Bhambra, Gurinder K. "Postcolonial and Decolonial Reconstructions." *Connected Sociologies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 117–140. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544377.ch-006>>.

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Postcolonial and Decolonial Reconstructions

Postcolonial and decolonial arguments have been explicit in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe. This has been particularly so in the context of demonstrating the parochial character of arguments about the endogenous European origins of modernity in favour of arguments that suggest the necessity of considering the emergence of the modern world in the broader histories of colonialism, empire and enslavement. As postcolonial and decolonial criticisms have become increasingly common, however, proponents of more orthodox views often make minor adjustments and suggest that this is all now very familiar and that, while the critique may once have had cogency, its force now is only in relation to positions that have already been superseded. In this way, the approaches discussed in the earlier chapters, such as multiple modernities, often seek to supplement, or marginally modify, existing approaches in terms of their future application, rather than to transform them. In contrast, my argument is that the postcolonial and decolonial critique has not properly been acknowledged, let alone superseded. Importantly, as I have argued in previous chapters, any transformation of understandings would require a reconstruction ‘backwards’ of our historical accounts of modernity, as well as ‘forwards’ in terms of constructing a sociology adequate for our global (postcolonial) age. In this chapter, I examine the traditions of postcolonialism and decolonial thinking and discuss how their radical potential in unsettling and reconstituting standard

processes of knowledge production might be drawn upon as part of a larger project for 'connected sociologies'.

The traditions of thought associated with postcolonialism and decoloniality are long-standing and diverse. Postcolonialism emerged as a movement consolidating and developing around the ideas of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak and drawing inspiration from the political movements for decolonization and the related scholar-activists associated with and central to such struggles. While much work in the area of Postcolonial Studies has directly addressed issues of the material, of the socioeconomic, there has also been a tendency for it to remain firmly in the realm of the cultural. This is no accident, given its intellectual provenance in the humanities more generally and English Literature more specifically. In contrast, the coloniality/modernity school emerged from the work of, among others, the sociologists Aníbal Quijano and María Lugones, and the philosopher and semiotician, Walter D. Mignolo. It was strongly linked to world systems theory from the outset as well as to scholarly work in development and underdevelopment theory and the Frankfurt School critical social theory tradition. More recently, it has sought to draw upon a broader range of theorists and activists from more diverse locations and across a longer time period.

As well as a disciplinary difference, there is also a difference in geographical 'origin' and remit; that is, the geographical locations from where the scholars within the particular fields hail and the geographical focus of their studies. Postcolonialism emerged both as a consequence of the work of diasporic scholars from the Middle East and South Asia and, for the most part, refers back to those locations and their imperial interlocutors (Europe and the West/North America). Decoloniality similarly emerged from the work of diasporic scholars from South America and, for the most part, refers back to those locations and their imperial interlocutors – again, primarily to Europe although addressing a much longer time frame. Whereas postcolonialism refers primarily to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, decoloniality starts with the earlier European

incursions upon the lands that came to be known as the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards. There has been little work, thus far, bringing together the intellectual and material histories of these fields. This chapter is one contribution to this larger project as well as establishing the theoretical basis for the further elaboration of 'connected sociologies' in the final chapter.

I

Postcolonial Studies emerged as an academic field in the wake of the publication of Edward W. Said's ground-breaking book, *Orientalism* (1995 [1978]). The contours of this field were further shaped by Homi K. Bhabha's collection of essays, *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Gayatri C. Spivak's preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and her oft-cited article, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1998). While this triumvirate of critical literary scholars formed the canonical hub of Postcolonial Studies, they were augmented by many others from across the humanities and social sciences. Alongside the inclusion of scholars associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hall 1992; Gilroy 1993) and the Subaltern Studies collective (Guha 1982, 1983; Chakrabarty 2000), Postcolonial Studies was also defined by its retrospective inclusion of earlier scholar-activists such as Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967 [1952]), Albert Memmi (1965 [1957]), and Aimé Césaire (1972 [1955]). There are a number of excellent works outlining and summarizing the field as a whole (see, for example, Gandhi 1998; Loomba 2005; Mongia 2000) and it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive overview here, given the range of contributions across the humanities and social sciences. Instead, I wish simply to pick up on some of the defining debates that have been significant in my articulation of postcolonial theory within the social sciences; this is a necessarily selective and incomplete account. While the humanities have engaged extensively with the idea of the postcolonial and with the field of Postcolonial Studies, the social sciences, generally, have been

more resistant to rethinking in light of such interventions – whether those of Walter Rodney and Frantz Fanon in the 1960s or those subsequent ones self-consciously defined as postcolonial.

