

PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A DIFFERENTIAL OPERATOR: BETWEEN DECOLONIALITY AND POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT: This paper aimed to use psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic tool to elucidate two divergent strands of thought within critical thinking about colonialism. The research strategy proposed aims to make psychoanalysis operate as a source from which two groups are structured, represented in this work by, on the one hand, Walter D. Mignolo and, on the other, Edward W. Said and Gayatri C. Spivak. The appropriation these authors made of psychoanalysis will allow us to guide our reading in detecting the way they understand the colonizer/colonized correlation, adopting or refusing a geopolitical anchoring as a disjunctive condition between these categories/positions.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Decoloniality, Psychoanalysis and Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Decoloniality.

RESUMO: A psicanálise como operador diferencial: entre decolonialidade e os estudos pós-coloniais. O objetivo desse artigo é utilizar a psicanálise como instrumental hermenêutico para elucidar a diferença constituinte de duas vertentes no interior do pensamento crítico ao colonialismo. A estratégia de investigação assim proposta ambiciona fazer a psicanálise operar como um termo a partir do qual se estruturam dois grupos, representados nesse trabalho por, de um lado, Walter D. Mignolo; e, de outro, Edward W. Said e Gayatri C. Spivak. A apropriação que esses autores fazem da psicanálise permitirá orientar nossa leitura na detecção do modo como compreendem a correlação colonizador/colonizado, adotando ou recusando uma ancoragem geopolítica como condição disjuntiva entre essas categorias/posições.

Palavras-chave: pós-colonialismo; decolonialidade; psicanálise e pós-colonialismo; psicanálise e decolonialidade.

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Based on the title of the special issue of this journal, “Psychoanalysis and Decolonization”, this article aimed to make psychoanalysis operate as a method for elucidating the difference between two strands of critical thought of colonialism. This proposal, far from seeking an origin for the term *de(s)-colonial* that justifies a correct, vulgar, or improper use that this term may have assumed, aimed to understand its epistemological project compared to *post-colonial* studies, using psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic tool. In this way, the research strategy proposed does not aim to think about the contributions psychoanalytic theory would have to offer to the post- or de(s)-colonial debate or even the other way around, i.e., how it would be possible to think about a post- or de(s)-colonial psychoanalysis, but rather to use it as an operator that will make it possible to reflect on the contrasts between the two groups, based on how the authors appropriate it.

Thus, we will use psychoanalysis as a mirror from which to reflect the differences between, on the one hand, the Latin American group Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) and the des-colonial proposal led by Walter D. Mignolo and, on the other hand, Edward W. Said and Gayatri C. Spivak, especially about the conceptual positions of the colonizer and the colonized. At the heart of this oppositional relationship, the appropriation these authors make of psychoanalysis will allow us to guide our reading in detecting how they adopt or reject a geopolitical anchoring as a disjunctive condition between these categories/positions.

The article is structured in three parts: in the first part, we outline a general overview of both postcolonialism as a heterogeneous theoretical and political group and the de(s)-colonial project. In the second part, we point out the differences between de(s)-coloniality and postcolonial studies based on the epistemological place occupied by psychoanalysis in both strands. In the third part, closely related to the second, we show how these two strands understand the colonizer/colonized correlation according to a tendency to adopt or not a geopolitical anchoring as a disjunctive condition between these categories/positions.

Postcolonialism and the de(s)-colonial turn

The beginning of the decolonization process of peripheral zones, from the middle of the 20th century onwards, was accompanied by theoretical and political productions from the Third World that spread to question the modern colonial narrative, rewriting hegemonic accounts and contributing to the emancipation and liberation of the colonized peoples. We can understand post-colonialism with a very heterogeneous group of theorists from different places and with different critical perspectives, among whom we could mention black theorists such as Léopold Sédar-Senghor and Aimé Césaire; African theorists and activists such as Frantz Fanon, Kwame Ninsin or Mário de Andrade; Indian theorists from the Subaltern Studies Group, such as Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; theorists of Orientalism such as Edward Said and theorists of the African diaspora and multiculturalism such as Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, among others.

Although not constituted as a homogeneous and articulated group, and although their proposals cannot be grouped according to geographical and disciplinary linearity, the so-called postcolonial activists and authors have mobilized to construct critiques of colonial modernity, questioning the places of sovereignty and subalternity and interceding for the colonized (BALLESTRIN, 2013).

