PLANETARY LONGINGS

MARY LOUISE PRATT

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DISSIDENT ACTS A series edited by
Macarena Gómez-Barris and Diana Taylor

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Spouses always come last in acknowledgments, and I've never liked that. So let me start by saying that I will toast the book's appearance with Renato Rosaldo, my lifelong partner in thought, creation, love, and the arts of living. We take none of it for granted. The thinking for this book began at the turn of the millennium, during a transformative year spent at the Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social (CIESAS) in Guadalajara, Mexico (1998–99). Three of the chapters (chapters 1, 4, and 11) were originally drafted there, and two others (chapters 2 and 3) were researched there. I am grateful to the generous colleagues with whom I shared conversations and experiences, who took the time to teach me and show me what I needed to know. Deep thanks to Rossana Reguillo, Magda Villarreal, Gabriel Torres, Renée de la Torre, Meche González de la Rocha, Santiago Bastos, Susan Street, María de la O, Doc Alonso, Gerardo Bernache, Jorge Alonso, Pati Safa, Guillermo de la Peña, Patricia Arias, and Jorge Durán, and to México. The book took shape after another transformative dislocation, from Stanford to New York University, where I began an association

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Lastly, I am thrilled that one of Edward Burtynsky's photographic masterpieces graces the cover. His work is sometimes seen as so desolate and distanced as to allow only for despair. For me, his work's combination of beauty and devastation incarnate what I call planetary longing. The images allow for only one human presence, the viewer, who is not given the luxury of looking at someone else's actions and desires but, rather, is present to their own.

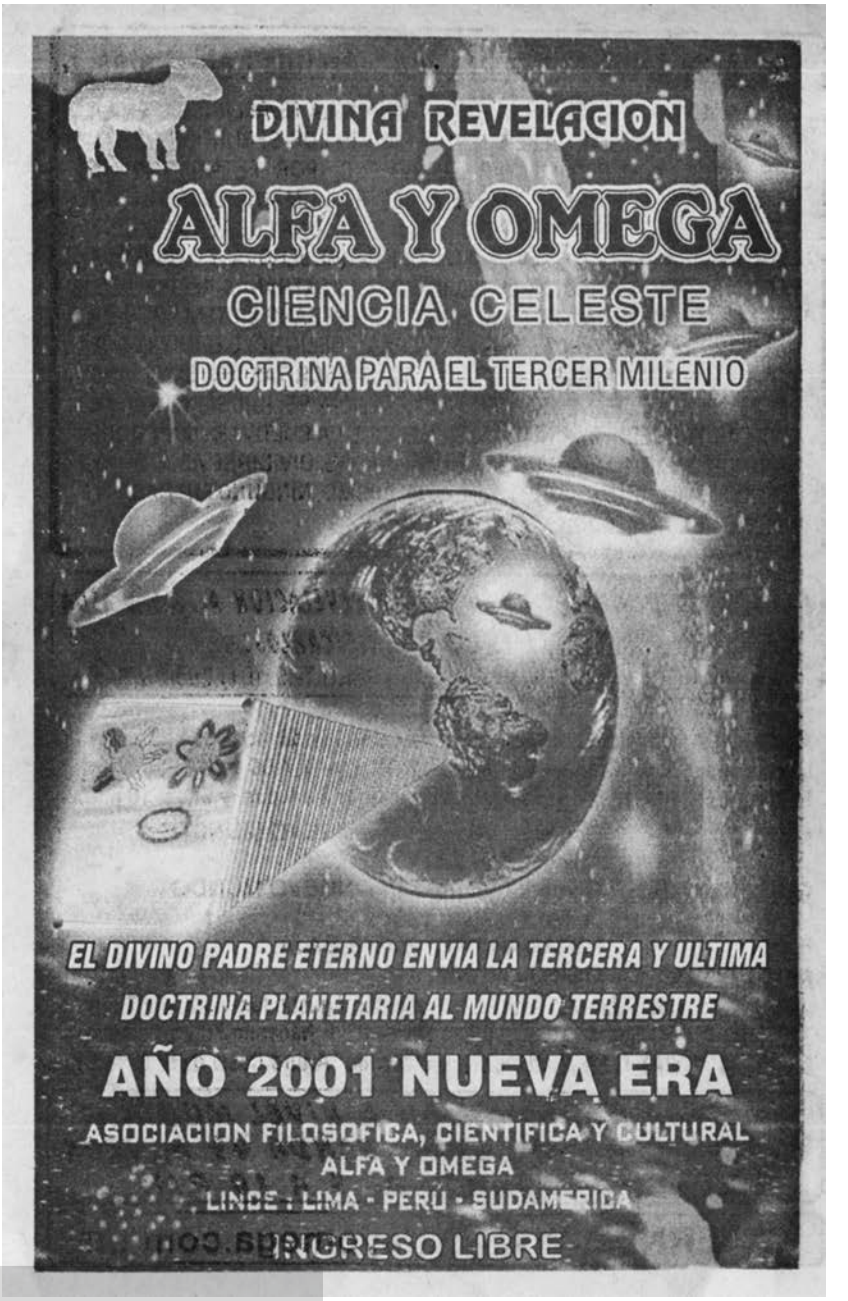
SITTING IN THE LIGHT OF THE GREAT SOLAR TV

In the summer of 2002, I found myself in a hole-in-the-wall restaurant in the city of Cuzco, Peru, in the company of my twenty-something vegetarian son. It was a simple, out-of-the-way place where a tasty, meatless meal was served for pennies to a local, mainly working-class male clientele. The walls, I noticed, were decorated with painted space-age images of stars, suns, and flying saucers. Shortly after sitting down, we realized that the customers were intently watching a TV screen mounted from the ceiling. It was broadcasting not the national networks but a string of videotapes from abroad documenting the visits of extraterrestrial beings over the history of the earth.

The little restaurant, it turned out, was run by a religious sect of "divine revelation" based in Peru, called Alfa y Omega. Its two central symbols are the Lamb of God and a flying saucer.

According to the pamphlets on sale, Alfa y Omega's doctrines are recorded in thousands of scrolls dictated telepathically by a "divine solar (extraterrestrial) father from the distant suns of Alpha and Omega in the Trino galaxy of the microcosm or kingdom of the heavens" (Alfa y Omega 2001).[1]

1.1 — Alfa y Omega flyer, Cuzco, July 2002. FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.



1.2 — Alfa y Omega flyer, Cuzco, July 2002. FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

These "doctrines for the third millennium" explain "the origin, cause, and destiny of all things known and unknown." "Have you joined?" the waiter asked me when I bought the pamphlet. "Not yet," I said.

Unlike some other post- and neo-Christian spiritual movements at the turn of the millennium, Alfa y Omega emphasizes not belief or faith but knowledge and understanding. Its adherents are driven by a permanent search for knowledge, which includes gatherings to discuss and interpret the telepathically delivered scrolls. Like other such movements, it is strongly antimaterialist and anticapitalist, aimed at working-class people. In its writings, Alfa y Omega refers to capitalism as "the strange law of gold" (la extraña ley del oro; Alfa y Omega 2001, 22) and announces "a new kingdom of truth, justice, and equality with a new heaven, a new earth, and new knowledge" (2). Its signifying machines are elaborate and operate in the micro and the macro. For example, the pamphlets from the restaurant describe a moral calculus that assesses a person's state of virtue by assigning points of darkness and light according to the number of molecules in the bodies of the people one has hindered or helped. Adopting orphans is an act that gains many points of light (16). Then there is the Gran Televisor Solar, the Great Solar TV, a huge screen in the sky that sometime in the future will display everyone's sins "in the presence of all humanity"(39). The TV set in the restaurant was part of the message. These tropes operate as figures, that is, semantic formations whose meaning is not reducible to analysis (see Spivak 2003). The aspects of all this I want to underscore are these: first, the emphasis on knowledge; second, the planetary optic; and third, the millennial framing, including the call for the new. The extraterrestrial visitors, it seems, establish an imagined standpoint from which to define the terrestrial and the human in planetary terms.