With *Orientalism*, not only did Said present a thorough-going critique of the arcane discipline of Oriental Studies, but he opened up the question of the production of knowledge from a global perspective. While he was not the first to address such a question, his positioning of it in the context of interrogating the Orient/Occident divide was novel. He unsettled the terrain of any argument concerned with the ‘universal’ by demonstrating how the idea of the universal was based both on an analytic bifurcation of the world and an elision of that bifurcation. This double displacement removed the ‘other’ from the production of an effective history of modernity. History became the product of the West in its actions upon others. At the same time, it displaced those actions in the idea that modernity was endogenous to the West and therefore removed the very question of the ‘other’ in history. In so doing, it also naturalized and justified the West’s material domination of the ‘other’ and in this way suggested the complicity between Orientalism as scholarly discourse and as imperial institution. It was no accident then, as Said suggests, that the movements for decolonization from the early twentieth century onwards should provoke a fundamental crisis within Orientalist thought; a crisis that fractures the complacent rendering of the ‘other’ as passive and docile and which challenges the assumptive conceptual framework underpinning such depictions. These defining arguments have been central to my research.

The errors committed by the Orientalists, Said argues, were twofold: first, they got things wrong because there was no Orient to depict; second, the Orient they described was a misrepresentation. Critics of Said have suggested that making such an argument is contradictory as there can be no misrepresentation of something that does not exist (MacKenzie 1995; Irwin 2007). While the argument is complex, it is not unfathomable. As Said argues, ‘The Orient that appears in Orientalism ... is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and

later, Western empire' (1995 [1978]: 202–3). In setting up the Orient as the 'other' of the West, Orientalists cumulatively (along with other scholars) created something in conceptual terms that did not pre-exist its categorization. This was done by separating out conceptually parts of the world which were historically and empirically interconnected, resulting in two ideal types devoid of adequate material referents: the universal, unexamined West which was elided with the notion of world history, and the particular, stagnant Orient which, as a temporally and spatially distinct entity, provided its counterpart. Depictions of this Orient then served to establish the truth of the conceptual categories rather than standing as an adequate representation of what was being 'observed'. Orientalists misrepresented the Orient, in part, because what they were looking at was filtered through the cumulative discourse which already suggested what there was to see – two disparate, unconnected entities, with characteristics specific to each. In this way, they both created the Orient, as a general category, and misrepresented what was then observed.

With this, Said is not suggesting that there is a real or true Orient that could have been known, but rather is provoking us to consider how what we know is itself framed as knowledge through particular systems of representation and the practices of colonial governance based upon them. He further pushes us to question the adequacy of those systems not in terms of their supposed fidelity to what is observed, but in terms of a broader ethical project. The issue is less that Orientalists got things wrong when they could have got them right and more that their interpretations were allied to and reinforced particular world views which justified forms of colonial governance and domination. The fundamental issue is to address the specific sets of connections that have been made from particular instances and to argue that other interconnections can also be made. Addressing other interconnections would provide an understanding of the world, one that would be no less interpretive, but more adequate in explaining the conditions of events in their own terms and in relation to wider interconnections. This would also embrace an ethical position that

acknowledges the value of human beings and human experience in global context. Orientalism, Said argues, both failed to identify *with* human experience, or to see it *as* human experience (1995: 328). The ethical impetus behind the best of work within Postcolonial Studies moves us in the other direction.

The central thesis of Said's work rests on an understanding of human identity, whether individual or collective, as constructed, that is, 'constantly being made and unmade' (1995: 333). Fundamental to this is the 'idea of rethinking and re-formulating historical experiences which had once been based on the geographical separation of peoples and cultures' and basing them instead on notions of intertwined histories and overlapping territories (1995: 353; see also, 1994). Said's work is characterized through its crossing of presupposed boundaries even as it abjures the existence of those boundaries and it takes seriously the question of how one *represents* other cultures at the same time as questioning what *another* culture is (Said 1995: 325). In responding to such questions, Said urges methodological caution in that he suggests we need to submit our methods to critical scrutiny and be vigilant in ensuring that our work remains responsive to the material issues with which it engages. His primary conclusion for us, as scholars and academics engaged with the world, is to guard against indifference in our scholarship. We need to keep in mind, Said concludes, that 'human history is made by human beings. Since the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning' (1995: 331).

It is this insight, perhaps above all others, that has become central to the broader project of Postcolonial Studies and is one that is developed at length within the work of Homi Bhabha. The publication of Bhabha's book, *The Location of Culture*, in 1994 brought together a series of ground-breaking essays published in a variety of journals over the previous decade. These essays cover a number of themes, but coalesce around a dual engagement with social ethics and subject formation on the one hand, and (the representation of) contemporary inequalities and their historical conditions, on the other – as well, of course, as the

relationships between these aspects. This is perhaps best captured in Bhabha's words that 'we must not merely change the *narratives* of our histories, but transform our sense of what it means to live' (1994: 256).

