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Introductory Remarks: the Past is Today

We live in a globalizing world, where interactions between different cultures and groups of people are becoming part of daily life. Such interactions are driven by different forces, and are influenced by a variety of aspects that make them difficult to study and analyze. Arguably, among these forces, the legacy of colonialism has been one of the main players in the process of globalization and intercultural interaction. I have been fascinated by the social dynamics fostered by colonizer-colonized relationships and the lasting imprints that these interactions have left in the countries once occupied, especially, in the communication patterns of today. In this paper, I bring together some of the main theorists of post-colonialism with the intent of applying their innovative ideas to a modern social artifact, José Mujica's speech at the United Nations on September 24th 2013. By doing so, I am trying to establish a connection between post-colonial ideals and a world influenced by neo-colonial practices.

It becomes important to define the above mentioned terms in order to clarify the analysis of this work. We can describe post-colonialism as the study of the effects of the era of European, and sometimes American, direct global domination, which ended roughly in the mid-20th century. It also focuses on residual socio-political, cultural and economic influences of that colonial history. With neo-colonialism, we refer to the geopolitical practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural imperialism to influence a country, instead of either direct military control or indirect political control. We can see how the two terms are not mutually exclusive; they are actually interrelated, inasmuch neo-colonial practices are a development, or an extension, of colonial ones. I argue that the main ideas elaborated by scholars associated with post-colonial studies are useful to understand socio-communicative interactions of neo-colonial imprint.

First, I will summarize the perspective on globalization of Arjun Appadurai, with the intent of explaining how globalization and post-colonialism are intertwined. Then, I will describe the ideas of four important thinkers within the post-colonial studies: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Antonio Gramsci. Finally, I will present the case study of Uruguay and the rhetoric used by its former president, José Mujica, in order to analyze and interpret his message, employing the previously described post-colonial ideas.

Part I: Globalization

Arjun Appadurai

Arjun Appadurai is considered the major theorist of globalization studies. His ideas are the result of his educational career and his cultural upbringing, which had him move from India to the U.S.A., where he fulfilled his academic career. Appadurai's perspective plays a big role in the analysis of post-colonialism because, arguably, globalization is in itself a symptom of the colonial and imperial period. His main subject of analysis revolves around the conceptual and material dichotomies that are caused by the global interactions created by colonialist agents in the past two centuries. According to Appadurai, "the central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization"(1). In other words, global dynamics are based on processes of assimilation of and resistance by individuals or groups towards main, or dominant, currents of values, which are usually outside the culture they identify with. Arguably, these value systems are identified with the ones of the colonizers. Modern globalization scholars often use the term homogenization and Americanization interchangeably, because one of the main socio-economic trends that are willingly and unwillingly embraced by subjugated cultures is the American one. Indeed, the dominant value system of the U.S.A. is spreading in and out of the North American country and it is

penetrating into the most remote corners of the globe. We will see in the third part of this paper that the critique advanced by Josè Mujica, in his UN speech, is indeed directed at ideologies associated with the United States. We can see why some scholars base their positions on such a connection, but Appadurai interestingly points out that American values are not the only ones that are playing into the homogenization process. Other major cultures are getting assimilated throughout the world; for example, Korea is being influenced by Japan, Cambodia is being influenced by Vietnam, who itself is getting influenced by China, and so on.

Appadurai tackles globalization by analyzing five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples. ethnoscaples deal with the movement of people, technoscaples deal with the movement of technology, finanscaples deal with the movement of capitals, mediascaples deal with the movement of media content and the different mediums through such content is shared, and ideoscaples deal with the movement of master-narratives and ideologies of a mainly political character. The previous descriptions are merely a summary of the landscapes utilized by Appadurai, but they introduce the idea that globalization happens at many different levels of society, and is not an uniform movement of culture or ideas or objects. Rather, it is composed of interacting flows of a more or less independent nature. The author underlines that “the critical point is that the global relationship between landscapes is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable, since each of these landscapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives (some political, some informational and some techno-environmental)” (4). This perspective on globalization allows a multicultural understanding of the colonial and postcolonial dynamics that are influencing societies. In fact, different nations and states developed their own master-narratives through time, causing their people to focus on common keywords that describe the sociopolitical structure of the system itself. Therefore, different cultures focus on different keywords and different landscapes, depending on their particular history, customs, values, etcetera.

In order to better understand the interconnectedness of the landscapes, Appadurai talks about the importance of *deterritorialization* within globalization. Deterritorialization can be described as the process by which a growing variety of social activities take place, irrespective of the geographical location of participants. New media, in particular, allow populations that are spatially divided to be in contact with each other, therefore exchanging information that can be analyzed within the rubric of Appadurai's five landscapes. We see, then, how new technologies influence the communication processes between groups, and that what is said is interrelated with how it is said. In other words, the mediums through which messages and information are exchanged, play a very important role in defining the global reality.