Alfa y Omega was founded in the 1980s by a self-taught man from the Andean province of Ancash in central Peru. It is one of many popular philosophical-religious-cosmological formations that formed in the context of the approaching millennium and the devastating impact of neoliberal capitalism on working people in many parts of the world. Peruvians had suffered especially hard from crashing standards of living, state failure, and years of violence and terror from the Shining Path guerrilla movement.[2] Alfa y Omega offered practices of knowledge making and signification that rejected materialism, consumerism, and failed narratives of development. It constructed a global and planetary imaginary with a knowledge-driven, spiritualized moral vision. It interpellated all humanity in dense webs of meaning and meaningfulness, like a centripetal force.

Alfa y Omega's call for new knowledge for the new millennium reminded me of a curious textual trope that turned up in Latin American fiction also during the 1990s. In a number of novels of that decade, elaborate signifying structures appear that the protagonist of the novel recognizes as meaningful but is unable to decipher. For example, in a novel by Chilean writer Diamela Eltit, called *Los vigilantes* (*Custody of the Eyes*; 1994), the obsessive and maladapted child of the female narrator spends his days alone in a room creating elaborate structures with a set of containers. The narrator recognizes these as laden with meaning, yet they are indecipherable to her. She writes the boy's father: "The games your son plays are more and more impenetrable to me, and I no longer understand what role the objects play and what relation they have with his body. The containers are rigorously laid out in the center of his room forming a figure whose beginning and end I cannot comprehend" (76).

Here again, a figure. The child appears to be founding a new regime of subject-object relations, an order in which his mother may have no place. If there is a future, the figure suggests, it is not in her hands. In *Salón de belleza* (*Beauty Salon*; 1994) by Peruvian novelist Mario Bellatin, a novel about the AIDS epidemic, the novel's gay protagonist adorns his hair salon with large aquariums inside which multiple varieties of fish create parallel social and reproductive orders that are clearly rule governed but incomprehensible to the narrator. The predatory violence among males, females, and babies is particularly indecipherable.[3] (Both these novels are discussed further in chapter 4.) Tropes of this sort abound in the work of the prolific and popular Argentine novelist César Aira. A text called *La villa* (*Shantytown*; 2000), for instance, takes place in a huge poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, suspected of being a center for the drug trade. The detective assigned to investigate is completely unable to make sense of how the place works, even though his profession is to *figure* such things out. At the end, the shantytown is revealed to be an elaborate, self-regulating spatial, social, semiotic, and economic order completely opaque to him. Whatever future is being constructed here, he is not part of it.

Like Alfa y Omega's extraterrestrial scrolls, these unusual figures with their elaborate hidden meanings allegorize the crisis of knowledge and futurity experienced by many sectors of humankind in the 1990s. It was not only the approaching millennium, though that was surely part of it (remember the Y2K crisis?). Neoliberal capitalism was transforming the world, bringing ecological catastrophe with it. No one has summed up more clearly than Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing the vast economic restructurings that inform

this book: "In the last two decades of the twentieth century, capitalism was transformed by the establishment of new international rules of trade that offered tremendous advantages for the world's most powerful corporations. Capital whizzed around the globe. Free-trade zones and new technologies of communication encouraged companies to spread their operations to ever-cheaper locations. Transnational specializations—such as currency traders, energy traders—flourished. Privatization initiatives and free-trade regulations dismantled national economies, making once-public resources available for private appropriation. Social scientists were awed by the scope of the project" (2005, 11–12). As the millennium approached, multinational enterprises invaded vast new territories with extractive industry and ecological devastation. Traditional knowledges became less and less able to explain the worlds they inhabited, and traditional lifeways less able to offer viable futures for the young. As standards of living for many fell in the face of demands for cheap labor, narratives of progress collapsed, along with hopes for more prosperous futures. Modernity also lost its power to map credible aspirations (chapter 1), while binary orders of gender, sexuality, and family shook at their foundations, not least because women were pressed into the underpaid workforce. The myth of development was increasingly challenged by the emerging narrative of unsustainability. No wonder the head of Alfa y Omega declared himself a *futurólogo*, a futurologist. Not just humanity but the whole biosphere was headed toward increasingly unrecognizable, possibly apocalyptic, futures. As the novelists prefigured, those futures called for new kinds of knowledge and new interpreters to decipher—and to make—the postmillennial world. The Zapatistas saw it, too, in the stream of communiqués they launched into the world after their uprising in 1994 (Ejército 1997; see chapter 3). As is often the case, popular culture anticipates what is coming: the new knowledges will be planetary, and they will address all of humanity, linked now by a shared fate.

This book reflects on these and other planetary figurations from a vast but specific location: the Americas. It is written from a conviction that the turn of the millennium—the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first—has marked a critical turning point in the human and planetary condition. This is not a book "about" the Americas. It is about a range of planetarized processes, forces, and aspirations, observed and thought about mainly from the Americas. Like Alfa y Omega, I think *from* the Americas *about* the planet. I am a student of Latin America raised in Canada and living in the United States—as Barack Obama quipped after nailing a nonchalant three-pointer in 2020—that's what I do.[4] To think from the Americas is to think from unique civilizational and ecosystemic

and geophysical histories that unfolded separately from those of the Afro-Eurasian landmass. The civilizations of the Americas had no "cradle" in the Middle East. Agriculture did not spread to the Americas from somewhere else. They had their own Neolithic(s). The sciences, empires, cities, writing systems, mathematics, music, astronomy, agriculture, manufacturing, and art forms that developed in the Americas after 14,000 BCE did not share a "common origin" with other sectors of humankind. Nor did their animals and plants for more than 200 million years.[5] Looking out from here, both the constants and the differences with other regions astound.

To think from the Americas is also to think from the history of European expansionism, colonialism and indigeneity, invasion and dispossession, extractive capitalism and slavery, experienced from the arrival site or receiving end of these forces. From the moment they acquired their name in 1507, the Americas have lived a history of transaction, contestation, exploitation, and invention. Such dynamics are the focus of this book. The first half centers on the turn of the millennium, from the 1990s through to 2020. The second half widens the chronology to the past two hundred years or so, and their echoes in the present. Two preoccupations recur throughout: futurity and force. Futurity is central because of the unprecedented crisis of futurity that human agency has brought about but is less and less able to imagine or control. This dire predicament offers a fruitful standpoint from which to think back to other crises of futurity, to become aware that agency and being require a projection into a future that is by definition imaginary, even if apparently certain. Thinking through futurity seems a gift of our apocalyptic moment. My other keyword, *force*, likewise derives from the unspecifiable, unpredictable dynamism of our Anthropocenic "nonanalogue" state, in which agency, intent, and governability determine less and less. As humans and other life-forms are increasingly subject to processes they do not control, knowledge makers are oddly freed from the demand to predict, model, specify, explain. A new openness to unpredictability enables a shift out of the systemic. Things that used to look like categories, structures, or systems start appearing as forces that can operate at any range and scale and have the ability to make things happen in any context in which they come into play—in the way we know warming temperatures will make things happen but no longer expect to fully know what things. With that kind of unpredictability comes improvisation. At different points in the book, I suggest the fruitfulness of conceiving indigeneity, coloniality, modernity, or decolonization in this way, as forces rather than systems or structures. This perspective enables thinking across massively varying scales and ranges, another postmillennial imperative.

World-Making at the Millennium

That 2002 Alfa y Omega moment in Cuzco makes a pretty good pivot from which to look first back at the end of the second millennium and then ahead to the beginning of the third, as I do in the first half of this book. On one side of the pivot, chapters 1–4 look at how the turbulent 1990s were lived and imagined. On the other side of the pivot, chapters 5–9 engage postmillennial anxieties, desires, and repositionings. On both sides of that pivot, one of my main interests is world-making, meaning the actions, practices, and creations by which people craft meaningful realities and stories for themselves out of their engagements with what is around them, even as they contend with hostile circumstances. As I argue in chapter 2, in response to imposed loss and hardship, like forced migration or the destruction of small-scale agriculture, communities imagine those forces in their own terms. The early chapters of the book are populated by such inventions—vampires, recycled travel tales, apocalyptic denouements, Indigenous experiments in citizenship and mobility, and an Andean ghost-mother who won't go away. Worlds are made by other means.