Postcolonial theory, according to Bhabha, is no longer (if it ever was) simply about the establishment of separatist trajectories or parallel interpretations, but should be seen instead as 'an attempt to interrupt the Western discourses of modernity through ... displacing, interrogative subaltern or postslavery narratives and the critical-theoretical perspectives they engender' (1994: 199). The issue is more about re-inscribing 'other' cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives – both in historical terms and theoretical ones – rather than simply renaming or re-evaluating the content of these other 'inheritances.' Modernity, as Bhabha elaborates, 'is not located, *a priori*, in the passive fact of an epochal event or idea ... but has to be negotiated *within* the "enunciative" present of the discourse' (1994: 201); that is, the meaning of modernity does not derive from a foundational event in the past, but from its continual contestation in the present. This negotiation calls into question both the conditions with which modernity is typically associated and the agents that lay claim to it. In other words, there is no essence to the event or actors of history that can be authentically captured after the event – history is the spectacle created through distance and through the displacement that exists between the event and the spectators. In naming oneself, as Bhabha suggests, one moves from the periphery to the centre and in the process transforms the understanding of 'modernity' from which and about which one speaks.

For Bhabha, then, there is no singular event of modernity and there are no moderns (that is, those who have lived through modernity); rather, modernity 'is about the historical construction of a specific position of historical enunciation and address' (201–2) and much can be learnt through examining the spatial contours given by theorists to the time of modernity. The insistent location of modernity in the French and industrial revolutions, for example, reveals the 'eurocentricity of Foucault's theory of cultural difference' (Bhabha 1994: 202);

a eurocentricity that is made more apparent when we address the case of Haiti, among others (see Bhabra 2007 for discussion). By interrupting the passage of modernity, the assumed temporal action of modernity, what is revealed is the particular staging of modernity. By bearing witness to different pasts one is not a passive observer but is able to turn from interrogating the past to initiating new dialogues about that past and thus bringing into being new histories and from those new histories, new presents and new futures. Postcolonial critical discourse at its best, Bhabha suggests, 'contests modernity through the establishment of other historical sites, other forms of enunciation' (1994: 254) and, in doing so, rearticulates understandings of modernity and the political possibilities associated with it. Bhabha demonstrates this process himself through his reading of Frantz Fanon's (1967 [1953]) *Black Skin, White Masks*.

In this book, Fanon interrogates the limits of ideas of the universal as commonly presented within concepts such as 'Man' in European social and political thought. He does this by demonstrating the historicity of such concepts, that is, their location within a particular history, and by refusing to be limited by that history in his articulation (and expansion) of the ideas expressed within and by the concept. Bhabha (1994) suggests that the theoretical manoeuvre made by Fanon occurs in the following way. First, Fanon performs the desire of the colonized to be identified as Man, that is, as universal. The response of (white) Men to him (a black man) suggests that he is not Man like them *and* that they have the right (power) to determine who is to count as Man. As a consequence of his racial and cultural differences, Fanon is interpellated as not-yet Man. This temporal distortion is effected by colonialism and described as 'belatedness': the Black Man is not-yet Man, he is Black Man. It is this inscription of a temporal disjuncture within a racialized categorization, itself presented as the 'other side' of the universal concept of Man that Fanon uses to dismantle the structure of power and identity that is established in such a move (Bhabha 1994: 194). By rejecting the notion of 'belatedness', of not-yet being in/of (modern) time, Fanon rejects the temporal disjuncture

which legitimizes his particular claim to the universal in the terms posited by European social and political thought; that is, he rejects the idea that his claim to the universal can only be a deferred one, one that is not-yet possible. In so doing, he also rejects 'the *framing* of the white man as universal, normative' (Bhabha 1994: 195) and exposes the hidden structures of this tradition which maintain exclusion and hierarchy in the name of the universal.

Fanon's refusal of the position of the subaltern, of the 'other side' of the universal, is a refusal also of the deferral necessary to a dialectical conception of history based on the idea of an emergence, in the future, of an equitable universality. He reconceptualizes the temporality of modernity in terms that recognize the coequality of peoples and cultures and provokes us to think of the universal from beyond its parochial articulations in European social and political thought. As Bhabha (1994: 196) argues, the move made by Fanon is not a postmodern move advocating the plurality of cultures and viewpoints, but rather is one that illustrates the social contradictions and cultural differences that constitute the disjunctive space of modernity and one that then calls for its re-articulation along egalitarian lines. Postmodern perspectives, Bhabha suggests, increasingly narrativize the question of social ethics and subject formations (1994: 197); that is, 'what is considered to be the essential gesture of Western modernity [is] an 'ethics of self-construction' (1994: 197). Social construction does not itself imply a form of universalism. Indeed, it frequently implies the opposite. However, insofar as social construction also constructs the 'other' then it is, as Bhabha suggests, 'ethnocentric in its construction of cultural 'difference' (1994: 197). We create ourselves at the same time as creating 'others', the non-moderns. Postcolonial scholarship, as has been discussed, has been integral to the exercise of opening out and questioning the implied assumptions of the dominant discourses by way of which we attempt to make sense of the worlds we inhabit. It has further provided the basis from which to reclaim, as Spivak argues, 'a series of regulative political concepts, the *supposedly* authoritative narrative of whose production was written elsewhere' (1990: 225). The

