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Walter D. Mignolo
Duke University, wmignolo@duke.edu

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Islamophobia/Hispunophobia
The (Re) Configuration of the Racial Imperial/Colonial Matrix

Walter D. Mignolo
Duke University
wmignolo@duke.edu

Abstract: There are enormous historical and social differences in the imperial making of Islamophobia—the fear and the hatred toward a powerful and widespread religion—and Hispanophobia—the fear and hatred toward secular subaltern forces with mixed religious beliefs that emerged in the seventies in the U.S. without the extended political connections or support from “Latin America.” We need to understand how the imperial imaginary constructs phobias in the mind of civil society, but at the same time be aware that on the other side of the imperial/colonial phobias potent de-colonial forces are at work, among Moslems and within Hispanics in the U.S., and Indians and Afros in South America (or the Latin America of the white population from European descent). There are enormous differences, but we have overcome the belief in abstract universalism and that the proletariat or the multitude will provide one single solution for the wretched of the earth. It so happens that the wretched of the earth know that if they are proletarian or part of the multitude, they are also imperial/colonial wretched, that is, racialized beings—beings marked by the colonial wound, that is to say, the lower rank in the human scale of being that, built by Christian theology during the Renaissance, were reactivated and maintained by secular philosophy during and after the Enlightenment. Islamophobia and Hispanophobia, it seems to me, are entrenched in the colonial horizon of modernity. However, de-colonial projects are at work, all over the world. Unveiling and uncovering the imperial foundations and reproductions of phobias (Islamic or Hispanic) are ways of de-colonizing (and de-naturalizing) what imperial rationality convinced us to be real, and that the real is accountable by only one rationality. The racial matrix holding together the modern/colonial worldmatrix is unfolding and updated in what we are witnessing today as Islamophobia and Hispanophobia.

I

We have been invoked to respond to the increasing culture of fear and rejection of the specter of Islam that unfolded in recent years mainly in Europe and the U.S., but also in the Russian Federation—that is to say, in the regions of the world where the so-called Judeo-Christian spirit is entrenched in the
government and in the media. There is no need to review the transformation of subjectivities and social consciousness in the West where Islamophobia has been mainly located after 9/11. Literature, the mainstream media, independent media, etc., have responded profusely to the event. Islamophobia in the Russian Federation, however, is not nourished so much by the collapse of the twin towers but by the conflict with Chechnya that, of course, precedes 9/11. We have here the traces of two interrelated and at the same time singular histories. And we shall treat them in their singularity rather than to subsume Islamophobia in Russia to a “universal Western” history. Both histories, however—as in that of Christianity, i.e., Western Christians (Catholics and Protestants) and Eastern Orthodox Christianity in Russia—have a common origin and a moment of divergence. Although I am not familiar with the particularities of Islamophobia in the Russian Federation,¹ I think it is important to have it in mind to avoid the mirage that what happens in the West (that is, Western Europe and the U.S.) happens all over the world. Another approach would be to take into account Islamophobia in South Asia and in East Asia, where Christianity made inroads but is not the dominant religion. I will limit my observation, however, to the locales where Christianity became increasingly hostile to Islam at the same time that it increased its complicity with Judaism and with the State of Israel.

In the United States, the specter of Islam at a global scale has been accompanied by the rising specter of Hispanophobia. Interestingly enough, Samuel Huntington has been the ideologue that connected both in two influential books timely published. The first one, that is more well-known, The Clash of Civilizations (1995), was published after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The second one, Who Are We? The Challenges of America’s National Identity (2004), was published after 9/11 which gave the U.S. an excuse to intensify the politics of national security. A chapter of Huntington’s second book was pre-published with the title “The Hispanic Challenge.” How are these two historical sequences and social imaginaries linked in the imperial global designs? Neither of the two historical sequences and social imaginaries are objective or “natural happenings” but invented and placed in a map of global designs. How then does the Western imperial imaginary manage to connect Islamophobia and Hispanophobia as a challenge (or a threat?) to the West and to the U.S. respectively? I suggest some answers to these questions in the following pages.

complemented by ethnicity. The Slavic peoples are defined by their linguistic attainment of the Slavic languages. They inhabited—since the 6th century, about a century before the emergence of Islam—what is today Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, while in the West Latin language became the trademark of Christianity and inhabitants’ ethnicity. Anglo-Saxons occupied the territories to the west of Slavic peoples. For the people inhabiting the northeast of the Mediterranean Sea (from Greece to Spain) there is not a single name but several: Hispania, Gaul, Italia (originally Vitalia). Thus, Western and Eastern Christians in religion and the variegated ethnicities that embraced Christianity in its various Eastern and Western versions all confronted the other religions of the book, Judaism and Islam.

Wide ranges of both Islamic and Christian traditions defined a variety of interrelations, conflicts, and cooperations in the long stretch from India, to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern and Western Europe, where people of Islamic or Christian beliefs, persuasions, and institutions interacted. All that began to change, radically, toward the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century. That change was introduced by Western Christians’ expulsion of the Muslims from the lands of Christendom in Garnhata in 1492. This singular event did not affect, immediately, the wide range of relations between Christian and Muslims from Spain to Central Asia and India. There was no CNN at the time to have simultaneous coverage of the immediate consequences of the events, as there was no photographer in Granada at the very moment that Christians raised the flag over the Alhambra!

The conflict between Christianity and Islam became more focused in the Iberian Peninsula. The rapid rise of Castile from a Kingdom to a world and capitalist empire re-mapped the long history of conflicts between Muslims and Christians. It is to this radical qualitative transformation that we must turn our attention.

