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Preface and Acknowledgments

THE MAIN topic of this book is the colonial difference in the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world system. Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974, 1980, 1989) seminal and controversial study is my starting point and the colonial difference my departing point. A corollary and consequence of it constitute the second topic, the emergence of the Americas and their historical location and transformation in the modern/colonial world order, from 1500 to the end of the twentieth century. The modern world system was described and theorized from inside itself, and the variety of colonial experiences and histories were attached to it and look at if from inside the system. However, it has an advantage over the chronology of the early modern, modern, and late modern periods I adopted in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (Mignolo 1995a, 2). And the advantage is the spatial dimension imbedded in the modern world system that is lacking in the linear conception of modern Western history. The spatial dimension of the system shows its external borders where the colonial difference was and still is played out. Until the middle of the twentieth century the colonial difference honored the classical distinction between centers and peripheries. In the second half of the twentieth century the emergence of global colonialism, managed by transnational corporations, erased the distinction that was valid for early forms of colonialism and the coloniality of power. Yesterday the colonial difference was out there, away from the center. Today it is all over, in the peripheries of the center and in the centers of the periphery.

The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. The colonial difference is the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet. If Western cosmology is the historically unavoidable reference point, the multiple confrontations of two kinds of local histories defy dichotomies. Christian and Native American cosmologies, Christian and Amerindian cosmologies, Christian and Islamic cosmologies, and Christian and Confucian cosmologies among others only enact dichotomies when you look at them one at a time, not when you compare them in the geohistorical confines of the modern/colonial world system. The colonial difference in/of the modern/colonial world is also the

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place where "Occidentalism," as the overarching imaginary of the modern/colonial world, was articulated. Orientalism later and area studies more recently are complementary aspects of such overarching imaginary. The end of the cold war and, consequently, the demise of area studies correspond to the moment in which a new form of colonialism, a global colonialism, keeps on reproducing the colonial difference on a world scale, although without being located in one particular nation-state. Global colonialism reveals the colonial difference on a world scale when "Occidentalism" meets the East that was precisely its very condition of possibility—in the same way that, paradoxically, Occidentalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the condition of possibility of Orientalism.

Border thinking (or "border gnosis" as I explain soon) is a logical consequence of the colonial difference. It could be traced back to the initial moment of Spanish colonialism in the Andes and Mesoamerica. In the Andes, the by now classic critical narrative in images by Amerindian Guaman Poma (Waman Puma), *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century (Murra and Adorno 1980), is an outstanding exemplar. As I already analyzed in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995a, 247–56; 303–11), the fractured locus of enunciation from a subaltern perspective defines border thinking as a response to the colonial difference. "Nepantla," a word coined by Nahuatl speaker in the second half of the sixteenth century, is another exemplar. "To be or feel in between," as the word could be translated into English, was possible in the mouth of an Amerindian, not of a Spaniard (see Mignolo 1995b). The colonial difference creates the conditions for dialogic situations in which a fractured enunciation is enacted from the subaltern perspective as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspective. Thus, border thinking is more than a hybrid enunciation. It is a fractured enunciation in dialogic situations with the territorial and hegemonic cosmology (e.g., ideology, perspective). In the sixteenth century, border thinking remained under the control of hegemonic colonial discourses. That is why Waman Puma's narrative remained unpublished until 1936 whereas hegemonic colonial discourses (even when such discourses were critical of the Spanish hegemony, like Bartolome de las Casas) were published, translated, and highly distributed, taking advantage of the emerging printing press. At the end of the twentieth century, border thinking can no longer be controlled and it offers new critical horizons to the limitations of critical discourses within hegemonic cosmologies (such as Marxism, deconstruction, world system analysis, or postmodern theories).

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 was prompted by the need to think beyond the linearity in the geohistorical mapping of Western modernity. The geohistori-

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cal 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 a crucial and constitutive moment of modernity/coloniality that was the sixteenth century.