task, following Spivak, is less about the uncovering of philosophical ground than in 'reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value-coding' itself (1990: 228); thus, I would suggest, accepting the possibility, in times of the postcolonial, of a critical realignment of colonial power and knowledge through what I set out in the conclusion as a methodology of 'connected sociologies'.

Of the three postcolonial theorists addressed here, Gayatri C. Spivak has probably the most fractious relationship with the field. She first came to international renown with her 1976 translation of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and, more specifically, with her translator's preface to the volume. Her reputation was consolidated with the publication, a decade later, of her essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), and her work, more generally, contributed to the increasing significance given to feminist and Derridean themes within Postcolonial Studies. In this section, I focus on this latter essay and look in particular at the way in which Spivak addresses Western efforts to problematize the subject and, in the process, questions how the Third World subject is represented in Western discourse.

In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak offers an analysis of the relationship between Western discourses and the possibility of speaking of (or for) the subaltern (woman). She assesses the intellectual and political contributions of French post-structuralist theory and finds it wanting in terms of its failures in addressing the implications of imperialism in discussions of power and epistemic violence more generally. She suggests that for all that is good and innovative in what has been written there is still a problem to the extent that the question of ideology is ignored, as is the post-structuralist theorist's own implication in intellectual and economic history. To work with 'a self-contained version of the West', she argues, 'is to ignore its production by the imperialist project' (1988: 289). This is not to suggest that the history of imperialism is the only history of the West, but to address more explicitly the question of how what is currently dominant and hegemonic came to be so. The silence of scholars such as Deleuze and Foucault on the (epistemic) violence of imperialism would matter less,

she suggests, if they did not choose to speak on Third World issues. Their silence is contrasted with Derrida's position, which sees the European subject's tendency to constitute the other as marginal, as one of the central problems of European philosophy that requires address (1988: 292).

Spivak situates her critique of post-structuralism – and, by implication, postmodernism more generally – in an address of the schematic opposition between interest and desire that is established in even the most critical forms of thought; where 'interest' constitutes the 'external' basis for the formation of subjects (structuralism) and 'desire' the subject's internal mode of self-formation (post-structuralism/modernism). She suggests that while this opposition is problematic in itself, it is nonetheless more important to attend to the historical construction of representation through 'interest' than try to rethink the individual through concepts such as power and desire (1988: 279). This latter move, she continues, allows for the sort of slippage that results in the Subject of Europe being reinscribed as the 'sun' around which all else revolves. By ignoring the international division of labour, which constitutes the unacknowledged ground upon which theory is articulated, the 'other' is uniformly homogenized as other at the same time as the diversity of 'us' is valorized. Instead, Spivak argues for an 'unlearning' that would involve recognition of the ideological formation of the subject as an object of investigation (1988: 296). Too often, she argues, European philosophers have masqueraded as absent non-representers who seemingly allow, unproblematically, the oppressed to speak for themselves without considering the economic and intellectual privilege this involves (1988: 292, 293). By attending to the ways in which we, particularly as intellectuals, are formed by interests would enable us to begin to see the political implications of our own claims to transparency, particularly in our relations to others (1988: 279). This would further involve recognition of the hidden frames of thought within which those others are slotted (see also Trouillot 1991).

The question of voice is central to Spivak's essay and is developed more fully in the concluding sections of it. She argues that to render

the thinking subject transparent is to efface the relentless recognition of the 'other' by assimilation and that what is needed is to develop work on the mechanics of the constitution of others; rather than simply to invoke their authenticity (1988: 294). As she argues in her critique of the early project of Subaltern Studies, it is necessary to recognize the heterogeneity of the colonized subaltern subject and, at the same time, guard against the privileging of subaltern consciousness; not to do so is to fall into a project of a reifying essentialism and taxonomy (1988: 284). The issue, for Spivak, is less the subjective experience of oppression, or the identity claims of the subject, and more understanding (and uncovering) the mechanisms and structures of domination. 'It is the slippage', as she argues, 'between rendering visible the mechanism and rendering vocal the subject' that is problematic (1988: 285). While her conclusion to this essay has often been understood as responding in the negative to the question posed in the title, I would suggest that the force of Spivak's argument is somewhat different. She suggests that the extent to which the subaltern is destined to remain mute is a consequence of mistranslations emerging from the relations of power involved in the colonial encounter and their reinscription into the dominant modes of knowledge production. In a similar fashion to Bhabha, then, the force of the critique from subalterneity is part of the process of reconfiguring the subaltern/power dichotomy in order to bring about a different present within which we speak (and listen).

