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The Battle of the Prefixes

The limits of my language are the limit of my world
Ludwig Wittgenstein

I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself
Gloria Anzaldúa

This issue of *Anglistica AION* is the final step in a process of cross-thinking around the prefixes "post" and "de" with reference to the colonial, a process that officially began in 2017 in Naples with an AISCLI (Associazione Italiana di Studi sulle Culture e Letterature di Lingua Inglese) Symposium titled "Postcolonial and Decolonial in Conversation". At that time Olivia Rutazibwa (Portsmouth University) was invited to converse with Iain Chambers and a group of migrants and activists of Centro Sociale Autogestito Ex Canapificio of Caserta, a centre for grass-roots organization, which provides migrants with legal aid. The conversation continued in Bari in 2019 with the 8th AISCLI conference "Postcolonial/Decolonial. Unpacking the Prefix: Literatures and Cultures in English and Beyond". This time we discussed with, among others, Madina Tlostanova (Linköping University), Paola Zaccaria (University of Bari), and musicians Karima 2G and Nabil Salameh.

Historically, the colonial has been escorted by a long list of prefixes. Alongside 'post' and 'de', one can find "un-colonial"[1], "trans-colonial"[2], intra-colonial, inter-colonial, semi-colonial, non-colonial, and, of course, anti-colonial and neo-colonial. The postcolonial perspectives (mostly related to British colonialism) adopted by Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978), Gayatry C. Spivak ("Can the Subaltern Speak?", 1988) and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 1994) as well as the decolonial perspectives (mostly related to Spanish colonialism) adopted by Aníbal Quijano ("Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad", 1991), Enrique Dussel (*1492: El encubrimiento del Otro. Hacia el origen of the "mito de la modernidad"*, 1992) and Walter Mignolo (*The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization*, 1995) are closely linked. Perhaps, we may add that the postcolonial perspectives tend to mostly stem from the realm of the cultural whilst the decolonial ones mostly from the realm of the sociological. Be as it may, they are definitely connected thanks to the common anti-colonial genealogy that reaches back to works such as *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940) by Fernando Ortiz Fernández, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950) by Aimé Césaire, and *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (1952) by Ibrahim Frantz Fanon, all of which represent a radical departure from established Western canons of thinking.

[1] See John Baldacchino, "Resemblance, Choice, and the Hidden: Mediterranean Aesthetics and the Political 'Logics' of an Uncolonial Subjective Economy", in Yasser Elhariry and Edwige Tamalet Talbayev, eds., *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Aesthetics, and Deployments of a Sea in Crisis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
[2] See Olivia C. Harrison, "Etel Adnan's Transcolonial Mediterranean", in Elhariry and Talbayev, eds., *Critically Mediterranean*.

Despite its widespread use, the term 'postcolonial' has been a disputed significant since its inception: indeed, an intense and prolonged debate emerged at least as far back as the early 1990s.[3] Both the fortune and misfortune of the term 'postcolonial' might be ascribed to the fact that it was born amidst many other 'posts': postmodernism, poststructuralism, posthumanism, postsocialism, and so on. However, if the postmodern and the postcolonial have been debated as potentially suspicious expressions because we are not out of modernity or colonialism yet, postmodernity and postcoloniality designate two different modes of cutting the canvas of modernity: if deconstruction is mostly associated with the former, decolonization is commonly associated with the latter. So, 'post' unavoidably meets 'de'. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, among many others, reminds us that the postcolonial has always been problematic both in terms of periodization and in terms of conceptualization. However, whatever questions the term raises, for him it has one constant: "the 'post' expresses a relation to coloniality, in fact, it absorbs the colonial into itself". [4] As Bill Ashcroft reminds us, it is a relationship embodied and highlighted by the hyphen itself: post(-)colonial.[5] For both scholars, then, 'post' indicates the absorption of the colonial into the postcolonial. In so doing, as Ngugi reiterates, "it simultaneously assumes a relationship to something else, something that is neither colonial nor postcolonial".[6] Perhaps here, Ngugi is implicitly referring to Aníbal Quijano's idea of "decoloniality"?[7]