III

Tariq Ali’s opening of The Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree describes a week in early December of 1499, when Cardinal Francisco de Cisneros gathered in his house, in Toledo, a group of selected knights. A few days after that meeting, the knights with a few dozens of soldiers began the ride to Garnhata.

When the knights and soldiers arrived, they entered into the houses of the Muslim elites and confiscated their libraries. The next step was to make a pile of books in the central plaza except, as Cardinal Cisneros ordered, a few books on medicine, astrology and architecture. At the end of the day, when all the books were piled up, one of the soldiers ignited the fire. Toward the end of the opening chapter, the story is told of a beggar who jumps into the pile and immolates himself. “What is life without knowledge” are his last words. The opening chapter closes with Cardinal Cisneros walking around the ashes and celebrating the “final victory.”

The novel tells the story of the increasing persecution of Muslim families in the following two decades. An additional aspect of the narrative relevant for my argument is one of the final chapters of the novel when a new character is introduced. An unnamed, red-headed, young and merciless Capitan leads one of the most violent scenes at this end to the novel, when the last Moors are expelled. The unnamed Capitan is described as a rootless soldier at the service of Cardinal Cisneros. The novel does not end here and has a closing chapter, parallel to and symmetric with the opening one. In the closing chapter we find that the rootless Capitan is someplace else several years later, no longer in Garnhata, walking through hills of thick vegetation. He is not walking alone. An unnamed local guide is accompanying him. They stop at some point at the top of a hill, looking down and in admiration of the spectacle of an urban center, a majestic city built over and surrounded by water. “Do you know the name of this fabulous place?” the Capitan asks his assistant. The city is named Tenochtitlan and its King is Moctezuma... It is a very rich nation, Capitan Cortés” (Epilogue, 244), says the local guide.

Tariq Ali underlines, at the beginning and end of the novel, a structural and heterogeneous moment of history setting the stage for the foundation of the modern/colonial racial matrix. Islamophobia today, I contend, is the accumulation of meaning in building the rhetoric of modernity, from the expulsion of the Moors to the war in Iraq and the conflict with Iran. Isn’t this too big of a claim, you may be wondering? However, and paradoxically, the end of the novel pre-announces what cannot be predicted at that point: the emergence of Hispanophobia five hundred years later. Let’s see.

1.

In the sixteenth century, Christian theology offered a frame and a conception of the human that took a particular turn in relation to co-existing civilizations (often called empires), like the Mughal and the Ottoman Sultanates, the Russian Tzarate, or the Incanate in the New World. Christian theological classification overruled, with time, all the others and served as the basic structure for the secular classification of races in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

In 1526, shortly after Charles I of Castile and V of the Holy Roman Empire came to power, Babar (one of the descendents of Genghis Khan) was on the road toward the foundation of the so-called Mughal Sultanate. His son Akbar was the Sultan of the Mughal Empire from 1556 to 1605, during almost the same years that Elizabeth I reigned in England and Philip II, son of Charles V, reigned in Spain (1556-1598). Suleiman the Magnificent extended his period of dominance and the preeminence of the Ottoman Sultanate (1520-1566), co-existing with the reign of Charles as Holy Roman Emperor (1519-1558) and King of Spain (1516-1556). While the Mughal and Ottoman Sultanates co-existed during the sixteenth century with the emerging Spanish Empire, the Incanate in Tawantinsuyu and the Tlatoanate in Anahuac were destroyed—the former around 1548, twelve years after Francisco Pizarro set foot in the lands of Tawantinsuyu, and the latter in 1520, a few years after Hernán Cortés—the merciless red-head Capitan—moved from the coast of Veracruz to Tlaxcala and finally to Mexico Tenochtit-
lan. Last but not least, the Russian Tzarate was on its way to imperial expansion, after Moscow was declared the Third Rome around 1520 and Muscovite Russia ended their tributary dependence with the Golden Horde.

Thus, the point of departure of my argument is that current debates about whether “race” is an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse, or whether in the sixteenth century “caste” was the proper system of classification, both assume that the classifications concocted by Renaissance men of letters or Enlightenment “philosophies” were universal. My point of departure is that the system of classification and hierarchies during the Renaissance or during the Enlightenment was a local one in this precise sense: people in India, China, Ottoman, Tawantinsuyu, Anahuac, etc., certainly were part of the classification but none of them, except Christian theologians, had any say in the classification. The only possibility to those who did not participate in the imperial organization of knowledge was either to accept how they were classified or to reclassify themselves for their own pride but with little effect on the organization of world power that was at stake. Let me explain.

Discourses of difference in the European Renaissance went hand in hand with discourses of fear.1 There is plenty of evidence about Christians in Spain but also in England. British travelers to the Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empires expressed their strangeness and the discomfort vis-à-vis the Turks. The European Renaissance could be taken as a reference period in which several “empires” (a general name extended after the name of the Roman Emperor instead, for example, of Sultan or Tzar) coexisted; although the discourses of Christianity and later on of political theory and political economy emerged as the dominant imperial discourses of Western capitalist empires. Racism went hand in hand with the historical foundation of capitalism as we know it today.

Take the Black Legend as a good and early example of the propagation of the Muslim “menace” from the Iberian Peninsula to the Atlantic countries, north of the Pyrenees. The Black Legend is, first and foremost, an internal conflict in Europe and for that reason I will describe it as the imperial internal difference. But the Black Legend, initiated and propelled by England, shared with the Spaniards the Christian cosmology that distinguished itself from the Muslim, the Turks and the Russian Orthodox. That is, the Black Legend contributed to the reinforcement of an imperial divide that was already carried out by the Spanish Kingdom of Charles I and the Spanish Empire under Philip II.

