
INTRODUCTION

On Gnosis and the Imaginary of the Modern/Colonial World System

I

In the sixteenth century, Spanish missionaries judged and ranked human intelligence and civilization by whether the people were in possession of alphabetic writing. This was an initial moment in the configuration of the colonial difference and the building of the Atlantic imaginary, which will become the imaginary of the modern/colonial world. *Translation* was the special tool to absorb the colonial difference previously established. *Border thinking*, as we shall see, works toward the restitution of the colonial difference that colonial translation (unidirectional, as today's globalization) attempted to erase. In the sixteenth century, the colonial difference was located in space. Toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the measuring stick was history and no longer writing. "People without history" were located in a time "before" the "present." People with history could write the history of those people without. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Max Weber transformed this lack (of alphabetic writing, of history) into a celebration of the possession of true knowledge, an Occidental achievement of universal value. I have had this overall picture in mind during the process of writing this book, as I was conceiving subaltern knowledges and border thinking as the response to Weber from the end of the twentieth century. Weber never mentioned colonialism, was unaware of the colonial difference and did not reflect on the fact that he was providing such a celebratory picture at the highest moment of European expansion and capital accumulation in the history of the modern/colonial world system. I would like to remind the reader of the initial sentences of the introduction to Weber's *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* ([1904] 1992) that provoked the reflections evolving into the book the reader has in her hands:

A product of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value.

Only in the West does science exist at a stage of development which we recognize to-day as valid. . . . In short, knowledge and observation of great refinement have existed elsewhere, above all in India, China, Babylonia, Egypt. But in Babylonia and elsewhere astronomy lacked—which makes its development all the more astounding—the mathematical foundation which it first received from the Greeks. The Indian geometry had no rational proof. . . . The Indian natural sciences . . . lacked the method of experiment. (Weber [1904] 1992, 13)

Weber was blind to the colonial difference and to the subalternization of knowledge built into it. It is difficult to imagine at the end of the twentieth century a book or a master thought that would continue the tradition of Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth century, French and German philosophers after the Enlightenment, and European social scientists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Sociologist and political scientist Samuel Huntington has recognized that people from “other” civilizations and with “other” forms of knowledge are claiming a *gnoseology* that they have been taught to despise (this is the particular topic of chapter 7). Weber provoked in me a reflection on coloniality and epistemology, although I had no intention, initially, of writing such a book as this on the topic. This book, however, is not just a collection of articles, even though part of the material in each chapter has already been published. Each chapter has been substantially rewritten in view of the overall argument. Looking back, the seed of the book was actually planted in a debate published by *Latin American Research Review* in 1993, on colonial discourse, postcoloniality, and Latin America, prompted by a review article authored by historian Patricia Seed (Seed 1991). I closed my response to the article with a long paragraph I would like to repeat here, this time in thematic parallel with Weber’s assertion:

When Barbadian poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite recounts the story of his search for a rhythm that would match his living experience in the Caribbean, he highlights the moment when skipping a pebble on the ocean gave him a rhythm that he could not find by reading John Milton. Brathwaite also highlights a second and subsequent moment when he perceived the parallels between the skipping of the pebble and Calypso music, a rhythm that he could not find in listening to Beethoven.¹ If Brathwaite found a voice and a form of knowledge at the intersection of the classical models he learned in a colonial school with his life experience in the Caribbean and consciousness of African people’s history, his poetry is less a discourse of resistance than a discourse claiming its centrality. Similar claims could be found indirectly in the writings of Jamaican novelist and essayist Michelle Cliff, who states that one effect of British West Indian colonial discourse is “that you believe absolutely in the hegemony of the King’s

¹ I am referring here to Brathwaite (1992). His general position regarding poetic practices in colonial situations has been articulated in Brathwaite (1983, 1984).

English and the form in which it is meant to be expressed. Or else your writing is not literature; it is folklore and can never be art. . . . The anglican ideal—Milton, Wordsworth, Keats—was held before us with an assurance that we were unable, and would never be enabled, to compose a work of similar correctness. . . . No reggae spoken here” (Cliff 1985). While Thiong’o, Lamming, and Brathwaite simultaneously construct and theorize about alternative centers of enunciation in what have been considered the margins of colonial empires, Latinos and Black Americans in the United States are demonstrating that either the margins are also in the center or (as Thiong’o expresses it) that knowledge and aesthetic norms are not universally established by a transcendent subject but are universally established by historical subjects in diverse cultural centers. Chicano writer Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, has articulated a powerful alternative aesthetic and political hermeneutic by placing herself at the cross-road of three traditions (Spanish-American, Nahuatl, and Anglo-American) and by creating a locus of enunciation where different ways of knowing and individual and collective expressions mingle (Anzaldúa 1987). . . . My concern is to underscore the point that “colonial and postcolonial discourse” is not just a new field of study or a gold mine for extracting new riches but the condition of possibility for constructing new loci of enunciation as well as for reflecting that academic “knowledge and understanding” should be complemented with “learning from” those who are living in and thinking from colonial and postcolonial legacies, from Rigoberta Menchú to Angel Rama. Otherwise, we run the risk of promoting mimicry, exportation of theories, and internal (cultural) colonialism rather than promoting new forms of cultural critique and intellectual and political emancipations—of making colonial and postcolonial studies a field of study instead of a liminal and critical locus of enunciation. The “native point of view” also includes intellectuals. In the apportionment of scientific labor since World War II, which has been described well by Carl Pletsch (1981), the Third World produces not only “cultures” to be studied by anthropologists and ethnohistorians but also intellectuals who generate theories and reflect on their own culture and history. (Mignolo 1993a, 129–31)

The situation is no different for natural scientists in Africa or Latin America, since intellectual achievements need material conditions, and satisfactory material conditions are related to the colonality of power. “Thinking from” was an expression and an idea that kept on haunting me, and I discussed it in seminars and attempted to develop it in some of my published articles after that date (see, for instance, Mignolo 1994; 1996a). “Border thinking” was the second expression that began to gain a life of its own. Although “border” is an overused word (e.g., border writing, border culture, border matters), none of the discussions I read using the word dealt with knowledge and understanding, epistemology and hermeneutics, those two sides of the intellectual frontiers of European modernity. My own idea of

“border thinking,” which I modeled on the Chicano/a experience, also owes much to the idea of “African *gnosis*” as it has been introduced by Valentin Mudimbe in his study on the invention of Africa (Mudimbe 1988). Border thinking, as I conceive it here, is unthinkable without understanding the colonial difference. Furthermore, it is the recognition of the colonial difference from subaltern perspectives that demands border thinking.

But let me add a few additional elements to explain what I have in mind and what this book is all about. Compare my initial quotation from Weber with the following quotation by Tu Wei-ming [1985] 1996):

Historically, the emergence of individualism as a motivating force in Western society may have been intertwined with highly particularized political, economic, ethical, and religious traditions. It seems reasonable that one can endorse an insight into the self as a basis for equality and liberty without accepting Locke’s idea of private property, Adam Smith’s and Hobbes’ idea of private interest, John Stuart Mill’s idea of privacy, Kierkegaard’s idea of loneliness, or the early Sartre’s idea of freedom. ([1985] 1996, 78)

Now, Tu Wei-ming’s is not just another contribution along the lines of Fritjof Capra’s *Tao of Physics* (1975). *Tao of Physics* was and still is an important argument to show that the differences between “modern physics” and “Eastern mysticism” are historical and “superficial” rather than ontological. Beyond both of them we find a human capacity for logical articulation and sophisticated thinking, which failed to underline the colonial difference implied in the very naming of them. “Modern physics” retained in Capra’s book the hegemonic weight of Western sciences, whereas “Eastern mysticism” retained the exotic connotations constructed by several centuries of Occidentalism. Tu Wei-ming defines himself as a Confucian practitioner, while Capra is a believer in the universality (nonhistorical) of the Western concept of reason. And what Tu Wei-ming is contributing to it is precisely to redress the balance between equal epistemological potentials that have been subordinated to each other by the coloniality of power and the articulation of the colonial epistemic difference.

The two last sentences of Tu Wei-ming’s introduction to his classic *Confucian Thoughts* (1985) reveal in an elegant way the epistemological limits of Western thought and its epistemological potential, as sustainable knowledge and not as a relic of the past to be “studied” and “fixed” from the perspective of Western disciplines. As sustainable knowledge, the epistemological potential of Confucian legacy dwells in the possibility of showing the limits of modern epistemology, in both its disciplinary and its area studies dimension. As such, there is no longer the possibility of looking at “translation” or “information” from “other cultures,” by which it is implied that “other cultures” are not scientific and are knowable from the scientific

approaches of Western epistemology. Tu Wei-ming is clear, in the preceding passage, in implying that a post-Occidental stage is being thought out and that such a stage is a point of no return and of the erasure of the colonial epistemic difference from the perspective of what has been a subaltern form of knowledge. On the other hand, Tu Wei-ming could be criticized from the perspective of Chinese leftist intellectuals for supporting the uses of Confucianism, in China, to counter the ideology of Western capitalism with an ideology of Eastern capitalism. Or he could also be criticized for using Weber's own logic to criticize Protestant ethics from the perspective of a Confucian ethics (Wang 1997, 64–78). Both cases, however, enter a new player into the game, albeit not the ideal player for all the coaches involved. We could imagine similar scenarios, in the future, in which subaltern religions will take the place left empty by the historical collapse of socialism. And that they could be used to justify capitalist expansion beyond the West and to counter Christianity and the Protestant ethics upon which Western capitalism built its imaginary and its ideological force. This possibility does not prevent Confucianism and other forms of subaltern knowledge from being enacted with different purposes. Once “authenticities” are no longer an issue, what remains are the marks left by the colonial difference and the coloniality of power articulating both, the struggle for new forms of domination (e.g., Confucianism and capitalism) and struggles for new forms of liberation. I accentuate “liberation” because I am arguing here from the perspective of the external borders of the modern/colonial world system. And we all know that “emancipation” is the word used for the same purpose within the internal borders of the modern/colonial world system.

In any case, the point I would like to make could be stressed by Tu Wei-ming's elegant and deadly sentence at the end of the introduction to *Confucian Thought*:

The nine essays, written over a fairly long period of time for a variety of purposes, are in the kind words of Robert C. Neville, “attempts at transmission and interpretation, Confucius' own self-understanding.” *However, these attempts, far from transmitting and interpreting the Confucian conception of selfhood, suggest ways of exploring the rich resources within the Confucian tradition so that they can be brought to bear upon the difficult task of understanding Confucian selfhood as creative transformation.* [1985] (1996, 16)

If Confucianism offers the possibility of desubalternizing knowledges and expanding the horizon of human knowledge beyond the academy and beyond the Western concept of knowledge and rationality, this possibility is also open to forms of knowledge that were hit harder by the colonial tempest, including the knowledge of Amerindians and Native Americans. Vine

Deloria Jr., as intellectual and activist has been insisting (since the 1970s) on the cracks (or the colonial difference) between Native American knowledge and the structure of power in the hands of Anglo-Americans. Deloria has been criticized for essentializing the difference by presenting it in dichotomous terms. I do not have the time here to dispel a form of criticism when it comes from a postmodern leftist position that is just blind to the colonial difference. Of course, America is not a two-sided struggle between Anglo and Native Americans. The force of the national ideology in scholarship and, as a consequence, the lack of comparative works (that will place Native Americans in the context of Amerindians in Latin America, Aborigines in New Zealand and Australia, but also in comparison with Islam and Hinduism) hide the fact that what really matters is the colonial difference. As Deloria (1978) argues, “world views in collision” have been a fact of the past five hundred years and they have been in collision in the sixteenth century and today. However, neither of the world views in collision remained the same and they were not just between Anglos and Native Americans. World views in collision have been many, at different times around the planet. That is precisely the geohistorical density of the modern/colonial world system and the diachronic contradictions of its internal (conflicts between empires within the same world view) and external borders (world views in collision).

In chapter 7 I return to this topic by a different route: the future of a diverse planetary civilization beyond the universalisation of either Western neoliberalism or Western neo-Marxism. However, I need to state now that my references to Wei-ming and Deloria were not done with the intention of proposing that Confucianism or Native American religions are alternatives to Protestantism. They were made to suggest, quite to the contrary, that Protestant ethics was not necessarily an alternative to neither Confucianism or Native American religions (Deloria, 1999; Churchill 1997), and, above all, to stress one of this book’s main arguments. If nation-states are no longer conceived in their homogeneity, if production of commodity is no longer attached to one country (e.g., think of the many places involved in the car industry), then we should no longer conceive Confucian or Protestant ethics or Native American religions as homogeneous systems either. Therefore, the relationships between faith and knowledge, a distinction we owe to the modern and secular conception of epistemology, needs to be rethought. That is mainly the reason I compared Tu Wei-ming and Deloria with Weber. Although I would enroll myself among the second possibility if I had no other choice. The good news is that we have other choices, even the possibility of choosing to think in and from the borders, to engage in border thinking as a future epistemological breakthrough. Tu Wei-ming and Deloria are not interpreting, translating from the Western hegemonic perspective, or transmitting knowledge from the perspective of area studies. Their analytic and

critical reflections (rather than “religious studies”) are engaged in a powerful exercise of border thinking from the perspective of epistemological subalternity. Alternatives to modern epistemology can hardly come only from *modern* (Western) epistemology itself.