The ideology of colonialism has fuelled a long war on the rest of the planet for the last five centuries. The colonial past, its racism, the division of the world among imperial powers are never simply 'out there or back then'. It is constitutive of the present and goes beyond matters of power and race since it also involves gender, religion, environmental issues, among many others. It involves the several intersected hierarchies contrived by the history of colonialism;[8] In short, it involves the big question of epistemology: how we come to know what we know. If there is a divergence between postcolonial and decolonial thinking (without presupposing any respective homogeneity), it might lie in the very way they counter the colonial while relating to Western epistemology:

- the postcolonial resituates the position of the non-Western Other in order to *rethink* the Occident and its relation to the non-Occident;[9]
- the decolonial resituates the position of the non-Western Other in order to *delink* it from the Occident and its hegemony.[10]

Without taking for granted that there is a homogeneous Occident, by the latter we mean the 'non-colonial' par excellence: Capitalist Modernity. Whereas within the postcolonial frameworks it might be impossible to cancel the complexity of Western inheritance(s) – one can only re-cast it in a frame that

[3] See, among many others: Stuart Hall, "When was the Postcolonial? Thinking at the Limit", in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds., *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge, 1996), Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'", *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992), 84-98, Ella Shohat, "Notes on the Post-Colonial", *Social Text*, 31/32, 1992, 99-113, Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New York: Verso, 1992), Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism", *Critical Inquiry*, 20.2 (1994), 328-356.
[4] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2012), 51.
[5] Bill Ashcroft, "On the Hyphen in 'Postcolonial'", *New Literatures Review*, 32 (1996), 23-31.
[6] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics*, 51.
[7] See Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad y modernidad racionalidad", *Perú Indígena*, 13.29, 1992.
[8] As to the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality and the relative decolonial proposal of "deep coalitions", see María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism", *Hypatia*, 25.4 (2010) and "The Coloniality of Gender", in Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*.
[9] See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993).
[10] See Quijano, "Colonialidad y modernidad racionalidad".

exceeds its origins – from the decolonial perspectives, the cancellation of the link to Western epistemology is not only possible but necessary. This is the reason why the postcolonial should be decolonised as well. Indeed, it is generally agreed that the postcolonial pairs are: Foucault/Said, Derrida/Spivak, Lacan/Bhabha. On the contrary, the decolonial option, as it has been renamed by Mignolo and Escobar,[11] demands the use of 'external' sources (Gandhi, Rigoberta Menchu, Gloria Anzaldúa, the Zapatistas Movement…), ones that dwell outside the West, on its "borders" (border thinking).[12]

Nevertheless, in countering the colonial, both the postcolonial and the decolonial endeavour to think 'without' the temporal framework of Hegelian/Marxian historicism[13] and 'within' the huge spatial framework that are the so-called 'global borders', configured as such since the conquest of America.[14]

As it is, beyond any nominalist issue, both "post" and "de" refer not to 'pastness' (the closure of an age) but to 'beyondness' (the opening of an age). According to this latter stance, then, postcoloniality and decoloniality, for that matter, are not an achieved condition at all, on the contrary, "an 'anticipatory' discourse, looking forward to a better and as yet unrealized world".[15] To this extent, we think that the postcolonial option overlaps with the decolonial one. Above all, if, as Chambers puts it, postcolonial means the revaluation of the present that arrives from extra-European time and space, which radically undoes the securities of European time and space, "this revaluation – he concludes – in play since first contact five centuries ago, is the critical heart of a 'decolonised postcolonial' criticism".[16] In this perspective, everything is in need of being decolonised, the postcolonial included. The decolonial as well needs some rethinking. Given it was born out of the disillusionment of the decolonization rhetoric at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall and it is predominantly focused on issues of race and capitalism in history, it has remained somehow unaware of more contemporary and pressing issues such as those linked to gender, the environment, unsettlement and defuturing.

