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# 1

# Eurocentrism, Political Struggles and the Entrenched *Will-to-Ignorance*: An Introduction

*Silvia Rodríguez Maeso and Marta Araújo*

This edited collection is an interdisciplinary production, bringing the work of international scholars and political activists within a wide range of approaches and disciplines, including History, Anthropology, Political Sociology, Philosophy, International Relations, Political Economy and the Sociology of Education. It addresses key contemporary issues in the critique of Eurocentrism and racism, in relation to debates on the production, sedimentation and circulation of (scientific) knowledge, historical narratives and memories in Europe and the Americas. It takes as its crucial starting point the concept of Eurocentrism as grounded in the project of Modernity and, in particular, its specific configuration of colonialism, history and Being which has led to the emergence of race as a key organizing principle in the modern world order from the geopolitical perspective of the creation of Europe/Europeanness, the expression of its hegemony and its contestation.

We consider Eurocentrism as a paradigm for interpreting a (past, present and future) reality that uncritically establishes the idea of European and Western historical *progress/achievement* and its political and ethical *superiority*, based on scientific rationality and the construction of the rule of law. Accordingly, we propose that it is essential to debate Eurocentrism within the formation of Western knowledge and its claims for universal validity, since this provides a certain historical mapping of the world that unambiguously establishes which events and processes are scientifically relevant and how they are interpreted – simultaneously *discovering* and *covering* them.



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In order to understand the consequences of Eurocentrism in terms of the way in which certain patterns of interpretation are produced and contested, it is vital to question the fundamental basis of the centuries-old project of Modernity: coloniality/racism. More specifically, following authors such as Enrique Dussel (2000, 2008), Sylvia Wynter (1995, 2003) and Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007), we consider that Eurocentrism is rooted in the Eurocentred colonization of America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and in two interrelated processes: the production of onto-colonial taxonomies based on the 'Western Idea of Man' (Wynter, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2004) in the distribution of (ir-)rationality/(sub-)humanity (that is, race), and the gradual establishment of capitalist accumulation as a global standard for labour and market control. Hence, Eurocentrism is not mere ethnocentrism, that is, the *perspective* from which each people tells their history, nor is racism simply the product of 'exacerbated ethnocentrism' (Cox, 1970 [1948]), pp. 477–9).

This conceptual framework calls for a critical analysis of modern and contemporary configurations of race and racism. In other words, 'modernity is racial' (Hesse, 2007, p. 643), and the specific relationships between power and knowledge that forge the contemporary contours of Eurocentrism can tell us about the histories of race and racism and their enduring legacies. This is paramount to unsettling a key epistemological and political effect of the ways in which we interpret Modernity and the idea of a European specificity (implicitly read as superiority), that is, the drawing of an 'abyssal line' (Santos, 2007) in the production of history. Boaventura de Sousa Santos has characterized modern thinking as 'abyssal thinking', consisting of 'a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones' (ibid., p. 45). He thus argues that whereas 'Western modernity' can be defined 'as a socio-political paradigm founded on the tension between social regulation and social emancipation', the *visible distinction* is simultaneously founded on an *invisible* one that establishes a division between metropolitan societies and colonial territories. While the 'regulation/emancipation' dichotomy is applied to the metropolitan *side of the line*, the colonial territories are ruled by the 'appropriation/violence' dichotomy. Following this analysis, Santos considers 'modern scientific knowledge and modern law' as 'the most accomplished and clear manifestation of abyssal thinking' (ibid., p. 46). Accordingly, the spheres of science and law produce, and are sustained by, a 'radical denial' that 'eliminates whatever realities are on the other side of the line'; although the colonial side of the line is the *condition of possibility* for the

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emergence of modern law and science, this is rendered *invisible* (ibid., p. 48). Erasing this history – what Maldonado-Torres (2004, p. 30) has described as the '*forgetfulness of coloniality* in both Western Philosophy and contemporary social theory' – is, therefore, a key characteristic of Eurocentrism. This allows for an interpretation of Modernity – of liberal democracy, citizenship, the nation-state and human rights, among other 'universal' categories – *as if* race, racism and colonialism did not lie at the core of this historical process, inside and outside the geographical borders of 'Europe', Europeanized nation-states and/or *the West*. Most importantly, race has been tenaciously produced and inscribed in the world through 'the idea of a neutral epistemic subject whose reflections only respond to the structures of the spaceless realm of the universal' (ibid., p. 29), an aspect crucial to the debates analyzed in this collection.