We all know it: in 1492, the Moors and the Jews were prosecuted in the Iberian Peninsula; Indians were “discovered” in the New World and massive contingents of African slaves were transported through the Atlantic. The “discovery” of the New World posed a different problem for Western Christians dealing with Muslims, Jews and Turks: if Jews and Moors were classified according to their belief in the wrong God, Indians (and later on Black Africans), had to be classified assuming that they had no religions. Thus, the question of “purity of blood” acquired in the New World a meaning totally different from the one it had in the Iberian Peninsula. Nonetheless, the fact remains that with the double expulsion of Moors and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, the New World brought a different dimension to the classificatory and hierarchical system. While in Spain Jews and Muslims identified themselves with those racialized labels, there were no “Indians” in the New World. To become “Indian” was a long and

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painful process for the diversity of peoples, the diversity of languages, and the diversity of memories and rituals from today’s Southern Chile to Canada. And there were no “Blacks” either. Africans transported to the New World from different regions of the continent had different languages, memories and religions, but now all of them became Blacks in the New World. In other words, whatever the system of classification in the Iberian Peninsula and in the New World, that system of classification was controlled by Christian Theology as the overarching and hegemonic frame of knowledge. Neither the “Turks,” nor the Mughal, nor the Christian Orthodox in Russia had any say in it—even less, of course, Indians and Blacks.

Let’s take a closer look at this first drawing of the sixteenth century scenario in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic. Three foundational articles for the logic of the articulation of “race” into “racism” at the end of the fifteenth and during the sixteenth century are: Aníbal Quijano’s seminal article introducing the concept of coloniality; (1992); Sylvia Wynter’s (1992); and the joint article by Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein (1992). These three articles have shifted radically the perspective and conceptualization of race/racism from the internal history of European modernity (Foucault) to the interrelated histories of modernity/coloniality. Several common assumptions in all three arguments are: (a) the conceptual reconfiguration of previous mutual conceptualizations between Christians, Moors and Jews; (b) the new configuration between Christians, Indians and Blacks in the New World; (c) the interrelations between (a) and (b); and—last but not least—(d) the translation of race into racism that took place in the sixteenth century that was (and still is) strictly related to the historical foundation of capitalism. The link between capital accumulation and a discourse of devaluation of human beings was absent in co-existing sixteenth centuries empires like the Mughal, the Ottoman, the Aztec, the Inca, the Chinese and the emerging Russian one. The complicity between political economy and political theory, based on the racialization of human beings, languages, places, cultures, memories, knowledge, etc., is what characterizes modernity/coloniality—that is, the West and Eurocentrism. This was the “novelty” of the sixteenth century and the historical foundation of the racial colonial matrix whose logic is still at work today. The content has been changing but the logic remains quite the same. The Black Legend should be understood in this scenario as the historical foundation of a mild form of racism among European Christians and the North-South divide in Europe itself. But let’s first explain the translation of race into racism and the historical foundation of modernity/coloniality.

“Race” was a concept that referred to a lineage, particularly applied to horses. Horses had, in Arabic history, a distinction they did not have among Christians. Thus, the fact that in Spanish dictionaries horses became the primary example of lineage—and still today, “pure blood” is an expression applied to horses with distinction that

invaded the vocabulary in English and Spanish (pura sangre inglesa, pura sangre española)—is telling about the fact that animals were classified by “race” and people by “ethnicity” (Greek nous, Latin natio). “Ethnicity” refers to a lineage of people for whom blood is not the only factor (and I wonder when blood became a crucial factor to redefine ethnicity), but rather memories and common histories, languages, rituals, everyday practices, food, songs and music were elements connecting a community of people through history. However, when Spanish Christians defined “race” on the example of horses and added the slippage toward the human (“Race in [human] lineages is understood pejoratively, as having some Moorish or Jewish race…”), they planted the seed for the historical foundation of racism. Racism, in other words, is not a question of blood or skin color but of a discursive classification entrenched in the foundation of modern/colonial (and capitalist) empires.

“Race” in the famous Spanish dictionary by Sebastian de Covarrubias, is synonymous with “blood” and implied “religion;” that is, the wrong religion. In the New World the situation was different. There were no people of the book. Christopher Columbus surmised that the people he met in the Caribbean were people with no religions. Later on, Spanish missionaries in the powerful Inca and Aztec “empires” had difficulties in figuring out what kind of “religions” were those that were so different from the three religions of the book they were so used to. They decided that indeed people in the Tawantinsuyu and Anahuac lived in spiritual idolatry and under guidance of the Devil. They assigned themselves the task of extinguishing idolatry. Indians, therefore, were cast aside and placed in a different category from Jews and Moors. Thus, while in the Iberian Peninsula “conversos” and “moriscos” designated ex-Jews and ex-Moors converted to Christianity, in the New World the term “mestizo” was coined to identify an emerging population of mixed blood, Spanish (and Portuguese) and Indian. In the process, “Blacks” in the New World lost their European identification and relationship with the Moors. In fact, Moor was the identification of indigenous nomadic Berber people in North Africa that were converted to Islam around the 7th century. It came to mean Muslim people from Berber and Arab descent. The name itself, as is well known, comes from the Kingdom of Mauri (Mauritania), a province in the Roman Empire located in what is today North Africa and more specifically Morocco. Since the Mauri were dark-skinned people from Africa, Moor was extended to African populations beyond the North of Africa. As Fuche points out, in the growing vocabulary of the Black Legend, Spaniards were sometimes pejoratively designated as Moors and as Black. Shakespeare’s “Moor of Venice” is indeed a Black person, a “blackamoor” (type this word in Google and click on http://imageevent.com/bluboi/blackamoors, and you will understand what I mean). Detached from that memory, Blacks in the New World became for European Christians (from the Spaniards to the British), relegated to slavery and as slaves their memories and spiritual belongings were not taken into account. In the New World, Blacks were not Moors but Ethiopians. In the Spanish and Portuguese colonies a new word was coined—“mulatto/a”—to designate people of new breed, a mixture of Spanish and Black.

