THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIAL INVESTIGATIONS

WALTER D. MIGNOLO

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BUY

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On Decoloniality interconnects a diverse array of perspectives from the lived experiences of coloniality and decolonial thought/praxis in different local histories from across the globe. The series is concerned with coloniality's global logic and scope and with the myriad of decolonial responses and engagements that contest coloniality/modernity's totalizing violences, claims, and frame, opening toward an otherwise of being, thinking, sensing, knowing, and living; that is, of re-existences and worlds-making. Aimed at a broad audience, from scholars, students, and artists to journalists, activists, and socially engaged intellectuals, On Decoloniality invites a wide range of participants to join one of the fastest-growing debates in the humanities and social sciences that attends to the lived concerns of dignity, life, and the survival of the planet.

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To the memory of Nieves y Mingo,

mi madre y mi padre,

who moved from the countryside to a nearby small town, Corral de Bustos, when I was seven,

so I could go to school.

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Preface

I

The manuscript for this book was forwarded to Duke University Press in March of 2020. The pandemic was reaching the US. Europe was reporting alarming statistics, while China, South Korea, and Taiwan were reporting their successful management of the events, whether unavoidable, carelessly managed, or planned (and by whom?). I received the copyedited manuscript at the beginning of October 2020. The US had been reporting alarming statistics for several months: infections, deaths, unemployment. Congress and the Federal Reserve took action with a broad array of programs to limit the economic damage from the pandemic, including lending trillions of dollars to support households, employers, financial markets, and state and local governments. The statistics around the planet were disconcerting. Under the circumstances, in reading a manuscript that was finished before the shock—whatever the causes, the reasons, and the origination—something arose in my consciousness that has been in my thoughts for a while: that we, on the planet, are experiencing a change of era, and no longer an epoch of changes. I couldn't at that point do too much with the manuscript, other than acknowledging that the cycle of Westernization of the planet was decisively over. The agony will last for a few decades, and it will not be pretty. Multipolarity in the interstate system is displacing unipolar Westernization; pluriversality is displacing the Western universality of knowing and sensing. This is the main argument of the book. It remains

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valid to me. The pandemic only accelerated a process that is irreversible and provided more evidence that the long-lasting consequences of coloniality are no longer hidden under the rhetoric of modernity, development, progress, growth, "more is better," and "bigger is virtuous."

The era that is closing I have dated 1500–2000. It is the era of Westernization of the planet, political and economic unilaterality, and epistemic and aesthetic universality. It is exploding, and out of the debris three trajectories are defining the change of era: de-Westernization and decoloniality provoked the counterreformation, that is, re-Westernization. The change of era invades and, like a whirlwind, eats into domestic and interstate politics and economics, with cultural corollaries across the board in the spheres of knowing and sensing: from research and teaching institutions (e.g., universities and museums) to the philosophical thinking that emerges from the trenches of everyday life-forming manifested in people's organizing to stop extractivism, agrobusiness, state abuses, uses and misuses of the pandemic, etc. The change of era is the overall frame of the book that I render in chapter 14 as the third nomos of the Earth. The sense of the change of epoch or era "floats," so to speak, over the other chapters. Hence, the book floats in the borderlands of the closing era of changes and the opening change of era.

This book is published by a university press. It is a scholarly book. Decolonial critical minds fear that the decolonial is surrendering to academia. Some critics even consider that Duke University is not a proper place to make decolonial claims. I respect those critics. Everyone is entitled to her or his own opinion. I am not apologizing for it. Being able to interact with undergraduate and graduate students around these ideas at Duke—but also in many universities and museums in the US, Latin America, western Europe, South Africa, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong—is not something that shall be rejected. Many others are like me. Universities and museums, think tanks composed by actors who have been through the university, and millions of people in the world, yesterday and today, have been through state and private pedagogical institutions, from primary school to graduate and professional schools. There is strong opposition in both universities and museums to thinking decolonially; it is also olympically ignored in the mass media.

An increasing number of professionals today (in law, medicine, engineering, design, computing) are becoming aware of the *coloniality of knowledge and sensing*, realizing how it has affected epistemology (the principles and assumptions that regulate knowing) and aesthetics (the principles and assumptions that regulate taste and subjectivity) over the past five hundred years. From 1500 to 1800, Christian theology (Catholic and Protestant) regulated both

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knowing and sensing. From 1800 to 2000, epistemology and aesthetics mutated into secular management, although theology never went away. The year 1800 could be taken as the year of the first drastic intramural overturning of the modern/colonial era. Theology and hegemony and dominance split into three secular trajectories: conservatism (e.g., the secularization of theological beliefs), liberalism (the bourgeois system of ideas regulating politics, economy, epistemology, and aesthetics), and socialism/communism (e.g., the dissenting trajectory emerging from the theological wreckages). These three trajectories remained, with modulations. Since 1970, there has been an "evolutionary drift": neoliberalism and globalism emerged out of liberalism, but liberalism persisted; conservatism mutated into fundamentalist nationalism (e.g., the alt-right, neofascism); and socialism/communism has had to be reconsidered after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the mutations of China after Mao Zedong.