In conceiving of Eurocentrism as a paradigm for an interpretation of reality, we insist on the need to bring the relationship between knowledge and power to the centre of disputes on national identity, cultural diversity and the validation of 'other' narratives. More specifically, we insist on the need to interrogate and explain what Sylvia Wynter (1992, 1995, 2003) refers to as the 'organization/order of knowledge' and its 'descriptive/prescriptive statements'. We argue that what is at stake is not that the history of Europe and the Americas is being written without considering colonialism and racial enslavement, but rather that the dominant approach often interprets these processes as a *dark chapter* (UNESCO, 2002, p. 17) in the triumphant development of Modernity (Wolf, 1997 [1982]), that is, an *appendix* to this history that is offset by the eventual progress in rights, equality and democracy. Accordingly, while colonialism and racism may be acknowledged in the debates on history and memory, they are often approached, to paraphrase Aimé Césaire (2000 [1955], p. 53), as that 'annoying fly' that interrupts the state's 'forgetting machine' (ibid., p. 52), driven by what needs to be remembered, celebrated or commemorated (e.g. the multicultural empire, *mestizaje*, intercultural encounters, liberal revolutions). Moreover, the legacies of colonialism are to be conventionally understood within the liberal framework of human rights. Following the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, p. 96) on the *formulas of silence* pervading the production of history on the Haitian Revolution, we argue that this framework erases and banalizes the histories of collective struggles and questions of political responsibility (for instance, the enduring anti-enslavement and anti-colonial/liberation struggles versus the narratives of White humanist abolitionism and independences granted *in due time* – drawing on the idea of the *immaturity*[1] of the

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colonized for immediate emancipation/liberation). For instance, as Angela Davis (1981, p. 59) showed in the case of White anti-slavery/abolitionist and women's rights movements in the United States, these initiatives towards emancipation both perpetuated racism and failed to promote a wider *anti-racist consciousness* – an example of the enduring rule of White supremacy/privilege.

We thus consider it crucial to approach the history of the formation of modern nation-states as inextricably bound to that of colonialism and racial enslavement (Goldberg, 2002; Santos, 2007; Nimako and Willemsen, 2011). This conceptual approach enables the discussion to move beyond traditional analyses that view debates on history and memory as merely a matter of the identity politics of groups demanding representation (Wynter, 1992; Deloria, 1995), particularly evident in the Northern American context, or as an issue emerging from the so-called challenges of globalization and the increasing diversity of national societies otherwise viewed as ethnically homogeneous in Europe (Goldberg, 2002, 2009). Hence the collection of chapters presented here takes as its starting point the critical enquiry of taken-for-granted assumptions underlying interpretations of the boundaries of the colonial, the national, and Europe/Europeanness (Hesse, 2007). In particular, this book engages with the construction of the 'Euro-Immigrant nation' (Wynter, 1992) in several American contexts and the presumed homogeneity of the nation in Europe – achieved and enforced through violence and the purging of difference (Goldberg, 2002, 2009). Both these notions consecrate the privilege of White Europeans and their descendants, albeit unwritten in historical accounts due to a *depoliticizing* approach (Brown, 2006). If, on the contrary, we take heterogeneity as constitutive of (post-)colonial nation-states and race as the key governing principle behind the subjugation of populations/nature and the distribution of moral values, the privilege of unmarked whiteness (inscribed in institutions, laws and practices) becomes a terrain for academic enquiry and political struggle. This is all the more relevant with regard to historical narratives, since they constitute a crucial site for the naturalization of privilege, as is evident in contemporary discussions on colonialism, slavery and (anti-)racism. Accordingly, several chapters in this collection interrogate the ways in which different patterns of *silencing* articulate with, and accommodate, *recognition* and *representation* through formulas of knowledge production, consolidation and consumption that trivialize existing power arrangements and enduring political struggles. As a whole, they point to the consequences of unveiling local and regional interconnected histories opening up a

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tension not only with 'other' histories, but also with specific attempts within Eurocentric thought to continually reshape the world in racially hierarchical terms and to recentre the West/Europe.

## Organization of the book

Chapters 2–8 focus on the notion of Eurocentrism as a *paradigm* for interpreting reality grounded in the project of Modernity, that is, in colonialism, capitalism and race. In particular, these contributions engage with the geopolitics of knowledge production in order to understand and challenge the ways in which academic narratives and methodologies are embedded in the naturalization and reproduction of racism.

Chapter 2 by Ramón Grosfoguel interrogates the historical roots of the contemporary order of knowledge (re)produced by the Westernized university, which renders other Western and non-Western knowledges inferior and outside the *acceptable* canon of thought. The author regards the contemporary hegemonic Human Sciences as founded on *epistemic racism/sexism* and locates their roots in the four genocides/epistemicides of the long sixteenth century: against Jewish and Muslim populations during the conquest of Al-Andalus and its aftermath; against Indigenous peoples in the conquest of the Americas; against Africans kidnapped and enslaved in the Americas; against women accused of witchcraft and burned alive in Europe. The chapter unfolds in dialogue with Enrique Dussel's insightful critique of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of Cartesian philosophy. The author analyzes how these four genocides/epistemicides made it possible for 'I conquer, therefore I am' to be transformed into the epistemic racism/sexism of the Cartesian rationale 'I think, therefore I am'. Grosfoguel's approach reveals the interrelation between these four processes of violence as *constitutive* of the modern/colonial world's epistemic structures and of Western man's epistemic privilege. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the need to move beyond Eurocentred Modernity and discusses the implications and possibilities for the decolonization of the Westernized university.