The emphasis on world-making is shared by scholars across disciplines who seem to engage with the disruptive impacts of capitalist globalization. After working for thirty years with an Australian aboriginal group, anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli sidestepped the lexicon of dispossession and loss to describe their situation. In the face of what she called economies of abandonment, Povinelli (2016) concluded that in this small group, the older generation had taken on the project of creating a "science of dwelling" (such an evocative phrase) that would give the young a viable way of being and living in the hostile environments they would face. The aim was not to preserve traditions but to create futures for the young. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing in her remarkable treatise *Friction* (2004) reports on fieldwork in Kalimantan, Indonesia, where she went to find out how the Meratus, the forest people she had studied before, were interacting with the forces of globalization, especially the multinational lumber interests that had invaded their territory. She was consciously seeking an understanding that went beyond the predictable rage and despair at seeing their lifeways disrupted. She found it through the concept of friction, which enabled her to see the world-making dimensions of inhabitants' interactions with global forces. Everything that enters from outside can do so only through traction with something that is already there, and that friction between the given and the new produces unplanned effects and possibilities. The challenge for the ethnographer was to perceive these without passing judgment on them.

The concept of friction enabled what Tsing (2005) came to call an "ethnography of global connection," alert to the generativity and unpredictability of global capitalism's world-changing effects in the places where it landed and on the people on whom it landed. She found that the destabilization of traditional lifeways combined with the arrival of new characters, commodities, and information generated a great deal of imaginative, future-oriented world-making activity, sometimes on a grand scale. Without denying harm, loss, and disaster, the world-making approach enables a fuller, truer account of this critical turning point in the human and planetary condition. World-making activity, says anthropologist Dorinne Kondo, "links structures of power, labor processes, and performances of gendered, national, and racialized subjectivities, in historically and culturally specific settings" (2018, 6). Feminist political economists J. K. Gibson-Graham take a related approach in *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), as does literary and cultural studies scholar Doris Sommer (2005) through her concept of cultural agency. Imaginative, future-oriented world-making likewise describes the extraordinarily rich outpouring of Indigenous thought that has accompanied the millennium, from locations across the planet (see below and chapter 5). Far from speaking for and about themselves, Indigenous thinkers today address all humanity, exhorting non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to remake their place on the planet and in the cosmos and aiming to show them how.

This turn toward what I am calling *world-making* shifts the understanding of cultural continuity. Continuity is defined not by the collective maintenance of practices, stories, and beliefs over time but by the shared work of world-making conducted by the group over time. Practices, stories, and beliefs play a fundamental role in this work, but they are not the work itself. This reconceived continuity appears to be one of the epistemic shifts that mark the millennium.[6] The emergence of planetarity as an analytical frame marks another such shift.

Planetarity

Some readers of this book may find it hard to remember when the idea of planetarity was not around. But in the 1990s, by and large, it wasn't. And then after the millennium, it was. The landmark comic series *Planetary* started in 1999, introducing a superhero team that called themselves Archaeologists of the Impossible, who operated in a space called the Wildstorm Universe (Ellis and Cassaday 2014). The term *multiverse* seems to have got its start in *Planetary*. In literary studies Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak began speaking of

planetarity in the late 1990s and headlined the concept in her 2003 manifesto for comparative literature, *Death of a Discipline*, as a way to delink from capitalist-humanist globality and "render our home uncanny" (2003, 74). In her account, too, the term registers the millennial crisis of agency and futurity: humans must reimagine themselves as "planetary subjects" rather than "global agents." Critic Masao Miyoshi called for a similar "turn to the planet" in a 2001 essay where he sees the climate crisis as requiring the restoration of a sense of totality against the disaggregation wrought by the 1980s and '90s (Miyoshi 2001). When I used the term *planetarity* to title an essay written in 2004 (Pratt 2005), I recall being struck when French president Jacques Chirac called that same year for a "réponse planétaire" to AIDS. No one, I thought, would have used that phrase a decade earlier. In 2003 a landmark *réponse planétaire* took place in response to the threat of a US invasion of Iraq. As some readers will remember, on February 14 of that year, an integrated, planetarized demonstration took place across the world's towns and cities, held together by cell phones, aimed at heading off the invasion before it happened. Not surprisingly, Alfa y Omega participated, planetarily, posting the message: "No to war! Because this planet, this humanity, needs voices and arguments that fight for peace, to unite all peoples in a single common cause to definitively eradicate injustice, hunger and sickness for they are the origin of much hatred and violence, and feed terrorism."[7] The planetary imagination flourished. In October 2010 the Great Solar TV ruled as people across the planet watched in real time the theatrical rescue of thirty-three Chilean miners trapped for weeks in the depths of, well, the planet. It was the finale of a two-month melodrama that included an idealized, planetarized performance of international cooperation of the kind Miyoshi longed for. Planetarity is in part a product of the communications revolution. As a concept, planetarity resonates above all with what I have been calling the crisis of futurity linked to climate change and the impending ecological catastrophe. I recently came across an email I received in late 2000 from a colleague in Chile who evoked in a desperate tone the *infierno* (hell) humans were constructing on the planet, the mass pauperization, extinction, and imaginable futures that awaited our species. Its planetary, trans species, apocalyptic world-making seemed so powerful and striking then that I printed it out and kept it. Two decades on, it's a commonplace. The box of oat milk on my counter invites me to "Join Planet Oat"; I am already a member of Planet Fitness. Yet our home remains uncanny. Repairing what has been damaged or restoring what has been destroyed no longer defines the world-making

project. As Elizabeth Kolbert (2021, 137) puts it, "The choice is not between what is and what was, but between what is and what will be."

Along with planetarity, the geotemporal concept of the Anthropocene appeared, to mark, in Povinelli's words, "the moment when human existence became the determinate form of planetary existence—and a malignant form at that" (2016, 9). *Geo-* replaces *post-* as the prefix of preference. I found myself writing about geolinguistics, while the geographers invented geohumanities and geoaesthetics (Elias and Moran 2015).[8] Planetarity shifted the focus toward ecological standpoints that conjugated the human with the nonhuman, the living with the nonliving. Povinelli proposed the concepts of geontology and geontopower to ground an inquiry into forms of power where "the living and the nonliving co-compose to produce singular modes of existence and forms of power—and empowerment" (2016, 5). World-making is reconceived as a joint enterprise among all existents, as many aboriginal peoples had imagined it all along.

The essays in part I of the book reflect on this millennial and epochal transition. The opening essay examines the expansionist discourse of modernity, whose world-making powers lost their purchase at the end of the century. It lays out in particular the critique of modernity developed by Latin American theorists in the 1990s. The next three chapters draw on materials from Latin America to trace the anxieties of the 1990s in vernacular culture, literature, and social analysis. As always, I find it fruitful to think through the lens of mobility and travel. Chapter 2 shows how older forms of travel writing were repurposed in the 1990s to capture the escalation of human migrancy and the way popular culture addressed the life-destroying forces of globalization as invading monsters. Chapter 3 rethinks human mobility as a relation between people who move and people who stay in place and uses that framing to reflect on contemporary mobility and placedness. Chapter 4 examines how novels of the 1990s allegorize civic breakdown and the crisis of futurity. Chapter 5 looks at how indigeneity acquired planetary force at the end of the twentieth century and how that process continues to unfold. Turning to the 2000s, chapters 6–8 discuss the postmillennial moment, marking the new conditions of knowledge making linked to the ecological imperative. These chapters explore the term Anthropocene, review mutations of the concept of the contact zone, and reflect on intersections of ecology, militarism, and tourism. Thinking across the millennial divide, chapter 9 juxtaposes the current wave of authoritarianism, including Trumpism, with that of the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America, exemplified by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile.