II

Let me explain my notion of border thinking by introducing “gnosis” as a term that would take us away from the confrontation—in Western epistemology, between epistemology and hermeneutics, between nomothetic and ideographic “sciences”—and open up the notion of “knowledge” beyond cultures of scholarships. *Gnosis* and *gnoseology* are not familiar words nowadays within cultures of scholarship. The familiar words are those like epistemology and hermeneutics, which are the foundations of the “two cultures,” sciences and the humanities. Indeed, hermeneutics and epistemology are more familiar because they have been articulated in the culture of scholarship since the Enlightenment. Since then, hermeneutics has been recast in secular, rather than in biblical terms, and epistemology has also been recast and displaced from its original philosophical meaning (referring to true knowledge, *episteme*, as distinct from opinion, *doxa*, and located as a reflection on scientific knowledge). Hermeneutics was assigned the domain of meaning and human understanding. Thus, the two cultures discussed by Snow (Snow 1959) came into being as a reconversion of the field of knowledge in the second phase of modernity, located in northern Europe and developed in the three main languages of knowledge since then (English, French, German). This frame is central to my discussion throughout this book. *Gnosis* was part of this semantic field, although it vanished from the Western configuration of knowledge once a certain idea of rationality began to be formed and distinguished from forms of knowledge that were considered dubious. *Gnosis* indeed was appropriated by the Gnostics (Jonas 1958), a religious and redemptive movement opposed to Christianity, from which comes the bad press received by “gnosticism” in the modern colonial world (from the Renaissance to the post–cold war). However, this is not the genealogy I am interested in.

Although the story is more complex, the following summary intends to map my use of *gnosis* and *gnoseology*. The verb *gignosko* (to know, to recognize) and *epistemai* (to know, to be acquainted with) suggest a different conceptualization of knowledge and knowing. The difference, in Plato’s work, between *doxa* and *episteme* is well known, the first indicating a type of knowledge guided by common sense and the latter a more second-order knowledge, a systematic knowledge guided by explicit logical rules. *Gnosis* seems to have emerged as a response to the need to indicate a secret or

hidden kind of knowledge. Greek philologists, however, recommend not to establish a rigid distinction between gnosis and episteme but to look at specific uses of them by specific authors.

Now, the *Oxford Companion of Philosophy* links gnoseology with the Greek word for “knowledge” and, therefore, does not make a clear distinction with episteme. But here an important and modern distinction is introduced as far as gnoseology refers to a kind of knowledge that is not available to sense experience—knowledge either attained by mystic contemplation or by pure logical and mathematical reasoning. Interestingly enough, the *Oxford Companion of Philosophy* reveals its own location when it clarifies that gnoseology is an archaic term and has been superseded by epistemology, (in the modern, post-Cartesian sense of reason and knowledge), and by metaphysics, a form and conceptualization of knowledge that has become (in Heidegger and Gadamer, for instance) linked with meaning and hermeneutics. Thus, gnoseology in the early modern colonial world became a term to refer to knowledge in general, while epistemology became restricted to analytical philosophy and the philosophy of sciences (Rorty 1982). In German the word *Erkenntnistheori*, in French *théorie de la connaissance*, and in Spanish *teoría del conocimiento* became expressions equivalent to gnoseology. Ferrater Mora ([1944] 1969), for example, distinguished in Spanish “teoría del conocimiento” from “epistemología” by the fact that the latter refers to scientific knowledge while the former to knowledge in general.

It is interesting to note that Valentin Y. Mudimbe employed gnosis in the subtitle of his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). This book emerged from a request to write a survey on African philosophy. How do you, indeed, write such a history without twisting the very concept of philosophy? Mudimbe states the discomfort he found himself in when he had to survey the history of philosophy as a disciplined kind of practice imposed by colonialism and, at the same time, to deal with other undisciplined forms of knowledge that were reduced to subaltern knowledge by colonial disciplined knowing practices called philosophy and related to epistemology. The “African traditional system of thought” was opposed to “philosophy” as the traditional was opposed to the modern: philosophy became, in other words, a tool for subalternizing forms of knowledge beyond its disciplined boundaries. Mudimbe introduced the word gnosis to capture a wide range of forms of knowledge that “philosophy” and “epistemology” contributed to cast away. To seize the complexity of knowledge about Africa, by those who lived there for centuries and by those who went to Westernize it, the knowledge produced by travelers in the past and by the media in the present, underlining at the same time the crucial relevance of the “African traditional system of thought,” needed to conceptualize knowledge production beyond the two

cultures. He noted that *gnosis* etymologically is related to *gnosko*, which in ancient Greek means “to know.” But, more specifically, Mudimbe notes, it means “seeking to know, inquiry, methods of knowing, investigation, and even acquaintance with someone. Often the word is used in a more specialized sense, that of higher and esoteric knowledge” (Mudimbe 1988, ix). Mudimbe is careful enough to specify that *gnosis* is not equivalent to either *doxa* or *episteme*. *Episteme*, Mudimbe clarifies, is understood as both science and intellectual configuration about systematic knowledge, while *doxa* is the kind of knowledge that the very conceptualization of *episteme* needs as its exterior: *episteme* is not only the conceptualization of systematic knowledge but is also the condition of possibility of *doxa*; it is not its opposite.

Following the previous configuration of the field of knowledge in Western memory, I will use *gnoseology* as the discourse about *gnosis* and I will understand by *gnosis* knowledge in general, including *doxa* and *episteme*. Border *gnosis* as knowledge from a subaltern perspective is knowledge conceived from the exterior borders of the modern/colonial world system, and border *gnoseology* as a discourse about colonial knowledge is conceived at the conflictive intersection of the knowledge produced from the perspective of modern colonialisms (rhetoric, philosophy, science) and knowledge produced from the perspective of colonial modernities in Asia, Africa, and the Americas/Caribbean. Border *gnoseology* is a critical reflection on knowledge production from both the interior borders of the modern/colonial world system (imperial conflicts, hegemonic languages, directionality of translations, etc.) and its exterior borders (imperial conflicts with cultures being colonized, as well as the subsequent stages of independence or decolonization). By interior borders I mean, for instance, the displacement of Spain from hegemonic position by England, in the seventeenth century, or the entry of the United States in the concert of imperial nations in 1898. By exterior borders I mean the borders between Spain and the Islamic world, along with the Inca or Aztec people in the sixteenth century, or those between the British and the Indians in the nineteenth century, or the memories of slavery in the concert of imperial histories. Finally, border *gnoseology* could be contrasted with territorial *gnoseology* or epistemology, the philosophy of knowledge, as we know it today (from Descartes, to Kant, to Husserl and all its ramifications in analytic philosophy of languages and philosophy of science): a conception and a reflection on knowledge articulated in concert with the cohesion of national languages and the formation of the nation-state (see chapter 6).

“Gnosticism,” said Hans Jonas (1958, 32), was the name for numerous doctrines “within and around Christianity during its critical first century.” The emphasis was on *knowledge* (*gnosis*) with salvation as the final goal. As for the kind of knowledge gnostic knowledge is, Jonas observes that the

term by itself is a formal term that doesn't specify what is to be known or the subjective aspect of possessing knowledge. The difference with the gnostic context can be located in the concept of reason.

As for *what* the knowledge is about, the associations of the term most familiar to the classically trained reader point to *rational* objects, and accordingly to natural reason as the organ for acquiring and possessing knowledge. In the gnostic context, however, "knowledge" has an emphatically religious or supernatural meaning and refers to objects which we nowadays should call those of faith rather than of reason. . . . *Gnosis* meant pre-eminently knowledge of *God*, and from what we have said about the radical transcendence of the deity it follows that "knowledge of God" is the knowledge of something naturally unknowable and therefore itself not a natural condition. . . . On the one hand it is closely bound up with revelatory experience, so that reception of the truth either through sacred and secret lore or through inner illumination replaces rational argument and theory. . . . on the other hand, being concerned with the secrets of salvation, "knowledge" is not just theoretical information about certain things but is itself, as a modification of the human condition, charged with performing a function in the bringing about of salvation. *Thus gnostic "knowledge" has an eminently practical object.* (Jonas 1958, 34)

We are obviously no longer at the beginning of the Christian era and *salvation* is not a proper term to define the practicality of knowledge, and neither is its claim to truth. But we need to open up the space that epistemology took over from gnoseology, and aim it not at God but at the uncertainties of the borders. Our goals are not salvation but decolonization, and transformations of the rigidity of epistemic and territorial *frontiers* established and controlled by the coloniality of power in the process of building the modern/colonial world system.

But since my focus is on forms of knowledge produced by modern colonialism at the intersection with colonial modernities, border gnosis/gnoseology and border thinking will be used interchangeably to characterize a powerful and emergent *gnoseology*, absorbing and displacing hegemonic forms of knowledge into the perspective of the subaltern. This is not a new form of syncretism or hybridity, but an intense battlefield in the long history of colonial subalternization of knowledge and legitimation of the colonial difference. By "subalternization of knowledge" I intend, through this book, to do justice and expand on an early insight by the Brazilian "anthropologist" (as he called himself, instead of "anthropologist") Darcy Ribeiro. "Anthropologist" was indeed a marker of subalternization of knowledge: an anthropologist in the "Third World" (Ribeiro was writing at the end of the 1960s and in the middle of the cold war and the consolidation of area studies) is not the same as an anthropologist in the First World, since the former is in the location of the object of study, not in

the location of the studying subject. It is in this precise tension that Darcy Ribeiro's observation acquires its density, a density between the situation being described and the location of the subject within the situation he or she is describing:

In the same way that Europe carried a variety of techniques and inventions to the people included in its network of domination . . . it also introduced to them its equipment of concepts, preconcepts, and idiosyncrasy which referred at the same time to Europe itself and to the colonial people.

The colonial people, deprived of their riches and of the fruit of their labor under colonial regimes, suffered, furthermore, the degradation of assuming as their proper image the image that was no more than the reflection of the European vision of the world, which considered colonial people racially inferior because they were black, Amerindians, or "mestizos." Even the brighter social strata of non-European people got used to seeing themselves and their communities as an *infrahumanity* whose destiny was to occupy a subaltern position because of the sheer fact that theirs was inferior to the European population. (Ribeiro 1968, 63)

That colonial modernities, or "subaltern modernities" as Coronil (1997) prefers to label it, a period expanding from the late fifteenth century to the current stage of globalization, has built a frame and a conception of knowledge based on the distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics and, by so doing, has subalternized other kinds of knowledge is the main thesis of this book. That long process of subalternization of knowledge is being radically transformed by new forms of knowledge in which what has been subalternized and considered interesting only as object of study becomes articulated as new loci of enunciation. This is the second thesis of this book. The first is explored through a cultural critique of historical configurations; the second, by looking at the emergence of new loci of enunciation, by describing them as "border gnosis" and by arguing that "border gnosis" is the subaltern reason striving to bring to the foreground the force and creativity of knowledges subalternized during a long process of colonization of the planet, which was at the same time the process in which modernity and the modern Reason were constructed.

By "colonial differences" I mean, through my argument (and I should perhaps say "the colonial difference"), the classification of the planet in the modern/colonial imaginary, by enacting coloniality of power, an energy and a machinery to transform differences into values. If racism is the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, "Occidentalism" is the overarching metaphor around which colonial differences have been articulated and rearticulated through the changing hands in the history of capitalism (Arrighi 1994) and the changing ideologies motivated by imperial conflicts. The emergence of new areas

of colonization that had to be articulated within the conflictive memory of the system (e.g., France's colonization of North Africa four hundred years after the Spanish expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula).