In Chapter 3, Arturo Arias focuses more closely on the nature of violence in the modern colonial world. Proposing a decolonial perspective, Arias explores the nature of violence exercized by hegemonic elites over subalternized and racialized civil societies in Latin America vis-à-vis the 'visceral' reaction of colonized subjects. This is illustrated by two cases: the nineteenth-century Yucatan Caste War and the late twentieth-century Guatemalan Civil War. Arias discusses the ways in

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which the justification for violence has been anchored in the ontological naturalization of racism at the centre of the everyday governance of all kinds of domestic events or, in other words, the ways in which colonialism has enabled Indigenous peoples and African 'slaves' to be conceived of as inferior to the conquering European subjects. Regarding the Yucatan Caste War, the author argues that the actual violence unleashed by Indigenous subjects is a solid example of a situation in which originary violence, enacted by Western elites convinced of their racial superiority, significantly contributed towards forestalling any possibility of peaceful behaviour on the part of the Indigenous population. Arias suggests that a similar case could be argued for the 37-year-long civil war in Guatemala, referring in particular to the brutal military counter-offensive against the insurrection in the Maya highlands that began in the summer of 1982. The author therefore argues that it is necessary to read and locate the Maya population's visceral response outside the disciplinary political mythologies of Western-centred revolutionary progress and the national ideal of *mestizaje*. More specifically, Arias sees the Guatemalan Maya movement's construction of a transnational field of political struggle as extending beyond the repressive epistemological frontiers of nationhood that have characterized the Marxist-oriented *Ladino* left. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the challenges posed by a decolonial logic: what happens when we view violence not only as inevitable, but as 'just'?

In Chapter 4, Sadri Khiari offers an appraisal of the context in which a decolonial strategy emerged in anti-racist struggles in France. His starting point is that racism can only be successfully approached by considering the political arena as the site of a power struggle between races, thus moving beyond the legacy of the colonial progressive/conservative or left/right cleavage which structures politics and has implied rendering the racial invisible. The consequence of the universal linear Eurocentric history that unfolded with the advent of Modernity and progress has been the relegation of other spaces, experiences and accounts to non-history or to earlier stages of history. Khiari thus interrogates the French conversion of a worldwide system of racial domination established since the sixteenth century and embodied in the formation and consolidation of the (White) Republic, which preserves the privilege of the unmarked whiteness constitutive of the racial system. In analyzing the challenges faced by decolonial politics in France, he points to the need to construct a border strategy that recognizes the dislocated sites and disjointed temporalities of emancipation and liberation struggles beyond the White Eurocentric political imaginary.

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Khiari argues that while liberation struggles developed an internationalist character (for example, the resistance of Africans deported to America and the Caribbean, the anti-colonial wars and the converging struggles of the 'Third World' following independence or the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa), they should be interpreted as racial struggles against White power. Within this approach, struggles for emancipation and liberation *within* the French Hexagon ought to be understood as resistance to the racial order challenging the continuing renewal of the coloniality of power relations. The author illustrates this with the articulation of class and race struggles, integrationist anti-racism and contemporary academic explanations of racism, which have established race as external to any historical power relationship, thus looking to the state for the possibility of its regeneration – in harmony with the republican ideal – whilst preventing anti-racism from being regarded as a political strategy outside particularism.

In Chapter 5, S. Sayyid casts a critical gaze upon certain readings of the post-colonial and calls for an engagement not simply with the critique of media representations and cultural prejudice, but also with the profound ways in which Eurocentrism is constitutive of Western knowledge. In his view, this is a necessary endeavour to grasp the ways in which cultural, philosophical and geopolitical forces and processes were organized in the service of the Eurocentred (colonial and racial) world order. Accordingly, he proposes to move beyond essentialism in the critique of Eurocentrism, laying down the horizons of a decolonial Philosophy. Sayyid calls for a non-essentialist reading of Wittgenstein's work and proposes that his contribution, particularly his later work, implies a critique of Eurocentrism that is relevant for an understanding of its relationship with epistemology, culture and racism. Following Wittgenstein's performative view of language and the relevance of the context in which language games are played, Eurocentrism is hence understood as a learned epistemology and ontology, rather than just in geopolitical terms. The chapter closes with the author distinguishing the difference between being European and the project of Eurocentrism, emphasizing that neither Eurocentrism nor its critique is exclusive to Europeans. Considering the logic of Eurocentrism a relationship of domination, Sayyid argues that the search for epistemological alternatives towards decolonial ends, including the decolonizaton of post-colonial studies, cannot reproduce the hierarchy of the West over the non-West.

In Chapter 6, Montserrat Galcerán Huguet poses crucial questions about the interrelationship between contemporary European politics