This is a brief scheme of the constitution and closing of the era of changes (e.g., the formation of Western civilization and the Westernization of the planet). De-Westernization and decoloniality cannot ignore Westernization, but they do not have to obey it anymore. And both trajectories are founded on disobedience and delinking. The change of era can no longer be captured by adding the prefix "post-." The post- prefix is valid within re-Westernization, the counterreformation that intends to maintain the privileges built over five hundred years of Westernization, but it is meaningless for de-Westernization and decoloniality. The prefix "de-" takes the field, breaking up Western universality and totality into multiple temporalities, knowledges, and praxes of living. Neither trajectory has precedence within the era of changes (1500–1800). But because Westernization cannot be ignored, not having precedence doesn't mean that both trajectories start *ab ovo.* The de- prefix means that you disobey and delink from a belief in unipolarity and universality; you take what you need to restitute that which has been destituted and that is relevant to the arising of *multipolarity* in the interstate relations and *pluriversality*. Multipolarity is the goal of de-Westernization in the interstate system and the global order; pluriversality in the spheres of knowing, sensing, understanding, believing, and being in the world is the goal of decoloniality in the hands of the emerging global political society.[1] Decoloniality is not a state-led task; it cannot be. The nation-state and the capitalist economy are today entrenched all over the planet. De-Westernization, however, can only be advanced by a strong state that is economically and financially solid. That is why China is leading the way in this trajectory. The current tendencies in China, Russia, India, and Turkey to mutate the nation-state into the civilization-state are revealing

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signs of restituting what has been destituted. I am not saying that civilization-states will be "better" than nation-states. I am just saying that most likely they will be.

As in my previous books, my love of jazz improvisations and blues movements guides the prose and the argument. There is a set of concepts that shepherds the melody. To start with the concepts in the title, politics and decolonial investigations: gnoseological and aesthesic *reconstitutions* confront head on the epistemic and aesthetic *constitutions/destitutions*, not to replace or supersede them but to reduce both of them to their own regional and deserved sphere.[2] The reader is advised to uncouple *aesthesis* from *aesthetics*. While aesthetics has been circumscribed to the sphere of fine arts, and also transposed to refer to other areas of experience involving "taste" (e.g., having good taste in food, wine, clothes, cars, furniture, etc.) and "beauty" (e.g., aesthetic surgery, fashion design, an attractive—as in pleasing to the senses—woman or a handsome man), I use "aesthesis" in its original meaning to refer to sensing and emotioning and, therefore, inseparable from knowing and believing. Epistemology and aesthetics are two key concepts of the rhetoric of modernity separated from each other: the first refers to knowledge and the second to taste and beauty. I am shifting that relationship in this book. Aesthesis is in all and everything we do, including, of course, living and thinking. The triad constitution/destitution/reconstitution ran parallel to modernity/coloniality/decoloniality and to domination/exploitation/conflict, the latter singling out the triple energy that holds together the colonial matrix of power, or CMP (see introduction, section III), and provokes the making of and the responses to colonial and imperial differences. In their turn, colonial and imperial differences created the conditions of border dwelling and border thinking—briefly, of being in the world, which I highlight with the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (see introduction, section III.3.6). To weave and make these concepts work to reveal, on the one hand, the *hidden underlying history* of the CMP and, on the other, the events, discourses, dates, names, images, maps, etc., in the *visible surface of thematic histories* requires a certain freedom to let the argument flow with the movements of the CMP and the gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions of the destituted. The flow and freedom of movement of improvisation in jazz and blues provide liberating energies to delink from the linearity of English composition. Besides, I came of intellectual age in the 1960s reading the great Argentine and Latin American essayists who were thinking and writing before the social sciences' regulations of thinking were introduced with the packaging and the promises of development and modernization.

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II

The Politics of Decolonial Investigations continues the archeology of Western civilization that I began with *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (1995). Two archeological sites are the European Renaissance (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) and the *colonial revolution*, better known as the discovery and colonization of the New World.[3] The two archeological sites of Western civilization are only one of the three Greek branches. One branch spread to the caliphate of Damascus and Baghdad; a second branch spread to Orthodox Christianity, which reached Moscow and the Slavic area; and the third one nourished Muslim philosophers from Central Asia (Ibn Sina), Western Asia (Al-Ghazali), and Maghreb (Ibn Rushd). Civilizations come out of narrative interpretations of signs of the past taken for historical facts that already carried the tag of their meaning in the present. "Western civilization" was not a tag pegged to thoughts and deeds in ancient Greece and Rome. Greece and Rome became the fountains of Western civilization during the European Renaissance at the intersection of Western Christianity after the Crusades and the loss of Jerusalem. The conquest and colonization of the New World (the colonial revolution) emboldened Western Christian theologians, men of letters and monarchs in the Iberian Peninsula and Italy, to rebuild themselves after their defeat in the Crusades.

The excavation I venture is within neither epistemic territory (existing knowledges and ways of knowing) nor aesthetic territory (regulation of taste, evaluation of genius, and ranking of human activities), but the destituted exteriorities (see introduction, section III.2) in the name of constituting (introduction, section III.1) and promoting Western civilization. Exteriorities are not ontic outsides but locations created in the constitution of the inside. What is ontic outside is out of reach and control, but exteriority is invented to be able to control and manage the destituted. Racism and sexism are two spheres that affect all of us on the planet, actors and institutions that defend the constituted and actors and institutions that are the targets of destitutions. Today the US sanctions in all directions are sanctions projected to the exteriority to secure the constitution of Western civilization. If China, Russia, and Iran were ontically outside Western civilization, sanctions would be a moot point. They are not outside but in exteriority. This is the work of the imperial differential. If Black people and transsexuals were ontically outside, there would be no problem. But people thus labeled are placed in exteriority and subjected to domination. This is the work of the colonial differential. Not only countries and regions (underdeveloped, Third World, emergent) are destituted to the

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exteriority, but people as well. Racism and sexism are the energies moving the destitutions of people to maintain the privileges of whiteness and heteronormativity. Racism and sexism are problems of whiteness and heteronormativity although they appear to be problems of people of color and transsexuality.[4] However, countries and people destituted to the exteriority of the system never quietly accepted the unilateral decisions of actors and institutions self-endowed with the privileges to destitute. *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* walks on the paths already opened by the many in the Americas, Africa, Asia, former Eastern Europe, and southern Europe whose thoughts and deeds were propelled by the dignified anger engendered by all levels of destitutions.

