



ON DECOLONIALITY

CONCEPTS

ANALYTICS

PRAXIS

WALTER D. MIGNOLO

/ CATHERINE E. WALSH

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 identifies and examines decolonial engagements in Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, the Americas, South Asia, South Africa, and beyond from standpoints of feminisms, erotic sovereignty, Fanonian thought, post-Soviet analyses, global indigeneity, and ongoing efforts to delink, relink, and rebuild a radically distinct praxis of living. 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.

A SERIES EDITED BY

Walter D. Mignolo & Catherine Walsh

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WALTER D. MIGNOLO

and

CATHERINE E. WALSH

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TO ANÍBAL QUIJANO / *who gave us, and the world,*
the concept of coloniality.

In memory of Fernando Coronil.

And in celebration of the 2016 “Standup” resurgence at Standing Rock.

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to exploring the meanings and consequences of *coloniality* experienced in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.

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Introduction

Catherine E. Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo

This book opens the Duke University Press series “On Decoloniality.” The series’ goal is to interconnect perspectives, expressions, thought, struggles, processes, and practices of decoloniality that are emerging in and from different corners of the globe.

Our conception and praxis of decoloniality in this book and series do not pretend to provide global answers or sketch global designs for liberation, even less to propose *new abstract universals*. We are interested instead in relationality. That is, in the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political-epistemic violence of modernity.

Relationality doesn’t mean that there is one way to do and conceive decoloniality, and that it happens to be the way we—the authors of this text—do and conceive it. For us to think that we are in possession of a decolonial universal truth would not be decolonial at all but modern/colonial, and for you, the reader, to assume that this is the way we think would create misunderstandings from the very beginning. Relationality also doesn’t mean simply to include other practices and concepts into our own. Its meaning references what some Andean Indigenous thinkers, including Nina Pacari, Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, and Félix Patzi Paco, refer to as *vincularidad*. Vincularidad is the awareness of the integral relation and interdependence amongst all living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos. It is a relation and interdependence in search of balance and harmony of life in the planet. As such, and as we propose in this book and series, vincularidad/relationality unsettles the singular authoritativeness and

universal character typically assumed and portrayed in academic thought. Relationality/vincularidad seeks connections and correlations.¹

Our proposal is for creating and illuminating pluriversal and intersiversal paths that disturb the totality from which the universal and the global are most often perceived. With this caveat in mind, we open the series with a *local* introduction to decoloniality's praxis, concepts, and analytics. Certainly it cannot be otherwise since all theories and conceptual frames, including those that originate in Western Europe and the Anglo United States, can aim at and describe the global but cannot be other than local.

The proposition here and in the series is to advance the undoing of Eurocentrism's totalizing claim and frame, including the Eurocentric legacies incarnated in U.S.-centrism and perpetuated in the Western geopolitics of knowledge. It is not with eliminating but reducing to size what Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes as North Atlantic abstract universal fictions. Thus while the series does not exclude the United States, the United States is not at the center of its interests, debates, and concerns. The interest more broadly is with *pluriversal decoloniality* and *decolonial pluriversality* as they are being thought and constructed outside and in the borders and fissures of the North Atlantic Western world.

While the Americas of the South (Central and South America) and the Caribbean are part of our location and interests, this is not a "Latin" American studies book series. No one would claim that Martin Heidegger's writings were German studies. He was German, and what he thought had a lot to do with his personal history and language. But he thought what he deemed to be thought at his time and place. So it is for us. Heidegger was not a token of his culture, and neither are we. We are where we think, and our thinking is provoked by the history of the Americas (including the United States) and the Caribbean since the sixteenth century, when the very inception of modern/colonial patterns (i.e., coloniality) began to emerge. Yet our thinking, and the thinking of those who will follow in the series, do not end—nor are they only located—here.

The aim of the series is to make accessible—through short, single- and/or coauthored texts, and edited collections—reflections on decoloniality from different continents, territories, and geographies; from different geobody storytelling, histories, herstories, and transtories; and from different translocal subjectivities, struggles, worldviews, and world senses, most especially of those who have lived—and live—the colonial difference. We hope that these books will broaden and enhance debates, and cultivate conversations among

those abandoning modernity's naturalized fictions and imperatives; those in search of the relational and communal over competition, those endeavoring to move beyond the dictates and confines of government politics and uni- or mononational state forms, and those radically opposed to the financial hunting of consumers and corporations chasing for technoqualified workers to increase the armies of unemployed.

Furthermore, the series seeks to interrupt the idea of dislocated, disembodied, and disengaged abstraction, and to disobey the universal signifier that is the rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality, and the West's global model. For us, the pluriversal opens rather than closes the geographies and spheres of decolonial thinking and doing. It opens up coexisting temporalities kept hostage by the Western idea of time and the belief that there is one single temporality: Western-imagined fictional temporality. Moreover, it connects and brings together in relation—as both pluri- and interspersals—local histories, subjectivities, knowledges, narratives, and struggles against the modern/colonial order and for an *otherwise*. This is the understanding and project of *pluriversal and interspersal decoloniality* that orients the series and this introductory book.

Such perspective does not mean a rejection or negation of Western thought; in fact, Western thought is part of the pluriversal. Western thought and Western civilization are in most/all of us, but this does not mean a blind acceptance, nor does it mean a surrendering to North Atlantic fictions. Within Western thought itself, there have always been internal critiques, Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism, so to speak. Bartolomé de las Casas in the sixteenth century and Karl Marx in the nineteenth century are clear examples. But these are not the critiques that we follow here. Our thinking instead is with the decolonial critiques of Eurocentrism that have been present in different moments in time, with the nonacceptances of the West and North Atlantic fictions as the only way. While not accepting could be termed *resistance*, our interest and proposition here (in this book and series) are, more crucially, with *re-existence*, understood as “the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity.”² It is the resurgence and insurgence of re-existence today that open and engage venues and paths of decolonial conviviality, venues and paths that take us beyond, while at the same time undoing, the singularity and linearity of the West. .

This first book introduces the perspective, concept, analytic, practice, and praxis of decoloniality that find their base and ground in the compound concept modernity/coloniality. Modernity, of course, is not a decolonial

concept, but coloniality is. Coloniality is constitutive, not derivative, of modernity. That is to say, there is no modernity without coloniality, thus the compound expression: *modernity/coloniality*. Our intent is to help the reader understand how the colonial matrix of power (CMP, of which modernity/coloniality is a shorter expression) was constituted, managed, and transformed from its historical foundation in the sixteenth century to the present. But the intention is also, and more crucially, to push considerations of how decoloniality undoes, disobeys, and delinks from this matrix; constructing paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living. For us, decoloniality and decolonial thought materialized at the very moment in which the CMP was being put in place (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries). Decolonially speaking, modernity/coloniality are intimately, intricately, explicitly, and complicitly entwined. The end of modernity would imply the end of coloniality, and, therefore, decoloniality would no longer be an issue. This is the ultimate decolonial horizon.

We also recognize the legacies of decolonization associated with the Bandung Conference (1955) and the Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries (1961) at the time of the Cold War. However, these legacies are not the central foundation of our project. For us, the horizon is not the political independence of nation-states (as it was for decolonization), nor is it only—or primarily—the confrontation with capitalism and the West (though both are central components of the modern/colonial matrix of power). Our interest and concern, reflected in this book but also in the conversations sustained since the late 1990s within what has been referred to as the modernity/(de)coloniality shared project, are with the habits that modernity/coloniality implanted in all of us; with how modernity/coloniality has worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort and deny knowledges, subjectivities, world senses, and life visions.

