Martin Savransky

AROUND THE DAY IN EIGHTY WORLDS

POLITICS OF THE PLURIVERSE

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THOUGHT IN THE ACT

A series edited by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi

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Martin Savransky

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Can one ever say when a book *begins*? Or when it ends? This one has, indeed, been long in the making. But, thinking back, it seems impossible now to pinpoint precisely when it begun. It certainly did not begin when I started writing it. For the fact is that, if I started writing it, it's only *because* it had already begun, in some other form, insisting in whatever else I was doing, making me hesitate, insinuating itself in the form of a generative problematic that, with the force of an imperative, turned me into its prey and compelled me to turn to it, to do what I could to develop it, to respond to its demand while intensifying the possibility that it could, in fact, be written. Which is to say that the book was already ongoing when I started writing it, and now that it is out of my hands, it remains unfinished, insisting and persisting in yours, unexpectedly morphing into whatever might come after it. The book is ongoing and unfinished, much like what is *in* the book—much like the runaway philosophical and political experimentation that turned me into its means and that, with the help of William James, I seek to activate through it, to make felt by means of it. The "and" trails along every edge, along every sentence: Ever not quite! Which is why, while this book is written in gratitude for, and in honour of, a whole host of relations (intellectual, personal, institutional, political, enduring, and ephemeral) through which it became composed, it is the ongoing and unfinished nature—of every book, perhaps, but certainly of this book—that overwhelms my capacity to name every one of those relations here.

And yet, as James himself told his editor upon submitting his thousand-page, two-volume manuscript *The Principles of Psychology*, "*No* subject is worth being treated of in 1000 pages!" If ongoing and unfinished (and it is clear that his was just as ongoing and unfinished as this one, albeit significantly longer), a book must have, if not necessarily an introduction and a conclusion, then at least a "before" and an "after." Above all, one must do one's best to avoid turning it into what, in his letter, James

called “a loathsome, distended, tumefied, bloated, dropsical mass.” The same goes, because of my own incapacity to name them all, for the relations I can and must strive to invoke by name here. Thus, I will try to exert some self-restraint, and restrict these thanks to those whose mark has been most patently felt in the weaving of this text. It goes without saying, but not without thanking, that this book would not be what it is without the warm and generous support from Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, who have been keeping the flame of speculative experimentation burning in extremely generative ways, and who enthusiastically welcomed the inclusion of this book in their brilliant Thought in the Act book series. Deep gratitude also goes to Ken Wissoker, Ryan Kendall, Annie Lubinsky, and two anonymous readers, who asked thoughtful questions, made perspicacious and invaluable suggestions, and carefully saw the book through its various stages of development and production. Their attentive, careful, and responsive editorial work is second to none, and it made the entire process a true pleasure.

Goldsmiths, and in particular the Department of Sociology, have provided the increasingly rare space of refuge within which a book like this could even be conceived, let alone developed. As it now faces—like many other institutions in the UK and around the world—new threats of intellectual devastation, this book is a modest thank you to everyone and everything that for years has made of Goldsmiths a place where thought can be cultivated pluralistically, along lines of divergence that connect it to the possibility of creating another possible university, of thinking, writing, and teaching for another possible world, even when the worlds we trust are possible are not always the same world. Inside it, even today, hindrance and experiment go all the way through.

Among colleagues and friends, this book is particularly indebted to some without whose careful questions, comments, and suggestions—or indeed, without their patient reading of too much of the text, at various stages—it would not be what it has become. In this sense, I am especially thankful to Monica Greco, Isaac Marrero-Guillamón, Rajyashree Pandey, Marsha Rosengarten, Sanjay Seth, and Isabelle Stengers, for their always generative and generous engagements, provocations, and propositions. Others who have enabled the composition of this book, through their helpful comments and suggestions on various chapters, sections, or passages or simply through their close intellectual friendship and support while the book was in the making, include, among others, Andrew Barry, Vikki Bell, Steve Brown, Felicity Callard, Nerea Calvillo, Didier Debaise, Vinciane Despret, Craig

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This book was written in the thick of it, amidst all other goings-on, without the benefit of sabbaticals, fellowships, or other such contemplative pleasures. On occasion, such escapes might have been welcome. And yet, in this particular case, the fact is that the writing benefited from the messy buzz of sociality, from the multifarious stream of life. Above all, it benefited from the interstices of thoughtful, collective experimentation that the MA and PhD students that attended my Politics & Difference masters module engendered each year for the last five years. Their willingness and ability to consent to experiment with a whole array of decidedly strange philosophical propositions; with even stranger beings; their capacity to put themselves at risk and their values in question as they groped for the possibility not only of making sense of obtuse ideas but of learning to think, live, and be connected to one another otherwise, gave me vital energy to carry on snatching bits of time here and there to enable the writing to continue its course, and to continue instilling joy, inside and in spite of the institutional demands of the day. At a time when universities seem increasingly unworthy of our attempts to defend them against their own devaluation, they persuade me that it is not the idea of the university, but something that can happen inside and in spite of it, something that brings us in and brings us back, which must be defended at all costs.

And those interstices are sometimes created, too, in rare spaces of scholarly exchange, through talks and seminars and meetings. In this sense, I've had the privilege of being invited to present and discuss aspects and parts of this book in various, immensely enriching contexts, with thoughtful audiences and participants. I am particularly grateful for discussions that took place at the Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy (CPPE) and the Business School at the University of Leicester (with thanks to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa for inviting me), with the Groupe d'Études Constructivistes (GECo) at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (with thanks to Didier Debaise and Isabelle Stengers), with the Unité de recherche en métaphysique et theories de la connaissance (MéThéor) at the Université de Liège (with thanks to Vinciane Despret), at the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health at Exeter University (with thanks to Lara Choksey), at the Experimental Speculation/Speculative Experi-

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It was on a certain afternoon—which might as well have been one of many hesitant beginnings—with Inês Violante, that the story of the first circumnavigation that opens this book began to insinuate itself in the midst of our conversation. It is to her, to life with her, that I am most grateful. May that remain, like a book, like the insistence of the pluriverse itself, always ongoing and unfinished.

CHAPTER ONE · Ongoing and Unfinished

Damn Great Empires!—including that of the Absolute.
WILLIAM JAMES

These days, my notion of the fantastic is closer to what we call reality.
Perhaps because reality approaches the fantastic more and more.
JULIO CORTÁZAR

ONE AND MANY · Ours is a tempestuous time. In the wake of the multifarious storms pouring over worlds for the last five hundred years, of imperial conquests and colonial projects, of capitalist supply chains and industrial progress, of rational knowledges and ecological devastation, it has long been a time of endings. Yet despite the ubiquitous resurgence of the term *apocalypse*, this is not the end to all endings, it is not for all that the end of time. Not yet, perhaps not ever. For in the end—to borrow Aimé Césaire's words—it is The End of the World that is the only thing in the world that's worth *beginning*.[1] Which is to say that it is the possibility of other worlds in this world that is beginning amidst all endings. The possibility of other stories, ongoing and unfinished, in-the-making in spite of all. Stories which offer neither the comfort of redemption, nor the foundations of a new and better civilization. But in the eye of the storm, they counter any sense of finality and trouble all fantasies of totality.[2] Pluralizing the present, these other stories, these other worlds in this world, precipitate a pragmatics of collective imagination against ongoing deso-

lation. Which is why it is possible that perhaps, just perhaps, by attending to stories where other worlds remain ongoing and unfinished, by experimenting with the possible beginnings such worlds might open up, the impossible itself can crack open, and an adventure in divergence around the day in eighty or a thousand worlds may once again become worthy of a certain kind of trust. This, indeed, is the speculative wager of this book, its groundless gamble, its throw of the dice: the wager on the possibility of rendering ourselves capable of thinking, against all odds, for other times to come, for worlds to be otherwise composed. To think, while we still can, in the hold of an improbable but insistent *perhaps*. One that, after William James—that most singular, divergent, and adventurous of American philosophers—we might call a *pluriverse*: a pluralistic universe underway and yet to be made, one and many, ongoing and unfinished.[3]