The field of Postcolonial Studies, as configured by the three scholars discussed here, is strongly animated by the politics of decolonization beyond the academy, while their theoretical critiques are oriented to the processes of knowledge production largely within the academy. The particular academic battlefields are different for each, as illustrated above, but they dovetail into a critique that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. I now wish to delineate the contours of the related field of coloniality/modernity. While Postcolonial Studies as a field retrospectively ordered the individual intellectual contributions of scholars, the modernity/coloniality project was a more planned

endeavour, partly in response to the success of postcolonialism within the academy. This research collective, organized by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, brought together scholars of Latin American/European origin working in universities in the US and Latin America and interested in ideas of dependency theory, colonialism, gender and critical theory (see Mignolo 2007a, 2007b). It built on the earlier work of scholars such as Enrique Dussel and Aníbal Quijano and sought, in particular, to examine the relationship between the Frankfurt School version of critical theory and the emerging paradigm of coloniality/modernity; and, indeed, decolonial thinking is understood 'as a particular kind of critical theory' (Mignolo 2007a: 155). In the following section, I discuss this paradigm as articulated by its most prominent advocates: Aníbal Quijano, María Lugones and Walter D. Mignolo.

II

The theoretical distinction, modernity/coloniality, was first articulated by Aníbal Quijano and published in the late eighties and early nineties as 'Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad'. In this article, reprinted in English in the journal *Cultural Studies* in 2007, he argues that with the conquest of the lands that we now call Latin America 'began the constitution of a new world order, culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet' (2007: 168). This coloniality of power, expressed through political and economic spheres, Quijano continues, was strongly associated with a coloniality of knowledge (or of imagination), articulated as modernity/rationality. This was predicated on a belief that knowledge, in a similar way to property, ought to be considered 'as a relation between one individual and something else' (2007: 173), not as an intersubjective relation for the purpose of something. The individuated form of knowledge production has as its correlate the 'radical absence of the "other"' and a denial of 'the idea of the social totality' (2007: 173). This enables

Europeans, both individually and collectively, to affirm their sense of self at the same time as making invisible the colonial order that provides the context for their 'self'-realization. As Quijano states, the emergence of the idea of Europe is an admission of identity in that it emerges through a process of differentiation *from* other cultures. Yet there is little reflection within European social and political thought on how those other cultures constitute the ground of European self-realization (in both senses). Rather, most discussions of Europe are oriented towards endogenous explanations of who Europeans are and what Europe is. Against this dominant conception, Quijano argues that the modernity that Europe takes as the context for its own being is, in fact, so deeply imbricated in the structures of European colonial domination over the rest of the world that it is impossible to separate the two: hence, modernity/coloniality.

Quijano further points to the contradiction between the disavowal of the idea of totality within European thought and its realization through 'undesirable political practices' based on an ideology of 'the total rationalisation of society' (2007: 176). While this particular political practice of totality within Europe may have tainted the very idea of social totality for many thinkers, Quijano argues that it is not necessary to reject the whole idea but, rather, just that aspect elaborated within the European modernity/coloniality paradigm. Beyond Europe, he continues, most cultures work with a perspective of totality in knowledge that 'includes the acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of all reality ... and therefore of the social' (2007: 177). Within such conceptions, difference is not understood in hierarchical terms or in terms expressing superiority or inferiority; instead, 'historical-cultural heterogeneity implies the co-presence and the articulation of diverse historical "logic[s]"' (2007: 177). This understanding enables critique of the European paradigm of modernity/coloniality to be more than 'a simple negation of all its categories' and aim instead for a more thorough-going process of epistemological decolonization that, as Quijano suggests, will 'clear the way for new intercultural communication ... as the basis of another rationality which may legitimately

pretend to some universality' (2007: 177). Paraphrasing Quijano (2007): there is nothing more irrational than continuing to believe that the idea of universality as articulated by a particular people, and even specified as *Western* rationality, could continue to be understood as universal.