Here we give attention to the what, why, with whom, and how of decoloniality, to the ways its concept, analytic, and praxis unravel modernity/coloniality's hold; engender liberations with respect to thinking, being, knowing, understanding, and living; encourage venues of re-existence, and build connections among regions, territories, struggles, and peoples. As mentioned above, decoloniality—as we understand it—was born in responses to the promises of modernity and the realities of coloniality, in the sense that Anibal Quijano introduced it. The conceptualizations and actionings of decoloniality are therefore multiple, contextual, and relational; they are not only the pur-

view of peoples who have lived the colonial difference but, more broadly, of all of us who struggle from and within modernity/coloniality's borders and cracks, to build a radically distinct world. Decoloniality, as we argue in this book, is not a new paradigm or mode of critical thought. It is a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis.

The underpinning of this text—and of us, as its authors—is deep-rooted in our sensing of both Americas during the Cold War, one of the Americas (the United States) in the First and the others (Central / South America and the Caribbean) in the Third World. When your life experience is touched and formed in and by the Third World, geopolitics matter; or when you realize that as a citizen of the First World you belong to a history that has engendered coloniality and disguised it by the promises and premises of modernity, you encounter coloniality from the two ends of the spectrum.

Global politics of course is much more complex today than in the Cold War period, or in the sixteenth century when the CMP began to emerge. The election of Donald Trump (and his first 100 days as we write this introduction), and the announced shift from “neoliberal globalism” to “national Americanism,” along with the reinstatement of the extreme Right in Argentina and Brazil, the escalating war in Syria, the prominence of North Korea in U.S. foreign policy, and the massive mobilizations in South Africa, among many other emerging geopolitical contexts and “events” (including the election of neoliberal globalist Emmanuel Macron to the French presidency), further complicate the present-day local-global arena. Today the CMP is not simply controlled and managed by the West (the United States and the EU) as has been the case for more than 500 years. The turmoil is now at once domestic, transnational, interstate, and global.

A return of right-wing nationalisms in the West (i.e., in the European Union plus Britain and the United States) is not worse, from a decolonial perspective, than the continuation of neoliberal globalism. However, the New World ordering of global coloniality (including the decline of the United States as worldwide leader), forces us to ask: what do decoloniality and decolonization mean in this junction? The reasons should be obvious: decolonization during the Cold War meant the struggle for liberations of the Third World and, when successful, the formation of nation-states claiming sovereignty. By the 1990s, decolonization's failure in most nations had become clear; with state in the hands of minority elites, the patterns of colonial power continued both internally (i.e., internal colonialism) and with relation

to global structures. At that moment coloniality was unveiled; decoloniality was born in the unveiling of coloniality.

Coloniality/decoloniality when introduced by Aníbal Quijano in 1990 was the hinging moment of the closing of the Cold War and the opening of neoliberal global designs (i.e., globalism). Today right-wing nationalisms build on the darker side of neoliberal globalism, and so-called progressive states (e.g., Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela) advance a twenty-first-century capitalism grounded in a politics and economy of extractivism that advances the destruction of lands-beings-knowledges, what many understand as Mother Earth. While the rhetoric and politics of right-wing nationalism, neoliberal globalism, and progressivisms may differ, each continues to perpetuate and further coloniality.

Certainly, the current conjuncture calls for urgent and sustained analysis and considerations in terms of the continuing shifts and mutations of the CMP—analyses and considerations not possible in this book but hopefully the subject of future volumes. While decolonial geopolitical and body-political responses—delinking and re-existence, resurgence, and insurgency—continue, decolonial praxis may begin to take on distinct forms in coming years in view of the changing rhetoric of modernity in the confrontations between the United States with the support of the European Union, on the one hand, and China, Russia, and Iran on the other. In the current formation of a multipolar world order the rhetoric of modernity is no longer unidirectional and unipolar.

We—Catherine and Walter—have crossed biographies that both complement each other and define our spheres of interest. Catherine, born and raised in the United States, has lived the majority of her adult life outside the U.S. mainframe, first in U.S. Latino communities and since the mid-1990s, in Ecuador, where she teaches and works closely with activists and social movements. Walter, born and raised in Argentina, after his PhD in France and becoming familiar with Europe, decided to relocate to the United States, where he became a politically engaged scholar who works with intellectuals and activists both inside and outside of the United States. For us both, the common anchor is the concept of *coloniality* introduced by Aníbal Quijano, and explained in detail in part II.

This common anchor connects us, but it does not presume to make uniform—or collapse into “one”—our thinking, doing, and words. This is why we wrote parts I and II of the book separately but connected and in relation. Making visible both of our subjectivities, views, voices, and thought is in fact

part of our methodology-pedagogy of conversation that has continued over the last twenty years, reflected as well in our published interviews of and with each other.³

In our thinking alone and together, theory and praxis are necessarily interrelated. Theory and praxis are constructions that presuppose the basic praxis of living. Without our daily praxis of living, it would not be possible to make conceptual and second-order distinctions between theory and praxis. Following this line of reasoning, this volume delinks from the modern concept of *theory versus praxis*. For us, theory is doing and doing is thinking. Are you not doing something when you theorize or analyze concepts? Isn't doing something praxis? And from praxis—understood as thought-reflection-action, and thought-reflection on this action—do we not also construct theory and theorize thought? By disobeying the long-held belief that you first theorize and then apply, or that you can engage in blind praxis without theoretical analysis and vision, we locate our thinking/doing in a different terrain.

This terrain is rooted in the praxis of living and in the idea of theory-and-as-praxis and praxis-and-as-theory, and in the interdependence and continuous flow of movement of both. It is in this movement that decoloniality is enacted and, at the same time, rendered possible. Decoloniality, in this sense, is wrapped up with re-existence; both claim a terrain that endeavors to delink from the theoretical tenets and conceptual instruments of Western thought.

If “another world is possible,” it cannot be built with the conceptual tools inherited from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It cannot be built with the master's tools, as Audre Lorde reminded us a number of years back, “for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”⁴ However, Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon offer a different stance on this same problem. “Not only with the master's tools,” they argue. “Slaves have historically done something more provocative with such tools than attempt to dismantle the Big House. There are those who used those tools, developed additional ones, and built houses of their own on more or less generous soil. It is our view that the proper response is to follow their lead, transcending rather than dismantling Western ideas through building our own houses of thought. When enough houses are built, the hegemony of the master's house—in fact, *mastery itself*—will cease to maintain its imperial status. Shelter needn't be the rooms offered by such domination.”⁵ In both these senses, we seek and posit in this book other conceptual instruments, other ways of theorizing, and other genealogies, all

of which—in both the past and present—construct and constitute what we understand as decolonial thinking, praxis, and thought.

Without a doubt, the critique of coloniality and the possibilities of decolonial horizons of praxis, knowledge, and thought (though not always with this same use of terms) have a legacy. W. E. B. Dubois, Anna Julia Cooper, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon are only several examples of the decolonial thinkers visibly present in the early and mid-twentieth century. However, the list of decolonial thinkers is long: From Guaman Poma de Ayala in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth in the viceroyalty of Peru to Ottobah Cugoano, in London but reflecting on his experience as a hunted human being enslaved in Jamaica and taken to London by his master, a British man named Campbell. From the abolitionist and activist Sojourner Truth and her famous discourse “Ain’t I a woman” in 1851, to Mahatma Gandhi in India in the early twentieth century, to Sun Yat-sen in China and the kichwa leader, activist, and educator Dolores Cacuango in Ecuador a few decades later. From Amilcar Lopes da Costa Cabral in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde to Steve Biko in apartheid South Africa; from Audre Lorde in New York, to Gloria Anzaldúa in the borderlands of Aztlán (the U.S. Southwest/Mexican border), Sylvia Wynter in the crossing of the Caribbean and United States, and to the many other racialized, genderized, and borderized decolonial thinkers whose *herstories*, *transtories*, and *ourstories* of thought have been made invisible by the racism and heteropatriarchy of the modern/colonial order. The genealogies of decolonial thinking and doing (across the spectrums of gender and race) have always marched parallel to the global predatory advance of modernity/coloniality.

