enlightened reform in the eighteenth century. The book is deeply researched and wonderfully written. In a few places, elongated retellings of events, such as of the trials of Havana conspirators during the Spanish reoccupation, cause the narrative to drag. However, these are mere quibbles with an important book that will become essential reading for historians of early modern Caribbean, Latin American and Atlantic history.

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Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*

(Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. xii + 291, $99.95, $26.95 pb and E-book; £77.00, £20.99 pb and E-book.

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Intellectual work under the rubric of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, or 'the colonial matrix of power', is today a vibrant inter- and trans-disciplinary field. Decoloniality has become a gathering point for counter-hegemonic thought and praxis clustering around three interconnected nodes: the mobilisation and investigation of a wide swathe of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies; critiques of colonialism and coloniality (whether historical, literary or philosophical analyses); and praxis-led scholarship (critical pedagogies, social movement-aligned intellectual activism and more). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* draws together these strands, and aims to be an introduction not only to a book series edited by the authors, but to the wider field.

The book is in two parts, the first written by Catherine E. Walsh, and the second by Walter D. Mignolo, bracketed by a joint introduction and afterword. Part 1 of the book, by Walsh, weaves decolonial theoretical propositions with instances of decolonial practice. Part 2, by Mignolo, attempts to lay out the conceptual apparatus of decolonial thinking, which aims to 'delink from the epistemic assumptions common to all the areas of knowledge established in the Western World since the European Renaissance and through the European Enlightenment' (p. 106).

It is poignant that in the couple of years since this book appeared, two of the leading lights of this school have died. First, in May 2018, Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, the figure on whom the field most deeply relies. And then, in July 2020, the Argentine philosopher María Lugones. Quijano and Lugones were the authors of perhaps the most influential texts of 'decoloniality' and are critical reference points for *On Decoloniality*.

In the 1990s, Quijano – a sociologist who came to maturity as an inheritor of the dependency school of heterodox Marxist thinkers – established the intellectual

framework of 'coloniality' in a series of papers that remain challenging and vibrant today. Perhaps his most seminal intervention was to configure the colonial origins of racial classification as central to a continuing structure of power. For Quijano, race 'is the most effective instrument for domination that, associated with exploitation, serves as the universal classifier in the current model of global power' ('Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1: 3 (2000), pp. 533–80, quote from p. 572). Quijano's work lies at the foundation of the extraordinary proliferation of scholarship around the relations in Latin America/Abya Yala between political economy, epistemology, globalisation and modernity which have flourished in the last two decades. The relations between this field of enquiry and a trans-American and trans-Atlantic tradition of Black radical thought on race remains an incomplete area of enquiry which is largely left to the side in *On Decoloniality*, notwithstanding some limited discussion of the vitally important work of Sylvia Wynter. Lugones later made a major advance in the field. She argued that gender itself, in Latin America at least, was a colonial imposition, and a new structuring field of division and domination ('Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System', *Hypatia*, 22: 1 (2007), pp. 186–209). Situating this work as an extension of Quijano's, Lugones laid out an analysis of relations of domination at the intersections between racial, social and gender classification.

I turn to Quijano and Lugones to emphasise the power of the ideas associated with decoloniality. Unfortunately, Mignolo and Walsh's book is not a good representative for this power. Indeed, for those – I am not one – intrinsically sceptical of the 'decolonial' turn, there is some lush fodder here, particularly in Part 2. Mignolo's is an intensely ambitious project, replete with vast transhistorical claims, rendered uncanny by repeated insistence on standpoint and partiality. For instance: 'The end of the Cold War and the invasion of Iraq, justified by the collapse of the Twin Towers (whoever was the planner and whatever the motivations), closed a five-hundred year cycle of Western mental and physical hegemony' (p. 106). This has a Fukuyama-esque tone of ultra-liberal certainty, even though they repeatedly insist that they aim at 'undoing Eurocentrism's totalizing claim and frame' (p. 2). Mignolo tells a quasi-complete history of the world through decoloniality. The scale of the ambition is matched by thinly referenced, vast geopolitical claims. The history of decolonisation becomes merely a state project which ran its course. The history of the Cold War is rendered parochial because 'both […] contenders […] were caught up in the same Western history, only they bent it for different purposes' (p. 129). Go say that to the Soviets. For Mignolo, decoloniality seems, in a contradictory sense, to need to make global claims: 'The decolonial project – in contradistinction to Christianity, liberalism, Marxism, and neoliberalism – is not another option for *global design* led by States, economic, financial, technological, and military institutions' (p. 147). This is a sweeping generalisation about quite different kinds of 'isms', which lose all their analytical purchase when seen as a collective of merely cognate institutional projects. Or, 'Most of culture and civilizations on the planet *see relations while in the West we are taught to see entities, things*' (original italics, p. 148). 'We in the West' surely see things and relations in a variety of ways, and the vagueness of Mignolo's 'most' is revealing. It is often hard to say what this flattening and simplifying achieves.