Appadurai's studies contributed to the development of post-colonial theory by analyzing and giving a new perspective on globalization and its interrelationship with the colonial and neo-colonial periods. His analysis of the five "scapes" underlines the complexity of world dynamics and shows how colonizer-colonized relations played a large role in the making of today's society. Now that we have a better understanding of how globalization and post and neo colonialist studies are related to each other, we can move on analyzing the work of the main theorists within the post-colonial studies discipline for the purpose of applying their ideas to a modern case study.

Part II: Post Colonial Theories

In this section, I will briefly analyze and highlight some of the main ideas elaborated by intellectuals related to the field of post-colonial studies. This part includes Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Frantz Fanon

Frantz Fanon contributed to the discipline of post-colonial studies by analyzing sociocultural phenomenon like nationalism and racism. He tackled these topics using points of view that can be related to Marxist criticism. In fact, he studied the hegemonic structures that were perpetrated in the colonies even after the colonizers left. Fanon's ideas on the role of *nationalism* in the colonies are explained in his article "National Culture," defining it as "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 155). This national culture is viewed from a dichotomous perspective, because it is one of the forces that led to the independence of many colonies, but it is also a way through which the local ruling classes replace the colonizers, replicating the conditions that nationalism tries to fight. In other words, nationalist sentiment is considered one of the necessary "tools" for movements that try to assert their identity in the struggle of obtaining independence from an oppressing group. But, the reality is that, such sentiment, can be also used by the local ruling class against their own people; they have the opportunity to hide their classist policies behind nationalistic ideas, indeed exploiting the masses in the name of national identity.

Colonizers start their rule by imposing economic structures that have the goal of supplanting the preexisting social dynamics of the colonized people. The colonizers try to "civilize" the occupied areas both because of mere imperialist needs for a similar social functionality to the motherland and because of a feeling of moral/divine duty of changing the living situations of the "uncivilized". This people are suffering from underdevelopment, which necessitates, in the ideology of the colonizer, a great economic and social effort. Furthermore, the occupiers intervene both on the present and the past culture. As Fanon puts it, "colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of

the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today....” (154). The colonizers, then, try to damage the perception of the traditions and narratives of the colonized, with the goal of alienating them from their culture and national identity. As a counter to this practice, Fanon introduces the concept of *literature of combat*. This type of resistance is mainly in the hands of native intellectuals (like Fanon), as well as of mundane, everyday storytellers. He argues that this kind of literature should not only be directed to the colonizers with the intent of changing their mind, but should be also directed to the colonized, with the intent of revitalizing the national culture and strengthening the nationalistic sentiment. This type of literature is characterized by writers who take responsibility for talking about liberty and cultural values in terms of the here and now. Through this kind of work, the intellectuals have more chances to appeal to the people. Talking about their culture and the idea of liberty, the writers are able to relate more to the readers and their realities, therefore fostering group cohesiveness around the cause, one of the main strengths on which independence movements rely on.

As mentioned, the occupiers are not the only ones to blame for the situation of the nationalist movements in the colonies. As Fanon states, “this traditional weakness, which is almost congenital to the national consciousness of underdeveloped countries, is not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime. It is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mold that its mind is set in”(156). The role of the local middle class is underlined, as it is often easier for the people with money and knowledge to remain linked to the social structure that allowed them to have the power. It is more difficult to commit to the betterment of their own people with the risk of losing some of the benefits that the occupiers granted.. The moral and national duties of nourishing and supporting the newly independent country are thus overshadowed, in Fanon’s view, by the lazy characteristic of materialistic satisfaction. Fanon notes, “the national bourgeoisie turns its back more and more on the

interior and on the real facts of its undeveloped country, and tends to look toward the former mother country and the foreign capitalists who count on its obliging compliance” (157). In other words, the upper class chooses to live in the memory of past glory under the colonizers rather than embrace the new reality and focus on the future of their own country. In all truth, they are alienated from reality and unconsciously (and consciously) seek to re-establish the status quo that put them in power.

Chidi Amuta, former senior lecturer in literature and communication at the Universities of Ife and Port Harcourt, brilliantly summarizes the process of cultural and material colonization elaborated by Fanon. Fanon’s perspective on culture is mainly materialistic, but as we saw, his work on Nationalism shows an understanding of the intricate relationship between colonizers and colonized that is different from other scholars of the time. His evolutionary schema can be divided into three phases: assimilation, reaffirmation and resistance. During the first phase, the above-mentioned middle class assimilates the value system of the colonizers and complies to their policies. The second phase, reaffirmation, is characterized by a sense of alienation from the culture that predated the arrival of the occupiers which leads to the rediscovery and reaffirmation of such values (see intellectuals and storytellers). The final resistance phase consists of the recognition of a national identity that is opposed to the foreign and unwanted rule of the white conquerors. This is the most important phase because it is the revolutionary and nationalist stage because “in the literature of the colonized in which the exposure of more natives to the realities of colonialist oppression also contributes to a democratization of the drive for literary expression” (159). This stage eventually leads to independence. The colonized, enacting resistance, set in motion the diffusion of democratic and national ideas within the people, through literature and social struggle.