The main research for this book consisted in conversations—conversations of several kinds, with students in and out of class, with colleagues and students in Latin America and the United States, with undergraduate students, with colleagues and graduate students at Duke and outside of Duke, and with all sorts of people outside academia, from taxi drivers to medical doctors, from female servants in Bolivia to small-industry executives, and all those who have something to say about their experiences of local histories and their perception of global designs. These were not "interviews," just conversations, casual conversations. Although I did not plan it as a book from the beginning, I did plan writing articles on a set of issues that, as I have explained in the introduction, emerged around 1992. Conversation as research method was decided on during the spring semester of 1994. I had finished the manuscript of *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* in the summer of 1993 and I was not ready to start another long and involved research project, nor did I have a clear idea of what I wanted to do next. Furthermore, I was appointed chair of Romance Studies, and we all know that administrative duties are not conducive to research projects.

Thus, I decided that for the next three to four years I would devote myself to conversations and writing about issues on coloniality and globalization, projecting the sixteenth century, or the early global period, to the nineteenth and the twentieth century. By conversations I do not mean statements that can be recorded, transcribed, and used as documents. Most of the time the most influential conversations were people's comments, in passing, about an event, a book, an idea, a person. These are documents that cannot be transcribed, knowledge that comes and goes, but remains with you and introduces changes in a given argument. Conversations allowed me to pursue two parallel tasks: to entertain a dialogue with intellectuals in Latin America, particularly in the Andes and Mexico; and to tie research agendas with teaching goals, since what you will read was previously delivered and discussed in graduate seminars at Duke and in Latin America, and in undergraduate seminars at Duke. The book is the journey of these conversations, and my acknowledgment goes mainly to the people who guided my thinking with their wisdom, although I cannot quote what they said, and perhaps they do not even remember it. An anonymous rumor is what constitutes the "data" of this book beyond, of course, the bibliography I cite at the end. But it is

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also an indirect conversation with Immanuel Wallerstein and Samuel Huntington. In the first case, I deal with his concepts of modern world system (1974) and its geopolitics and geoculture (1991a), in the second case, with Samuel Huntington (1996) and his concepts of civilization, the clash of civilization (to which border thinking is a way out) and, above all, of "Latin American civilization." I contest on the bases of the spatial history of the modern/colonial world and of the Latin American/U.S. relations since 1848 and 1898. In short, my conversation with them is from the perspective of the humanities in dialogue with the social sciences. Indirectly, this book has been written under the conviction that the humanities lost their ground after World War II and did not respond to the increasing influence of the social and natural sciences. "Cultural studies" filled that gap dispersed in several posts and ethnic and gender studies. The "Sokal affair," in *Social Text*, was possible precisely because of the absence of a strong philosophy holding together the humanities in "confrontation" with the natural and the (hard) social sciences. If the Kantian university was based on *reason*, the Humboldtian university was based on *culture* and the neoliberal university on *excellence* and *expertise*, a future (or posthistorical; Readings 1996, 119–34) university shall be envisioned in which the humanities will be rearticulated on *a critique of knowledge and cultural practices*. It is from this perspective, from the perspective of the humanities, that I enter into indirect dialogue with the social sciences through Wallerstein and Huntington. But I am also pursuing this dialogue from the perspective of Latin American thought, as I introduce it here through Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui, Salazar Bondy, Rodolfo Kusch, and Nelly Richard, among others. This dialogue also results last but not least, from the Latino/a/American contributions in the United States, such as those by Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Frances Aparicio, José Saldívar, David Montejano, Rosaura Sánchez, José Limón, and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, among others. It is finally from the double perspective of the structure of knowledge (humanities and social sciences) and of the sensibilities of particular geohistorical locations in the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world that I engage (in) this dialogue.

