

# Public Arguments – 12



Tata Institute of Social Sciences  
Patna Centre

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MADINA TLOSTANOVA

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## **THE POSTCOLONIAL AND THE POSTSOCIALIST: DIALOGUES, OPACITIES, AND “DEEP COALITIONS”**

– MADINA TLOSTANOVA

Let me start with relating my own trajectory with the topic I am going to address. This is not a justification of my right to discuss this issue and I do not claim to represent any positions. What follows below is first of all my own reflection growing out of my personal experience. This experience certainly has existed in close connection with history, geopolitics, phenomenology and intersected with collective experiences of various groups. My specific positionality of postcolonial and at the same time postsocialist person coming from the darker colonial side of socialist modernity and living and working today in a European university as a professor responsible for postcolonial feminisms, is an important aspect in the analysis of and communication with other existing interpretations of the postcolonial and the postsocialist.

A flotsam and jetsam of the darker colonial side of the Soviet/Russian empire, I am an insurgent product of Soviet multiculturalism with its utopian goal of creating a new ethnically creolized Soviet human being. My parents came from two quite different colonial spaces - the Caucasus and Central Asia, which the Russian empire has disputed for centuries with its more successful imperial rivals and later made into a fake showcase of ethnic-racial egalitarianism and affirmative action. The Soviet tactics of nurturing the so-called “national cadres” who would be loyal to the empire and gradually weaken their links to the national culture was quite successful and popular as it gave advantages of education, representation and social mobility for those colonial subjects who bought into it or made a compromise forgetting their native languages and cultures and, paradoxically, more and more orienting towards the West as an alternative to the increasing Soviet regime's failures. This Western orientation that in the colonial Soviet case could not promise an inclusion but only the increased pangs of “double consciousness”<sup>1</sup>, became predominant in my late Soviet childhood and youth. The following bitter

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realization of the impossibility of fitting into the Western modernity and unwillingness to continue operating within the increasingly provincialized Russian model have pushed many postcolonial postsoviet subjects back to their national cultures. However, this return turned out to be impossible or complicated and, what is more, required alternative methodological models from those that were recycled from the Soviet past (and previously got there from the outdated Western arsenal). First of all, it refers to the uncritically reproduced vectorial progressivist model which interprets the ethnic national as traditional and fallen out of time in binary opposition to the modern. This justifies only one type of difference – a tamed multicultural other. Yet, the postcolonial postsoviet others may easily turn to be not only the notorious “singers of their native land”<sup>2</sup> according to the old Soviet formula, but also decolonial critics, cunningly subverting both local antiquarian and global homogenized positions and refusing to follow the limited contemporary editions of docile Ariels and rebellious Calibans.

I never wanted to be an assimilated Ariel or, much less, a stand-point singer of my native land. I had several presumably native lands and my attachment to any of them was problematic and complex at best. The multiplicity of my own ethnic roots and the impossibility to relink with my native cosmological grounds via any communities; the Soviet educational Russification and my family's diverse educational strategies which were divided between the Western-oriented models and my Indologist mother's urge to be attentive to alternative positions, voices and histories, made me a critical cosmopolitan out of necessity and long before it became fashionable. Ironically, having travelled to the West to study in the late 1980s-early 1990s, I discovered for myself postcolonial studies, various strands of non-Western feminism, critical race theory and many other discourses that provided a necessary, though later challenged, initial entry point into my then indistinct decolonial sensibilities.

Living at the border and with a border cutting through my self, answers best my internal self-awareness and grants an advantage of multiple optics of a trans-diasporic voluntary, if not always happy non-belonging, of being

neither here nor there or both here and there at once. Therefore I did not fit into any of the models that were offered in the late Soviet empire. As a non-white colonial gendered other in the increasingly racist late-Soviet times, I experienced what it meant to be multiply discriminated on many levels – from visual to intellectual. I had to juggle identities. I disidentified<sup>3</sup> in order to survive in the aggressive environments – imperial and nationalist, as both rejected me for different reasons. In Moscow, I was seen by default as an exotic and/or dangerous other, unable to develop intellectually and in need of emancipation from the presumably patriarchal norms of my native culture, even though I was more emancipated than many of the emancipators themselves and my belonging to any one culture was quite problematic.

At the same time, contrary to many women-of-color and postcolonial feminists I could not find a solace in my presumably native environment either. For ethnic-national local communities in the Caucasus I was a traitor of their farmstead patriotism with some primordialist versions of identity, and particularly, woman's identity associated with piety, family-centrism rather than education or creativity, and a general compliance with patriarchal norms which was all a rather late construction influenced by both Islamization and the Russian colonization.<sup>4</sup>

Today, living in the West which is ignorant about the colonial-imperial configuration of the Russian and Soviet empires and homogenizes the colonizers and the colonized, I continue to be seen and othered as a Russian even though nothing but a passport connects me with that country.<sup>5</sup> Therefore my (post)colonial identity is hidden and erased in the Western contexts and this in itself becomes an act of recolonization and silencing. In the end, both the hyper visibility of my colonial status in Russia and the invisibility of this status in the West distort me and represent me in simplified and binary ways. It is important to break away from this vicious circle of false representations and attempt to find a voice to tell about the darker colonial side of the Soviet modernity and its deferred dialogue with the postcolonial subjects whose experience was not directly marked by the state socialist experiments and rhetoric.

## **The end of history, decoloniality and the postsocialist elephant in the room**

A decisive historical moment to which I would like to go back, the moment which has determined the global geopolitical, economic, existential and epistemic situation we all share today, is the end of state socialism and the triumph of the neoliberal globalization. The latter was presented at first as a universal human condition of happy consumerism devoid of any historical dimension, a life in the eternal present of the only remaining postCold war version of modernity. At that point different ideas emerged that were sensitive to and critical of this new political design of the presumably shrunken world with erased borders and weakened nation-states, of the world left ultimately with no social justice utopia even as awkward and limited as the socialist one, and hence, increasingly with no future dimension.

The moment when Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history<sup>6</sup> and the socialist modernity as the last global utopia of universal happiness was buried alive together with its voluntary and involuntary agents, was also a moment of the decisive shift from the discourses of decolonization that corresponded to the Cold war logic, to the conception of decoloniality. Peruvian scholar Anibal Quijano introduced the concept of “coloniality”<sup>7</sup> “as a response from the underside to the enforced homogeneity of neoliberal modernity and to the realization that the state cannot be democratized or decolonized.”<sup>8</sup> At that moment the Cold War term ‘decolonization’ started to shift to ‘decoloniality’.

Coloniality is different from colonialism and decolonization is different from decoloniality. Colonialism is a historical and descriptive term whereas decolonization refers to political status and does not attempt a deconstruction of epistemic and discursive grounds of the modern/colonial project at large. Decolonial thought emerging as at the decisive moment of the state socialist modernity's collapse does not accentuate the historical description of (neo)colonialist strategies or the agenda of gaining the political independence, but rather focuses on the long lasting ontological, epistemic

and axiological traces left after colonialism as such seems to be a matter of the past. Decoloniality concerns itself mainly with the critique and delinking from the habits modernity/coloniality implanted in all of us, “with how it has worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort and deny knowledges, subjectivities, world senses and life vision.”<sup>9</sup> Decoloniality is a pluriversal<sup>10</sup> option which is grounded not only in resistance but more importantly, in a life-asserting re-existence<sup>11</sup> as a creation of the multiple world anew.