Yet it has been the work of what is known today as the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality group or project that has, since the decade of the 1990s and following Anibal Quijano’s introduction of the coloniality of power, more deeply explored the analytic dimensions of coloniality and decolonial thought. This communal project in its initial composition was primarily based in South America and the United States and included Edgardo Lander (Venezuela), Fernando Coronil (Venezuela–United States), Santiago Castro-Gómez and Oscar Guardiola-Rivera (Colombia), Arturo Escobar (Colombia–United States), Javier Sanjinés (Bolivia–United States), Zulma Palermo (Argentina), Maria Lugones (Argentina–United States), Freya Schiwy (Germany–United States), Enrique Dussel (Argentina–Mexico), Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Agustín Lao-Montes (Puerto Rico–United States), in addition to Quijano and ourselves. Much of its writ-

ing was in Spanish. While many of its members have also written extensively in English, the first English-language publications identified with the project or group came out in the volumes of *Nepantla*, including the dossier from 2002, “Knowledges and the Known: Andean Perspectives on Capitalism and Epistemology,” organized by Freya Schiwy and Michael Ennis. Another dossier came out in *Cultural Studies* in 2007, and later in a book edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar and published by Routledge.⁶ Today this decolonial communal project functions as a loosely knit assemblage of socially and politically committed intellectuals with affinities that shift and move, with localizations in most, if not all, of the continents of the world, and with plural perspectives and standpoints on the modern/colonial matrix of power.

Engaging decoloniality as we conceive and enact it in this book, providing a frame for the book series, means to engage in two types of activities at once: the thinking-doing, and doing-thinking of decoloniality. In an earlier draft of this book, we opted to begin with the first, with the analytic of coloniality of power through conceptual elucidation (a familiar task in philosophy). The idea was to establish a conceptual foundation upon which the second activity emerges and is grounded; that is, the processes, practices, and praxis of decoloniality. However, responses from readers made us rethink this order, most especially because our project is to unsettle and disobey—not reproduce—the reign of theory over practice. While we contemplated interspersing the chapters that now constitute part I and part II, our fear was that this would take away from the flow of each part. Our decision then, and reflected here, is to begin with the doing-thinking, with the people, collectives, and communities that enact decoloniality as a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis; that is, with the activity of thinking and theorizing from praxis. This does not mean that part I is praxical and part II theoretical. They are both theoretical/praxical in different ways, starting at two ends of the spectrum and working toward the center: theoretical praxis and practical theory. Part I, entitled “Decoloniality in/as Praxis,” written by Catherine, is organized around the central questions of the decolonial *how* and the decolonial *for*; that is, on the one hand, the question of how decoloniality is signified and constructed in and through praxis. Of interest here is how those who live the colonial difference think theory, theorize practice, and build, create, and enact concrete processes, struggles, and practices of resurgent and insurgent action and thought, including in the spheres of knowledge, territory-land, state, re-existences, and life itself. And, on the other hand, the question is how this praxis interrupts and cracks the modern/colonial/

capitalist/heteropatriarchal matrices of power, and advances other ways of being, thinking, knowing, theorizing, analyzing, feeling, acting, and living for us all—the *otherwise* that is the decolonial *for*. The geopolitical and body-political context here is Abya Yala, broadly understood as the Americas, and most especially as the Americas of the South (Central and South America) in relation with the Caribbean. Nevertheless, we believe that readers will find interrelation with other regions of the globe.

In this first part of the book, the analytic of the coloniality of power moves in a kind of serpentine fashion, in and out of decoloniality's processes, practice, and praxis, building the connection, conversation, and relation with part II.

In part II, "The Decolonial Option," written by Walter, the order of the above-mentioned activities reverts to thinking/doing. This part is a meditation on *coloniality* (shorthand for *coloniality of power*), a concept as important as those of *unconscious* in Sigmund Freud and of *surplus value* in Karl Marx. Unconscious and surplus value were introduced to deal with and confront issues and problems affecting and afflicting Western European society. *Coloniality* here deals with and confronts issues and problems common to all former colonies of Western Europe in the Third World. The text examines how coloniality of power was formed, transformed, and managed in its history of more than 500 years. Furthermore, it explores how the coloniality of power operates today on a global scale when North Atlantic imperial states can no longer control and manage the monster (CMP) they created, being disputed by *returning civilizations* (commonly referred to as emerging economies).

Once the colonial matrix of power is no longer managed and controlled by the so-called West, it impinges on and transforms all aspects of life, particularly with regard to two interrelated spheres: (a) the coloniality of political, economic, and military power (interstate relations), and (b) the coloniality of the three pillars of being in the world: racism, sexism, and the naturalization of life and the permanent regeneration of the living (e.g., the invention of the concept of *nature*). Part II moves, then, in a kind of spiral (nonlinear) way from the analytic of the coloniality of power to the second, more forward-looking activity. Here the interest is with the variegated processes of delinking from the promises made in the name of modernity: development and growth and the prison houses of coloniality. Part II closes by highlighting decoloniality as interrelated processes of healing colonial wounds that originate in each of us. Each of us, endorsing and embracing

decoloniality, is responsible for our own decolonial liberation. The task is not individual but communal. It means that no one should expect that someone else will decolonize him or her or decolonize X or Z, and it means that none of us, living-thinking-being-doing decolonially should expect to decolonize someone else. As such, part II complements part I and vice versa. Moreover, each part alone and both parts together evince the interweaving of concepts, analytics, and praxis.

With this book we intend to open up a global conversation that the series will build upon, broaden, and extend. Subsequent volumes will extend the reflection and discussion to other actors, projects, and geopolitical areas and regions, including South and North Africa, the former Western and former Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation and Central Asia, East and South Asia, and Southeast and West Asia (labeled Middle East by U.S. navy admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1902). Global indigeneity, feminisms of color, and decolonial corpo-political-epistemic struggles and standpoints—including those that interrogate gender, sexuality, erotics, and spirituality—will also be the focus of future volumes.

In essence, the series opens to all the people in different parts of the world who are prone, like Gloria Anzaldúa herself, to sense *La facultad* (the power to do). *La facultad* is sensed by all: “Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity). Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the dark-skinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign.”⁷

Thinking from and with this *facultad* (undisciplined), from and with decoloniality, and from and with the possibilities of building a radically distinct world, are part and parcel of the project of this series and this first book that introduces it.⁸

Notes

- 1 Complementarity and relationality in search of equilibrium and harmony are fundamental concepts in Indigenous philosophy from ancient times to today. For a detailed exposition in decolonial Indigenous thinking, see the argument by Aymara thinker Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, *Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir: Filosofía, políticas*,

estrategias y experiencias de los pueblos ancestrales, 6th ed. (La Paz: Instituto Internacional de Integración, [2010] 2015), 115–68. See also Kichwa politician, lawyer, and Indigenous leader Nina Pacari, “La incidencia de la participación política de los pueblos indígenas: Un camino irreversible,” in *Las vertientes americanas del pensamiento y proyecto des-colonial*, ed. Heriberto Cairo and Walter Mignolo (Madrid: Trama Editorial, 2008), 45–58; and Aymara scholar and intellectual Felix Patzi Paco, “Sistema comunal: Una propuesta alternativa al sistema liberal,” in *Las vertientes americanas*, 61–84. A similar philosophy and pedagogy through the land has been powerfully articulated by the Nishanaabeg scholar, activist, and artist Leanne Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebelious Transformation,” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25. For a detailed discussion of relationality from a non-Indigenous decolonial perspective, see Rolando Vázquez, “Towards a Decolonial Critique of Modernity: *Buen Vivir*, Relationality and the Task of Listening,” in *Capital, Poverty, Development: Denktraditionen im Dialog: Studien zur Befreiung und Interkulturalität* 33, ed. Raul Fornet-Betancourt, 241–52 (Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz, Germany: Achen, 2012).

