



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

The South of the Poor North: Caucasus Subjectivity and the Complex of Secondary
“Australism”

Author(s): Madina Tlostanova

Source: *The Global South*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue: The Global South and World Dis/Order
(Spring 2011), pp. 66-84

Published by: [Indiana University Press](http://www.indiana.edu/~iupress/)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/globalsouth.5.1.66>

Accessed: 26/08/2011 11:11

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Global South*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

The South of the Poor North: Caucasus Subjectivity and the Complex of Secondary “Australism”

Madina Tlostanova

ABSTRACT

The erasing of the Second World has resulted in the increased binarity of the world order and changing of its axis to the North-South divide. Similarly to the West-East partition it tends to homogenize various local histories into imagined essentialized sets of characteristics. Drifting of bits and pieces of the Second World in the direction of either the North or the South has become unavoidable for all its former subjects, yet leaves them with an uncertain, almost negative subjectivity. The article problematizes the role and function of the ex-Socialist world and its colonial others within the global North-South divide and through the concepts of colonial and imperial differences. It considers Caucasus as the utmost case of the South of the poor North and analyses secondary “Australism” syndrome which is devastating for the subjectivity of its people. Finally, it dwells on the possible ways of decolonizing of being, sensing and thinking in the non-European Russian/Soviet ex-colonies.

1. A SOUTHERN PROLOGUE

In the spring of 1993, I was interviewing the charming and intellectually sharp, if already somewhat feeble, Eudora Welty while doing my graduate studies at the English department of the University of Mississippi. Having learned that I was from Caucasus—the South of Russia—she dropped that “all Souths are alike all over the world,” which I interpreted as a nice Southern gesture meant to include me in the club. But then I started to reflect, compare, and analyze, which resulted in a dissertation on Eudora Welty, in several articles on US Southern fiction, and eventually in my own Southern but also

Caucasus novel in which Miss Welty's phrase acquired unexpected overtones. Having spent a year in Mississippi, I had a strange feeling of being at home in that climate, among those trees and smells, enjoying local food and birds and, most of all, local people with their stories and memories, prejudices and complexes, who were always ready to see a human being in a stranger, unlike the people of New England or Moscow. I have not been writing much on US Southern fiction for the last decade but I have written a lot on Caucasus—the Russian South—as a part of a larger concept of the non-western world. This essay is revisiting the South but with a global dimension in mind. It is trying to understand how different local histories relate to the new construct of the global South, why some of their inhabitants stagnate and others turn negative resistance into positive re-existence, and in what way secondary Australism prevents Caucasus from truly joining the Global South.

Caucasus local history is unquestionably different from that of the American South, yet it is consonant with the Global South trajectory in many ways. Still, there were clearly certain constants that made me feel at home in the deep South in the most acute and painful way, compelling me to rethink the South of my childhood, which has become known today as the South of the poor North. Among them is the peculiar sense of place, always far more important than the somehow broken time which even the forced Soviet modernity was not able to fix: the Caucasian Southern mythology recreated and repeated again and again with a clear understanding of the gap between reality and myth, and a no less stubborn unwillingness to articulate it; the defeated but proud people with their strange “prehistory of globalization,”¹ who are dispersed throughout the world in large Caucasus diasporas today; the erased story of the Ottoman or Black Sea Transit, linked with hundreds of thousands of dispensable human lives; the sensuality and hidden violence of landscapes and stories; the painful gender and slavery theme of the “white slavery” black legend; the repressed yet always surfacing race which acquired in Caucasus a paradoxical dimension of being white yet black and the other way round.

All of this I discovered later when I paid attention to the intricate ways the local became the global and realized that I am also of the South (Caucasus) and of the Orient (Central Asia), but inevitably of the poor North (Russia) as well, as the defeated empire trapped its colonial subjects like myself in a truly deadening way, closing rather than opening the new possibilities connected with globalization. It was then that I realized that I would always be better understood in any South than in “my own” poor North. Standing in the Mississippi Delta forest after the conversation with Miss Welty, I breathed in the sweet air which smelled like home, I touched the dogwood tree that looked so familiar, and heard a neighbor across the lake who was calling me with a soft Southern drawl resembling the melodious intonations from the dark blue

Southern nights of my childhood. I spent the next twenty-five years in Moscow and extensively traveled abroad. I certainly cannot claim to represent the Caucasus sensibility or identity of then or now, but I know what it is and I know it not as a native informant and not as a detached anthropologist, but as a border person whose aesthesis is inextricably and forever linked with Caucasus, a place which I will always love and hate.