III

The original idea for this book came from Francisco Carballo of Goldsmiths, University of London. The story goes like this: Francisco and Luis Alfonso Herrera Robles from the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, Ciencias Sociales, in Mexico, coedited a book (*Habitar la frontera: Sentir y pensar la descolonialidad, Antología: 1999–2014*, 2015) collecting several of my articles in Spanish into a volume published by CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs). Shortly after the three of us met in Barcelona for the book's presentation, Francisco suggested a similar volume with articles published in English. We met in Lisbon in April of 2015 and worked on a preliminary list of articles, outlining a rationale. Francisco would write the introduction while I revised the articles, providing short descriptions of when, where, and why the article was published, similar to what we did for the book published by CIDOB. We completed the job and submitted the manuscript to Duke University Press as a proposal to external evaluators. The proposal received positive reviews, but unfortunately Francisco ran into personal problems, preventing him from completing the planned introduction. The Duke University Press editor recommended that I go ahead with the book without the introduction.

When I reread all the articles to outline the rationale for the collection, I came to realize that the articles written between 2000 and 2019 were intermingled with the publication of the following works: *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000), reprinted with a new preface in 2012; the afterword written in 2003 for the second edition of *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (1995); the publication of both *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011) and *The Idea of Latin America* (2005); and, last but not least, the publication in 2007 of a long essay, "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Mo-

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dernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality," which was rewritten in Spanish and translated into German, Swedish, Rumanian, and French. The fact that it was translated into several languages is due, in my understanding, to the essay's personal summary of the school of thought already recognized by the decolonial compound "modernity/coloniality/decoloniality."[5] These basic assumptions of the decolonial school of thought—that there is no modernity without coloniality and that they both provoked decoloniality—sprang from Aníbal Quijano's seminal article, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality."[6]

The title of this book, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*, has its reason. I intentionally avoided "research," which in the humanities is a term borrowed from the hard sciences. The *Cambridge Dictionary* offers this general definition: "a detailed *study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding*" (emphasis added). The examples following the definition are extracted from the hard sciences. The humanities have recently also borrowed "lab" from the hard sciences. I surmise that borrowing terms from the hard sciences makes the humanist feel more serious or rigorous, perhaps even scientific (see chapter 14), while at the same time surrendering to the hegemonic coloniality of scientific knowledge. I disagree. By reconstituting "research" into "investigation" (and taking the first step into gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions), I am restituting a term in the family of the humanities destituted by the clout of scientific "research." Edmund Husserl titled his work on logic *Logical Investigations* (1900). Ludwig Wittgenstein titled his own *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). If we search for "Sherlock Holmes" on the web, we will find many entries relating Sherlock Holmes to "investigations." Holmes's investigations are neither academic nor scholarly nor scientific. Investigations are needed when a problem has to be solved or a question to be addressed. His strategies have impacted many fields beyond the academy. Here is an example from an organization called the Nonprofit Risk Management Center:

> Recently, many of our clients have focused on increasing their readiness to respond to and manage employee complaints, workplace *investigations*, and employment practices liability (EPL) claims. . . .
>
> While Sherlock Holmes may not be an inspiration for proper workplace etiquette in the 21st Century, his techniques may be useful as you reflect on how your entity manages workplace *investigations*. Keep in mind that conducting effective and ethical *investigations* of workplace issues and employee complaints could reduce your organization's exposure to EPLI claims.[7] (Emphasis added.)

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The Politics of Decolonial Investigations takes from Sherlock Holmes his passion to "reveal the mystery" beyond academic strictures. The mystery that decolonial investigations seek to reveal is the foundation, transformation, management, and control of the colonial matrix of power (CMP), from its foundations in the sixteenth century to artificial intelligence in the twenty-first. This matrix has been fueled and run by "coloniality of power," the will to control and dominate, embedded in the politics of Eurocentric knowing. Decolonial investigations are fueled instead by the will to "reveal the mystery of the CMP," disobeying epistemic and aesthetic dictates by taking on gnoseological and aesthetic reconstitutions (see introduction, section III).

In the preface to *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, I wrote that the book came to be the third volume of a trilogy that was not planned as such. The first part was *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* and the second was *Local Histories/Global Designs*. I realized that the articles that Francisco and I had selected began to look like the fourth volume of a tetralogy as they showed the backstory of the trilogy. I made some adjustments, replacing some of the original articles and adding a few. At the end of the day, the title *Decolonial Investigations* sounded the most appropriate, for literally that is what the articles originally were: decolonial investigations in the framework of modernity/coloniality which at once enacted decolonial thinking in search of decolonial praxes of living.[8]