Fanon also wrote a lot in regards to the role of race in colonial realities. Being from Martinique, he personally experienced the racial interactions of the time, which included not only Caribbean’s black and white French Colonizers, but also African blacks. One of the most interesting points

underlined by Fanon's observations is that racism was used as the predominant way to enforce the power hierarchies that saw the whites ending up on top of the sociocultural power structure. Like in many other countries in which racism and slavery were present, black people slowly assimilated and internalized the practices of discrimination employed by the French colonizers. This process of assimilation is also known as cultural hegemony (see Gramsci), because the colonized start to be integrant actors in maintaining the power structure that keeps them at the bottom. In his book, *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon illustrates the situation by sharing an anecdote from his military career, where he had to serve with people from all the different French colonies. He recalls talking with a fellow black soldier from the Antilles, a man who was annoyed by other soldiers from Senegal who tried to identify themselves with blacks from the Antilles. The latter want to separate themselves from African blacks because they consider their culture closer to the French one, in other words, whiter. This example is interesting because it reflects how the colonized assimilated the racist values system, and then protracted the discriminations towards other groups of people. Even if the speech that I will analyze does not include references to race, I find it important to talk about Fanon's take on racial hegemony, because it is a crucial idea in post-colonial studies, and because hegemony is an integral part of Mujica's discourse. In this section, we saw the importance of Fanon's work and the relevance of concepts such as nationalism and literature of combat. Interestingly, resistance has been analyzed and theorized afterwards by Edward Said, who focused on the struggles in the Middle East and the stages through which the colonized can "fight" the colonizers.

Edward Said

Edward Said is known in the discipline of post-colonial studies most prominently because of his book *Orientalism*. His studies focus mainly on the literature and cultural narratives that influence

national identities as a result of colonial interactions. Due to his Palestinian origins, he focuses on the meanings contained and communicated in the use of the term “Orient,” which is both an idea and a “place” that are intertwined with, and centered in colonial hegemonic Europe. Once again, the identities of Occident and Orient depend on each other, while constituting one of the dichotomies that influenced modern society the most. Since the Greeks and the Persians, there has been a differentiation of cultures and value systems still in existence today. The everlasting “West” versus “East” contrast is indeed a main source of meaning making processes, which peaked during colonial times. European powers idealized and defined “Orientals,” often through stereotyping and generalization. But, in doing so, the “East” gained self-awareness. Indeed, Said notes, notions of and discourses surrounding “The Orient” have helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and/or experience. Yet, according to Said, “none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture” (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 87). Anyone who studies and works with the Orient is thus considered an Orientalist for Said. However, for the purposes of my work, it is important to highlight the sociopolitical implications for the colonizers and colonized. According to the author, “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 88). Here, the imperialist and hegemonic role of Orientalism is laid out. The pre-colonial idea of Orientalism was embraced by the colonizers, and then brought to a point where it was used to maintain control of their colonies in the East by casting the land and the peoples as “other.” The East-West link was a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. In Europe, the “Easterners” were oversimplified, were essentialized, based on anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical features, therefore creating a sense of disconnect. In other words, Orientalism, as a

practice and as an effect, is centered around the notion of *othering*. In Said's words, Orientals were identified, "first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 90). We still live in a society in which the Occident-Orient dichotomy is present, in which misrepresentations of oriental people are the order of the day in Hollywood productions and other kinds of mainstream media. In this way, the narrative is maintained in a deterritorialized way (per Appadurai), since it can be accessed from anywhere at any time. We can see, then, how Orientalism cannot be easily pinpointed due to its wide variety of applications, a point Said tries to summarize as

a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world. (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 90)

In a nutshell, this quote represents Said's insight about the complexity of sociopolitical discourses like Orientalism. His work gifted a very important concept to post-colonial theory, since the colonization of the Middle East has been such an important historical moment for the development of current global society. In a way, Orientalism was another example of political intellectualism meant for European self-affirmation during imperial conquest.