Longing

The work of world-making is driven by desire and will and by the force of life itself seeking to project into the future. This is part of what I attempt to capture with the word *longings* in my title. The term carries a particular poignancy in relation to the predicament at the millennium. All life-forms, including humans, face a new configuration of certainty and uncertainty, namely, the certainty that everything is going to change drastically, the certainty that these changes will be impossible to anticipate or control and will produce increasingly hostile conditions of existence. It is impossible not to long for this to be otherwise. Some propose planetarity as a new field of imagination and agency that escapes the exhaustion and dead-endedness of the *post-*, a prefix that came to attach itself to just about everything. In this frame, utopian longings spring forth, like those expressed in a 2015 volume called *The Planetary Turn*, where the turn arcs toward the promise to "move beyond the limits of globalization, cosmopolitanism, environmentalism" toward a "multi-centric and pluralizing, actually existing worldly structure of relatedness, critically keyed to non-totality, non-homogeneity, and anti-hegemonic operations typically and polemically subtended by an eco-logic" (Elias and Moraru 2015, xxiii). This idealized futurology flowers in the context of a "subtending eco-logic" that with utter clarity anticipates dystopia on the same range and scale. In the existing eco-logic, moreover, the available human response is anything but sublime: it can only be managerial. Conserving pluridiversity and relationality boils down to the work of counting, tagging, and tracking endangered species (cougars, bald eagles, blue frogs, . . .) and staging their survival and reproduction, perhaps in captivity. In the midst of such arduous micromanagement, the ideal of the multicentric totality inhabits the sphere of longing. Planetarity at most offers a lifeboat.

Concepts

Throughout this book my thinking has been guided by the work of Australian feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, in particular the theory of the concept of her 2011 book, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*, notably in a chapter tellingly titled "The Future of Feminist Theory: Dreams for New Knowledges" (74–88). Grosz's approach builds on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's claim that "all concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning, and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges" (1994, 16). So,

for example, I treat planetarity as a concept linked to the crisis of futurity and agency posed in particular by climate change and impending ecological catastrophe. Concepts, Grosz elaborates, "emerge, have value and function only through the impact of problems generated from outside" (2011, 80). Concepts, however, are not solutions to problems. Rather, they enable the search for solutions by opening up alternatives to the present, by enabling the imagining of possibilities. They do so by "transforming the givenness of chaos, the pressing problem, into various forms of order, into possibilities for being otherwise" (78). Concepts are not propositional, not capable of being true or false. We need concepts, Grosz says, to "think our way in a world of forces that we do not control," the more so because the solutions to our pressing problems inevitably lie "beyond the horizon of the given real" (82). This last point is critical. The solutions lie beyond our horizon because the real in which "we" (whoever the "we" is) are living is the real created by the pressing problem. So, for example, the concept of patriarchy identifies a pressing problem and enables the search for solutions to the problem. But no one living in patriarchy can fully imagine what a nonpatriarchal society would actually look or feel like, because we are imagining such a society from within patriarchy. We are required to work toward an outcome we cannot know. The concept enables that work through its power to "add ideality to the world" (79).

Grosz's vision holds for many of the concepts that animate this book—planetarity, Anthropocene, contact zone, coloniality, indigeneity, decolonization, and others. In different chapters I discuss these concepts in her terms. All arise in connection with pressing problems and enable thinking beyond immediate events and horizons. At the same time, Grosz emphasizes, concepts are completely worldly. They are anchored in real events, experiences, and materialities and in this sense are not abstract. They generate agencies of all kinds—ambitious world-making activity, Tsing would say. The changes they enable will also be real events, experiences, and materialities. For Grosz, these worldly, problem-related, and future-generating dimensions of concepts make them "indispensable to movements seeking radical change. . . . Theory is one means by which we invent radical and unforeseen futures" (82–84).

Though concepts cannot be judged as true or false, they can and must be judged both for the futures they enable or disable and for their successes at doing so. The ethical dimension is always present. They have life spans—concepts appear, give what they have to give, subside, and are replaced by others. Humanists will remember a moment in the early 2000s when the concept of cosmopolitanism appeared to have the potential to define a revitalized project

for global humanity (perhaps as a replacement for modernity). A flurry of books appeared, but then the idea exhausted its promise and faded away. That was another millennial moment. In chapter 15 I approach political independence as a concept, arguing that colonial leaders struggling for independence in the nineteenth century did not and could not know in advance, or even imagine, what it would actually look like. I then show it did indeed engender radically different futures.

Coloniality

Cuzco is also a pivot point for part II of this book as well, which centers on the dynamics of coloniality, recolonization, survivance, and decolonization in contemporary and historical contexts. Indeed, two of the chapters take place in and around Cuzco. Formerly the capital of the Inca Empire, under Spanish colonialism Cuzco was, and today remains, a place defined and energized by the intersecting dynamics of empire, coloniality, indigeneity, and decolonization. It is an unparalleled place from which to think about those planetary longings.

Just as ecological crisis demands new kinds of knowledge making, so did colonialism when it became a serious object of study in the late 1970s. It would be hard to exaggerate the impact of this development on knowledge making in the academy. For those who did not live the change, it can be hard, maybe impossible, to imagine how little the workings of empire and colonialism were thought about or understood in the metropole in the 1970s, or how thoroughly, as Edward Said put it, "the literary-cultural establishment" had "declared the serious study of imperialism and culture off limits" (1994, 21). As one who did live that change, let me illustrate it with a small anecdote.

In 1977, not long after I arrived as an assistant professor at a prestigious American university, I was invited by colleagues in comparative literature to give a talk about my research. I presented a paper on André Gide's novel *L'Immoraliste* (*The Immoralist*; 1902) and Albert Camus's short story collection *L'Éxil et le royaume* (*Exile and the Kingdom*; 1957). Using my training in close reading, I discussed the two works as explorations of Franco–North African colonial relations and the colonial imagination, at different points in the trajectory of French colonialism in North Africa. I read Camus's story "La femme adultère" ("The Adulterous Woman") as an attempt to rewrite and partially decolonize Gide's novel, while at the same time reconfirming European superiority and whiteness (Pratt 1979). The reception surprised me. The scholars who studied European literature understood what I was

saying but simply did not find it credible. To them it just made no sense to see these French works as in any way about colonialism or North Africa. They were existential parables about the homelessness of modern man; they could not be illuminated in any way by the history of French imperialism in North Africa. The real or historical Africa had no relevance at all to the interpretation of either work. Misled perhaps by my interest in language, I had simply failed to grasp the philosophical nature of the texts.

That, dear reader, was the pre-postcolonial moment.[9] The omnipresence of empire and coloniality woven throughout the European literary canon was invisible and unthinkable because no one yet knew how to think about it. Nor did many want to think about the complicity of European systems of knowledge and artistic traditions with Europe's imperial and colonial enterprises. The writings of anticolonial and anti-imperial thinkers—C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Walter Rodney, Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Eduardo Galeano, Guillermo O'Donnell, Chinua Achebe, Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and so many others—were out there and easily available in 1977 (see chapter 16), but they still lay beyond the horizons of mainstream literary scholarship. They inhabited a faraway space then called the third world. Scholars studying the third world did come into contact with these thinkers, as I had through the study of Latin America, where literature and revolution were joined at the hip. (Chilean revolutionary poet Pablo Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971.)

Things were about to change. A book called *Orientalism* (Said 1978) was in press at the very moment I was giving my talk., and it would change the landscape of literary studies forever.[10] Today few readers would find it implausible to read *The Immoralist* and *Exile and the Kingdom* as about colonialism. In fact, it is impossible now to read them any other way. It is now normative to find the West unthinkable apart from its imperial enterprises. In this respect we have lived a knowledge revolution. Said called it a "huge and remarkable adjustment in perspective and understanding" (1993, 243).

In the 1980s, empire and imperialism were core concepts for this new critical project, not colonialism or the postcolonial.[11] As I argue in chapter 16, postcolonialism displaced the initial anti-imperialist frame. In a telling moment in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said attempted to weld the two terminologies together: "The real potential of post-colonial liberation," he said, "is the liberation of all mankind from imperialism" and the "reconceiving of human experience in nonimperial terms" (274, 276). For me, this is still the point.