1 In England, and in Shakespeare, the meaning of Moor was far from being precise. See Emily C. Bartels’s “Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race” in Shakespeare Quarterly. 41.4 (1990): 433-452.
2 Alonso de Sandovala Creole in the Vice-royalty of Nueva Granada (today Colombia and Venezuela) published during the first half of the seventeenth century, De instauranda Aethiopu salute: Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos etiopes (1627, 1647). I owe this information to Eduardo Restrepo (a graduate student in Anthropology at UNC, writing his dissertation on this work). For a general overview of Sandoval’s treatise, see M.E. Beer, http://www.kislakfoundation.org/prize/199702.html.
2.

Now we have the basic elements of the racial modern/colonial matrix. Christians placed themselves at the center—the epistemic privilege of Theology and the theo-politics of knowledge—both as members of the right religion and of the hegemonic theological discourse and as White Spaniards and Portuguese. On the one hand, we have Christians and confronting them, Moors and Jews. On the other we have Spaniards and Portuguese and, confronting them, Indians and Blacks. In between the first triad, we have “conversos/as” and “moriscos/as.” In between the second triad, we have “mestizos/as” and “mulattos/as.” The first presupposed religion. In the second religion is a non-existing entity and so Spaniards and Portuguese in the New World become the substitute of Christians in the Iberian Peninsula. When, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the concept of “race” is reconfigured, it is reconfigured in a secular frame. Thus, skin color began to replace blood as a racial marker. Consequently, the Peninsular triad is forgotten because it was based on religions and the second triad was forgotten because it happened in the colonies … and that was not part of European history! Thus, today, scholars revisiting the concept of race—most of them in England, the U.S., Germany and France—start in the mid-eighteenth century. H.F. Augstein’s edited volume Race. The origins of an Idea, 1760-1850 (1996), has evidently no idea of what happened before 1760, as if the idea really emerged in the heart of Europe (England, France and Germany) without any relation to the European colonies since the sixteenth century. More to the point, and surprisingly funny, the first chapter from Buffon’s Natural History is on what? On the natural history of the horse! There is no indication, even for one second, that the origin of the modern/colonial idea of race emerged when the lineage of the horse was linked to Christian’s undesirable human beings, Moors and Jews. This double-blindness among intellectuals and scholars from and in the heart of Europe is the (unintended) consequence of the Black Legend. How come?

What I have said up to this point was a sketchy summary of the idea of race/racism as it was articulated by Christians in the Iberian Peninsula. For them Theology was the master epistemic frame. Theology offered the tools to describe and classify people with the wrong religion and people without religion. Christianity was one among other world religions, but it was the right one. How was that decided? Because Christians made the classification on the basis of Theology as the supreme Archimedean point from which the entire world could be observed and classified. Christians, who were also Castilians and Portuguese in the New World, were among Indians and Blacks, but Castilians and Portuguese were superior to them. Thus, Theology allowed for a conceptualization of Humanity for which Castilian and Portuguese were taken as the exemplar of what human beings are supposed to be. But then came Elizabeth I, and with her the enactment of a discourse of race in England that was mainly directed toward the Spaniards. Of course British men of letters and officers of the State did not look at the Ottoman Empire with friendly eyes. The tribulations of Roger Ascham at the frontiers of Western Christians with the Ottoman Empire (Reports and Discourse of the Affairs in Germany, 1550) where the presence of the Turks was disturbingly felt, are a telling sign of the fundamental self-inflicted fear of difference. And with respect to the New World, England was more interested in following the Castilian example of empire building than in debating whether Indians and Blacks were human beings. Thus, the discourse of race in England, during the European Renaissance, does not contradict the Spaniards’ classification—on the contrary, they made the Spaniards the target, for Spaniards were the Moors, Jews, Indians and Blacks. In other words, the Black Leg-
end is a racial discourse internal to Europe: the racialization of the Latin and Catholic South in the mouth and pen of the Anglo and Protestant North.

The logic underlying the discourses on race during the European Renaissance went hand in hand with the historical foundation of capitalism as a new economic formation could then be summarized as follows. Bartolomé de Las Casas offered a blueprint of this logic in his classification of “barbarians.” An analysis of the logic of his classification shows a set of underlying principles. Long after the end of the Crusades, Christian Europe continued to be under pressure from the expanding Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans had impressive victories, including the capture of Constantinople, last outpost of the Roman Empire and spiritual center of Orthodox Christianity. Eventually Western Christians would mount effective counter-attacks and keep Ottoman forces out of central Europe, but for a long time the “Turkish Menace” would haunt European dreams. In the Iberian Peninsula, the racial difference between Christians, on the one hand, and Jews and Moors, on the other, follow two different principles. The Turks and the Moors were not of course the same in any Christian mind. However, they knew that the Moors had an imperial Islamic past and the Turks an imperial and bright present. Thus, calling the Turk and the Moors barbarians was a way to construct the external imperial difference.