The concepts of coloniality and decoloniality though formulated largely from the Latin American vantage point, potentially allow drawing the second-rate empires such as Russia as the zone of the external imperial difference, as well as the subsequent state Socialist modernity, into the modern/colonial matrix, while at the same time humbling the anglophone postcolonial studies through downsizing them to their specific geopolitical and corpo-political experience.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, decolonial thought is not doing this in order to occupy itself a central place as a champion of the new universalist truth but only to draw attention to the optional nature of any theories and refusal to continue playing the deadly game of modernity – that of agonistic rivalry for the indisputability of a single correct interpretation of the world and its future.

The western liberal and neoliberal thought has interpreted the concepts of post-communism<sup>13</sup> and postsocialism in exclusively temporal sense (a period after socialism), ignoring their spatial and human dimensions or, in other words, the millions of human lives who share the experience of being branded for several decades as 'the (communist) East' and are still inhabiting this symbolic East which is breaking today under the pressure of the new geopolitical divisions and North/South axes. This bias has been criticized many times and mainly by the post-socialist scholars themselves. However, decolonial thought even if it was shaped in many ways as a response to the end of the Cold War, has also completely ignored - at least in the beginning<sup>14</sup> - both the experience of state socialism and what came after it in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. The postsocialist people in contrast with the

indigenous or the colonized have remained for decolonial as well as postcolonial thinkers a rather abstract and alien group. The actual lives of the people who woke up one day to find themselves in a 'post-'situation when “socialism had ended but they were still there,”<sup>15</sup> who were told to forget about the state socialist experience, go back to the end of modernity's queue and start from scratch in a different paradigm, were not taken into account as relevant in either of the equations (the decolonial or the neoliberal).

Today's intolerant populists and right-wing fundamentalists taking over in many parts of the world are a logical result of the fall of the socialist system and the short-lived neoliberal claims of owning the world. If the Cold war logic allowed the socialist system to act as a counterbalance for the capitalist world and thus gave some opportunities to the people to fight for their rights, today this function is performed by quite different institutions – nationalist, religious, populist, protectionist, and other such local forms which act as a steam release creating an illusion of change and often adopting the language of love to exercise hatred. Sara Ahmed points out on the defensive uses of hate within various fascist and other hate discourses that declare themselves as organizations of love: “The ordinary white subject is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilization of hate, as a passionate attachment tied closely to love. The emotion of hate works to animate the ordinary subject, to bring that fantasy to life, precisely by constituting the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the real victim.”<sup>16</sup>

The promise of slow progress in the only remaining correct modernity, used to manipulate postsocialist people, was false from the start as there was no space for the postsocialist others within this model – they could not properly join the cohorts of the colonizers or the colonized, the global capital or the global labor force. The former ideological difference was lifted and since it was the only visible and allowed indicator of the socialist difference with the Western normativity that remained intact and was not seriously revised after the end of the Cold war, it is not surprising that the postsocialist space and its people have become a void,<sup>17</sup> a non-region,<sup>18</sup> an inconvenient defeated dragon which was not expected to survive after the heroic epic of the

Cold war was over. A failed utopia that has become unmentionable for both western left, right and center, and also for postcolonial and decolonial groups. In the latter case, it was connected with a number of complex and not entirely reflected upon reasons that prevented the former Third World from openly engaging in discussions of state socialism and postsocialism.

Socialist modernity acted as an invisible and silent trigger and at times mediator of the lighter (end of history) and darker (coloniality) interpretations of the present. This state socialist modernity at whose expense the happy neoliberal globalization chant took central stage, became the proverbial elephant in the room that no one wanted to notice or take into account. Today this elephant is still largely missing in the global knowledge production mediated by the US academia and experts who refuse to see the postsocialist as a global human condition which it largely is and conveniently compartmentalize the postsocialist world into a familiar area studies discipline albeit with a new title of Eurasian studies.

Role of the passive object of study for the global North and lacking of parity-based dialogue with the global South are the main problems of the postsocialist world. Partly they stem from the specific local histories of the postsocialist and postcolonial countries, but also with the dangerous global tendencies of the increasingly sealed from each other stand point positions, victimhood rivalries, fixations on particular histories of discrimination and lack of will to unite or at least make alliances in our struggle against the global coloniality. The optimistic neoliberal global chant of the shrunken world of happy consumers and erased borders have clearly demonstrated its unsightly darker side. The movements of capital and goods and perhaps a few globe-trotters easily changing continents and jobs from one transnational corporation to another, was replaced with a threatening image of globalization at the center of which stands the figure of the refugee and the increasing flow of people who migrate to escape death, famine, war, and political repressions. The failure of the global promise has resulted in a next wave of particularisms grounded in a sober realization of the impossibility to provide a universal progress, even in a simplified neoliberal understanding.

The neoliberal global model has manifested the same old darker colonial sides albeit at times in new wrappings, causing the revival of the stale geopolitics and the defensive strengthening of nation states with overt top-down nationalist agendas as is the case with several Eastern European countries or with the neo-imperial nationalist rhetoric in Russia.

In this context an alliance of the postcolonial and postsocialist human experiences, stances and voices becomes even more urgent as it could potentially make us into a very powerful force of change for a better and fairer world, as the postcolonial and postsocialist human conditions are shared by the majority of people in the world. Decolonial re-existence can serve as a positive ontological design for this future world, far from any primordialist call to go back to some essentialized and constructed authenticity. Various native traditions, then, are taken out of the museum or archive and put into a dialogue and heated argument with modernity. This “for” rather than “against” principle<sup>19</sup> may be useful in building alliances among the old and new others of modernity such as the postcolonial and the postsocialist populations.

### **The postcolonial condition, the decolonial option, the postsocialist mediation: a duel of returned gazes?**

I interpret the terms decolonial and postcolonial in a rather unconventional way in order to transcend the long-going rivalry and geopolitical divisions between the postcolonial studies and the decolonial option. The postsocialist optics acts as a medium allowing to see intersections and opacities between these two critical discourses and also a litmus test demonstrating the boundaries of their applicability and the potential to develop dialogues and alliances.