Decolonizing Postcolonialism

Postcolonial inquiry took shape through a series of exclusions that enabled its rich conversations but limited its scope. Four in particular stand out. First, postcolonial inquiry bracketed out the so-called first wave of European imperial expansion, that is, the Spanish, Portuguese, British, and French colonial enterprises of the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries, all over the planet but most conspicuously in the Americas. Postcolonial inquiry began with the so-called second wave of European incursions, which for some was inaugurated by Napoleon in 1800 and for others by the scramble for Africa in the 1880s, ending with post–World War II independences in Africa and Asia.[12] Second, postcolonialism bypassed noncolonial forms of empire, such as the militarized control exercised by the United States under the Monroe Doctrine (1823) and the Platt Amendment (1901), or the economic domination France and Britain exercised over Spanish America after it became independent from Spain. This latter form of domination came to be called *neocolonialism*, meaning the continuing exercise of imperial power in economic form after colonies became politically independent (Nkrumah 1964, 1965). The separation is artificial and misleading, for colonial, noncolonial, and neocolonial forms of empire ran in parallel and worked hand in hand. In the nineteenth century, Britain and France were simultaneously colonizing powers in Africa and Asia and equally aggressive neocolonizers in Spanish America. Indeed, they helped Spanish Americans gain independence from Spain in order to gain access to their markets and resources themselves. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), one of postcolonialism's sacred texts, needs to be read alongside his remarkable novel *Nostromo* (1904), which depicts British neocolonialism in South America. And both should be read alongside another of their contemporaries, the Philippine novelist José Rizal, whose novels penetratingly deconstruct waning Spanish colonialism and rising nationalism in the Philippines (see chapter 16).

Third, postcolonial studies focused its attention on the Afro-Eurasian landmass, to the exclusion of Oceania and, above all, the Americas. This certainly avoided some inconvenient complications. Chronologically, Spanish America became postcolonial in the 1820s and the United States in 1776. How does the term apply to them? For a long time, neither postcolonial scholars nor Americanists showed much interest in exploring that question. Interesting parallels were lost in the process. Americanists eventually zeroed in on the term *settler colonialism* to remake the study of US history, society,

and culture. Today this term is the framework for a huge scholarly reassessment (see, for example, Grandin 2019).

Fourth, and finally, postcolonialism's elision of the Americas went hand in hand with an elision of indigeneity, one of the most consequential formations arising from the colonial encounter. Postcolonial scholarship rarely addresses Indigenous agency and has not found Indigenous thought a source of insight into the colonial or ex-colonial condition nor into the work of decolonization. To be fair, the disinterest has been mutual. Indigenous scholars have argued that postcolonialism's foundational concepts of hybridity and mimicry disavow indigeneity altogether (Grande 2015) and that with respect to Indigenous and other subordinated peoples, the postcolonial project is a mutation of colonial power itself, an act of recolonization that keeps Indigenous ways of knowing in a place of otherness or invisibility (Rivera Cusicanqui 2020). Below I suggest that, among other things, different strategies of decolonization are at work in the two formations.

Indigeneity

As the millennium turned and the search for new knowledges and possibilities for being intensified, postcolonialism waned, and Indigenous knowledge making began to flourish in a new, extroverted way (see chapter 5). In the time of planetarity, Indigenous people see plainly that their futures depend on compelling non-Indigenous people to change their ways of world-making and that many of those people are searching for guidance as to how to do so. This is another development in the millennial intellectual landscape that would not have been predicted in the 1970s or 1980s. Numerous examples are found throughout the book. Chapter 5 reviews the geopolitical conditions that globalized and planetarized Indigenous agency at the end of the twentieth century.

The first thing to underscore about indigeneity is that it is nobody's primary identity. To be Indigenous is to be a member of a people, tribe, or nation that has its own unique name and self-identity—one is Maori, Cree, Navajo, Mapuche, or a combination of such, before one is Indigenous. And that name invokes a continuity that goes back to the time before the colonial encounter, when indigeneity did not (yet) exist. Indigenous power, identity, and being arise from this continuous, collective making/becoming, what Australian anthropologist Genevieve Bell has called the "undelible continuity" from precolonial through colonial and then ex-colonial times.[13] Autochthonous

or tribal names designate an arc of being and becoming that exists independent of the colonial invader. Language, ceremony, clothing, music, story, and dance are among its formal enactments today. When Indigenous groups disappear, it is because that arc of collective becoming has ended, often through death or disbursal.

In an important book that appeared at the turn of the millennium, Anishinaabe (Chippewa) theorist Gerald Vizenor introduced the term *survivance* to name this process of living Indigenous being/becoming. *Survivance* denotes much more than *survival* and is intended to correct that pathos-laden term. Survivance is "an active sense of presence," sustained by stories that "renounce domination, tragedy and victimry" (Vizenor 1999, vii). It is carried out by world-making practices of retention and refusal. Indigenous subjectivity is grounded in place (though not necessarily ancestral place), where political sovereignty and the sacred both dwell. In *Decolonizing Methodology* (1999), Maori theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that acquiring or inheriting a collective name is where indigeneity begins, not ends. Indigeneity for Smith names an ongoing, nonteleological process of self-invention, the living out of a collective's being in time and place. That being is both autonomous and relational, and both affirmative and oppositional or contestatory.

The focus on self-creation is critical, because unlike tribal names, the term *indigeneity* is relational, a product of the colonial encounter. The colonial labels for the colonized—*Indigenous*, *First Nations*, *pueblos originarios* (original people), *autochtones* (autochthonous), *aboriginal*, *native*—all refer to anteriority in time and place; that is, they evoke an other who was there first, before someone else arrived. The arrival is what creates the before-and-after moment—you become Indigenous only when somebody else shows up uninvited. Thus, the term *indigeneity* names a relation, not a condition. It inaugurates what I call the *colonial divide* (chapter 14) and usually sets in motion a narrative of invasion, struggle, displacement, dispossession, otherness, and survivance (or extinction). It creates an Indigenous we that is a historical agent, and a historical debt that the colonizer can never repay.

Indigeneity is thus energized from two sources: the self-making energies of precolonial being and the struggles surrounding the unresolved (and seemingly unresolvable) colonizer-colonized relationship as it unfolds in time. I have found it fruitful to imagine indigeneity today not as a condition but, as already suggested, as a force. I see indigeneity as a force that generates agency wherever it comes into play. It has the power to make things happen, but what it will make happen is not systemic or predictable. This force can operate on any range or scale, in any register, using any materials. Indigene-

ity today can generate a land occupation, a United Nations bureaucracy, a poetry anthology, a beauty contest, international travel, academic programs, tax law, dance and theater, court battles, alternative legal systems, medical tourism, gambling tourism, hairstyles, education experiments, insurgencies, archaeology, cosmovisions.[14] As I discuss in chapter 14, when colonial optics represent Indigenous people as historically inert, they deny Indigenous people the dynamic, innovative agencies that colonial power itself forces on them. In just about any context you can think of, indigeneity has the potential to generate actions, events, meanings, feelings, intentions, decisions, relationships, outcomes. Powerful cultural constructs operate in this unbounded, generative manner, and that is the source of their power. At the same time, many Indigenous communities today inhabit conditions more precarious than ever. States and corporations have found ways to use recognition against them. Everywhere, Indigenous people face powers greater than their own. As a concept, in Elizabeth Grosz's sense, indigeneity arises in connection with the "pressing problem" of colonial injustice, which continues to operate and renew itself. The struggle for decolonization continues.

Perhaps now it is clearer why postcoloniality and indigeneity have not been friends. Postcolonialism's foundational intervention was to deconstruct and supersede the binary oppositions of colonizer/colonized, refusing to regard these parties as inhabiting separate and opposing realities. The postcolonial project grasped the colonial condition as collusion, entanglement, mediation, and interpenetration of subjects positioned in multiple, shifting ways with respect to the colonizer/colonized divide. Hybridity, impurity, mimicry, ambiguity, mobility, and ambivalence are the ingredients of the colonial relations and experiences it explores. An important goal was to complicate the militant stance of anticolonial thought, which condemned colonialism unequivocally and saw the colonized as victims (see chapter 16).