What all of this means, and what becomes more transparent in chapters II to 14 and the epilogue, is that the constitution and hegemony of Western knowledge, along with its regulations of knowing, which together imply the regulation of subjectivity, shall all be questioned for their assumptions (the enunciation) rather than their content. Consequently, to reconstitute knowing and sensing requires starting from non-Western genealogies of thoughts or from Western concepts sidelined by the rhetoric of modernity, like gnosis and aesthesis. To put it more bluntly: reconstitution demands a departure, delinking from Western cosmology, in its theological and secular foundations, in which all knowledges—including scientific ones—are embedded. The shift is accomplished by moving toward non-Western cosmologies, the foundations of their praxes of living and sensing that have been and continue to be destituted by Western cosmology with its epistemic and aesthetic weapons.[9] And by digging into the basement of Western cosmology to recover destituted concepts and histories, as was the case with gnosis and aesthesis (I come back to gnosis in the introduction). In this volume, aesthesis is unpegged from aesthetics in two ways: it refers to (a) the realm of the senses, beliefs, and emotioning, where "art" is one aesthesic sphere, and (b) sensing underlying science, mathematics,

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philosophy, and theology since the actors are human beings and the rationality of their arguments cannot be detached from the subjectivity that animates what they are doing. However, in these spheres of knowing and understanding, the aesthesic dimension was destituted and silenced by the privilege of the rational and the epistemic.[10] Quijano synthesized this situation in the title of his foundational article, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality."

Consequently, the volume that the reader has in her hands is no longer a collection of published articles but a new volume all its own. Every original article has been drastically revised and rewritten while maintaining its original idea and the main thrust of its argument, which required further investigations on the topic of each chapter. *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* is divided into four parts, including an introduction and an epilogue. And it goes like this: the introduction is the most recently written piece, and it came about after all the previous considerations. In it I revisit basic concepts of the schools of thought identified as modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, and I outline the history, the structure, the levels, and the flows of the CMP. I also revisit my own previously introduced concepts, such as colonial/imperial differences, border thinking, and epistemic/aesthesic reconstitution—all of which provide an overall *analytics* of the CMP's contents (the said, the enunciated) for chapters 1 to 10. Chapters 11 to 14 and the epilogue tackle *terms* (the saying, the enunciation) and work on paths for decolonial reconstitutions.[11]

Part I, "Geopolitics, Social Classification, and Border Thinking," explores diverse ramifications of race/racism, starting from Quijano's distinction between social classification and social class, the making of racism as a foundational concept of modernity/coloniality. Racism is a problem created by the classifier; it is not a problem created by the classified. Hence, race is an epistemological, not an ontic, question. That means there is no "race'" in the world beyond the "concept of race": race is a concept that serves to classify human beings according to preselected features: blood, skin color, religion, nationality, language, primitive/civilized, economic world ranking (developed/underdeveloped), etc. The concept of race is a classification upon which racism was construed. I explore this point in chapter 1. In chapter 2, I turn to how race and racism work in the constitution of the CMP, from the sixteenth century to today. Foregrounding the classifiers that established complicities between Islamophobia and Hispanophobia, I argue that race/racism was a determinant in the constitution of the CMP and its power for destitution. In chapter 3 I look at the economic and political consequences of racism, connecting the African slave trade in the colonial foundation of modernity to the Holocaust in the first half of the twentieth century. I argue that the modern/colonial slave

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trade operated by doubly subjective transformations. Slave traders and plantation owners assigned to themselves the privileges of taken human beings as a commodity (and for that, racism was a useful concept). In turn, the enslaved persons lost their dignity and self-esteem. Enslaved persons were, for traders and plantation owners, commodities and, therefore, dispensable or disposable. Five hundred years later, the Holocaust introduced the political dimension of disposability: bare lives. Bare lives were not commodities but persons whose legal rights had been disposed. State politics took the place of slave traders and plantation owners. At the end of the twentieth century and in the first decades of the twenty-first, economic and political dispensability of human life worked together in the bodies and lives of immigrants and refugees in Europe and the United States. Colonialism ended but coloniality has persisted. The last chapter of part I tackles the race question in the historical foundation of the nation-state in nineteenth-century Europe and its impact in the concurrent foundation of Zionism in the creation of the nation-state of Israel. The common element of all nation-states' form of governance is a care for the nation more than for human beings. These four chapters are connected through the geopolitical scope of racial classification, the colonial difference that sustains racial classification, and border thinking as decolonial perspectives of racism, geopolitics, and social classification.

Part II, "Cosmopolitanism, Decoloniality, and Rights," is connected with part I by the following question: who speaks for the human in human rights? I have explored this question in an article published elsewhere.[12] The basic presupposition, outlined in part I, is that race and racism are—as I just said—epistemic, not ontic, matters. Or, if you wish, they are ontological matters that cannot be dealt with empirically. Which means that race and racism came about from epistemic classifications of the ontic signs (like blood or skin color). Consequently, those who control knowledge have the privilege of projecting an institutional image of the "real" that hides that the real is an epistemic projection. Chapter 5 explores the difficulties and restrictions that cosmopolitanism has to overcome racial dehumanization and racial discrimination as well as dehumanization embedded in the concept of human rights, an issue I explore in more detail in chapter 12. Chapter 6, "Cosmopolitanism and the Decolonial Option," connects with the issue of globalism/globalization explored in chapter 5 and with the problem of the nation-state explored in chapter 4. In chapter 6 I investigate the vogue of cosmopolitanism in North Atlantic scholarship that succeeds the decades of the vogue of exploring nationalism in the 1980s. The question raised in chapter 5 is that the cosmopolitan trend in philosophy runs parallel with the trend of globalization in the social sciences. In

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chapter 7, I come back and expand on the question of rights explored in chapter 5 and argue that, seen from the experience, history, and perspective of the former Third World, the demands for "living" rights extend beyond "human" ones to the rights of our Earth since life—decolonially speaking—cannot be detached from the limited and restricted sphere of human life.