I believe that postcoloniality should be regarded as a condition, a certain human existential situation which we have no power of choosing, while decoloniality is an option consciously chosen as a political, ethical and epistemic positionality and an entry point into agency. The postcolonial

condition is more of an objective given, a geopolitical and geo-historical situation of many people coming from former colonies. The decolonial stance is one step further as it involves a conscious choice of how to interpret reality and how to act upon it. It starts from a specific postcolonial origination, which can fall into the traditional sphere of interests limited to the British and French empires and their colonies, focus on a more typically decolonial Central and South American configuration, or even go beyond both locales and venture into the unconventional imperial-colonial histories of Central and Eastern Europe, the Ottoman Sultanate, or Russia. A mere description of a postcolonial predicament or an analysis of its present outcomes in a concrete locale, then must lead to the next step of developing an active and conscious ethical, political, and epistemic position whose goal is to decolonize thinking, being, perception, gender, and memory. It is then not enough to call a scholar postcolonial. It is crucial to take into account from the start not only our given objective positions, but also who and what we chose to be in our profession and in our life. Instead of stating for the umpteenth time the rather obvious differences in the origination of postcolonial and decolonial discourses and their links to various types of colonialism in India and Africa and in the Americas, we can look how relevant these theories are when and if applied to quite different geopolitical configurations such as Eurasia or Central and South-Eastern Europe. By postsocialist I also do not mean the actual relation to socialism as an ideology, its acceptance, revision or rejection. I merely state the lack of choice for someone born and raised in the socialist or postsocialist space and situation, whose ideology we as individuals might not even share.

The postcolonial discontent often stems from its too close link with modernity understood as a set of particular epistemic assumptions. In decolonial view this leads to the failure of postcolonial critique attempting to use the methodological tools of the master in order to dismantle his house<sup>20</sup> rarely attempting to question the “hegemony of the master's house” as such; to quote Walsh and Mignolo, “in fact, mastery itself which will then cease to maintain its imperial status.”<sup>21</sup> Yet, in spite of the failures of institutionalized

academic postcolonial theory, the post- and neocolonial existential condition itself shared by millions of people in the world is capable of generating quite viable and powerful decolonial drives indicating a specific political, ethical, existential and cognitive positionality.

The distinction between the condition and the option sheds some light on the main postcolonial flaw in the eyes of decolonial thinkers. It cannot be fixed with a mere addition of the new voices and geopolitical experiences (such as the post-Soviet, the post-Ottoman or the post-AustrianHungarian) to the postcolonial choir. The postcolonial and the decolonial discourses refer not only to different locales, but also to different modes of thinking and being in the world, although they frequently overlap with each other; the decolonial thinkers are quite often postcolonial people and the postcolonial scholars in their majority share the decolonial agenda. Still there are spaces and conceptual tools within each of these discourses that remain opaque for the other and areas that demonstrate their limitations.

What is at stake here is the degree of postcolonial and decolonial involvement in de-automatizing of and delinking from the Western epistemic premises, naturalized cognitive operations, methodological clichés and disciplinary divisions, and consequently, attempts to build a different conceptual apparatus to set free an alternative world perception. The postcolonial critique of the (neo)colonialist Western tactics in the past and in the present, is usually framed in the very terms of the Western poststructuralist, neo-Marxist, post-Lacanian or affect theories, or at least with some courtesy to the West as an uncontested producer of disembodied universal knowledge. This leads to a reproduction of monotopical hermeneutics<sup>22</sup> with its privilege of controlling knowledge and meaning from the position of sameness and through inventing its otherness. Hence the postcolonial discourse still interprets the (post)colonial other for the same, and in a language that the same is able to understand and share.

Santiago Castro-Gomez calls this syndrome the “hubris of the zero point” - a specific Eurocentric positionality of the sensing and thinking subject, occupying a delocalized and disembodied vantage position that eliminates

any other possible ways to produce, transmit and represent knowledge: “The co-existence of diverse ways of producing and transmitting knowledge is eliminated because now all forms of human knowledge are ordered on an epistemological scale from the traditional to the modern, from barbarism to civilization, from the community to the individual, from the orient to occident... By way of this strategy, scientific thought positions itself as the only valid form of producing knowledge, and Europe acquires an epistemological hegemony over all other cultures of the world.”<sup>23</sup>

As a result, the Western monopoly on knowledge production and distribution and the disciplinary matrix of the modern/colonial knowledge, remain intact even if postcolonial theorists offer considerable reinterpretations of the Western critical concepts. This postcolonial strategy facilitates a dialogue with the mainstream Western theories by remaining within the same hermeneutical horizon, and hence brings an easier and more successful institutionalization, yet at times may inadvertently reproduce coloniality of knowledge.

Decolonial option performs a different operation. It does not start with Lacan or Butler slightly modifying their theories to make them fit the analysis of the post/neocolonial reality, but rather focuses from the start on the genealogy of decolonial thinkers and their epistemic tools,<sup>24</sup> on who produces knowledge, from where and why, and never with applying the established theories to some new postcolonial material.

Decolonial option does not offer a self-sufficient single truth proclamation (being an option among other options) and it does not describe phenomena from a detached vantage point. Whereas any “studies” (cultural studies, postcolonial studies, etc.) do not have a choice but to be defined by contrast with other disciplines and promote their own universal truth. This leads to “disciplinary decadence” - a proliferation of disciplines and their losing links with reality (de-ontologization), in Lewis Gordon's formulation,<sup>25</sup> and trying to secure a more stable position for one's scholarly group within the existing epistemic matrix of modernity/coloniality.

A radical rethinking and clarification of theoretical and methodological grounds on which the imperial and colonial classifications are made is needed to problematize the predominantly descriptive approach of postcolonial studies which are not always sufficiently attentive to correlational structural and power asymmetries. Along with Western liberal principle of mostly paternalistic inclusion, or rather instead of it, a different principle should be formulated and launched. It could be based on a revision of the very architecture of power, knowledge, being, gender, and perception. It is necessary not to build into the existing system by merely expanding it with new elements, as the postcolonial studies have been doing, but rather to problematize this system as the decolonial thought has attempted to do in the last two decades.

Along with the complex relations of the postcolonial and decolonial paradigms which have been addressed time and again by a number of commentators, it is also important to take more into account the postsocialist mediation of both discourses; a complex history of the postsocialist reception of postcoloniality and an even more complex and understudied history of the postcolonial interpretations of socialism and postsocialism. In many ways these relations fall into the well-known post-Lacanian Homi Bhabha's metaphor of the returned gaze and mimicry.<sup>26</sup> But in this case, the metaphor is complicated turning into a duel of returned gazes. To analyze the dynamics of this duel and its possible consequences is important for future development of critical discourses and practices which would go beyond the limits of the bankrupt Europe and insolent America with their solipsist sense of self-uniqueness as producers of knowledge. Alternative discourses involving a complex dialogue of the postcolonial and postsocialist others must not only analyze the present and design possible models of the future, including the coalitions of struggle for a better world, but also rethink the past and introduce back into the analysis the forgotten Cold War historical pages when the relations of state socialism and the postcolonial countries were often a cunning playful alternative to the officially endorsed binarity or today's unipolarity. In my view, the voices from the postcolonial world interpreting

socialism and postsocialism are more interesting and urgent today than the continuous efforts of the postsocialist appropriations of the postcolonial paradigm.