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and established scholarship, which points towards the enduring centrality of an idea of Europe that continues to claim universal validity whilst remaining blind to the colonial difference that sustains the Enlightenment concept of reason. Galcerán Huguet starts by considering the effects of post-colonial and decolonial theories on the idea of Europe and by raising the fundamental epistemological question that these conceptual approaches imply: *how to think beyond the colonial framework?* Her analysis interrogates the resistance among European academics and intellectuals to post-colonial and decolonial theories, taking as an example the French context and the work by Africanist scholar Jean-François Bayart, namely his critical position regarding the theoretical, historical and political claims of the Party of the Indigenous of the Republic. Galcerán Huguet focuses on the ways in which post-colonial theories developed within Anglo-American academia have merged with the European trend known as post-structuralism, most notably the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, and how post-colonial writers place themselves in a highly contentious area in which worldwide Westernization is taken as a given. She stresses that this literature locates the discussion of 'European identity' in the recognition that the European project of Modernity was founded on the enslavement of other peoples and cultures, whose lives and experiences have been marked by these processes. Yet, as she argues, there is also a reluctance to acknowledge coloniality except in a sanitized way that reflects the supposed European self-critical tradition, as illustrated by the 2003 European *Manifesto* signed by Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. Finally, the author discusses the specific place of Latin America and Spain within this constellation of political and academic debates, theories and interventions, pointing to the differences between post-colonial and decolonial studies in the use of critical categories for dominant thought. The chapter concludes by questioning the epistemic privilege of dominant European culture in worldwide academia.

In Chapter 7, Branwen Gruffydd Jones focuses on the power/knowledge relationship, exposing the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism at the heart of the rise and consolidation of Africanist scholarship. Her analysis centres on nineteenth-century British and European colonial enterprises and the post-war establishment of 'area studies' in the US. Jones sees knowledge production as a crucial element of European colonial rule and as becoming institutionalized in research programmes via funding from large American philanthropic foundations since World War II (for instance, Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford), particularly in the face of growing anti-colonial protest and organization. Her

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analysis thus helps to unravel how hegemonic Africanist scholarship has conformed to this geopolitics and to the epistemological context of modernization theory, behaviouralism and positivist comparative politics. Jones questions the predominant academic debates within this framework, which range from issues concerning political transition and instability, nationalism, political parties, leadership and the role of elites, to the more specific analysis of neo-patrimonialism. Accordingly, she considers it paramount to draw attention to the Philosophy of History within which these vocabularies and theoretical frameworks have been constructed as one which positions African societies in a time separate from, and prior to, that of Europe or the West – also prevalent in other studies in areas which analyze politics in so-called 'new' and 'developing' states. Jones concludes by warning of the pervasiveness of a historicist consciousness in the conventional vocabularies of 'state failure', which echoes a lament for the passing of colonial rule.

In Chapter 8, Sandew Hira proposes that mainstream academic and popular approaches to colonialism and slavery in the Netherlands are ideologically grounded in the legacies of European White Enlightenment thinking. He argues that colonialism had a deep impact on the development of science, defining the way in which the relationship between European and non-European societies was addressed and studied and codifying racism within the rise and consolidation of Western social thought. *Scientific colonialism* does not consider the view from the (codified as) 'other' and fails to situate its own narrative as enunciated within the logic of the oppressor and exploiter. Moreover, as illustrated by Hira's analysis, this Eurocentric approach also fails to meet the test of its claims for factuality and logical rationality. This is often overlooked in academic endeavours due to unchecked implicit assumptions and propositions, the production of knowledge of a descriptive nature, the deployment of statistical data to confer scientific authority on a particular ideological positioning, and partial accounts of colonialism and slavery. Hira thus engages with a *Decolonizing the Mind* approach which aims to make such assumptions and concepts explicit, in addition to checking their factual and logical basis.

Chapters 9–13 critically engage with dominant contemporary conceptual frameworks and official narratives on the (post-)colonial nation, race and history. In particular, the authors engage with accounts of colonialism, slavery and the colonized in terms of their relation to customary national histories and enduring struggles against racism. The marginalization of critical narratives by/on the colonized and their relegation to scientific, political and pedagogical irrelevance in

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Europe and the Westernized world are some of the ideas discussed. One implication of these Eurocentric academic and political approaches is that they reflect on the dissemination and sedimentation of knowledge, namely in museums, state-sanctioned curricula and textbooks, which are analyzed in several chapters in this collection.

In Chapter 9, Maria Paula Meneses and Margarida Gomes interrogate the exclusion of the view codified as 'other', exploring the silences on African involvement in World War I by looking at the case of the theatres of war in territories colonized by Portugal (which maintained a state of 'neutrality'). The chapter illustrates the interrelationship between the methods applied to compel Africans to serve on the Mozambique front in World War I to prevent a German invasion – with a focus on the role of the Niassa Company and the *carriers* – and the legal system that imposed forced labour and extended the existing structure of racial hierarchy. The authors thus unravel the ways in which World War I and its aftermath were crucial to the enforcement of modern Portuguese colonial policies. Following Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *sociology of absences* and his critical theory on 'modern abyssal thinking', Meneses and Gomes highlight the ways in which the dominant Western narrative on World War I has failed to consider 'other' involvements (their reasons, trajectories and implications) precisely because it favours a Eurocentric and linear approach to the history of this conflict, primarily recognizing the (mostly White) expeditionary forces that fought on the European front as lawful combatants. Thus, the silence surrounding the African troops in Mozambique during World War I is exemplary of the re-enactment of an abyssal line that tenaciously splits the *metropolitan* from the *colonial* side of the line. The chapter shows that an approach to the conflict as restricted to the geographical limits of Europe is closely related to the long-standing tendency to treat African social phenomena as atypical, local processes outside global rational explanations, assuming linear temporality as the neutral medium within which history unfolds.