- 2 Adolo Albán Achinte, “Interculturalidad sin decolonialidad? Colonialidades circulantes y prácticas de re-existencia,” in *Diversidad, interculturalidad y construcción de ciudad*, ed. Wilmer Villa and Arturo Gueso (Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional/Alcaldía Mayor, 2008), 85–86.
- 3 See Walter Mignolo, “Decolonial Thinking and Doing in the Andes: An interview with Catherine Walsh, a propos of *Interculturalidad, Estado, Sociedad: Luchas (de)coloniales de nuestra época*,” *Reartikulacija*, Slovenia, January 2011; and Catherine Walsh, “Las geopolíticas del conocimiento y colonialidad del poder: Entrevista a Walter Mignolo,” in *Indisciplinar las ciencias sociales: Geopolíticas del conocimiento y colonialidad del poder: Perspectivas desde lo andino*, ed. Catherine Walsh, Freya Schiwy, Santiago Castro-Gómez, 17–44 (Quito: UASB/Abya Yala, 2002).
- 4 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, [1984] 2007), 112.
- 5 Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, “Introduction: Not Only the Master’s Tools,” *Not Only the Master’s Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006), ix.
- 6 Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 7 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 63–64.
- 8 One of the first volumes of the collective modernity/coloniality/decoloniality was titled precisely *Indisciplinar las ciencias sociales: Geopolíticas del conocimiento y colonialidad del poder*, ed. Catherine Walsh, Freya Schiwy, and Santiago Castro-Gómez.

Decoloniality in/as Praxis

Part One

CATHERINE E. WALSH

1 The Decolonial *For*

Resurgences, Shifts, and Movements

Did you hear?

It is the sound of your world collapsing.

It is the sound of our world resurging.

The day that was day was night.

And night will be the day that will be day.

—SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS

Openings

Some say we are up against a civilizational crisis, a crisis in which the universalized model or paradigm of the West is crumbling before our very eyes. Others, such as the Zapatistas, speak in a related way of the Storm brewing, the Storm already upon us, the Storm whose force is rapidly growing. This Storm, say the Zapatistas, is the catastrophe that we all feel. It is the war against life in all of its practices, forms, and manifestations.¹

Many in the Souths of the world, including the Souths in the North, know it well. It is a war of violence, destruction, and elimination, a war that is epistemic and existence based, a war that is feminized, racialized, and territorialized. It is the war of global capital, of coloniality regenerating and reconstituting itself, a war—according to Nelson Maldonado-Torres—indicative of the increasingly violent tendencies of dominant Western ideals (including of the human), and of the constitutive dimensions of dominant conceptions and processes of civilization.² It is a war that aims to break the social weave, and to engulf and destroy all—including beings, knowledges, lands, and ways of thought and existence—that obstruct and impede its path.

However, as coloniality-capitalism plot their advance, so too spread resurgences, shifts, and movements toward a decolonial otherwise, resurgences, shifts, and movements of decoloniality in/as praxis. This chapter opens reflections on decoloniality's otherwise and praxis. And it lays the ground for understanding the potential and prospect of the decolonial *for*.

(De)coloniality

Decoloniality has a history, *herstory*, and praxis of more than 500 years. From its beginnings in the Americas, decoloniality has been a component part of (trans)local struggles, movements, and actions to resist and refuse the legacies and ongoing relations and patterns of power established by external and internal colonialism—what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls colonialism's long duration³—and the global designs of the modern/colonial world.

Lest we forget the modes of power that began with the invasion of the Cross and Crown in the Caribbean and in the land and/as myth invented first as America, and later baptized Latin America. This is the land that gave initiation, substance, and form to the coloniality of power, its system of social classification based on the idea of race, of “conquerors” over “conquered,” and its structural foundation tied to modernity and Eurocentered capitalism. The control of labor and subjectivity, the practices and policies of genocide and enslavement, the pillage of life and land, and the denials and destruction of knowledge, humanity, spirituality, and cosmo-existence became the *modus operandi* of this new model and pattern of power that later traveled the globe.

In the America of the North (now Canada and the United States), settler colonialism came later, exercising its system of violence and power to accomplish similar expansionist goals. “The form of colonialism that the Indigenous peoples of North America have experienced was modern from the beginning,” says Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, precisely because it included the “expansion of European corporations, backed by government armies into foreign areas, with subsequent expropriation of lands and resources.” In this sense, “settler colonialism is a genocidal policy.”⁴ While settler colonialism is distinct from the coloniality of power established in the Americas of the South in the sixteenth century, its patterns of extermination, pillage, enslavement, racialization, dehumanization, and power are, without a doubt, related.

With colonialism and coloniality came resistance and refusal. Decoloniality necessarily follows, derives from, and responds to coloniality and the ongoing colonial process and condition. It is a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonized and racialized subjects—*against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and *for* the possibilities of an otherwise.

Decoloniality denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasion. It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity. Moreover, it is indicative of the ongoing nature of struggles, constructions, and creations that continue to work within coloniality's margins and fissures to affirm that which coloniality has attempted to negate.

Decoloniality, in this sense, is not a static condition, an individual attribute, or a lineal point of arrival or enlightenment. Instead, decoloniality seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought. Such perspectives and positionalities evoke and convoke what Maldonado-Torres refers to as a *decolonial attitude*. For Maldonado-Torres, this attitude recalls that advanced at the beginning of the twentieth century by W. E. B. Du Bois, that which “demands responsibility and the willingness to take many perspectives, particularly the perspectives and points of view of those whose very existence is questioned and produced as indispensable and insignificant.”⁵ Such attitude requires attention to what decolonial feminist thinkers such as Sylvia Wynter, Audre Lorde, and Yuderkys Espinosa have referred to as relational ways of seeing the world, including the relation between privilege and oppression.

The interest of this part I is, in a broad sense, with encouraging this relational way of seeing. It challenges the reader to think *with* (and not simply *about*) the peoples, subjects, struggles, knowledges, and thought present here. In so doing, it urges the reader to give attention to her or his own *inner eyes*, what Wynter called the classificatory lens and logic that put limits on how we can see, know, and act on and with respect to the local, national, global order.⁶

More specifically, the interest here is with praxis: the affirmative and prospective thought-actions-reflections-actions that give shape, movement,

meaning, and form to decoloniality. The interest is with the praxis that walks decoloniality and, as we will see in the section that follows, with the praxis that gives substance to and elucidates resurgence and the decolonial *for*.