In my own intellectual history, a first formulation of border gnosis/gnoseology could be found in the notion of "colonial semiosis" and "pluritopic hermeneutics," which I introduced several years ago (Mignolo 1991) and which became two key notions in the argument and analysis of my previous book on coloniality in the early modern period (Mignolo 1995a). Colonial semiosis (which some readers found to be just more jargon, although the same readers would not find "colonial history" or "colonial economy" extravagant) was needed to account for a set of complex social and historical phenomena and to avoid the notion of "transculturation." Although I do not find anything wrong with the notion of transculturation, and while I endorse Ortiz's corrective of Malinowski's "acculturation," I was trying to avoid one of the meanings (indeed, the most common) attributed to the word: transculturation when it is attached to a biological/cultural mixture of people. When Ortiz suggested the term, he described Malinowski's acculturation as follows:

Acculturation is used to describe the process of transition from one culture to another, and its manifold social repercussions. But transculturation is a more fitting term. I have chosen the word transculturation to express the highly varied phenomena that come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutation of culture that has taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual or other aspects of its life. (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 98)

Ortiz conceived the entire history of Cuba as a long process of transculturation. And he summarized this idea in the following dictum: "The whole gamut of culture run by Europe in a span of more than four millenniums took place in Cuba in less than four centuries" (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 99). Ortiz was interested in defining a national feature of Cuban history. I am more interested in critically reflecting on coloniality and thinking from such an experience, than in identifying national (or subcontinental, e.g., "Latin American") distinctive features. This is the main reason why I prefer the term colonial semiosis to transculturation, which, in the first definition provided by Ortiz, maintains the shadows of "mestizaje." Colonial semiosis emphasized, instead, the conflicts engendered by coloniality at the level of social-semiotic interactions, and by that I mean, in the sphere of signs. In the sixteenth century, the conflict of writing systems related to religion, education, and conversion was a fundamental aspect of coloniality (Gruzinsky 1988; 1990; Mignolo 1995a). Colonial semiosis attempted,

although perhaps not entirely successfully, to dispel the notion of “culture.” Why? Because culture is precisely a key word of colonial discourses classifying the planet, particularly since the second wave of colonial expansion, according to sign system (language, food, dress, religion, etc.) and ethnicity (skin color, geographical locations). Culture became, from the eighteenth century until 1950 approximately, a word between “nature” and “civilization.” Lately, culture has become the other end of capital and financial interests.

While Ortiz defined transculturation mainly in terms of contact between people, he suggested also that tobacco and sugar, beyond their interest for the study of Cuban economy and historical peculiarities, offer, in addition, certain curious and original instances of transculturation of the sort that are of great and current interest in contemporary sociological sciences (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 5). This kind of transculturation is closer to my own notion of colonial semiosis. Let’s explore why. In the second part of the book, and after exploring in detail tobacco’s features in comparison with sugar, Ortiz explores the historical aspects of both and observes:

Tobacco reached the Christian world along with the revolutions of the Renaissance and the Reformation, when the Middle Ages were crumbling and the modern epoch, with its rationalism, was beginning. One might say that reason, starved and benumbed by theology, to revive and free itself, needed the help of some harmless stimulant that should not intoxicate it with enthusiasm and then stupefy it with illusions and bestiality, as happens with the old alcoholic drinks that lead to drunkenness. For this, to help sick reason, tobacco came from America. And with it chocolate. And from Abyssinia and Arabia, about the same time, came coffee. And tea made its appearance from the Far East.

The coincidental appearance of these four exotic products in the Old World, all of them stimulants of the senses as well as of the spirit, is not without interests. It is as though they had been sent to Europe from the four corners of the earth by the devil to revive Europe when “the time came,” when that continent was ready to save the spirituality of reason from burning itself out and give the senses their due once more. (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 206)

I am not interested in discussing here the historical validity of Ortiz’s assertion but in looking at transculturation from the realm of signs, rather than from that of people’s miscegenation, and in displacing it toward the understanding of border thinking and the colonial difference. When people’s blood enters in the definition of transculturation, it is difficult to avoid the temptation to understand miscegenation and biological mixtures. It is not the blood or the color of your skin but the *descriptions* of blood mixture and skin color that are devised and enacted in and by the coloniality of power that counts. Blood mixture and skin color, as far as I can ascertain, do not have inscribed in them a genetic code that becomes translated into

a cultural one. Rather, the descriptions made by those living organisms who can make descriptions of themselves and of their surroundings (Mignolo 1995a, 1–28) are the ones that establish an organization and a hierarchy of blood mixture and skin color. In this regard, the notion of transculturation is not relevant so much because it describes a given reality as it is because it changes previous descriptions made by living organisms making descriptions of themselves (and sometimes following “disciplinary” norms in order to get such descriptions “right”). Transculturation offers a different view of people interaction. It is, in other words, a principle to produce descriptions that changes the principle in which similar descriptions have been made up to the point of its introduction in cultures of scholarship’s vocabulary. Instead, the encounter of exotic products coming into Europe from the four corners of the world to enter in a new social and gnoseological setting is a good image of transculturation without *mestizaje*. What is missing in Ortiz’s analysis is coloniality, and it is missing because for Ortiz the main question is nationality. Thus, colonial semiosis frames the issue within but also beyond the nation in the sense that nation-states are firmly established in the horizon of coloniality: either you find a nation-state that becomes an empire (like Spain or England) or one undergoing uprisings and rebellions to become autonomous, working toward the foundation of a nation (e.g., the Americas at the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries).

Perhaps some of the resistance to colonial semiosis from people who will readily accept colonial history or economy is due to the fact that colonial semiosis goes together with pluritopic hermeneutics. And this, for sure, not only complicates the matter but also introduces more obscure jargon. Sometimes, however, jargon is necessary, for how would you change the terms, and not only the content, of the conversation without it? I needed the combination of these two notions to move away and not get trapped by the opposite danger: the platitude of colonial economy or colonial history starting from the surface of what is “seen” and avoiding the risks of looking for what Rolph-Trouillot called the “unthinkable” in the Haitian Revolution. Thus, it is not always the case that jargon is unnecessary, and often uncommon words show us the invisible. In any event, pluritopic hermeneutics was necessary to indicate that colonial semiosis “takes place” in between conflict of knowledges and structures of power. Anibal Quijano (1997) has developed the notion of “coloniality of power,” a phenomenon I just described as a “conflict of knowledges and structures of power.” My understanding of coloniality of power presupposes the colonial difference as its condition of possibility and as the legitimacy for the subalternization of knowledges and the subjugation of people.

III

Coloniality of power is a story that does not begin in Greece; or, if you wish, has two beginnings, one in Greece and the other in the less known memories of millions of people in the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast, and better-known memories (although not as well known as the Greek legacies) in the Andes and in Mesoamerica. The extended moment of conflict between people whose brain and skin have been formed by different memories, sensibilities, and belief between 1492 and today is the crucial historical intersection where the coloniality of power in the Americas can be located and unraveled. Quijano identifies coloniality of power with capitalism and its consolidation in Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Coloniality of power implies and constitutes itself, according to Quijano, through the following:

1. The classification and reclassification of the planet population—the concept of “culture” becomes crucial in this task of classifying and reclassifying.
2. An institutional structure functional to articulate and manage such classifications (state apparatus, universities, church, etc.).
3. The definition of spaces appropriate to such goals.
4. An epistemological perspective from which to articulate the meaning and profile of the new matrix of power and from which the new production of knowledge could be channeled.

This is, in a nutshell, what for Quijano constitutes the coloniality of power by way of which the entire planet, including its continental division (Africa, America, Europe), becomes articulated in such production of knowledge and classificatory apparatus. Eurocentrism becomes, therefore, a metaphor to describe the coloniality of power from the perspective of subalternity. From the epistemological perspective, European local knowledge and histories have been projected to global designs, from the dream of an *Orbis Universalis Christianus* to Hegel’s belief in a universal history that could be narrated from a European (and therefore hegemonic) perspective. Colonial semiosis attempted to identify particular moments of tension in the conflict between two local histories and knowledges, one responding to the movement forward of a global design that intended to impose itself and those local histories and knowledges that are forced to accommodate themselves to such new realities. Thus, colonial semiosis requires a pluritopic hermeneutics since in the conflict, in the cracks and fissures where the conflict originates, a description of one side of the epistemological divide won’t do. But that is not all, because while the first problem was to look into the

spaces in between, the second was how to produce knowledge from such in-between spaces. Otherwise, it would not have been a pluritopic hermeneutics, but a monotopic one (i.e., a perspective of a homogenous knowing subject located in a universal no-man's-land), describing the conflict between people made of different knowledge and memories. "Border thinking" is the notion that I am introducing now with the intention of transcending hermeneutics and epistemology and the corresponding distinction between the knower and the known, in the epistemology of the second modernity. To describe in "reality" both sides of the border is not the problem. The problem is to do it from its exteriority (in Levinas's sense). The goal is to erase the distinction between the knower and the known, between a "hybrid" object (the borderland as the known) and a "pure" disciplinary or interdisciplinary subject (the knower), uncontaminated by the border matters he or she describes. To change the terms of the conversation it is necessary to overcome the distinction between subject and object, on the one hand, and between epistemology and hermeneutics on the other. Border thinking should be the space in which this new logic could be thought out. In chapter 1, I explore Abdelkebir Khatibi's concept of "an other thinking" as a response to this problem. In chapter 6 I explore the possibility of "an other tongue" following Alfred Arteaga's expression.

IV

This book came into existence when I realized that today's emergence of "border thinking" was a consequence of the modern world system, as originally described by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), and expanded and complicated later on by Eric Wolf (1982), Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1989), Giovanni Arrighi (1996), not to mention the debates on the very idea of "world system" that took place in the past twenty years, of which the journal *Review* (published by the Ferdinand Braudel Center at Binghamton) has been a visible medium (see *Review* 15, No. 4, [1992], for instance). I began to piggyback on modern world system analysis and, in doing so, I followed the example of Edward Said on the one hand and the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group on the other. In both cases, there was piggybacking on Michel Foucault, first, and Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, second, whose debates on colonialism were located in a "universal" domain of discussion, promoting it from the more local and descriptive site it occupied until the 1980s. But then, why am I not piggybacking on South Asian subaltern studies, or on Said's *Orientalism*, or even on German critical theory or French post-structuralism, which have more clout in cultural studies and postcolonial debates than modern world system theory? And why the modern world system model or metaphor that has been much criticized and looked at with

suspicion by many within the social sciences, and went almost unnoticed within the humanities?

One of the possible answers to this question is at the same time my justification to start with this paradigm: the modern world system model or metaphor has the sixteenth century as a crucial date of its constitution, while all the other possibilities I just mentioned (Said, Guha, critical theory, poststructuralism) have the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment as the chronological frontier of modernity. Since my feelings, education, and thinking are anchored on the colonial legacies of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas, to “begin” in the eighteenth century would be to put myself out of the game. This is also an answer to Valentin Mudimbe, who asked me once, “What do you have against the Enlightenment?” The Enlightenment comes second in my own experience of colonial histories. The second phase of modernity, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, was derivative in the history of Latin America and entered in the nineteenth century as the exteriority that needed to be incorporated in order to build the “republic” after independence from Spain and Portugal had been gained (see chapter 3).

Border gnosis or border thinking is in this book in dialogue with the debate on the universal/particular, on the one hand, and with Michel Foucault’s notion of “insurrection of subjugated knowledges,” on the other. Furthermore, border thinking/gnosis could serve as a mediator between the two interrelated issues I am introducing here: subjugated knowledges and the universal/particular dilemma. A link between Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledges and Darcy Ribeiro’s subaltern knowledges allows me to reframe the dilemma of the universal/particular through the colonial difference.

In his inaugural lecture in the College of France (1976), Foucault introduced the expression “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” to describe an epistemological transformation he perceived at work in the fifteen years or so previous to his lecture. He devoted a couple of paragraphs to specify his understanding of subjugated knowledges: “By subjugated knowledges I mean two things. On the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist or formal systematization” (81). By “historical content,” Foucault was referring to something that has been buried “behind” the disciplines and the production of knowledge, that was neither the semiology of life nor the sociology of delinquency but the repression of the “immediate emergence of historical contents.”

His second approach to subjugated knowledges was expressed in the following terms:

I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowl-

edge that has been disqualified as inadequate to its tasks or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition of scientificity. I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the doctor—parallel and marginal as they are to the knowledge of medicine—that of the delinquent, etc.) which involve what I would call a popular knowledge [*le savoir des gens*] though it is far from being a general common sense knowledge, *but on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its forces only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it*—that is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (Foucault [1976] 1980, 82; emphasis added)

Foucault was certainly aware of the disparity between the kinds of knowledges he was confronting, academic and disciplinary knowledge, on the one hand, and nonacademic and popular knowledge on the other. He was also aware that he was not attempting to oppose the “abstract unity of theory” to the “concrete multiplicity of facts” (83). Foucault was using the distinction between disciplinary and subjugated knowledges to question the very foundation of academic/disciplinary and expert knowledge without which the very notion of subjugated knowledge would not have sense. He called *genealogy* the union of “erudite knowledge and local memories” and specified that what *genealogy* really does is to “entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter hierarchies and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects” ([1972–77] 1980, 83).