Said's studies in post-colonialism not only revolved around Orientalism, he also analyzed the process of decolonization, in a fashion similar to Fanon's. Interestingly enough, Said's understanding of the process of decolonization includes an ideological phase and a "concrete" phase, but he puts them in opposite order, as compared to Fanon's. While the latter has the revolutionary phase (fighting phase) as the last step of the decolonizing process, the Palestinian author puts the concrete revolutionary effort as the first step, and the ideological one at the end. Citing Basil Davidson, Said says,

the slow and often bitterly disputed recovery of geographical territory which is at the heart of decolonization is preceded— as empire had been—by the charting of cultural territory. After the period of "primary resistance," literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes the period of a secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system." (*Culture and Imperialism* 209)

According to the author, taking back the territory is a necessary variable in order to allow sociocultural healing. I find this perspective concordant with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is crucial to fulfill needs concerned with survival (land and resources), before trying to fulfill needs of cultural self-actualization. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that indeed the colonized are left with physical and cultural wounds from which it is not easy to recover.

Such recovery, according to Said, can be characterized by three main purposes. The first one is the need to see the community's history as an integral, coherent whole, through the re-appropriation of the language alongside with the practice of national customs such as storytelling, cuisine, literature, etc. The second purpose is to see resistance to imperialism not as a mere reaction against the conquerors, but also as a different way to conceive reality. This re-conception is based on "breaking down the

barriers between cultures. The conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories” (*Culture and Imperialism* 216). Postcolonial studies are centered on the work of intellectuals that actually enter Western discourses and try to modify them from within. The majority of the authors that I am discussing in this paper are in fact affirming the identity of the colonized through works that permeate the literature of the West. The third and final purpose of resistance is to “pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation” (*Culture and Imperialism* 216). Said explains that a more integrative view is needed, because even if independence is reached, the stereotyping and the discrimination continue. The author encountered several examples of Western discourse that treat non-Western nationalist movements as non-deserving of the same consideration. Indeed, there is a perceived disconnect between the idea of nationalism and colonized (often third-world) countries. Due to historical and social patterns, the Occidentals are associated with nationalist sentiments, and therefore, due to the dichotomous reasoning characteristic of colonialism (see *Orientalism*), no one else is supposed to believe and stand for the same values. Once again, it becomes important to pull away from “separatist nationalism” and work towards fulfilling the “proposition that the formerly subject peoples are entitled to the same kind of nationalism as, say, the more developed, hence more deserving, Germans or Italians”. (*Culture and Imperialism* 217). Here, with a hint of sarcasm, Said underlines the hypocritical rationale embraced by the colonizers, who believe that nationalism is positive only when acted upon by developed societies. By doing so, they perpetrate the dehumanizing processes that identify colonized populations as inferior and therefore undeserving of nationalist sentiments.

Edward Said’s work plays a very important role in postcolonial studies, concepts such as orientalism and resistance are integral part of my analysis of Mujica’s rhetoric. My subject of study offers even more food for thought for post-colonial critique. The reality described by the former

President of Uruguay can be also viewed through the lenses of the ideas developed by intellectuals of the caliber of Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is considered one of the main thinkers associated with post-colonial studies. Her piece, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, contributed to the discipline by elaborating on Foucault's and Gramsci's ideas related to the status of subaltern groups in stratified societies. Before analyzing Spivak's perspective, it is important to talk about Gramsci and his theoretical work, as a source of concepts related to post-colonialism. Antonio Gramsci was an Italian communist thinker, now considered the main Marxist intellectual of the West. He coined the concepts of *cultural hegemony* and of *the subaltern*, and overall studied the conditions of the oppressed. Even if Gramsci's ideas developed as a result of his involvement in the struggles of the workers and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) during the Fascist rule of Benito Mussolini, they are applicable to the situation of any discriminated group, like the colonized. He coined the term subaltern because at the time, Fascist censorship prohibited the use of words connected to Marxist ideals (e.g. proletariat). The identity of the subaltern is contrasted with that of the dominant group, who holds the power. Due to this dichotomy, the oppressed embodies all the attributes that are not of the oppressor, he/she is primordial, undeveloped, untasteful, and so on. This creates a generalization that damages the image of the oppressed, fostering discrimination and dehumanization, in a similar fashion to the Orientalization of the people of the Middle East as elaborated by Said. Therefore, according to Gramsci, "a group which is subaltern, has not yet gained consciousness of its strength, its possibilities, of how it is to develop, and therefore does not know how to escape from the primitivist phase" (*Gramsci Reader* 210). This inability of the subaltern to escape their position unveils the hegemonic power structure that organizes

that society. According to Gramsci, hegemony is power achieved through a combination of coercion and consent. In fact, ruling classes achieve domination by creating subjects who “willingly” submit to being ruled (*Colonialism/Post-colonialism* 29). In this scheme of things, ideology is crucial in creating consent and manipulating the system of meanings and values of and for the people. This ideology usually depicts the subaltern social group as being deprived of historical initiative, as being in continuous but dis-organic expansion, and as being unable to go beyond a certain qualitative level of lifestyle and achievement (*Gramsci Reader*, 351). We can see, here, how Gramsci’s description of the laborers, or proletariat, matches the one of the colonized, since both groups are subalterns oppressed and disenfranchised by the dominant hegemonic power structure. Hegemony acts subtly, it is a powerful tool of oppression because the colonized maintain the unjust power structure by embracing the status quo and adhering to the policies and customs of the colonizers without recognizing that such behavior is taking their identity away.