Resurgence and the Decolonial *For*

Since the Spanish invasion of the “Americas”—what some fallaciously term the *Conquest*—the struggles, movements, and actions of peoples native to these lands and those brought here from Africa by force, have been and still are *against* what the Kichwa intellectual and historical leader Luis Macas calls the colonial yoke or tare. However, they have also importantly been—and continue to be—*for* the creation, and cultivation of modes of life, existence, being, and thought *otherwise*; that is, modes that confront, transgress, and undo modernity/coloniality’s hold. It is the *for* that fosters, signals, and sketches pro-positions of affirmation and reaffirmation that disrupt and unsettle coloniality’s negations. It is the *for* that takes us beyond an *anti* stance. Moreover, it is the *for* that signifies, sows, and grows the otherwise of decoloniality and/ as praxis.

Central here is that which Adolfo Albán names as *re-existence*, understood as “The mechanisms that human groups implement as a strategy of questioning and making visible the practices of racialization, exclusion and marginalization, procuring the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity and self-determination, while at the same time confronting the bio-politic that controls, dominates, and commodifies subjects and nature.”⁷

This is the resurgence of “our world” to which the beginning epigraph of the now defunct SupMarcos refers.⁸ It is a world radically distinct from that of savage capitalism, imposed Western modernity, domination, and oppression. The reference here is to a collective resurgence—understood as renewal, restoration, revival or a continuing after interruption⁹—of knowledges, life practices, and re-existences that are not only Zapatista but also present and growing in territories throughout Abya Yala and the Souths of the world. For the First Nation activist-thinker Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, the real work of resurgence—and of movement- and nation-building—generates new knowledge on how to resurge from within: “We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement through lived experience and embodiment.

Intellectual knowledge is not enough on its own. . . . All kinds of knowledge are important and necessary in a communal and emergent balance.¹⁰

My interest in this first part of the book is with the knowledges resurging and insurging *from below* (that is, from the ground up) within and through embodied struggle and practice, struggles and practices that, in turn, continually generate and regenerate knowledge and theory. I find accordance here with Simpson's contention that theory is not just an intellectual pursuit; "it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational."¹¹ I also agree with Sylvia Marcos that to theorize is to live; that is, and following the words of the defunct SupMarcos, "a theory so other that it is practice."¹²

Decoloniality, without a doubt, is also contextual, relational, practice based, and lived. In addition, it is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and existentially entangled and interwoven. The concern of this part I then is with the ongoing processes and practices, pedagogies and paths, projects and propositions that build, cultivate, enable, and engender decoloniality, this understood as a praxis—as a walking, asking, reflecting, analyzing, theorizing, and actioning—in continuous movement, contention, relation, and formation.

"Without praxis," Enrique Dussel says, "no pathway is made." It is praxis that makes the path. Yet as Dussel cautions, "the path cannot be made without points of reference that permit one to traverse topographies and labyrinths unknown. One needs a compass and to know in which direction to walk," he says. The compass gives general orientation. However, the "direction is discovered only in concrete application, with the material of day-to-day, militant, and solidarity-based praxis."¹³

It is this praxis, the making of decolonial paths, that is of interest here. While part II will focus on the conceptual frameworks, reflections, and discussions of (de)coloniality's what and why, the focus in this first part is on praxistical questions of the for, the how, and the with whom, and what for. With this beginning, I intend to disturb the notion that theoretical and conceptual frameworks must necessarily precede praxis, as well as the idea that meaning is only conceptually derived. To begin with praxis and the praxistical activity of thinking-doing, is to turn academia and Western modern thought upside down.

Here I ask: How is decoloniality signified and constructed in and through praxis? How—through what actions, processes, practice-based struggles, theory, theorizing, and thought—is praxis enacted, engaged, created, and defined? How, and in what ways, do these actions, processes, practice-based struggles,

and thought point to and work toward projects of social, political, epistemic, and (re)existence-based transformation? And, how do they push, provoke, and advance other ways of being, thinking, knowing, feeling, and living? That is, other ways that interrupt, transgress, and fissure or crack modernity/coloniality's matrices of power, and make evident concrete instances and possibilities of the otherwise?

Who are the individual and collective subjects involved? With whom and for what are their propositions, processes, practices, struggles, and projects? What are the aims, intentions, hopes, visions, and horizons? Moreover, how together do the peoples, struggles, propositions, processes, practices, and actions give decoloniality a lived significance and make decoloniality a lived project of/in praxis?

Such questions necessarily make present and bring to the fore voices, bodies, minds, spirits, and thought other than just my own. Here the reader will encounter voices, bodies, minds, spirits, and thought that speak from and to individual and collective standpoints, struggles, projects, propositions, and practices—voices, bodies, minds, spirits, and thought that work to loosen and undo modernity/coloniality's hold; transverse time, place, and space; and put forward an otherwise of being, feeling, thinking, knowing, doing, and living that craft hope and possibility in these increasingly desperate and violent times of global coloniality/global capitalism taken to the extreme.

The intention here, and to paraphrase Gloria Anzaldúa, is to not just tell but also show how decoloniality happens.¹⁴ The intention is not to write *about*, nor is it to develop a narrative by simply citing a plethora of authors, contexts, and texts. Rather, it is to think *from and with* standpoints, struggles, and practices, from and with praxical theorizings, conceptual theorizings, theoretical conceptualizings, and theory-building actionings. It is to think from and with struggles that think and thought that struggles. "Thought that does not struggle is nothing more than noise, and struggles that do not think, repeat the same errors and do not get up after falling," say the Zapatistas.¹⁵ Moreover, it is to think from and with subjects, actors, thinkers, collectives, and movements that are signifying, sowing, and growing decoloniality in/as praxis. This thinking from and with—and especially from and with modernity/coloniality's underside, margins, and cracks—constructs, shapes, and fashions what I understand as, and what I endeavor to assume in my own practice, as a decolonial and decolonizing methodological-pedagogical-praxistical stance.

Such a stance, of course, maintains as constant the dilemma that Anzaldúa so poignantly described: "how to write (produce) without being inscribed

(reproduced) in the dominant white structure and how to write without reinscribing and reproducing what we rebel against.”¹⁶ Recognizing this dilemma and continually struggling with it (not expecting that I will ever be able to totally surmount it) are central not only to my pedagogy-method, but also to the ways I conceive, consciously address, and give praxis to my locus or place of enunciation.

As a woman perceived as white, an immigrant (from the America of the North to the America of the South, that is, from the so-called First to the so-called Third World), and an intellectual associated with the university (although my militancy and engagement are most often against the institution, in its margins, borders, and cracks), I carry a privilege that I cannot negate. How to write, think, and act in ways that work to dismantle the structures of privilege and the modern/colonial matrices of power (of which privilege is part), how to assume decolonial praxis (including decolonial feminism) in practice, and how to help walk a decolonial *for* (i.e., a decolonial otherwise), are questions that underscore my decolonial and decolonizing intention and methodological-pedagogical-praxistical stance, not only here but in all aspects of my relational being-becoming.

By mentioning this intention and stance, I hope to challenge the reader to shift her or his posture and gaze. The challenge is to not look for theory first. It is also to move beyond a simple reading of and about, toward a thinking from and with, a thinking-doing that requires contemplation of one’s own place of enunciation and relation (or not) with the so-called universality of Western thought. I am referring to a thinking-doing that delinks, that undoes the unified—and universalizing—centrality of the West as the world and that begins to push other questions, other reflections, other considerations, and other understandings.