Both a closeness and a possible synergy between the decolonial and the postcolonial are badly needed today, overwhelmed as we are by new waves of colonialisms, racisms, fascisms, both here in Italy and in so many more places around the world: from the global Black Lives Movements to our local recent debate on Montanelli's involvement in Italian colonialism. This closeness and synergy are badly needed to fight the colonial matrix of power, which is still consuming the planet as has been since the foundation of modernity, whose dark, hidden, repressed side was and still is coloniality. The right utterance truly is 'modernity/coloniality', which, once unpacked, clearly reveals how there is no

[11] Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).
[12] Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 2000).
[13] See Enrique Dussel, *1492 El encubrimiento del otro - hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad* (La Paz: Plural, 1994), Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: Minnesota U.P., 1996), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1999), Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 2000).
[14] See Quijano, "Colonialidad y modernidad racionalidad", Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London and New York, Verso, 1993), Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: Michigan U.P.,1995), Hall, "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'?".
[15] Patrick Williams, "'Outlines of a Better World': Rerouting Postcolonialism", in Janet Wilson, Cristina Şandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds, *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millenium* (London and New York: Routledge 2010), 93.
[16] Iain Chambers, *Postcolonial Interruptions, Unauthorised Modernities* (London: Rowman & Littlefield 2017), 17, our emphasis.

modernity without coloniality. Only in this way can we view racism not as pathological but as physiological, i.e., structurally embedded in the very fabric of (the Eurocentric project of) modernity.

Finally, such closeness and synergy are badly needed to sustain a decolonizing agenda in a world where the only suitable prefix should be the alpha privative 'a': an a-colonial world, or, better yet, a world where no prefix is needed at all, because there will be no more words like colonialism or coloniality. Until then, our motto will have to be to 'always decolonize' since if we do not choose decoloniality we will never halt the 'brutality' of modernity and we will never attain an accomplished a-colonial world.

The articles included in this issue of *Anglistica* explore the articulations of postcolonial and decolonial practices, working with theoretical, literary, visual and linguistic texts, and reflecting therefore not only on the debates surrounding coloniality and its prefixes, but also on the politics of aesthetics and different forms of ARTivism.

The two opening articles are theoretical reflections that, we think, interact with each other addressing with very different voices the question of decoloniality, activism, and intellectual practice. Walter Mignolo traces the meaning of coloniality/decoloniality and offers a wide reflection on the *pensamiento otro* and its practices within and without the academia. The essay is a grand picture of the decolonial option starting from its originator, Aníbal Quijano, up to the de-Westernization phase at the beginning of the 21st century. Mignolo tries to answer one of the questions posed by the call for this issue: "How can we articulate another thinking entirely, pre-fixed, post-fixed, but certainly not fixed"? He does so by recalling the genealogy of the decolonial option (the dependency theory debate in South America in the sixties and the decolonizing process of the Bandung Conference of 1955) and its affirmation after the end of the Cold War thanks to Quijano's concepts of 'coloniality' and 'delinking'. What Mignolo highlights here is that after Quijano the decolonial thinkers extended the domain of decoloniality from epistemology to aesthesis, that is to say, from knowing to sensing/believing. Above all, Mignolo stubbornly strives to contrive a theoretical pattern that meticulously describes the historical process of modernity/coloniality (constitution/destitution dimensions) and the political project of decoloniality (reconstitution), both at the level of the 'terms' of the enunciation (actors, institutions, languages) and at the level of the 'content' of the enunciation (or the enunciated created by discourses, theories, artistic products…). What is interesting for us is that these processes also concern those thinking, writing and living in the European South, i.e. in decolonial terms, in the space of (internal) imperial difference. Finally, predicting the possible criticism of deeming such a project naïve or unachievable, Mignolo makes clear that it cannot be a state-led 'pre-fixed' project but one "led by the emerging global political society", and as such surely not 'fixed'.

In parallel but also fluidly expanding routes of postcoloniality and decoloniality, Paola Zaccaria weaves a map of interconnected artistic and ARTivist textualities, feminist decolonial practices, postcolonial literary texts and discourses. Zaccaria addresses two fundamental questions: how do "postcolonial" and "decolonial" scholars and artists decolonize their gaze in what she calls "the age of TransMediterrAtlantic flows"? And, furthermore, how to be aware of the dynamics of segregation, discrimination and racism intrinsic to contemporary governmental policies? In other words, where and – especially – how does the articulation of cultural practices work to decolonize not only the hegemonic discourse, but also our own gaze, as scholars and thinkers, working within – much more than without –

hegemonic institutions and languages? The map Zaccaria offers is intricate and poetic, militant and contemporary, yet rooted in a "personal postcolonial-decolonial feminist *camino*" that she offers to the reader as an invitation to share the journey, and which we gladly accept and treasure.