The scholarly production of knowledge is also a central question in Chapter 10 by Kwame Nimako. This author calls for conceptual clarity within academic and political approaches and discourses on the transatlantic *slave trade* and *slavery* (including 'modern slavery'), in the light of the weak empirical grounding for these concepts and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century reinventions (after the legal abolition of slavery and the end of the Cold War). Nimako questions the current conceptual inflation, academic institutionalization and universalization of these notions among *career historians*. He thus challenges

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the practice of calling on archival material to validate certain scientific claims – which broadly overlooks the fact that such *evidence* was obtained and preserved for specific purposes, including maintaining the racial hierarchy. In considering that this material can be used to study social formation and the production of knowledge, Nimako thus suggests we engage with, rather than ignore, the historical fraud that allows for the perpetual naturalization of slavery and shifts the burden of responsibility for slavery away from Europe and European descendants. This conceptual shift is crucial to discussing the legacies of European slavery, specifically with regard to the formation of the nation-state, national identities and cultural traditions, and the continuing (though changing) racisms that shape international and domestic relations. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that the abuse of the concept of slavery is partly a consequence of *parallel lives and intertwined belonging*: people sharing the same spaces but having different experiences and memories, giving rise to different understandings and notions of freedom and emancipation, with consequences for the production of knowledge.

In Chapter 11, Nilma Lino Gomes addresses the historical demands of the Black movement during the last century in Brazil, particularly in terms of education. In 2003, under the Lula da Silva government, these demands culminated in the legal requirement for the mandatory teaching of the history of African-Brazilian and African history and culture in compulsory education. By linking this official initiative to other related debates – such as anti-racist teaching and affirmative action – Gomes explores the challenges, tensions and contradictions that have emerged with the implementation of this law. Although the background context to its approval is the emerging consensus on the lack of representation and misrepresentation of ethno-racial diversity in Brazil, resulting from enduring grassroots struggles, the implementation of the law has revealed the difficulties in achieving anti-racist teaching throughout the Brazilian educational system. Despite the alliances that have been formed between the state, international organizations and grassroots movements, the broader context of political ambiguity in the commitment to fight racism and the legacies of a Eurocentric knowledge system have hampered meaningful change. Ten years after its implementation, this legislation has not been sufficiently consolidated in public policies, thus curtailing the efforts made by grassroots movements to achieve structural change in education. Nonetheless, such collective demands have been crucial to launching a broader political debate across the country on institutionalized racism.

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Chapter 12 explores the limited changes to history teaching in Mexico brought about by state reforms to education which were, at least partially, a reaction to the grassroots struggles of the Zapatista movement. Dolores Ballesteros Páez focuses on discourses on race and racism in secondary education history teaching following the 1993 and 2006 educational reforms in Mexico, which were meant to contest the assimilationist approach that pervaded the education system during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in 1994 and the adoption of international recommendations on the multicultural curriculum, the defence of a pluricultural identity has emerged in schoolbooks. However, as Ballesteros Páez suggests, despite the increasing representation of certain populations (especially Indigenous and African enslaved populations), these remain a *silent presence*: although the 2006 education reform introduced a multi/intercultural approach (mostly adding new content to textbooks), by continuing to silence the racist and nationalist ideas behind the political construction of the Mexican nation, these populations remain on the margins of the main narrative. Mexican national identity, drawing on ideas such as *mestizaje* and, more recently, multiculturalism and interculturality, is nowadays constructed as homogeneous (supposedly a blend of Indigenous, African and Spanish elements), whilst erasing certain populations from national history, restricting their *presence* to small sections or viewing them as limiting the modernization of the country. Through the *illusion of inclusion*, the privileged position of the descendants of Spanish colonial settlers is both consecrated and rendered invisible, whilst a systematic and historically informed reflection on racism and its changing dynamics in Mexican society is evaded. This can be seen in the erasure of the idea of race as a crucial factor in contemporary inequalities and as a key mobilizing force within grassroots struggles. This chapter thus illustrates the limited horizons of policy reform in challenging Eurocentrism in education.

In Chapter 13, the final chapter, Stephen Small analyzes the processes of knowledge production and dissemination that have made 'other' experiences and narrations visible, although still consigned to marginality in public history. Specifically, he focuses on the public memory of slavery and on representations of the struggles of African-Americans in museums and on plantation sites. Small argues that while there is an impressive amount of research and knowledge about slavery and its legacies in the US and extensive information is available in a wide range of museums, mainstream accounts continue to provide narrow

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coverage and a particular discursive orientation – presenting a grand narrative of American history that emphasizes freedom, equality and fairness. Despite improvements, these accounts do not fully escape the US nationalist ideology of progress and the legacy of *Southern gentility*, disavowing public discussion of race and slavery. Plantation museums incorporate or marginalize slavery in relative terms, or simply annihilate it from their narratives. Specialist museums managed by African-Americans, on the other hand, tend to offer a more complete account of the extent and depth of slavery and its legacies, which is crucial to challenging dominant views and assumptions and to highlighting their contributions to labour, technology, medicine, knowledge and culture in the US. Small thus argues that the contemporary museum infrastructure continues to constitute a 'separation of knowledge' that is the outcome of the 'segregation of knowledge' – itself a legacy of slavery and legal segregation. His chapter reminds us that knowledge production is inseparable from racialized ideologies, and that these ideologies continue to be shaped by a combination of factors, including economic profit, political gain, nostalgia and the evasion of guilt, as well as hostility to Black people. Small concludes that only continued social mobilization will prevent the marginalization of knowledge of the Black experience in US history.