Part III returns to the geopolitical question focusing on the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world order from 1500 to 2000, approximately, or for the period of Westernization of the planet. This is the era of the second nomos of the Earth and the epoch of changes when "newness" and "post-" are key markers. In chapter 8, I argue that around 2000 the signs of a shift from the Western to the Eastern Hemisphere were noticeable, and 9/11 was a signpost that legitimized the counterrevolution I call re-Westernization, motivated by the closing of the cycle of Westernization (1500–2000)—initiated with the colonial revolution in the sixteenth century—and the imperative to contain de-Westernization, with China, Russia, and the other BRICS leading the way at the time. However, after the weakening of BRICS following the judicial coup in Brazil and the election of Jair Bolsonaro as president, de-Westernization had three pillars in the CRI (China, Russia, and Iran) and a monumental mover, the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative). I continue this discussion in chapter 9 in a conversation with Christopher Mattison, who at the time of the conversation was assistant director of the Advanced Study Institute of the University of Hong Kong, where I was a research fellow for a semester. I mention these details because the conversation was conducted during the first semester (January–June) of 2012 in the *living* experience and *atmosphere* of East Asia and the spirit of rebalancing the change of hands in Hong Kong in 1997. I traveled to Beijing, Shanghai, and Singapore during the semester, and the sense of de-Westernization became palpable to me (I sensed it; it was something different rather than reaching a rational conclusion over statistics and diagrams). I sensed that the state-led Bandung Conference of 1955 had two outcomes: one toward the South with the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the other to the North, toward Singapore, China, and the Asian Tigers. In chapter 10, I tackle the coming into being of the expression "Global South" as successor of "Third World," after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the expression "Third World" lost its meaning once the Second World didn't exist anymore. This exploration connects with the issues of classification explored in part I. While in part I classifications refers to bodies, in part III it refers to regions. Race and racism conjoin the classification and ranking of bodies with the geopolitical classifications of the regions the bodies inhabit. Geo- and biopolitical classifications complement each other, for it is assumed

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that underdeveloped regions of the planet (a geopolitical classification) are inhabited by people of color who speak non-European languages and embrace belief systems other than Christianity; and therefore men, women, and trans/nonbinary people in these regions are ranked below their equivalents in the First World, Global North, and Global West.[13]

Part IV focuses on the geopolitics of gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions by exploring in some detail the works and thoughts of José Carlos Mariátegui in the South American Andes and Antonio Gramsci in the South of Europe. The parallel, not the comparison of their lives and thoughts (in the sense that their thinking was entangled with their praxes of living), allows for a better understanding of knowing, thinking, and believing emerging from their geo-body locations, explored in parts I and III, in the colonial matrix of power. Focusing on Sylvia Wynter, chapter 12 examines the meaning of being human: when and for whom. When an Afro-Caribbean woman from the Third Word (or the Global South, if you prefer) asks, "What does it mean to be human," the answers would most likely not be the same as the answer given by a white man from the First World (or the Global North, if you prefer). The answer is no longer a question of an abstract universal definition of "the human," but is affected by the geo-body political location of the answer to an abstract concept created by white males of the North. Hence, gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions are of the essence. Wynter's questions and answers allow us to reframe the coexisting perspectives on the posthuman and the inhuman in continental philosophy and North Atlantic cultural studies.[14] Shifting the geography of reasoning toward the gnoseological and the aesthesic relocates the answers to the questions that are taken up from the perspective of the destituted who are supposed to not be properly human.

In chapter 13 I push gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions further, exploring the geo-body politics of knowing, sensing, and believing introduced in chapter 11. This time the parallel is between Aníbal Quijano, a thinker from the South American Andes who anchored a particular school of decolonial thought (which has permeated my work since 1995 and the decolonial investigation in this book) and for whom Mariátegui was a political and intellectual ancestor, and Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, a German philosopher who established the school of phenomenology. Gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions are here a means to redress the hierarchies by epistemic and aesthetic relevance. The geopolitics of meaning and the geopolitics of money complement each other in the simultaneous movement, the constitution/destitution, of the colonial matrix of power. Those hierarchies worked well in an era of Westernization, the second nomos of the Earth, and the era of changes that

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come to light in chapter 14. In this chapter I devote my attention to the advent of the third nomos of the Earth, to the politics of decolonial investigations, and to the meaning of gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions.

Finally, the epilogue. The epilogue is a continuation of the investigations reported in chapter 14, but in a more personal way. It is a more personal account of why the politics of decolonial investigations is necessary to shake off five centuries of modern/colonial epistemic and aesthetic regulations. It is also a complement to chapter 13 in the intent to redress five hundred years of epistemic and aesthetic regulations and enforced abstract universals. And it is a follow-up to a previous argument on epistemic disobedience, independent thought, and decolonial freedom.