It is also interesting to note that the modes of action that Gramsci suggests as ways to combat hegemony are very similar to the ideas that Said applies to decolonization. As I already explained, colonizers act through hegemonic power, allowing Gramsci’s theories to enter the realm of post-colonial thought. The two options of resistance are War of Maneuver or War of Position, which indicate two different modes of class struggle, and thus the appropriate strategies for revolutionaries to take. The War of Maneuver (Said’s concrete phase) is, for Gramsci, the state of open conflict between classes, between revolutionaries and the status quo. A War of Position (Said’s ideological phase), on the other hand, is the slow, hidden conflict, where the “oppressed” seek to gain influence and power through resistance to the dominant group via culture itself, through small, daily actions and interactions.

As mentioned earlier, Spivak develops the term and applies it to matters within the post-colonial “jurisdiction,” talking about the situation of her own India. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, the author analyzes the post-imperialist reality of India, a place where the British occupiers made sure to exert their power both coercively and overtly. Spivak reconsiders the problems of subalternity within new historical developments as brought about by a capitalistic politics, which undermine revolutionary voices and divisions of labor in a globalized world. The colonizers, in this view, have embarked on a “remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other.” (*Post-colonial Studies Reader* 25). The previously mentioned process of othering (Said) is almost a universal technique aimed at distancing the colonized from the colonizers, attributing to them inhumane and primitive adjectives that cause stereotyping and discrimination. This attribution, renders them as human beings that are less tied to, in terms of responsibility and respect, to the political and interpersonal realms of the ruling class. Spivak argues that due to their socioeconomic situation, the colonized are not capable of intervening against the current dominant discourses because of the lack of freedom of speech and knowledge. She disagrees with Foucault’s assertion that if given a chance, the oppressed would be able to speak and know their conditions. In fact, due to the process of hegemony, the colonized wouldn’t be able to access that knowledge since they have been alienated from it by the dominant discourses. As mentioned earlier, by assimilating the structural and cultural changes brought by the oppressors, the oppressed lose consciousness of their situation and lose touch with the means of independence and freedom, like literature. Spivak provides material for further consideration as she differentiates between the colonized who make up the local elite and the actual subaltern who do not have the means to embrace the values of the colonizer. For her, the “true” subaltern group is identified by its difference and distance from the elite, and it does not have a chance to know and speak for itself.

The ideas developed by Gramsci and Spivak, as well as Fanon and Said, help us make sense of the past, and today’s world dynamics. Hegemonic forces, and the condition of the oppressed are indeed

still in existence, the current structures of power make sure that such discourses stay under the radar with the goal of keeping them from public knowledge. This is why it is important to talk about the few who are able to pierce the hegemonic veil of oppression and try to change the status quo by speaking up for the subaltern. José Mujica is one of these few people and his speech at the United Nations is a token of his political views and philanthropic commitment.

Part III: José Mujica's Speech at The United Nations as a Case Study

My main goal in this paper is to draw connections between the ideas of major theorists in the field of post-colonialism and the rhetoric of José Mujica, former President of Uruguay from March 2010 to March 2015. Some links are stronger than others, but overall I argue that the ideals and efforts of Mujica are indeed aligned with perspectives set forth by post-colonial intellectuals. His speech at the United Nations, along with his national policies, are symptomatic of a movement of resistance towards the dominant values that are covertly jeopardizing the culture and the economy of countries like Uruguay. As mentioned in the introduction, we live in a world that is not free from colonialism; this process has transformed and it is still influencing global and local dynamics. Post-colonialism deals with the legacy of imperialist colonialism and its peculiar features, but today there are neo-colonial trends that need to be addressed and contrasted, and Mujica's speech is an interesting, and important, example of such resistance.

The speech was delivered at the General Debate of the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly that took place in New York at the end of September of 2013. The meeting "provided the only forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the UN Charter" (*UN News Center*, 2013). The topic for the session was: "The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!" The hearing had several guest speakers that represented

many of the countries that are part of the UN. Each orator was “to promote dialogue, reflection and commitment to the formulation of an effective new agenda to overcome poverty and insecurity and ensure sustainable development” (*UN News Center*, 2013).