What might a radical pluralism look like, in the hold of perhaps? What politics of the possible might the pluriverse open up? Let me begin by beginning again, hesitantly, with a series of partial stories in the form of a list threading some loosely connected worlds through which openings make themselves felt in spite of all. A list which, like all good lists, is neither definitely finite nor statically infinite, but always *indefinite*, without beginning or end, ongoing and unfinished, always beginning with "And" and ending, provisionally, with "et cetera":[4]

> And there is this world where, for much of the year, the sun doesn't set, either east or west, until a green and yellow night erupts to cover all hours of the day.
>
> There is this world in which people cultivate their existence in the sea, learning to move, and think, and live under water for tens of minutes on end.
>
> There is this world where elves are real, living underneath rocks. Meddling in human affairs, they're called the *huldufólk* (the hidden people), and often force modern infrastructural development projects to slow their pace and change course.
>
> There is this world where ghosts are real, requiring the same things that humans require, making demands for care and justice after a disaster, and often receiving offerings of food and drink, money, clothing, and even bicycles and motorbikes.
>
> There is this world where immortality is real, enjoyed by strange fungal beings that, borne of deforested landscapes, do not die unless they are killed.

There is this world where shamanism is real, releasing its forces with the thawing advent of spring, which pushes forward a permanent state of transition after socialism, with or without shamans.

There is this world where soybeans, real soybeans, kill, actively taking the lives of peasants in expanding monoculture plantations.

There is this world where sorcery-lions are real, haunting their victims at night by means of direct, deadly attacks, or more slowly, by poisoning the health of their victims.

There is this world where characters are real, fictional characters borne of novels and stories who then come to inhabit the private spaces of people entering into conversations with them, making suggestions, offering advice.

There is this world where Gods and Goddesses are real, some revolutionary, some impersonal and remote, some extremely personal, engaging in intimate exchanges with those who learn how to trust them.

There is this world where yellowish moldy things, unicellular beings with no brains or nervous systems, inhabiting suburban backyards, can think and select and make logistical decisions that at times are as efficient as those made by human engineers.

There is this world where healers, developing the appropriate techniques, can extract gray, visible spirits from people's bodies, relieving them of their pain and suffering.

There is this world where oracles pronounce indubitable truths, truths that can sooth or bewilder those who consult them but which are never put into question, never doubted, for doubt is irrelevant to them.

There is this world, which are many, where Pachamama—or what, inadequately, some of us call Nature—has a real existence and even the right to integral respect for its ongoing existence despite persistent assaults by extractivist practices.

There is this world where the dead are real and present in the lives of those who go on living, often appearing in the guise of birds or cats, transforming the habits of those who love and remember them.

(Etc.)

There are more, many more little worlds in this world, many et ceteras to be added to this permanently unfinished list. But here's the thing: this is not a list of imaginary places or legendary lands. These are neither parallel universes, little freestanding units, nor utopian scenarios. When I speak of these many beings as *real*, I do not speak metaphorically. I am not

simply claiming certain people *believe* them to be real, that they belong to some exotic *worldview* or to other modes of *knowing* the world, and I am not even saying they correspond to so many ontologies, or to *theories* of what is. All such formulations would leave the foundations of our modern world, of what some call "reality," ultimately unscathed. These are many little worlds insofar as their *realities* diverge radically from each other, and from the heavily policed borders and deep foundations of the modern, Western ploughing of the world. But their differences are immanent. Rather than absolute separations, they trail along the "and" that, James proposed, makes the world *both* one and many.

Indeed, divergence does not oppose, but presupposes, togetherness. Already in 1907, James argued that the problem of whether the world is one or many was the most pregnant of all philosophical problems, the one with the largest number of consequences, such that if you know whether someone is a decided monist or a decided pluralist you perhaps know more about their outlook on life than if you give them "any other name ending in *ist*."[5] But James was also aware then of what no philosophy can any longer pretend to ignore: that the problem of difference, of one and many worlds, has always been more than philosophical. For indeed, in the wake of the tangled catastrophes of capitalism, colonialism, and extractivism, the mass disqualification of differences through which the modern world was born has radically devastated the very conditions of livability of myriad human and more-than-human worlds in this world. In relay and return, to experiment with differences under the sign of a radical pluralism requires that we trouble those facile images of diversity and sameness in a unified cosmos capable of containing difference in its midst. For the pluriverse is speculatively situated in the "*and*" that connects "one" and "many" through divergence, holding the many connecting frictions in generative tension. Standing resolutely against the absolute, before the beyond, without foundations, the pluriverse trembles in the interstices between the one and the many, insinuating the possibility of other worlds in this world, of differences all the way down.

The possible it intimates is an urgent and insistent one, for it lurks there where the seams of the modern modes of worlding the world have begun to burst. As such, while its degrees of oneness and unity ultimately remain an open, empirical question, permanently up for verification and transformation, its ongoing insistence is in the form of partial stories, of loosely connected and disconnected realities, of eighty or a thousand "little hangings-together" in continuous processes of unification here, and plu-

ralization there, without amounting to an encompassing unification yet, or perhaps ever.[6] For these realities, spread across South and North, the West and "the rest," frequently derided and condemned, often hard-won, when not reluctantly conceded and dimly disclosed, nevertheless subsist precariously. They persist in intimate friction with and in spite of the ongoing and unfinished project of what I would call the modern *monification* of the world: the disqualification and devastation of differences brought about through capitalist supply chains and corrosive forms of laughter, through rational knowledges and colonial expansions, through development programs and socio-ecological plundering.[7] These realities are many, but in some respects, in some planetary respects, we're all in the same multifarious storm, to swim or sink together—literally.[8] It is the reality of such realities—one and many, ongoing and unfinished—that the pluriverse insinuates as an insistent possibility. And it is this possible to which this book seeks to respond.

THE FEELING OF REALITY · In spite of all, worlds still abound, unbound, they stir trouble and pose problems, they insist and persist. There are now a host of efforts in fields as diverse as philosophy, geography, postcolonial studies, anthropology, theology, political theory, and the nascent environmental humanities that seek to engage with the insistence of differences and the troubles they precipitate so as to try and cultivate a radically pluralistic politics that may work to displace and counter the modern monification of the world—in other words, to reimagine the possible conditions for its livability in the plural. And it is precisely in the interstices of these various diverging paths that, in *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*, the effort involves something altogether different from the attempt at writing another exegetical commentary or an interpretation of James's thought, which still appears to produce contemporary exegetes who conclude that his work provides us "with little discussion of social issues that appear central at present."[9] What I seek instead is to *relay* aspects of the thrust of his thought as a hand held out from a past that has never left our present. A held-out hand which perhaps another hand—one that quietly but irreverently sidesteps the fate of much of James's reception among avid commentators—may speculatively experiment with, may seek to relaunch and reactivate, to turn it once again into a generative and demanding proposition.[10]

To relay James today is not, therefore, to attempt yet another faithful exposition, another go at "building up an author's meaning out of separate

texts" so as to assess their inward coherence, or lack thereof.[11] Relaying is above all an art of consequences. It is experimental or it is nothing.[12] As such, it requires not fidelity but the risky cultivation of a certain form of trust, and its efficacy consists precisely in the extent to which such an experiment may manage to grasp something of James's "centre of vision, by an act of imagination," breathing a bit of new life into propositions that might otherwise fade away.[13] Such is the task before us. Relaying James's pluralism as a proposition that is at once dramatically political, radically empirical, and fugitively metaphysical, I hold out a trusting hand as I seek to forge new and always partial connections among a multiplicity of divergent paths. For indeed, as it happens in this overspecialized academic habitat we inhabit with difficulty while we still can, these diverging projects speak to each other less than one might wish, expressing the somewhat troubled dissonance created by the "and" that turns "the one and the many" into a problem on which we cannot turn our backs any longer.