My intention in this introduction and throughout the book is to move subjugated knowledge to the limits of the colonial difference where subjugated become subaltern knowledges in the structure of coloniality of power. And I conceive subaltern knowledges in tandem with Occidentalism as the overarching imaginary of the modern/colonial world system: Occidentalism is the visible face in the building of the modern world, whereas subaltern knowledges are its darker side, the colonial side of modernity. This very notion of subaltern knowledges, articulated in the late 1960s by Darcy Ribeiro, makes visible the colonial difference between anthropologists in the First World “studying” the Third World and “anthropologians” in the Third World reflecting on their own geohistorical and colonial conditions. Allow me to repeat, with a distinct emphasis, Ribeiro’s paragraph quoted already on page 13:

In the same way that Europe carried a variety of techniques and inventions to the people included in its network of domination . . . *it also introduced to them*

its equipment of concepts, preconcepts, and idiosyncrasy that referred at the same time to Europe itself and to the colonial people. The colonial people, deprived of their riches and of the fruit of their labor under colonial regimes, suffered, furthermore, the degradation of assuming as their proper image the image that was no more than the reflection of the European vision of the world, which considered colonial people racially inferior because they were black, (Amer) Indians, or mestizos. . . . Even the brighter social strata of non-European people got used to seeing themselves and their communities as an *infrahumanity whose destiny was to occupy a subaltern position* because of the sheer fact that theirs was inferior to the European population. (Ribeiro 1968, 63; emphasis added)

Although the introduction of “subalternity” by Antonio Gramsci pointed toward a structure of power established around class relations in the modern (industrial) Western societies, ethnoracial relations (as I suggested) were crucial for the establishment of class relations structured around labor, the exploitation of the Amerindians, and the increasing slave trade from sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, a hierarchical relation and consequently a subalternization of knowledge occurred at a different level, the level of religion. Christianity established itself as intolerant to Judaism and Islam as well as to the “idolatry” of the Amerindians, whose extirpation became a major goal of the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Duviols 1971; MacCormack 1991). Christianity became, with the expulsion of Jews and Moors and the “discovery” of America, the first global design of the modern/colonial world system and, consequently, the anchor of Occidentalism and the coloniality of power drawing the external borders as the colonial difference, which became reconverted and resemantized in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the expansion of Britain and France to Asia and Africa. Global designs are the complement of universalism in the making of the modern/colonial world.

Today, a world history or a universal history is an impossible task. Or perhaps both are possible but hardly credible. Universal histories in the past five hundred years have been embedded in global designs. Today, local histories are coming to the forefront and, by the same token, revealing the local histories from which global designs emerge in their universal drive. From the project of the *Orbis Universalis Christianum*, through the standards of civilization at the turn of the twentieth century, to the current one of globalization (global market), global designs have been the hegemonic project for managing the planet. This project changed hands and names several times, but the times and names are not buried in the past. On the contrary, they are all still alive in the present, even if the most visible is the propensity toward making the planet into a global market. However, it is not difficult to see that behind the market as the ultimate goal of an economic project that has become an end in itself, there is the Christian mission of the early

modern (Renaissance) colonialism, the civilizing mission of the secularized modernity, and the development and modernization projects after World War II. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on the market and consumption, is not just a question of economy but a new form of civilization. The impossibility or lack of credibility of universal or world histories today is not advanced by some influential postmodern theory, but by the economic and social forces generally referred to as globalization and by the emergence of forms of knowledge that have been subalternized during the past five hundred years under global designs I just mentioned—that is, during the period of planetary expansion I call here modern colonialisms and colonial modernities. To simplify things, I refer to this double edge as modernity/coloniality. The coexistence and the intersection of both modern colonialisms and colonial modernities (and, obviously, the multiplication of local histories taking the place occupied by world or universal history), from the perspective of people and local histories that have to confront modern colonialism, is what I understand here as “coloniality,” quite simply, the reverse and unavoidable side of “modernity”—its darker side, like the part of the moon we do not see when we observe it from earth.

The overarching, and necessary, concept of coloniality/modernity implies the need, indeed, the strong need, for building macronarratives from the perspective of coloniality. And this is one of the main goals of this book. Macronarratives from the perspective of coloniality are not the counterpart of world or universal history, but a radical departure from such global projects. They are neither (or at least not only) revisionist narratives nor narratives that intend to tell a different truth but, rather, narratives geared toward the search for a different logic. This book is intended as a contribution to changing the terms of the conversation as well as its content (persuaded by Trouillot’s insistence on the issue) to displace the “abstract universalism” of modern epistemology and world history, while leaning toward an alternative to totality conceived as a network of local histories and multiple local hegemonies. Without such macronarratives told from the historical experiences of multiple local histories (the histories of modernity/coloniality), it would be impossible to break the dead end against which modern epistemology and the reconfiguration of the social sciences and the humanities since the eighteenth century have framed hegemonic forms of knowledge. Western expansion since the sixteenth century has not only been a religious and economic one, but also the expansion of hegemonic forms of knowledge that shaped the very conception of economy and religion. That is to say, it was the expansion of a “representational” concept of knowledge and cognition (Rorty 1982) that I will be attempting to displace from the perspective of emerging epistemologies/gnoseologies, which I explore and conceive as border gnosis/gnoseology and link to modernity/coloniality.

V

The book is then a series of interconnected essays on the *imaginary* of the modern/colonial world system. I use imaginary in the sense of Edouard Glissant. Following the translator of *Poétique de la relation* ([1990] 1997), I read Glissant *not* to mean by imaginary “the now widely accepted Lacanian sense in which the Imaginary is contrasted with the Symbolic and the Real.” For Glissant the imaginary is all the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world. Hence, every human culture will have its own particular imaginary” (Wing 1997). In a terminology already introduced in the *Darker Side of the Renaissance* (Mignolo 1995a), the imaginary of the modern/colonial world is its self-description, the ways in which it described itself through the discourse of the state, intellectuals, and scholars. I also submit, and discuss throughout the book, “Occidentalism” as the overarching metaphor of the modern/colonial world system imaginary. It is fitting that an updated article published by Wallerstein in 1992 is titled “The West, Capitalism and the Modern World-System.” By “border thinking” I mean the moments in which the imaginary of the modern world system cracks. “Border thinking” is still within the imaginary of the modern world system, but repressed by the dominance of hermeneutics and epistemology as keywords controlling the conceptualization of knowledge.

But let me tell you first how I do conceive of the modern/colonial world system in this book. I do not discuss whether the “world system” is five hundred or five thousand years old (Gunder Frank and Gills 1993; Dussel 1998a; 1998b). It is important for my argument to make a distinction between the “world system” Gunder Frank and Gills theorize and the “modern/colonial world system,” whose imaginary is the topic of this book. This imaginary is a powerful one, not only in the sociohistorical economic structure studied by Wallerstein (1974; 1980; 1989) and what he calls “geoculture” (Wallerstein 1991a), but also in the Amerindian imaginary.

“Imaginary” shall be distinguished from “geoculture.” For Wallerstein, the geoculture of the modern world system shall be located between the French Revolution and May 1968 in France (as well as around the world) is defined in terms of France’s intellectual hegemony—a most interesting location of the geoculture of the modern world system, since its economic history as the history of capitalism (from Venice and Genoa, to Holland and England) (Arrighi 1994) does not include France, as a special chapter of this narrative. France, then, provided the geoculture of modernity since the French Revolution, although France’s participation in the history of capitalism was marginal (Arrighi 1994). On the other hand, Wallerstein stated that there is no geoculture of the system until the French Revolution. How can we describe then the Christian global and geo-ideological perspective from

the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries? I prefer, therefore, to think in terms of the imaginary of the Atlantic commercial circuit, which is extended, and thus includes what Wallerstein calls “geoculture,” to the end of the twentieth century and is resemantized in the discourse of neoliberalism as a new civilizing project driven by the market and the transnational corporations. In my argument, the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system is the overarching discourse of Occidentalism, in its geohistorical transformation in tension and conflict with the forces of subalternity that were engendered from the early responses of the Amerindian and African slaves to it, to current intellectual undoing of Occidentalism and social movements looking for new paths toward a democratic imaginary.

Laguna writer Leslie Marmon Silko includes a “five hundred year map” at the beginning of her novel, *The Almanac of the Dead* (1991); (fig. 1), and the first sentence of the Zapatista declaration from the Lacandon Forest in January 1994 reads “we are the product of 500 years of struggle” (EZLN, CG 1995). October 12 is commemorated by Spaniards and officially in the Americas as the day of the “discovery.” Amerindians have recently begun to commemorate October 11, instead, as the last day of “freedom.” I suppose that a similar image can be created, if it is not yet at work, among the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American population.

Glissant’s use of the concept of “imaginary” is sociohistorical rather than individual. Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, concerned with the same question of the density of collective memory, conceived every act of saying as inscribed in a triple dimension: the ground (“suelo”), the underground (“subsuelo”), and the enemy (“el enemigo”) (Ortega y Gasset 1954). The underground is what is there but is not visible. The Christian T/O was invisibly inscribed since the sixteenth century in every world map where we “see” fourth continents. We may not “know” that the fourth continents are not “there” in the world map but the symbolical inscription “fourth” in the tripartite Christian division of the world in Asia/Shem, Africa/Ham, and Europe/Japeth began to be accepted in and since the sixteenth century. And we may not know that the Americas were considered the daughter and the inheritor of Europe because it was, indeed, a fourth continent but not like the others. Noah did not have four sons. Consequently, the Americas became the natural extension of Japeth, toward the West. The imaginary of the modern/colonial world system is not only what is visible and in the “ground” but what has been hidden from view in the “underground” by successive layers of mapping people and territories.

However, I’m not arguing for the “representation” of the invisible or for “studying” the subalterns. To argue in that direction would be to argue from the perspective of a “denotative” epistemic assumption that I rejected in my previous book. (1995a; 16–28) and that I continue to reject here. Denotative epistemic assumptions are presupposed in what I call here “territorial episte-

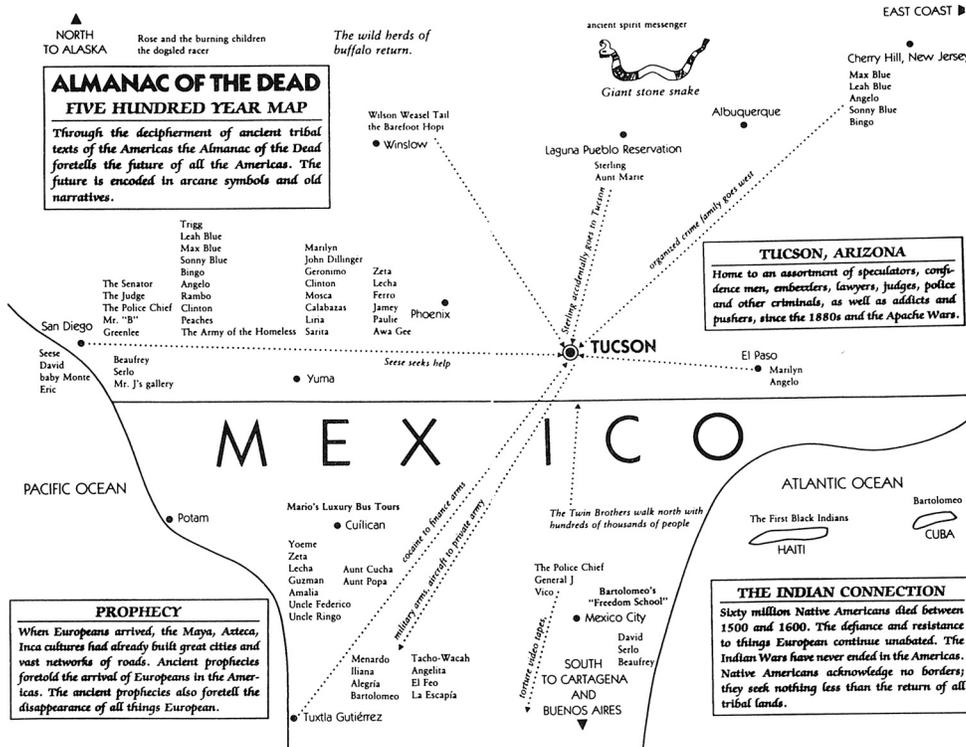


Figure 1. Leslie Marmon Silko's map reinstalled the colonial difference by introducing the temporal dimension within a spatial configuration, showing in a transnational perspective the history of the modern/colonial world system from a particular local history. As we know, Amerindians did not make a strict distinction between space and time. The "five hundred year map" joins Amerindians' and Native Americans' claim for memory, for land, for human dignity, for the desubalternization of knowledge, and for erasure of the colonial difference. (From Leslie Marmon Silko. 1982. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc.)

mology" and which is, in terms of Ortega y Gasset, "the enemy." Ortega y Gasset assumed that every act of saying was a "saying against." In my argument this is not a necessary restriction. It would be more accurate to say that every act of saying is at the same time a "saying against" and a "saying for." This double movement will acquire a complex dimension when viewed at the intersection of local histories and global designs, and at the intersection of hegemonic and subaltern grounds and undergrounds. From this perspective, recent discussions on the "facts" and "fictions" component of Rigoberta Menchú's (1984) narrative fall within a denotative and territorial epistemology. Rigoberta Menchú's story is no less "fact and fiction" than any

other known narrative from the Bible to *The Clash of Civilizations*. The better question would be: What are the ground, the underground, and the enemy of these or other narratives? To argue in this direction requires a change of terrain: to move, first, from a denotative to an enactive epistemology, and, second, to move from a territorial to a border epistemology which presupposes an awareness of and a sensibility for the colonial difference. Rigoberta Menchú argues from an enactive and border epistemology. Her critics are located instead in a denotative and territorial epistemology. This tension between hegemonic epistemology with emphasis on denotation and truth, and subaltern epistemologies with emphasis on performance and transformation shows the contentions and the struggle for power. It also shows how the exercise of the coloniality of power (anchored on denotative epistemology and the will to truth) attributes itself the right to question alternatives whose will to truth is preceded by the will to transform—a will to transform, like in Rigoberta Menchú, emerging from the experience of the colonial difference engrained in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world since 1500.

Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1989) described the world order between A.D. 1250 and 1350 in eight dominant commercial circuits, extending from Peking to Genoa (fig. 2). At this point I am interested in two aspects from this map. One is the fact that during that period, Genoa, Bruges, and Troyes were in the margins of the commercial circuits, dominated by circuit viii. This is one of the reasons why Spaniards and Portuguese were interested in reaching China, but there is no record of the Chinese being irresistibly attracted by Christendom as it was emerging in the West after the failure of the Crusades. My second point of interest is that figure 2 completely ignores what figure 3 shows. The map shown in figure 3 includes two more commercial circuits “hidden” from Eurocentric narratives. The first commercial circuit had its center in Anahuac, in what is today Mexico, and extended toward today’s Guatemala and Panama in the south and to today’s New Mexico and Arizona in the north. The other had its center in Tawantinsuyu, in what is today Peru, and extended north toward present-day Ecuador and Colombia, east to present-day Bolivia and south to the northern part of today’s Argentina and Chile.

Enrique Dussel (1998a) has suggested that, given the world order described in figure 2, the fact that it was the Spaniards and not the Chinese or the Portuguese who “discovered” America responds to an obvious historical logic. China was in a dominant position. Therefore, even if Chinese navigators reached the Pacific coasts of America before the Spaniards, it was not an event to be qualified as the most important since the creation of the world, as historian López de Gómara did toward 1555. The Portuguese did not need to try the Atlantic route because they had been controlling the coast of Africa, from north to south, and around to the Indian Ocean, with

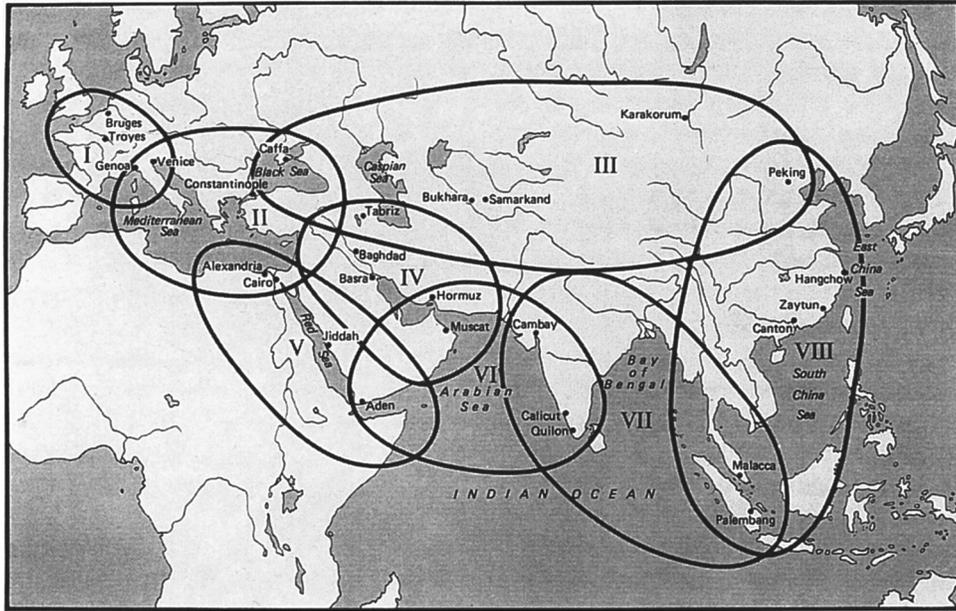


Figure 2. The eight commercial circuits in the thirteenth century in a multicentered world, according to Janet L. Abu-Lughod. Notice that although Abu-Lughod writes at the end of the twentieth century, the Atlantic and the “Americas” are not in the picture of the scholar because they were not in the picture of those living in the thirteenth century from Genova to Aden and to Peking; from Palembang to Karakorum. (From Janet L. Abu-Lughod. 1989. *Before European Hegemony*. Copyright © 1989 by Oxford University Press. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.)

easy access to Malaca, Canton, and Peking. It is not by chance that Columbus went first to the court of Portugal, and only after his plans were rejected did he approach Isabelle and Ferdinand of Spain. What Columbus did, in this context, was to open the gates for the creation of a new commercial circuit connecting circuit I, in Abu-Lughod’s map, with the one in Anahuac and the other in Tawantinsuyu. I am retelling this well-known story because it is the story that connects the Mediterranean with the Atlantic, begins to displace the commercial forces (mines and plantations) to the latter, and lays the foundation of what is today conceived as the modern world system. Now the inception of a new commercial circuit, which would be the foundation of Western economy and dominance, goes together with a rearticulation of the racial imaginary, whose consequences are still alive today. Two ideas became central in such rearticulation: “purity of blood” and “rights of the people.”

The “purity of blood” principle was formalized at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in Spain, and established the final “cut” between Chris-

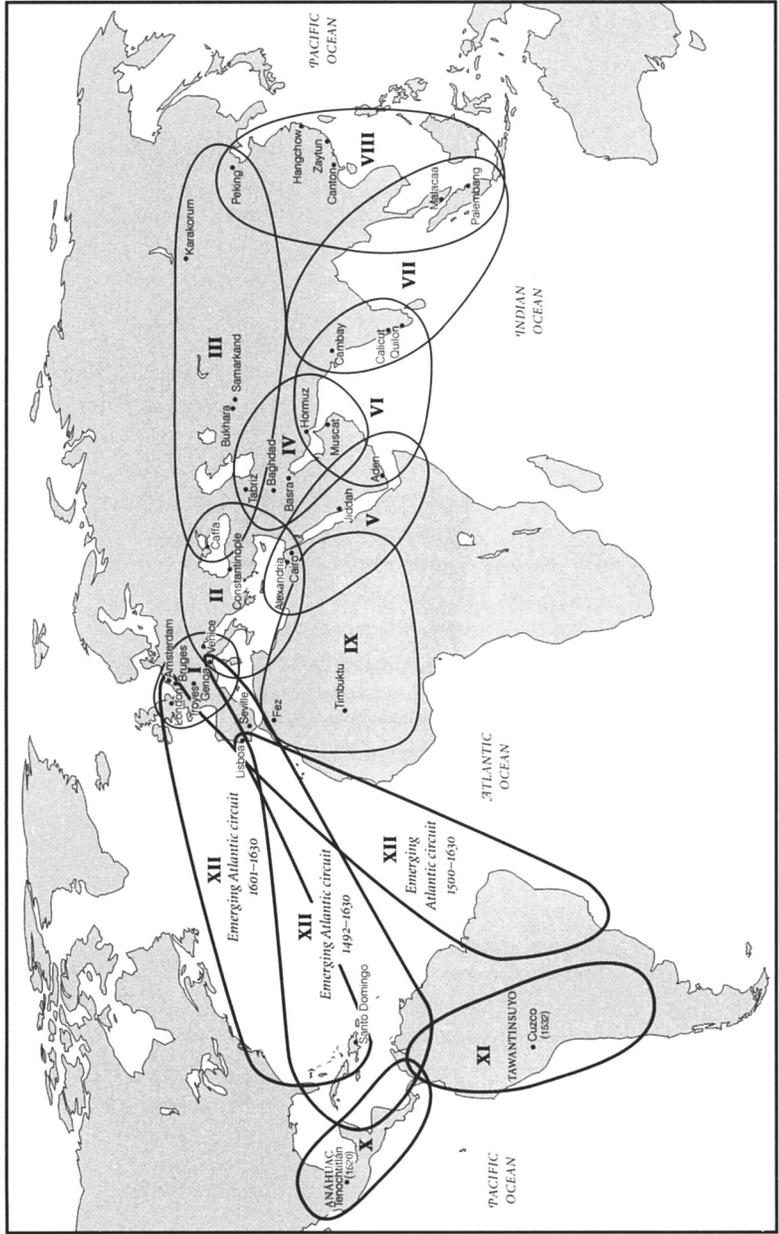


Figure 3. The emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit connected two existing ones: Anahuac (today Mexico, Guatemala, Yucatan, Nicaragua) and Tawantinsuyu (today Bolivia, Peru, north of Chile and Argentina, Ecuador and Columbia). Until the middle of the fifteenth century, the Atlantic commercial circuit was not yet hegemonic, although Christians' global designs and map making provided a global conception of the world not available until then. The Atlantic commercial circuit became hegemonic with the expansion of England and France to Asia and Africa, after the Dutch transitional period in the second half of the seventeenth century. This moment corresponded also with the tracing of the imperial (internal) borders and the making of the European South.

tians, Jews and Moors (Sicroff 1960; Netanyahu 1995, 975–80, 1041–47; Harvey 1990, 307–40; Constable 1997). At the same time, it created the concept of “converso.” While the expulsion of the Moors demarcated the exterior of what would be a new commercial circuit and the Mediterranean became that frontier, the expulsion of the Jews determined one of the inner borders of the emerging system. The converso instead opened up the borderland, the place in which neither the exterior nor the interior frontiers apply, although they were the necessary conditions for borderlands. The converso will never be at peace with himself or herself, nor will he or she be trustworthy from the point of view of the state. The converso was not so much a hybrid as it was a place of fear and passing, of lying and terror. The reasons for conversion could as easily be deep conviction or sheer social convenience. Whatever the case, he or she would know that the officers of the state would be suspicious of the authenticity of such a conversion. To be considered or to consider oneself a Jew, a Moor, or a Christian was clear. To be a converso was to navigate the ambiguous waters of the undecided. At the time, the borderland was not a comfortable position to be in. Today, the borderland is the place of a desired epistemological potential (see chapters 1, 5, 6, and 7) and the “discomfort” generated by Rigoberta Menchú.

While “purity of blood” rearticulated the three religions of the book and the field of force in the Mediterranean, later it was adapted to the Spanish colonies in the Americas too, and it was carried over the republican period. My interest here in underlining “purity of blood” is due to the fact that in the Iberian Peninsula in the sixteenth century the Atlantic was organized according to a different and opposed principle: the “rights of the people,” which emerged from the Valladolid early debates between Gines de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas on the humanity of the Amerindians and was followed up by the long debates in the School of Salamanca on cosmopolitanism and international relations (Höffner 1957; Ramos et al., 1984). Contrary to “purity of blood,” which was a punitive principle, “rights of the people” was the first legal attempt (theological in nature) to write down a canon of international law, that was reformulated in a secular discourse in the eighteenth-century as the “rights of men and of the citizen” (Ishay 1997, 73–173). One of the important differences between the two (“rights of the people” and “rights of men and of the citizen”) is that the first is at the heart of the colonial, hidden side of modernity and looks for the articulation of a new frontier, which was similar neither to the Moors nor to the Jews. The second, instead, is the imaginary working within the system itself, looking at the “universality” of man as seen in an already consolidated Europe, made possible because of the riches from the colonial world flowing west to east, through the Atlantic.