While postcolonialism emerges as a heterogeneous theoretical and political grouping, the *de(s)-colonial*¹ project originates from the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Group (M/C), made up of Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo, among its main names. Formed at the end of 1990, the M/C Group understands that the modern Enlightenment project of human emancipation cannot be separated from the establishment of a colonial matrix of power. Modernity and colonialism would be two sides of the same project involving practices of violence and domination of colonized peoples. As a consequence, the modern/colonial project spontaneously led to an anti-colonial reaction emerging from the colonies. This reaction has been called de(s)-colonial², understood as a geo-epistemic turn³ to the foundation of modernity. Therefore, the de(s)-colonial turn concerns an epistemic practice that includes a wide range of manifestations whose point of contact lies in their peripheral origin:

Des-colonial thinking emerged at the very foundation of modernity/coloniality as its counterpart. This happened in the Americas, in indigenous and Afro-Caribbean thoughts. It continued in Asia and Africa, not related to de-colonial thinking in the Americas, but as a counterpart to the reorganization of modernity/coloniality with the British Empire and French colonialism. A third moment of reformulation occurred at the intersections of decolonization movements in Asia and Africa, simultaneous with the Cold War and the ascendant leadership of the United States. (MIGNOLO, 2008a, p. 180; 181)

¹ A term first introduced by Nelson Maldonado-Torres in 2005 (BALLESTRIN, 2013).

² Walter Mignolo, the founding member of the Latin American group Modernity/Coloniality (M/C), uses the term de-colonial to distinguish it, on the one hand, from the concept of “decolonization” - as it was used during the Cold War - and on the other, from the variety of uses of the term “post-coloniality.” The author also mentions the variations “de-colonial” and “decolonial” used by Catherine Walsh and Aníbal Quijano, respectively. The term de-colonial would also differ from post-colonial theory and post-colonial studies since the latter are eminently anchored in European critical theory (Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida).

³ Mignolo (2008a) alternates mentions of the de-colonial epistemic turn, sometimes referring to it as “geo-epistemic change” (p. 181)

Although the meta-reflection on the de-colonial epistemic turn occurred later, Mignolo (2008a) understands de-colonial epistemic practice as all responsive to the modern logic that *naturally* arose in the colonies during the colonization period. Based on this, the author defends a critique of colonialism that aims to reinsert this epistemology into history, starting with the reconstruction of a de-colonial genealogy. The starting point for this proposal would be a *detachment*⁴ from any epistemology that was born anchored in a hegemonic matrix of *power*⁵ as a condition of possibility for opening up theories, practices, policies, epistemologies, but above all, identities that were erased or assimilated in the colonization process - the decolonization of *knowledge* and *being*. Therefore, de-coloniality refers to a project of decolonization of *power, knowledge, and being*, which operates by placing the perspective of the colonized at the forefront and implies, first and foremost, epistemic decolonization, that is, a detachment from all Western epistemology as a starting point for the affirmation of de-colonial thinking.

As a constituent part of modernity, de-colonial thought traces its genealogy from the periphery, presenting itself, for Mignolo, as an option in the face of “the whole of Western society, which includes liberal capitalism and Marxism” (MIGNOLO, 2011, p. 18), Christian theology, and the “sciences (social, natural and human), including both the ‘post’ varieties (post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism) and the academic configurations that create and celebrate ‘new objects of study’ [...]” (MIGNOLO, 2008a, p. 178). By interpreting Marxist, post-structuralist, and post-colonial critiques as anchored in a hegemonic matrix of power, Mignolo proposes a break with European thought, which would open the door to “[...] other economies, other political theories, the cleansing of the coloniality of being and knowledge [...]” (MIGNOLO, 2008a, p.184), in the form of an antagonism that pits the West - represented mainly by Europe and the United States - against the “others”.

Therefore, this dichotomous structure - West/other(s) - distances the de-colonial project from any relationship with psychoanalysis, insofar as the latter was born as an intrinsically European critique of modernity. In this sense, from an epistemological point of view, the relationship between psychoanalysis and de(s-)coloniality actually consists of a *non-relationship*.

This dichotomous position is contrary to that taken by post-colonial authors such as Edward W. Said and Gayatri C. Spivak. Following the perspective we have outlined in our reading, these authors differ from Mignolo mainly based on two aspects: the first concerns Mignolo’s de-colonial search for a theory responsive to colonization that remains outside the scope of occidental influence and which, precisely because of this, would be essentially emancipatory; the second aspect, intrinsically related to the first, refers to the positions of sovereignty/subalternity that make up his interpretations of the colonizer/colonized correlation.