The USSR with its showcase ideology offered a grand utopia or a new religion. The failed socialist modernity has lost its most important future vector and turned into a land of the futureless ontology.<sup>27</sup> By losing to the capitalist modernity it failed to meet the expectations of many “wretched of the earth.” This was a traumatic experience that in many cases needed to be compensated or at least buried deep which is what the postcolonial subjects with leftist views and social expectations attempted to do. But it did not yet lead to any critical analysis of state socialism or to a clear understanding of differences between utopia and reality. In a sense, for many leftists in all parts of the world it is still difficult to equate socialism with colonialism, particularly that state socialism always represented itself as an anticolonial system.

And even if the majority of the Non-Aligned countries today have almost unanimously turned to the West for their models of the future or to different forms of dewesternization (trying to preserve the local axiological bases combined with the Western economic and technological models), it has not necessarily been a voluntary and happy choice. Behind the pragmatic attitude and the need to survive, there is also a wisp of disappointment in the state socialist promises of universal happiness that have never been fulfilled.

There is one more overlooked aspect in this entangled situation – the complex and, at times, contradictory interplay of rational analysis and affective reactions. What I mean is that often the warm human memories of the mutual links between the Second and Third Worlds do not exclude a rational understanding by the same nostalgic people that these links were often initiated by the ideological agents of state socialism and therefore were cynical and manipulative from the start. Yet there is a gap between ideological constructs and much more complex reality including people's rethinking and reworking of this ideology into something else. Thus, I have heard from several Indians that back in their childhood they were fond of the affordable Soviet “Progress” and “Raduga” publishers' children's books that

easily won the competition with the British much more expensive editions. We realize that this was a clear expression of the Soviet soft power and efforts to win (or at times buy) India as well as other Non-Aligned countries through various cultural activities, festivals, societies of Afro-Asiatic solidarity housed in the Soviet Central Asia, etc. Likewise people of my parents' (almost gone by now) Soviet generation remember the first Indian cinematographic entry into the Soviet culture of the mid 1950s through hugely popular Raj Kapoor's films. Interestingly enough for the Soviet side these rather naive versions of Indian neorealism still represented the first signs of thaw (after the end of Stalinism), the first gulps of freedom. So the links and communications were asymmetrical in the sense that the Soviet Union was selling to the postcolonial world the socialist dream as a paradise of free or very cheap goods, whereas India (in my example) was unwittingly offering the Soviet people a possibility of a different world which was interpreted as a world of freedom, a world of beautiful people, songs and dances, a world of lush nature and love unburdened by production problems and ideological shackles. What I find important here is not the ideology or propaganda as such, but its complex relations with the affective side of the matter, with the emotional side affects. Taking into account the experience of the decades that followed this mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Second and Third Worlds flirting with each other, the middle aged and elderly people who recollect these encounters today, are experiencing a strange and paradoxical critical nostalgia, a peculiar contradictory ironic sincerity. Yet their eyes are still shining with honest excitement when they relive their adolescent joy of getting a cheap collection of Soviet fairy tales or watching *Awaara* uninvited hiding behind the screen in a Soviet culture club.

### **The (post)soviet/(post)colonial experience complicating the postsocialist and postcolonial logic**

The latter example brings us to an important forking path in our brief analysis of the postcolonial and postsocialist intersections and opacities. It

refers to the importance of differentiating between the European and non-European socialist and postsocialist stances and predicaments. The Soviet/colonial experience has always remained somewhat neglected and untranslatable into the postcolonial language even if we shared the major vices of the darker side of modernity. For instance, the Soviet empire represented itself as already a postcolonial and liberating federation in relation to the non-Russians who were invariably pictured by the Soviet historiography as previously suffering in the “prison for the peoples,” the Czarist empire. In other words, the Soviet project represented itself as decolonization. The main lost illusion for the former Czarist colonies was independence, with which the Bolsheviks lured them back into the Soviet yoke to later enslave and deprive them of nascent local national modernities. This logic was particularly evident in gender and sexuality discourses. Soviet notions of modernity and progress and the creation of national elites ran parallel to similar attempts made by European imperialist policy makers, for example, the British in India. In particular, there were similarities in relation to state actions of the Bolsheviks on women's question in the Muslim peripheries. However, Soviet modernization campaigns aggressively intervened in the 'inner realm' of Central Asian and the Caucasus cultural life where other imperial powers hesitated to interfere with in other colonial societies. Ultimately, the Soviet policy of accelerated nation building in the peripheries helped to create the proverbial colonial comprador elites much faster and more successfully than in the case of the British or French empires. Yet children of these elites started to develop their own cultural and political decolonial sensibilities already by the 1980s, if not earlier.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the 1917 Bolshevik revolt was ultimately interpreted by many anticolonial thinkers and activists in Eurasian borderlands as someone else's revolution and as a recoil as the expectations of the empire's periphery that blossomed after the 1917 February revolution were abruptly aborted and all national liberation parties and movements were quickly crushed. The myth of the lagging behind Asia and the Caucasus, launched in the Czarist empire and refurbished in the Soviet Union, erases important historical events of the

early 20th century which signify a political awareness and independent goals of the colonial regions and elites, including the notorious gender question.

The Bolshevik revolution was far from anticolonial even if it strove to present itself as such. Rather, it was a deferral and strangling of decolonization impulses that had just started to develop in the colonies. Enslavement was presented as liberation and efforts to decolonize were branded as reactionary uprisings of the old forces. The consequences of this distortion have marred the history of the Soviet empire and its colonies from the start to the end, and are still not resolved today. In this sense, the history of the Russian colonies is quite different from those of the western modern empires and first of all in how the same manifestations of anticolonial nationalism were interpreted positively if they referred to the Czarist times and were harshly persecuted if they took place in state socialist environments. This forced people to accept, at least externally, the top down official, and sanitized models of ethnonational cultures which according to the Soviet (simplified dialectical) logic were supposed to undergo an accelerated development and quickly dissolve in the unified socialist culture which nevertheless remained decidedly Russian in its main elements.<sup>29</sup>

One of the favorite rhetorical devices of the Soviet propaganda was to contrast itself with the Czarist Russia, carefully hiding their close connection and continuity.<sup>30</sup> On the surface, the USSR was promoting theatrical multiculturalism and other forms of affirmative action, and advocating creolization instead of racial/ethnic segregation (which was an important argument in its juxtaposition with the demonized West). Needless to say that most of it was a cardboard mockup, hiding racism, Orientalism, progressivism, structural inequality and other familiar modern/colonial vices, but also its own specific and often contradictory features. Among them the most prominent one is Russia's different attitude to its different colonies in accordance with the degree of their proximity to Europe, which is connected with the inferiority complex of Russia itself as a second-rate empire, with its catching-up mentality in relation to the West.