The final steps in the preparation of this manuscript coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sense of an ending was for me doubled: the closing of a long and consuming project of writing and editing and the beginning of what revives the sense of an ending. The meaning of "apocalypse," as Moulay Driss El Maarouf, Taieb Belghazi, and Farouk El Maarouf remind us, has been inscribed in different ways (movies, TV series, books) in the popular consciousness by mass media of all kinds, as the final catastrophe (like the one announced in 2012 following the misinterpreted Mayans' prophecy): a catastrophe of such dimensions that it leaves no one to tell the story. However, the authors rescue the Greek meaning of the word *apokalyptein*: "uncovering, disclosure and revelation."[15] In that sense, Francis Fukuyama's infamous sentence could be proven right: we on the planet may be experiencing "the end of history"—the end of a history that fabricated the ontology of the present, the slow disintegration of the CMP; the end of an era, the era of Westernization and of the second nomos of the earth. The advent of the third nomos is not, however, a *transition* as if there were only one line to transit from A to B. That is the logic of the second nomos. The third nomos is not a transition but an *explosion*: the universal does not transit but explodes into the pluriversal; the unipolar doesn't transit but explodes into the multipolar. That is the mark of the change of era and of the advent of the third nomos of the earth. By rescuing the forgotten and destituted meaning of *apokalyptein*, El Maarouf, Belghazi, and El Maarouf have indeed performed a singular work of gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitution.

The politics of decolonial investigations is indivisible from gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions. These ideas are, in the last analysis, the main thrust of this book.

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Acknowledgments

My first and foremost gratitude and my greatest debt is to Aníbal Quijano (1930–2018). Our interaction and collaboration during the early years of the formation of my thoughts—which unfolded via personal conversations and email exchanges starting in 1996 and in conversation with friends of the collective modernity/coloniality—have radically changed the orientation of my thinking, my sensing and emotioning, my research, and my own praxis of living. Many of those conversations were interspersed with several of the articles that became chapters of this book, which is in constant dialogue with his ideas, proposals, wisdom, intellectual honesty, and political commitment.

Specific thanks to Francisco Carballo, who, as I mentioned in the preface, put this project in motion.

I am indebted to all my coeditors, and to all the publishing houses and scholarly journals where these articles were originally published and where they became preliminary versions of this book's chapters. None of the previously published essays remain in their original form. They were rewritten to fit the main thrust of the book: the politics of decolonial investigations and gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions. Most of the original titles were modified. Others remain the same.

Chapter 1, "Racism as We Sense It Today," was originally published in "Comparative Racialization," special issue: *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (October 2008). It was revised in light of a volume on the same topic published the year before: Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, eds., *Rereading the Black Legend: The*

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Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), and rewritten for this volume.

Chapter 2, "Islamophobia/Hispanophobia," and chapter 3, "Dispensable and Bare Lives," were originally published in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, the former in vol. 5, no. 1 (2006), and the latter in vol. 7, no. 2 (2009). Mohammad H. Tamdgidi is the journal editor.

Chapter 4, "Decolonizing the Nation-State," was first published in *Deconstructing Zionism: A Critique of Political Metaphysics*, ed. Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

Chapter 5, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis," was published in *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000). It was rewritten in light of "Cosmopolitan Localism: Overcoming Colonial and Imperial Differences," chapter 7 of *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Chapter 6, "Cosmopolitanism and the Decolonial Option," was published in *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29 (2010). I eliminated the hyphen in "de-colonial" from the original title. It felt necessary back then.

Chapter 7, "From 'Human' to 'Living' Rights," was originally published in *The Meaning of Rights: The Philosophy of Social Theory of Human Rights*, ed. Costas Douzimas and Conor Gearty (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014). I replaced "Life" with "Living." It is a sequel to "Who Speaks for the 'Human' in Human Rights?," reprinted in Walter D. Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

Chapter 8, "Decolonial Reflections on Hemispheric Partitions," was published in FIAR: *Forum for Inter-American Research* 7, no. 3 (2014).

Chapter 9, "Delinking, Decoloniality, and De-Westernization," was originally published in HKAICS (Hong Kong Advanced Institute for Cross-Disciplinary Studies) when both Chris Mattison and I were visiting fellows during the first semester of 2012. It was reprinted in *Critical Legal Studies: Law and the Political* (May 2012).

Chapter 10, "The South of the North and the West of the East," was originally published in *Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in North Africa and the Middle East* (November 2014). I modified the title.

Chapter 11, "Mariátegui and Gramsci in 'Latin' America," was published in *The Postcolonial Gramsci*, ed. Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya (New York: Routledge, 2012). It originally had the subtitle "Between Revolution and Decoloniality."

Chapter 12, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?," was published in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as a Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

Chapter 13, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology: The Geopolitics of Knowing and Epistemic/Ontological Colonial Differences," was published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2018). The journal editor was Alia Al-Saji.

Chapter 14, "The Rise of the Third Nomos of the Earth," was originally published as the foreword to *The Anomie of the Earth*, ed. Federico Luisetti, John Pickles, and

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Wilson Kaiser (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). The original title was "Anomie, Resurgences and De-Noming." The original argument remains, but it was extended and projected toward the change of era and emergence of the third nomos of the Earth (de-Westernization and decoloniality).

The epilogue, "Yes, We Can: Border Thinking, Pluriversality, and Colonial Differentials," was originally published as a foreword to Hamid Dabashi's book *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

My gratitude extends not only to friends and colleagues who read and commented on these chapters, or those who have been in the same campus and buildings for many years, or even those with whom I had conversations on the specific topic of this or that chapter. Coloniality is everywhere, and everything connects with everything, such that a conversation on decoloniality and music could illuminate some aspects related to the economy and governance or to knowledge and racism. This is perhaps a significant departure of decolonial investigations from the standardized research mode of the Western Hemisphere and its model of scholarship promoting "expertise" in one area or discipline. Decolonial investigations are tantamount to the politics of decolonial thinking. In every case the conversations and exchanges of ideas enriched my own argumentations and praxis of living. All those unquantifiable experiences that help many of us intellectually, emotionally, and politically cannot be quoted in the footnotes or stored in an archive. Behind and before a book, an artwork (i.e., a skillwork), a public discourse, a TV news program, etc., there lies a world of energy, emotions, interactions, and memories that are irreducible to scientific, technological, and corporate metrics.

Specifically and chronologically, my thanks go to Catherine Walsh, who invited me to join as a faculty member and dissertation advisor in the Program of Latin American Cultural Studies at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito, established at the beginning of the twenty-first century and whose future is uncertain after Catherine's retirement. Over almost twenty years, my collaboration with Cathy has been constant. Its fruit is the coauthored book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018), and the book series published by Duke University Press. My thanks to Pedro Pablo Gómez Moreno, currently coordinator of the PhD program in Artistic Studies at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, in Bogotá. I have collaborated with Pedro Pablo since 2010 organizing events and publications. In Argentina, thanks go to Zulma Palermo and María Eugenia Borsani, two decolonial thinkers from the South with whom I have been in conversation and collaboration in several activities, though mainly in coworking on the book series *El desprendimiento* ("delinking"), published by Ediciones del Signo in Buenos Aires. Concomitantly

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I also benefit by working as director of the book series with Malena Pestellini, director and guiding light of the publishing house, and with Pablo Martillana, Malena's right hand.

In Europe, my thanks go first to Rolando Vázquez, with whom we started the Middelburg Decolonial Summer School in 2010 in the Netherlands, which occasioned yearly summer think tanks. I appreciate the brilliance and generosity of all the teachers involved: María Lugones, Gloria Wekker, Patricia Kaersenhout, Jean Casimir, Jeannette Ehlers, Madina V. Tlostanova, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, and Rosalba Icaza. In 2012 Alanna Lockward, who unfortunately and unexpectedly passed away in January of 2019, created Be.Bop (Black Europe Body Politics). Being her advisor from 2012 to 2018 put me in yearly contact with curators, artists, activists, and filmmakers who enlarged my relational understanding of what gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitution means for other people (although they are not using those terms to ponder what they are doing). More to the point was the collaboration between Be.Bop and the Middelburg Decolonial Summer School, where in addition to the aforementioned core faculty were periodic collaborators like Quinsy Gario, Manuela Boatcă, and Artwell Cain. All of that was happening during the period (2015–2019) when I worked on rewriting the original articles for this book.

Beyond my appreciation for the communal experiences mentioned above, there were also personal learnings I would like to acknowledge. Leo Ching shared his wisdom on East Asia, mainly China, Japan, and Taiwan. In the fall semester of 2016, we cotaught a graduate seminar at Duke titled, "The Irreversible Shifts of the World Order: The Global South and the Eastern Hemisphere." We repeated the seminar at the undergraduate level in the summer of 2017 at Duke in Kunshan, where we had twenty students from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and one student from Brazil based in the US. Both seminars were indeed a life laboratory exploring the students' responses to the mutation of the global order. On this matter I benefitted from the opportunity to test ideas and arguments on coloniality, decoloniality, and global order in Taiwan, thanks to a generous invitation by Joyce C. H. Liu to deliver three lectures under the auspices of the Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies at National Chiao-Tung University and the National Taiwan University.

During the period in which most of the essays collected here were written, I coauthored several articles and a book with Madina V. Tlostanova, who is also a core faculty member of the Middelburg Decolonial Summer School. Since the school's move to the Van Abbemuseum of Contemporary Art, I have benefited from conversations and collaboration with its director, Charles Esche. I was fortunate to be invited to present and test my ideas at CISA (Centre for

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Indian Studies in Africa) in July–August of 2014 by director Dilip Menon. The three lectures I delivered there were titled "Decolonial Thoughts" by Dilip himself. Remembering a few years later that CISA's portrait of Mohandas Gandhi hung not too far from the poster announcing my lectures, I realized a fateful proximity to the man whose decolonial thoughts (not exempting criticism of his unfortunate racist underpinnings) centered his very praxis of living. The image of that wall remains vivid in my mind and nourishes my thoughts on Gandhi, some of which I incorporate in the introduction to this book (section III.3). During three six-week periods at STIAS, the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (2015, 2016, and 2018), while I was writing the second part of *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018), coauthored with Catherine Walsh, I experienced the prelude of Rhodes Must Fall and the intensification of decolonial struggles, decolonizing the university and the curriculum. I learned much in conversation with Nick Shepherd and Siona O'Connell, at the University of Cape Town back then, as well as from Stephanus Muller, creator and director of Africa Open Institute for Music, Research and Innovation. He and Marietjie Pauw taught me to think of music decolonially. And related to them both is the filmmaker, writer, and activist Aryan Kaganof, a STIAS colleague in 2016. He had just finished his film *Decolonising Wits* and was beginning to film *Opening Stellenbosch*, both investigations on decolonizing the university and its curriculum. The documentaries incorporate numerous conversations with faculty and students.

I owe thanks to the graduate students in my seminars on decolonial thinking, and to undergraduate students who understood coloniality and decoloniality without addressing the issues directly, but through the racial, sexual, political, and economic histories of "Latin" America and through the Indigenous thinking of the present grounded in the cosmological ancestrality of the great civilizations of what is today the American continent.

Immense gratitude to Tracy Carhart and Katja Hill. Tracy painstakingly transcribed and adjusted published articles into Word, going two or three times over my editing of each essay, compiling bibliographies, and framing the manuscript under Duke University Press's publication format. When Tracy retired in December of 2019, Katja came to the rescue in the last stage.