Turning to a very specific grounding of the theoretical debate to the South of Italy, Carmine Conelli's contribution is a wide-ranging review of the history of the 'questione meridionale', the late birth of the 'questione settentrionale' and the main reactions to the otherization of the Italian South at the end of the 20th century. He achieves this through a verification of the postcolonial and decolonial perspectives as tools to place the Italian South in the broader context of the global south, starting with Gramsci's ground-breaking notion of subalternity. At the same time, his audacious attempt is also to choose the Italian South as a useful point of observation, on the one hand, for 'decolonizing' the postcolonial stance and pushing it out of the customary (Anglophone and Francophone) archives; and, on the other, for remarking how some decolonial thinkers sometimes underestimate the inner coloniality that has marked European history, which for this reason is not as homogeneous as it is supposed to be.

Reflecting as well on locations and on the space and time of theory, so to speak, Filippo Silvestri's article is dedicated to the evaluation of Mignolo's theoretical work from a philosophical and semiological standpoint. Above all, it is aimed at highlighting Mignolo's effort to distance himself from a European tradition of thought or to delink form it, by denaturalising or de-stituting (to put it with the Argentinian scholar) the supposed centrality of modern Western thought. Mignolo's decolonial project, or option, focuses on some *loci enunciationis*, which are South American in the first place and reach back to *pachakuti*, i.e., the upsetting of time and space due to the conquest of America. All of this should contribute to the re-constitution of a pluriversal perspective ('diversality'), respectful of every single culture existing in the world. The very question of cultural difference, and the fundamental – therefore – interaction with the widely debated field of anthropology is tackled by Marina De Chiara, whose article proposes a fundamental dialogue between James Clifford's insistence on the colonial nature of modernity, and the theoretical insights of decolonial thought. Clifford calls for the urgency that not only postcolonial and cultural studies, but also anthropology address and include notions such as decolonization and globalization, in order to comprehend modernity and its configurations.

Turning to the literary voice and reading it as a key to reflecting on and developing the theoretical debate, Angelo Monaco's essay is a reading of Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* through the decolonial category of transmodernity. That is to say understanding an anglophone novel from a geo-political perspective grounded in South America. This being said, Monaco's essay seriously tackles the questions of prefixes, shifting from the rigid 'post' and 'de' to the fluid 'trans', as he claims. While doing so, he also juxtaposes Dussel's decolonial stance and Spivak's postcolonial one, seeing the two scholars as converging on the fact that liberation requires an endeavour based in reframing the global imperialist perspectives through Levinas's ethics of alterity. To Monaco, Roy's novel is evocative of Dussel's transmodern stance since it tries to maintain a dialogue between self and other, man and nature, coloniser and colonised, centre and periphery, history and mythology. Therefore, if according to the Argentinian philosopher a transmodern ethics calls for a liberation project based on the reason of the other, be it human or non-human, so does Roy's novel. In its fluid format, encompassing liquid novelistic techniques (omniscient and multifocal narrative perspectives), characters with fluid identities (the transgender vulnerable community called '*hijra*' would become a metonymic signifier for contemporary India itself), and environmental issues (aspirin given to cows to increase the production of milk), the

novel is read as a significant manifestation of the transmodern project, especially with reference to the word '*azadi*' ('freedom') through which Roy ventriloquises the Kashmiri cause.

Mara Mattoscio and Juan Velasquez Atehortúa Velasquez, in turn, propose an exploration of the notion of presentism, in order to address the issue of temporality, and in particular of defuturing and the (connected) erasure of the past that is projected upon colonized and postcolonial subjects. The analysis involves two types of textualities; postcolonial literature on one hand (through the works of Adichie, Coetzee and Rossouw) and media ethnography (through the case-study of Swedish media reports on anti-immigrant violence). Mattoscio and Velasquez work across disciplines, reflecting not only on the relevance of the construction of temporalities in both postcolonial discourse and in decolonial thinking and practices, but also on the interconnectedness of ethics and aesthetics, of contemporary migrations and narratives of time, identity, and power relation.