The West and the Other

Edward Said is a literary critic of Palestinian origin, activist, and defender of the Palestinian cause. In 1948, he was exiled from West Jerusalem and settled in the United States, where he studied at boarding school and graduated from Princeton University. His first book, on Joseph Conrad, was published when he was an assistant professor at Columbia University. The outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967 transformed his academic career, giving rise to a new line of thought, manifested most notably in his book *Orientalismo: O Oriente como invenção do Ocidente [Orientalism: the Orient as an Invention of the Occident]* (2007/1978) (BOLLAS, 2004).

Said’s critical reflection in his writings on Orientalism arises from the identification of an antagonism that pits the West against what has become known, in post-colonial terminology, as the Other. In this text, this dichotomy is presented not as a possibility of detachment and openness, as we mentioned in Mignolo, but as the foundation of a correlation⁶ that allows the West to organize a belief system built on ideological narratives and fantastical images that shape its representation of the Other. The images the West projects onto what it calls the Orient to come to constitute what is understood as “exotic” and translated into a kind of totality that is tributary to a system of images and beliefs that articulates literature, cinema, travel accounts, science, and philosophy, establishes a contrast to Europe that, at the same time, constitutes it.

The central thesis introduced by Said presents *the Orient as an Invention of the West*, exposing the discursive production that, by dividing the world in two, serves colonial domination and violence. The so-called Orientalism is defined by the author as

[...] a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the East” and (most

⁴ “This epistemic detachment differs, in the sense of colonial difference, from Samir Amin’s (1988) use of the term ‘the disconnection’. Amin remained in the bubble of the modern episteme, and his ‘disconnection’ suggested a change of content, not of the terms of the conversation. On the other hand, the ‘epistemic detachment’ marks the breaking and fracturing, a moment of openness. In this sense, ‘openness’ also differs from the sense that a similar concept, ‘the open’, has in Agamben (2002). In de-colonial thinking, openness is precisely detachment from naturalized dichotomies such as ‘man and animal’ [...]” (MIGNOLO, 2008a, p. 183)

⁵ The colonial matrix of power or coloniality of power is, for Mignolo, a complex matrix that includes the control of the economy, authority, nature and natural resources, gender and sexuality, and the control of subjectivity and knowledge (BALLESTRIN, 2013).

⁶ “[...] The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the site of Europe’s largest, richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural rival, and one of its deepest and most recurrent images of the Other. Moreover, the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) with its contrasting image, ideas, personality, experience.” (SAID, 2007, p. 27-28).

of the time) “the West”. In this way, an enormous mass of writers, including poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epic novels, social descriptions and political accounts of the Orient, its peoples, customs, “mind”, destiny and so on (SAID, 1990, p. 14).

To this definition, Said adds two other meanings for the term. The first refers to the academic productions of professors, researchers, and scholars of the Orient - whether in anthropology, sociology, history, or philology - which he calls Orientalists, and the second, dating back to the 18th century, refers to an Orientalism organized as an institution to negotiate with the Orient, aiming for domination and sovereignty over it (SAID, 1990; BIRMAN, 2008).

Thus, we can say that the Other, as the invention of the West, would not be effectively marginalized, forgotten, ignored, or erased but would be precisely what the colonizer is interested in, occupied with, seeks to scrutinize, examine, write about, and explore. This dichotomy produced by the fantasy of the exoticism of the Other is, therefore, at the heart of colonial thinking and allows Europe to constitute itself, in contrast with Eastern “eccentricity” as a sovereign Western identity. Thus, the production of alterity is at the service of the construction of an identity.

Thought from different perspectives, the antagonism between colonizer and colonized, which founds colonialism, is recognized by both post-colonial thinkers, such as Said and Gayatri Spivak, and de-colonial thinkers, such as Walter Dignolo. However, as far as our proposed reading is concerned, the biggest divergence between Dignolo’s conception, on the one hand, and Said and Spivak’s readings, on the other, is fundamentally concentrated in the second half: while Dignolo proposes endorsing such antagonism as a condition for what he calls “other” epistemologies and forms of existence; Said and Spivak appropriate psychoanalysis in defense of a deconstruction of the very antagonistic relationship West/Other and colonizer/colonized.

With the recognition of a de(s)-colonial epistemic turn, the M/C Group⁷ proposed an affirmation and inversion of this dichotomous logic, in which the perspective of the colonized takes on a preponderant role, suggesting a decolonization project that aims to detach itself from all European epistemology as a premise for the affirmation of a de(s)-colonial epistemology: “other” thoughts that would have been covered up and discredited as “primitive”, “barbaric”, “mystical”, “native”, among other adjectives that constituted Europe’s Other.

For Dignolo (2011), there are at least three forms of criticism to modernity, each distinguished by its place of origin and dissemination: the first form of criticism arises within Europe itself and includes psychoanalysis, Marxism, post-structuralism and post-modernity; the second form of criticism remains centered on the idea of Western civilization, including the projects of dewesternization and Occidentosis; and the third form of criticism is based on the problem of colonization, including post-coloniality and decoloniality.