The first experience in this direction was a two-week seminar I taught at the Institute for Social Research at the Universidad de Puebla, Mexico, in the summer of 1994. The topic was the "postcolonial reason," an embryo of what is now chapter 2. Raúl Dorra, Luisa Moreno, and Marisa Filinich, who were running a workshop within the Institute for Social Research, invited me. My first thanks go to them and to Alonso Vélez Pliego, director of the institute. Enrique Dussel gave one of the seminar lectures on colonization and the world system, one of the first versions of an article that has recently been published under the title "Beyond Eurocentrism: The World System and the Limits of Modernity" (Dussel 1998a). Not only have we remained

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in touch since that encounter but my own reflections—as the reader will soon see—became very much framed by Dussel's on the articulation of modernity, coloniality, and the world system.

The piece that initiated the mediations that ended up in this book was "The Postcolonial Reason: Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Theories," first prepared for the conference on "Cultures and Globalization," organized by Fred Jameson, Masao Miyhosi, et al., which took place, at Duke University in November 1994. Rewritten in Spanish, the article was published in Brazil (Mignolo 1996a), in Germany (Mignolo 1997c), and in Venezuela (Mignolo 1998). I mention these reprints for one reason, which is related to the subalternization of knowledge. If you publish in English, there is less need for reprinting because of the wider circulation. If you publish in Spanish, normally publications do not go beyond the local circuit. Rewritten again in English, this piece became "The Post-Occidential Reason" and is now chapter 2 of this book.

The seminar in Puebla was the first of a long list of talks and seminars I gave in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia). The list of people I should thank here is too large and I will limit myself to thank, first, the participants in all those seminars, graduate students and colleagues. Second, I would like to thank personally those who invited me and with whom I engaged in longer and more sustained conversations. In Argentina, Enrique Tandeter and Noé Jitrik, at the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires; Laura and Mónica Scarano and Lisa Bradford, at the Universidad de Mar del Plata; Mirta Antonelli, at the Universidad de Córdoba; and David Lagmanovich, and Carmen Pirilli, at the Universidad de Tucumán. In Bolivia, I am in great debt to Javier Sanjinés for introducing me to many great Bolivian thinkers for whom coloniality, far from being a question of the past, is alive and well in the Andes today. In Bolivia also Juan Carlos Mariacca and Ricardo Kaliman invited me to the first Jornadas de Literatura Latinoamericana (in 1993) and to lecture at the Facultad de Humanidades of the Universidad de San Andrés. This visit to La Paz indeed oriented a great deal of this book. In Colombia Carlos Rincón and Hugo Niño allowed me to have personal experiences and conversations with colleagues and graduate students in Bogotá and Cartagena de Indias. In Brazil I am in debt to Jorge Schwartz and Ligia Chiapini for inviting me on a couple of occasions to participate in workshops and lectures at the center Angel Rama and at the Institute for Advanced Studies, at the University of São Paolo; to Ana Lucia Gazolla, who organized a "tour" through Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Minas Gerais, and São Paolo, in May 1995; to Juan Carlos Olea and to Rebecca Barriga for asking me to teach a seminar at El Colegio de México in May 1997.

From all these seminars with colleagues and graduate students I learned, first and foremost, to gauge local histories with global designs: to weigh local histories and interests in Latin America and the United States—to continue

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reflecting on my own personal location as a Latin American (Hispanic) and Latin Americanist in the United States (Mignolo 1991); to measure the extent to which the end of the cold war was transforming "Latin American Studies," a scholarly project engrained in global designs (e.g., area studies); to ponder how "Latin American thoughts" (a philosophical enterprise whose main concern was to define and relocate an identity that was being allocated by the new colonial empires, parallel to [Latin] American nation building) were also changing with the end of the cold war. Consequently, I also learned how the disciplines in the "human sciences" can no longer remain as the intellectual arbiter of global designs detached from local histories. And, finally, I learned how much globalization was creating the condition for building from knowledges suppressed from local histories; how much such building, facing the unavoidable spread of modern and Western epistemology, had to work on the border in order to be successful, since a divisive frontier and the affirmation of "authenticity" would contribute to the suppression of knowledge in the internal and external frontiers of the modern world system.