Lorena Carbonara and Alessandra Rizzo's joint effort is one of the contributions dedicated to language analysis and the decolonial option. Drawing on Maldonado-Torres's ten theses, the two authors propose a stimulating exploration of Yasmine Fedda's collective project *Queens of Syria* as a decolonial performance disarticulating the colonial matrix entrenched in the discourses on the 'migratory situation', specifically on female refugees' situation. What is interesting here is that the migrant-performers are already considered decolonial subjects in that the very performance itself gives a way to migrants, while talking back, to emerge as agents of decolonial change. Moreover, the second part of the essay focuses on the study of the English subtitles (through specific and well-known functional and pragmatical linguistic models), conceived as an 'activist' decolonial device capable of countering the hegemonic language through lexical choices and grammatical constructions, which posit the refugees as possessing their own 'local grammar'. Elvira Pulitano's essay also addresses the issue of migration, discussing the on-line multimedia project Archivio delle memorie migranti (AMM) as a virtual storytelling space in which migrants and refugees in contemporary Italy exercise agency and resistance despite their disenfranchisement as political subjects. Her analysis of some of their self-narrations reveal them as powerful examples of "digital ARTivism" as enacted in the practice of contemporary Chicanx and Latinx cultural producers. Through a digital storytelling mode, AMM aims at facilitating the development of transnational migrants' activist consciousness, which she successfully argues aligns AMM, and the Italian border archive, with the decolonizing epistemological reorientation that has begun to undo the Western project of coloniality/modernity.

In Pierpaolo Martino's contribution we move to London where Linton Kwesi Johnson's dub poetry stands as a space of resistance to the structures enforced by what Aníbal Quijano describes as "the coloniality of power". By mixing Caribbean dialect and the rhythms of reggae, London is portrayed in his poems as a site of conflict between those who perform and those who try to resist discrimination. His artistic/critical language overcomes theory (and prefixes), sustains the performativity of his poetry and asks its readers/listeners to perform themselves that same resistance required to preserve and assert their own difference.

Shifting, again, to a different time and space, Paola Della Valle's essay looks at the trivialization of the existence of Pacific Islanders exposed in travel books and fiction on the 'South Seas' from the late 18th century to the present, focusing, in particular, on the representations of Polynesian women as sexually saturated figures, in which exoticism and eroticism overlap. Her revealing close analysis of Sia Figiel's latest novel *Freelove* (2016) through the "decolonial turn" advocated by Maria Lugones,

exposes the rejection of the hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logic sustaining Western epistemes and affirms the "fractured locus" through which multiple ontological presuppositions coexist. Also in the light of Lugones' reflections on the coloniality of gender, Fabio Luppi's contribution focuses on the binary opposition of traditional gendered representations of colony and colonizer in Irish drama before and after independence. Looking into works by W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, O'Casey and Teresa Deevy, among others, the article investigates the construction of gender roles and the challenges emerging in Irish playwrights to the traditional image of women, in particular in relation to religion and politics.

Rosita Maglie brings us back to the issue of migrations and the relation between language and subjectivity, proposing a study of multimodal narratives of migrants in English as featured in the United Nations Migration Agency's online platform "I am a migrant" (IAAM), and looking into the potential of resistance and decolonial discursive practices emerging from the linguistic and visual choices of the migrants. In this perspective, issues of subjectivity, agency and the definition of humanity itself are discussed, addressing the essentially exclusionary politics at the core of the governance of contemporary migrations, but also detecting the possibility of tearing down those very excluding walls. Finally, through their contribution on language and, more specifically, ELF, Annarita Taronna and Laura Centonze explore the decolonial practices carried out by migrants in intercultural encounters. Theirs is a well-supported wider reflection on the use of ELF as a translingual practice and a decolonial option in migratory contexts. Drawing on a corpus-based approach, the essay shows how the use of code-switching consciously made by migrants becomes a way for co-constructing meaning and identity in multicultural contexts.