The context that orients and grounds this part I is Abya Yala. Abya Yala is the name that the *Kuna-Tule* people (of the lands now known as Panama and Colombia) gave to the “Americas” before the colonial invasion. It signifies “land in full maturity” or “land of vital blood.” Its present-day use began to take form in 1992 when Indigenous peoples from throughout the continent came together to counter the “Discovery” celebrations, “to reflect upon 500 years of the European invasion and to formulate alternatives for a better life, in harmony with Nature and Human Dignity.” As the then-joint statement of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), and the California-based South and Meso American Indian Information Center

(SAIIC) went on to argue: "With the European invasion and subsequent process of colonization, our peoples became isolated and cut off from each other, breaking a level of development we had attained. Today, our peoples are developing forms of political, religious, cultural, and economic interchange and interrelationships—a continental cultural identity—, a civilization."¹⁷

It was in this frame of reestablishing a continental identity, relation, and civilization, that Abya Yala became a way to rename, disrupt, and counter "America," a name-idea imposed in, by, and through "conquest." As such, it was a decolonial proposition not only for Indigenous peoples, but more broadly for the continent and to and for the world.

Brought to the fore here are the politics of naming. "To name is to struggle," argues the Kichwa intellectual Armando Muyolema. "First America and later Latin America are the result of those politics of naming and imperial struggles for political and cultural hegemony in conquered territories."¹⁸ Similarly and in reference to European imperial naming, Iris Zavalla sustains that the heuristic code of naming is a form of political cartography or mapmaking that fixes the cultural image, subordinates differences, and radically destroys identities.¹⁹ The European baptizing of the continent drastically modified the heretofore history, plurality, and social, cultural, economic, spiritual, territorial, and existential foundation of these lands, making it—by naming it—a singular unit seen and defined from the European gaze; a naming that as Aimé Césaire argued more than half a century ago, intended to annihilate all that existed before: "I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out, I am talking about millions of men [*sic*] torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life—from life, from the dance, from wisdom."²⁰

Nevertheless, this baptizing also established, as Vanessa Fonseca maintains, a genitive matrix in its naming. "America, the land of Americo. To name 'her,' he possessed her. To think America as the name of a woman," says Fonseca, "is to insert her—America—as difference in a process of signification that entails a will to power," and a power to name.²¹ It is easy to see, in this sense, how "America" has been mutually imbricated with coloniality from the beginning.²² Moreover, in the same vein, it is easy to understand why the collective renaming as Abya Yala is resurgence, and why it is a clear example of decoloniality in praxis.

Some argue that Abya Yala takes back the original Indigenous concept and name for the continent. Anahuac and "Turtle Island," the latter in increas-

ing use by First Nations peoples, similarly take back North America's pre-invasion conceptual naming. Recalled here as well is Aztlán, the ancestral home of Aztec peoples in the lands of what are now the U.S. Southwest and the Mexican Northwest, a take-back naming present in the works of many Chicanas and Chicanos, most notably Gloria Anzaldúa.

Others see in the renaming of Abya Yala the contemporary exercise of a re-existence-based politics that is decolonial in attitude, posture, proposition, and force. That is, a politics that affirms, constructs, and advances a radically distinct meaning, understanding, and project not just for Indigenous peoples but also for all. Thinking with this politics and naming is part of the decolonial option that Walter will describe in part II. In addition, it is a central part of the conceptualization of decolonial praxis that underscores this part of the book.

Decolonial praxis, of course, is not limited to the context of Abya Yala. Yet it was in the particular sociohistorical and geopolitical context of the "discovery and conquest" of the Americas of the South (i.e., "Latin" America and the Caribbean) and its multiple violences—racialized, gendered, physical, civilizational, cultural, linguistic, ontological-existential, epistemic, spiritual, cosmological, and so forth—that coloniality and decoloniality took form.

As Aníbal Quijano has explained, coloniality developed around two central axes or patterns of power that came to be foundational to modernity and global capitalism. The first was "the codification of the difference between conquerors and conquered in the idea of 'race' . . . the constitutive, founding element of the relations of domination that the conquest imposed." The second was "the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and products" that articulated "slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market."²³ As a matrix of power, coloniality came to operate in Abya Yala, and subsequently elsewhere, in multiple spheres, exercising control over humanity, subjectivity and being, gender and sexuality, spirituality, knowledge production, economy, nature, existence and life itself. Coloniality, in this sense, involves and affects us all. As Maldonado-Torres contends, "as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day."²⁴

Decoloniality necessarily evokes coloniality. It has its roots and reason in the modern/colonial matrix of power, a matrix that, as Walter will describe, has its base in Quijano's conceptualization. Quijano laid the ground with the concept-term *coloniality*. However, the idea of an ongoing pattern of colonial power can be witnessed in the thought of many, including Frantz

Fanon and the lesser-known Colombian thinker Manuel Zapata Olivella, who both thought from their own colonial difference.²⁵ The operation of a colonial matrix of power has also been analyzed in differential ways and in distinct contexts by a number of authors, who may or may not identify with the decolonial project.²⁶

However, the interest here is not with conceptual genealogies, but with the ways that decoloniality is defined by, from, in and with the struggles—political, epistemic, and existence based—against coloniality and for its otherwise. The interest is with how decoloniality's project and praxis take form in and contribute to the fissures of the dominant order, what I have called its decolonial cracks.²⁷ While these fissures or cracks are present throughout the world, including in the Global North, the project and praxis of decoloniality are more visibly witnessed, sensed, and felt in what the Pakistani intellectual-activist-feminist Corinne Kumar calls the "wind of the South": "The South as civilizations, . . . as voices and movements, . . . as visions and wisdoms, . . . as the discovering of new paradigms, which challenge the existing theoretical concepts and categories breaking the mind constructs, . . . as the discovery of other cosmologies . . . other knowledges that have been hidden, submerged, silenced. The South as a new political imaginary, . . . new meanings, new moorings."²⁸

If it is the South (the South in the South and the South in the North) that, as Kumar suggests, proffers new movements, philosophies, and horizons of and for praxis, then Abya Yala is particularly illustrative. This is because of its 500-plus years of decolonial resurgence, insurrection, rebellion, and agency, and for its present-day shifts, movements, and manifestations that give possibility, sustenance, credence, and concretion to a decolonial otherwise.

On Decolonial Shifts and Movements

While 1492 marked the beginning in Abya Yala of the model of world power that we now refer to as modernity/coloniality, the decade of the 1990s—of 500 years—began in this same continent a new political moment of decolonial resistance, proposition, shift, and movement. The *newness* of this moment was not in its originality in a lineal sense. Rather it was in its contemporary re-membrance of decolonial struggle and historical continuity in thought, analyses, reflection, and action from the ground up, that is, from the peoples

who for centuries have lived the colonial difference, the difference imposed through a hierarchical classification based on the ideas of race, anthropocentrism, heteronormativity, and gender.

The multitudinous public uprisings of Indigenous peoples in Ecuador and Bolivia in 1990, and of the Zapatistas in Mexico in 1994, along with the continental organization against the colonial celebrations of 1992 mentioned above, made visible to the world an agency, initiative, and posture of both protest and proposition. The massive uprising of 1990 organized by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE)—sometimes referred to as the awakening of the sleeping lion—disturbed the dominant ethnic imaginary of Ecuador's Right and Left. This imaginary perceived Indians as a passive population tied to the countryside, artisan work, and/or manual labor, and as "disappearing entities anxious to become 'civilized' mestizos."²⁹ The mobilization of thousands of men, women, and children made present the existence, vitality, and force of Indigenous peoples, but also put on the table the problem—and failure—of the so-called democracy, the homogenizing national project, and the uninational state. Land, self-determination, and ethnic rights were part of their demands; the other part, as I will discuss further in chapter 3, was for a plurinational state and a radically distinct social project for all of Ecuadorian society.