Dignolo (2008a) understands that the de-colonial project differs from post-coloniality precisely because the latter was born out of intrinsically European criticisms to modernity⁸. These criticisms, coming from Europe, denounce the modern Enlightenment project without explicitly considering its colonial dimension. In this sense, these critiques have an intolerable trait for Dignolo: they are universalist critiques without claiming to start from the perspective of the colonization that underlies modernity. Thus, Dignolo (2020) proposes rejecting criticisms to modernity that purport to be *universalist*, but remain particular criticisms whose scope is to solve *local* problems⁹, i.e., inherently European problems. In de(s)-coloniality, it is a question of considering the geoepistemic condition as a determining feature for the construction of a critique that, unshackled from its European and Western origins, would be “truly” emancipatory.

If the M/C Group proposes a fracture from what it calls postmodernity and postcolonialism, seeking to reconstruct a de(s)-colonial genealogy, Said and Spivak respond to the problem of antagonism from another perspective. We could say that Said is adamant about the importance of non-Europeans reading European authors. This statement is made by the author on several occasions, and by way of illustration, we transpose one of these passages here:

Freud was an explorer of the mind, of course, but also, in a philosophical sense, an inverter and remapper of accepted or established geographies and genealogies. He, thus, lends himself in a special way to re-readings in different contexts since his work is all about how the history of life lends itself, through memory, research, and reflection, to endless structuring and restructuring, both in the individual and collective sense. That we, different readers from different historical periods, in different cultural contexts, continue to do so in our readings of Freud seems to me nothing less

⁷This project also appears in Quijano’s writings: “In the first place, [epistemological decolonization is necessary] to give way to a new inter-cultural communication, an exchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality that can legitimately claim some universality. There is nothing less rational than the claim that the specific worldview of a particular ethnic group should be imposed as the universal rationality, even if that ethnic group is called Western Europe. Because that, in reality, is to claim for a provincialism the title of universality (the cursive is mine).” [free translation] (QUIJANO *apud* MIGNOLO, 2008a, p. 184)

⁸ “Postcoloniality (postcolonial theory or criticism) was born amid (post)modernity. That is why Michel Foucault, Jaques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida have been the points of support for postcolonial criticism (Said, Bhabha, Spivak)” (MIGNOLO, 2008a, p. 188).

⁹ “It is one thing to criticize the complicity between knowledge and the State while inhabiting a particular nation-state (in this case, France) and another to criticize the complicity between knowledge and the State from the historical exteriority of a universal idea of the State, forged in the experience of a local history: the modern, European experience of the State” (MIGNOLO, 2020, p. 111).

than a vindication of the power that his work has to instigate new thoughts, as well as to illuminate situations that he himself may never have dreamed of. [...] I don't think Freud could have imagined that he would have non-European readers or that, in the context of the Palestinian struggle, he would have Palestinian readers. (SAID, 2004, p. 57; 72)

Works such as those by Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx¹⁰ cross temporal, cultural, and ideological boundaries because they lend themselves to endless restructuring, use their words, and can be signified and re-signified from different contexts and serve various purposes. In this second case, it is a discursive dispute.

As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, Said's interest in Freud's work lies mainly in two moments. The first is in *Beginnings* (1975), his study of literary genesis, where he devotes a long segment to a detailed analysis of *A interpretação dos sonhos* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*] (2019/1900). The second, in a speech given in December 2001 at the Freud Museum in London, published under the title *Freud e os não-europeus* [*Freud and the non-Europeans*] (2004). In this second moment, Said analyzes *Moisés e o monoteísmo: três ensaios* [*Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays*] (2018/1939[1934-1938]), drawing attention, fundamentally, to the question of identity, a theme that would reveal the importance of the work for the author, and with which Freud himself, at the end of his life, had to confront:

Moses seems to have been composed by Freud for himself, [...]. In this book, Freud, the scientist seeking objective results in his research, and Freud, the Jewish intellectual exploring his own relationship with the ancient faith through the history and identity of its founder, are never really set against each other. Everything in this work suggests not resolution and reconciliation [...] but, on the contrary, more complexity and a willingness to leave the irreconcilable elements of the work as they are: episodic, fragmented, unfinished (that is, unpolished). [...] Freud is obsessed with returning not only to the problem of Moses' identity [...] but to the elements of his own identity as if it were possible to return to that question so crucial to psychoanalysis, the very heart of the science [...] (SAID, 2004, p. 58-59)