The “Rights of the People” had another important consequence in building the imaginary of the modern world system, which would be revealed after the declaration of the “rights of men and of the citizen.” “Rights of the People” was a discussion about Amerindians, and not African slaves. Amerindians were considered vassals of the king and servants of God; as such they, theoretically, could not be enslaved. They were supposed to be educated and converted to Christianity. African slaves were not in the same category: they were part of the Atlantic “commerce” (Manning 1990, 23–37) rather than natives of a New World where complex social organizations have been achieved, as in Anahuac and Tawantinsuyu. However, and perhaps because of the difference in status, Amerindians failed in their revolutionary attempt. The most well known revolt, that of Tupac Amaru, in the eighteenth century was unsuccessful. The Haitian Revolution, which anticipated the movements of independence in Spanish America, was successful but “silent” in the self-description of the modern world system (Trouillot 1995) for which only the independence of New Englanders from England and the French Revolution counted.

The extension of the Spanish domain in the Americas, as can be seen in figure 4 (Wolf 1982, 132) significantly changed during the nineteenth century. Its shape was transformed first with the independence of Spanish American countries and, second, with the displacement of the frontier between the United States and Mexico when Mexico lost its northern territories in 1848 and then Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898. The modern/colonial world system was profoundly altered at the end of the nineteenth century. The United States (a former British colony) became a leading power, and Japan detached itself from China and was admitted to the family of nations abiding by the standards of civilizations. By the beginning of the twentieth century (as shown in fig. 5; Huntington 1996), the imaginary of the “modern” world system reduced the “West” to practically just English-speaking countries. On the other hand, a complementary perspective from the hidden side of “coloniality” (fig. 6, Osterhammel 1997) underlines the colonized areas of the world, instead of underlining the “West.” These two maps (figs. 5 and 6), suggest once more that modernity and coloniality are looked at separately, as two different phenomena. There could be no other reason why Wallerstein conceived a “modern” and not a “modern/colonial” world system, and why all his more recent analyses are done from within the history of the “modern” (Wallerstein 1991a), which he locates in the French Revolution.

At this point, a new and crucial turn in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system shall be mentioned. If the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were dominated by the Christian imaginary (whose mission extended from the Catholics and Protestants in the Americas, to the Jesuits in China), the end of the nineteenth century witnessed a radical change.

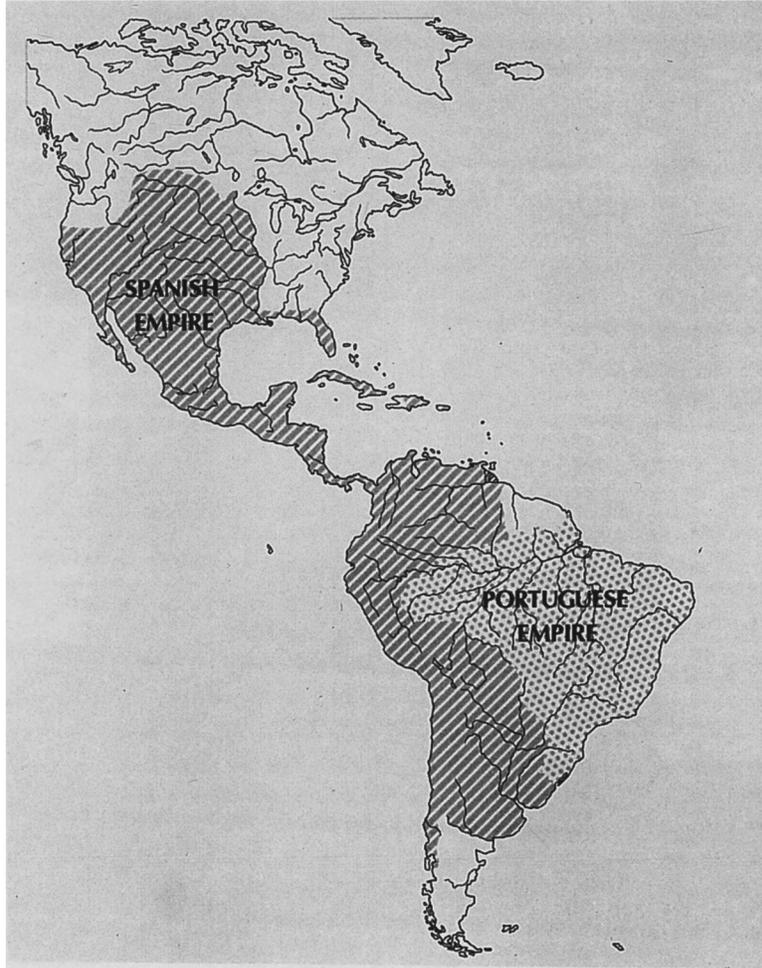


Figure 4. The Spanish Empire, until 1848, extended through almost all the Americas. (From Eric R. Wolf. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: The University of California Press. Used by permission of The University of California Press.)

“Purity of blood” was no longer measured in terms of religion but of the color of people’s skin, and began to be used to distinguish the Aryan “race” from other “races” and, more and more, to justify the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon “race” above all the rest (de Gobineau 1853–55; Arendt [1948] 1968, 173–80). I submit that the turning point took place in 1898 when the U.S.-Spanish War was justified, from the U.S. perspective, with reference to

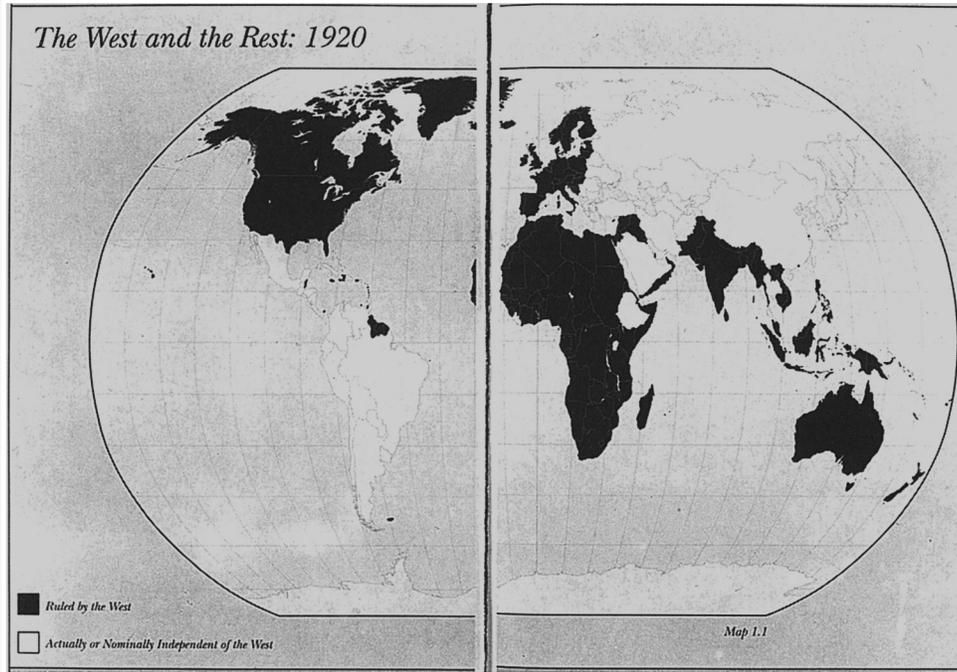


Figure 5. By 1920 hegemony has moved North and West as the United States was already on the way to becoming the new imperial country. Central and South America and the Caribbean (roughly “Latin America”) became “marginal” in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world. (From Samuel P. Huntington. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Used by permission of Simon and Schuster.)

the superiority of the “white Anglo-Saxon race” whose destiny was to civilize the world (Mahan 1890; Burgess 1890, vol. 1; Fiske 1902b) over the “white Catholic Christians and Latins,” a term introduced by the French political intelligentsia and used at that time to trace the frontiers in Europe as well as in the Americas between Anglo-Saxons and Latins. A significant turn of events took place whose consequences for today’s racial and multicultural discourse in the United States cannot be overlooked. Not only did W.E.B. Du Bois write *The Souls of the Black Folk* ([1905] 1990) in the initial years of the twentieth century when racial discourse on white supremacy was justifying U.S. imperial expansion, but also the year 1898 became the anchor for the U.S. perspective on “Latinos” continuing until today. I have argued elsewhere (Mignolo, forthcoming) that 1898 provided the ideological and historical justification to recast 1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico in an ideological discourse that was still not available at the time (Oboler 1997).



Figure 6. By the same years (beginning of the twentieth century), a look from the colonial perspective helps also in understanding the colonial difference. In contrast with figure 4, Spanish territory has been reduced to Spain itself. British and French territories reversed the sixteenth to mid-nineteenth century modern/colonial map: territorial possessions are now located in Africa and Asia, not in America. “British” territory in the Americas, as drawn on the map, is no longer British at the time but independent United States. (From Jürgen Osterhammel. 1997. *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, used by permission of Markus Wiener Publishers.)

The changes in the modern/colonial world imaginary I have in mind throughout this book are illustrated in figures 7, 8, and 9. The reader should make an effort to “see” beyond the maps the colonial differences, framed in the sixteenth century and reframed ever since until the current scenario of global coloniality.

VI

There are, finally, several differences I would like to underline between the terminology and assumptions of the modern world system model or metaphor and my own conception of the modern/colonial world system. In the first place, I conceive of the system in terms of internal and external borders rather than centers, semiperipheries, and peripheries. Internal and external borders are not discrete entities but rather moments of a continuum in colonial expansion and in changes of national imperial hegemonies. The emer-

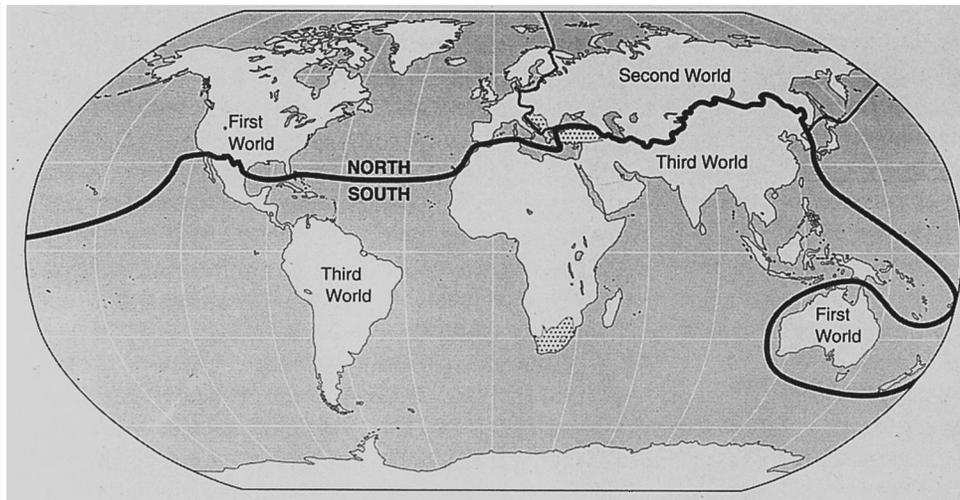


Figure 7. The cold war redrew the map of the early modern/colonial world and displaced the colonial difference from the dichotomy between Occident and Orient to North and South. The North-South geopolitical distinction is curious since Australia and Argentina are so far South as you can get, but the colonial difference has been located, this time, in First and Third Worlds. These developments explain again why “Latin America” began to fade away in the 1920s (see fig. 5). (From Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen. 1997. *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*. Berkeley: The University of California Press. Used by permission of The University of California Press.)

gence of a new commercial circuit centered in the Atlantic and inclusive of both Spain and its domain in the Americas and the Philippines is one of the basic changes triggering a new imaginary. If Islam was situated in the exteriority of the commercial circuit, the Americas were located halfway between the otherness of the Amerindian and the African slaves, on the one hand, and the Spanish and Creole (born in America from Spanish descent) population, on the other. In the sixteenth century, Russia and Spain were two powerful Christian centers. Soon, they became its margin. Leopoldo Zea (1957) described how Russia and Spain became borders (his expression) of the West: “border countries where Western habits and customs are blurred and mingle with non-Western ones” ([1957] 1992, 103). For Zea, the increasing secularization of the hegemonic Western imaginary relegated Russia and Spain to the fringes of the West:

Russia because of her Byzantine orthodoxy and Spain because of her Catholicism did not take the path pursued by the West, when she began to follow a new trend, renouncing her Christian past as an experience she had undergone but had no desire to repeat. During this phase Russia had to readjust to the new