Quijano's understanding of the coloniality of power has had much resonance within academic debates oriented to understanding modernity and colonialism as co-constitutive, particularly within the Latin American and Caribbean contexts (see, for example, Maldonado-Torres 2007; Vázquez 2011; Walsh 2002; Wynter 2003). Maldonado-Torres, for example, transforms the idea of the coloniality of power to the 'coloniality of Being' and uses this 'to thematize the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience' (2007: 242). He develops this argument through a consideration of European philosophy and, in particular, its limits in relation to theorizing the reality of the colonial world and its production of colonial subjects as invisible and dehumanized. The key issue for Maldonado-Torres is that the supposedly unfinished (democratic) project of modernity, as theorized by Habermas, ought actually to be understood as 'the unfinished project of decolonisation' (2007: 263). Wynter similarly engages with European philosophy in order to unsettle its institution of 'a new principle of nonhomogeneity' consolidated around the 'Color (cum Colonial) Line' (2003: 322). She dissects the philosophical moves made within European thought to elide biocentric descriptive statements with descriptive statements, and argues instead for a new science of the Word, following Césaire, that would be the basis of producing knowledge about our uniquely human domain and 'the urgent problems that beleaguer humankind' (2003: 328); something that the natural sciences have been unable or unwilling to do.

Beyond an engagement with Quijano's idea of the coloniality of power, what these different contributions share is, as Walsh puts it, an understanding that the 'geohistorical colonial difference created by the coloniality of power' has not only subalternized 'ethnic-racial groups but also their knowledge' (2002: 62); and it is to the recovery

and re-articulation of that knowledge that these scholars and activists orient their academic work. Vázquez builds on this, by arguing for wider recognition of the way in which social struggles challenge and define 'the oppressive grammars of power' (2010: 41). In this way, he suggests, the conceptual vocabularies of the academy can be displaced and re-signified with meanings that emerge from 'political practices, alternative forms of justice, other ways of living' (2010: 41). As discussed earlier, however, in relation to Postcolonial Studies, my intention here is not to survey the full extent of the research programme of modernity/coloniality, but rather to point to the key debates and theoretical insights that have been most significant for me in the development of this particular research project. In this section, then, I will limit my fuller discussion first to María Lugones' particular interpretation of the colonality of power in the context of making an argument for a decolonial feminism, before addressing Walter Mignolo's sustained engagement and development of this term.

Lugones builds on Quijano's colonality of power by arguing for modernity/coloniality to be understood as simultaneously shaped through specific articulations of race, gender and sexuality. This is not to provide a raced or gendered (alternative) *reading* of the paradigm of modernity/coloniality, but rather to re-read modernity/ coloniality from a consciousness of race, gender and sexuality *and* to examine the emergence and development of those categories within this context. Lugones argues that not only did colonization invent the colonized, it also disrupted the social patterns, gender relations and cosmological understandings of the communities and societies it invaded. In doing so, it rearticulated particular European understandings of gender and sex from a bifurcation between male and female to a racialized understanding of the same embedded within a logic of colonial difference. This further overlay and sought to erase the varied conceptualizations of gender, sex and sexuality that pre-existed the European colonial/ modern gender system. This system organizes the world into homogeneous, separable categories arranged through hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logics which, in the process, erase colonized women from

most areas of social life. As Lugones argues, for example, to suggest that 'woman' and 'black' are homogeneous, separable categories, 'then their intersection shows us the absence of black women rather than their presence' (2010: 742).

This is an absence or an erasure that is exacerbated by the failure of decolonial theorists to take seriously the intersection of race, gender and sexuality with the modernity/coloniality paradigm. Lugones suggests that the contemporary global system of power is affirmed by any 'transnational intellectual and practical work that ignores the imbrication of the coloniality of power and the colonial/modern gender system' (2007: 188). She points to the important linkages between the works of decolonial scholars and feminist scholars of colour – such as Mignolo's borrowing of 'border thinking' from Anzaldúa – and argues that resisting the coloniality of gender requires 'seeing the colonial difference' and resisting the 'epistemological habit of erasing it' (2010: 753). Instead, she argues for such resistance to be a 'coalitional starting point' for 'learning about each other' (2010: 753). Lugones, here, builds on and extends the argument made by Quijano (2007), Lorde (2007) and others regarding knowledge as something produced by communities rather than individuals. She argues that given that our ways of living in the world are shared, and so our knowledge of the world is shared, so there is important work to be done in learning from and about each other. Learning from the other does not imply becoming the other or succumbing to the categorical logic of dichotomies that separate and homogenize others. Instead, Lugones argues for the non-reducibility of the multiplicity that emerges in encounters with colonial difference and a plea that '*the fragmented loci can be creatively in coalition*' (2010: 755, italics in original). While Lugones has emphasized the necessary work that must be undertaken by individual scholars and activists within their communities of knowledge to build and maintain coalitions (connections), Mignolo focuses on the interconnections of the narrative histories and epistemologies of such encounters.