In Bolivia the 500-kilometer March of Indigenous Peoples from the lowland Amazon region to the capital (also in 1990), made visible a peoples that the so-called nation-state had historically denied. It also brought to the forefront debates about the significance of territory, Nature (with a capital *N*), and the capitalist logics of ownership, extractivism, and exploitation.

The public emergence of the Zapatistas in 1994 similarly made visible the historically invisibilized. Moreover, the Zapatistas' call for an end to neoliberal policies and for new visions of social and political participation and democracy in Chiapas and in Mexico as a whole, marked the beginning of a new political moment of decolonial resistance, resurgence, proposition, thought, shift, and movement that continues until today.

Of course these mobilizations, mobilizing acts, and social, political, and economic analyses unsettled traditional leftist class-based perspectives that, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, attempted to fix the identity and social function of native peoples as only rural peasants.³⁰ Unsettled as well were the anthropologically conceived ideas of, and the anthropological study about, ethnicity and Indios. In Ecuador, Indigenous

communities ousted anthropologists; with this loss of “objects” of study, many schools of anthropology closed. Recalled is the poignant analysis of the Maori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith, on the research-imperialism-colonialism entwine. “The term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism,” Smith contends. “This collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized.”³¹

Throughout the decade of the 1990s, Indigenous peoples began to ascertain their own forms of identification and self-representation. They disputed the societal negations of their historicity, perseverance, and self-determination as millennial nations and peoples, and they made visible their presence and intellectual sovereignty as social protagonists and historical and political subjects. In so doing, they challenged the dominant models of society, economy, governance, nation, and state and, in a related sense, their own heretofore anonymity and invisibility in the public sphere. One of the clearest challenges to this anonymity and invisibility has been the collective act of the Zapatistas to cover their faces. “So that they could see us, we covered our faces; so that they could name us, we negated our names . . . reaffirming a collective identity, a movement that is Zapatista.”³²

The decade of the 1990s stands out, not because Indigenous resistance did not exist before, but because of the character and nature of this period of Indigenous-led resurgence and struggle. Throughout Abya Yala, Indigenous people did not just “rise up,” but they led public actions, formed alliances with other sectors, and educated the general populace about the lived social, political, and economic problems of neoliberalism and the modern/colonial/capitalist system.³³ They gave substance and form to what Arturo Arias, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, and Emilio Del Valle Escalante call the “territory of Indigenous agency”; that is, to a linguistic, aesthetic, epistemic, and political project that articulates new spheres of mobilization, subjectivity, and decolonizing production.³⁴ Additionally, they worked to interrupt the multicultural politics of recognition present throughout the continent (discussed in chapter 3), and to work “within,” that is from Indigenous communities’ own ancestral knowledges and intelligence, what Leanne Simpson calls the necessary knowledge and intelligence for resurgence.³⁵

For the Kichwa intellectual and lawyer Nina Pacari, it was in the decade of the 1990s that protest and prospect, theory and practice, and the strug-

gles of land, culture, ideology, and liberation all coalesced in the Ecuadorian Indigenous movements' demands, proposals, and projects for structural transformation and the building of a radically different social order.³⁶ Yet this is not to suggest that the challenges to coloniality and the propositions of decolonial possibility in Abya Yala have come only from Indigenous movements. Nor is it to simplify or idealize these movements, their propositions, worldviews, and practice or to intimate that indigeneity necessarily implies decoloniality (something I will take up in chapter 4).

Rather, and on the one hand, it is to recognize that in Abya Yala, it has been the social movements of historically excluded, subalternized, and racialized peoples that in the last decades have led and given substance and possibility to what Fernando Coronil referred to as the innovations and ruptures of *el devenir histórico* (the historical becoming).³⁷ The reference here is to the innovations and ruptures that signal political formations, positions, and practices that extend beyond the concerns of the traditional Left. And it is also to innovations and ruptures that outline new strategies of action and of social, political, economic, epistemic, cultural, and re-existence-based struggle that confront the legacies and contemporary manifestations of the modern/colonial matrix of power and push decolonizing movements. The fact that it has been Indigenous movements, the movements of African descendants, and women—particularly women of color—who have led these innovations, ruptures, and struggles is not fortuitous. Also not fortuitous is the fact that these innovations, ruptures, and struggles have been directed at transformations of and for society as a whole, transformations understood as a historical becoming that undoes the categories that coloniality and its system of hierarchical social classification imposed.

Similarly and on the other hand, it is to recall Arturo Escobar's argument made over a decade ago about "the need to take seriously the epistemic force of local histories and to think theory through from the political praxis of subaltern groups."³⁸ Escobar's position here was twofold.

First, Escobar made a case for the "flesh and blood" of decolonial struggles; of the need for potential work within what he termed "the modernity/coloniality research program." Here Escobar referred to the work that directly engages "colonial difference and border thinking from the ground up," thus helping to avoid the epistemological traps of disembodied abstract discourse, the risks of logocentrism, and the limitations of academic-intellectual reflection. Second, Escobar argued for a decolonial shift of sorts concerning how we understand theory. Such a shift entails a rethinking of how and with

whom we think (and understand) theory, and a recognition of the intertwines of local histories, knowledges, political praxis, and place.

As I have argued, it also entails moving from a posture of “studying about” to “thinking with.”³⁹ This latter move necessarily demands the enunciation of the researcher herself or himself, and the making visible of his or her presence in this thinking. Challenged here are not only the scientific precepts of distance, neutrality, and objectivity, but also importantly the Western modern/colonial frames of theory, knowledge, research, and academic thought. As I will argue in later chapters, such shifts are important steps in individual and group work toward a decolonial perspective, but also, and more broadly, in terms of praxis itself, including in opening decolonial cracks and fracturing and fissuring modernity/coloniality’s hold on knowledge, thinking, and learning within the university.

The problem, however, is when theory, theorizing, knowledge, and thought are considered as only—or predominantly—the purview of academics and the academy. This is not to slight the worth of decolonial praxis and movement within academia (see chapters 3 and 4). Instead, it is to prompt considerations that take us beyond the centrality of academia and its subjects, contexts, and confines. It is to confront the idea of historically excluded, subalternized, and racialized peoples as “objects” of study. In addition, it is to open consideration about the ways in which subjects, peoples, and movements who live the colonial difference not only *act* but also produce knowledge and construct theory.

Here, theory, as knowledge, is understood as incarnated and situated, something that the university too often forgets. Theory—as knowledge—derives from and is formed, molded, and shaped in and by actors, histories, territories, and place that, whether recognized or not, are marked by the colonial horizon of modernity, and by the racialized, classed, gendered, heteronormativized, and Western-Euro-U.S.-centric systems of power, knowledge, being, civilization, and life that such horizon has constructed and perpetuated. The production of knowledge and theory through embodied practice and from the ground up—that is by subjects, identified or not as women and men, who live the colonial difference—turns the dominant precept of reason and its geography and geopolitics on its head.

The interest then, and to paraphrase Escobar, is to give attention to the ways those who live the colonial difference think theory through from political praxis, theorize their own practice, and take (very) seriously the epis-

temic force of local histories and struggles. Such attention takes us beyond postures that simply associate social movements and subalternized groups with social and cultural resistance, and resistance as an end goal. More critically, it urges considerations of the praxistical or praxical. Specifically, it urges considerations of insurgent political, epistemic, existence-, and re-existence-based constructions, productions, creations, practices, and action-reflection that generate alternatives, interpolate the instances of hegemonic power, including neoliberalism and what the Zapatistas have recently termed the *capitalist hydra*,⁴⁰ and give route to shifts and movements toward decoloniality's otherwise. The chapter that follows explores what all this means in concrete terms.