Freud's Moses - originally from an Egyptian and African background and at the same time the inaugurator of the Jewish and European monotheistic tradition - inhabited a space of inside and outside, which would have implied, for the creator of psychoanalysis, a questioning of his own belonging - at the same time a Jew and an atheist scientist - and ultimately brought to the agenda a questioning of whether or not psychoanalysis was a "Jewish science." Importantly, Said was born in Jerusalem but he studied and graduated in an English-speaking country during exile. Such a trajectory would not allow him to completely identify with the West or the East. In his famous work *Out of Place: Memoirs* (2019/1999), the author analyzes this border space that he shares with both Freud and the Freudian Moses, in his biographical and political situation:

[...] It took me almost fifty years to get used to, or more accurately to feel less uncomfortable with, "Edward," a ridiculously English name forcibly linked to the unmistakably Arabic surname Said. My mother indeed explained to me that I had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales, who made quite a name for himself in 1935 [...], and that Said was the name of several uncles and cousins. [...] For years, depending on the specific circumstances, I would quickly pronounce "Edward" and emphasize "Said," on other occasions, I would do the opposite or add one name to the other so quickly that neither sounded clear. The only thing I couldn't tolerate [...] was the disbelieving and [...] disheartening reaction: Edward? Said? (SAID, 2004 apud BIRMAN, 2008, s/p)

The debate on the overcoming of *identity* by a *differential* discourse on *identification* (BIRMAN, 2004), central to Freudian theory, is given great prominence in Said's speech at the Freud Museum in London. The author's efforts on this occasion were fundamentally focused on thinking about the question of the institutionalization of Jewish identity with the formation of the State of Israel. The suffering of anti-Semitism in Europe during the Second World War fostered the establishment of the Hebrew state in a non-European geopolitical space, which would have been responsible for an enormous effort to consolidate a national identity through the constitution of a state that is politically organized in such a way as to promote the isolation of this "Jewish identity" in its refusal and opposition to anything considered "non-Jewish".

The formation of the State of Israel, in this sense, was tributary to the definition of a state made by and for Jews, which legitimizes the establishment of exclusive land ownership rights that, among other political actions, maintain the Jewish identity against the "non-Jewish". This is contrary to the Freudian refusal to assimilate "any doctrinal attempt to establish Jewish identity in a solid formation" (SAID, 2004, p. 73). In Said's words:

Palestinians who lived in pre-1948 Palestine can neither return (in the case of refugees) nor have access to land in the

¹⁰ "The special point I'm making from this is that it would be imperative to read them [Jane Austin and Karl Marx] as intrinsically valid for today's non-European or non-Western reader, who is often either happy to dismiss them completely as inhuman or insufficiently aware of colonized peoples (as Chinua Achebe did with Conrad's representation of Africa), or read them as somehow 'above' the historical circumstances to which they belonged so much. My analysis tries to place them in their context as precisely as possible, but then - because they are extraordinary writers and thinkers whose work has made possible the emergence of other works and alternative readings based on developments of which they could not have been aware - I see them in counterpoint, that is, as figures whose writings cross temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries, in an unforeseen way, to emerge as part of a new group, along with subsequent history and subsequent art." (SAID, 2004. p. 55)

same way as Jews. Far removed from the spirit of Freud's deliberately provocative notes that the founder of Judaism was a non-Jew and that Judaism began in the realms of Egyptian and non-Jewish monotheism, Israeli legislation combats, represses, and even cancels Freud's carefully maintained openness of Jewish identity in relation to its non-Jewish past. The complex layers of the past... have been eliminated by an official Israel. (SAID, 2004, p. 72-73)

We can, therefore, say that the Saidean reading of the Freudian text reflects the substantial conception of Jewish identity with the formation of the State of Israel, which strives to erase the non-European origins of Judaism, assuming legal and political positions that isolate and restrict the rights of non-Jews.

As far as Spivak is concerned, her appropriations of Freud, along with Marx, Jacques Derrida, and Antonio Gramsci, allow her to think of the colonizer/colonized antagonism no longer as a dichotomy between fixed categories but as a game of positions, whose arrangements, always provisional, are organized based on the conditions under dispute. This reading allows the author to develop a strong critique of the role of ideology in intellectual productions.