Seeking to construct the theoretical conditions for a decolonial option to a global future, the tradition of postcolonial thought, for instance, is of course acutely sensitive to the ways in which the imperialist system of knowledge and capitalist production that Walter Mignolo, for convenience (I hope), dubs the "Western code," the code by which European modernity proclaimed its own historical exception, has operated in such a way as to override and strip divergent worlds from their generative liveability.[14] Postcolonial and decolonial thinkers are sensitive, that is, to the fact that Euromodernity continues its expansion on the alleged achievement of a universal thought that may finally be called "rational," while doing so at the expense of the experiences, values, and knowledges of the those that have been on the receiving end of its imperialist operations. Their plight is poignant and urgent, and aspects of their proposals continue to inspire and inform the experiment that this book sets in motion. At the same time, however, divergences abound and proliferate. For I fear that as they seek to uncover the foundations of a post-Occidental reason, their concern with epistemology and identity, and their profusion of neo-Kantian diagnoses on the coloniality of knowledge, of power, of being, and so forth, often draw many a postcolonial thinker back into the modern quicksand of the Western code itself, not only presenting the latter as a homogenous and accomplished block but as a "coloniality at large," endowed with a reality no other decolonial "option" appears capable of resisting, or even putting at risk.

A fertile and divergent path is being traced by a growing number of contemporary anthropologists, philosophers, and political ecologists.

They have radically turned the tables on the Eurocentric game of cultural relativism by appealing to the language of multiple ontologies and comparative metaphysics.[15] In so doing, they sometimes have created quite wonderful openings for beginning the task of taking seriously the realities of these many worlds outside the modern West. Indeed, if I find myself drawn to an experiment in relaying James's pluralistic problematic today, it is no doubt thanks to what they have taught me. *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* holds out a hand to them too, in generous affinity with their efforts. Alas, I'm not an anthropologist. Yet it is our shared interest in the "permanent decolonization of thought" that leads me to experiment, beyond an analytics of ontology, with the divergences, connections, and transformations that are made and unmade by the ongoing and unfinished adventures of many other worlds in this world.[16] For while possibly appropriate to those others who have a stake in the theorization of their own modes of experience, it is worth continuing to remind oneself, now and again, that "ontology" is not everybody's problem. Its significance belongs above all to a world which, to varying degrees, still keeps alive the flame of that questionable tradition that so comfortably has split the world into epistemologies and ontologies, appearances and realities, what things are and what they look like. Which is why it is the great merit of these adventurous anthropologies to have resisted the habit—to borrow Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's apt words—of relating to other cultures "as solutions to those problems posed by our own," attempting instead to create the means to attend to the divergent ways in which others pose problems of their own. And it is in alliance with them that what I seek to intensify throughout this book is precisely the possibility of giving to those differences and divergences the power not to solve but to induce a metamorphosis of the manner in which we might come to pose our own problems.[17]

This is to say that, in seeking to stimulate a new appetite for trusting the pluriverse, what I hope to do in the course of this book is not to solve but to learn to inhabit the problem of differences, of the one and the many, to *feel* this "and," in its viscosities and its openings, in its violences and its possibilities. If the problem of the one and the many is so crucial today, then it's because it evokes in its most dramatic stakes the need to pay attention to what James called "the feeling of *and*."[18] It is, in other words, because this "and" matters: because any clear-cut, either/or solution, while possible in the abstract, is practically unworkable. "Things are with another in many ways, but nothing," James protested, "includes everything or dominates over everything. The word 'and' trails along after every sen-

tence. Something always escapes. 'Ever not quite' has to be said of the best attempts anywhere in the universe at attaining all inclusiveness."[19] Pluralism is not an unproblematic celebration of the many. It is an ongoing response to a generative problematic, an insistence that calls for no jubilant solution but for careful and pragmatic experimentation. This is what the anaphoric operation that composes the list above ("There is this world . . .") tries to evoke: this *and* that, one *and* many, same *and* different, ongoing *and* unfinished. For as James argued, when the problem is addressed pragmatically rather than abstractly, "the world is one just so far as its parts hang together by any definite connexion" and "it is many just so far as any definite connexion fails to obtain."[20] And it is growing more and more unified or pluralized as the many practices that compose it continue to intervene in it. The pluriverse insists and persists in the interstices between the one and the many, rejecting either as final solutions to its ongoing problematic insistence.

The kind of pluralistic variation I am after, therefore, is one concerned with the pluralization of this element over which the modern world has claimed exclusive jurisdiction—a pluralization of this thing, of this *king*, called "reality." Pluralism's trusting hand is held out to manifold *realities*, loosely connected, partially open to each other and to their own becoming, composing a precarious cosmos that is diverging with itself all the way down—one and many, ongoing and unfinished. For if an ontology is always in some sense the handmaiden to some metaphysical system, *reality*, the sense of reality—suggested James, sneakily, in the middle of his treatise on psychology—"feels like itself, that is about as much as we can say."[21] *Reality feels like itself*: a demanding formulation that needs no phenomenological subject, no human agent, and no cultural whole, to be already there (where?), doing the work of feeling. Reality *feels* and *is felt* – a formulation which, put in the general language of serious metaphysicians, might perhaps read like this: "reality" may be said of everything that feels and is felt anywhere in the universe. Or as James put it elsewhere: "Everything real must be experienceable somewhere, and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real."[22] Indeed, it is precisely in this sense that *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* sets out to relay James's thought: as the anti-imperialist efforts of a runaway metaphysician. For while he may be better known as a mere psychologist or, at best, a philosopher of "experience," it is also James who, bit by bit, makes experience and reality coincide in an irrepressible and generative plurality, such that while experience is the "primal stuff or material in the world" of which "everything is composed,"

there is also "no general stuff of which experience at large is made. There are as many stuffs as there are 'natures' in the things experienced."[23] Reality feels like itself, in the plural.

Feeling like itself, "reality" doesn't always need to come wrapped up in proper names—like Amerindian, Cuban, Western, Melanesian, and so on—because it hasn't yet learned that it is indecent for it to go out naked. To those who are heirs to the musings of modern European philosophy, this may sound like a minor, technical distinction, but the pragmatic difference it can make is, I suggest, significant. Because the modern tradition is also the one that has turned its own metaphysics into an empire, deploying its trained realism into a weapon of mass disqualification that creates and polices the border between what may count as real and what is dismissed as illusory, fantastical, superstitious, magical, or whimsical, no matter where (or when) it is found. Which is also to say that, as I gasp for another chance to regenerate my imagination while I still can, in this book I find myself entertaining pluralism, after James, as an ongoing, anti-imperialist effort dedicated to *our own metaphysical indetermination*—a speculative pragmatism that is not *against* the work of metaphysics as such, but resolutely *other* to its imperial expansions into an all-inclusive system.[24] More than a straightforward multiplication of the many, then, pluralism animates the politics of a world that persistently resists the assaults that would turn it into a single order, risking its own unfoldings and refoldings into an irreducible and insistent pluriverse. This kind of pluralism is thus a vector for a speculative, decolonial imagination.[25] One that instead of opposing power to power, instead of confronting the empire of modern realism with the anti-realism of deconstructive critique, lays siege to empire by embarking on the adventure of cultivating a realism generous and generative enough to travel around the day in eighty or a thousand worlds. A pluralism *trusting* enough to wager on the possibility that, as Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy once reminded the World Social Forum, "another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."[26]