Indigeneity, by contrast, decolonizes by sustaining and developing ways of being, knowing, and doing that contest the dominant ways of the colonizers and correct their weaknesses and errors. From this perspective, Quechua-American theorist Sandy Grande argues that "the concepts of *mestizaje*, hybridity, and border subjectivity dear to both critical pedagogy and post-colonial studies cannot be models for Indigenous subjectivity" (2014, 117). They are, Grande finds, "part of the fundamental lexicon of Western imperialism" (117). These terms come into play only after colonialism's foundational act of dispossession has occurred and colonial society has taken shape. Rather than addressing the colonial encounter, hybridity and *mestizaje* presuppose it. The postcolonial optic thus cannot be a model for Indigenous

emancipation. This does not mean that Indigenous being cannot recognize or inhabit hybridity, entanglement, ambivalence, and the rest. It means Indigenous emancipatory projects do not begin there. Perhaps this is why the postcolonial paradigm treated them as irrelevant. In the time of planetarity, however, they have taken on an extroverted, even didactic authority, offering possibilities for being and futures in the face of impending doom.

Decolonization

As I suggested earlier, it has been a tremendous achievement to come to know what we now know about how empire and colonialism work; how they generate knowledge, orchestrate desires, and execute power; how they produce subjects, aesthetics, tastes, pleasures, and plenitudes; how they can enchant the world. We learned to observe the projection onto others of beloved things Europe was destroying in itself and of despised things Europe could not confront in itself. We learned to discover the deep moral unrest writhing at the heart of it all and surfacing from time to time in horrible forms.

We also learned that the colonial story is not over. As Spivak (1999) has observed, Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, and colonialist thinking cannot simply be set aside; they must be worked through, even as they persist around us in continuously mutating forms. The work of decolonization is this continuous, unending process of working through, a collective making and unmaking that is arduous and decisive for the future of all beings.

In the twenty-first century, the concept of coloniality has emerged to advance this work. The term originated in Spanish in the concept of *colonialidad del poder* (coloniality of power), proposed in the 1990s by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano to observe that though Spanish colonial rule was 150 years in the past, power of all kinds and at all levels in Peru continued to operate along colonial lines (Quijano 2000). It is interesting to note that this concept emerged in Quijano's work at the end of the millennium, after decades devoted to analyzing Peruvian society from a Marxist perspective. Quijano's felicitous term entered the English academic lexicon in the late 1990s, introduced by US-based Argentine theorist Walter Mignolo (2011). *Coloniality* names a force. It introduces a fruitful way to contemplate the long, evolving afterlives of colonial world-making, its reiterations, mutations, and renewals in the present and into the future, as I do in part II of this book.

This persistence is the "pressing problem" (Grosz 2011) that the concept of coloniality enables us to see, as a step in the search for alternative futures. As with indigeneity, it is fruitful to think of coloniality not as a condition

but as a generative force that is able, wherever it comes into play, to create agency and make things happen. Coloniality, too, has powers of self-creation and self-renewal. Coloniality can be clever and sly, for colonial*ism* itself has been delegitimated. Historians note that often measures presented as removing colonial domination actually reassert it in a new form, as when slavery is abolished and replaced by indentured servitude or when colonial rule is replaced by neocolonial economic domination. One of the painful lessons the millennium has brought is that white supremacy remains alive and well in the world, reanimated and relegitimized on a mass scale. As a force, coloniality can operate in any arena—a free-trade agreement transforms domestic small farming into export monoculture; a scholar in the Global South is required to publish in Europe or North America to keep her job; a white scholar's attack on an Indigenous intellectual becomes international news (chapter 11); white northerners spend their winters in all-inclusive resorts staffed by underpaid workers and sustained by local resources (chapter 8); a mining company is allowed to ruin the water supply of multiple Indigenous communities; markets in replacement organs run from south to north; planeloads of deportees run from north to south, along with the winter tourists. Coloniality is commodified and marketed all the time in nearly any zone of consumption—films (from *Out of Africa* to *Indiana Jones*), fashion (endless leopard print), food, travel, and so on. Such commodifications reanimate colonial values. No wonder today we hear calls to "decolonize everything!"

The list of watershed books that appeared in 1999 includes Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary*. A Chicana feminist theorist, Pérez introduced the adjective *decolonial* in contrast with *postcolonial* to inaugurate an intellectual/political project focused on decolonizing knowledge, historiography, imaginations, selves. She proposes a decolonial imaginary that operates in a space between the colonial and the postcolonial, a zone of creative transformation where the decolonizing subject makes its home and does its world-making work (Pérez 1999, 5–6). This is a space where decolonization names not a political process but a wholesale transformation of subjectivities and ways of being and knowing, one in which decolonizing people are empowered actors.[15] In the past decade, promoted by Mignolo, the concept of the decolonial has become a keyword enabling scholars and educators across the Americas to engage with coloniality (including their own) in a way postcolonial and anticolonial thought did not.[16] Critics lament the term's easy detachment from political agency and from the grounded institutional, political, and educational struggles for decolonization (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010).

The essays in part II of *Planetary Longings* are all studies in coloniality, past and present. The first three take up late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century cases where coloniality is in play, generating what I like to call traffic in meaning. Using examples from a range of times and places, chapter 10 examines ethnography's debt to the colonial travel archive and some of the attempts in the 1990s to decolonize it. Chapter 11 analyzes the epistemic panic generated by Guatemalan Indigenous writer and activist Rigoberta Menchú, culminating in David Stoll's 1999 book-length attack on her truthfulness. Moving into the new millennium, chapter 12 takes up Spanish director Icíar Bollaín's ironized reenactment of Spanish colonialism in her film *También la lluvia* (*Even the Rain*; 2010). Revisiting the colonial archive, chapter 13 offers a critical reflection on the concept of cultural translation by bringing contemporary translation theories to bear on an eighteenth-century Andean judicial text that sentences an Indigenous rebel leader to death. Chapter 14 takes up the concept of coloniality to juxtapose two eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female figures in the southern Andes. Chapter 15 explores mutations in the concepts of independence and decolonization between Spanish America and the Philippines. Chapter 16 recalls the broad current of third-world anticolonial, anti-imperial thought that got sidelined by postcolonialism.

How Did You Get Here? Why Did You Come?

That visit to Cuzco in 2002 was pivotal in yet another way. Almost to the day, it marked thirty years since my first visit there in the summer of 1972. That visit was part of a life-defining experience that underlies this book. A fellow Stanford graduate student and I (she in anthropology and I in comparative literature) received National Defense Education Act funds to spend our summer learning Portuguese. We had two options: enroll in an intensive course at the University of Texas or come up with enough additional money to get us to Rio de Janeiro, where we would audit classes at the public university. What a no-brainer! Neither of us could afford both round-trip plane fare and three months living in Rio. But what if we traveled overland and spent half the summer getting there? We would still have time to fulfill our language-learning obligation and fly back just in time for classes. And we would get to travel through South America, where neither of us had ever been (though we had both spent time in Mexico and Spain). I already knew and loved South American literature. This was my chance to see where it came from.

So we did. From California we got a free ride to Guatemala with two rich Salvadoran students taking home new BMWs. Not till we were in line at the

El Paso border did they tell us we were there as decoys, to distract the border guards from the automatic rifles hidden behind the back seat of their cars. For what? "Pa' matar campesinos," they said ("to kill campesinos"). Popular insurgency was already underway in El Salvador, and they were on the other side. Trapped, we did our decoy job and stuck to buses and trains after that. In Latin America, wherever there is a road, there is some form of commercial transportation—a bus, a van, a truck, or even, at one river, a platform on a pulley. Few people own cars. We followed the Pan-American Highway south through Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru down to Lima, then headed inland and upward, into the southern Andes—Huancayo, Ayacucho, Cuzco, through Puno and across Lake Titicaca into Bolivia, then south into Argentina, across the northern pampa into Paraguay, and from there across the Friendship Bridge (with police on our heels) into Brazil. Two months of hard travel through unforgettable geographies and adventures got us to Rio. There was no tourism in that part of the world in 1972, just a handful of travelers who kept crossing paths at hostels and bus depots along the way. Only one travel guide to South America existed, and we all used it. Over and over again, people asked us, "How did you get here?" and, almost as often, "Why did you come? Why would anyone come here?" The trip cemented my lifelong engagement with all things Latin American—geography, people, politics, art, popular culture, music, language. The Andean region, which turns up repeatedly in this book, grabbed me and has never let go. So in 2002 I honored that original trip by repeating, with the help of that vegetarian son, the climb to the top of Huayna Picchu to retake a photograph from thirty years before and register my gratitude.