In this sense, while Mignolo's project refers to a detachment from a European epistemology, seeking a de(s)-colonial epistemology, Said and Spivak, in their postcolonial theories, highlight what we could call an epistemological shift. The notion of epistemological displacement reverberates the Derridean concept of *iterability*. This concept, from the Latin *iterum*, refers to "again" or "once more." Iterability refers to the repeatable condition of every set of signifiers; in other words, all signification is produced in a transposability condition. In this sense, a text does not effectively belong to an established context or a geopolitical space because no signifier is anchored in a determined signification, and repetition is always possible, which will also be responsible for opening up a new set of significations. It is from the iterable prism of theoretical texts that these authors appropriate psychoanalysis in an unforeseen way. From this perspective, the concept of a substantially European theory, as opposed to theories seen as non-European, loses its more predictable meaning.

Sovereignty and subalternity in the colonizer/colonized correlation

The aspect we intend to elaborate on next is an offshoot of the first. It involves thinking about how the appropriation of psychoanalysis has allowed postcolonial thinker Gayatri C. Spivak to articulate sovereignty and subalternity in the colonizer/colonized correlation, as opposed to the affirmation of antagonism proposed by Mignolo. Spivak is an Indian philosopher, literary critic, and professor at Columbia University. Initially known for her translations of Derrida, the author is a member of the Indian Subaltern Studies Group, with a postcolonial and feminist critique based on Marxism and Derrida.

In her article *Pode o subaltern falar? [Can the subaltern speak?]* (2010/1988), Spivak starts with a critique of the dialogue between Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault entitled *The Intellectuals and Power*¹¹ to reflect on the practice of intellectuals about subaltern groups and to self-criticize the Subaltern Studies Group in India. The crucial point that Spivak wants to draw from this dialogue concerns the fact that European intellectuals, even in their most radical critiques, continue to obfuscate the place occupied by Europe as the Subject of history.

The indeterminate language of the hegemonic European discourse provides support for a Subject - written in capital letters - that Spivak understands as a "strong passport" Subject, that is, a Subject that does not assume any geopolitical determination because it does not encounter any obstacles to its agency, to its speech/language, understanding itself as a historical agent and as the one that the entire theoretical and philosophical tradition takes as an interlocutor. This immediacy allows the European historical Subject not to recognize any opacity in its position, granting itself the right to speak in neutral language, in the name of a universal position. Under Marxist influence, the author seeks to reinsert the role of ideology in the involvement of intellectual and economic history, which was ignored by Deleuze and Foucault, and to show how, within a supposedly neutral discourse, the place of enunciation is implicit in a clear complicity of intellectual production with the international economic interests of the West.

Spivak begins her critique by extracting excerpts from the aforementioned dialogue in which Foucault and Deleuze mention the importance of establishing conditions in which the oppressed subject can speak for himself, to the extent that he is fully aware of the oppression he suffers and therefore no longer needs intellectuals to represent¹² him. In neutral language, as if they were talking about the oppressed as a free historical Subject, Foucault and Deleuze assume that their interlocutor is a strong passport Subject, revealing an "unquestioned valorization of the oppressed as Subject" (SPIVAK, 2010, p. 36).

The assumption that the oppressed could constitute themselves as an identity, that is, a *Self*, capable of free agency, aware of their own oppression and therefore able to represent themselves, would reveal, for Spivak, the overlapping of two possible meanings of the notion of "representation". Returning to Marx, in *O 18 Brumário de Luís Bonaparte [The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte]* (2021/1799), the author distinguishes between the German terms *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*. On the one hand, *Vertretung* would be the act of taking the place of another in a political sense of the

¹¹ "I chose this friendly interaction between two activist philosophers of history because it blurs the opposition between the theoretical production of authority and the unprepared conversational practice, allowing us to glimpse the trail of ideology." (SPIVAK, 2010, p. 26)

¹² "Deleuze admirably points out: 'to establish conditions in which prisoners would be able to speak for themselves'. Foucault adds that 'the masses know perfectly, quite clearly' - again, the theme of not being fooled appears here - 'they know much more than [the intellectual] and they certainly say it very well' (FD, p. 206-207)" (SPIVAK, 2010, p. 36)

word, in the sense of “speaking for” another. While *Darstellung* would be an act of staging, “re-presenting”.

The Eighteenth Brumaire is the moment when Marx presents the difference between class interest and class consciousness. Class interest is what constitutes a class (*Darstellung*) from a descriptive point of view¹³ - that is, a unity formed by differences from another group. For there to be class consciousness and the constitution of a transforming class, there needs to be something, a *Vertretung* - a form of representation in the sense of “speaking for” - that represents it as a unified whole (*Darstellung*).

The idea of class consciousness since Marx calls into question the representation of the subject who - dispersed - cannot represent itself. By merging the two terms - *Darstellung* and *Vertretung* - and disregarding one of the modes of representation - *Vertretung* - European intellectuals, in an unforeseen way, constituted themselves as a representation that spoke for the oppressed, supposing it as a represented unit - the Other of Europe -, projecting its own condition as a free historical Subject and ignoring the system of oppression that produces subalternity.