The elaboration of the mutual co-constitution of modernity/coloniality and the extension of the time frame of modernity back

to the fifteenth century are two of the key contributions made by Quijano to the reconceptualization of the dominant modes of thought. Both aspects radically challenge standard notions of modernity. The temporal dimension is stretched back from the eighteenth century to the fifteenth century and the spatial dimension is expanded from northern Europe, specifically France and Britain, also to include southern Europe, specifically Spain and Portugal, and Latin America. Acknowledging these shifts establishes colonialism as the precondition for the development of (ideas of) modernity and all subsequent understandings of modernity have to take into account the conditions of its emergence. Mignolo develops Quijano's earlier theoretical work and, in particular, further elaborates his conception of modernity/coloniality in the context of the work of epistemic decolonization necessary to undo the damage wrought by both modernity and by understanding modernity/coloniality only as modernity. The decolonization of knowledge, he suggests, occurs in acknowledging the sources and geopolitical locations of knowledge while at the same time affirming those modes and practices of knowledge that have been denied by the dominance of particular forms. He is not arguing simply for a geopolitics of location as central to any academic endeavour, but rather a consideration of *what* that geopolitics enables to be known and *how* it is to be known. The key issue for Mignolo is not only that epistemology is not ahistorical, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that epistemology 'has to be geographical in its historicity' (2000: 67). This has also been described by Mignolo (2000) as 'border thinking'.

The border is constituted by the limits of Western philosophy in its failure to address colonial difference, that is, to address or make visible 'the variety of local histories that Western thought ... hid and suppressed' (2000: 66). It is the encounters between a universalist Western philosophy with those other histories, then, that creates the possibilities for 'border thinking' from which concepts, paradigms and histories can be reworked. While 'border thinking' formed a central aspect of Mignolo's early work, it was superseded by his development of the idea of 'de-linking'. This was articulated in the context

of the modernity/coloniality paradigm discussed earlier and pointed now to the necessity of an epistemic de-linking from the rhetoric of modernity and a practical de-linking, that is, a struggle to break free, from the logic of coloniality. Whereas previously Mignolo (2000: 91) had argued for a politics of diversality that regionalized the European legacy and located critical thinking in the space of colonial encounters, he now argues for a politics of pluriversality underpinned by an epistemological project of de-linking, subsequently reformulated as the decolonial option (2007, 2011): each will be discussed in turn.

Mignolo's project of 'de-linking' points to the need to change the terms (concepts) as well as the content (histories) of the conversations on modernity/coloniality. He argues for a decolonial epistemic shift that enables the histories and thought of other places to be understood as prior to European incursions and to be used as the basis of developing a connected history of encounters through those incursions. In the process, he argues also for the epistemic de-linking from 'the rhetoric of modernity' to involve rethinking 'the emancipating ideals of modernity in the perspective of coloniality' (2007b: 469). Following Chakrabarty's (2000) earlier phrasing of the concepts and paradigms of the European tradition being indispensable, but inadequate for our understanding of the social world, Mignolo similarly sees these as 'necessary ... but highly insufficient' (2007b: 459). This is as a consequence of both Chakrabarty and Mignolo agreeing with the dominant conceptualization of modernity as a phenomenon having emerged in Europe, albeit in the context of an 'other' against which it was (silently) juxtaposed. Therefore, for Mignolo, European understandings of modernity are necessary to the extent that they delineate its emergence and development in Europe, but insufficient to the extent that they fail to address (the relationship of) the 'other' within such processes, or prior to such processes; with the 'other', here, being the initial colonial endeavours of Europeans in Latin America.

The de-linking project, then, seeks 'to de-naturalize concepts and conceptual fields that totalise A [*sic*] reality' (2007b: 459). Mignolo does this, in part, by discussing the significance of Waman Puma de

Ayala, a seventeenth-century indigenous Peruvian writer, who chronicled the history of Andean civilizations from before the arrival of the Spanish. Mignolo draws on the work of Rolena Adorno, who translated and introduced Waman Puma de Ayala's *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (with John V. Murra and Jorge L. Urioste), and concurs with her assessment that bringing this work to wider scholarly attention was 'an act of decolonisation in the forum of historical literary scholarship' (Adorno cited in Mignolo 2007b: 506 fn 30). He further argues that the *Nueva Corónica* [new chronicle] should not be understood as 'a correction of a Spanish mistake within the same Spanish epistemic logic', but rather, as 'the introduction of a new logic to tell the story' (2007b: 461). This is as a consequence of these chronicles narrating a history of the Andes that locates the Spanish invasion in the context of already existing histories and makes this event one in a series of events as opposed to the foundational event from which history is to be written. Using the example of Waman Puma de Ayala, Mignolo argues for the importance of recovering earlier histories, that is, histories prior to colonization, from which to articulate both alternative possibilities of living and modes of resistance to the logics of modernity/coloniality. Shifting the historical frame of significant events from Europe to other parts of the world, and prior to European contact, necessitates 'the re-writing of global history from the perspective and critical consciousness of coloniality' (2007b: 484). This rewriting does not involve the inscription of a new form of universality, but rather, for Mignolo, a new *pluriversality* where 'each local history and its narrative of decolonisation can *connect* through that common experience and use it as the basis for a new common logic of knowing' (2007b: 497).