What I also learned through this experience was the suspicion, mainly in the Southern Cone and in Colombia, about coloniality and postcoloniality. The fact that the independence of most Latin American countries was achieved at the beginning of the nineteenth century meant that the focus of discussion became modernity, and not coloniality; postmodernity, and not postcoloniality. I make an effort, in the book, to understand why things are as they are and to distinguish the "colonial period" (an expression that refers to Spanish and Portuguese colonization, mainly) from the "coloniality of power" that is well and alive today in its new guise of "global coloniality." I also picked up the suspicion, in several places, that cultural studies and postcoloniality were imperial fashion being imported to Latin America. This suspicion talks directly to the question of Latin American studies and Latin American thoughts during the cold war that I just mentioned. What drew my attention, however, was that the suspicions were expressed by the same people, sometimes by their followers, who in the 1970s were the enthusiastic supporters and mediators in introducing Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, the Frankfurt School, Raymond Williams, et al. This seemed to me a very revealing case for understanding the coloniality of power and knowledge in Latin America, where Europe still holds its hegemonic epistemological position, while the United States, particularly since 1898, became more of the "imperial other." I was surprised again in Brazil, in contrast with my experience in Latin American countries, when I found a critical but also more generous propensity to receive and evaluate "foreign" theories, be they from Europe or from the United States. Perhaps the towering figure of Milton Santos had something to do with the kind of conversations I was engaged in. It was not by chance that the name of architect, environmentalist, and theoretician of

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globalization Milton Santos was brought to my attention in Bahia, after one of my lectures. His views as well as those of other participants in conferences and books edited by him have been influential in chapters 3 and 7.

At Duke, the main conversations that were decisive in shaping the book occurred around graduate and undergraduate seminars, and two international and interdisciplinary workshops, "Globalization and Culture" (November 1994) and "Relocation of Languages and Cultures" (May 1997). The workshop, organized by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, with the collaboration of Ariel Dorfman, Alberto Moreiras, and myself, was very influential in the overall conception of the book. Chapter 7 is the version of a paper I read at that conference; and an early version of chapter 2 appeared in the "Workshop Reader," in a mimeograph version. The second workshop, organized by myself with the participation of a large steering committee composed of colleagues and graduate and undergraduate students, was equally important for all I have to say in this book, about language, transnationalism, and globalization (chapters 5, 6, and 7). The colleagues and graduate and undergraduate students with whom I discussed the issues related to the conference topics are Miriam Cooke, Leo Ching, Eric Zakim, Mohadev Apte, Catherine Ewin, Teresa Vilarós, Lynn James, Helmi Balig, Alejandra Vidal, Gregory P. Meyjes, Jean Jonassaint, Chris Chia, Ifeoma Nwankwo, Meredith Parker, Benjamin B. Au, and Roberto González. Chapter 5 is a developed version of an article I wrote before, which was the platform of the second workshop.

Two parallel teaching experiences occurred between the fall semester of 1994 and the spring semester of 1997. First, Bruce Lawrence, who was the director of "Globalization and Cultural Changes," one of the units of *Focus* (an interdisciplinary program for first-semester freshmen at Duke), passed the torch on to me. I directed and taught in the program from 1994 to 1997. Since each *Focus* unit is composed of four seminars, and therefore, four professors, a graduate student assistant, and a graduate student in charge of English composition, and since the program is built on a constant flow of interactive conversations between students and instructors, I have enormously benefited from this experience–not only because I gained more "knowledge" but mainly because it was a learning experience to discuss issues on globalization with students coming right from high school. My recognition and thanks then go to colleagues and graduate students participating in this experience: Bruce Lawrence, Marcy Little, Miriam Cooke, Bai Gao, Orin Starn, Michael Hardt, Sybille Fischer, Silvia Tendeciarz, Freya Schiwy, and Pramod Mishra.