By external I mean, that the difference was with non-Western non-Christians and therefore non-Europeans. And it was imperial because neither the Moors nor the Turks were colonized in the way Indians and Blacks slaves were. Moors were expelled from Europe and the Turks were already in what would become Eurasia. The Jews were expelled but most of them remained within Europe wherein, after the 16th century they would have a remarkable presence and a tragic outcome: the Holocaust. On the characterization of the Jews (people without an empire or state), Christian theologians constructed the internal colonial difference. As Aimé Césaire pointed out in his Discourse on Colonialism, Jews as the internal others (that is, marked by the internal colonial difference within European history itself—as distinct from Indians and Blacks defined by the external colonial difference from Europeans’ own history) was one of the historical consequences of European discourse on race/racism during the Renaissance. What Western Europeans cannot forgive Hitler for, Césaire observed, are not the crimes against man—it is not the humiliation of man as such but the crimes against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied European colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India and the “niggers” of Africa.”1 (Interestingly enough, to understand how coloniality of knowledge works, we should notice that even Césaire forgot about the Indians of the Americas.)

Internal and external are not characterizations of an objective observer, from an Archimedean point of observation, who decides what is inside and what is outside in the objective reality of the world! Hegel’s dictum that the real is rational and the rational is real is an obvious imperial statement that remains in the history of philosophy as the intricate connection between a rationality that corresponds with one reality: the reality of the imperial logic of the Archimedean point from where races and racism were constructed and continued to survive. Both characterizations are constructions of Christian theological discourses that I am reporting in a free-indirect style. There is not, and cannot be, an Archimedean point at which the observer is not implied in the description of his or her observation. By describing the Christian point of view in a free-indirect style I am, at the same time, speak-

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ing from the perspective of those who have been “racialized”; and in doing so, I am attempting to de-colonize the structure and content of knowledge on race and racism that has been framed by Christian theology and by European secular science and philosophy. With this caveat in mind, let’s then move to the construction of the *external colonial difference*. As you may have guessed, and that the example of Césaire makes clear, Indians and Blacks were “like” Jews (and as a matter of fact the comparison between Indians and Jews—made by Spaniards and Creoles from Spanish descent—abound in the sixteenth century). Indians and Blacks, like the Moors, were people alien to the sphere of Christianity. They were—in principle—external to Christianity. Thus, even if there were Black Christians coming to the New World and, even though during the sixteenth century Indians were converted to Christianity, nevertheless, Indian Christians and Black Christians were still considered “different” from Spanish or Portuguese Christians. Indians became stateless people in Tawantinsuyu and Anahuac after the defeat of Atahualp and Moctezuma. Indians and Blacks were the target for the construction of the *external colonial difference*.

And where shall we place the Black Legend in this scheme? We are back in the sixteenth century. Philip II became King of Spain in 1556 and he would transform the Kingdom he inherited from his father, Charles I, into the glorious moment of the Spanish Empire. The Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire changed its role and function from the second half of the sixteenth century to its demise, during WWI. It became a buffer zone where the Ottoman Empire was stopped; and it became a marginal region of Western Christendom now that the center of the world economy moved to the Atlantic, from Spain and Portugal to Holland and England. Vienna and Munich still today conserve the garb and the magnificence of Imperial cities (while Moscow and Istanbul entered a process of visible decay). Elizabeth I became Queen of England in 1558; Ivan the Terrible was the Grand Prince over all the Rus since 1533 and the first Russian Tzar since 1547—Moscow as the Third Rome competed with and complemented Istanbul (the second Rome) and Rome proper. China and Beijing were far away, but were the center of attraction in a world that had no center. It was Columbus and Western Christians who dreamed of Cipango, not the Chinese who desired the land of Christendom. For Chinese scholars and officers of the Ming Dynasty, Western Christendom was—if known at all—in the territory of the barbarians. It was in that scenario that Richard Eden traveled from England to the limits with the lands of “the Turk” toward the middle of the sixteenth century and wrote a report that could be considered a blueprint of the aforementioned Black Legend.

The promoter of the Black Legend employed the troops already in place to describe and classify people in relation to a model or standard of Humanity and infringed upon Christian Spaniards, at the height of the crisis of the Church in the middle of the nineteenth Council of Trent.\(^1\) By accusing Spaniards of being barbarians (for the atrocities they committed in the New World), and naming them Moors, Blacks and Sarraçens, no British men or women of letters confused the Spaniards with the Moors or the Turks, much less with Blacks or Indians in the New World. The external imperial and colonial differences were maintained. And also the internal colonial difference: no Englishman or Englishwoman would fail in making the distinction between a Christian and a Jew. If the previous racial distinctions were maintained, what was added was the *internal imperial difference*.

\(^1\) The nineteenth ecumenical council opened at Trent on 13 December, 1545, and closed there on 4 December, 1563. Its main object was the definitive determination of the doctrines of the Church in answer to the heresies of the Protestants; a further object was the execution of a thorough reform of the inner life of the Church by removing the numerous abuses that had developed in it.
The Black Legend inaugurated a racialized discourse within, that is, internal to, Western and capitalist empires of the West. As is well known, the Black Legend was part of the political purpose of England to displace Spain from its imperial domination. What the Black Legend does not mention is that the British were as brutal and greedy as the Spaniards. In fact, the Black Legend was part of an imperial conduct as well as discourse that we have seen at work since then in England to the present-day United States.

3.