Pluriversality as a global project, then, is constituted through the decentred connections *between* local histories and oriented *around* 'the decolonial option'. This is the latest theoretical innovation articulated by Mignolo (2011) within the broad paradigm of modernity/coloniality and is distinguished from seemingly similar trajectories such as dewesternization as articulated by scholars such as Kishore

Madhubani. Mignolo suggests that while both decoloniality and dewesternization seek to reject the (self-proclaimed) epistemic superiority of the West, dewesternization does not question the capitalist economy with which it is bound, only who leads within it. The decolonial option, on the other hand, starts from the idea that ‘the regeneration of life shall prevail over [the] primacy of recycling the production and reproduction of goods’ (2011: 121) and aims towards breaking ‘the Western code’ of modernity/coloniality both epistemologically and materially. Decolonial options, Mignolo continues, enable the building of communal futures different from our pasts; futures that are built around the idea that we ‘place human lives and life in general first’ (2011: 141). The theoretical shifts in Mignolo’s work, from border thinking to de-linking to the decolonial option, are all grounded in the modernity/coloniality paradigm and seek to articulate distinctive positions within the broader debate contesting the dominance of European modes of thought. In the final section of this chapter, I bring together the key contributions of Postcolonial Studies and the modernity/coloniality paradigm to set up how an idea of ‘connected sociologies’ might emerge from them. This will be discussed more fully in the final chapter.

III

As should be apparent from the preceding discussion, both postcolonialism and decoloniality are developments within the broader politics of knowledge production and both emerge out of political developments contesting the colonial world order established by European empires, albeit in relation to different time periods and different geographical orientations. The key issue to emerge from the work of decolonial scholars is to pull the time horizon of debates on modernity back to the late fifteenth century and extend them southwards to take into account both the activities of southern European countries such as Spain and Portugal, but also the southern half of the continent to be

named the Americas. Quijano and then Mignolo after him have also done much to demonstrate the deep imbrications of the development of modernity within coloniality and, in establishing the concept of coloniality, providing us with a way to discuss the more profound realities of colonialism, especially 'after' the event. The colonial matrix of power, that Mignolo argues is the inextricable combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality), has to be central to any discussion of contemporary global inequalities and the historical basis of their emergence.

Lugones extends the arguments of both Quijano and Mignolo to demonstrate how coloniality not only divides the world according to a particular racial logic, but also creates specific understandings of gender that enable the disappearance of the colonial/raced woman from theoretical and political consideration. In this, Lugones is close to Spivak's (1988) considerations in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' and makes explicit the issue of listening and learning from others in any development away from current dominant structures of knowledge production. In pointing to the importance of coalitions of resistance as well as coalitions of understanding, she highlights the necessary relationship between hierarchies of oppression and the personal politics of knowledge production (where the personal is always understood in terms of the communities within which individuals are located and through which knowledge is produced). All the theorists considered here would argue strongly for such a conception of knowledge production and acknowledge their own debts – intellectual and other – to the communities that sustained and enabled their scholarship; from historical antecedents such as Waman Puma de Ayala (and their translators), to relative contemporaries such as Fanon and Césaire, as well as the academic research communities that develop and take the ideas and initiatives of these scholars beyond their initial conceptualizations.

Said's influence within the academy (and further afield) has been as extensive as it has been diverse. His key theoretical contribution, I would suggest, is the demonstration of how the idea of the universal

within European thought is based on a claim to universality at the same time as it elides its own particularity, and how this claim is sustained through the exercise of material power in the world. His argument is not one of immanent critique or the working out of a scholastic position within academic debate, but rather, is focused on exposing the ways in which relations of power underpin both knowledge and the possibilities of its production. Bhabha similarly is committed to the disruption of standard narratives that reinforce particular conceptualizations of power in the name of a broader humanitarian ethos and providing resources for the construction of other narratives. His reading of Fanon, for example, brings to the fore the particular work being done by ideas of the universal within European thought and the deferral that is inserted into those universals when applied to those understood as 'other'. In arguing for the necessity of rearticulating understandings of modernity from other geographical locations and through a consideration of processes of colonization and enslavement, he aligns straightforwardly with scholars of the modernity/coloniality paradigm. Postcolonialism and decoloniality are only made necessary as a consequence of the depredations of colonialism, but in their intellectual resistance to associated forms of epistemological dominance they offer more than simple opposition. They offer, in the words of María Lugones, the possibility of a new geopolitics of knowledge.