Generation

For my generation of scholars, the last three decades of the twentieth century were a time of astonishing transformation and innovation in the work of knowledge making. Every discipline underwent a methodological revolution. Disciplinary boundaries were challenged at every turn; new objects of study bounded into view, called forth by new concepts and methods. Cold War preoccupations created area studies, geographically framed spaces of inquiry that marshaled expertise from multiple disciplines (and gave defense money to comparative literature students). The transgressive, insurgent energies galvanized by 1960s uprisings eventually took up residence in university departments. The democratization of higher education demanded new subject matters and fields of inquiry. Objects of study appeared that were impossible to house in existing

disciplines—things like ideology, hegemony, everyday life, subjectivity, gender, ethnicity, modernity, sexuality, *mestizaje*, the social imagination, dependency, madness, the state. Methodologies traveled and trespassed. Humanists brought interpretive methods to bear on domains beyond literature, religion, and the arts, especially domains otherwise deeded to the social sciences. In those disciplines, empiricism and formalism had left large uncultivated spaces ripe for trespass, and knowledge makers trespassed. Literary scholars extended the tools of close reading to any form of text, and textuality expanded its purview from writing to any complex object. Textuality became not a feature of an object but a lens for looking at objects and discerning their text-ures. Fruitful divisions of labor developed between disciplines and transdisciplinary inquiries. Feminism challenged literary canons and at the same time refreshed and reanimated them. The archives gave up new treasures. Experts and trespassers became complementary, each benefiting the other.

For individual scholars, these methodological revolutions were enormously liberating. You could be a scholar and teacher without necessarily housing yourself in a discipline or a single department. You could rove and belong to multiple conversations. You could cultivate the arts of trespass. Where there were fences, you could climb them, bearing gifts. You could look for commonalities and continuities across contrasting or opposing domains. You could show, as I sometimes do here, that what high culture is doing, popular culture is doing too, maybe better or sooner. I was trained in textual analysis and have loved its revelatory powers when deployed in discursive regimes that fail to reflect on themselves (like ethnography in chapter 10 or a sentencing document in chapter 13). What an exhilarating experience. Introducing *Keywords*, Raymond Williams wrote "The work which this book records has been done in an area where several disciplines converge but in general do not meet" (1976, 2). Today, because of Williams and many other innovative theorists, many of the disciplines do meet in postdisciplinary spaces with names that end with the word *studies*. The work that this book records is the result of having lived that knowledge-making revolution, lived the change. Those three decades of intellectual dynamics were the gift of a lifetime. My debts are too many to name.

These revolutions in knowledge making were animated to a significant degree by social justice and liberation struggles that also shaped the generation of scholars and teachers who grew up in the 1950s and entered universities in the 1960s and early 1970s. These struggles have been the driving force of our work. We learned to think surrounded by anti-imperial, anticolonial, antiracist, antipatriarchal, antiauthoritarian struggles—for independence all

over Africa, for sexual liberation and gender equality, for desegregation in South Africa and the United States, against Soviet takeovers in Eastern Europe and US imperialism in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Location

For each of us, the particularities of our locations and experiences channeled the ways these engagements took shape in our lives. I grew up in a small farm town in English Canada in the 1950s, in a world steeped in coloniality, though not monopolized by it. In Listowel, Ontario, we were British subjects and members of the British Commonwealth. We studied, worked, and played beneath portraits of the Queen of England. We sang to God to save her every morning—and look, as of this writing, she is still alive. The back of our school rulers listed the English monarchs in chronological order so we could learn to recite them by heart. People kept scrapbooks of the royal family. My aunts and uncles fought proudly for England in World War II, my grandfathers and great-uncles in World War I. Every winter the town put on a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta along with the skating carnival and of course hockey. (Once, unforgettably, a hypnotist came through.) We had good schooling, but it taught us that everything that was important happened somewhere else. We lived outdoors, spending summers at cottages on lakes and winters on backyard rinks. We were taught Canadian history but did not learn that it mattered, even to us. We learned to sing through English folk songs—"Sir Eglamore that Valiant Knight, fa la daffy down dilly"—and in church choirs that sang English hymns. We wouldn't have been able to imagine Canadian hymns. We devoured British children's literature—Enid Blyton, Albert Payson Terhune, A. A. Milne—though we also read and loved the *Little Women* books, L. M. Montogmery's classic *Anne of Green Gables* series, and endless tales of the Far North, usually involving heroic sled dogs. In high school we were taught to write well, using English essayists as models. To this day, I write like an essayist. The empire made geography important. Every year each student received an atlas, Commonwealth countries in red. We belonged to this immense planetary constellation—the empire closed us off from ourselves but opened the planet to us. My love of geography, both maps and land, began there and has never left me. The moment I learned to read, *Great Wonders of the World*, given to me by my grandmother, became my favorite book. That's where I want to live, I thought. Out there.

Anticolonialism was in the mix too. After all, we were a colony, populated by those who left the motherland by choice or force. The town's name was

Irish, brought by refugees from the potato famine in the 1840s. Our grandmother, Annie MacGillivray, made sure we knew what the English had done to the Highland Scots: Bonnie Prince Charlie's exile, the routing of the clans, the Battle of Culloden (1746). That defeat had brought the highland MacGillivrays to Canada. She read us Bobby Burns, played the piano, and sang "Bonnie Charlie's nu awa'" from a songbook stored in the piano bench. Our aunts flung the highland fling at Christmas. Like many families in the town, the MacGillivrays had a tartan and a family crest that defiantly said, "Touch not the cat / bot with a glove." From early on I knew colonial violence existed, anticolonialism too, with music, poetry, and dance to go with it.

We were colonizers, too, settler colonialists, but unforgivably we did not know ourselves well that way. Indian myths, symbols, and token objects were all around us, but as children we had no idea our Native age-mates were being taken from their parents and sent to harsh, faraway residential schools where some of them died. Most of us did not fully grasp that devastating reality till decades later when, in a millennial breakthrough, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission did its work (2008–15).

Our parents were ambitious for their six children, two sons and four daughters. These ambitions had different implications for the two genders. In the minds of the adults, the sons had knowable futures. The eldest would take over the father's profession (in this case, a law practice, which he did); the younger would seek another path (in this case, it was to be medicine, which he didn't). For them, the difficult thing was escaping this fate should they want to. The girls, in contrast, faced a futurity gap. Our mother, a feminist raised in Toronto, was athletic and university educated. She taught English at the town high school. She wanted bigger things for her daughters . . . but what were they? In the 1950s and early 1960s, nobody seemed to know. The adults could not tell us what was possible for young women of our generation. The world was clearly changing, but no one around us seemed able to discern what we might aspire to. We would certainly go to university (our mother wanted all smart girls to go to university), but to study what? What for? For the daughters, the future was a journey without a map. I faced a particular challenge, for I had been born into a cruel injustice: a large deep port-wine stain covered one side of my face. I was a freak. This catastrophe placed me among the wretched of the earth, for life. It made my possibilities particularly hard to imagine. When I asked my mother one day if she thought anyone would ever give me a job, she answered, "I don't know." I had no idea whether I would be able to build a life I would want to live. There's a crisis of futurity for you.

At the same time, in that little town, the empire had left us surrounded by single women who had built lives outside marriage and family. World War I had left a cadre of educated, independent spinsters whose male counterparts had died. They were nicknamed the Senate and had the status of community elders. They prided themselves on being cultured and cosmopolitan. They read, painted, dressed well, traveled, taught school, played golf and bridge, ran clubs, held teas, confronted straying husbands. They seemed to have little use for men; often they lived with their sisters. Passing by at church, they would ask what I was reading and give advice like, "Remember, always have your own money." As the Queen does.

Listowel was a small but not isolated place. We heard what was going on in the world. Refugees arrived from Hungary, South Africa, and later Vietnam. I first heard the word *fascist* from a Sunday school teacher who had fled apartheid. The couple who owned the scrap metal business had numbers tattooed on their arms. They had met in Bergen-Belsen; he later became our mayor. Listowel had one Black family, a Chinese restaurateur, and, somehow, a family of Japanese farmers whose son became student body president. Were there racism and anti-Semitism? Yes, of course. But the primal everyday prejudice was anti-Catholicism. The town of three thousand had thirteen Protestant churches and a single Catholic one, located just outside the town limits. Intermarriage, to many, was catastrophic.