Yet the experience of the non-European Russian and Soviet colonies does not quite equal the postcolonial one. The tricky Soviet policy was precisely to give the colonial others some symbolic means of empowerment to make them loyal to the regime. In this case, the population that otherwise would have been classified as the Third World, were given an honorary Second World status thanks to their belonging to the Soviet Union. And this rather illusive status is still often more important for them than any real affinities and possible alliances with the Global South. The power of the modern/colonial agonistic and rivalry for a more prestigious place in modernity strangles any decolonial impulses. This is one of the reasons why the postsoviet postcolonial others are often reluctant in their critique of the Soviet Union as they still see the Soviet regime as progressive and providing basic rights and freedoms. To make the next step and identify the colonizing elements in the Soviet modernization is still quite rare among the postcolonial postsoviet thinkers. Additionally the contemporary condition of many of these countries, their official state nationalisms that often are clones of the Soviet discourses in which the Marxist core was simply replaced with the state nationalist one, together with the heightened social inequality, corruption, lawlessness, the growing impact of conservatism and fundamentalism merging with neocolonialist features, make people nostalgically recall the Soviet modernity in spite of its colonialist tint.

A major problem of scholarship on postsocialism and postcolonialism is often the researchers' inability to intersectional analysis, their fixation on one element – be it ideology or ethnicity. As a result, a more complex Soviet colonial experience is simplified and taken to one difference whereas all others are erased and neglected. Examples include not only the notoriously color-blind and rather misleading interpretations of such commentators as Boris Groys, Alexei Yurchak or Alexander Etkind<sup>31</sup> who entirely concentrate on the lighter side of the Soviet modernity and mainly write about its metropolitan narrow elitist groups, and the postcolonial analogizing of the post-socialist experience represented in the majority of Eastern European works,<sup>32</sup> but also the more complex and ambiguous texts such as Sharad Chari

and Katherine Verdery<sup>33</sup> attempting to overcome the postcolonial analogizing in their idea of the post-Cold War studies. Chari and Verdery did an important job in opening the discussion field for looking between the posts. However their geopolitics of knowledge remains Western and leads paradoxically to a reproduction of vantage points they seem to be against. They homogenize the USSR, at times buying the Soviet propaganda at face value. Their suggestion to jettison both postsocialist and postcolonial studies and launch the single overarching post-Cold War research instead, is grounded in a contradictory impulse of freeing the social sciences from the Cold War ideological restrictions yet paradoxically using the very Cold War as the only vantage point.

Chari and Verdery's approach attempts to analyze various aspects of socialism and colonialism in an isolated way, without realizing that labor markets and redistribution of surplus value, the Soviet yet obviously colonial division of labor and resources cannot be regarded separately from racist and colonialist human taxonomies and divisions of the Soviet empire. Likewise any conversation on the intersection of the postsocialist and the postcolonial cannot start as late as with the Cold War, because the trajectories of discrimination and human taxonomies in which these discourses are grounded, started much earlier than the division into capitalism and socialism. Chari and Verdery do not differentiate between the postsoviet condition of the non-European colonies and the larger postsocialist discourses focusing mainly on Eastern Europe. Therefore, they are ignoring the crucial decolonial concept of the imperial difference without which it is impossible to grasp the postcolonial-postsocialist complex intersection.

Starting from approximately the sixteenth century a global imperial hierarchy was built in the emerging world system. Several imperial leagues were formed and transformed in the course of time. In the post-enlightenment modernity, Spain, Italy and Portugal were shifted to the position of the internal imperial difference. The Ottoman sultanate and Russia, on the contrary, became the external imperial difference, as they were grounded in different religions, language origins, economic models and ethnicracial

classifications. Both internal and external imperial others did not have a chance to join the first league and become equal to Great Britain, France, or the US today.<sup>34</sup>

It is necessary to differentiate between various levels affecting the parallels and discrepancies between the postcolonial and the postsocialist conditions and imaginaries, and in doing so, to go deeper than the history of the state socialist system. The roots of the possible dialogues or the reasons for their lack lie in the intersection of the earlier historical layers, marked by the imperial rivalry and therefore by the imperial difference in its multiple and complex manifestations, and the later ideological and geopolitical differences merging with these original imperial-colonial levels.

A core category defining modernity/coloniality is race, intersecting with economic and social forms of the modern/colonial dependence. The difference in the interpretation of race and racism is one of the main reasons for the lack of understanding and dialogue between the postcolonial and the postsocialist thinkers. Although there are more and more critical discourses questioning the Cold War division of academic labor and disciplinary boundaries, it is still often the case that people from the Global South are regarded as the ones who have the epistemic privilege of legitimately discussing race and racism as their authentic experience. Even the most advanced and self-critical postcolonial discourses in this respect often preserve the essentialist binaries of the Cold War era knowledge production. According to this logic, postsocialist subjects of any kind become trespassers when and if we focus on race or issues of colonization. Our past ideological difference still overshadows all other differences. The former Second World continues to be seen in a characteristically homogenizing way, as an 'ideological, rather than racial, other.'<sup>35</sup>

Eastern European postsocialist subjects cannot initiate a postcolonial-postsocialist dialogue because their interest in the postcolonial is mostly limited by its appropriation to their own needs to negotiate a better treatment within Europe and claim their own whiteness thus reinstating the modern/colonial agonistics principle providing the grounds for the present

status quo. Eastern European countries' 'unspoken insistence on their whiteness,'<sup>36</sup> their hesitation to identify with other colonized subjects<sup>37</sup> and their desire to 'return to Europe' through processes of democratization and Europeanization<sup>38</sup> distance them from any deep understanding of or genuine interest in race and racism seen from the colonial difference. The racialized colonial sides of both capitalist and socialist versions of modernity are then seen as a foreign experience that the Eastern European postsocialist subjects reject as unimportant. Additionally, they are still denying the official state socialist discourses of proletarian internationalism and solidarity with the struggling people of the Global South. Therefore, anything that resembles this rhetoric is immediately rejected without further analysis.

With different speeds and to different extents of realization of their failure most of the postsocialist Eastern European societies grasped that the only move they can count on is comprised of the small steps climbing the ladder of modernity in a hope to reach the full European status. Then a number of postsocialist subjects started cultivating disappointment in the European/Western project, and its critique, resembling the postcolonial arguments or even borrowing from them. There is something disturbing in the application of the postcolonial theory to the postsocialist reality as it remains ultimately Eurocentric in its typically modern/colonial agonistics i.e. a rivalry for a better, more prestigious place in the human taxonomy created and supported by modernity/coloniality.

Modernity/coloniality justifies violence against those who are branded sub-human. One of the consequences is the uncritical acceptance of the existing global hierarchy where everyone is assigned a never questioned place, and even being unhappy with this place is scared of losing this already precarious position or being associated with those who stand even lower. In many cases this turns into a victimhood rivalry detected in both postcolonial and postsocialist groups. This is a sad result of the continuing coloniality of being, thinking, and perception, which does not allow to break free from the universally accepted agonistic paradigm - compete or perish. A true decolonization then means delinking from this logic and refusing to compete

for a higher place in modernity, or for a tag of a victim that would allow to gain access to charity and affirmative action.