Reading Antonio Gramsci (2002/1934) allows Spivak to add to the Marxist formulation the notion of subalternity, which is always constituted as an episodic and unruly unit, without there actually being the formation of a transforming class. It is in this context that the term subaltern is introduced by the author who, questioning its improper use - which would refer to any oppressed subject - starts to conceptualize it as the position of the subject who, in fact, cannot speak. In this sense, the subaltern ceases to be the place of what constitutes itself as the alterity of the West, the Other of Europe and becomes a discursive position, operating as a third term in the colonizer/colonized dichotomy.

The criticism of Deleuze and Foucault extends to post-colonial intellectuals and the Subaltern Studies Group, as self-criticism, by inserting into the discussion the problem of the consciousness of women as subalterns, thought of by the author based on the Indian ritual of the immolation of widows. The *Sati* - Hindu ritual in which the widow immolates herself on her husband’s funeral pyre - would have remained restricted as a practice in India to the period before British colonization. With the arrival of the British, who dedicated themselves to exploring Indian culture, *Sati* was rediscovered by the colonizers who, in an act of “liberation” of Indian women from the violence of Hindu men, instituted a law, in the name of human rights, banning the practice in colonized India. The effect of this act is the return of the ritual as a habit, constituting a practice of nationalist anti-colonial resistance which, for the Hindu man, would also concern the desire of women, true Indians, to burn to death.

Thus, we have, at first, the discourse of the colonizer, and, secondly, the discourse of the colonized man, each trying to point to the true desire of the woman, who supposedly could speak for herself about her own oppression. As a product of this relationship, Spivak elaborates the following sentence “white men saving dark women from dark-skinned men”, and concludes: “I elaborated this sentence [...] in a spirit similar to that found in Freud’s investigations of the sentence [Beat a child]” (SPIVAK, 2010, p.119). The fantasy that Freud describes in “*Batem numa criança*” [*A child is being beaten*]: *a contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions*] (2010/1919) concerns the position of children in a process of subjective division about their father’s love, which emerges in the face of the birth of a rival (brother or sister).

Reconstructing Spivak with Freud¹⁴, this scheme would look like this: the first period of the Freudian fantasy is the one that reveals the child’s desire to be protected and loved by the father about their rival, which is reflected in the sentence: “My father beats a child I hate”. In Spivak, this time is mobilized by the hatred the woman feels for the colonizer, which translates into the colonized man’s view that the truth of the woman’s desire is to be saved by the man of color from the threat of the colonizer.

In the second half of the fantasy, the child, guilty of his/her desire, represses the hatred he/she has directed at his/her rival. The process of repression promotes a reversal of hatred towards the subject themselves, who now assumes the position of the object: “My father beats me”. This position could be translated, in Spivak, as the position of object of subalternity occupied by the Indian woman.

In the third and final period, for this fantasy to be able to emerge into consciousness, the adult agent of the first tense and the child object of the second tense must both assume an impersonal position, which translates into the proposition: “They beat a child”. A sentence with an indeterminate subject, for Spivak, would be a purely universal proposition that would indifferently affect everyone. The agent authority at this point no longer has a face, representing everything that manifests itself as neutral and indeterminate language in European philosophical discourse: “the law”, “civilization”, and “human rights”.

The two conscious scenes of the fantasy, the first and third, promote the repression of the intermediate time, which remains unconscious. The subordinate position occupied by the Indian woman is the one that lies between the discourses of the colonized and the colonizer. In disputing the woman’s true desire - between dying as a true Indian or freeing herself from the domination of the colored man - the hatred of the colonized/colonizer opposition produces the position of the subaltern woman as an object in the intermediate phase. The neutral language of the sovereign Subject who establishes the law prohibiting *Sati* produces not only the Other of the first period but also the subaltern position of the second period.

¹³ “To the extent that millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that distinguish their way of life [...] they form a class. To the extent that [...] the identity of their interests fails to produce a feeling of community [...] they do not form a class” (MARX apud SPIVAK, 2010, p. 46).