STORIES WITHIN STORIES, WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS · Other worlds underway, ongoing and unfinished, trust we must. Isn't this what Gilles Deleuze meant when he implored that the most urgent and most difficult task before us today is precisely to believe in the world? The urgency of this task, one that requires a "mode of existence still to be discovered," and

a problematic "we" yet to be composed, signals that this is not a matter of cultivating an *amor fati* toward an impending apocalypse.[27] To trust the world, to insist on living in it, to persist in it, is urgent because it demands that we insist on *another* world in this world, and that we trust *that*. This is what Fred Moten beautifully calls the "the joyful noise of the scattered, scatted eschaton," the refusal of a modern eschatology that has gone to great lengths to bring about its miraculous discoveries and creations, and now begins to wonder whether those same lengths may well bring about the end.[28] But while possibly joyful, this possible refusal is no doubt also the most difficult. Because, as Deleuze acknowledged, "we have so many reasons not to believe" in the world, "we have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or a god."[29] More than that, we continue to lose it. Indeed, it was the impending loss of the world, the progressive erasure of differences propelled by the imperialization of America, that marked James's anti-imperialist pluralism at the turn of the twentieth century, and against which he sought to cultivate a risky, experimental trust in the insistent possibility of an irreducible pluriverse.[30]

What has happened to us? What have been the lengths that this modern eschatology has gone to such that it could have partly succeeded in creating the foundations for a narrow form of reason fundamentally pitted against trust, and turned its provincial realism into a weapon of mass disqualification? We could recall Max Weber's nostalgic lament about the modern disenchantment of the world generated by the growing rationalization of a culture finally freed from all illusions.[31] This is a fine story, but I fear it is not the one the urgency of the task demands. Because any (re) enchantment of the world has disenchantment built into it.[32] And Weber's romanticism, for its part, is the child of a modern epoch that accepts as *fait accompli* a fate that is still ongoing and unfinished. A fate many of those other worlds are either indifferent to, or keep plying against as their "outsized realities," to borrow Gabriel García Márquez's words. The realities of hidden people, of gods and ghosts and soybeans and oracles and sorceries, were never "enchanted" to begin with.[33] They just feel like themselves.

Thus, in attempting to scat the eschaton, to disclose its enclosure such that another throw of the dice may become possible, perhaps we can experiment with a different tale. One whose memento will neither lead us to simply ponder where the magic has gone, nor set the mythological foundations for the complete erasure of a memory that, however sad, is still ours, to which we are today called upon to respond. The challenge is whether we can explore the possibility of asking other generative questions that

may in turn make the monumental challenge of trusting the other worlds in this world possible. With that in mind, let me propose a *failing* story of origins of the modern project of world-monification, one whose implausible plot is I think as interesting as its unraveling. This is a tale, in other words, about the turning of the world into a *globe*. It is a tale I entertained for a short while (only to be amazed at its unraveling, and humbled by my own learned ignorance) when trying to imagine that, just as the moderns were supposedly able, according to their own stories, to leave the Middle Ages behind—that is, in the middle of their path to "progress"—by realizing that the innumerable marvels and wonders that fascinated Europeans at that time were not real because the world, now enlightened, had never in fact been populated with divine presence;[34] that this might have been made possible, in turn, by the fact that they had *already* discovered that those other worlds in this world could not in any genuine sense be *real*, either. While today, out of tolerance and goodwill, one may call them cultural, metaphorical, magical, traditional, or religious, they could not possibly be real because it was the turning of our unbounded reason into technologies of circumnavigation that gave us Columbus's egg and Magellan's voyages, that gave us the modern Age of Empires and enabled us to settle, once and for all, that the world is *not* many, for contrary to medieval wisdom, the earth is not flat, but round.

One could imagine how, rightly or wrongly, the event of the first successful circumnavigations would have been key to this process. First, because of the economic and geopolitical accession to world-wide trade and processes of enslavement and colonization of non-European peoples, but also, importantly, because of the geometrical discovery of a spherical Earth, perfectly self-contained, with no cliff-edges, and no possible worlds beyond. A round world mirroring in earthly experience the theologics of the One.[35] Indeed, as the modern epic goes, Columbus held the enlightened but then unpopular conviction that the Earth might in fact turn out to be round, and had to overcome the calumnies of the assembled clerics at Salamanca to get a hearing with the Spanish monarchs to gain their support for the expedition that would open a nautical path between the Spanish Kingdom and the Far East. For this reason, when they reached what later became known as America, Columbus was convinced he had actually arrived in Asia. It was thanks to this cosmographical mistake, therefore, that Europe was placed at the center of the map as well as of history—a gesture that prompts postcolonial philosopher Enrique Dussel to make the provocative suggestion that, rather than having been born of its own accord,

through the miraculous inventions of an enlightened techno-scientific culture, it was Columbus who in fact inaugurated Modernity.[36]

Columbus, however, didn't make it to Asia, and so he never quite managed to bend the medieval map. It was the Portuguese renegade Fernâo de Magalhães who, as is known, is credited with having led, between 1519 and 1522 (and with Spanish funding), the first voyage around the world—not quite in eighty days like Phileas Fogg, but in well over a thousand. Unlike Columbus, who described his voyages as the discovery of "another world,"[37] Magalhães was still adventurous but a lot less speculative, simply seeking westward access to the Spice Islands promised by Columbus but never delivered, a kind of access that, if achieved, would have enabled Spain to lay sovereign claim to part of the Portuguese-dominated spice trade. Assisted by his Malaysian polyglot slave Enrique, a fleet of five ships, 230 men, copious artillery, and promises of massive future dividends, he sailed south alongside the African shore, and made the Atlantic crossing south of the Equator to reach southern Brazil. From then on, they continued sailing along what would now be the Uruguayan and Argentinian shores.

For reasons far more numerous than I can here relate, this was a dangerous trip. Suffice it to say that, on their way down the American coast, Magalhães and his fleet came across "hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons." They also encountered "a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer, and the whinny of a horse."[38] And as they found shelter in the natural harbor of what later became known as Puerto San Julián in the Argentinian Patagonia, Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine member of the fleet who kept written records of their journey, writes that they encountered a giant who, at the glance of a mirror, "was greatly terrified, leaping backwards" and making "three or four men fall down."[39] This was, of course, less than half of the trip. Navigating through the strait that crosses the southern tip of the continent on to the Pacific Ocean, the other half also included internal rebellions and desertions within the crew, food shortages, generalized cases of scurvy, and violent encounters with indigenous peoples from Micronesia—until at least part of the fleet made it to the Philippines and then on to the much sought-after Spice Islands in what is now the Indonesian archipelago. After spending some time stuffing themselves on cloves and cinnamon, they eventually reentered the Atlantic and made the final stretch back to Spain.

The map was bent. If, as the Martinican philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant put it, "the first Colonist, Christopher Columbus, did not voyage in the name of a country but of an idea," then presumably Ferdinand Magellan, the first circumnavigator, would have literally *brought home* the idea that, contrary to medieval wisdom, the world was not flat but round—without worlds beyond, wholly and ecumenically one.[40] As he turned the cliff-edges into a challenging but united mass of water, and established a definite connection around the many little worlds for the first time, the Dark Ages drew to a close and the colonial monification of the world was thus initiated. Indeed, in some regards, this was a critical event. Not only was the very construction of the fleet responsible for "the final demise of the forests of the Mediterranean and the beginning of an intensive exploitation of wooded parts of the Baltic, Scandinavia, Russia, and eventually, the Americas,"[41] but as historian Joyce E. Chaplin has argued, having succeeded in turning the globe into a real object, the expedition also made "plans for global empire real."[42] The Global World, the Age of Empires, and Cheap Nature Capitalism were thus born as triplets, and modernity began to lose the world as soon as it had finally managed to capture the globe.[43]

That said, a contemporary historian may understandably want to burn me at the stake for this story. Others may object that it risks creating too strong an association between modernity and the West, thus giving a free pass to the Eurocentric character of many a story of the advent of the modern age. They would remind us that "the West" is little more than an abstraction, that modernity was neither an exclusively European invention, a historical rupture with a pre-modern past, nor a fully successful achievement. They would argue that despite its furious disavowals, modernity is itself multiple and plural. They need not be wrong either. As far as I am concerned, "modernity" is the heteronymic name for a host of different stories we tell. Which is not to say that these are "just stories." Stories do things, they infect our lives and practices, they weave and tear worlds, they shape how they might come to be inhabited. We live and die by the stories we tell. Thus, no story can claim innocence.[44] No story can disentangle itself from what it omits, any more than it can distance itself from the consequences it precipitates, or the difference it might be liable to make. Each involves a risk, a wager on the worlds we might seek to weave. Which is why it matters how stories are told. With some stories we are lured into the surreptitious instabilities of the modern, looking for the per-

sistent ambivalences of that which its most Eurocentric and self-indulgent versions would disavow. With others, we're prompted to sail in the search for alternative configurations of what being modern might involve. But perhaps other stories, like the one I'm in the midst of telling, might yet take us along different paths, not always marked on a map. By *provincializing* the modern, by rendering it a mode of ploughing and of inhabiting a world-turned-globe that has become dominant but never total, by conceiving it as a project and a force that has proven extremely effective but never finished nor entirely successful, perhaps these kinds of stories create the possibility of something else. Perhaps they enable us to affirm that while we're heirs to colonizing and imperial histories that persist in the worlds we might seek to weave—*ever not quite*, there are other worlds in this world; other ways of inhabiting worlds are possible in spite of all. Perhaps stories like this might also precipitate the possibility of telling other stories, ones which might lure us to the sense of an opening, transforming thought through a pluralistic variation of interests.