* * *

Dominant debates on colonialism and racial enslavement exemplify the workings of Eurocentrism as a paradigm of knowledge production and interpretation. Despite occupying a marginal position within modern historiography (Trouillot, 1995; Vergès, 2008), in recent decades there has been a re-emergence of political and academic interest in the history and in memorialization of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic. International efforts have been crucial in fostering public debate, namely: (a) the International UNESCO *Slave Route* programme focusing on disseminating knowledge on slavery, which was launched in Benin in 1994 following a proposal by Haiti and several African countries; (b) the 2001 United Nations-sponsored Durban World Conference against Racism and the declaration that the transatlantic slave trade and slavery were inextricably associated with racism; (c) the UNESCO initiatives launched during the International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition (2004) to encourage research into the links between the slave trade, slavery and contemporary racism.

Despite their relevance in launching a debate that in many contexts had been dormant, three questions are particularly problematic

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within the approach and initiatives proposed. Rooted in Eurocentric thinking, such endeavours depoliticize Atlantic slavery and regenerate the historical cover-up of its close links with colonialism and racism (Goldberg, 1993; Hesse, 2002). First, through the persistence of the approach to the 'transatlantic slave trade' as a 'tragedy' (for example, UNESCO, 2001, p. 14; 2002, p. 6), an *exceptional* process, or an *appendix* to the history of Europe. The 2001 Durban Declaration (UNESCO, 2002), whilst acknowledging the negative impact of slavery on Africa, broadly omits its benefits to Europe: Atlantic slavery is approached as a process happening *over there* – in the colonies – with little relevance to European history. Consigning slavery to a *dark chapter* (ibid., p. 17) of this history paves the way for the centrality of contemporary narratives that depoliticize colonialism and enslavement – and, consequently, racism – within the semantics of *mestizaje*, multiculturalism and interculturality (Araújo and Maeso, 2012a; see also Ballesteros Páez, Chapter 12 in this volume).

Second, with the increasingly widespread idea of the universality of slavery – at the heart of the *Slave Route* project (for example, Diène, 1998; UNESCO, 2013). This is the revival of a colonial narrative that prevented racial enslavement from being considered a European 'discovery', generally blaming it on Arabs and Muslims and calling for European moral outrage alongside continuing colonial exploitation (Hochschild, 2006 [1988]; Gopal, 2006; Nimako, Chapter 10 in this volume). The idea of the ubiquity of enslavement is also being reformulated within the currently expanding study of 'modern slavery', assuming 'that research work on the Atlantic "slave" trade and slavery is exhausted' (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011, p. 190). This again turns race into a coincidental factor in the history of Atlantic slavery, a non-constitutive element of this system of exploitation. As such, the relationship between slavery and race becomes relevant – an *obsession*? – for the scholars and activists of (anti-)racism but optional or, at most, a parenthesis in academic and pedagogical accounts of colonialism and slavery.

Third, via an approach to education and scientific knowledge as antidotes to racism (Henriques, 1984), consolidated in the post-war context in which UNESCO emerged and eventually becoming hegemonic. In contemporary times, international debates on slavery and history teaching continue to enshrine the role of scientific knowledge in combating racism via the production of accounts that 'give [this phenomenon] a rigorous scientific character' (UNESCO, 2001, p. 15) and thus eradicate 'ignorance and prejudice' (ibid., p. 6; see also pp. 5–12). The relative insignificance of the 'transatlantic slave trade'

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in European/Western history and historiography (and its contemporary containment within *accommodating* narratives) cannot be reduced to a matter of academic ignorance. Such an approach derives, as Trouillot (1995, p. 6) suggests, from a positivist view of science that masks the configurations of power through a *naive epistemology*. We therefore need to consider the 'strange' silence (UNESCO, 2001, p. 14) on racial enslavement as the consequence of crucial intellectual choices and engagements that foster the absence of knowledge but are not reducible to it (Trouillot, 1995).

These global debates have acquired specific relevance and contours in different contexts – with race being variously considered *as if* it could be temporarily hidden from view, or added in as an extra explanatory element. Throughout the last century, initiatives to reconsider national imaginaries of colonialism, race and slavery have emerged in Europe and in the Americas,[2] with education becoming a battleground for important struggles for knowledge/power. For instance, since the 1960s in the US,[3] the Civil Rights movement has pushed for a reorganization of the system of knowledge, albeit accompanied by institutional reaction (Wynter, 1992, p. 11; see also Davis, 1981; Deloria, 1995). As Frank Füredi (1998) argued, UNESCO's rejection of race as a scientifically and politically consensual concept since the 1950s led to the rise of ideas of *cultural difference* and *pluralism* – rather than equality – in international political and academic debate, which would have an impact on debates in education. The Cold War and national liberation struggles in Africa and Asia – endangering the privilege of the West in the world order – further created a context in which mobilization around racial consciousness was politically and diplomatically deflected (ibid.). Accordingly, most debates on history teaching and textbooks have been narrowly framed by the need to represent the (colonized/enslaved) 'other' in *multicultural* societies. Official initiatives to broaden the curriculum, as well as much scholarly work, have failed to move beyond an understanding of racism as 'ignorance and prejudice' and of Eurocentrism as misrepresenting or lacking the 'other' side of history, which is dominant in UNESCO interventions. They have favoured a rectification and/or compensatory approach that reduces 'aggressive nationalism' (UNESCO, 2001, p. 11) and adds in limited amounts of the 'version of the losers', whilst failing to challenge existing descriptive and prescriptive rules that determine in/exclusion:

> Multiculturalism can seem to be an attractive answer to the particularism of the Euro-Immigrant perspective from which the present textbooks are written … Rather than seeking to reinvent our

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> present cultural native model, the multi-culturalism alternative seeks to 'save' the nation model by multiculturalizing it. It does not move outside the conceptual field of our present EuroAmerican cultural model. (Wynter, 1992, p. 16)

Thus, on both sides of the Atlantic, the *master script* on slavery (Swartz, 1992), colonialism, race and the nation has broadly remained unchanged – by design and by implementation. Debates on the multicultural curriculum and multiperspectivity have failed to unsettle Eurocentrism and to produce a profound critique of the construction of the core idea of the national/European/Western 'we' in which the 'other' is to be included. Cornel West's assertion remains relevant:

> We need to tell a story about ways in which 'Eurocentrism' as a category for the debate is hiding and obscuring something, obfuscating a debate, prepackaging a debate that thereby never really takes place and becomes, instead, this battle between bureaucrats over slots and curriculum … the only way we get beyond a paralyzing either/or perspective is to take a look at this idea of Europe, the very idea of Europe as an ideological construct. (West, 1993, pp. 120–1)

What is therefore required is an approach that considers not merely the (mis)representation of the 'other' but shows the theoretical and analytical relevance of the notion of Eurocentrism to understanding the ways in which race and racism are rendered (in)visible in the debate on nationhood, citizenship, democracy and human rights (Araújo and Maeso, 2012b). Whilst education is a crucial site for the analysis of the naturalization both of Eurocentric thinking and of related political and cultural contestation, these struggles have never been about mere symbolic representation, but about access to resources (Wynter, 1992; Deloria, 1995). This is particularly evident in Nilma Gomes' Chapter 11 in this volume: demands for *inclusion* in the canon of knowledge have been linked to a wider struggle against the institutionalization of racism. Affirmative action in higher education and the debate this has unleashed in Brazilian universities bears witness to this.

Beyond academic historiography and formal education systems, the increasing relevance of multisited productions of history should also be noted, particularly with regard to their role in shaping collective memories of colonialism, enslavement and racism. Public commemorations, museums and exhibitions, media productions and pedagogical materials are crucial sites for the construction and

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sedimentation of historical narratives. They usually reveal the 'institutionalized practice of social forgetting' (Nimako and Small, 2012) and are particularly relevant to understanding the problematic status of any political discussion on (anti-)racism (Eichstedt and Small, 2003). While the state has had an advantage in ensuring its citizens acquire official history through compulsory schooling, museums, public events and commemorative commissions (Wertsch, 2002), significant ruptures with official knowledge have often been the result of the enduring struggles of grassroots movements, political activists and intellectuals. Local initiatives have been crucial to the development of collective memories, frequently building on national and international partnerships. Many of these initiatives and cultural productions aim to promote alternative, critical forms of memorializing colonialism and enslavement through intellectual collaboration and communitarian knowledge production and dissemination (for example, community-based libraries, digital resources, guided tours). In Europe, for instance, in cities such as London or Amsterdam, Black History/Heritage tours have emerged to challenge official discourses that consign colonialism and enslavement to a distant and thus irrelevant (*irreparable*) past. In the US, as Stephen Small argues in Chapter 13 of this volume, despite the impressive amount of knowledge produced on slavery, most initiatives designed to memorialize it – in museums and plantation sites – continue to disseminate a hegemonic narrative on the relationship between colonialism and nation-state formation; those that do not are mostly the result of Black mobilization.

This goes to show that the relationship between anti-racist and political liberation struggles and scientific discourse has always been, at least, uneasy. Universities have historically been sites for the reproduction of White privilege, through the canonization of certain *scientific* theories and explanations. More importantly, they also provide the arsenal of categories to be deployed concerning the 'political', the 'religious', 'violence', and so on, all of which revolve around the question of *Being Human*. As Vine Deloria ironically remarks:

> The constant drumbeat of scientific personalities who manipulate the public's image of Indians by describing archaeological horizons instead of societies, speaking of hunter-gatherers instead of communities, and attacking Indian knowledge of the past as fictional mythology, has created a situation in which the average citizen is greatly surprised to learn that Indians are offended by racial slurs and insults. (Deloria, 1995, p. 21)