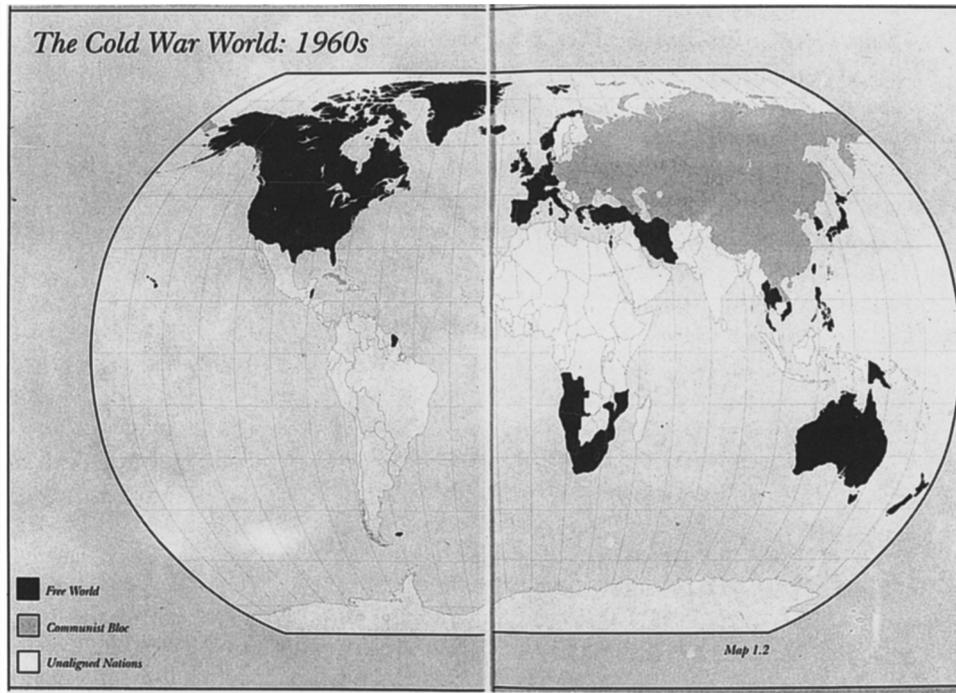


Figure 8. The cold war also witnessed massive decolonization that radically transformed the face of the world as depicted in figures 5 and 6. A new form of colonialism, nonterritorial, arose in the West (or “free world”), in which power was no longer visible and measured in territorial possessions. A new form of colonialism arose in the East (or “Communist bloc”), leaving a zone of nations in between (or “unaligned nations”). (From Samuel P. Huntington. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Used by permission of Simon and Schuster.)

trend, become Westernized, and abandon that part of the past which no longer had any meaning for Western man. (Zea 1992, 104)

The Marxist-Leninist revolution in 1918 redrew the borders and the place of the Soviet Union in the modern world system and began a colonialism of its own. Although I do not pursue this line of thought in this book, it is important to mention it not only as an explanation of my understanding of “borders of the modern/colonial world system” but also because in 1959 Cuba entered into the reconfiguration initiated by the Russian Revolution and forced a redrawing of the geopolitical map of the Americas. It is also important to keep in mind that the Russian Revolution brought the emerging Soviet Union into a new relation with western Europe through the incorporation of Marxism, all the while maintaining its memory and its “difference” with the secular imaginary of the core countries of western Europe

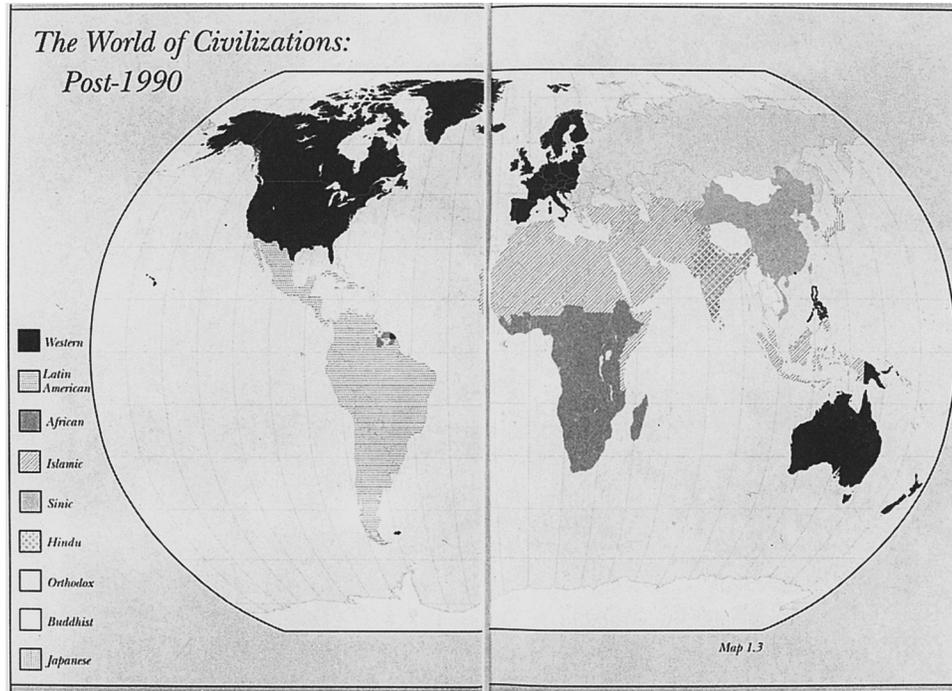


Figure 9. The end of the cold war made more visible what is still graphically invisible: the global colonialism enacted by the transnational corporations. The colonial difference is no longer located in the geographic arena. The colonial difference is displaced here to “civilizations,” not to cardinal points in map. “Latin America” suddenly became a “civilization” whose configuration can hardly be understood without understanding the colonial difference as was played out in the complex spatial history of the modern/colonial world. (From Samuel P. Huntington. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Used by permission of Simon and Schuster.)

(Wallerstein 1991a, 84–97). The “speed with which Russia was assimilated into European international society increased at the end of the seventeenth century” (Gong 1984, 101), but by the end of the nineteenth century, two positions (Westerners and Slavophiles) disputed Russia’s relation to Europe. Westerners considered Russia European, whereas to Slavophiles it was both European and Eastern, “with native principles of life which had to be worked out without influence from Western Europe” (Gong 1984, 106). Similar considerations could and should be pursued in other borders, like the Ottoman Empire, Japan, China, and Islamic countries. Borders install in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system an other logic, a logic that is not territorial, based on center, semiperipheries, and peripheries.

The decision to frame my argument in the modern/colonial world model rather than in the linear chronology ascending from the early modern, to

the modern, to the late modern (as I did in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*) was prompted by the need to think beyond the linearity of history and beyond Western geohistorical mapping. The geohistorical density of the modern/colonial world system, its interior (conflicts between empires) and exterior (conflicts between cosmologies) borders, cannot be perceived and theorized from a perspective inside modernity itself (as is the case for world system analysis, deconstruction, and different postmodern perspectives). On the other hand, the current and available production under the name of “postcolonial” studies or theories or criticism starts from the eighteenth century, leaving aside the crucial and constitutive moment of modernity/coloniality that was the sixteenth century.

Starting from the premises of world system analysis, I move toward a perspective that, for pedagogical purposes, I specify as modern/colonial world system analysis. If we bring to the foreground subaltern studies also as a perspective, as Veena Das suggests (Das 1989), then modern/colonial world system analysis introduces the subaltern perspective articulated on the basis of memories and legacies of the colonial experience, that is, the colonial experiences in their historical diversity. At this point the concept “coloniality of power,” introduced by Anibal Quijano (1992, 1997, 1998) is displaced, shifting from a “modern world” to a “modern/colonial world.” Once coloniality of power is introduced into the analysis, the “colonial difference” becomes visible, and the epistemological fractures between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism is distinguished from the critique of Eurocentrism, anchored in the colonial difference—being articulated as postcolonialism—and which I prefer (because of the singularity of each colonial history and experience) to conceive and argue as post-Occidentalism (see chapter 2). Thus, the geopolitic of knowledge becomes a powerful concept to avoid the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and to legitimize border epistemologies emerging from the wounds of colonial histories, memories, and experiences. Modernity, let me repeat, carries on its shoulders the heavy weight and responsibility of coloniality. The modern criticism of modernity (postmodernity) is a necessary practice, but one that stops where the colonial differences begin. The colonial differences, around the planet, are the house where border epistemology dwells.

There is, finally, another clarification to be made. Within the discussion among theoreticians and historians adhering to modern world system, the “origins” of capitalism and the “origins” of the modern world system constitute a point in question. Giovanni Arrighi’s discussion of the non-debate between Ferdinand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein (Arrighi 1998, 113–29) is about the origin of capitalism that Braudel locates in thirteenth-century Italy. When Wallerstein takes 1500 as a reference point, it is not clear whether he is referring to the origin of capitalism or to the origin of the modern world system, which implies, but goes beyond, capitalism.

My own emphasis is on the emergence of a new commercial circuit that had, in the foundation of its imaginary, the formalization of “purity of blood” and the “rights of the people.” These two principles were contradictory in their goals: the first was repressive, the second was expansive (in the sense that a new logic and new legal principles were necessary to incorporate unknown people to the imaginary). The principles of “purity of blood” and the “rights of the people” connected the Mediterranean with the Atlantic. A new imaginary configuration was coalescing, one that complemented the transformation of the geopolitical world order brought about by the “discovery” of America: the imaginary of the emerging modern/colonial world system.

VII

Finally, a note on local histories and global designs, which are so crucial to understanding border thinking, at the intersection of both, but from the perspective of local histories, and above all, to understanding the limits of world system analysis, the variety of postmodern perspectives, and deconstruction confronted with the colonial difference and the emergence of border thinking. I suggested before that world system analysis, postmodern theories, and deconstructive strategies (even if there are differences between them) are all valuable critical enterprises of and within the imaginary of the modern world, but that they are blind to the colonial difference. They are blind not to colonialism, of course, as an object of study, but to the epistemic colonial difference and the emergence of border thinking as a new epistemological (or gnoseological) dimension. Let me offer some preliminary highlights of an emerging conceptualization from the experience of the colonial difference.

Hélé Béji, a writer and philosopher who divides her life between Paris and Tunisia, and who wrote a disenchanting book about the failures of nation-building after decolonization (Béji 1982), in her latest book makes a strong distinction between civilization and culture. Civilization, like for Norbert Elias (Elias 1937), is for Béji linked to modernity, progress, technology. Culture, on the other hand, is conceived as the domain of tradition, the domain and spheres of life against which civilizing designs attempt to tame. Culture is also linked with passion, whereas civilization is portrayed in terms of reason:

Le triomphe des passions culturelles en dit long sur la désaffection des individus pour les promesses de la civilisation . . . L'Occident est aujourd'hui confronté à cette nostalgie d'une identité qui se présente comme l'enjeu essentiel de notre humanité. De plus en plus, le mot *culture* recouvre une acception de l'humain où chaque identité, pour échapper à sa dissolution mondiale, se resserre dans

une tradition, une religion, une croyance, une origine, jusqu'à se réduire à une figure rudimentaire de la mémoire que la civilisation continue d'effacer inéluctablement. (Béji 1997, 46)

The triumph of cultural passions is very revealing of the disappointments that people experience when confronted with the promises made in the name of civilization. The West is today confronted with the nostalgic revival of identity that presents itself as the true face of humanity. The word *culture* discloses, more and more, a sense of being human where each identity, to avoid being dissolved by globalization, closes itself on a given tradition, a given religion, a belief, an origin, to the point of reducing itself, as identity, to a rudimentary figure of memory that civilization continues to erase relentlessly. (1997, 46)

The notion of "culture mondiale" introduced by Béji (1997, 47) has to be translated as "worldly culture" and not as "global culture," which will be a translation complicit with Béji's notion of civilization, technology, progress, and homogeneity. "Worldly culture," which for Béji is a new form of civilization (and I would say a post-Occidental notion of civilization), distinguishes itself from the concept of civilization associated with modernity in that "worldly culture" does not imply a "universal reason." "Worldly culture" would be, in my own argument, the outcome of border thinking rearticulating, from the subaltern perspective of "cultural reason," the "universal reason of civilization." In a previous article I have attempted to express a similar idea under the concept of the "postcolonial reason" (1994, 1996a, 1997a) and, in chapter 2 of this book, as "post-Occidental reason," that I also explore under the heading of border thinking/gnoseology.

The tensions between culture and civilization staged by Béji, parallel my own concept of subaltern knowledge in the constitution of the modern/colonial world system. Her concept of "worldly culture" parallels my own of border thinking as, precisely, the multiplication of epistemic energies in diverse local histories (different spaces and moments in the history of capitalism; Arrighi 1994) and its unavoidable obscure companion, the history of colonialism (still to be written from the perspective I am displaying here). In the obscurity of the company, in the cracks between modernity and coloniality, dwells the colonial difference(s). Béji's "culture" parallels my own "local histories" and, therefore, "worldly culture" could be translated to my vocabulary as the rearticulation and appropriation of global designs by and from the perspective of local histories. Let me offer you another quotation from Béji where my own notion of border thinking from the subaltern perspective becomes the epistemic potential that remaps colonial difference(s) toward a future "culture mondiale" (worldly culture). Here the hegemony (face) of civilization and the subalternity of cultures would become the multiple diversity of local histories (without faces) but no longer subaltern to global designs.