That, for better or ill, is the risk I take—the risk, that is, of experimenting with such stories in order to throw the dice and begin again. But I do so with some hesitation, for hesitation is at the heart of this story I'm trying to tell. It simultaneously subtends and upends it. After all, compared to the monistic elegance of most stories of origin, pluralism "offers but a sorry appearance. It is," James insisted, "a turbid, muddled, gothic sort of affair, without a sweeping outline and with little pictorial nobility."[45] Muddle things I must! For it is not just that while Magalhães did made history, he didn't actually make the entire journey, having died somewhere along the way at the hands of Filipino soldiers defending themselves from invasion. Nor is it just that, by the time the fleet reached the South Asian Sea, it would have probably been Enrique, the Malaysian slave, who was the first person to have completed a journey around the world. The fascinating unraveling of this story begins when we note that much of its "pictorial nobility" hinges on the bending of the medieval flat-Earth map. Enticing as it is, I found out rather quickly and with some embarrassment that this could not, in and of itself, have been the inaugural event of the modern monification of the world—at least not without unraveling the untimely thread that connects the event of circumnavigation in the early sixteenth century with another event that took place much later. Which is to say, not without considering that most things happen through the *resonance* of events, "point of view on a point of view, displacement of perspective, differentiation of difference,"[46] stories within stories, worlds within worlds.

By this I mean that, if we follow the story linearly, Magellan's circumnavigation could not have constituted the birth, or rather, the rebirth—which is to say, the *Renaissance*—of the self-contained, spherical Earth, for the simple reason that the Earth of the Dark Ages was never flat to begin with. This is where the other story in this story opens up. Contrary to the epic tale, this other story notes that the ancient insights of a spherical Earth achieved by the Greeks never quite faded, and "all major medieval scholars accepted the earth's roundness," at least in principle, "as an established fact of cosmology."[47] In fact, the natural historian Stephen Jay Gould writes of this other story that apparently only two medieval scholars espoused such flat cosmologies. One proposed an account whereby people at the antipodes "might walk with their feet above their heads in a land where crops grow down and rain falls up," while the other championed a literal interpretation of a biblical metaphor which suggested that the Earth was "a flat floor for the rectangular, vaulted arch of the heavens above."[48] But both of them were largely marginal figures in medieval scholarship, not least because they wrote in Greek and remained untranslated during a time when the *lingua franca* was Latin. To muddle things further, back in the enlightened imperial center of the world, monsters, curiosities, and other wild facts and outsized, extraordinary realities still populated fairs, coffeehouses, and publications until well into the eighteenth century. After all, it was at that time that the Académie Royale des Sciences printed Leibniz's account of a dog that could bark out about thirty words![49] As this other story goes, it was not until the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century that the epic story of the flat Earth took hold, and was introduced on a massive scale in history textbooks pretty much until today, with the sole purpose of supporting the place of Darwin's theory of evolution as the latest episode of "a tale of bright progress continually sparked by science."[50] The introduction of the flat-Earth story in history textbooks was, as Gould suggests, a chapter written by modern historians in their equally implausible story of the development of human civilization as an ongoing strife between Science and Religion.

A *failing* story of origins indeed—for neither the circumnavigation, nor the nineteenth-century campaign led by historians, will singly help us pinpoint its beginning. But something is underway nevertheless. Something is engendered in the resonance between these events; another story within these stories is woven through them, one which opens up what has effectively constituted an epochal transformation, underway throughout the last few centuries, and lacing itself around many other stories of the rise

of the "new sciences" and Newtonian physics,[51] the bifurcation of nature,[52] the rise of natural law in both science and politics,[53] and the birth of the human sciences.[54] This transformation that we have come to call "modern" extracted elements of such divergent stories with a view toward the general orchestration of a dominant story of order that would bring together, into an encompassing scheme, the laws of nature and the laws of nations. And in so doing, it embraced the arrival of what in hindsight we might call a new, modern metaphysics of an ordinary, uniform, and unexceptional order of nature. Conflating it with reality as such, modernity celebrated its intellectual, political, and social implications. Stephen Toulmin had a point, then, in associating the "hidden agenda" of modernity with a *counter-renaissance* that, in conflating reason with the boundless, the general, the universal, the certain, and the timeless, poured scorn on everything specific, local, timely, and uncertain.[55] Writing a historiography of backward pasts to accompany a geography of living anachronisms, this new metaphysics spread throughout philosophy, science, and the arts in the form of a modern realism that rendered the imagination dangerous and the extraordinary vulgar, and thus transformed the way in which the event of circumnavigation came to matter. According to its own story, going around the world was no longer merely a nautical success, nor even just a political achievement. Instead, it represented the absolute victory of a finally boundless reason over a world whose unruly edges and extraordinary multifariousness could then safely be ignored, and eventually banished. A mode of inhabiting the world where one would no longer be compelled to believe in other worlds in this world, or to trust anything beyond what this domesticated orthodoxy now deemed possible. And yet, ever not quite: the story is still ongoing, the agenda is still unfinished.

WHAT IS REALITY CAPABLE OF? · In knitting together certain forms of naturalism, of rationalism, and of colonialism, what these connected stories animated, therefore, is the conjuring of an order of the possible in a now self-enclosed world.[56] This is why rather than choosing between them, I propose these stories-within-stories as a kind of *opening*, one perhaps capable of *dis*-closing the closure brought about by the progressive plot of the epic tale of the nineteenth century, one providing a possible resource to counter the process of monification and to reimagine the stakes of trusting the world and its pluralization again. Rather than simply arguing for a

(re)turn to the flat Earth, then, I propose to invert the direction, which is to say the sense, of Magalhães's and Fogg's travel—*around the day in eighty worlds*. What is at stake here is neither the affirmation of many little separate worlds in isolation, nor the number eighty, but the wresting of the adventure of voyaging from the dreams of the colonial project by going around a pluralistic universe of partial stories and connections. In other words, it is a matter of attempting to rescue realities in the plural from the hands of modern realists *and* anti-realists alike. Of course, disputes over some form of "realism" or another may have been around ever since Plato expressed his distrust of art and sought to expel poets from the Republic, but these connected stories have enabled the modern flame-keepers of Platonism to truly spread across the contemporary world.[57] And today, while the list of disqualified realities rises exponentially in a world without refuge, "realist" thinkers fight over whether one should be a realist either about the past *or* about futures, a realist about natural kinds *or* about human kinds, a realist about things-in-themselves *or* about things-as-related, a realist about objects *or* about relations, a realist about substances *or* about processes, or a realist about stars but not about the occurrence of the sequence "777" in the number π.[58] Which begs the question: other than by its love for the unexceptional, how should modern realism be characterized? What is the patterning through which it ploughs the world?