In 1994, Miriam Cooke and I forged a three-year seminar on colonial legacies and postcolonial theorizing. Miriam was in charge mainly of North Africa and the Middle East and I was in charge of Latin America, including the Caribbean and the Latino/a question in the United States. Beyond that

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geohistorical configuration, we decided to focus the first seminar on language, the second on space, and the third on memory. Unfortunately, Miriam was on sabbatical and I had to teach the second seminar, on space, by myself. However, the experience of conceiving mentally the seminar and coteaching two of them, not only taught me a lot about areas of the world of which I knew little, but it established a fruitful dialogue whose consequences are evident throughout the book. I am indebted to Miriam Cooke again for organizing and inviting me to a workshop on Mediterranean studies, in Tunisia, where I had the chance, over three days, to listen to the presentations of Tunisian intellectuals and to converse with them outside the conference room.

After finishing the three-year seminar, I cotaught, in the fall semester of 1997 and the spring semester of 1998, an undergraduate and a graduate seminar with Irene Silverblatt on modernity, coloniality, and Latin America. Beyond all the beauties of these seminars, to which the students largely contributed, the most striking experience for me was the difference in how you address undergraduate (juniors and seniors, mainly) and graduate students on the same topic, because the seminar was exactly the same but at different levels. Both seminars, in addition, were part of the program in Latin American cultural studies.

Finally, in the spring semester of 1998, Enrique Dussel and I cotaught a seminar on alternative forms of rationality. This seminar, together with long conversations before classes and in different conversational settings, was indeed a crucial experience for the formulation of "border thinking" in this book, as well as for restating my previous debts and differences with Dussel's enormous intellectual contributions to several of the issues discussed in this book. This seminar was decisive for the changes I introduced in chapter 3, which had been previously published as an article (Mignolo 1995c). Elizabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (who unfortunately left Duke in the fall of 1994) and then Jean Jonassaint brought *la Francophonie* close to home and to my own interests. Jonassaint brought it literally close by bringing key figures from the Francophone and Caribbean intelligentsia to Duke over the past three years.

Through all these years, the active participation of graduate students was indeed as beneficial as the dialogue with my own colleagues. I cannot mention the names of all the graduate students taking these four seminars, but I would like to thank them collectively. I would like to mention, however, the names of those students whose dissertations were closely related to some of the issues discussed in this book and that have influenced my own perspectives. Chronologically, Juan Poblete showed me a new panorama on the politics of language and literature in nineteenth-century Chile. From Verónica Feliú I learned to further evaluate the difficulties in writing "from" here "about people" down there, particularly because Veronica, who *partici-*

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pated in the political performance by women in Chile at the end of the 1980s, wrote a dissertation *about* it in the middle of the 1990s. José Muñoz, who was already at the end of his graduate student years when I came to Duke, brought to me a new perspective on identity politics with his reflections on ethnic and sexual disidentification. Ifeoma Nwankwo brought in her perspective as a Jamaican in the United States and taught me to think about the differences between Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans. Chris Chia showed me how important Gloria Anzaldúa was for a Chinese graduate student who came to Duke in the early 1990s; and how to write about North American cultural history from an "outsider" perspective. From Zilkia Janer I learned to think in more detail about the national colonialism in Puerto Rico and from Lucía Suárez to conceive interlanguage connections among Caribbean women writers, in English, French, and Spanish. With Pramod Mishra I have entertained long conversations on his view on southern U.S. culture and literature mixed with his autobiographical stories from Nepal and India. I owe much to Shireen Lewis for writing a dissertation on "Negritude," "Antillanité," and "Creolité," which displayed a panorama of almost a century of Afro and Afro-Caribbean intellectual production, and so thanks are due for the conversations we had during the process. Fernando Gómez made me think about the difference between writing "utopias" in Europe and Franciscans "planning" utopias in the New World. Finally, I am thankful to Marc Brudzinski and Doris Garroway for organizing a wonderful conference on postcoloniality and the Caribbean. This conference showed in its own development that the Caribbean, far from being a repeating island, is a complex historical configuration of competing colonialisms in the movable structure of the modern/colonial world system.