There is minimal attention to both the fractures within the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge(s), and the complex interwoven dynamics of intellectual and political history. It is too simplistic to see a singular historical sweep of colonial imposition and its 'decolonial' opposite in Latin America. To do so makes it impossible to understand, for example, the roles of national elites, the sometimes-fractured relationships between Black, peasant and Indigenous projects of liberation, inter-regional struggles, and so on. Historical and geographical nuance gets lost in the hundreds (indeed, in Chapter 10, literally millions) of years that *On Decoloniality* repeatedly jumps across, frictionlessly.

The book emphasises its connection with praxis and political struggle. But the recommendations for such struggle are contentious:

> The battlefield for overcoming racism and sexism is, then, at the level of the enunciation […] Liberation is through thinking and being otherwise. Liberation is not something to be attained; it is a process of letting something go, namely, the flows of energy that keep you attached to the colonial matrix of power, whether you are in the camp of those who sanction or the camp of those sanctioned. (p. 148)

It would be easy to dismiss this out of hand, but we should read it in its proper context in Mignolo's argument. It emerges from his claim that 'patriarchy is located' in the domain of enunciation, that is not just a 'cultural' or 'discursive' field, but the establishment of knowledge itself and the matrix of 'coloniality'. The domains are 'a field of representation', a 'set of rhetorical discourses', a 'set of global designs'. They constitute the 'content of the conversation, or that which is *enunciated*. Conversely, the broader level, where the domains are defined and interrelated with the *terms* of the conversation, or enunciation proper' (original italics, p. 144). 'Consequently, decoloniality shall focus on changing the terms of the conversation that would change the content', not vice versa (p. 144). Yet Mignolo's vision of liberation is weirdly de-collectivised and self-indulgent. The idea that liberation is to be achieved through a personal release and self-transformation is irrelevant to the myriad, ongoing struggles for self-determination, justice and human dignity. Mignolo's position is as unambiguous and anti-materialist as it is politically unconvincing: 'What matters is not economics, or politics, or history, but knowledge' (p. 135).

There is a familiar methodology throughout the book: rather than work through the details of other traditions of thought, these are 'recalled' (sometimes enthusiastically) and denotated as 'decolonial', and then the authors move sideways to begin again on new foundations, marked out by Mignolo and Walsh. This happens with the twentieth-century anti-colonial writing with roots in actual, historical struggles against empire. Meanwhile, postcolonial studies (and its connections with that anti-colonial writing, subaltern studies, heterodox Marxism, Third World feminism and so on) is generally ignored, despite postcolonialism's extensive discussions of the problems of colonial epistemologies that are part of the focus of this book.

From Quijano and Lugones, to Raquel Gutiérrez, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Sofia Zaragocín and Leanne Simpson, the thought and praxis of decoloniality is astonishing in its breadth and quality. Despite the limitations of this

introduction, it is moving and transforming in ways that continue to be conceptually and politically vital.

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Eduardo Grüner, *The Haitian Revolution: Capitalism, Slavery, and Counter-Modernity*

(Cambridge: Polity, 2019), pp. xix + 252, £55.00, £17.99 hb and pb; $62.20, $20.40 hb and pb.

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Eduardo Grüner explores the Haitian Revolution as a political and philosophical response to Eurocentric Enlightenment modernity and as a radical rejection of slavery and Western capitalism. From the start of his analysis, Grüner painstakingly establishes the difference between the slavery that existed in the Americas (modern slavery), particularly in Saint-Domingue/Haiti, and forms of slavery that existed in Europe in pre-modern times (ancient slavery). Fundamentally, the difference is that slavery in the Americas was particularly racialised and constituted the central basis for the capitalist system, unlike slavery in ancient Europe where the slave shared the master's skin colour and benefited from treatment of *partial humanity*. Using a Marxist framework, Grüner describes the slave as simultaneously the embodiment of *labour power* and a *means of production*, central components of capitalism. The slave trade facilitated the expansion of the nascent capitalist system and the beginning process of its globalisation.

By analysing racialised slavery and capitalism as intimately intertwined, the author also calls attention to modernity. Modernity is considered as an ideology that forms its economic basis upon capitalism but gained its philosophical and political resonance through the Enlightenment philosophers' writings and its materialisation through the French Revolution. Thus modernity came with a (false) promise of universalism that proclaimed 'Equality, Liberty and Fraternity' among the *citoyens* (citizens). The promise did not, however, extend to the vast enslaved population in the French colonies. The slave was considered a 'thing' and was denied any 'political consciousness'. From this angle, Grüner points out that the Haitian Revolution appeared to be inconceivable. Therefore, he argues that the Revolution defies the odds by 'making the historical and political unconsciousness conscious' (p. 59).

Such a claim is particularly novel. Yet, Grüner reminds us that the Haitian Revolution has been massively repressed by the collective Western narrative. He bases his analysis on the seminal work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot, the late Haitian anthropologist, who portrays the Haitian Revolution as completely