¹⁴ Thanks to Felipe Castelo Branco for his discussions on this subject

Thus, from what we have seen so far, we can say that Spivak and Said appropriate psychoanalysis and propose a deconstruction of the colonizer/colonized antagonism from two prisms. Said's texts reveal a critique of the substantial conception of Jewish identity that would find its maximum expression in the formation of the State of Israel. As an activist for the Palestinian cause, Said (2004) finds in Freud an author whose "irremediably unresolved relationship with his own Jewishness" (p.61), helps him to think about the Hebrew state's effort to erase the non-European origins of Judaism, assuming legal and political positions that dispute territories and archaeological traces, isolate and restrict the rights of non-Jews. The Jewish identity that is dogmatized by the Israeli state would be opposed to the Freudian vision of a tradition that is born cohabiting with other traditions in the same territory, expressed by the bordering place occupied by Freud himself and the Freudian Moses.

In turn, Spivak appropriates psychoanalysis to criticize Europe's place of enunciation as a Subject, which produces subalternity. The subaltern is the one who cannot speak because they are not constituted as a Self, that is, as a free historical Subject capable of agency, but as a divided subject, located, in the case of the Indian woman, between the assimilationist discourse of the colonizer and the nationalist discourse of the colonized man. The colonizer/colonized dualism is no longer interpreted as essentialist categories, but as a ternary construction, a game of logical positions whose arrangements are made and unmade according to the conditions in dispute.

Starting from another understanding, the Latin American de-colonial project breaks, from an epistemological point of view, from any originally European critique to modernity. In this sense, Mignolo's proposal moves away from psychoanalysis and reaffirms the colonizer/colonized antagonism in the defense of politics *with* identity¹⁵. For Mignolo (2008b), if the places of the colonizer and the colonized were established by the colonizer, it is from these places that the colonized must respond. Therefore, the de-colonial turn suggests an inversion of this dichotomous logic, in a critique that aims to reconstruct the de-colonial genealogy, recognizing practices, policies, and epistemologies that came from the colonies and which would therefore be substantially emancipatory.

Psychoanalysis between de(s)-coloniality and postcolonial studies

Thought of as an operator, psychoanalysis allows us to identify the formation of two groups within critical thinking about colonialism: on the one hand, the de-colonial project of the M/C Group undoes any relationship with psychoanalysis, while Said and Spivak appropriate it. If we can speak of an essentialist antagonism that underlies colonialism, which divides the West and the Other, the colonizer and the colonized, we recognize in Mignolo an author who reaffirms this antagonism in an attempt to pluralize it. His critique aims to affirm the "others", both from an epistemological point of view and from the point of view of the constitution of subjectivities, aspects that are closely related. If colonization affects the spheres of power, knowledge, and being, decolonization presupposes an epistemic detachment, which implies, from the outset, the opposition between a colonial epistemology and others, which would be "clean" - borrowing the term used by the author - coloniality.

The assumption of the existence of a substantially European epistemology, which would be in opposition to those free from colonial "contamination", loses its most predictable meaning if we think that theoretical texts lend themselves to countless meanings, crossing temporal and cultural boundaries, as Said argues. To the extent that these texts are appropriated and re-appropriated by authors from different eras and in different contexts, it is no longer possible to establish, by their origin, where a theory actually belongs. This does not mean that there is no implicit place of enunciation in Western philosophical production - as Spivak would make us believe in his elaborations - but that there is, in the case of these authors, a discursive dispute that allows theoretical writings to be displaced to a time, space, and purpose not previously imagined. In this sense, the search for a cleansing of coloniality remains dichotomous and geopolitically anchored.

The antagonism underlying colonialism is, on the other hand, deconstructed by Said and Spivak, not only from an epistemological point of view, i.e., by their appropriation of psychoanalytic theory but also by their subsequent proposal of the relations of sovereignty and subalternity that make up the colonizer/colonized correlation. In Said, we find the problematization of Jewish identity with the formation of the Hebrew state, while Spivak deconstructs the colonizer/colonized dichotomy by looking to Gramsci for the category of subalternity - that which is constituted as an organization that is always provisional, obliterated by the dominant classes - and going beyond the Gramscian formulation with Freud - by presenting her concept of subalternity as the position of the one who cannot speak and who is, in the case of the Indian woman, divided between the discourses of the colonizer and the colonized.

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¹⁵ "[...] I am not talking about 'identity politics', but about 'identity in politics'. [...] I will argue that identity in politics is crucial for the de-colonial option [...]. Fausto Reinaga (the Aymara intellectual and activist) clearly stated in the 1960s: 'Fuck you, I'm not an Indian, I'm an Aymara. But you made me an Indian and as an Indian, I will fight for liberation. Identity in politics, in short, is the only way to think decolonially (which means thinking politically in terms of decolonization projects). All other ways of thinking (i.e. interfering with the organization of knowledge and understanding) and of acting politically, i.e. ways that are not decolonial, mean remaining within imperial reason; that is, within the imperial politics of identities" (MIGNOLO, 2008b, p. 289;290).

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