Outside of Duke two conversational experiences were prominent in the final shape of the book. One entails the discussions within the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, which I joined in February 1994. Chapter 4 is a direct illustration of my debt to the group. The second I owe to Kelvin Santiago and Agustin Lao for graciously inviting me to join the working group on the coloniality of power. Discussions and conversations with members of the group occurred in the past year, and have very much impinged on the final version of the manuscript. Regarding individuals outside of Duke, I continue to thank, for what they write and what they say, Norma Alarcón, Frances Aparicio, Fernando Coronil, and José Saldívar. I thank Roberto Fernández-Retamar first for his intellectual generosity; for being the only Spanish-American intellectual I know for whom the Haitian Revolution was a crucial event in the shaping of Caribbean and Latin American modernity/coloniality; also for making it possible for me to continue our conversations in Cuba, in January 1998; and for making it possible for me to entertain conversations with other Cuban intellectuals. My personal acquaintance with Michel-Rolph Trouillot came late, in March 1998, although his work

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on the Haitian Revolution was already part of my own reflections. However, I had three occasions of listening and talking to him since then and the final corrections of this manuscript. In these conversations I perceived connections between his project and mine that I was not aware of by just reading his work, chiefly his latest book, *Silencing the Past* (1995). I kept them constantly in mind while making the final corrections. Eduardo Mendieta and Santiago Castro-Gómez entered also in the domain of conversations in the past two years, but both have contributed with their training in philosophy to a discussion that was mainly—with the exception of Enrique Dussel—between literary and cultural critics, anthropologists, historians (including historians of religions), and sociologists. Ramón Grosfogel taught me how to look at dependency theory in the context of the world system and to rethink Puerto Rico in the colonial horizon of modernity.

Last but not least, I owe much also to colleagues and friends at Duke whom I have not mentioned yet: Ariel Dorfman for many reasons but mainly for writing *Heading South, Looking North* (1998) and for telling me, before it was finished, stories about his bilingual experience. My thanks go to Gustávo Pérez-Firmat for writing *Next Year in Cuba* (1995) and for constantly expressing his doubts about what I write about. In chapters 5 and 6 I deal, in argumentative style, with problems that Dorfman and Pérez-Firmat framed in seductive and powerful narratives. Discussions in the Marxist Working Group, lead by Fred Jameson and Michael Hardt, have also been instrumental to understand and to work out the question of Marxism in the Americas and the compatibilities and incompatibilities between North and South Marxism. In this book, I pursued this issue through José Arico's reflections on Marxism and Latin America.

I am also indebted to Gabriela Nouzeilles and Alberto Moreiras for our long and recursive conversations that, among other things, ended up in the publication project and soon to be published journal *Nepantla: Views from South*; to Teresa Vilarós for bringing a plurilingual and plurinational Spain to Duke; to Cathy Davidson for opening up the conversation between "(North) American" and "Latin American Studies"; to Karla Holloway and Rick Powell for opening up a new perspective on Afro-American issues in this country, and to Rick particularly for his effort to show the connections of black North American with black Latin American art; and to Andrea Giunta, in the same vein, for making me aware of the links between development ideologies, dependency theory, on the one hand, and art production, museums, and international exhibits sponsored by private institutions in Latin America after the 1960s, on the other. I also wish to thank Leo Ching, who guided me through some basic readings about colonialism and Japan's entry into contact with the modern/colonial world system; John Richards, for making me part of one of his obsessions, expressed through working and reading groups, on the current meaning and possibilities of world and/or universal

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history; Sucheta Mazundar, who brought China into contact with the Americas for me; Eric Zakim, who participated in one of the seminars I cotaught with Miriam Cooke and connected, in the seminar as well as in his published works, the Jewish with the (post) colonial question; and Jean Sullivan-Beals, for her support and for helping to put together the first draft of the manuscript, and Avital Rosenberg, for her patience in putting together the final version.

Pramod Mishra reappeared in the last stage of the book, reading the last version of the manuscript and contributing his expertise as a writer, his colonial experiences from Nepal, and his skill as instructor of English composition. Valentin Mudimbe and Nick Dirks were kind enough to make me believe that the manuscript was promising when they saw the first version. Finally my thanks go to Mary Murrell, at Princeton University Press, for her enthusiasm and professionalism.

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