President Mujica started by addressing the audience and introducing himself and the country he calls home. He gave a description of the socio-economic status quo of the world, and of South America in particular. He listed some of the many issues that were on his daily agenda, such as drug trafficking, deforestation, unemployment, etc. Then, he started to criticize what he perceived as the main cause of the problems that are afflicting his continent, and the globe as a whole: capitalism. Capitalism is just one of the many ideologies that make up the “neo-colonizer’s” value system. Today, the oppressor can be identified with the United States of America, or at least its corporate and ruling classes. Using a vocabulary charged with passion, he talked about the crisis of values, lack of global awareness, environmental degradation, and alienation. Finally, he called to action all the world leaders present at the conference, by pointing out the need for a globalized policy making structure that would establish and “enforce” a new value system, an ideology based on humanitarian principle, not on capitalism and consumption. Such value system would be a step towards diminishing the power of colonialist forces, allowing the development of other social discourses. The main points explored during the speech make it extremely relatable to post-colonial principles since his rhetoric describes the current capitalistic powerhouses in terms that were indeed used by the before mentioned post-colonial scholars to describe colonial oppression. His words reflect a trend in today’s society, the connections between capitalism and globalization.

Mujica was the President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay from March of 2010 until March of 2015. Uruguay is a small country of roughly 3.4 million people, but still has an important role in South America, mostly from a political standpoint. It is one of the most liberal and forward thinking

countries in the world for what concerns welfare policies and internal laws. Its capital city, Montevideo, is the economic, cultural, and political center of the country. Uruguay was a Spanish colony for almost 3 centuries and gained independence in 1814 after three years of war. Since then, the country has been tied economically to the United Kingdom. After World War II, the U.S. foreign policies in Latin America started to influence Uruguay as well, arguably starting the process of neo-colonization. In fact, in the 20th century, Uruguay experienced many years of socio-political turmoil that escalated with the military coup of 1973. The military was aided and supported by the U.S., who did not look favorably on the activities of the local rebellious group, the Tupamaros. Until 1985, this dictatorship limited Uruguay's growth and put the country in a state of economic stagnation. But with the fall of the government and the restoration of democracy, the economy "resurrected," leaning on the reliability of the institutions and offshore banking that boosted the tourism sector, among the others. According to BBC News, "a dependence on livestock and related exports has left Uruguay vulnerable to ups and downs in world commodity prices. Recessions in Brazil and Argentina - its main export markets and sources of tourists - propelled the country into economic crisis in 2002" (BBC News 2012). Uruguay is now recovering, and its growth is based on the development of new sectors beside tourism and livestock. The economic recovery is coming with a price, though. The dominant ideology that came with it is undermining the local culture and values, (re)colonizing the citizen of Uruguay through cultural hegemony.

Mujica's Speech Analyzed with Fanon's Ideas

Mujica's speech can be related to Fanon's ideas because it addresses issues of "nationalism," and because it is an *act of combat* in itself, due to its content and its intended audience. First of all, I argue that Mujica not only uses nationalistic ideas as an argument, but he develops them into

internationalism. Since now the colonizers cannot be easily pinpointed, due to the more abstract features of neo-colonialism, Mujica attacks the ideals that identify the oppressor rather than the oppressor itself. Like colonizers of the past, the modern ones are interested only in their own economic development, alienating all the “other” groups from their resources and cultures. By looking at the current global trends, we can say that now the whole earth planet is a colony and the colonizers come from within, trying to exploit it in their favor. In fact, the former president states that, “the globalized economy doesn’t have any other goal than the private interests of very few people and each National State looks for its own stability and continuity and today, the great task for our peoples is the Everything” (*Mujica* 4). By saying Everything, Mujica refers to an internationalist spirit, whose supranational nature would limit the colonizing forces identified with capitalism, consumerism, materialism, and so forth. Interestingly enough, the former Uruguayan president actually attacks the nationalistic drives of the powerful countries that dominate the world economy. He says that “the force that was liberatory for the weakest, became oppressive in the arms of the strong” (*Mujica* 7); repeating Fanon’s dilemma about the double use of nationalism. It is a tool that can be used by the oppressed to unify against the oppressor, or it can be used by the oppressor itself as a way to strengthen its domination.