Voices of the postcolonial/postsocialist people that could provide the necessary bridge for dialogues of the two sensibilities are completely excluded and unheard as they are not entitled to represent the postsocialist condition either internally or externally.<sup>39</sup> These postsoviet postcolonial racialized others are not properly represented in the public or academic discourse just as their predecessors in the state socialist system were kept silent or forced to assimilate because they contradicted the grand socialist narrative of the backward people being civilized by the Russian Bolsheviks to be subsequently accepted into the only correct form of modernity. Therefore, one of the possible future strands of the postcolonial-postsocialist dialogue could perhaps focus more on these voices and sensibilities and retrace their multiple historical and cultural connections with the postcolonial populations before, during, and after the Soviet rule. Reintroducing these nuances into the scholarly and activist discourses and advancing a critical self-reflection outside the prescribed Eurocentric mythology, is a necessary step for the elaboration of theory and practice at the intersection of the postcolonial and the postsocialist experiences rather than simply borrowing the postcolonial terms and concepts outside their historical context.

Exclusionary tactic and victimhood rivalry are becoming rapidly outdated in the face of enforced fragmentation and reemergence of the ultra-right. It is not a question of encapsulating within one's narrow position, but rather a necessity of always being critical of our own locus of enunciation, of arguing from a specific point which we should not be afraid of displaying. In the logic of pluriversality we are all equal and therefore we have the right to be different, yet this difference is not a closure, it does not prevent us in all our diversity from joining the struggles crucial for all.

### **The discordant timelines of the postcolonial and postsocialist trajectories**

One more important impediment for the development of postcolonial and

postsocialist dialogues can be defined as their discordant time-lines,<sup>40</sup> the fact that each of them has its own pace and direction not necessarily intersecting with each other and often coming to similar ideas and discoveries independently. As mentioned above the postsocialist people in the last three decades were faced with the necessity of going back, starting from scratch, and erasing the experience of the socialist modernity. We were placed in a strange delocalized colonial situation—colonized not by one particular country any more, but by the global coloniality of neoliberal modernity/coloniality which makes us into contemporary equivalents of the colonial subalterns attempting to carve a space in some else's version of modernity.

According to Boris Groys, “the postcommunist subject travels his route not from the past to the future, but from the future to the past; from the end of history . . . back to historical time. Postcommunist life is life lived backward, a movement against the flow of time.”<sup>41</sup> With the failure of the socialist modernity we had to return to the mild liberal progressivism as opposed to the radical Soviet one. In a sense it was one more recolonization of the society which was previously subsumed and enchanted by a different modernity/coloniality yet was trained to think that the socialist modernity was a form of decolonization.

Soon it became clear that post-Soviet people seemingly sent to the end of the queue, in fact, were simply squeezed out of history, because the catching-up would never end in overtaking. We found ourselves in the void, in a problematic locale inhabited by problem people, people whose belonging to humanity was questioned. Yet in speaking about a generalized postsocialist person, Groys neglects the colonial difference inside the external imperial difference—the darker side of (post)Soviet modernity marked by orientalism, racism, othering, and forced assimilation—and indirectly denies the fact that Soviet progressivism meant one thing for Russians and something else for Uzbeks or Georgians. Thus, their present trajectories cannot be parallel or identical by definition.

The lacking dialogue between the postsocialist and the postcolonial others stems, among other things, from the dis-coordination of the capitalist

and socialist modernities, which shared many (mostly negative) features, such as progressivism, orientalism, racism, providentialism, hetero-patriarchy, and a cult of newness, but coded them differently in ideological terms. The postcolonial-postsocialist intersections include the common experience of dependency and its overcoming, the necessity of building into the global modernity/coloniality in the capacity of forever catching up others who are still treated within the discourses of orientalism and progressivism and thus subjected to annihilation or appropriation. The former orientation towards the capitalist or socialist modernity as well as the difficult Non-Alignment balancing have triggered certain differences in the trajectories imposed onto the postcolonial and postsocialist worlds in the last three decades. The former colonial other entering the larger world controlled by the West does not have to change his or her modernity – it used to be Western and remains today the main landmark for the postcolonial other who simply continues his/her progressive movement toward the cherished belonging to sameness or in some cases, creating a national version of modernity which often continued the trickster game of maneuvering between the stronger powers.

The postcolonial other could at the same time cherish a dream of an other socialist modernity which however had to remain a dream, whose loss is unfortunate but not catastrophic. In the postsocialist case, a lot more is at stake leading to today's apathy and futureless ontology. Instead of the postcolonial steady progressive development, there is a drastic change of ideal and hence an abrupt regression and a new much slower and humbler progressivism of today. The postsocialist temporality is different from the postcolonial one because it is viewed as an abrupt historical rupture with the discredited socialist modernity rather than a slow progressivism within the same western modernity though on its colonial side, as in the case of postcolonialism.

If we attempt to draw a schematic timeline for the development of postcolonial and postsocialist discourses we will see that their relation reminded a musical counterpoint; in many ways the two discourses

coincided, but it happened at different historical moments, was triggered by different reasons leading nevertheless to similar results and even possible potential coalitions, because ultimately they manifest different reactions to the same phenomenon of modernity/coloniality. Nevertheless it is only now that the two discourses are starting to hear each other.

The early postcolonial discourses were largely leftist, anti-capitalist and still progressivist without questioning the universalized western norms of education, human rights, democracy, and women's emancipation.<sup>42</sup> However early enough and particularly in the postcolonial spaces themselves rather than western universities, there emerges a more critical kind of postcolonial studies which attempted to question the western modernity as such. This critical postcolonial discourse follows the principle that postcolonial and other forms of coalitions grounded in multispatial hermeneutical principles (instead of taking the other to a frozen difference) are more important in our struggles for liberation than any one single form of difference, be it gender, race, religion or class. It is important to idealize neither socialism nor the constructed tradition with its precolonial social and cultural systems. These sensibilities disagree with the postsocialist stance both when we criticize state socialism and when we refuse to romanticize the tradition.

Postsocialist trajectory, on the contrary, was marked by an almost emotional rejection of everything socialist and a fascination with Western knowledge, at a time when postcolonial scholars still largely rehearsed the leftist anticapitalist discourses and at least indirectly opted for socialism. Later, a number of postsocialist activists and scholars, both from Central and Eastern Europe and also the non-European former Soviet colonies, started reinterpreting the socialist legacy in a less negative way, criticizing the Western infiltration of academic institutions, NGOs and other bodies of knowledge production in postsocialist countries.<sup>43</sup> This happened at a point when some postcolonial thinkers were beginning to develop their anti-Western modernity discourses.<sup>44</sup> Although, objectively, the two positions intersected, the traditions they had in mind were completely different and they did not hear each other, just like they do not hear each other today.

## On deep coalitions

In today's situation of the global conservative and essentialist backlash and the alarming revival of nationalist and neoimperial discourses, it is high time we forgot about our discrepancies and local stand points of oppression and look for possible intersections and eventual coalitions that could help us oppose something positive to the global defuturing tendencies.<sup>45</sup> Such a dialogue could trigger rethinking in human subjectivity and political agency, knowledge production, gender, ethics, and perception. It is needed in rebuilding coalitions along the South-South and South-semi-periphery axes for a more successful struggle against neocolonialism, racism, eurocentrism, sexism, heterosexism and other xenophobic manifestations of modernity/coloniality.