Notes

Epigraph: Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Comunicado del Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General del Ejército Zapatista De Liberación Nacional del 21 de diciembre del 2012," accessed July 22, 2017, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2012/12/21/comunicado-del-comite-clandestino-revolucionario-indigena-comandancia-general-del-ejercito-zapatista-de-liberacion-nacional-del-21-de-diciembre-del-2012/>.

Unless otherwise specified, translations of Spanish-language quotations are those of the authors.

- 1 See Comisión Sextra del EZLN, *El pensamiento crítico frente a la hidra capitalista I* (Chiapas, Mexico: EZLN, 2015).
- 2 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
- 3 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "La raíz: Colonizadores y colonizados," in *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia: Cultura y política*, ed. Xavier Albó and Raúl Barrios, 27–139 (La Paz: CIPCA-ARUWIYIRI, 1993).
- 4 Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 6.
- 5 Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 8.
- 6 Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved: A Letter to my Colleagues," *Forum NHI: Knowledge for the 21st Century* 1, no. 1 (1994): 42–71.
- 7 Adolfo Albán Achinte, "¿Interculturalidad sin decolonialidad? Colonialidades circulantes y prácticas de re-existencia," in *Diversidad, interculturalidad y construcción de ciudad*, ed. Wilmer Villa and Arturo Gueso (Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional/Alcaldía Mayor, 2008), 85–86.

- 8 At dawn on May 25, 2014, the Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos, Zapatista spokesperson and military chief, died a symbolic death. The collective decision by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) to end SupMarcos's existence, an existence created by the EZLN in 1994, was strategic. "We have come to realize that we now have a generation of Zapatistas that can look us straight in the face, that can hear us and speak to us without waiting for guidance or leadership, without pretending submission or following. . . . The figure of Marcos is no longer necessary. . . . The figure was created and now its creators, the Zapatista women and men, destroy it. If you are able to understand this lesson, then you have understood one of the foundations of Zapatismo." See EZLN, "Entre la luz y la sombra," Chiapas, Mexico: EZLN, May 25, 2014, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2014/05/25/entre-la-luz-y-la-sombra/>.
- 9 Walter Mignolo, "Foreword: Anomie, Resurgences, and De-Noming," in *The Anomie of the Earth: Philosophy, Politics, and Autonomy in Europe and the Americas*, ed. F. Luisetti, J. Pickles, and W. Kaiser, vii–xvi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
- 10 Leanne Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 16.
- 11 Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy," 7.
- 12 In Sylvia Marcos, "La realidad no cabe en la teoría," *El pensamiento crítico frente a la hidra capitalista III*, ed. EZLN (Chiapas, Mexico: EZLN, 2016), 21, 27.
- 13 Enrique Dussel, *16 Tesis de Economía Política: Interpretación filosófica* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2014), 322.
- 14 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark, Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. Analouise Keating, 7 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
- 15 In Sylvia Marcos, "La realidad no cabe en la teoría," 15.
- 16 Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 7–8.
- 17 CONAIE, ONIC, and SAHIC, "A Call to Indigenous People: 500 Years of Resistance," *Native Web*, South and Meso American Indigenous Information Center, April 1989.
- 18 Armando Muyolema, "De la 'cuestión indígena' a lo 'indígena' como cuestionamiento: Hacia una crítica del latinoamericanismo, el indigenismo y el mestiz(o)aje," in *Convergencia de tiempo: Estudios subalternos/contextos latinoamericanos, estado, cultura subalternidad*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez, 328 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).
- 19 Cited in Muyolema, "De la 'cuestión indígena,'" 328.
- 20 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, [1955] 2000), 43.
- 21 Vanessa Fonseca, "América es nombre de mujer," *Reflexiones* 58, no. 1 (1997): 3–4.
- 22 Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 47.
- 23 Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1 no. 3 (2000): 533–34.
- 24 Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.

- 25 See, particularly, Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Las claves mágicas de América* (Bogotá: Plaza and Janes, 1989).
- 26 See, for instance, Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa 1900–1980*, ed. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (La Paz: Hisbol, 1986), 168, and Patricio Noboa, “La matriz colonial de poder, los movimientos sociales y los silencios de la modernidad,” in *Pensamiento crítico y matriz (de)colonial de poder: Reflexiones Latinoamericanas*, ed. Catherine Walsh, 71–109 (Quito: Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar and Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2005). In a subsequent text, Rivera elaborated the idea of a colonial matrix of *mestizaje* (see “La raíz: Colonizadores y colonizados”).
- 27 Catherine Walsh, “Pedagogical Notes from the Decolonial Cracks,” *e-misférica* 11, no. 1 (2014), accessed May 24, 2016, <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/emisferica-111-decolonial-gesture/walsh>.
- 28 Corinne Kumar, “Introduction,” in *Asking We Walk: The South as New Political Imaginary. Book One, In the Time of the Earth*, ed. Corinne Kumar, 2nd ed. (Bangalore: Streelekha, 2010), xiii–xiv.
- 29 Walsh, “The (Re)Articulation of Political Subjectivities and Colonial Difference in Ecuador: Reflections on Capitalism and the Geopolitics of Knowledge,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 3, no. 1 (2002): 68.
- 30 One of the clearest contestations to this imposition can be read in the 1983 “Political Thesis” of Bolivia’s CSUTCB, the labor union arm of the katarist movement. “Our oppressors have tried through diverse means to systematically plunder our historical identity. They tried to make us forget our true origins and reduce us to only *campesinos* or peasants, without personality, without history and without identity. . . . In this liberation struggle, we have maintained our personality as Aymaras, Qhechwas, Cambas, Chapacos, Tupiguaranis, etc., and we have learned that we can reach our liberation without losing our cultural identity and our identity as nations.” CSUTCB, “Tesis política 1983,” in *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa 1900–1980*, ed. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (La Paz: Hisbol, 1986), 196.
- 31 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 1.
- 32 Letter from Subcomandante Marcos to “Hermanos,” March 1995, http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1995/1995_03_17_b.htm.
- 33 For a detailed description of these struggles, see Walsh, “The (De)Coloniality of Knowledge, Life, and Nature: The North American-Andean Free Trade Agreement, Indigenous Movements, and Regional Alternatives,” in *Globalization and Beyond: New Examinations of Global Power and Its Alternatives*, ed. Jon Shefner and Patricia Fernández-Kelly, 228–48 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).
- 34 Arturo Arias, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, and Emilio Del Valle Escalante, “Literaturas de Abya Yala,” *Lasa Forum* 43, no. 1 (winter 2012): 7–10.
- 35 Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy,” 16. On the struggles against the politics of recognition, particularly among Canadian First Nations, see Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin*,

White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

- 36 Nina Pacari, talk given in the Forum on the "World Crisis and the Exhaustion of Progressive Models," Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito, October 12, 2015.
- 37 Fernando Coronil, "¿Globalización liberal o imperialismo global? Cinco piezas para armar el rompecabezas del presente," *Comentario Internacional, Revista del Centro Andino de Estudios Internacionales*, no. 5 (2004): 117.
- 38 Arturo Escobar, "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-globalization Social Movements," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no.1 (2004): 217. Also see Escobar, "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program." In *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, 33–64 (New York: Routledge, 2010).
- 39 See Walsh, "Political-Epistemic Insurgency, Social Movements and the Refounding of the State" in *Rethinking Intellectuals in Latin America*, ed. Mabel Moraña, 199–211 (St. Louis: Washington State University, 2010).
- 40 See Comisión Sexta del EZLN, *El pensamiento crítico frente a la hidra capitalista I*.