The speech can be seen as a rhetoric of combat, relating to Fanon’s literature of combat, because it is not only directed to change the mind of the oppressor, it is also addressed to the fellow oppressed in order to revitalize their culture and ideals. The primary audience of the message was the UN assembly, which, due to its diversity, allowed the ex-president to deliver his speech to the leaders of the dominant countries (which we label as colonizers) such as the U.S.A. At the same time, he addressed leaders of smaller countries like Bolivia, whose situation aligns more closely with Uruguay. Also, since we live in a time where high-tech communication is easily accessible, Mujica’s message was able to reach people all around the world, improving his chances to start a new discourse that

challenges the preexisting ones. Once again, one of the main themes of Mujica's speech is internationalism and its importance for the success of human kind as a whole. As he states, "today it is time to battle to prepare a world without borders" (*Mujica* 4). He believes that a globalized planet would benefit the human species, instead of leaving the current state of affairs in the hand of the dominant groups, thus threatening cultural and social diversity. If Fanon's main thesis is to underline the importance of developing national sentiment and engaging in literature of combat to fight the colonizers, then Mujica is echoing this by trying to bring together the all the countries on earth. Through his rhetoric of combat, he tried to foster nationalistic sentiments in the South American countries with the goal of creating an ideological coalition against the value system that is jeopardizing the human well-being.

Mujica's Speech Analyzed with Said's Ideas :

At first glance, it might sound counterintuitive to associate a speech from a leader of a South American country with the work of a prominent Middle Eastern intellectual. Nevertheless, I find that Said's reflections on Orientalism can be linked to Mujica's rhetoric on a theoretical level. I argue that the East-West dichotomy analyzed by Said is mirrored by a North-South dichotomy that is recognizable in the speech. As we have seen before, the process of othering is crucial for groups of people to create internal cohesion against a real or perceived different group. In a similar way, the rhetoric employed by Mujica exploits this we-versus-them persuasive practice, in order to underline an issue in the status quo as well as strengthening his argument. The Uruguayan leader uses this "technique" from the beginning of his speech when he says, "I am from The South, I come from The South. The corner of the Atlantic [Ocean] and the Plata [River]. My country is a soft plain-field, temperate and fertile. Its history is of ports, leather, butchery, wool and meat" (*Mujica* 2). By

underlining his origins, he is already separating himself from the objects of his critique, which are epitomized by the U.S.A, who are the North. He is preparing the field for his arguments, his *rhetoric of combat*. He distances himself from the colonizers both ideologically and geographically and thus enhances his persuasive potential. Furthermore, he seeks solidarity in his North versus South opposition with the fellow presidents of the Latin American countries. They all share the past of being colonized by European rulers, and a present of national politics influenced by the U.S. economic and political policies. In fact, he states, “I am from the South and I come from the South to this assembly. I am burdened with the millions of poor compatriots in the cities, villages, jungles, pampas, and low places of Latin America, shared fatherland that we are making ours” (*Mujica 2*). Once more he underlines that he is from the South and refers to Latin America as a whole as a shared fatherland. He is bringing together the Latin people, whose interests, in his rhetorical strategy, are different from the ones of the “Northerners”. He goes on by listing how involved he is with the problems of other Latin countries, for example the Cuban embargo, or the Colombian drug war... all in order to explain his motives and unite the South against the oppressive and hegemonic ideals of the North.

Said also develops the idea of resistance against the colonizers. As we saw, he differentiates between a concrete and an ideological phase. With his speech, Mujica is ideologically resisting the oppressive value system of the North, and he is doing so by following the three steps of resistance suggested by Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. The former Uruguayan President underlines the transition from the local cultural beliefs to the ones brought by the oppressor. He criticizes these new beliefs and calls for the re-appropriation of the culture of the homeland. He says, “we have sacrificed the old immaterial gods, and fill the temple with the God Market. He organizes for us the economy, the politics, the habits, the life and he even finances in installments and credit cards, the appearance of happiness” (*Mujica 3*). In other words, he is arguing that the current social structure is emphasizing a set of values that is misplacing the priorities of the individuals, and such a system dehumanizes people,

making it seem like they are born only to consume, replacing a more spiritual and in tune with the earth lifestyle that was once characteristic of Latin people. Love, friendship, adventure, solidarity, family... Mujica lists the values that used to be important, with the goal of bringing them back to prominence.

Said's idea of re-conception of resistance, we see, can be found in Mujica's words when he tries to enter and to intervene the discourse of the North (or, the West) by delivering his speech at the UN. Throughout his presentation, he continuously appeals to the dominant powers, as well as to his fellow leaders of smaller countries. In fact, he achieves this goal by engaging in the third step suggested by Said, pushing for a more integrative view of humanity. Indeed, his main argument, and in the end, his call for action, is to create a world in which everyone is seen as a human first, not as a commodity or a consumer or a member of the market, and in which decisions are based on this precept. He states that everyone needs to fight "for an agenda of world agreements that begin to govern our history, and to overcome the threats of life. The species should have a government for humanity that overcomes individualism and that works to create political heads that look to science and not only to immediate interests. This is not easy or quick, in the case that it is being possible" (*Mujica 7*). In other words, in embracing and enacting Said's ideas in his oratory, Mujica is striving for a world in which national materialistic drives are set aside, in which internationalist values direct the decision-making for the greater good, the more lofty and necessary goals, of the human community and human liberation.