The Black Legend is a piece of a larger puzzle that transcends the particular moment of its origin. Similar ideas filtered into the U.S. in the nineteenth century and informed very popular narratives like William Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Peru* (1847). Notice that the book was published one year before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo that gave the U.S. possession of a vast territory previously belonging to Mexico. That is, the book was published at a moment in history when history repeats itself and the U.S. of the nineteenth century, like England of the mid-sixteenth century, is affirming its imperial ambitions. Imperial ambitions that had already been mapped by the discourse on race/racism during the European Renaissance have given authority to imperial powers to reproduce themselves and to reproduce the sense of superiority of agents in a position of epistemic authority to classify the world. A few decades before Prescott, Hegel in Europe collected the legacies of the Black Legend and asserted the superiority of the heart of Europe (England, Germany and France)—that is, the three countries that in the nineteenth century consolidated and expanded Western capitalism and imperialism.

Hegel was clear in capturing the unfolding of this story when he stated, at the end of his introduction to *Lessons in the Philosophy of History,* “the three sections of Europe require therefore a different basis of classification” (pp. 102). And he went on to offer the following geo-political map:

1) The first part is Southern Europe—looking towards the Mediterranean [...] North of the Pyrenees, mountain chains running through France, connected with the Alps that separate and cut off Italy from France and Germany. Greece also belongs to this part of Europe.

2) The second portion is the heart of Europe [...] In this centre of Europe, France, Germany and England are the principal countries.

3) The third, said Hegel, consists of the northeastern States of Europe—Poland, Russia and the Slavonic Kingdoms. They came late into the series of historical States, to form and perpetuate the connection with Asia. In contrast with the physical singularities of the earlier division, these are already noticed, not present in a remarkable degree, but counterbalance each other.

Hegel wrote about States but neglected to mention that the States of the heart of Europe constitute the new imperialism. He claims that the States of the heart of Europe are pure and clean, have no connection with Africa, as in the case of Spain and Portugal (which is why it is important for him to highlight Italy and Greece), and no connections with Asia, like the northeastern States. It was in 1853 (a few years after Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Peru*), that Joseph Arthur, comte de Gobineau, published the new configuration of the discourse on race/racism, the discourse that would serve the purpose of the new Western empires. That treatise was titled *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines.*

The internal imperial difference that the Black Legend put in place had diminished its rhetoric, through time. In Europe, En-
gland, Germany and France are the strong players of the European Union. The Latin and Catholic South still form an imperial core. England and the U.S. had joined forces, in spite of their difference, since Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher opened the way to the fatal alliance of Tony Blair and George W. Bush. Five hundred years after the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula and five hundred years after the invasion and invention of America, Samuel Huntington identified the Moors as enemies of Western civilization and Hispanics (that is Latinos and Latinas) as a challenge to Anglo identity in the U.S. Racism dies hard and the specter of the Black Legend is still alive and well, helping to diminish Spaniards in Europe and criminalize Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. If Indians were the victims of Spaniards that the Black Legend denounced, Black slaves were the victims of England that the Black Legend contributed to hide under Spanish barbarism.

However, none of the discourses on race/racism went uncontested. In the first modernity Waman Puma de Ayala in Peru in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century and Ottabah Cugoano in England in the eighteenth century, after being enslaved in the Caribbean, contested imperial racialization. Before Gobineau and before Prescott, Frederick Douglass in the nineteenth century published (in the U.S.) Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself (1845). Haitian Anténor Firmin published in France a well-documented study against Gobineau. Firmin’s book was entitled De l’égalité des races humaines (1885). W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon followed suit in the Americas; and Gloria Anzaldúa stood up, as a Latina, to claim “for women of my race the Spirit shall speak.” These voices of dissent not only contest the Black Legend but all imperial discourses on race and racism (including Spaniards), of which the Black Legend is one piece of the puzzle.

IV

Let’s return to the “White Lands” I showed at the beginning. As it is well known, the process of expelling the Moors from Western Christians’ lands (and today “White Held Lands”), were supported by Papal Bulls authorizing the dispossession of pagan’s lands and legitimizing Christian appropriation (see for example the edict of Pope Nicholas V, Jan 8, 1455). Thus, when Western Christians arrived to las Indias Occidentales on Columbus’s map, they already had the experience of dispossessing people from their land and legitimizing Christian appropriation. The (in)famous Requerimiento remains as the signpost of a long process of massive land appropriation from the Indigenous population. As it is well known, the enormous diversity of the population in Tawantinsuyu and Anahuac (as well as the land in between both, named Abya-Yala) as well as the Islands renamed “the Caribbean,” all became in spite of themselves, Indians. And all of them were constructed as people without religion and therefore victims of the Devil. There was an empty space in their souls that the Devil took advantage of, as they were empty lands that the Christians began to take advantage of.

Theology and law came together in the Salamanca school, and in the pioneering work of Francisco de Vitoria, Relectio de Indis (1539), the justification of Christian land appropriation with the “recognition” that Indians have to keep possessions of their “parcels” was discussed. In this regard, Francisco de Vitoria is the direct antecedent of John Locke’s. The difference between both is that Vitoria not only was concerned with the relationships among theology, law, and land possession, but he charted the principles of international law that, from then on, will go hand in hand with Western imperial expansion. In that regard, Vitoria is also the antecessor of Hugo Grotius’s (1583-1645) international law and Immanuel Kant’s cosmopolitanism. While Vitoria devised a system
of international law to legitimize land possession, Grotius extended it (during the first half of the seventeenth century) to the opening of the sea. In *Mare Liberum* (Free Seas) he formulated the new principle that the sea was international territory and all nations were free to use it for seafaring trade. Grotius, by claiming “free seas,” provided suitable ideological justification for the Dutch’s breaking up of various trade monopolies through their formidable naval power (and then establishing their own monopoly).

