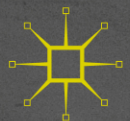


POSTCOLONIALISM & POSTSOCIALISM IN FICTION AND ART

Resistance and Re-existence

Madina Tlostanova



Postcolonialism and
Postsocialism in Fiction and Art

Madina Tlostanova, *The Sublime of Globalization: Sketches on Transcultural Subjectivity and Aesthetics*

Madina Tlostanova, *Gender Epistemologies and Eurasian Borderlands*

Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*

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Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art

Resistance and Re-existence

palgrave
macmillan

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Linköping, Sweden

ISBN 978-3-319-48444-0

ISBN 978-3-319-48445-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-48445-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016960547

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I warmly thank Walter D. Mignolo, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and Rolando Vázquez – my decolonial colleagues – for inviting me to publish a series of articles on decolonial aesthetics in their co-edited collections and journals including *CALLE14, Estéticas y Opción Decolonial, Arte y Estética en la Encrucijada Descolonial*, and *Social Text. Periscope*, as well as for giving me a chance to share my ideas and intuitions on the intersections of postcolonial and postsocialist artistic and existential experiences at the annual Decolonial Summer School ‘Stolen memories: museums, slavery and (de) coloniality’ and ‘What does it mean to decolonize? Introducing the decolonial option’ in Middelburg, the Netherlands, in 2015 and in 2016.

I would also like to thank my postsocialist colleagues from Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Romania, with whom we have collaborated in different book and journal projects and conferences on the intersections of postsocialist and postcolonial sensibilities. Our many illuminating conversations, discussions, and debates during and after these events were very helpful for the gestation of this book. In particular I would like to thank Professor Dorota Kołodziejczyk who invited me to participate in the special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* ‘On Colonialism, Communism and East-Central Europe – Some Reflections’ that she co-edited together with Cristina Sandru. I would also like to express my gratitude to Doctor Dobrota Pucherova and Doctor Róbert Gáfric for inviting me to give a keynote speech at their 2014 conference ‘Postcolonialism and East-Central European Literatures’ in Bratislava (Slovakia) and for including my article in their co-edited collection *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*

(2015). Those were wonderful opportunities for exploring my ideas in international contexts and for developing the main issues and ideas of this book.

I am grateful as well to my gender studies and Baltic studies colleagues from two Swedish universities – Linköping University and Södertorn University. In the last three years the Center for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) at Södertorn University and the Department of Gender Studies at Linköping University invited me several times as a scholar-in-residence, visiting scholar, and keynote speaker which has allowed me to present my ongoing investigations in preparation for this book at different workshops, higher seminars, and international conferences. I am particularly thankful to Professor Rebecka Lettevall – director of CBEES at Södertorn University – and Professor Nina Lykke from Linköping University, as well as to my younger colleagues – Professor Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Doctor Redi Koobak – with whom I have been collaborating intensely on the feminist issues of the postcolonial and postsocialist intersections in our joint publications and ongoing projects.

I would also like to thank several museums, galleries, curators, and art theorists for their generous invitations to participate in the educational and theoretical programmes of a number of exhibitions, biennials of contemporary art, and other related events including *Manifesta 10*, the educational programme of the Moscow Centre of Contemporary Art, Moscow Jewish Museum and Centre of Tolerance, Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Aspan Gallery in Almaty (Kazakhstan), ‘Media Impact’ activist festival, Victor Misiano’s multiple projects on postsocialist artists and imaginaries and particularly his invitations to publish several of my texts in his *Moscow Art Magazine*. This experience was invaluable for working on this book.

I am very grateful to the anonymous reader whose constructive and well-meaning criticism helped me a lot in revising the manuscript at the final stage.

Last but not least I would like to thank the artists and writers whose inspiring works and reflections that they shared with me in our interviews and personal dialogues were immensely important as well. Among them I am especially grateful to Ariel Dorfman, Afanassy Mamedov, Taus Makhacheva, Vyacheslav Akhunov, Saule Suleimenova, Ciprian Muresan, and Aslan Gaisumov.

PROLOGUE

Let me start with a story that I was told by Indian scholar Kalpana Sahni who wrote a book on Russian/Soviet Orientalism debunking the notorious myth of proletarian internationalism (Sahni 1997). Sahni's story of the 2010s demonstrates the shifts that have taken place in the last twenty-five years placing many of the postsocialist people in a strange delocalized colonial situation – colonized not by one particular country any more, but by the global coloniality of neoliberal capitalism which forces the post-socialist subjects to migrate to the global North and become contemporary equivalents of the colonial subalterns. Paradoxically today the masters are not necessarily the white privileged Europeans but quite often those who were previously the classical subalterns themselves. The race indicator so powerful before, the symbolic belonging to Europe, goes to pieces leaving us with a strange picture of the poorly communicating remnants of the two grand modernity projects – the Western (European) liberal/neoliberal one and the Socialist failed modernity replaced today with various nation-state projects which often go under the pressures of neoliberal globalization and the necessity to survive between the stronger and more aggressive powers.

Sahni was in London, helping her daughter-in-law with her newly born baby. The daughter-in-law is originally from India but brought up in the USA where her parents – people of humble backgrounds – went forty years ago to improve their prospects. The father became an engineer and the mother became a doctor. Now both are retired and wealthy Indian-Americans who rented a flat in London and hired a Lithuanian lady cleaner, who ran from house to house trying to make enough money to

send back home to her son who is studying to become a doctor. This Lithuanian lady was a Marathon runner in her country where, in the years of the Soviet occupation, she had a standard flat and the meagre free amenities provided by the Socialist system. Today her son works in three places to make ends meet. Sahni was curious to watch the conversations between the Indian doctor who did not know how exactly to treat this 'servant' and the obsequious Lithuanian woman. One made it from the bottom up; the other's life came crashing down. One day the Lithuanian woman mentioned that she had to get home soon because her son was arriving for a few days before he performed in Berlin. Seeing a surprised look, she explained that he was a member of the Lithuanian State Philharmonic Orchestra . . .

In telling this story Sahni was not defending socialism but rather trying to reflect on the ironies of history that has placed the postsocialist other in a much more difficult and unwinning condition than the postcolonial one who has been gradually entering the ex-metropolis and winning his or her place there. In the postsocialist case the trajectory was often the reverse.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction: A Leap Into the Void?	1
2	How to Disengage from the Coloniality of Perception	23
3	Decolonial Art in Eurasian Borderlands	45
4	Decolonizing the Museum	73
5	Postsocialist/Postcolonial Tempo-Localities	93
6	Tricksters, Jesters, Qalandars	129
7	Coloniality of Memory at the Postcolonial/Postsocialist Juncture	157
8	Afterword: An Open Finale	193
	Bibliography	205
	Index	219

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1	Ciprian Muresan, <i>Leap into the Void, after Three Seconds</i>	2
Fig. 3.1	Vyacheslav Akhunov, <i>The Doors of the New Tamerlane</i> . Digital printing, 100 × 80 cm, 2004	48
Fig. 3.2	Vyacheslav Akhunov, <i>The Red Star Alley of the Clown Politicians</i> . Carpet and digital printing on plastics, 90 × 90 cm, 2015	51
Fig. 3.3	Saule Suleimenova, <i>French House</i> . Gicleé print and acrylic on canvas, 127 × 180 cm, 2016	65
Fig. 3.4	Saule Suleimenova, <i>Three Brides</i> . From the series ‘Cellophane Painting’. Plastic bags, board, 100 × 140 cm, 2015	67
Fig. 4.1	Taus Makhacheva, <i>The Way of an Object</i> . Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable, 2013	88
Fig. 5.1	Taus Makhacheva, <i>Gamsutl</i> . Still from HD video	103
Fig. 5.2	Aslan Gaisumov, <i>No Need for Theories</i> . From the series ‘Untitled (war)’. Mixed media: book, soil. 7.5 × 12 × 26 cm., 2011	111
Fig. 5.3	Aslan Gaisumov, <i>Untitled</i> . Mixed media: one original Chechen water jug from the nineteenth century, six glass copies of the national Chechen water jugs, 2015	112
Fig. 6.1	Taus Makhacheva, <i>Delinking</i> . Photo-documentation of performance, 2011	147

Introduction: A Leap Into the Void?

The title of this introduction comes from a dialogue of the two art works: one of them – French artist Yves Klein’s famous 1960 photomontage *Le saut dans le vide* which celebrated a sense of the emancipation of the artistic impulse, transcendence, negating gravity but also rhymed with Klein’s interest in the Zen-Buddhist interpretation of the void; and the other – contemporary Romanian artist Ciprian Muresan’s 2004 ironic work *Leap into the Void, after Three Seconds*, concentrating on the painful and degrading fall coming three seconds after the leap.

The spatiality of both works is almost the same – the old cobbled streets of some unrecognized European city (Fig. 1.1), but the accent on the fall rather than the leap makes a lot of difference, symbolizing the gist of the postsocialist initial hope, bitter disappointment, and the subsequent emergence of a critical reflection on our condition and our prospects for the future.

1.1 THE POSTSOCIALIST PREDICAMENT: FROM THE ‘END OF HISTORY’ TO A POSTCOLONIAL ANALOGIZING

The almost overnight dismantling of the Socialist world after 1989 has led to a typical Western understanding of postsocialism exclusively in temporal (a period after socialism) and not in spatial terms, thus ignoring the millions of people who share the experience of being branded for several decades as ‘the (communist) East’ and who are still inhabiting this



Fig. 1.1 Ciprian Muresan, *Leap into the Void, after Three Seconds*. Photography, 2004. Courtesy of the artist

symbolic East which is fragmenting today under the pressure of new geopolitical divisions and North/South axes. We woke up one day to find ourselves in a notorious ‘post-’ situation, or to adopt a more well-known formulation of this situation, Francis Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ discourse (1992), we woke up to a new reality of multiple dependencies and increased mental, if not economic and social, un-freedom, invisibility to the wider world and the continued forms of silencing and trivialization by the dominant discourses of neoliberal modernity, the growing dispensability of our lives, the intricate subordination of the spheres of being,

thinking, and perception which continue after political decolonization and flourish after formal de-sovietization.

History has resumed its course since then but the position of the ex-Socialist world in this process has remained precarious and under-conceptualized – for various reasons – both in the West and in the ex-Socialist world itself. Western social sciences and humanities have for a long time simply ignored the collapsed USSR since the enemy was conquered and it was not important any more to spend as much money and effort on (post-) Soviet area studies as before. As a result many grants and programs were redistributed along different geopolitical divisions that were more fitting for the new situation in which the postsocialist world was indeed a void. It is high time we – the postsocialist people – attempted to reflect on our post-1989 trajectories and today's condition and decide if and how we can refer to our mutual experience of the deviant Socialist modernity to build a positive future and identify the agents and forces in the contemporary world with whom we can build dialogue and make coalitions.

What has been required from us – the inhabitants of the collapsed once-utopian and later dystopian Socialist world – was divided into two quite familiar options – Orientalist annihilation or progressivist appropriation. The post-Soviet people with a few exceptions of the Baltic countries, Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, divided at the former imperial borders between the 'Asiatic' Russian Tsarist empire and the not sufficiently modern/capitalist but still European Austria-Hungary, became equivalents of Amerindians, seen as the losing race bound to disappear or merge with the global South. The postsocialist Eastern European countries were interpreted in a more progressivist than Orientalist manner meaning that they were considered to be reformable and eventually subject to European assimilation yet always with an ineradicable sense of difference. The postsocialist 'other' was encouraged to uncritically accept the existing hierarchy of the world where everyone is assigned a precise and never-questioned place, and even being unhappy with this position on humanity's ladder – with the frozen human taxonomy naturalized in and by modernity – is to risk losing one's quite precarious position and becoming associated with those who stand even lower, like the global South today. In two decades all of this resulted in a peculiar postcolonial complex and even fashion within Europe when the postsocialist people started to compare their present situation with the former third world and regard the core Europe as their stepmother.

Certainly, the after-the-end-of-history effect of rendering the post-socialist people as the last representatives of the race that had to disappear together with the vanished second world, giving space to more successful rivals, was far from being particularly new or original. It reiterated in slightly different terms the general logic of modernity with its habitual operation of translating geography into chronology and assigning whole groups of people living in the non-European or non-Western spaces to other times or rather, positioning them outside the only sanctioned course of time and the only appropriate way of life.

What was new and different in the postsocialist case was that it was not the archaic tradition, not the downtrodden premodern 'savages' to which Western modernity was opposing itself. Rather it was an *other* state Socialist modernity which failed and was subsequently rendered as wrong and non-viable, while its practitioners had to be instructed on how to become fully modern (in the only remaining neoliberal way) and therefore, fully human. It goes without saying that the progressivist paradigm has had an in-built feature of always keeping a sufficient lag between the modernizing catching-up ex-Socialists and the first-rate Western/Northern subjects. This logic was first seriously shaken only in 2008 when the global economic crisis demonstrated to the inhabitants of the first world that they were not really immune to joining the armies of dispensable people, and their 'natural' advancement in comparison with the ex-second and ex-third worlds did not guarantee them a stable and invulnerable position.

The validity of the concept 'postsocialist' itself as an umbrella term, no doubt reeking of Cold War area studies approaches, is being questioned more and more radically together with the growing dispersal tendencies relocating the former Socialist subjects along different vectors and within different alliances in the new world order where the precarious Socialist semi-periphery is rapidly sliding into a more and more chronic peripheral condition. If we look at the post-Soviet states it becomes obvious that those who still remain under Russian imperial rule, like the Northern Caucasus republics, are in great variance with those who have been politically independent for the last twenty-five years even if they have been forced to always negotiate their rights with stronger partners (Russia being only one of the possibilities in this case), as happens in the Southern Caucasus.

This is the historical juncture at which the postcolonial ghost emerges in the background of the postsocialist drama. A complex and contradictory

drama for sure, as it contains the initial euphoria of the postsocialist countries returning to the European bosom and soon discovering their secondary status, the more traditionally subaltern postcolonial fate of the non-European Soviet ex-colonies, and the bitter post-imperial Russian sense of defeat dangerously manipulated into today's imperialist revanchism, as well as many other local nuances and complexities. Erasing ideological differences between the symbolic West and East proved to be rather easy and today, twenty-five years after the collapse of the Socialist modernity, it should have been possible to museumize and shelve the Socialist experience. However, it has not happened because the thin ideological film hides unreflected upon imperial and colonial complexes and persistent re-emerging power asymmetries, which correlate with pre-Socialist memory and mythology, with Socialist discourses which have always had their darker colonial side, and with today's situation of global colonialism from which no one is exempt.

A different view from Francis Fukuyama's end of history paradigm for the postsocialist world was summarized by art and media theorist Boris Groys:

The only real heritage of today's post-Communist subject – its real place of origin – is the complete destruction of every kind of heritage, a radical, absolute break with the historical past and with any kind of distinct cultural identity . . . The post-Communist subject travels the same route as described by the dominating discourse of cultural studies – but he or she travels this route in the opposite direction, not from the past to the future, but from the future to the past; from the end of history . . . back to historical time. Post-Communist life is life lived backward, a movement against the flow of time. (Groys 2008, pp. 154–5)

Groys stresses that the communist modernity went against the course of world history, in a sense transcended it. When the project failed we were all forced to come back to the usual established course, speed and most importantly direction of history and to the camouflaged but recognizable mild progressivism as opposed to a radical Socialist one. And this was interpreted by many as a way backwards, whereas for a number of social theorists this trajectory reminded of the postcolonial situation albeit with some important differences which did not allow the easy translation of the lighter side of modernity into the darker one – in this case, socialism into colonialism.

The postsocialist people soon started to experience the painful pullbacks from the dubious state Socialist system to the miseries of overt and cruel neoliberalism combined with neo-traditionalist revivals often erasing even the smallest and most meagre advantages of Socialist times. Thus, Slovenian feminist Lilijana Burcar bitterly claims that ‘the so-called transition from socialism to capitalism is a euphemism for regression. It stands for the massive scaling back of essential socio-economic rights which affects women differently from men. The re-installment of capitalist social relations rests on the processes of re-patriarchalization, most clearly evident in the dismantling of the Socialist welfare system’ (Burcar 2012, p. 108). Indeed, in Neil Lazarus’s words, our liberation from ‘actually existing’ Socialism has been a liberation into the world-system of ‘actually existing’ capitalism (Lazarus 2012, p. 121). But the question is precisely in what capacity we were allowed into the free world. According to Romanian social theorist Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, ‘the post-1989 civilizational promise of Europe and Occidentalism has currently reached a critical point of saturation in Eastern Europe. However, the direction taken by the accompanying disenchantment and reinvention is by no means predetermined. Consequently, one is faced today with the historical task of decolonizing the imaginary and rebuilding alliances, against the dissemination of cynicism, ethnocentric nationalism, and postcommunist racism’ (Tichindeleanu 2013).

1.2 ON THE WRONG PROGRESSIVISM AND STARTING FROM SCRATCH

What is important in all of these and many other reflections on the postsocialist condition, is that in contrast with most postcolonial countries which have not interrupted their successive movement along the progressivist trajectory, the postsocialist people were asked to forget about our version of modernity and start from scratch in a paradigm of a different Western and neoliberal modernity. We were not really in the position of a *tabula rasa* or a ‘savage’ waiting to be civilized but this is largely what we were offered after 1989. Certainly there were a lot of intersections between the Western/liberal/capitalist and state Socialist modernities, since the Socialist modernity after all originated in the West and therefore shared such familiar features of modernity as progressivism, Orientalism, racism, providentialism, hetero-patriarchy, and a cult of newness. At the same time there were clearly opacities and blind spots between the two

versions of modernity, false parallels and redoubling of a number of discourses which no one has managed to critically conceptualize or overcome so far. Tricked into believing that the only legitimate modernity is the neoliberal capitalist one, we have doomed ourselves to the next twenty-five years of stagnation, catching up and forever emerging. The crucial aspect of this position is that not many of the Socialist people really shared the ideals of Socialist modernity. The majority of those who found themselves under the Soviet rule were its victims who had to build themselves into the state Socialist modernity to survive. And our redemption dream then was linked precisely with the capitalist liberal modernity of which not many of us had any experience. When the dream came true it soon became clear that our role in this ‘correct’ modernity was far from the ideals we nourished. The renewed polarization of the world into the global North and South did not leave us many options and the leap into the void soon acquired quite real dimensions intensified by an under-theorized feeling of injustice stemming from our overnight displacement from the second world to the global South or the deep periphery of Europe.

There is a complex correlation between the postsocialist as an objective state of those who simply happen to originate in the ex-Socialist countries, and can manifest any political, ethical or existential agenda, and the post-socialist as a discourse genetically linked with socialism, even if revisionist. In this book I interpret the ‘postsocialist’ in the first sense, as a geopolitical and corpo-political circumstance and legacy which in most of the artists, writers, theatre and film directors, activists and thinkers discussed in what follows, induces a clear anti-Soviet stance. This positionality is also often decolonial as they become increasingly disenchanted with actually existing Socialism and actually existing neoliberal capitalism both of which devalue their lives and futures.

Alluding to W. B. Du Bois’s phrase, Jane Anna and Lewis Gordon point out that racism and colonialism generated people ‘marked as the continued sign of ill fate and ruin. Problem people’ (Gordon and Gordon 2010, p. 19). The ex-second world came to be a problematic region in such a post-Duboisian collective sense of the people with delayed humanity and no place in the new world. But this is not a clearly racialized division; it is a poorly representable semi-alterity. Russians and Eastern Europeans have become after 1989 the off-white blacks of the new global world – looking and behaving too similar to the same, yet remaining essentially other, the hyper visible invisibles who, according to Jennifer

Suchland, like Spivak's subalterns, have never even started to speak (Suchland 2011). The cruel and often colonial forms of enforced Socialism that lasted for several decades were what we all shared. They left their marks and traces on us, weaving collective memories and myths, some nostalgic, others condemning. But no matter how we interpret this shared past, we won't be able to forget it and erase this experience pretending to be or acting as the postsocialist subalterns who are only now starting to learn to speak.

The postsocialist void was so traumatic precisely because it asked us to renounce the past and the future alike, leaving us with very meagre options. This overflowing negativity has cemented the void situation for a long time. As Sharad Chari and Catherine Verdery state in their often quoted article contemplating the possibility of postsocialist studies and comparing them with the trajectory of postcolonial discourse:

over time, 'postsocialism' came to signify a critical standpoint, in several senses: of the Socialist past and of possible Socialist futures; critical of the present as neoliberal verities about transition, markets, and democracy were being imposed upon former Socialist spaces; and critical of the possibilities for knowledge as shaped by Cold War institutions. Here, postsocialist studies began to converge somewhat with the agenda of postcolonial studies. Just as postcoloniality had become a critical perspective on the colonial present, postsocialism could become a similarly critical standpoint on the continuing social and spatial effects of Cold War power and knowledge. (Chari and Verdery 2009, p. 11)

I will come back to this theorizing of the 'postsocialist' below, but it is important to stress already here that these authors remain insensitive to the temporal and spatial inconsistencies and discordances between the two projects and also vis-à-vis the mainstream Western modernity that a number of postsocialist scholars have been able to detect and analyse.

All the struggles, achievements, failures, double standards, and multi-directional paths of the Socialist people who were hard to homogenize in any non-contradictory way, were neglected and indeed – following the path described by Groys – we were made to go back to a starting point preceding the West, and forced to unlearn what we have learnt before and forget what we have gained or lost in the Socialist years, in order to start from scratch. In contrast with some colonial situations this negation of the Socialist models and patterns was not so much a forced procedure but

rather, more a case of a voluntary self-colonization by the rhetoric of the Western capitalist modernity which started to be questioned only much later, often in unappetizing essentialist and nationalist forms.

The situation was even more grave thanks to a virtual lack of any theoretical models to conceptualize this peculiar void. The Cold War division of academic labour with its clearly colonialist social sciences versus area studies binarism was less and less capable of addressing or adequately investigating the contemporary knowledge and subject production marked by mobility, dynamic changeability, and decentring. The Socialist world was studied by the West somewhere in between the social sciences and area studies but certainly closer to the colonial side, within its separate model of Sovietology. Such study existed on substantial financial support until 1989, when this peculiar form of area studies failed to offer any sufficient overall models to explain the collapsed USSR which stopped being regarded as one homogeneous region and started to be redistributed along different geopolitical lines (Tlostanova 2015).

Some of its parts drifted in the direction of the object of study within the still flourishing Western area studies. This shift is obvious in David Chioni Moore's article in *PMLA* applying postcolonial theory to the postsocialist reality (Moore 2001). However, it proved difficult to lump together Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Russia proper and Siberia without taking into account the complex interplay of colonial and imperial differences and intersecting experiences of various subalternized empires and their internal and external others. It is important that the application of postcolonial theory to the analysis of the post-Soviet and wider, postsocialist world was done first by a Western scholar (and not even by diasporic postcolonial scholars in the West who were less ready to equate communism with colonialism but also were more sensitive to the obvious differences between the two models).

Sadly, there were almost no efforts from the side of postsocialist researchers themselves to have their say and not only describe their own experience but also attempt to conceptualize it without following the convenient mainstream Western models. This was an alarming indication of a more severe (than in the global South) case of coloniality of knowledge in the failed Socialist modernity. It is true that there were sporadic interesting works contemplating the postsocialist condition, written by Western scholars and several diasporic thinkers from the former Socialist countries and Soviet republics (usually claiming a more European belonging, such as Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic countries) (Chernetsky 2007;

Bobkov 2005). Methodologically these works followed the Western social sciences and the humanities. But with few exceptions their Eastern European genealogical traces have interfered in the process of assimilation into the global knowledge production system.

1.3 THE SPLENDOURS AND MISERIES OF POST-COLD WAR STUDIES

In response to the mainstream reading of the postsocialist as a void, and the postcolonial analogizing of the postsocialist condition, and in dissatisfaction with an antiquarian turn in the emergent postsocialist studies, a number of scholars have offered alternative definitions and concepts. One of the well-known models was formulated by Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery in their understanding of post-Cold War studies. They did an important job in at least opening the discussion for looking ‘between the posts’. However, it is not clear where the authors themselves speak from, in relation to the postcolonial and/or postsocialist world. Their geopolitics of knowledge is obviously Western, although certainly leftist. This leads to vague and shifting optics, and paradoxically to a reproduction of vantage points they seem to be against. The authors homogenize the USSR, at times buying the Soviet theses at face value, ignoring the gap between the Bolshevik manipulative rhetoric and the reality.

Chari and Verdery operate with generalized and homogenized notions of postcolonial studies and postsocialist discourses which are far from concrete cases of both critiques. Thus they claim that the main postcolonial vector is away from Marxism and towards philosophically informed critique, although we know that some of the most powerful postcolonial texts are Marxist (in a Frankfurt School rather than any orthodox sense) and can at the same time be postmodernist and philosophical. Further on the authors say that the main postsocialist vector of development is in an ethnographic direction with Marxist tools (Chari and Verdery 2009, p. 9). This could seem a totally false statement if we did not guess that Chari and Verdery actually meant a very specific Western sort of postsocialist social sciences exemplified by Michael Burawoy, and completely ignored even the possibility of postsocialist subjects themselves reflecting on their own condition, which would demonstrate an almost completely opposite picture. So with good intentions Chari and Verdery continue to practise epistemic colonialism and endorse the Cold War division of intellectual labour.

Their suggestion to jettison both postsocialist and postcolonial studies and launch a single overarching post-Cold War research agenda instead is grounded in a contradictory impulse of freeing the social sciences from the Cold War ideological restrictions but paradoxically using that very Cold War as the only vantage point. It is questionable not only because contemporary critical discourses usually try to avoid vantage points as such, but also because the Cold War is back albeit in a new disguise and also is a too narrow and too ideological, historically recent vantage point, seriously narrowing and simplifying our perspective.

Chari and Verdery's approach lacks the necessary intersectionality as they attempt to analyse various aspects of socialism and colonialism in an isolated way, without realizing that labour markets and redistribution of surplus value, the Soviet yet obviously colonial division of labour and resources cannot be regarded separately from racist and colonialist human taxonomies of the Soviet Empire. The Soviet economy was unimaginable without colonialism, as well as its double standard gender system. Although this was a very specific kind of racism which could take mutant and creolized class, religious, ethnic and gender forms. Buying at face value the Western revisionist Sovietology idea of the USSR as an 'affirmative action empire' (Martin 2001), and homogenizing the Soviet Union as opposed to the rest of the Socialist world without taking into account the imperial-colonial structure of the Tsarist empire, later preserved and 'improved' by the Soviet leaders, the authors ignore the fact that the Bolsheviks wanted to have communism and keep the colonial empire too (Sahni 1997, p. 109).

The Tsarist empire, the USSR, and even today's Russia are all multi-cultural, multi-confessional, multiethnic polities held together at different times by various ideologies, faiths, and power discourses. And any conversation on the meaning of the postsocialist 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 capitalism versus socialism division. The Socialist experience cannot be taken exclusively to ideology the same way as it cannot be limited by colonialism. It existed at their intersection leading to the creation of a model which – after the collapse of Socialism – turned out to be colonial as a whole, in relation to the winning neoliberal modernity/coloniality, yet retaining traces of its own internal imperial-colonial structures. Understanding this configuration requires a critical and dynamic intersectional approach.

Chari and Verdery do not sufficiently differentiate between the post-Soviet and the postsocialist discourses whose relations with postcolonialism are different not for ideological or even economic but rather for racial reasons and because of the external imperial difference (in this case it is clearly Russia as the loser-empire in modernity, an empire which turns into a colony in the eyes of the West). Russia conquering Siberia and later the Caucasus and Turkestan is a more traditional case of imperial-colonial relations often mimicked from Spain, Great Britain, and France, whereas its advances into Europe – both in Tsarist and later Soviet periods – are fit less well 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.

Chari and Verdery also make a mistake of dehistoricization comparing the Soviet empire of the post-Second World War period with the European capitalist empires of the much earlier époque when they were involved in the conquest, infiltration, and annexation of the colonized territories. These events took place at different historical junctures: the Russian empire did exactly the same but it happened before the Soviet times, and the capitalist empires were not annexing new territories after the Second World War either.

This brings us to the necessity of differentiating more carefully between various local histories and structural models within the postsocialist, post-Soviet, and various postcolonial intersections. Postcolonial critique can be very roughly divided into two versions – the earlier leftist anti-capitalist and still progressivist modernizing form (grounded in the principle of young national modernities), and the later more critical and radical postcolonial theories questioning Western modernity primarily in its epistemic aspects and often looking for the erased, forgotten and subsumed indigenous knowledges and ways of life. Both extremes are potentially anachronistic as they tend to idealize either socialism or the highly constructed precolonial tradition. Both sensibilities do not agree with the postsocialist subjects' stance either when we criticize state Socialism or when we refuse to romanticize the constructed 'tradition'. According to Slovenian scholar Svetlana Slapšak, 'the carefully cultivated "wisdom of the colonized" is effective – almost deadly – in restoring conservative values imposed as liberation from Socialist ideological constraints, and imposing nationalist discourses and practices instead, initializing forced silence and other anthropological signs of power being distributed through new channels' (Slapšak 2012, p. 40).

The evolution of postsocialist critique therefore did not correspond to the familiar postcolonial logic at all – either in its temporal or in its notional accents and nodes. Initially the postsocialist trajectory was marked by an almost emotional rejection of everything Socialist and a fascination with Western knowledge. This happened at a time when postcolonial theorists still largely rehearsed the leftist anti-capitalist discourses. Later a number of postsocialist scholars started reinterpreting the Socialist legacy in a less negative way, criticizing the Western infiltration of postsocialist academia. They were doing this at the point when postcolonial critique started developing its anti-Western modernity stance and objectively the two discourses intersected, although the traditions they had in mind were totally different and they did not hear each other then. This very schematic juxtaposition of the speed and direction of postcolonial and postsocialist trajectories demonstrates that there are indeed many intersections but they often happen at different time periods and are triggered for completely different reasons leading nevertheless to similar results and even possible coalitions in the end, because ultimately they manifest the spectre of different reactions to the colonality of power.

In their introduction to the 2012 special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* devoted to postcolonialism, communism, and East-Central Europe, Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Cristina Sandru explain the lacking or marginal intersections between the postcolonial and postsocialist realms, through political and disciplinary terms, claiming that anti-communist dissidence in Eastern Europe was seen in the West (including the postcolonial theorists of the West) as a right-wing movement which was not necessarily the case, and also that postcolonial theory was grounded in what they call post-structural culturalism, and rejected other approaches (Kołodziejczyk and Sandru 2012, p. 114). This is true of the relations between the Western-based largely post-Marxist postcolonial theory and the postsocialist world in its (peripheral) European frames. But it is not necessarily true in a wider horizon – I mean among less Western varieties of postcolonial discourse produced by third world intellectuals, and the postsocialist condition in its wider than Eastern European sense.

But let us go back to Chari and Verdery. They apply the Western area studies sources rather than paying any attention to the discourses formulated in the postsocialist regions themselves, by the still living but rapidly passing away people who can offer first-hand testimonies of the Soviet and Socialist racism, colonialist and gendered divisions of labour, and