The continuing power asymmetries can be shaken, if such direct South to South and South to semi-periphery coalitions are developed without Western mediation and the West stops prescribing the terms of the conversation and the categories of analysis, classifying others according to their proximity or remoteness from the Western norm. This in effect means a refusal to start any analysis from the Western blueprint and building any position or idea into the preexisting Western template. Designing alternative trajectories and drawing reemerging genealogies is a difficult but necessary task before we can hope to start dismantling the hidden binaries and persistent hang-ups of presumably universal theories of culture, politics, and society.

The hidden streak of the Soviet colonial tricksters who tried to counteract in various ways should be revisited and revived today, but at a different level of finally struggling openly and in solidarity with other others of the world. Such coalitions to counter modernity/coloniality can liberate us from endless appealing to someone else's ideals, and from the eternal double consciousness. But they should be initiated from below, and never be vertical and hierarchical, never again imposed from the imperial or global enter. Even more importantly, they should start from ruthless decolonizing of our own selves, minds, bodies, genders, sensibilities, and memories. But for that we

need to work hard and painfully to be our better selves. It is not only about eradicating ignorance and learning about each other. More importantly, it is about nurturing particular subjectivities grounded in co-relationism, horizontal solidarities and caring attitudes instead of predominant agonistics.

Relationality as a methodological principle and as a philosophy of radical contingentism<sup>46</sup> – i.e. an ontology without subject, objects and processes that are intrinsically existent by themselves stresses coalitions across racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, ideological and many other borders, coalitions based on the weaving patterns connecting differences rather than accentuating the “nature of the components” themselves<sup>47</sup> to paraphrase the famous Glissant's metaphor.<sup>48</sup> It means the processes across cultures, nations, regions, imperial and colonial histories, and geopolitical configurations. Successful coalitions across racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, ideological and other borders, based on relationality and communality, are always in the making.

These coalitions would have to be always open and ready to change, always “in the making” and always trying to find flexible entry points into the multiple struggle of interrelated others. This is the opposite of minority discourses continuing to stress the insurmountable obstacles leading to a reproduction of a mosaic of local stand-point positions of resistance which are unable and sometimes unwilling to build alliances and therefore help the dominant power reproduce its “divide and rule” principle again and again. Such a dynamic interweaving of the past and the present and also, a creolization of many traditions and a readiness to multispatial hermeneutical efforts, is the configuration that better answers today's challenges and struggles, and allows for co-relational coalitions rather than being trapped in the limitations of one's victimhood. We are at the stage when postcolonial and postsocialist discourses are more in need of a dialogue than further differentiation and mutual exclusion, of effective strategies for shaping the open and flexible “deep coalitions” of resistance which are always in the making. According to María Lugones, “deep coalitions never reduce multiplicity, they span across differences. Aware of particular configurations

of oppression, they are not fixed on them, but strive beyond into the world, towards a shared struggle of interrelated others.”<sup>49</sup> Such coalitions require then maintaining complexity and heterogeneity rather than taking them to homogenous sameness on both universalized global and/or particularized local grounds.

One of the mechanisms for the organization of this opposition is critical border thinking first formulated in the works of Chicana predecessors of decolonial feminism.<sup>50</sup> Critical border thinking as a product of a complex and dynamic interaction with modernity from the position of exteriority, of living in hostile environments yet reinstating one's epistemic rights, leads to an itinerant, forever open and multiple positionality, marked by transformationism, shifting identifications and a rejection of either/or binarity, turning instead to a non-exclusive duality which is to be found in contemporary models of conjunctive logic, in many indigenous epistemologies of the Global South, and in diasporic trickster identifications overcoming the previous Ariel-Caliban dichotomy in ironic forms of activism. It is necessary to advance an open critical basis taking into account the existing parallels between various echoing concepts and epistemic grounds, and find a trans-disciplinary language for expressing oppositional being, thinking and agency, across transcultural and trans-epistemic pluriversal spaces.

Border thinking and relational oppositional praxis are effective transformative tools potentially leading to the emergence of a flexible, non-ossified and open coalitions of resistance. Such a praxis is grounded in a nomadic travelling mode of existence which sees culture itself as a journey, as a process of social construction and also aims at “constructing a new subject of a new ... geopolitics of knowing and loving.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Coda**

I do not have recipes for giving the world back its future dimension. Yet I do believe that it can stem only from a radical delinking from the

modern/colonial logic and overcoming modernity from decolonial and other cracks and fissures and designing a different pluriversal idea of the world, of knowledge, of being and of sensing. This is a long and painstaking process requiring collective effort to foster alternative correlational forms of life. But it is already at work in different parts of the world—from the political society, from the social movements, from grass roots struggles for autonomy and various decolonial thinking, doing, and creativity initiatives.

It is high time we stop hiding behind the past tags and indeed attempt a shifting not only in the geography of reason but also in our political and ethical responsibility to be able to see behind the thick fence of “-isms,” what is more important for the contemporary moment and for the future of life as such and of the lives of those who remain not only anonymous to us but also perhaps, beyond our understanding. Following Frederick Douglass, Simone Weil and Asma Abbas, Lewis Gordon call this “not only a political responsibility but also a peculiarly political form of love.”<sup>52</sup>

For the non-European postsoviet people it is crucial to retrace the forgotten links with the Global South. But to remember them differently from what the Soviet empire prescribed and controlled before. To bypass the distorting imperial mediation and concentrate on the positive resistance and re-existence as another way of being in spite of coloniality and beyond modernity. And the co-existence of many models of knowledge and perception of the world, including the postcolonial and the postsocialist ones. It should be a coalition not of the “offended” competing in their victimhood, but striving to change the logic of the world in such a way that nobody is an other any more, that we are equal not only on paper but in reality and hence have the right to be different and practice pluriversality in the world consisting of many interacting and intersecting worlds.

1. Du Bois, William B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: McClurg, 1903.
2. The singers of the native land was a standard Soviet formula used to describe authors coming from the ethnic minorities who were prescribed to follow the formula: “Ethnic-national in its form, socialist in its content”.
3. By disidentification here I refer to the model first introduced by Jose Esteban Muñoz who argued that people who are 'hailed by more than one minority identity component' can choose disidentification, a transformative political strategy that neither conforms, assimilates or resists the dominant ideology, but rather 'works on and against' dominant ideological interpellation. Muñoz, Esteban Jose. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 11.
4. For more details on the Adyghe cosmology and gender roles see Tekuyeva, Madina. *Muzhchina i Zhenschina v Adygskoj Kulture (Man and Woman in the Adygean Culture)*. Nalchik: El-Fa, 2006.
5. For more details see Tlostanova, Madina, Suruchi THapar-Bjorkert and Redi Koobak. “Border thinking and disidentification: Postcolonial and postsocialist feminist dialogues”. *Feminist Theory*. Published online May 2, 2016, doi: 10.1177/1464700116645878.
6. Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
7. Quijano, Anibal. “Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad”, *Peru Indigena* 13, No 29, 1992, p. 11-20.
8. Walsh, Katherine and Walter Mignolo. *On Decoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, p.106.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
10. Pluriversality is a coexistence and correlation of many interacting and intersecting non-abstract universals grounded in the geopolitics and corpopolitics of knowledge, being, gender and perception, reinstating the experiential nature of knowledge and the origin of any theory in the human life-world. Pluriversal critique targets not the concrete constellations of race, gender and class, but rather the aberration of the universal as such. For more details see: Tlostanova, Madina and Walter Mignolo. *Learning to Unlearn. Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012, p. 65.