El *Requerimiento* ([http://www.ciudadseva.com/textos/otros/requeri.htm](http://www.ciudadseva.com/textos/otros/requeri.htm)) was a double edged sword. On the one hand, it responded to the complaints of many theologians that protested the Spaniards’ treatment of the Indians and the way they took possession of their land. On the other hand, it served as a legal-theological document to take possession of Indian’s land whenever they did not comply with regulations imposed by the King and the Church. And we know how easy it is to fabricate violations of the rule and to criminalize the people that the dominant system needs to marginalize or disposes. The *Requerimiento*, read in Spanish and sometimes in Latin to the Indians, “offered” them the opportunity to surrender and obey or to be captive and dispossessed.

At this initial moment of the consolidation of Western empires and capitalism, through the emergence of the Atlantic economy, land possession went together with theological and legal justifications. The sixteenth century was the turning point of what Carl Schmitt (1952) described as *the nomos of the earth* (we could invent the expression land-nomia in parallel to astro-nomia, the law of the stars): the appropriation of land (together with the exploitation of labor) to produce commodities for the global market, and what African political theorist, Siba N’Zatioula Govogui (1995), writing from the silenced half in Schmitt’s narrative, describes as the complicity between racism, international law and justifications for the appropriation of land and exploitation of labor. That switch is what Quijano described as the transformation of capital into capitalism (before the industrial revolution) and the role the invention of modern racism played in that transformation. Such a turning point took place more radically during the seventeenth century, when the Dutch, the French and the British intensified the slave trade and established the profitable Caribbean plantations. While the Spaniards and the Portuguese concentrated on the extractions of gold and silver (from Zacatecas in New Spain to Potosi in Bolivia to Ouro Pretto in Brazil), the northern Atlantic economy concentrated mainly on sugar, tobacco, coffee and cotton. This distinction in economic approaches is revealing of the chanting orientation of the economy and another explanation for the emergence of the Black Legend.

However, what is important for my purposes here is that in both economic configurations (extraction of gold and silver and cultivation of sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco), capitalism emerged—as Aníbal Quijano explained on several occasions—as the happy complicity between several forms of labor (serfdom, slavery, handicraft and small commodity production, and reciprocity) and capital (forms of economic control by currency or other means): that is, the conjunction of massive appropriation of land

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1 It is interesting to notice that a sector of the progressive and Marxist left is taking now Schmitt’s book as the bible to tell the forgotten part of the modern/colonial world, that of Spain. But, still, this is half of the story, the story told from the perspective of modernity. Schmitt cannot be read, today, without reading the imperial and racist dimensions of international law. One can imagine that if a person, beyond being a political theorists trained in the West, takes seriously the inscription of his or her African body and the geo-politics behind it, s/he really doesn’t need to read Schmitt to understand that law and land went hand in hand in the modern/colonial formation of capitalism, since the sixteenth century. See Siba N’Zatioula Govogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995; Carl Schmitt *Les nomos de la terre. Dans le droit des gens du jus publicum Europeaum* (1952). Traduit de l’allemand par Lilyane Deroche Gurcel. Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1988.
and massive exploitation of labor (e.g., mainly African slaves) occurred in the New World to produce commodities for the global capitalist market. From the Requerimiento in the early sixteenth century to the intensification of labor and massive production of “natural” commodities (e.g., sugar), from the nomos of the earth to the exploitation of the land, the racialization of the population in the New World (Indians and Blacks) was consolidated.\(^1\)

And what happened to the Moors, in the meantime?

Let me jump three centuries ahead and focus on the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century and then go back to establish some landmarks in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Alfred Thayer Maham (\textit{The Influence of Sea Power upon History}, 1660-1783, published toward the end of the nineteenth century) is credited with the invention of the geo-political region today known as the Middle East. We also know that England was also very active in inventing the region. Roger Ander-

\[1\] The history of the Requerimiento is not just past history. It is very present. A recent event, reported in the publication \textit{Indian Country}, on May 26, 2006, described an event in which Indians claim the devolution of their land. A May 18 event called “Papal Bulls, Manifest Destiny and American Empire” featured Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation (Haudenosaunee); Tonya Gonnella Frichner, Onondaga Nation; Esmeralda Brown, of Panama, chair of the Non-Governmental Organizations for Sustainable Development’s southern caucus; and Yolanda Teran, Kichwa from Quito, Ecuador, and a member of Ecuador’s National Council of Indigenous Women. In a similar vain, the so-called nationalization of natural resources, by the government of Evo Morales, is part of the same history. Today the imperial struggle for the appropriation of land continues through the appropriation of natural resources. Iraq is a case in point, but also the Caucasus and Central Asia where Western imperial countries have to contend with the Russian Federation (the successor of second-class empires—Russia and Soviet Union—that is in the process of reconstitution; cf. Tlostanova 2003, \textit{Janus Faced Empire}) and China (an empire that went into recession during the period that the power of Western capitalist empires increased).