2. CHANGING THE WORLD AXIS—KEEPING THE LOGIC OF MODERNITY/ COLONIALITY

Everyone is now familiar with the terms Orientalism and Occidentalism, including all of their possible connotations and nuances from the pretence at scholarly neutrality to the cases of open political and ideological engagement. However, these are concepts of the particular historical and geo-political context and logic. They can be defined as the logic of the European normative nation-states, capitalist empires of modernity, comparativist taxonomic anxiety as the main measuring tools for humanity and appropriation and/or annihilation as the basic acculturation techniques. This general dichotomous logic was maintained during the short (in historical terms) period of capitalism/socialism divide, often translating purely ideological characteristics of the Second World into racial and cultural differences and imperial-colonial relations. The rapid, almost overnight disappearance of the Second World in the early 1990s led to a strange symptom which is manifested in Fukuyama's infamous "the end of history" discourse and in the typical Western understanding of the post-Soviet condition in the temporal rather than spatial sense, thus rendering irrelevant and invisible dozens of millions of people who actually live here.² From the side of the vanishing Second World (and my own) it can be summarized in the following questions: What does it mean to be a void, to be nothing in the new architecture of the world? What does it mean to be aware of the fact that the Second World narrative in history is over, the war already won, the defeated side never again expected to reemerge and pester the world with absurd claims to existence?

The post-Soviet space can enter neither the world of capital nor the company of world proletariat. Therefore it does not suffer the "sweat shop sublime" (Robbins 84) as much as it wants to. The post-Soviet subject does not feel passive guilt upon consuming the fruit of other people's labor, nor does he/she experience Caliban's anger. The post-Soviet intellectual elites until very recently have continued to see the Western tradition as their own; they were brought upon Western culture and were identifying with it (sometimes through Russian mediation). There is one recurrent sensibility, namely that of the present community of fate of the millions, the ex-subalterns and their masters, who all of a sudden found themselves in a similar situation of being thrown out of

history/modernity. What is at stake here is the private miserable life of a common individual in the situation of physical survival, the inability to solve the most elementary problems against the background of dark, sinister, and irrational forces of history. Due to historical cataclysms of a gigantic scale, the global forcefully penetrates one's private life, connecting it to the millions of other subjects of the (ex)empire, suddenly thrown out of their usual social existence, deprived of their status, work, citizenship, ability to survive, self-respect, and prospects for the future. Here the moral sphere is acting not in the form of guilt and self-justification but in the form of resentment, resulting in the lack of action or, in some rare cases, transcendence of the post-Soviet sublime towards a decolonial option.

The erasing of the Second World has resulted among other things in the increased binarity of the world order. The drifting of its bits and pieces in the direction of either the North or the South has become an unavoidable procedure for all its former subjects. This lack of the third term, so to speak, the absent possibility of mediation which once existed, affected the leading geopolitical models. It created a huge gap between the multifarious and contradictory world refusing to be stuffed into the procrustean bed of such logic and the new rigid opposition of the global North and the Global South conservative return to the older "classical" geopolitical and civilization models in the vein of Friedrich Ratzel,³ Halford Mackinder or, slightly later, Karl Houshofer and, more recently, Dimitri Kitsikis and Samuel Huntington. The ideological language of the Cold War was replaced with the *deja vue* of *lebensraum* and heart-land and rim-land master narratives, and the attribution of particular fixed characteristics to various civilizations and intermediate regions, with a focus on the North-South divide as a new world axis. Today the economic aspect seems to prevail in the idea of the global North and global South, as it is manifested in Willy Brandt's 1980 division of the world approximately at a latitude of 30° N,⁴ with an exception of Australia and New Zealand (the white settler colonies) which should not have been included according to the latitude principle, and the often excluded India⁵ which geographically should have belonged, or in the seemingly neutral digital explanation of the North-South divide⁶ clearly collapsing today. Yet the racist, cultural, and religious reductionist and deeply imperial sides of these concepts and divisions cannot be entirely hidden or suppressed, leading us directly to the imperial-colonial differential in modernity and the need to look at the North-South construct through a different lens.

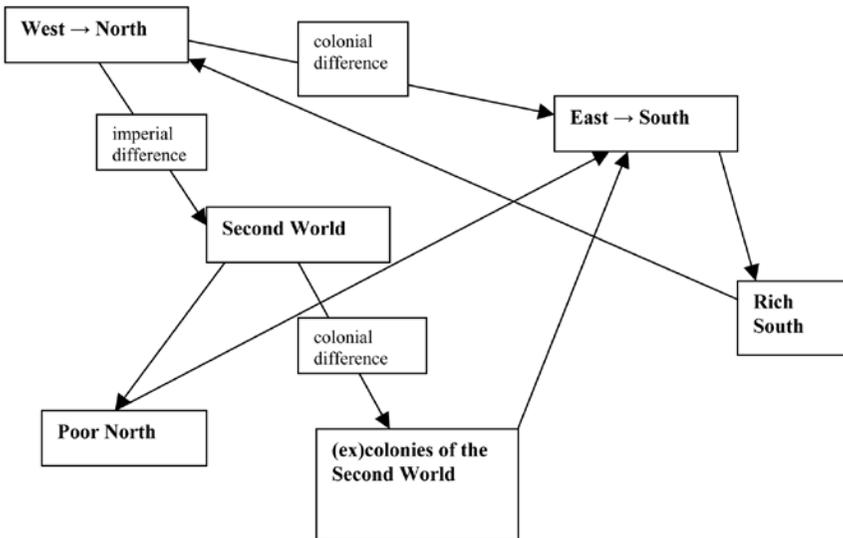
Globalization and particularly its recent global crisis, which is not only the crisis of capitalism but even more a crisis of modern subjectivity, knowledge production system, modern ethics, etc., have not been able so far to act in the capacity of the Yalta conference, as Neil Smith suggested several years ago (22). It has failed to build a new world order, creating instead a global (dis)order, symbolically manifested in the change of the geographic axis of history. The

inadequacy of geopolitical schemes indeed intensified the sensation of the world (dis)order and its precarious instability. And the relative freshness of the recently coined terms—the global North and the global South—cannot hide their old and well familiar grounds—those of the rhetoric of modernity with its hidden logic of coloniality⁷ as a racial, economic, social, existential, gendered, and epistemic bondage of modernity reconfigured yet maintained once again through the North/South dichotomy.

The North/South divide as a product of the North always codes the global South as poor, suffering, and downtrodden, fixing its essentialized place as a victim which can be destroyed if its resistance becomes too violent and dangerous. The crucial point here then is to stop looking at the global South and its epistemology, ethics, and ontology through a negative lens and stop seeing poverty as the only connector between different Souths. Resistance can and does turn to re-existence as a positive model of existential creativity, and acculturation can and does turn to transculturation as a mutual and more symmetrical exchange between dominant and repressed cultures.

3. IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL DIFFERENCE AND THE NORTH/SOUTH DIVIDE

Let us imagine what happens with the vanished Second World in all its complexity and intricate hierarchies in the new binary structure of the world (dis) order:



The ex-Second World does not join so easily one or the other of the two remaining poles, generating oxymoronic subcategories instead, such as the poor North which does not equal the poor or global South, or the South of the poor North. The latter in turn does not equal or entirely merge with the global South. To understand this logic we need to introduce two concepts coined by Walter D. Mignolo and developed by other members of the decolonial collective including myself. I refer here to the imperial and colonial difference transparent in the West/East as well as North/South divide.⁸ The colonial difference refers to the differential between the first-class capitalist empires of modernity (the heart of Europe) and their colonies which became the Third World in the twentieth century, that is, the absolute other of the First World, translated into the concept of the West or, at the present day, of the global North, understood unanimously as the rich North, the global market economy, the (neo)liberal and democratic societies, dispersed geographically but united economically.

The imperial difference is trickier, as it refers to various losers that failed to succeed in or were prevented by different circumstances and powers from fulfilling their imperial mission in modernity. These losers took second-class places and became intellectually, epistemically or culturally colonized by the winners (Great Britain, France, Germany, and currently the US) and developed a catching-up logic, a whole array of psychological hang-ups, schizophrenic collective complexes, ideologies of the besieged camp or, alternatively, of the victory in defeat. All of these complex sensibilities and subjectivities have found their most interesting and acute realization in arts, fiction, and other creative spheres.

Imperial difference collapses itself into internal and external variants. The former refers to the European losers of the second modernity which became the South of Europe,⁹ while the latter means the not-quite-Western, not-quite-capitalist empires of modernity. Consider for instance the Ottoman Sultanate or Russia as a paradigmatic case of such a Janus-faced empire—rich yet poor, providential yet failed. Russia has never been seen by Western Europe as its part, remaining a racialized empire, which feels itself a colony in the presence of the West and projects its own inferiority complexes onto its colonies, particularly Muslim ones, which today have become precisely the South of the poor North, the multiply colonized others of the defeated Russian/Soviet empire. In the case of the Ottoman Sultanate, this inferiority complex gave birth to self-racializing and efforts to whiten the elites, while in the case of Russia, it generated a complex of a secondary European and Central Asian, and in the case of Caucasus—a self-orientalization or a symbolic self-whitening, leading to a stagnation of any alternative political and social movements and actors. The dead-endedness of the imperial difference has been the specific Russian problem for centuries, much before the capitalism/socialism divide, and is re-inscribed at present in the return of the North/South division.

4. ORTHODOX PROVIDENTIALISM, (NEO)EURASIANISM AND OTHER SUBALTERN IMPERIAL COMPLEXES

The way out of this dead end was looked for in the sphere of the transcendent and the spiritual, overcoming the materiality of the world in the direction of some kind of sacred geography or superseding geopolitics. Such was the “Moscow as the third Rome” theocratic model, according to which Moscow was taking the place left free by Constantinople and striving to create a new Orthodox Christian center in the South-East Europe instead of the defeated Byzantium that never coped with its mission. The theocratic imperial consciousness has been marked by deep statism, presently acquiring ethnic forms, and by the sanctification of the state as a “metaphysical principle of sacred cosmology” (Pelipenko 316), the direct correlation between the imperial territory and the religious-metaphysical and transcendental dimension, and providential exceptionalism which, adding specific colors to Russian xenophobia, sees the other as hostile to the great theocratic project. Territorial expansionism has been motivated primarily not in strategic or military or much less economic terms, but in terms of a rather aggressive Russian Orthodox universalist ideal of a particular spirituality, taking over the whole humanity of the specific ecumenical and universalist Russian Orthodox vision. In Dostoyevsky’s words, “Europe is almost as dear to us as Russia, in Europe there resides the whole Japheth race, and *our goal is to unite all the nations of this race and even further, to Sem and Ham*” (161, italics mine).

Russian Orthodox civilization strove to build, however unsuccessfully, its *own* global model. With the collapse of the Soviet Union its unattainability became obvious, and this was the most crucial and seldom discussed failure of this empire, not ideology or economy as such. The orthodox civilization in its purely religious or seemingly secular Soviet forms had always aimed to take revenge for the lost battle with Western modernity. This sentiment was expressed in Eurasianism, which saw Russia as a specific Eurasian empire transcending the East/West divide, as a meta-civilization and mediator of European and non-European factors. The Eurasianists correctly diagnosed Russian secondary Eurocentrism as generating secondary Orientalism and racism, turning into cultural ex-centrism and negation of positive cultural identity. They stressed the necessity of “knowing oneself and “being oneself” instead of trying to copy and resemble the great world powers, proclaiming in a sheer utopian way the role of Russia as the world leader in the liberation of the colonial world from the “Romance-Germanic yoke” (Puti Yevrazii 76), unifying all Asian cultures dominated by the West.

The same sentiment was later expressed in its repressive form as Soviet expansionism and a missionary zeal to convert everyone into the Socialist faith, going hand in hand with a more strategically calculated building of its

own model of Socialist modernity parallel to the Western one. The soviet model shared the main elements and vices of Western modernity but positioned itself as an independent alternative project. The catching-up modernity in Russia/Soviet Union was just an external and not very successful strategy, while the imperial consciousness has remained essentially the same under Peter the Great, Stalin, and Putin.

Having lost with the collapse of the USSR its theocratic element in the form of the Soviet myth, today's Russia is unsuccessfully trying to change it into a nationalist ideal. However, its global imperial origins constantly appear and reappear, as is seen in the case of the new Eurasianists attempting a revanchist manifesto of the victory in defeat and a future utopian revolution of the poor South under the auspices of the poor North, thus revamping the poor North as the spiritual sacred center of the world. The poverty of the poor North here is used as the main signifier capable of uniting Russia with the global South in the planetary revolution after which the lost and "hidden meta-continent will emerge from the depths of the past" and materialize in reality, and the "geopolitics will become a sacred geography" (Dugin 36). This utopianism would have been irrelevant were it not for the fact that it is very symptomatic of Russia as a subaltern empire with complex relations with the South of the poor North. Caucasus, for example, still remains partly its colony.

5. SUPERIMPOSING THE WEST-EAST AND NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE, OR THE ARBITRARINESS OF GEOGRAPHY

The Second World or today's poor North was originally a dubious construct; on the one hand, it disrupted the dichotomy of the East and the West, allowing certain groups to raise their status from the Third World to the Second World (as it had happened with the majority of Central Asian and Caucasus colonies). On the other hand, it differed from the global modernity/coloniality only on a most superfluous ideological level; being a variant of Western modernity and with one of its stray discourses positioned officially as its alterity, it maintained the basic myths and major components of modernity as such, including racism, progressivism, and coloniality of being, gender, and knowledge. In a sense, modernity in the twentieth century was implemented in two forms—the liberal/capitalist modernity and the socialist/statist modernity. Each of them had a sunny side and a darker side. Each of them has its own kind of coloniality. The darker colonial side of the Soviet modernity was manifested in a second-rate type of the Soviet citizen constructed in spite of internationalist slogans and an overt goal of racial mixing of the population designed to create a future Soviet Mestizo/a with an erased ethnic element. These identities turned out highly problematic and self-negating at times. The previous Soviet project of redeeming and converting the colonial others (of

non-Russian ethnicities and non-Christian religions) into the communist faith is gone while a total rejection and radicalized othering prevails.

If we take the Latin equivalents of the North-South divide, we can come up with two more terms—"Australism" (from Austral - Southern) and "Borealism" (from Boreal - Northern), which can help formulate a preliminary definition for what I would like to problematize—an anxiety to divide the world according to the North-South divide replacing the previous West/East division, including the capitalist/socialist dichotomy. Under the façade of purely economic development of criteria of classifying locales as belonging or not belonging to the North, this presumably new division hid unappetizing and stale notions which went beyond economy into the spheres of ontology, gnoseology, ethics, etc. They were based on the "hubris of the zero point" (Castro Gomez 433) as the main epistemic principle and the division of humankind into modern (Northern) and traditional (Southern), thus coding modernity officially in temporal (and not spatial) terms and, according to Mignolo, hiding the imperial-colonial relations which accentuate space-in-history rather than disembodied time as such ("Coloniality at Large" 240). Today's peculiar return of geography and the urge to literally and symbolically re-territorialize is marked by the drive to depoliticize history and erase the power asymmetries. This proves to be impossible, as the global North as a new point of ultimate arrival is even more unattainable for the majority of actors than the previous ideological West. Geography remains deeply ingrained in the colonality of power, being, gender, and knowledge, preventing under-modern, sub-human groups and countries from belonging to the North and maintaining the gates much more vigilantly than during the Cold War. Economically, Turkey, for example, has earned its right to belong to the North, but for most Northern theorists of the South-North divide that does not make it part of the North. They invent reasons like the ersatz human rights issue, but in reality the reason lies in Islam and in the fact that Turkey is marked by imperial difference and the catching-up principle of applying modernity in ways similar to those applied in Russia. The ex-Socialist countries of Eastern Europe are in a similar situation of double standards: While formally they should be regarded as part of the global North, they have been assigned a fixed place as the poor relative in the new world (dis)order.

A few years ago while I was teaching in the North of Germany, I asked my students where Europe ended and Asia started for them. They said, "at the Berlin wall," which meant that they were still within the juxtaposition of capitalism and socialism. Russian students in 2002 told me in a more "neutral" scientific way that it is the Ural mountains that divide Europe from Asia, as this was what they learned in high school. In 2009, a Mexican-American student assured me that Europe is everything that is to the North of the global South (and hence for him there was no difference between Russia and Germany). The

latter mixture of the old West-East and new North-South divide is an American hemispheric view (from a subaltern perspective), quite different from the Eurasian situation and Eurasian interpretations. Just as the American century was geographic and continued the providential and exceptionalist Manifest Destiny ideology (Smith, *American Empire* 19–20), so too does today's North-South division easily reveal its expansionist imperial grounds even if they seem to be disembodied territorially.

Similar to the previous East-West divide, the new-old North-South divide is highly problematic, as it tends to homogenize various local histories into imagined essentialized sets of characteristics. Yet, no matter how we formulate these binary oppositions (savage-civilized, Christian-pagan, West-East, capitalist-socialist, etc.) in their core, there always lies the ego-politics of knowledge based on the zero point epistemology and the accompanying strive to taxonomize the world according to the hierarchy of the rich North and the homogenized poor South (Mignolo, "Delinking" 461–62). The South has become global against its will while many locales with different local histories, sometimes hardly identified as geographically Southern, have been turned into the symbolic South in the process of altering geography according to various myths of modernity. Today modernity turns the concept of the Orient into the poor South.

In Eurasia in the continental sense, the secondary defeated empire Russia is geographically in the North, yet economically, socially, politically, and epistemically it is the South or, rather, the poor North in spite of all the remaining oil, which immediately questions the North-South divide. As for the South of this secondary ex-empire, that is, its colonies in the Caucasus (the hot Siberia) and in Turkistan (the ex-Russian Orient), it seems to be the typical example of the poor South where the Russian and Soviet colonialism gave place today to the ideology of "banana republics" with their ethnic statism and clan system, unemployment, stagnation, and petty nationalism.

6. THE PARADIGMATIC SOUTH OF THE POOR NORTH - CAUCASUS

Let us concentrate on the ways Caucasus has been (re)conceptualized within the Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet imperial ideology as well as on the models of problematic subjectivity generated as a result. The imperial treatment of Caucasus was a mediating link between two versions of Russian imperial tactics—the early one manifested in the way the empire dealt with many peoples of Siberia, the Urals, Altay, etc., essentially similar to the treatment of Native Americans in the New World by white settlers, and a later version of Russian colonialism in Central Asia, copied in many ways from the British and French models. Many ethnicities of Caucasus indeed manifested the paradigmatic South for Russia, while their lands signified the only easy possibility of opening the Janus-faced

empire to the world through a warm sea. Hence the annexation of Caucasus was a purely geopolitical matter and highly symbolic at that, while the pragmatic economic or even military reasons were of secondary importance.

The Russian empire constructed its rationale for discriminating against the Caucasus *others* in various ways, from treating them as military allies and equals in humanity in the first modernity, through racializing and dehumanizing in the second modernity during the conquest of Caucasus, their treatment as internal others in Soviet times, to their total othering as symbolically black today. Hence their paradoxical metamorphosis from the quintessence of the Caucasian (white) race to their subhumanity and blackness in contemporary Russian neo-imperial discourse (Tlostanova 90).

During its conquest (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), Caucasus was far from being homogenously Muslim. But within the Russian imperial imaginary, Caucasus had to play the role of the secondary domestic Orient and thus acquired additional demonized features by being coded by the conquering Russians as Islamic and Asiatic (Sahni 36–40). Here lied a substantial difference between the Russian demonization of Caucasus and the European and American exoticization of the same land, with westerners coding it as the South of Europe rather than Asia and its people as ex-Christians rather than Muslims. In the nineteenth century, Caucasus people acted in the Western imaginary as exotic internal noble savages of the South of Europe, fallen out of modernity and in need of the benevolent humanistic West's protection from the barbarous Russian empire and the devious Ottoman Sultanate.

Consequently, the inhabitants of this peculiar South were regarded alternatively and sometimes simultaneously within the discourse of the dying race which has to give its space to the more successful, modern and European Russians, and the predominantly Muslim interpretations of Caucasus identity. Interpreted as unanimously (and incorrectly) Muslim, Caucasians were once again either negated and annihilated, or seen as subject to more humane development and civilizing discourses. If today global South stands mainly for the ex-Third World and those parts of the Second World which failed to raise to the status of the North, in the nineteenth century the situation was more complex, particularly in Russia, where instead of Western Orientalism one finds secondary Orientalism, the direct result of secondary Eurocentrism—an old and incurable Russian disease. Both of them distort the Western originals in the Russian cultural and mental space. Orientalist constructs in this case turn out not only more complex but also built on the principle of double mirror reflections. These constructs copy Western Orientalism with a slight deviation and, necessarily, with a carefully hidden, often unconscious sensibility that Russia itself is a form of a mystic and mythic Orient for the West. As a result, both mirrors—the one turned in the direction of the colonies and the one Europe turned in the direction of Russia—appear to be distorting and creating a

specific unstable sensibility, balancing between the role of an object and that of the subject in the epistemic and existential sense.

7. SECONDARY AUSTRALISM SYNDROME

Along with the Russian secondhand and distorted Orientalism, there was obviously a parallel Australist discourse which accentuated the Christian element in Caucasus identity, the high racial status of Caucasus people in the scale of humanity according to then popular quasi-scientific theories such as Blumenbach's Caucasian race,¹⁰ and a carefully maintained connection with and belonging to Europe, though obviously a second-class Europe. This specific construction of Caucasus as a questionably European South had a Western origin, with imperial rivalry at its base and the black legend mentality targeted against Russia and the Ottoman Sultanate. The future of the Caucasus people was not really of any interest to the West then or today. They have remained the stiffened emblems of Orientalist fantasies, the dehumanized arguments in the rivalry between Russian autocracy and Western liberalism.

More importantly, these constructs deeply infected the Caucasus identity resulting not in a classical Orientalist self-negation and painful complexes as we see in Turkistan (the only place where Russians were called "Europeans" by the colonized people), but in a claim to European and whiteness discourses, as Caucasians have remained both the victims and the perpetrators of the whiteness myth. They have accentuated their status of breed improvers (in Ottoman harems) and their geographic locality in Europe (manifested in the dispute over whether the Caucasus mountain range belonged or did not belong to Europe), impossible to erase from Caucasian subjectivities until now when they find themselves in the situation of the symbolic blacks of Eurasia, gradually becoming blacker and blacker in the Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet imaginary, along with the enfolding of the racial discourses of modernity. Race has been reconsidered through belonging to (the center of) Europe, Christianity, and modernity, and, at the same time, commercialized and virtualized in the frame of commodity racism (McClintock 210, 219). The faithful following of the Eurocentric myth and Caucasian attempts to inscribe themselves into the South of Europe narrative have created a catch-twenty-two situation, as they closed for Caucasians any possibility of identification with the global South today.

Orientalist and Australianist discourses alike had racism at their core, constructed by Eurocentrism as a discursive space from which racism as its instrument makes the Eurocentric affirmation normative. In Caucasus, race was a borrowed mental handicap which nevertheless has distorted its intersubjective relations and stifled its decolonial moves for centuries. The constructed racial discourses lying at the basis of the modern/colonial hierarchy of

the world, having started with the colonization of the New World and the Atlantic transit, began to circulate globally. They have been mediated in various places—from colonial to subaltern imperial. The local history of Caucasus and the turning of its people from whites (in the nineteenth-century Western discourse) to blacks (in the post-Soviet Russian paranoid narrative) is a peculiar illustration of the flexibility, arbitrariness, and misanthropic stability of racial discourses in modernity.

Caucasus people remain among the few whose resistance to Russia has been consistent and persistent throughout history. Yet it has never been entirely successful due to many reasons, secondary Australism being one of the major psychological explanations for this failure. Today Caucasus resistance is divided into several flows with different claims at global resonance. The most well known is linked to extremist versions of Islam and often demonized as terrorist, although there are many other ingredients in this phenomenon, with economic and social factors playing an important role, and the politicized religion acting as a glue holding various factors together. The seemingly more intellectual internal flow of resistance is weak and increasingly opportunistic and neocolonial, while a more articulate global Circassian diaspora resistance based on imagined pan-Caucasian identity still remains unsuccessful. As a result, the inhabitants of the Caucasus find themselves in a void. Now, just as one hundred and fifty years ago, they are used but never really needed by Russia or Turkey, Arabic countries, or the West.

8. "I FELT I WAS AN INDIAN MYSELF!" OR HOW TO GET OUT OF THE SECONDARY COLONIAL DIFFERENCE?

Two years ago I wrote a book on decolonial gender epistemologies in the Americas and in Eurasia, and sent a copy to a Caucasus writer Dzhambulats Koshybayev, who for me represents both a peculiar contradiction and the hidden potential of Caucasus subjectivity: he is highly intellectual, refined, and well read in Western and Eastern literatures. As a postcolonial, Koshybayev writes in the language of metropolis, the imperial Russian, creating intricate ironic many-layered Southern parables of imagined spaces which seldom follow the direction of history, memory, locality or any reality for that matter. But I sensed in his works a Southern agony and angst, marking the void, the un-verbalized loss and defeat, which he transcends in his peculiar Hermann Hesse-style glass-bead game.¹¹ Dzhambulats responded with an old-fashioned letter written by hand and sent in a blue envelope with Caucasus mountains on the stamp. There was one phrase there that made me feel that my book was not written in vain: "After reading your text I felt I was an Indian myself!" For me the question is really how to open this decolonial way for Caucasus people, how to let them feel that they are also (symbolic) Indians.

There is no epistemology of the South in any positive critical sense in Caucasus. There is no drive to find connections with other “Souths.” What is at work here is precisely a complex of secondary Australism and a symbolic rejection of one’s role as the South, either as resistance or re-existence. Many Caucasus intellectuals still tend to interpret the Russian/Soviet modernization positively by contrasting Soviet modernizing projects in the colonies with those of the Muslim “developing” countries. A symbolic rising to the status of the Second World together with the Soviet empire is still regarded as an unquestionably positive step, even if within the Soviet empire the racial hierarchy has remained intact. Any possible parallels and intersections with Third World discourses have been automatically erased as humiliating or irrelevant. The same refers to the virtual lack of the additional dimension of the colonial difference, hidden and suppressed in local epistemic, ontological or ethical models.

It proves difficult to delink from the mutant paradigm of secondary colonial difference with its double standards in the sphere of subjectivity. Colonial and ex-colonial groups remain subjects of redemption by means of various discourses and tactics—from Christianity to civilizing mission, from socialism to overall consumerism today. They remain incarcerated in a triumphant vector pointed towards emancipation in accordance with the heresy of stagism. Delinking from this point of view requires a self-reflexive and highly critical stance and a readiness to work on different levels. Caucasus today cannot offer an identity which would cope with this task, as its intelligentsia has been traditionally pro-Russian and pro-Soviet, its new business elites are neocolonial, while its common people, finding themselves in the condition of being thrown overnight into the dead-end situation of the poor South, easily become victims of extremist revanchist organizations and sentiments. The new elites continue the economic, social, and cultural discrimination of their own people, hiding behind neo-liberal or ethnic-nationalist slogans and continuing to practice a self-deprecating intellectual dependency on the values of Western modernity. It is the result of external imperial difference with its secondary Eurocentrism as the constitutive element that spreads over the colonized as well as the colonizers.