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This modern/racist question has compelled colonized peoples 'to define what it means to be human because there is a deep understanding of what it has meant to be considered not fully human, to be *savage*' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012 [1999], p. 28; original emphasis). This process has been somehow translated by scholars into the more fashionable question of (political) *agency*, although usually accompanied by the *policing* of knowledge production by the colonized and minoritized. For instance, the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism and racism lays at the centre of the heated controversy surrounding Rigoberta Menchú Tum and her biographical testimony on the massacres by the Guatemalan army in 1981–82. Entitled *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala*,[4] the testimony follows the publication of a book, by American anthropologist David Stoll in 1999, questioning the veracity and representativeness of her narrative (Arias, 2001). To these critiques, she responded:

> It is not a question of you believing in my own truth or someone else's; I'm simply saying that I have the right to my memory, as do my people. (Rigoberta Menchú Tum, interviewed by Juan Jesús Aznárez, 1999, in Aznárez, 2001, p. 116)

This polemic is illustrative of the ways in which *certain* knowledge is read as *too* subjective and suspicious – an ad hoc narrative serving more a specific (and dubious) political agenda than an objective interpretation of 'events' – as well as the common construction of Indigenous peoples as easily 'manipulated' by external political forces. Although the relationship between knowledge and power may have been acknowledged and incorporated in scholarly reflections, Westernized academia and its internal rules of reproduction remain – as Khiari argues in Chapter 4 of this volume – anchored in a Eurocentric paradigm that disregards race as a power struggle. Grosfoguel's interconnected analysis in Chapter 2 of this volume provides an understanding of the historical roots of this epistemological order and the main challenges this poses to the Westernized university.

More often than not, the depoliticization of race and racism prevents established academics from thinking outside the colonial framework, rapidly condemning some knowledge as 'ideological' and therefore irrelevant, as Galcerán Huguet points out in Chapter 6 of this volume. At the core of this issue is the 'self'–'other' dichotomy, which has been mainly interrogated by critical scholarship. Fernando Coronil (1989), in his review of Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America*, noted that the

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'fascination with the construction of "otherness"' leaves the colonial self *unmarked* and perpetuates the imperial 'politics of selfhood' (p. 329). This present collection therefore considers it imperative to unravel how the unmarked self – inscribed in legal frameworks, institutional practices and historical archives – is reproduced through the use and reinvention of certain vocabularies, concepts, and arguments, as analyzed by Jones, Hira and Nimako in Chapters 7, 8 and 10 of this volume. The politics of knowledge are also closely related to the geopolitical borders of scholarly inquiry and their production and organization of our 'objects' of analysis and interpretations. In this sense, as already stated, it is essential to question the divide between the colonial and the metropolitan. In Chapter 9 of this volume, Meneses and Gomes' interrogation of the dominant narratives of World War I, which foreground the imaginary of a 'European war', represents a step in this direction. They also highlight the problematic construction of *national* cases that continues to frame the understanding of historical processes and political struggles on the frontiers of nationhood.

What, then, are the challenges? The articles compiled in the issue of *Human Architecture* edited by Boidin and colleagues point towards the 'potential for the renewal of American and European universities' (2012, p. 2) brought by the different experiences and historical trajectories of academic and grassroots movement critiques of the production of knowledge. They also examine the multiple layers of 're-Westernization' and the containment of 'critical inquiry' in several topics (such as slavery and racism) through the reproduction of hegemonic research fields and frameworks of inquiry (for example, 'immigration/minority studies'). This serves as a critical warning on the shortcomings of many critiques of Eurocentrism emerging from academia (see also Sayyid, Chapter 5 in this volume). As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui stresses in her critique of the establishment of 'post-colonial' and 'cultural studies' research in US universities, these institutionalized fields assemble a 'conceptual apparatus, and forms of reference and counterreference that have isolated academic treatises from any obligation to or dialogue with insurgent social forces' (2012, p. 98).

This calls for an approach to the decolonization project as a *practice* that it is always engaged with profound political and cultural change (ibid., pp. 100–1). However, it is a collective political endeavour that the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigm is not only unwilling, but also *ill-prepared,* to embrace, entrenched as it is, to paraphrase Maldonado-Torres, in its *will-to-ignorance* 'with good conscience' (2004, p. 36).

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## Notes

1. The thesis of 'immaturity for self-determination' was contested by intellectuals within national liberation movements, such as Amílcar Cabral in his *Political Texts* (1974, p. 47).
2. In the last decade, in Europe, debates on slavery and history teaching were most visible in Britain, France and the Netherlands. In the Americas, Brazil, Colombia and the US (particularly the textbooks discussion prompted by the Texas State Board of Education) are illustrative of this.
3. Carter G. Woodson's (1933) *The Mis-Education of the Negro* is a powerful example of an earlier challenge to the dominant canons of knowledge in education in the US.
4. Published originally in French in 1983 and a year later in English, Menchú Tum, a member of the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC), narrates in her testimony the massacres by the Guatemalan army in 1981–82 in hundreds of Mayan villages, as part of its counter-insurgency strategy in El Quiché region. She became a spokesperson for Indigenous rights, particularly for the Mayan peoples. Rigoberta Menchú Tum received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 and was a candidate in the 2011 presidential elections in Guatemala.

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