11. Adolfo Albán Achinte describes re-existence in the following way: “When a human being exists in the core of the colonial matrix as an other with no rights, for such a person an inclusion and an active reworking of odors, tastes, colors and sounds of his/her ancestors and remaking of systematically negated forms of interactions with the world, of being and perception, become a necessity, a sensual response of resistance and building of one's own existence anew and in defiance to coloniality”. See: Albán Achinte, Adolfo. *Textiendo Textos y Saberes. Cinco Hijos para Pensar los Estudios Culturales, La Colonialidad y la Interculturalidad*. Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, Colección Estudios (Inter)culturales, 2006.
12. The geopolitics of knowledge refers to the local spatial and temporal grounds of knowledge and perception. The corpo-politics can be defined as the individual and group experiential accounts of understanding and thinking, rooted in our local histories and curves of origination and dispersal. See Tlostanova and Mignolo, op. Cit., p. 33.
13. The postcommunist is a particularly misleading term still in use in the Western and especially American works and ignoring the fact that none of the state socialist countries have ever claimed that they were able to actually build communism. And even calling them socialist is an exaggeration.
14. Later the decolonial scholars have turned to the postsocialist ones and there emerged several collaborations and promising intersections involving such scholars as Walter Mignolo, Manuela Boataca, Ovidiu Tichendeleanu, Nikolay Karkov and myself.
15. Alexievich, Svetlana. *Vremya Second Hand* [Secondhand Time]. Moscow: Vremya, 2013, p. 91.
16. Ahmed, Sara. “Affective economies”, *Social Text* 79 (Volume 22) No 2, 2004, p. 118.
17. Tlostanova, Madina. “Postsocialist postcolonial? On post-Soviet imaginary and global coloniality”, *Journal of postcolonial writing*. Volume 48, Issue 2, 2012, On Colonialism, Communism and East-Central Europe - some reflections. pp. 130-142. <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/3q7tsjNpU62knmtwKuPM/full>
18. Suchland, Jennifer. *Economies of Violence: Transnational Feminism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking*. Durham and London: Duke University Press., 2015, p. 87.
19. Walsh and Mignolo, Op. Cit., p. 15.

20. Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - A Biomythography*. Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1992, p. 32.
21. Walsh and Mignolo, Op. Cit., p.7.
22. Tlostanova, Madina and Walter Mignolo. “On pluritopic hermeneutics, trans-modern thinking, and decolonial philosophy”, *Encounters. An international journal for the study of culture and society*. Zayed University, United Arab Emirates, Vol. 1, Number 1, Fall 2009, pp. 11-27.
23. Castro-Gómez Santiago. 2007. “The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern Reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism”, *Cultural Studies*. March/May. Vol. 21, No 2-3. 2007, p.433.
24. Adorno R. Guaman Poma. *Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*, Second revised edition. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000; Marcos S. *Taken from the Lips: Gender And Eros in Mesoamerican Religions*. Leiden: Brill, 2006; Kusch R. *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
25. Gordon, Lewis. *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times*. London: Routledge, 2006.
26. Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge 1994, p. 86.
27. Tlostanova, Madina. *What does it mean to be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press: 2018.
28. Suleimenov, Olzhas. *Azi Ya*. Alma-Ata: Zhazushi, 1975.
29. The Soviet ideology contradicted itself in creating nationalities in the periphery, on the one hand (including the imposed literacies and the sense of ethnic-territorial belonging), and on the other hand, regarding the national traditions and customs that came to be associated with this ethnicity only due to colonization—as a threat.
30. Sahni, Kalpana. *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*. Oslo: White Orchid Press, 1997.
31. Groys, Boris. “Beyond Diversity: Cultural Studies and Its Post-Communist Other”. *Art Power*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2008, pp. 149-164; Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton University Press, 2005; Etkind A. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. London: Polity, 2011.

32. Kołodziejczyk, Dorota, and Cristina Sandru. "Introduction: On Colonialism, Communism and East-Central Europe—Some Reflections." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2, 2012, p.113–16; Pucherová, Dobrota, and Róbert Gáfric, eds. *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*. Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2015.
33. Chari, Sharad and Katherine Verdery. 'Thinking between the posts: postcolonialism, postsocialism, and ethnography after the Cold War'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51(1), 2009, pp. 6–34.
34. Imperial difference disrupts the presumable homogeneity of imperial spatiality and complicates it by drawing the attention to complete or partial losers which for various reasons failed to fulfill their imperial missions. As a result they occupied second or even third-class places within the modern imperial hierarchy and increasingly competed among themselves rather than with the winners. Occasional attempts to break out of the second division into the first an interesting example of which was the USSR have been invariably punished, prevented and stopped by the first-class imperial powers. The losing empires even if economically and politically independent were intellectually, culturally and existentially colonized by the winners, often through efficient self-colonizing tools. Similarly to the colonial difference sustained through a paradox of essentially unattainable ideal of progress and ultimate merging with the imperial sameness, the sphere of imperial difference has also repeatedly slid into forever catching up logic, developed collective inferiority complexes and unhealthy compensating mechanisms, besieged camp ideologies or alternatively, victory in defeat myths and consequently lapses into neo-imperial jingoism and revanchism. Not incidentally the liminal empires marked by imperial difference were geographically situated in Eurasian continent, occupying the most complex cultural-ethnic-religious-economic intersections and nodal points. Usually they lacked one or more important elements of a successful modern imperial profile such as Western Christianity, increasingly in its protestant forms, capitalism – again, increasingly in its industrial and not mercantile varieties, racial hierarchy easily separating the sameness from the otherness, last but not least, the alphabetical and wider, literacy affinity or lack of it which seriously affected the symbolic belonging to the ruling club. In this context Russia conquering Siberia and

later the Caucasus and Turkestan is a more traditional case of imperial-colonial relations whereas its advances into Europe - both in Czarist and later Soviet periods - are less fitting into the postcolonial pattern because within the larger Eurocentric and progressivist logic Russia/USSR stands lower than the territories in Europe it attempted to conquer.

35. Suchland 2015, Op. Cit., p. 852.
36. Imre, A. Whiteness in post-socialist Eastern Europe: the time of the gypsies, the end of race. In J.A. Lopez, ed. *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 82.
37. Kelertas, V. *Baltic Postcolonialism*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006.
38. Suchland, Jennifer. Is postsocialism transnational? *Signs*, 3(4), 2011, pp. 837–862.
39. Tlostanova, Madina, Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert and Redi Koobak. “The Postsocialist Missing Other of Transnational Feminism”. *Feminist Review*, 2019, in print.
40. Ibid.
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