Another transformation relevant for my argument was the Industrial Revolution. The industrial revolution required “natural resources.” Capitalism at that point added to the production of “natural products” (everything related to agriculture for human consumption) to “natural resources” (everything related to feeding the machines, to machines’ consumption). The invention of the Middle East was an operation to mark a territory, within the larger picture of the Orientals, rich in natural resources, particularly oil. The history from the discovery of oil and the invention of the Middle East to the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq has been told many times and it is well know in its general unfolding. Of interest for my argument are the transformations—in the imaginary created and propelled by Western capitalist empires—and the continuation of Christian Theologians in the sixteenth and seven-
teenth centuries—of the ancient Moors into Arab nations controlling vast amounts of natural resources. And what is also of interest here is that after WWII it was no longer London (only) but Washington (mainly) who took the lead in public relations and wars with the Middle East. And the situation was further complicated by the existence of the Soviet Union. Once again: we witnessed during the Cold War the transformation—within the colonial matrix of power—of the role of the Russian (Orthodox) empire in the sixteenth century. “The Eisenhower Doctrine on the Middle East, A Message to Congress” (January 5, 1957) set the stage for the triangulation between the U.S., the Soviet Union and the Middle East. Then, the Soviet Union collapsed. Condoleezza Rice expressed her concern about lacking a reason for national security after the collapse. And then the events of 9/11 marked, by themselves as well as by the political consequences of the Western media, a turning point in the connection between economy and racism. Metaphorically, the collapse of the twin towers, as the symbol of a capitalist society, could be seen as closing a cycle that started with Cardenal Cisneros’ burning of the books, as the symbol of Islamic society. Islamophobia today, it seems to me, unfolds in the blurry sphere of the production of fears between capitalist exploitation of natural resources and immigrations (mainly identified as Arabs and/or Moslems), to the core of capitalist imperial countries (England, France, Germany, Spain and the U.S.—that is, the countries more heavily involved in the history of capitalism).

Let me close with two examples that, I hope, will bring together all of what I said up to this point.

In the U.S. neither Arabs nor Moslems were visible in what became known as Nixon’s ethno-racial pentagon: that is, Whites, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Native-Americans. In the ethno-racial pentagon, the grouping of people by religions (common in the sixteenth century Christian classification) was erased. The ethno-racial pentagon is the re-articulation of the secular imaginary of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, when racial classifications became “scientific” instead of “religious”(!) Thus, declaring whether you are Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu was not a requirement in official forms keeping track of nationals as well as foreigners. As far as I know, the Nixon ethno-racial pentagon has not been changed in official forms. But we all know that Arabs, Middle Easterners and Moslems are no longer invisible. Not only that, the racialization of the Middle East created an agency that is both visible and feared—visible and feared as where Communists during the Cold War. For Condoleezza Rice, the events of 9/11 presented the opportunity to justify and intensify national security. For contractors and the oil industry, 9/11 offered an excuse to intensify and justify the control of authority (e.g., what happened to Saddam Hussein) and the efforts of the U.S. to demonize Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Thus, we make a general distinction between interacting spheres of the social, such as the control of the economy, the control of authority, and the control of civil society. We can understand how Western imperial configurations (e.g., political and economic complicities between the U.S., France, England and France, mainly), administers fear through the control of the media. Thus, the control of the civil society is the control of subjectivity by re-inscribing, actively, a racial matrix of power that, since the sixteenth century, was an imperial instrument: control of authority, control of the economy, control of labor, and control of the population— of all those who have been integrated into the Christian civilizing missions of the market economy and those who become the rest, who cannot be integrated and that could rebel.

A global political society has always been in the making (sometimes through
anti-imperial reactions, other times through clear de-colonial projects), from the Indigenous rebellions in the sixteenth century, to the Black Maroons fleeing from plantations, to Indians nationalists and different manifestations of uprisings in Africa. Today, multiple and diverse configurations of political societies (in their diverse local histories through the encounter with Western capitalism and racism), are coming together in pushing a common, although diverse (pluriversal and not universal) agenda: de-linking from the magic bubble of universal totalitarianism which means engaging in a relentless de-colonial process—de-colonizing authority, de-colonizing the economy, de-colonizing knowledge and being. Islamophobia is nothing else than the re-inscription of racial fears to generate racial hatred among the sector of the population (civil society) that the empire needs as a buffer zone.

The second example brings us back, full circle, to the sixteenth century on the common ground of Islamophobia and Hispanophobia. Samuel Huntington provided the new map of the two phobias that I indicated at the beginning. The imperial and colonial phobias, however, shall not make invisible the emergence of de-colonial forces.

There are enormous historical and social differences in the imperial making of Islamophobia—the fear and the hatred toward a powerful and widespread religion—and Hispanophobia—the fear and hatred toward secular subaltern forces with mixed religious beliefs that emerged in the seventies in the U.S. without the extended political connections or support from “Latin America.” We need to understand how the imperial imaginary constructs phobias in the mind of civil society, but at the same time be aware that on the other side of the imperial/colonial phobias potent de-colonial forces are at work, among Moslems and within Hispanics in the U.S., and Indians and Afros in South America (or the Latin America of the white population from European descent). There are enormous differences, but we have overcome the belief in abstract universalism and that the proletariat or the multitude will provide one single solution for the wretched of the earth. It so happens that the wretched of the earth know that if they are proletarian or part of the multitude, they are also imperial/colonial wretched, that is, racialized beings—beings marked by the colonial wound, that is to say, the lower rank in the human scale of being that, built by Christian theology during the Renaissance, were reactivated and maintained by secular philosophy during and after the Enlightenment.

Islamophobia and Hispanicophobia, it seems to me, are entrenched in the colonial horizon of modernity. However, de-colonial projects are at work, all over the world. Unveiling and uncovering the imperial foundations and reproductions of phobias (Islamic or Hispanic) are ways of de-colonizing (and de-naturalizing) what imperial rationality convinced us to be real, and that the real is accountable by only one rationality.

In sum, Tariq Ali’s novel, *The Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* is indeed prophetic. It reveals the underground of Samuel Huntington’s fears. By linking, at the beginning and at the end of the novel, Cardinal Cisneros’ hateful campaign to expel the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula with the conquest of Mexico (the expulsion of the Aztec from their own lands), Ali indeed connected two radical heterogeneous historicist-structural moments—constitutive of the racial matrix holding together the modern/colonial world. This matrix is unfolding and updated in what we are witnessing today as Islamophobia and Hispanicophobia.