Given that no "cat-on-the-mat" argument is capable of singlehandedly ploughing the world, and given that, as I have just suggested, so-called realist philosophers may disagree about whether one should affirm the reality of the cat, or the mat, and would probably frown upon any modest attempt to affirm the reality of the *on*, my suggestion is that modern realism can be characterized neither as a philosophy, a theory, nor even as an intellectual position. Consider the supposedly standard definition of realism, which states that among its basic premises are that "the world consists of some *fixed* totality of mind-independent objects" and that "there is exactly *one* true and complete description of 'the way the world is.'"[59] What is this if not a legislative decree? What is this if not the arbitrary definition of an abstract *boundary*? What difference does this definition make, if not that of inspiring distrust in other worlds by insisting dogmatically in the fixed and single nature of *this* world as *the* world? Which of the many other worlds could possibly survive it? Alas, poor ghosts, poor hidden people, poor giants and oracles, poor gods and goddesses and the dead; poor Pigafetta, poor our own imaginations, apparently so mind-dependent; poor

the relationships and partial connections we're in; poor novelty; but also poor Darwin, poor James, poor Deleuze, poor our sense of curiosity, discovery, and invention; poor the possible itself.

Because it is a moving border legislating on the kinds of questions that can be asked, the meaning and function of modern realism is first to be defined negatively. Just like the notion of Enlightenment itself,[60] this order of the possible for which modern realism is a nickname is largely defined by what it excludes, which is to say, by what it opposes, such that we may as well imagine it rather as an order, both metaphysical and political, of the *impossible*. More than a philosophical doctrine with an affirmative proposition about what reality *is*, modern realism must thus be pragmatically understood, first and foremost, as a belligerent operation, as an entire mode of inhabiting and engaging the world and its forms of divergence, a mode which makes its own militant legislations percolate into every encounter, into every feeling of *and*. This modern-realist operation functions primarily as an act of policing that, aided by the rise of an unexceptional metaphysics and the global expansion of European empires, consists in marshalling a distrust for the world as it travels around it, undertaking the ongoing—but I insist, unfinished—task of legislating what is real from what is illusory or superstitious, what is possible from what is impossible. With no patience for generative questions, it behaves like the schoolmate of Julio Cortázar, the Argentinian writer in whose honor I've titled this book. This was a classmate to whom Cortázar lent a book by Jules Verne; after a few days the boy brought it back and, to Cortázar's surprise, said: "I can't read this, it's too fantastical."[61]

Were it not for the fact that European colonization turned this distrusting realism into an imperial machine of its own, we would not need be concerned with it. But its ubiquitous presence today, its capacity not only to disqualify anything it faces but to transform the very mode of judgment, cornering those who seek to think the possibility of another world in this world into the defeat of an equally distrusting anti-realism, makes its consequences felt with an urgency that one can no longer afford to ignore. Because while abstract philosophical arguments cannot singlehandedly shape the world in their own image, philosophies nevertheless are, as James said over a century ago, "intimate parts of the universe," such that "with our theories," even with our modern realist theories-of-no-theory, the universe "may trust itself or mistrust itself the more, and by doing the one or the other, deserve more the trust or the mistrust."[62] This is why, animated by James's proposition that reality feels like itself, this books sets

out to invert Magellan's journey, and go around the day in eighty worlds. Because it seems to me that the first task to be undertaken in the permanently ongoing and unfinished project of our own metaphysical indetermination, one that might perhaps enable us to regenerate our trust in this world and its possibilities, is the task of refusing the modern-realist operations by snatching realism from its modern alliance with monism. Which is to say, the task of laboring against the empire of mistrust that the metaphysics of an ordinary nature has instilled in our practices and imaginations. Because what distrusts itself deserves to be mistrusted.

Édouard Glissant once wrote that decolonization "will have done its real work" when it goes beyond the limits of the oppositional logic that defines it as the negative of colonialism.[63] Seconding him, I would say that it will then have *resumed* its work on and in reality. More than a deconstructive critique of coloniality, refusing the reasons that give rise to opposition requires a *pluralistic realism* that works experimentally to cultivate an ongoing and unfinished pluriverse, diverging with itself all the way down. Not, therefore, a relativist "anything goes," but a pluralist "many things *are!*" Laboring toward metaphysical indetermination, I want to associate this kind of pluralism with the paradoxical figure of a *runaway metaphysics*, unhinged from first principles and apocalyptic endings, permanently ongoing and unfinished: an exercise that has certainly nothing to do with the modern systematic search for the ultimate structure of a boundless reality principle, to be discerned above and beyond the multifarious realities of this world. It is the modern justifications for the distrust in the world that a runaway metaphysics rejects, and it is the temptation to be absolved in yet another boundless beyond that it resists. As such, it will favor no system, condone no systematic distrust, and authorize no principle of neglect. Unhinged, its task is that of an ongoing experimentation, a permanent effort in generative feeling, an ongoing and unfinished art of noticing and learning, not from a realm of a higher denomination but from the multifarious, empirical "reality where things *happen*," without exception.[64] A runaway metaphysics must thus go wandering South and North in the search for possible alliances with other little hangings-together, with realities lost, suppressed, marginalized, and derided, with realities fantastical, incomprehensible, and implausible; always in touch with other worlds underway and yet to be made, insisting in the distrusted rubbles that modern-realist operations have disavowed. And it insists in them to make felt, always a bit more, always a little differently, that if reality needs no other justification than experience itself, there is no one substance of which all experiences

are made. That there are other worlds in this world, underway and yet to be made. That reality feels like itself, in the plural.

A thoroughly realistic project, albeit of an unusual sort: pluralistic, unprincipled, counter-ecumenical, pragmatic, radically empirical. Going around the day, it will perhaps resemble the kinds of realism we entertain during the night, when even the most skeptical of the moderns can be shaken at the glimpse of the shadow of a possible ghost. Such a pluralistic realism would no doubt be unusual because, instead of beginning with either positive or negative doctrines, with so many determinations and definitions distinguishing what is real from what is not, it must always begin again, with a generous and generative question that modern-realist operations have made almost impossible to utter: "*what is reality capable of?*," and stay to hear the responses. It is clear that this question will not, by itself, solve any of our problems. Worse, it will take away our favorite weapon for dealing with them. In so doing, it is likely to create new, pragmatic problems of learning to inhabit a pluralistic world without foundations. But, perhaps, just perhaps, these new problems may change the ones we've got. Perhaps they may be able to create the possibility of something unexpected to happen on a day when we have learned to expect nothing. And perhaps, just perhaps, giving this possible a chance matters. With it, perhaps the pluriverse may trust itself a little more. This, at any rate, is what I'm trusting.

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Like a many-storied universe, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* unfolds and enfolds experimentally, through piecemeal approximation, stuttering its most humble questions while holding out a hand to a host of different worlds it trusts may meet its hand. Cultivating a pluralistic art of noticing other worlds in this world, the book thinks with what some of their many stories may demand of our own concepts and propositions in relay and return, so as to render each other capable of response, capable of trusting reality to feel and be felt in the plural. In so doing, each chapter attempts to relay relevant aspects of James's thought by situating it in generative and generous alliances with ethnographic stories of other fellow day-travelers as well as with a host of other thinkers inhabiting the interstices of this pluralistic manifold in and out of Europe. Chapter 2, "Runaway Metaphysics," undertakes the initial task of articulating the stakes and demands of our own metaphysical indetermination by following the story of the fractious exchange between anthropologist Harry West and Lazaro Mmala, a school-

teacher and veteran of the Mozambican war of independence, on the question of whether the sorcery-lions that populate the Mueda Plateau can be understood as political "symbols," or whether, as Mmala forcefully insists, we must come to terms with the fact that they are indeed *real*. The attempt to take Mmala's response seriously precipitates nothing less than a pragmatic revaluation of the ways in which we have come to approach the politics of difference. Relaying aspects of James's thought in conversation with postcolonial scholars and contemporary cultural anthropologists, I suggest that rather than a matter of choosing between "epistemological" or "ontological" pluralisms, the adventure in divergence opened up by a runaway metaphysics calls for nothing less than the *decolonization of the plural* itself.