Mujica's Speech Analyzed with Gramsci's and Spivak's Ideas :

Mujica's ideas are also related to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Gramsci, as discussed above, was an Italian socialist thinker who elaborated the Marxist concepts of hegemony and domination, as well as theorized ways to challenge such power structures. According to his philosophy, domination is the ruling of a more powerful class or culture over a weaker, subjugated one. The

dominant group manipulates and sets the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, and values so that these become the worldview that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm by everyone. This dominant ideology presents itself as being universally valid, and then justifies the social, political, and economic status quo as natural, inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as a set of artificial social constructs that ultimately only benefit the ruling class (*Language and hegemony in Gramsci*, 32). We see how Mujica's discourse draws attention to the hegemonic agenda. Capitalism is seen as an economic system that is based on accumulation of wealth and power, first and foremost; and even if theoretically it is supposed to be working on the principle of meritocracy, it inherently helps the people who have the capital to maintain their position of power. Intertwined with capitalism are consumerism and materialism, which help the economy to support itself by influencing the social dynamics at its very roots. Humans are socialized into believing and behaving according to the principles of material accumulation and functional consumerism, therefore perpetrating the same power structures that keep them in a place of inferiority.

Using Gramsci's and Spivak's term, the subalterns don't have the means, or the knowledge, to exit this circle in which life is dictated by principles promulgated by the oppressors. One of the main false ideas that is inculcated into the population is that richer equals better. The Uruguayan President takes a strong position against this concept. He uses a powerful example to make his point, an tale that perfectly exemplifies the life of the subaltern. Let's call it the ordinary man story. He says, "the simple man of our time wanders between finance institutions and the tedious routine of air conditioned offices. He always dreams of vacations and freedom. He is always dreaming of ending his debts, until one day his heart stops beating and goodbye" (Mujica 4). These words are extremely rich of metaphoric value. They bring upon the eyes of the listener the despair embedded in the monotony of everyday life, made ordinary and dry by the misplaced priorities that the power structures support and demand. The current value system that privileges capital over all other things in life is actually limiting human life as a

whole. Mujica tries to make a change by influencing the discourses of the higher levels of politics, represented by the United Nations. According to Dr. Peter Ives, of the University of Winnipeg, Mujica is,

operating in complex ways in venues often not understood as political, strictly speaking. For them, politics as the operation of power is not just about governments, elections, or even the police and the army. Rather, politics occurs daily in everybody's lives, whether one is going to school, reading a novel or visiting the doctor. Some of the most crucial operations of power occur at the micro or molecular level (*Language and hegemony in Gramsci* 154- 142).

I argue that this excerpt perfectly describes the rational and theoretical foundations of the former President of Uruguay. The ordinary man's story shows how politics and their related values penetrate the everyday life of the masses, and that the masses themselves feed into the current power structures, maintaining them in and as hegemony.

Concluding Remarks: Looking toward the Future

In this paper I have presented a connection of post-colonial theories to a neo-colonial rhetorical situation, with the goal of showing the interrelation between the two disciplines, as well as of analyzing Mujica's speech from a new point of view. First, I summarized the perspective on globalization of Arjun Appadurai with the intent of explaining how globalization and post-colonialism are intertwined. Then, I described the ideas of four important thinkers within the post-colonial theory discipline: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Antonio Gramsci. Finally, I presented the case study of Uruguay and the rhetoric used by its former president, José Mujica, and analyzed and interpreted his message as employing the previously described post-colonial ideas.

The critical approach of communication theory allows us to make sense of reality in a different way, the post-colonial perspective is a tool that we can use to analyze and unpack the underlying meanings of today's world. Class interactions, intercultural communication, and political rhetoric are among the many "environments" where communication acts as a social force. In my case, I believe that Mujica's speech is a good example of resistance of the hegemonic ideologies that are pervading the world, with the overt and covert intent of overpowering the local cultures and instilling a social mentality that fits the economic expectations of the dominant countries. Mujica argues, in accordance with Fanon and Said, that this practice is dehumanizing and damaging, and he adds that it is also a threat to the survival of the human species. It seems obvious to point out that the scenario represented by the Uruguayan leader calls for an immediate reaction, a response, to these (post)colonialist ideologies, not only for the sake of the colonized, but also for the sake of life on Earth. Furthermore, in my analysis I want to point out that we are not in a post-colonial society, or era. We are, I contend, in a neo-colonial one, because the interactions between oppressor and oppressed have not disappeared; they have only morphed into something more subtle and covert. We should learn from the studies of thinkers like Appaduraj, Fanon, Said, Spivak, and Gramsci, and follow the lead of people like Mujica. We must resist the hegemonic ideologies and fight for human life.

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