La *culture mondiale*, qui est une nouvelle forme de civilisation, se distingue de celle-ci en ce qu'elle n'a plus de raison universelle. La civilisation avait un visage, tandis qu'elle n'en a pas. Elle est une entité anonyme où l'Orient et l'Occident, tout en s'affrontant, développent de mystérieux traits communs. Les retombées de la civilisation son entrées dans le métamorphoses sans nom, sans lieu, sans époque, de la culture mondiale. (Béji, 1997, 47; see my chapter 7 for an exploration of this last idea)

“Worldly culture” is a new form of civilization that distinguishes itself from the former in that “worldly culture” does not claim a universal reason. Civilization was provided with a face, while “worldly culture” doesn't have one. “Worldly culture” is an anonymous entity where the East and the West in confrontation cultivate [*developpent*] intriguing common traits. The periodic rise and fall of civilization are entering now in a metamorphosis of a worldly culture without name, without place, without epoch.

In a similar line of thinking, Martinican writer and philosopher, Edouard Glissant ([1990] 1997, 1998), distinguished between “globalization” (Béji's civilization, my global designs) and “mondialization” (Béji's culture, my local histories). A similar distinction in terms of vocabulary has been advanced, independent from Béji and Glissant, by Brazilian sociologist Renato Ortiz. Let me offer an example of each that will help in understanding the double articulation and the subsequent the epistemic potential of border thinking (from a subaltern perspective) emerging from the cracks between civilization and culture, between globalization and “mondialization” (worldness), between global designs and local histories. Here is Glissant on “globalization” and “worldness”:

Worldness is exactly what we all have in common today: the dimension I find myself inhabiting and the relation we may well lose ourselves in. The wretched other side of worldness is what is called globalization or the global market: reduction to the bare basics, the rush to the bottom, standardization, the imposition of multinational corporations with their ethos of bestial (or all too human) profit, circles whose circumference is everywhere and whose center is nowhere. (Glissant 1998, 2)

From the clash between the worldness and the global, Glissant extracts the positive fact of “plural, multiplying, fragment identities” that is no longer perceived as a lack or a problem but as a “huge opening and as a new opportunity of breaking open closed gates” (1998, 2). The opening up of new and diverse worldness identities emerging from the clash between current global designs (the market civilization) is for Glissant the becoming of a “world in Creolization,” to which I return in chapter 5. Glissant has been criticized for using “Créolization,” a local Caribbean concept, and giving it a planetary (not universal) scope. However, the concept has also been used by anthro-

pologist Ulf Hannerz (1987a) thinking precisely of globalization from the perspective of “peripheral cultures” (Hannerz 1991) and, furthermore, it has been the “normal” procedure in modern epistemology to delocalize concepts and to detach them from their local histories (e.g., “logocentrism,” “archaeology,” “capitalism,” “cogito,” etc.). By a different route, Glissant arrives at an image and description of the future similar to that of Hélé Béji, a perspective of a worldly culture as a new civilization without hegemony:

What will historical consciousness be then, if not the chaotic pulsing towards these meetings of all histories, none of which can claim (thanks to the inherent qualities of chaos) to have an absolute legitimacy? . . . I call creolization the meeting, interference, shock, harmonies and disharmonies between the cultures of the world, in the realized totality of the earth-world. . . . Creolization has the following characteristics: the lightning speed of interaction among its elements; the “awareness of awareness” thus provoked in us; the reevaluation of the various elements brought into contact (for creolization has no presupposed scale of values); unforeseeable results. Creolization is not a simple cross breeding that would produce easily anticipated results. (Glissant 1998, 4)

If Creolization is not a “cross breeding,” it is because it is conceived not as hybrid but, once again, as a rearticulation of global designs from the perspective of local histories. The local history Glissant is talking about and from is the colonization of the Caribbean. He is thinking from the colonial difference. And from the colonial difference hybridity is the visible outcome that does not reveal the coloniality of power inscribed in the modern/colonial world imaginary.

I conclude this discussion with Renato Ortiz because while Ortiz’s distinction between “globalization” and “worldness” is similar to Glissant’s (and also close to Béji’s distinction between culture and civilization), he does not foresee a future in Creolization—a future of a “wordly culture” without one face, but with many of them. I explore this difference in more detail in chapter 3. I would like to note here, however, the differences between decolonization in Tunisia in the late 1950s, the fact that Martinique is, still a French “protectorate” after the wave of decolonization after World War II, and that Brazil’s complex decolonization and subsequent nation-building took place during the nineteenth century. Ortiz, contrary to Béji, is thinking almost a century after decolonization in Brazil. His own approach to globalization has been shaped by both a local history and a colonial language (Portuguese) distinct from Béji’s.

But Ortiz has another aspect in common with my argument. His is a critic of the limits of the notion of world system, particularly when it comes to the notion of “culture.” Ortiz ([1994] 1997, 23–98) is correct in pointing out that the notion on “geoculture” introduced later by Wallerstein (1991a) is restricted to the geoculture of the system. That is, it leaves in the dark

other cultural manifestations or dimension. Wallerstein himself will agree with Ortiz's appraisal that this is precisely the meaning Wallerstein attributes to geoculture: the geoculture of the modern world system and not as the culture of the world. But in any case, Ortiz's debate with Wallerstein from Brazil and in Portuguese (and translated into Spanish) is more a process of building his own argument than engaging in a dialogue with Wallerstein. What his argument amounts to is the need to distinguish between "globalização" and "mondialização" (globalization and worldness).

From here Ortiz moves to differentiating, on the one hand, economic and technologic globalization from cultural worldness and, on the other, to distinguish between the restricted meaning of geoculture, in Wallerstein, and a world cultural diversity beyond and betwixt the geoculture of the modern world system. The establishing of these different levels allows Ortiz to disentangle, when thinking about capitalism in China and Japan, the level of globalization (economic, technologic) from the level of worldness. The Confucian intellectual legacy offered, for instance, a model for the adaptation of local culture to the global economy different from the training of workers in England after the industrial revolution. In this respect, the "traditional" European societies were less prepared for the advent of capitalism than the "traditional" societies in China or Japan. This comparison allows Ortiz to remap the concept of modernity and apply it to the multiplication of modernity as illustrated by the displacement of capitalism to East Asia. This move, in Ortiz's argument, is crucial since it represents the view of an intellectual in the "Third World" sensitized and attentive to the fractures of the geoculture of the modern/colonial world system when it enters in conflict with the diverse geocultures of the world. This is Ortiz's strength. His weakness is his blindness to the colonial difference. Ortiz's criticisms of Wallerstein's notion of geoculture have been argued from the very perspective of modernity itself, not of coloniality. Coloniality doesn't enter in his argument. Like in Wallerstein, modernity is the center and coloniality is relegated to the periphery of the history of capitalism. But coloniality is not a protagonist. Ortiz is more concerned with the transformation of life-style by what he calls "world modernity." "World modernity" (Ortiz [1994] 1997, 99–144), much like Béji "worldly culture," is not a European or North Atlantic modernity but is precisely worldly.

But contrary to the views of Béji and Glissant, Ortiz's worldly modernity is deprived of the memory of colonial differences and the forces, still at work today in the mass media, of the coloniality of power. Ortiz focuses his attention on examples such as airports or malls around the world and, from this vantage point, attempts to dismantle the easy opposition between global homogeneity and local heterogeneity (as well as other common oppositions). The argument—and sometimes the celebration of "world modernity"—is indeed against the defense of national values and cultures. The fact

that Ortiz overlooks the colonial difference leads him to draw his “world” examples mainly from the United States, Japan, and Europe. Argentina and Brazil may enter the picture, but as a point of comparison, not as the location of the coloniality of power. For that reason, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean are largely absent from his examples and statistics. For the same reason, when capitalism is considered, Ortiz’s main examples are China and Japan, but not Algeria, Indochina, India, or even the Caribbean. Finally, and with the purpose of locating the different arguments, I would like to add that Ortiz’s concern with epistemology is located in his departure from world system analysis. His is a signal contribution on the limitations of the social sciences when transposed from their place of “origin” to the colonial world. But Ortiz does not reflect critically on this issue (see my chapters 4 and 6), as other sociologists do (Quijano 1998; Lander 1998a; 1998b). In Latin American intellectual and academic production, this is a significant difference between intellectuals caught in the net of European legacies (like Ortiz himself) and intellectuals like Quijano, Dussel, and Rivera Cusicanqui for whom coloniality is a starting point of their intellectual production.

From this perspective, let’s go back to the question of modernity. If, as Quijano and Dussel claim, modernity is not a European phenomenon, then modern colonialism has different rhythms and energy according to its spatial and historical location within the modern/colonial world system. Global designs thought out and implemented from the local history of Europe, first, and then the North Atlantic in the twentieth century were influential in the making of colonial modernities in different localities and temporalities of the modern/colonial world system. This book is not a new history of the modern/colonial world system but a series of reflections on the question of knowledge in the colonial horizon of modernity. My main aim is to make an epistemological point rather than to tell the story anew.

VIII

The book’s architectonic is the following: by starting with and departing from the modern world system metaphor and introducing parallel expressions such as modernity/coloniality, modern/colonial world system, coloniality at large I intend to stress that there is no modernity without coloniality, that the coloniality of power underlines nation building in both local histories of nations that devised and enacted global designs as well as in those local histories of nations that had to accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their direct participation. Thus, two pervasive and simultaneous topics that run through the book are subaltern knowledges and border thinking, in their complex and diverse intersections at different stages of the modern/colonial world

system. The Americas, for example, were part of the system from its very inception; the Islamic world, on the contrary, was cast out at the very inception of the system, while India came into the picture in the late eighteenth century; China and Japan, for their part, were never colonized in the way the Americas and India were, and their very existence and tardy entrance into the picture not only make the picture more complex, but also create new possibilities for thinking from and about the exterior borders of the system. President Clinton's 1998 visit to China was a preview of such possibilities.

Chapter 1 is devoted to developing in more detail the basic concepts and scenarios I have introduced thus far. The three chapters in Part Two revolve around the ratio between geopolitical configurations and knowledge production. Chapter 3 starts a dialogue with postcolonial theorizing, bringing "Occidentalism" and "post-Occidentalism" into the picture, post-Occidentalism serving as a local and overarching concept in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system on which postcolonialism and post-Orientalism depend. Chapter 4 brings the overall discussion of chapter 2 to the Americas and their place in the modern/colonial world system, articulated by overlapping imperial conflicts and their relations with Amerindians and with African slavery and its legacy. It attempts to remap the Americas in the modern/colonial world system, rather than to reproduce it in the national imaginary, be it in Bolivar or the early version of the Monroe Doctrine. Chapter 4 brings the previous discussion to an epistemological terrain and explores, on the basis of subaltern studies, the tensions between local histories and global designs at the epistemological level. While in Part One the argument is underlined by the ratio between geopolitical configurations, knowledge, and the coloniality of power, Part Two focuses on language, knowledge, and literature (as a transdisciplinary site of knowledge production). In chapter 5 I focus on the crisis of national languages and literatures in a transnational world. Chapter 6 expands the same argument in the domain of epistemology and discusses the complicity between the hegemonic languages of the modern/colonial world system and the social sciences. Both chapters constantly bring to the foreground the dialectics between subaltern knowledges and border thinking. In chapter 7 I reconstruct the larger picture in which the issues discussed in chapters 5 and 6 take place. In it I discuss the role of "civilization" and "civilizing mission" in the modern/colonial world system. I consider border thinking at the intersection of the "barbarian" and the "civilized," as the subaltern perspective appropriates and rethinks the double articulation of "barbarian" and "civilized" knowledge.

All in all, this is an extended meditation that started from the recognition of any critique of modernity from inside modernity itself (e.g., postmodernity, deconstruction, world system analysis) and, above all, of its limits. That

is why I start and depart from world system analysis (as well as from postmodernity and deconstruction). The internal variability of “differe/a/nce” cannot transcend the colonial difference, where deconstruction has to be subsumed and transformed by decolonization. In other words, the transcending of the colonial difference can *only* be done from a perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and, therefore, from a new epistemological terrain where border thinking works (see the end of chapter 1, where I explore this idea through the work of Khatibi and Derrida). Border thinking can only be such from a subaltern perspective, never from a territorial (e.g., from inside modernity) one. Border thinking from a territorial perspective becomes a machine of appropriation of the colonial differe/a/nces; the colonial difference as an object of study rather than as an epistemic potential. Border thinking from the perspective of subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization.