Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis 18 (2023), z. 3, s. 191–205
10.4467/20843933ST.23.019.19438
www.ejournals.eu/Studia-Litteraria

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The Disintegration of "Power/Knowledge". Post-Socialist Studies as Decolonial Studies? A Personal Point of View. Part 2: The Socialist Expansion of Post-Colonial Studies

Abstract: The relationship between post-colonial and post-socialist studies is extraordinarily complex. Post-colonialists might argue that it can be approached from different perspectives as well as different power positions of knowledge production. As a result, I have chosen a specific trajectory that intersects and challenges the static power positions and is able to trace the debates and the unfolding of the complex problem over time. As a long-time scholar in this area, and moreover one who has taken many different roads in both fields, I will describe this relationship from the perspective of my own scholarly biography.

However, my professional career has spanned several decades and surpassed the transient trends and fashions within this scholarly field. As such, it can only be depicted as an extensive narrative comprising multiple episodes, published in sequence across the double issue of the journal *Studia Litteraria*, devoted to forms of engagement in contemporary Southern and Western Slavic literatures. Part 2 focuses on the socialist expansion of Post-Colonial Studies.

Keywords: post-colonial studies, self-colonization, post-socialist studies, Russian colonialism

Abstrakt: Relacja między studiami postkolonialnymi i postsocjalistycznymi jest niezwykle złożona. Badacze postkolonializmu stwierdzą, że można do niej podejść z różnych perspektyw, ale także z różnych pozycji władzy w produkcji wiedzy. W rezultacie wybrałem konkretną trajektorię, która przecina i kwestionuje statyczne pozycje władzy oraz jest w stanie prześledzić debaty i rozwój tego złożonego problemu w czasie. Jako wieloletni badacz w tej dziedzinie, a co więcej, osoba, która obierała wiele różnych dróg w obu podejściach, - postkolonialnym i postsocjalistycznym – opiszę tę relację z perspektywy mojej własnej biografii naukowej. Moja kariera zawodowa obejmuje kilka dekad i wykracza poza przemijające trendy i mody w tej dziedzinie naukowej. W związku z tym można ją przedstawić jedynie jako obszerną narrację składającą się z wielu epizodów, publikowanych w podwójnym numerze czasopisma Studia Litteraria, poświęconym formom zaangażowania we współczesnych literaturach południowo- i zachodniosłowiańskich. Część druga skupia się na socjalistycznej ekspansji studiów postkolonialnych.

Słowa kluczowe: studia postkolonialne, samokolonizacja, studia postsocjalistyczne, kolonializm rosyjski

1. Multiplication of "Colonialisms"

The expansion of the meaning of "colonialism" into East European contexts began with a multiplication of metaphors. Milica Bakić-Hayden's "nesting orientalism" was followed by Michael Herzfeld's creation of the term "crypto-colonialism," which referred to the exoticization of a culture dependent on a metropolis and viewed through the lens of its ancient cultural heritage (Herzfeld 2002). Another scholar, Violeta Kelertas from Lithuania, developed the concept of "Baltic post-colonialism," which was linked to the aggressive policies of the Soviet Empire. Kelertas argued that the Soviet Union had violently imposed a Russified version of communism on its near periphery – Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries – despite its rhetoric of proletarian "friendship between nations." In Kelertas's view, this policy was simply a continuation of the old colonial model in which empires ruled over distant peoples (the new colonial empire even dreaming of a world dominated by communism[1]). Under the influence of historical revisionism, Kelertas rejected the use of the term "totalitarianism" to describe the USSR as a Cold War legacy. Instead, she viewed Soviet rule as a form of "repressive colonial occupation."[2] The populations of the Baltic countries, in her view, were culturally distinct from Russian and Soviet culture and alien to its communist ideology. Therefore, they were forced into a state of "mimicry and parody" (a reference to Homi Bhabha's work), and were not to blame for the imposition of communist ideology and outside government models. Kelertas argued that the domination over the Baltic countries was achieved without hegemony, as the populations were coerced into compliance rather than internalizing the ideology of their oppressors (Kelertas 2006, 1–8).

In contrast to the oversimplified and self-apologetic use of "colonialism," Russian scholar Alexander Etkind offered a more convincing analysis by placing Russian colonialism in its relevant historical context (Etkind 2011). Etkind argued that the concept of "internal colonialism" was not a modern invention, but was actually a traditional element of the politics and conquest ideology of the Russian Empire throughout the 19th century. This concept legitimized military subjugation, repressive rule, and cultural hegemony over internal "natives," such as various "backward" peoples and tribes in Siberia and the Caucasus, who were racially and culturally distant from the Russians themselves. Etkind demonstrated in historical detail how certain techniques of governmentality and ideological hegemony in pre-modern Russia were not fundamentally different from those employed in modern colonialism, and in fact were often directly borrowed.

[1] Kelertas did not comment on the strange irony of history whereby the initial idea of a proletarian "permanent revolution," which legitimized the early Soviet attempts to export revolution to neighboring proletarian nations still dominated by capitalism (such as Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, etc.), came dangerously close to the notion of "empire."

[2] "I feel that "totalitarianism" is a loaded term for the independence-minded Balts, who did have their own democratic governments before the Second World War and wished to reinstate them. The terror imposed on the Balts by the Soviets was unusually inhumane. Hence, "totalitarianism" obscures the severity of the occupation and undercuts the Balts' drive for freedom and democracy" (Kelertas 2006, 2).

He also demonstrated how Russian culture developed a similar "white man's burden" syndrome as seen in other colonial empires as well as the sense of "colonial presence in the background," not dissimilar to the phenomenon found in British novels, as described by Edward Said (see Said 1994). In the case of Russian internal colonialism, specific colonial techniques such as stigmatization, racialization, and exoticization of the ethnic and cultural Other were also employed. Despite being within Russia's own territory, the colonized Siberian and Caucasian tribes were portrayed as wild, uncivilized, primitive, and "savage," as well as oriental and sensual, and thus considered naturally inferior and in need of Russian "civilizational help." However, it is worth mentioning that Etkind used these colonial categories solely to describe the politics of the Russian Tsarist Empire, not the USSR in general.

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The actual detachment of the colonial perspective from the traditional 19th-century historical colonialism, together with the new link between post-socialist and post-colonial studies, occurred around the same time and were based on contributions from South America, which will be described later. Before doing so, it is important to note that in the period 2000–2010, three key publications played a decisive role in connecting Eastern European and Balkan studies with post-colonial studies.[3] All three became mandatory references for almost all future studies in this field. The significant aspect of these publications was that they did not deal specifically with Balkanism or the Ottoman or Habsburg legacies, but rather with the common socialist experience of the "Second World" countries.

Only the first of these three publications, the article by researcher of the black Atlantic, David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?" (Moore 2001), operated within the post-colonial paradigm. Working with extremely broad concepts of "colonialism" and "empire,"[4] Moore aimed to provide a global postcolonial critique, as his article's subtitle announced. He was convinced that "there is on this planet not a meter of inhabited single square land

[3] In Alexei Yurchak's article, "Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More" (see Yurchak 2003), there are already some "post-colonial" remarks yet the focus of this article is different.

[4] In Moore's interpretation, the concept of modern colonialism is expanded far beyond its conventional historical limits. For instance, William the Conqueror is deemed a colonizer. Debates about whether ancient and medieval colonizations have a continual link to modern colonialism (Ferro 1997) are not mentioned. The term "colonial" loses its modern specificity when related to technology, navigation, conquest of the seas, and the creation of global trade networks. It encompasses all possible historical periods, all points on the planet, and all people who were once conquered, enslaved, displaced, repressed, etc. Moore claims that "many cultural situations, past and present, can be said to bear a post-colonial stamp" (Moore 2001, 112). He recognizes that such an approach may render the concept too general and devalue it, depriving it of analytical power, but nevertheless, he advocates for its generalization in order to include the post-Soviet sphere within the post-colonial analytical frame. Russia and the USSR exercised control over a large part of the earth for more than 250 years, and although that control has now ended, its effects continue to reverberate in the literatures and cultures of Eastern Europe and the republics of the former USSR (see Moore 2001, 123). A critique of this mode of argument will be presented in the note below.

that has not at one time or been, another, colonized and then postcolonial" (Moore 2001, 112). From this all-embracing colonial point of view, he noticed an obvious anomaly: "an enormous geographic, or rather geopolitical, exclusion – the disappearance of the Second World, the Soviet and post-Soviet sphere from the map of global post-colonial analysis." It was his desire and methodological ambition to correct this error, and to expand the map of post-colonial studies further,[5] as a follow-up to Ella Shohat's programmatic article, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'" (1992) (quoted by Moore 2001, 116).

However, the "expansion" was accomplished through a similar network of extremely general concepts. According to Moore, colonialism exists wherever there is conquest by an external force and the replacement of local independence with puppet regimes. It also exists where the economy serves the conqueror through asymmetric exchange, unfair commercial monopolies of the metropolis, and the imposition of monoculture agriculture. Additionally, colonialism exists where there is oppression of local religions and cultures, where the conqueror's language is necessarily introduced into schools and public life, and wherever dissenting voices are suppressed, with oppositional energies relegated to mimicry, satire, parody, and jokes. Out of this colonial legacy, the "post-colonial hangover" is born, which is fundamentally similar in different parts of the world (Moore 2001, 114–115).

The abstract conceptual web was, in fact, a self-sufficient meta-language capable of absorbing more and more local realities, threatening to emancipate itself completely from their historical specificities. This generalized discourse made Africa, as well as black inhabitants of the USA, Sweden, and the USSR seem comparably post-colonial. Also included were the "internal colonisations" within the British Empire, that is to say the problems regarding Ireland and Scotland. Consequently, "it should be clear that the term 'postcolonial,' and everything that goes with it – language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover – might reasonably be applied to the formerly Russo- and Soviet-controlled regions post-1989 and -1991, just as it has been applied to South Asia post-1947 or Africa post-1958. East is South" (Moore 2001, 116).

After such a principled position, a fairly informed analysis of the actual internal colonialism of the Russian Empire followed. Although in fact a specialist in another field, nevertheless Moore worked meticulously with specific facts about the "overland" colonization of the "internal Others" in the Caucasus and Siberia during the 18th and 19th centuries. In the logic of the "global omnivorousness" of the post-colonial paradigm which he sought, he easily equated the Tsarist empire with the USSR in the hybrid "Russo-Soviet," allowing him to successfully point

[5] Moore's approach had a sense of predetermination about it. The question of whether the post-socialist world is post-colonial was not something that was pursued, as the answer was considered self-evident and clear from the outset. This was suggested rhetorically in various ways in the article. For instance, Moore made statements such as: "In my view, at least two features of this giant sphere are significant for currently constituted postcolonial studies: first, how extraordinarily postcolonial the societies of the former Soviet regions are, and, second, how extraordinarily little attention has been paid to this fact, at least in these terms" (Moore 2001, 114).

out the secret colonial and racist Stalin type imperialism and the aggressive Russification hidden beneath official Soviet policy.[6]

While this was convincing and acceptable, there was one flaw: the official communist policy itself was losing any relevance from that perspective, and Soviet rule had been reduced to the suppression of internal others. Only after successfully "adding" the traumatic legacies of the "Second World" to the global framework of post-colonialism could Moore afford to give free rein to his doubts. In the last part of his article, he begins making clarifications and stipulations, reminding readers that Russian colonization still has its peculiar specifics[7] and that "Russia" and the "USSR" are perhaps not the same thing. He hints that his own "Russo-Soviet" construction is untenable, although it had been a useful analytical tool for him throughout the text. Only at the end, with scientific integrity, does he begin to mention opposing views, suggesting that what happened between 1917 and 1991 might not have been quite the same as the era of Tsarist colonial power. He can afford the luxury of being critical and differentiated, since the rhetoric of his text has already achieved its point and included the post-socialist world within the global post-coloniality. Any doubts, clarifications, and critical comments remain just a "footnote."

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The other two articles cited D. C. Moore and acknowledged his influential idea, but they chose not to align themselves with post-colonial studies. Neil Lazarus (Lazarus 2012), in particular, worked within a neo-Marxist methodology, and revised recent versions of the world system theory. His critique was not focused on the extension of the post-colonial paradigm, but rather on the false essentializations within both post-colonial and post-socialist studies. He claimed that post-colonial theory, even in its best examples such as Said, tended to fetishize and essentialize a malevolent West, replacing any careful consideration of the heterogeneous processes of capitalism's penetration in different parts of the world. On the other hand, scholars and intellectuals from the former Eastern Bloc were prone to the opposite error, as a result of their understandable hatred of the communism that had oppressed them. They tended, according to Lazarus, to idealize and homogenize the image of an ideal "Europe," which had a complex and shifting history and geography, fraught with conflicts, fragmentation, and violence. Lazarus found both constructions to be reified and unsatisfactory. He believed that they could only be overcome through a systematic Marxist analysis, which

[6] Especially after WWII Stalin imposed brutal social engineering and genocide on the entire population, as well as lasting racism in the processes of Russification of the "internal others" – Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Mongolians, etc.

[7] Moore argues that the colonialism of the Soviet Union, the successor of Tsarist Russia, was specific in that the colonization of the Baltic republics did not involve Orientalizing the "culturally inferior," as in the case of the British or French Empires. Rather, Russian-Soviet power colonized the population, who were not culturally inferior to it, and, in fact, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians were culturally and civilizationally more advanced. This reversal is too nonspecific for the traditional notion of modern colonialism.

focused not on the "West" and "East," but on the contradictions within the modern development of global capitalism.

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Perhaps the most significant of the three key articles by non-Eastern European scholars was written by South African Marxist Sharad Chari and American ethnographer Katherine Verdery, titled "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War" (Chari and Verdery 2009). This influential text calls for global and relational thinking to move beyond traditional field borders. Chari and Verdery do not place themselves within the post-colonial studies paradigm, but instead choose to move "between paradigms," using the heuristic perspective of entangled history and intertwined narratives. Their article aims to challenge the limitations of post-socialist and post-colonial studies, encouraging communication and a change in their reified spatial views. They offer a new matrix of thinking, arguing that the relevant phenomena in the post-colonial and post-Soviet space should be studied within the context of their conflicting relations, mutual replicas, and intertwined causalities. In fact, these "worlds," viewed as the spatial reifications of power relations, were themselves constructs of the Cold War, including the considerable influence of the failed paradigms of modernization and transitology. Thus, Chari and Verdery argued that as a global event, the Cold War created a lasting common legacy, which reverberates in all aspects of the recent global world. It created reified spatial borderlines as well as isolating political programs, and its consequences must be explored in a dialogue between post-colonial and post-socialist studies. In this exchange, both approaches can overcome their limitations, learn from each other and explore the common heritage defined as "the competition of Empires during the Cold War and its consequences" (Chari and Verdery 2009, pp.6–31).

While Chari and Verdery's article was both compelling and erudite, it shifted its explanatory causal chains too much towards the global perspective, thus underestimating the local causality and the specificity of the Second World.[8]

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As becomes clear from the preceding discussion, the application of post-colonial methods in an analysis of post-socialism emerged between 2000 and 2015 through

[8] This question about the one-sided examination ("flattening") of the legacy of the Second World due to its heuristic consideration through a specific methodological prism is by no means unique to Chari and Verdery. For this reason, it will be examined in more detail at the end of the third part of this essay. Here, I just want to highlight that Katherine Verdery cannot specifically be accused of being ignorant of the contexts. She is a globally renowned anthropologist, specializing in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the vice-president of the Romanian Studies Society, and the longtime director of the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Michigan. However, even she, due to the high methodological stake of the entangled history approach she aims to apply together with Chari, has intentionally underestimated the local causalities of socialist and post-socialist worlds. The applied perspective has managed to sideline her rich and intricate knowledge of the Second World – knowledge she undoubtedly possesses.

numerous individual scholars' attempts and experiments with different variations of the concept of "colonialism." In this context, three highly influential publications, those by Moore, Lazarus, and Chari and Verdery, played a crucial role in this process by making serious efforts to broaden the previously isolated study of socialism and adopt a more global perspective. However, among these three scholars, only Moore can be considered a true post-colonialist, as he endeavors to radically expand the map of postcolonial studies to include the "Second World." Lazarus's Marxist program and Chari and Verdery's concept of "entangled post-Cold War histories" lack such ambition; in fact, Chari and Verdery even suggest that post-colonial studies and post-socialist studies should mutually benefit each other. Furthermore, Chari and Verdery limit the temporal perspective of post-colonialism to the effects and legacies of the Cold War, rather than encompassing the vast historical period of hundreds of years with all the various legacies of colonialism from the earliest days of geographical discoveries up to the present. Their perspective, connected to the entangled legacies of the Cold War, is confined to a period of approximately 60–70 years.

Indeed, one can conclude that it was Moore's article that proved pivotal for the future globalization of the postcolonial paradigm and the shift of post-colonial methodology towards post-socialist studies. An indirect proof of this is that virtually every subsequent publication references the article as a turning point and relies on its authority without challenging it. Indeed, by 2010 it had become commonplace and indisputable that post-colonial methods could and should be applied to the post-socialist world.

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Despite its widespread acceptance, however, there may still be reasons to doubt the article's premise. In fact, Moore himself is clearly aware of the great logical and methodological danger hidden beneath the excessive expansion of any concept, including concepts such as "colonialism" and "post-colonialism." He writes:

> As for the risked inflation of the category "postcolonial" – a category already so crazily diverse, ranging from accounting to the Middle Ages, nautical archaeology to the Bible, that one wonders how anyone could unify it even before a Soviet inclusion – I recognize that when terms expand their scope they risk losing analytic force. There is little sense in claiming terms like "colored," for example, if all the world has color. Or perhaps not. In closing, then, I would like to defend an inflation of the postcolonial to include the enormous post-Soviet sphere. Primarily I do so because Russia and then the Soviet Union exercised powerful colonial control over much of the Earth for from fifty to two hundred years, much of that control has now ended, and its ending has had manifest effects on the literatures and cultures of the postcolonial-post-Soviet nations, including Russia. Of course, as I have noted, the specific modalities of Russo-Soviet control, as well as their post-Soviet reverberations, have differed from the standard Anglo-Franco cases. But then again, to privilege the Anglo-Franco cases as the colonizing standard and to call the Russo-Soviet experiences deviations, as I have done so far, is wrongly to perpetuate the already superannuated centrality of the Western or Anglo-Franco world. It is time, I think, to break with that tradition (Moore 2001, 116).

Let us pay some attention to the specific rhetorical tactics employed in this passage and focus specifically on the following: “I recognize that when terms expand their scope they risk losing analytic force. There is little sense in claiming terms like “colored,” for example, if all the world has color. Or perhaps not.”

Here, a key rhetorical maneuver is employed for “overcoming” the methodological danger of stripping overly general concepts of their substance. Curiously enough, the mastery of this logical danger is achieved through a simple negation – the expression “Or perhaps not,” singled out as an independent sentence devoid of a predicate but nevertheless loaded with emphasis. It is this rhetorical trick that allows the inclusion of the Soviet experience within the vastly expanded realm of “colonialism.” Next, Moore presents various arguments, but they all fail to address the logical problem at hand as they primarily focus on historical and political aspects. The first argument revolves around the Russian imperial experience (distinct from the Soviet period, despite problematic attempts to establish “continuities”). The second argument emphasizes the need to avoid subjugating the concept of “colonialism” to within its traditional Eurocentric usage: this is obviously not a logical argument. The latter line of reasoning is particularly noteworthy: we initially borrow a name from a specific historical phenomenon (European colonialism) and assert that it can encompass other phenomena (as all European colonialisms share certain common features with other power regimes, making them eligible to be labeled as ‘colonial’). However, we then discover that certain specific power regimes lack these common features, thus posing a logical difficulty. To overcome this challenge, we politically (and not logically) reject the authority of the initial phenomenon and claim that completely dissimilar regimes can also be deemed “colonial.” Logically, it appears as follows: Y and X can be united under one concept due to their shared predicates and similarities in a, b, c, d. However, Z does not possess these common predicates or features a, b, c, d. We resolve this logical difficulty by “dismissing the authority” of X as illegitimate, thereby allowing us to classify Z within the same overarching concept. It is evident, however, that this represents a revolutionary political gesture rather than a logical operation; in this case, the descriptive rules of logic and political-normative goals are inextricably intertwined.

In summary, the widely accepted post-Moore program of applying the post-colonial paradigm to the Second World is based on a rhetorical trick. It relies on a simple and “sovereign” gesture of opposition against the well-established logical principle that expanding the concept’s extension diminishes its semantic content. Since the Port-Royal Logic, this principle has been well known: comprehension and extension are inversely related. “But perhaps not.”

David Chioni Moore is well aware of the dangers associated with such extension and “inflation” of concepts. Nevertheless, he asserts his performative “maybe not!”. His motivation stems obviously from a desire for conceptual power that goes beyond logic: the map of post-colonial studies should not contain any gaps, and the post-colonial program should by all means permeate and gain influence everywhere. He attempts to justify this power as purely conceptual, transforming

the category of "post-colonial" into a peculiar "universal"[9] akin to "race," "class," "age," and "gender" – a category with epistemological applicability worldwide.

However, as readers of Foucault and Said, we remember that the power of knowledge is never purely conceptual. It is always territorialized and institutionalized "power/knowledge," i.e., it involves the mastery and domination of specific places, institutions and positions that have the capacity to influence both knowledge production and epistemological perspectives. However, it is obvious that this implies the opposite, too: the exercise of power onto the institutional places themselves. In our case, this concerns a specific micro-power: it pertains to the relative weight of post-colonial studies (and those scholars who engage in them), within the specific institutional settings of universities, faculties, departments, research projects and research budgets, academic conferences, journals, scientometric rankings, and more: the institutional places of knowledge production. Expanding the map of post-colonial studies equates to an increase not only in its explanatory power, but also in its academic influence and institutional authority within universities. This power, apparently, holds such immense significance, that it deserves to be attained even at the expense of logical errors.

2. The Paradigm Shift

As is evident from the preceding notes, my focus from 2013 to 2020 was on researching other topics such as the legacies of totalitarian socialism and the history of utopia, leaving aside my interests in self-colonization. As one of my teachers, Maria Todorova – who predicted the end of the post-colonial "trend" in 2005 – perhaps shares some of the responsibility for this shift. But I too believed that my idea of "self-colonization" was a metaphor with limited historical validity, which would fade away with the decline of the traditional Eurocentrism of the 19th century. After all, the contemporary global world is already multi-centric and multicultural.

[9] This passage deserves its own quote, too: "This observation, as this essay has suggested, should recast the views of postcolonial and post-Soviet scholars alike: not so much to help them judge whether place X "is postcolonial or not" – this is not an essay in ontology – but rather to cause them to ask if postcolonial hermeneutics might add richness to studies of place or literature X or Y or Z. In sum, the colonial relation at the turn of the millennium, whatever it may be, is thus not theoretically inflated to a point of weakness, nor is it the property of a certain class or space of peoples, but rather it becomes as fundamental to world identities as other "universal" categories, such as race, and class, and caste, and age, and gender" (Moore 2001, 124). This sentence highlights the peculiar historical trajectory of post-colonial studies, transitioning from positioning the subaltern who "cannot speak" (Spivak 1993), a creature with fragmented non-identity existing "between" territories, borders, and narratives (Bhabha 1994), to a notion of vague "universality." However, a crucial question arises: how can this category claim to be "universal" and foundational to global identities, when the very concept of "universality" is dismissed as an Eurocentric ideological construct within the frame of the postcolonial paradigm? This question remains unanswered by Moore, and even the use of quotation marks around it fails to resolve it.

However, I was surprised to discover during a conference in Poland,[10] a 2018 interview for a Hungarian journal (see Nagy 2020), a theoretical seminar in Germany, and my guest professorship at Columbia University (January–June 2023)[11] that interest in the post-colonial problem (now referred to as "decolonial") is on the rise – contrary to Todorova's predictions about the "melancholic phase of post-colonial studies." This new (at least for me) decolonial variant of post-colonialism has become one of the leading paradigms in the Western humanities and is driving the practical and institutional process of academic "de-colonization" in many Western universities. This has led to a revision of curricula and teaching methods, the decolonization of libraries and cultural canons, and the displacement of old power perspectives of knowledge production. Specialized centers, programs, and large research projects dedicated to decolonization have already been established in most Latin American and North American universities, as well as many British and European ones. These self-reforming humanities aim to break down the walls of the academic ivory tower, involving political and artistic activism, and initiating spectacular public decolonial actions in order to spread the ethos of decolonization throughout society.

The changes were not just practical, but also theoretical. The influential post-structuralist post-colonialists from the past – such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, and Helen Tiffin – were no longer in circulation. The once-prominent issues they raised, such as the exclusion of the colonized from the colonial Symbolic order, the "binarism" that suppressed differences, the colonial "abject" and "uncanny," the displaced role models, the in-between-ness, the impossibility of reconstructing an "authentic" national culture, and the consequent traumatic production of subjectivity, as well as the mimicry game between Master and Slave and the impossible voice of the subaltern, were rarely discussed in theoretical depth. In fact, the only idea of post-colonialism that really survived was Said's territorialized production of knowledge and the power construction of scientific fields. However, this old idea had now fallen into the hands of new authorities, coming from different place themselves – Latin-American theoreticians – activists of global "decoloniality," such as the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (Quijano 2007), the theorist of Argentinian origin Walter Mignolo, the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, the expert on Latin American culture Catherine Walsh from the University of Quito, Ecuador, and many others. They no longer wanted to quote French poets, as did Césaire (1971) or Fanon (1963), or follow theoretical traditions born in Euro-American universities, as did Said, Spivak, and Bhabha. Their ambition was simply to radically rewrite the "geography of knowledge" and shift the centers of production to other non-Western spaces.

The ideological father of the new movement, Aníbal Quijano, was a radical critic of European colonial modernity from 1492 up until globalization. According to him, five hundred years later, Western modernity has culminated in a new

[10] It was organized by Jan Sowa under the title "Pan-Slav(e)ism – Learning Capitalism from Central and Eastern Europe", Warsaw 2013.

[11] I was invited and took part in a webinar on decolonization of the Russian and Eurasian Studies, organized by Harvard University, Columbia University, etc.

world order that, through asymmetric globalization, has attained power covering the entire planet. That is why the state of "coloniality," the dark face of modernization and globalization, still exists in the unjust current state of the world, where the Euro-Atlantic world continues to be the winner, while Latin America and Africa remain the main losers. Conceptualized as such, global colonialism is an everlasting condition that needs to be remedied through permanent decolonization. Its first step is an epistemological defiance of Western modernity. According to Quijano, the latter is based on Cartesian rationalism, artificially opposing the "subject" to the "object" and "culture" to "nature." This philosophical and scientific paradigm had huge practical and social consequences, leading to atomic individualism and the absence of a project for "social totality," as well as an amputated sensitivity for the "Otherness" of different cultures. It resulted in objectified categorizations of all non-Europeans and racialized classifications, which legitimized colonial conquests, atrocities, and biopolitics. This led to the subjugation of free peoples and the destruction of non-Western cultures, which were subordinated to the Euro-colonial way of "production of knowledge." The epistemological dominance of Western culture, internalized by colonized people, lasted for centuries and still conquers souls today, not through direct colonial violence or colonial-administered education, but through post-modern cultural "seduction." Therefore, decolonization aims to destroy this knowledge hegemony and regain the legitimacy of local cultures, which, unlike the European one, have their own cosmic vision (totality) and are therefore non-repressive, accepting differences and heterogeneities. Only in this way can a pluralistic model of knowledge production be restored, allowing everyone the freedom to make free cultural choices, untethered from the age-old "cultural colonialism."

Quijano's short programmatic essay, a real theoretical manifesto, was first published in Spanish in 1989 and in English in 1999, and it founded and developed the entirely new concept of de-coloniality. In all subsequent contributions, his appeal to "undo Eurocentrism's totalizing claim and frame" was repeated again and again.

The concrete techniques of this undoing were developed afterwards by many de-colonialists, most notably by Mignolo (Mignolo, Escobar 2010, Mignolo 2011, Mignolo, Walsh 2018), who formulated them as something in between epistemological deconstructions of the basic concepts of the West, accompanied by short and understandable practical suggestions for young people. This central technique by Mignolo is called "delinking." It disconnects the free-thinking person from the whole implied epistemology of Euro-modern colonialism, including contemporary attempts at "secondary westernization," forced by global corporate neo-liberalism. Mignolo stresses the fact that "delinking" is not the old procedure of reduction to "universality," but rather a collective intellectual and practical endeavour for epistemic dialogue between different post-colonial cultures.[12] It aims

[12] In the very beginning of the foreword to their book, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Walter Mignolo and Catherine Welsh state that its purpose is "reflections on decoloniality from different continents, territories, and geographies; from different geobody storytellings, histories, crossstories, and transtories; and from different translocal subjectivities, struggles, worldviews, and

to preserve their "pluriversality" by binding together a bundle of various perspective shifts arising from the heterogeneity of the colonial experiences in different historical periods and in different parts of the world. However, the epistemic insights hidden in the different colonial experiences must be linked once more. This is called "relinking" – an intense dialogue between the numerous variants of decolonization that will create solidarity. To establish a common base, Mignolo suggests the category of "vincularidad," derived from an Indian tribe inhabiting the Andes, which denotes an awareness of the inner connection and interdependence between all living organisms, the Earth, and the cosmos (but it is rational, not pantheistic or mystical). The Argentinian theoretician and historian of premodern cultures explicitly points out that the commitment of the previous generation of post-colonialists (such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, etc.) to French post-structuralism has been abandoned. Decolonization should not start from Western theoretical perspectives, since that always will reproduce the Western hegemony, but rather from the life experiences of the different people of the world, as well as from the teachings of the great anti-colonialists from Latin America and elsewhere. He lists some of these father-figures as Waman Puma de Ayala, Mahatma Gandhi, José Carlos Mariátegui, Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Rigoberta Menchú, and Gloria Anzaldúa, among others.

The examples Mignolo provides of the delinking/relinking technique demonstrate that it involves a revision of the vocabulary of the most fundamental categories inherited from Renaissance humanism and the Western Enlightenment. Mignolo does not deny these categories, which have been accepted by the colonized for centuries, but rather seeks to radically alter them by erasing their implicit Eurocentric connotations and, where possible, replacing them with new concepts that shift the geo-political focus of knowledge production. For instance, he revises basic concepts such as "modernity,"[13] "emancipation,"[14] the Marxist concept of "proletariat," and the concept of "revolution,"[15] imbuing their transformed, "relinked" connotations with an acknowledgement of the diversity of races, skin colors, and cultures among the "wretched of the Earth." This has both theoretical and practical implications, creating new possibilities for subjectivity, solidarity,

world senses, most especially of those who have lived – and live – the colonial difference" (Mignolo, Walsh 2018, 2). They further note that they are not interested in anti-colonial "resistance," but in re-existence, including the internal pluralism of European thought, understood as "the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity" (ibidem, 18).

[13] The concept of "Modernity" needs to be freed from the implicit claim that it is exclusively a European phenomenon that has subsequently spread throughout the world. In its constitution, Modernity did not solely originate in Europe; rather, it emerged in an inescapable dialectical relationship with various colonial "Others." Modernity bears the shadow of all the racialized and colonized peoples, ethnicities, tribes, and minorities that make possible the commercial, financial, human, and cultural economy of the Modern age.

[14] The term "Emancipation" has historically referred to the liberation of the elite, white bourgeoisie, which subsequently became a colonial oppressor. As a result, this concept must be replaced by the ideologically unencumbered term "liberation," which alludes to the struggles for independence by numerous non-European peoples and tribes.

[15] Similarly, the concept of "revolution" should not be linked solely to its white models, such as the Glorious British Revolution, American Independence, and the French Revolution.

political struggle, and knowledge production that are liberated from European-liberal or socialist overtones. In short, it is necessary to decolonize the reference system and entire conceptual apparatus, stripping Western "universal" concepts of their epistemic privileges. Mignolo refers to this as "terminological denaturalization," whereby the points of knowledge production shift from the colonial center to the zones of exteriority, along the borders and interstices of modernity.

What follows involves rejecting the grand Euro-colonial Narrative and instead telling countless alternative stories from the perspectives of the colonized. These narratives are not necessarily 'better,' but different from those that hold cultural power. Mignolo summarizes all such epistemic procedures for practical and pedagogical purposes as "delinking" from the CMP, the colonial matrix of power. According to Quijano's model, the Matrix itself is understood as the specific Western combination of Cartesianism, modernity, capitalism, and colonialism, which has implemented the symbolic power of the West for 500 years.

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It was a magnificent program.

However, when it comes to dialogue between cultures, allow me to share a Bulgarian proverb: "It was all too good to be true." We Eastern Europeans have witnessed the horrifying transformation of one of the most inspiring utopias into terrible dictatorial regimes. Therefore, we have become skeptical of new utopias.

Or perhaps I shouldn't generalize by referring to "Eastern Europeans"? Many of my younger colleagues from Poland, Serbia, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Bulgaria have already embraced the paradigm of decolonization – an astonishing fact that I will discuss and analyze further in the next and final part of this essay.

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