By threading together a speculative exploration of James's concept of trust with anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann's story of evangelicals who learn to trust in the reality of God standing by their side, with love, Chapter 3, "Trust of a Held-out Hand," examines and dramatizes the implications of James's generative proposition that reality feels like itself. Countering the modern histories that reduced the realities of gods and spirits to the realm of "religion," and turned "belief" into a weapon of de-realization of other worlds, I suggest that trust is the *generic* name James gave to the feeling of reality in the plural. And in this sense, it designates an immanent, living disposition that impregnates, always differently, the multifarious ways in which the inhabitants of the many worlds in this ongoing and unfinished world live, think, feel, and act. Trust, in short, characterizes a living attitude of *consent* to the world: a feeling-with one's world. As such, whenever James is concerned, trust constitutes an immanent metaphysical ultimate, capable of generating a transformation of our concept of reality and an opening to our own metaphysical indetermination. For what the practices of these evangelicals make perceptible is that it is possible to *learn* to trust another world in this world. Trust, therefore, does not simply subtend the manifold relationships people establish with their worlds in this world, but simultaneously opens these relations up and creates the possibility of extending them, to a whole array of "ifs" and "maybes." Learning to trust, I suggest, precipitates a pluralistic event: the partial, fragile, ongoing, and unfinished weaving of a tremorous form of togetherness that obtains thanks to, and not in spite of, divergence. And for that reason, the risky cultivation of trust is a requisite for the pluriverse's own verification.

Trust is therefore what a radically irreducible politics of difference *requires*, interrupting the modern habit of considering ourselves free to

translate and redefine the ways in which others inhabit their world. What it makes possible is a felt approach to the turbulent insistence of the pluriverse itself. Indeed, it is this interstitial trembling, the partial connections between its different little worlds, that makes the pluriverse felt. On a quiet day, one can hear it breathing. Modern realism has always despised the tremors, going to any lengths to hold *our* world fast, deploying its weapons of de-realization to countervail the quickening of our own foundations. Approaching this tremorous togetherness can hardly be achieved, therefore, without experiencing something of our own metaphysical indetermination as another world passes into our experience. This is what, in Chapter 4, I call a "worldquake": the insinuation of another world underway, of a buzzing multiplicity of other worlds in this world, of the feeling of another world passing into one's experience. By threading Edith Turner's experience of seeing a visible spirit coming out of a woman's back in Zambia, together with James's own experience of a mild earthquake and some of his reflections on the relationships between percepts and concepts, it is the aim of this chapter to *dramatize* the experience which worldquakes precipitate.

A worldquake, I propose, puts all general principles out of their depth, making perceptible the radical contingency of any and all responses to the feeling of difference in the concrete. As such, it helps us understand that a politics of the pluriverse is neither a matter of articulating equanimous responses, singlehandedly capable of putting us and others on symmetrical footing, nor is it only about a politics of translation, of choosing between betraying either the language of origin or of destination. Rather, worldquakes require that one grants the trembling of togetherness the power to transform our stories and concepts, to let oneself be transformed by them. They prompt what, throughout this book, I call an *intranslation*: an entirely nonsymmetrical act, at once conceptual, political, and pragmatic, of *introducing* ("intraduire") and precipitating generative vectors of alteration, curves of divergence, variations of interest, the many boiling over the one, a pinch of chaos in the cosmos.[65] Worldquakes leave us without foundations. They make present that there is something tragic in every decision, in any response. The ongoingness of the pluriverse itself is at stake, and just as there are novelties, there will be losses. Which is why a runaway metaphysics cannot but keep stuttering out its most humble needs like a foolish little child in the eyes of reason. Thus, the test of its experiments cannot be any other than a thoroughly *pragmatic* one: what difference might this

make? With our responses and additions, does the pluriverse "*rise or fall in value?* Are the additions *worthy* or *unworthy*?"[66] Chapter 5, "Pragmatism in the Wake," explores the generativity of James's pragmatism as an experimental and speculative response to events that make such radical contingency felt. And it does so by threading his thoughts on the pragmatic method together with a most dramatic story: that of the profusion of ghosts that emerged in the aftermath of the tsunami that hit the coast of Japan in 2011, killing 18,000 people, and of the improvisational practices that a group of Buddhist, Shinto, and Protestant priests articulated in the wake of the disaster. Eschewing the strictures of their doctrinal knowledges and languages without surrendering to the professed modernity of contemporary Japan, these priests developed a host of spiritual care work practices across divergent forms of religious faith to address not only the trauma of the survivors, but also the suffering of the dead who lost their living to the wave. In so doing, I suggest that their practices dramatize the most generative feature of pragmatism: the speculative wager on the feeling of *if*, the insistence on the possibility that caring for other stories can lead, in turn, to composing ways of living and dying well with others, of rendering each other capable of response, of enabling the pluriverse to trust itself a little more.

Building on the preceding explorations, the final chapter, "The Insistence of the Pluriverse," brings aspects of James's melioristic thought to bear on contemporary debates around what I refer to as the emergence of an interest in political cosmology. Which political dreams and fears, hopes and perils, might the Jamesian pluriverse animate? By relaying a story of James's own visit to a sort of concrete middle-class utopia, the Methodist retreat at Chautauqua, the chapter places James in conversation with a renewed engagement among postcolonial thinkers in the very idea of a "pluriverse," and dramatizes the possible alliances and divergences that are made present between them. Whereas contemporary thinkers tend to associate the notion of the "pluriverse" to a cosmology where many worlds "fit," and some even characterize it as a new *universal* project from below, I argue that the Jamesian pluriverse conjures a political cosmology that rejects all cosmopolitan dreams of transcendence. Instead, the cosmology arising from James's world-picturing activity is that of a precipitous manifold, a permanently ongoing and unfinished composition of forms of divergence, togetherness, and experiment. The pluriverse, I suggest, is the name for a *perhaps* that insists and persists. And pluralism, in relay and

return, is but a pragmatics of the pluriverse—the art of relaying the dynamic of collective invention through which myriad divergent practices, in and out of Europe, cultivate their own forms of trust in the possibility of another world while consenting to the possibility that the worlds they trust are possible are not the same world.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE: ONGOING AND UNFINISHED

1 "What can I do? / I must begin. / Begin What? / The only thing in the world that's worth beginning: / The End of the World, no less," Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2013), 38–39.

2 Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

3 Strictly speaking, the terms James occasionally used for it were "multiverse" and, more frequently, "a pluralistic universe." Even contemporary physicists begrudgingly acknowledge a connection between their cosmological theories of the multiverse and James's early use of the term. To my knowledge, it was Benjamin Paul Blood, whom James dubbed a "pluralistic mystic," who may have coined the term. The frequent attribution of the notion of "pluriverse" to James is, however, not unwarranted, because it highlights the crucial fact that, unlike the physicists' "multiverse," which connotes the hypothetical existence of multiple, parallel universes, James rejected the invitation to consent to a multiverse made of disconnected parts that are indifferent to each other. What the notion of "pluriverse" evokes, in other words, is the need to stay with both the one and the many, to attend to the fact that "[o]ur 'multiverse' still makes a 'universe'" without thereby positing "a universal co-implication, or integration of all things *durcheinander*." See William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 325; Benjamin Paul Blood, *Pluriverse: An Essay in the Philosophy of Pluralism* (Boston: Marshal Jones, 1920).

4 Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli/Universal, 2009).

5 William James, *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 64.

6 James, *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*, 66.

7 To speak of a process of modern monification is not to say that there haven't

been surreptitious processes of pluralization or indeed "hybridization," as Bruno Latour has classically remarked. In his argument, the modern efforts at metaphysical compartmentalization and border-policing—between nature and culture, facts and fetishes, humans and nonhumans, objects and signs, epistemology and ontology, reality and appearance—are often inconsistently produced, applying differently from case to case, and have always been fraught with all manner of side effects that engender a proliferation of multiple "hybrids," which in fact turn out to be constitutive of the "modern constitution" as such. Hence his famous phrase that "we have never been modern." And yet, this need not lead us to affirm that "modernity" is therefore nothing but a bluff, another illusion that simply ought to be unmasked and denounced as such. As a set of stories and operations that have ploughed much of the world, modernity "is a force added to others that for a long time it had the power to represent, to accelerate, or to summarize—a power that it no longer entirely holds." See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 40.

8 There is no Planet B, as activists rightly say. Yet to be in the same storm does not in any way mean that we're all in it in the same way. Many of us, moderns and other-than-moderns, humans and other-than-humans, living and dead, are already, as others have been and may end up soon, drowned at the bottom of the sea, piled up in the belly of the ship. Our togetherness is made of divergence through and through.

9 James Campbell, *Experiencing William James: Belief in a Pluralistic Universe* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 215.

10 The dominant reception of James has been adamant in casting his thought as fundamentally apolitical and has read his pragmatism as a hallmark of the American protest against philosophical questions—whatever works. A minor group of readers, scattered across the twentieth century and growing in recent years, on the other hand, have provided perceptive and lucid accounts of James as a deeply philosophical and profoundly political thinker. It is those that I pay tribute to. See among others, Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2007); Deborah J. Coon, "One Moment in the World's Salvation: Anarchism and the Radicalisation of William James," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 1 (1996): 70–99; William Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Kennan Ferguson, *William James: Politics in the Pluriverse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Alexander Livingston, *Damn Great Empires! William James and the Politics of Pragmatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

11 William James, *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James (London: Longmans, Green, 1920), 355.

12 On the experimental practice of relaying, see Isabelle Stengers, "Relaying

a War Machine?," in *The Guattari Effect*, ed. Eric Alliez and Andrew Goffey (London: Continuum, 2011), 134–57.

13 James, *The Letters of William James*, 355.

14 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). Throughout this book, I use the term *postcolonial studies* broadly and liberally to refer to what is nevertheless a manifold of projects that go under different names. When approached as specific traditions, however, one can of course discern significant historical, geographical, and disciplinary differences. For an exploration of some of those, see Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues," *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014): 115–21.

15 By now the literature on this is too vast to cite comprehensively, but for a range of thoughtful perspectives and debates, see the excellent collective volume edited by Pierre Charbonnier, Gildas Salmon, and Peter Skafish, *Comparative Metaphysics: Ontology after Anthropology* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

16 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014).

17 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2015), 46.

18 William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume One* (New York: Dover, 1950), 256.

19 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 321.

20 James, *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*, 76.

21 William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume Two* (New York: Dover, 1950), 280.

22 William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 83.

23 James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 3, 14.

24 Martin Savransky, "The Wager of an Unfinished Present: Notes on Speculative Pragmatism," in *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures*, ed. Alex Wilkie, Martin Savransky, and Marsha Rosengarten (New York: Routledge, 2017), 25–38.

25 Martin Savransky, "A Decolonial Imagination: Sociology, Anthropology, and the Politics of Reality," *Sociology* 51, no. 1 (2017): 11–26.

26 Arundhati Roy, "Confronting Empire" (paper presented at Life After Capitalism, World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 27, 2003). See also Arundhati Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2006).

27 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Thomlinson (New York: Verso, 1994), 74–75.

28 See Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 118.

29 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 74–75.

30 Livingston, *Damn Great Empires!*

31 Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009).

32 I am thankful to Sanjay Seth (personal communication) for this felicitous phrase.

33 Gabriel García Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America," Nobel lecture delivered at the ceremony of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Stockholm, Sweden, December 8, 1982. Accessed November 28, 2019, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-lecture.html.

34 Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2003).

35 In fact, another story of around-the-world travel prior to the first circumnavigation was a cautionary tale against imperialistic hubris from polytheistic Ancient Greece. In this story, which seems only too timely today, Phaeton (son of Helios, the Greek sun god, and a mortal woman) asks to guide Helios's solar chariot around the world for a day, only to find that he cannot control the horses and ends up wreaking havoc along its path. Gaia pleads with Zeus to stop him, and the latter strikes him with a thunderbolt, turning Phaeton's hair on fire. In a desperate attempt to put the fire out, Phaeton runs into the Eridanus River, where he finally drowns. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (London: Penguin Classics, 2004). For an interesting, historically sensitive, and theologically minded account of the logic of the One and its possible pluralistic indetermination through a theology of multiplicity, see Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

36 Enrique Dussel, *1492: El Encubrimiento del Otro. Hacia el Origen del "Mito de la Modernidad"* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 1994).

37 See Joyce E. Chaplin, *Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 10.

38 See García Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America," where he recites the account of Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine navigator who traveled with Magellan.

39 Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage Around the World*, trans. Lord Stanley of Alderley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1874), 49–50.

40 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 17.

41 Chaplin, *Round About the Earth*, 18.

42 Chaplin, *Round About the Earth*, 37.

43 See Jason W. Moore, "The End of Cheap Nature. Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying about 'The' Environment and Love the Crisis of Capitalism," in *Structures of the World Political Economy and the Future of Global Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Christian Suter and Christopher Chase-Dunn (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), 285–314.

44 A review of the myriad individual voices and versions in these not quite articulated debates would require a book in and of itself. Indeed, it is likely to require more than one book, as these various articulations make themselves manifest and follow a cornucopia of disparate threads in fields like philosophy, postcolonial studies, cultural anthropology, sociology, development studies, political theory, and the history of science. For a very succinct yet illuminating discussion on the merits and perils of some influential, critical stories of modernity, see Sanjay Seth, "Is Thinking with 'Modernity' Eurocentric?" *Cultural Sociology* 10, no. 3 (2016): 385–98.

45 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 45.

46 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (London: Continuum, 2004), 200.

47 Stephen Jay Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack: Essays on Natural History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 42.

48 Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, 42–43.

49 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 331.

50 Gould, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, 47.

51 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 350.

52 Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1920).

53 See Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis, eds., *Natural Laws and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

54 See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002). For an account of the persistence of the extraordinary and the occult in the human sciences, see Jason Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

55 Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

56 Indeed, it is not a matter of conflating these, which would lead us to reject all realisms, all rationalisms, all theisms. Rather, it is always a matter of attending, in each case, to how *certain* forms of theism, rationalism, representationalism, naturalism, and imperialism become woven together in the constitution of a specific operation of disqualification.

57 Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 29.

58 This, I'm afraid, is as much the case for many "analytical" philosophers, who have traditionally rallied around "realism" as a flag, as it is for many contemporary "continental" philosophers, who after deriding realism as a weakness of thought have recently rediscovered an appetite for realisms of various kinds. For a contemporary discussion, see, for instance, Manuel Delanda and Graham Harman, *The Rise of Realism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017). For an excellent history of anti-realism in continental philosophy, see

Lee Braver, *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

59 Hilary Putnam, *Representation and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 107.

60 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 350.

61 Julio Cortázar, *Clases de Literatura. Berkeley, 1980* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2013), 50. See also Julio Cortázar, *La Vuelta al Día en Ochenta Mundos* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2007).

62 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 317.

63 Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 17.

64 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 213.

65 I borrow the term "intranslation" from Barbara Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

66 James, *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*, 122–23.

CHAPTER TWO: RUNAWAY METAPHYSICS

1 I am thankful to Chilean filmmaker, visual sociologist, cartographer of the fantastic, and above all dear friend and comrade Felipe Palma for this suggestion.

2 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 38.

3 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 39.

4 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 40.

5 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 255.

6 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 213.

7 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 32.

8 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 328.

9 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 324.

10 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 324.

11 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 324.

12 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 324.

13 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 322.

14 Cortázar, *Clases de Literatura*, 50.

15 Harry West, *Ethnographic Sorcery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

16 West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, 1.

17 West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, 1–2.

18 West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, 3.

19 West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, 3.

20 West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, 4.

21 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.