Eventually we got TV. The day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, our high school history teacher, a Finnish socialist from a northern mining town, announced it on the public-address system, weeping, and we were all sent home. I mourned for months, made a scrapbook. But Canada was roiling, too, in a drama of decolonization. That same year, 1963, the Front de Liberation du Québec formed in Quebec, a Marxist-based revolutionary guerrilla group with the goal of liberating its homeland from Anglo-Saxon domination. It aimed to found a sovereign nation on socialist principles and worker justice. The model was Cuba. The group's manifesto was titled *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (White Negroes of America) (Vallières 1968). The rest of the decade was punctuated by bombings, kidnappings, hijackings, even killings, and horrible uncertainty about whether the country could hold together, or wanted to. It did, but to this day the political wing of the sovereignty movement, the Parti Québecois, founded in 1967, remains a player in Canadian politics. Our father had been prescient. Though he had been taught to hate the Catholic French, he saw that bilingualism was the country's only path forward. One by one, he sent us to Quebec for long summers working on our French.

Even as separatism threatened, Canada decolonized. 1967 was a year of nationalist delirium, as the country celebrated the centennial of its founding. It acquired its own flag and hosted the world's fair in Montreal. It was a massive, ecstatic ritual of (white) emancipation that all of my generation remember. In its aftermath, programs in Canadian studies began to appear in universities. But I was already on my way to find the Great Wonders of the World.

Futurology, Independence

The four sisters had to forge their own paths, and all did. It took courage, risk, and hard work. One became a nurse, married a doctor, divorced him, and became a gifted surgeon. One studied history, played varsity ice hockey, taught school in Lesotho, landed a reporting job at a small-town weekly, and wound up as managing editor and expert political writer at a major Canadian newspaper. One studied English in Canada and Oxford, became a competitive gymnast and rower, got an entry-level position at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and became a prizewinning documentary TV writer and director who worked all over the world. For my part, I had figured out early on that academic achievement would be my path, my "shot," as the hero of *Hamilton* put it. Books were always my salvation; they took me elsewhere. In high school I was discovered to have "a gift for languages" and was able to study French, Latin, and German. This, I realized, was my ticket to "out there."

So it was that in September 1966, I stood before a registration desk at the University of Toronto to sign up for the honors BA in modern languages and literatures. I was unprepared for urban university life, a gifted and hard-working student from a farm town who scored high on provincial exams and won a scholarship but had no idea what was possible. The degree involved reading the canons of three European literatures from the Middle Ages to the present in the original languages. That did not sound hard to me. I loved the *desdoblamiento*, the multiplying of the self that multilingualism enabled. I read grammars for fun. "Which three languages do you plan to work in?" the clerk asked. I hadn't thought about it. French and English, certainly, and then, without a second's hesitation, I jumped over German, Russian, and Italian and chose Spanish. Did I already know that those three languages, and later Portuguese, would open exit doors from Anglocentrism and Eurocentrism, two well-worn paths that I desperately wanted to escape? I think so. Did I already understand that I was connected to Spanish not through Spain but through the Americas, where we were all living out the

long, overlapping afterlives of empire? Probably, in some inchoate way. Without yet having read a page of Latin American or African literature, did I already suspect I would find in them, among so many things, geographies from and in which to think more richly, creatively, ethically, and deeply? Besides English and French, I chose the only other imperial language on the list, that is, the only one that governed worlds outside of Europe as well as in Europe. The great preoccupations of this book, futurity, coloniality and "the re-conceiving of human experience in non-imperial terms," as Said noted (1994, 276), came together in that choice that made all the sense in the world, though at that moment I might not have been able to say why.

Conclusion

"The political alternatives to present domination," says Elizabeth Grosz, "are not there waiting to be chosen, possible but not yet real. These alternatives . . . are not alternatives, not possibilities until they are brought into existence. . . . Only if the present presents itself as fractured, cracked by the interventions of the past and the promise of the future, can the new be invented, welcomed, and affirmed" (2004, 261). Our Great Solar TVs have for some time now been showing signs of the planetary crisis of futurity. The Anthropocenic threat was well underway in 1966 when I stood at the registrar's desk in Toronto. Some people knew it, but most people didn't know it or know how to know it. In *The Great Derangement* (2016), Amitav Ghosh argues that one of the central problems facing the West is the way industrial capitalism has miseducated and disabled the imaginations of its subjects, rendering them unable to imagine forces and transformations on the vast scale now required. Realism has taught them to treasure specificity in storytelling, the local, the empirical, the concrete. They can grasp, to take a recent example, the last living northern white rhino but not mass extinction, can comprehend illness but not a pandemic. This is surely one of the foremost, most robust elements of the present that must be fractured or cracked as we humans figure out how to live the living and dying that lies before us. This is a daunting and riveting challenge.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 The Alfa y Omega translations are mine. For an ethnography of Alfa y Omega, see Gogin (2005).

2 For a moving and vivid documentary account of this economic shock in Lima, see Heddy Honigmann's 1994 documentary *Metaal en Melancholie* (*Metal and Melancholy*).

3 Some readers may be reminded here of the concept of teleiopoiesis (*teleio* = end-directed, *poiesis* = making) introduced by Jacques Derrida in *The Politics of Friendship*, a third text that appeared in 1994. Derrida evokes a similar figure of an indecipherable future. Speaking of a "time out of joint," he imagines a state of "messianicity without messianism" and "an anticipatory poiesis that may lead us to experience the impossible" (3).

4 The feat took place at a campaign stop in Chicago on November 1, 2020. See "'That's What I Do': Barack Obama Hits Silky Three-Pointer on Campaign Trail," Northwestern High School, November 1, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akqoxeu-RHE.

5 Scientists estimate that the separation of the continents took place around 200 million years ago.

6 Performance studies theorist Diana Taylor (2003) makes a related distinction between *archive* and *repertoire*.
7 Alfa y Omega, accessed March 16, 2005, www.alfayomega.com.pe/noguerra.htm (link no longer working).
8 *GeoHumanities* is the title of a journal founded by the American Association of Geographers in 2015.
9 Masao Miyoshi (2001) documents a similar experience. In his account as in mine (below), Edward Said's Orientalism marks a watershed.
10 Chinua Achebe had already given, in 1975, his earthshattering lecture, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," at the University of Massachusetts. It, too, appeared in print in 1978, another watershed moment in literary history (Achebe 1978).
11 For example, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989); Pratt ([1992] 2007); Said (1993); and Spurr (1993). For early critiques of the postcolonial paradigm, see McClintock (1992) and Shohat (1992).
12 The field of transatlantic studies emerged to fill this gap.
13 Bell, panel discussion, Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University, April 28, 2021.
14 In 2020 Muskogee poet Joy Harjo was named poet laureate of the United States, the first Native American to hold this position. That year she edited a comprehensive anthology of Native nations' poetry titled *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through*.
15 Pérez is one in a line of Chicana feminist theorists whose books in the 1980s and 1990s animated the radical reimagining of the Americas from the literal or figurative site of the US-Mexico border. They include Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Cherríe Moraga, Chela Sandoval, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, among others.
16 Recent book listings, for example, include volumes on decolonial feminisms, decolonial linguistics, decolonial futures, and decolonial love, as well as a decolonial travel guide and Mignolo's own *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* (2021).

CHAPTER ONE. MODERNITY'S FALSE PROMISES

This chapter is based on "Modernity and Periphery: Toward a Global and Relational Analysis," in *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, edited by Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 21–47.

1 These compendiums of elements were gathered from the canonical academic literature on modernity, including such classics as Appadurai (1996), Berman (1982), Buell (1994), Calinescu ([1977] 1987), Habermas (1985), Held (1983), Heller (1990), Latour (1991), Toulmin (1990), and Touraine (1988, 1992). I also draw on surveys of metropolitan theories of modernity by Brunner (1987), Calderón (1988a), Lechner (1991), Lander (1991), and Larraín Ibañez (1996).