Last but by no means least, my gratitude to Reynolds Smith. His savoir faire as former editor of Duke University Press, his familiarity with my work, and our mutual understanding after many years of collaboration on the book series Latin America Otherwise, informed by his understanding of the larger issues addressed in each essay, greatly improved my arguments in detail and clarity.

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Notes

Preface

1 I borrow the expression from Partha Chatterjee to underscore the sector of civil society whose members, beyond casting votes at the proper time, take matters into their own hands not expecting that the government, banks, or corporations will do good for them/us. Decoloniality, at large and in the particular mode I argue here, cannot be an academic project of the civil society. That's even more true when you assume that the decolonial is already an option to join political society. See Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

2 Several years ago, I dealt with this issue but was unable to find a way out of "epistemology." I used the concepts in two ways, in the standard modern meaning of the concept while addressing decolonial issues with the same word. It was recently that I found in gnoseology a way out of epistemology. So the title today would be, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology/Building Decolonial Gnoseologies." The article in question is Walter D. Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology/Building Decolonial Epistemologies," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/Latino Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada María Isasi Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 19–43.

3 Mike Ennis, "Historicizing Nahua Utopias" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2006). See also Silver Moon and Mike Ennis, "The View of the Empire from the Altepetl: Nahua Historical and Global Imagination," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Differences in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 150–66.

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4 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Problem* (New York: Humanity Books, 2003 [1898]); Lewis Gordon, "What Does It Mean to Be a Problem?," in *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000), 62–95.

5 Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Cosimo, 2005 [1879]).

6 For a collection of Aníbal Quijano's essays from after he introduced "coloniality" and conceived decolonial horizons as "epistemic reconstitutions" and subjective delinking, see Walter D. Mignolo, ed., *Aníbal Quijano: Ensayos en torno a la colonialidad del poder* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2019).

7 Erick Gloeckner, "Workplace Investigation Tips from Sherlock Holmes," Nonprofit Risk Management Center, accessed October 1, 2020, https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/e-news/workplace-investigation-tips-from-sherlock-holmes/. See also Darrin, "Seven Investigation Strategies from Sherlock Holmes," North American Investigations, September 13, 2013, https://pvteyes.com/7-investigation-strategies-sherlock-holmes/.

8 Walter D. Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez, "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings," *Social Text: Periscope*, July 15, 2013, https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/; Walter D. Mignolo, "Reconstitución epistémico/estética: La aesthesis decolonial una década después," *Calle 14: Revista de investigación en el campo del arte* 14, no. 25 (2019): 15–32.

9 Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztecs Thought and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); James Maffie, "Aztec Philosophy," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed May 31, 2020, https://www.iep.utm.edu/aztec/; L. Sebastian Purcel, "Eudaimonia and Neltiliztli: Aristotle and the Aztecs on the Good Life," *Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy Newsletter* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 10–19. For similar arguments on technological thoughts and cosmology in China, see Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Windsor Quarry, UK: Urbanomic, 2016). For southern Africa, see Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, ed., *What Do Science, Technology and Innovation Mean from Africa?* (Boston: MIT Press, 2017); Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu* (Harare, ZW: Mond Books, 1999); Fainos Mangena, "Hunhu/Ubuntu in the Traditional Thought of Southern Africa," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.iep.utm.edu/hunhu/?fbclid=IwAR2Clka7AcUN5s8AlMUdb6gG9rQHgLLx9TE0018_SEXlZ5qn-khUWL37wQE; Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *The Formation of the Arab Reason: Texts, Traditions and the Construction of Modernity in the Arab World*, trans. Center of Arab Unity Studies (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011 [1988]).

10 See Mignolo and Vázquez, "Decolonial AestheSis."

11 For my previous elaboration on gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions, see Mignolo, "Reconstitutción epistemémitco/estética."

12 Walter D. Mignolo, "Who Speaks for the 'Human' in Human Rights?," in *Human Rights from the Third World Perspective*, ed. Jose-Manuel Barreto (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 44–65.

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13 Walter D. Mignolo, "Decolonial Body-Geo Politics at Large," in *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives, Critical Interventions*, ed. Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Counterpress, 2016), vii–xviii.

14 Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Caribbean Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000); Antony Bogues, *Black Prophet, Black Heretics: Radical Political Intellectuals* (London: Routledge, 2003); Jean Casimir, *Une lecture décoloniale de l'histoire des Haïtienne: Du Traité de Ryswick à l'Occupaton Américaine (1697–1915)*, preface by Walter D. Mignolo, afterword by Michel Hector (Port-au-Prince: L'Impremeur S. A., 2018) (English translation: *The Haitians: A Decolonial History* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020]); Louis R. Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (New York: Fordham University, 2015).

15 Moulay Driss El Maarouf, Taieb Belghazi, and Farouk El Maarouf, "COVID-19: A Critical Ontology of the Present," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (April 26, 2020), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2020.1757426.

Introduction

1 "Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia." Excerpts from the Pentagon's plan after the collapse of the Soviet Union: "Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival," *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html.

2 J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1967).

3 Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007 [1992]), 177.

4 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "The Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the History of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 240–70.

5 See Walter D. Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez, "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings," *Social Text Periscope*, July 15, 2013, https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/. See also Walter D. Mignolo, "Reconstitución epistémica/estética: La aesthesis decolonial una década después," *Calle 14: Revista de Investigación en el campo del arte* 14, no. 25 (2010): 14–32.

6 I am borrowing this concept from Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

7 A vigorous decolonial current of thought in Eastern Europe is underway. See, for instance, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, "Decolonial AestheSis in Eastern Europe:

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