There is a clearly utopian vision of leaping from the secondary Second World status to the secondary First World status, but what could be the possible alternatives? Either going back to the suffocating embrace of Russia and playing the role of its second-class citizens or sub-humans, or becoming the service countries for the rich North or the rich South. Moreover, it is more difficult to overcome the complex of the colony of the second-class empire (the poor North) than even the complex of the ex-Third World which has an access to the first-hand modernity through its postcolonial genealogy and could never claim a European origin to begin with, as it has been the case with Caucasus. It is painful to part with such pacifying illusions.

For the South of the poor North, it is urgent to join the shaping South-to-South networks and dialogues. But what is needed here, and what is lacking so far, is the successful delinking from the established rules and divisions, the turn from survival to re-existence, the combination of the global and the Southern dimensions, or, to paraphrase the old formula used to analyze William Faulkner's works, the turn of the local into the universal (or, in this case, pluriversal) (Mignolo and Tlostanova, "Theorizing from the Borders" 210) in the sense of keeping both dimensions dynamically at work. This happens easier and more acutely and creatively in the spheres of art and literature, non-rational and non-scientific knowledge, and selected intellectual positions than in scholarly discourse, political organizations and movements, etc. that are strictly controlled by the state or corporations. In the creative and non-rational spheres there are quite interesting and successful examples of magically turning the "local color" into the analectically, in Dussel's understanding,¹² global dimension and thus linking the erased history and the subaltern modernity.

Such an example is Murat Yagan, an Abkhazian born in Turkey and living in Canada, an artist, philosopher, and a spiritual leader of a Sufi order. Apart from being a talented artist who studied in the West and also knows perfectly both the Circassian and the Islamic traditions, Yagan is an oral transmitter of the Ahmsta Kebzeh—an ancient spiritual tradition, or knowledge of the art of living an abundant life, which has originated in Caucasus but has been maintained mainly by the Circassian diaspora abroad.¹³

9. RESTORING THE GLOBAL DIMENSION

The future possibility of joining the multiple global South in conceptualizing and restating the forgotten or discredited re-existence models lies precisely in delinking from the logic of the present world (dis)order rather than looking for a comfortable place in its taxonomy, in realizing that there are many Souths that can have a productive dialogue practicing their re-existence around and beyond the totality of the logic of modernity. The analectic global Southern dimension of thinking in case of the South of the poor North has been sustained mostly not in those who stayed, but rather in those who belong to the several million diaspora with its strive to restate the long and erased histories as well as subjectivities and geo- and body-politics of the negative globalization, including the Black Sea slave trade. Unfortunately, there is no real unification of the internal and external flows. The diasporic Circassians are more articulate in their criticism of Russian colonialism. They claim the old tradition of unsubdued Circassians and retain traces of Caucasus cosmologies, while at the same time attempting to use the civil society and international organizations in order to attract attention to the Circassian question.

But digging out the erased history is not sufficiently paired with the continuing living tradition. There is a crudely interrupted indigenous legacy which often makes any dialogue difficult and deceptively leaves only the option of *going back* to tradition, artificially recreated in this case. One of the reasons for this is the unprecedented artificial selection that has taken place in case of Caucasians. Those who did have a sense of dignity, an independent spirit, and a memory of the Circassian past were either killed or forced to immigrate. The gene of resistance has been destroyed in those who stayed home. Their minds had been fed with the colonialist interpretations of history and Soviet nationalities discourses, and suffer from a lack of continuous literacy tradition that would help to remember as well as from a pervasive fear.

A more global power shift and a more visionary leadership are needed in order to make the two resistance flows reunite without being manipulated by Russia, the West, or the Muslim world. A long awaited process of building horizontal coalitions with other Souths needs to be initiated as well. But there is no sufficient drive for that in the Russian Caucasians, many of whom are still immersed in their whiteness myth and behavior of happy slaves. Such a dialogue with other Souths is the only way out for Caucasus, but what could be the grounds for such South-to-South networks? Clearly it has to be re-existence as a positive existential creativity, mostly on trickster grounds, in Chela Sandoval's sense,¹⁴ toward a decolonizing of being, knowledge, and aesthesis. It is necessary to restore the lost global dimension, a sense of belonging to the global South, which requires eradicating puny pettiness and opening one's eyes to another formula of turning the local into pluriversal. This is better expressed in diasporic Circassians who are attuned to the general problems of many different Souths, such as ontological othering, dispensability of human lives, slavery, sea transit, metaphysical duality of (symbolic) blackness and whiteness, etc. A (more) global Caucasus subjectivity is needed, written into the global history of the (many) Souths.

We cannot know today if the decolonial paths of re-existence detectable sporadically in Caucasian selves would generate in the future any kind of alternative sensibility not infected by the rhetoric of modernity with its hidden logic of any form of coloniality—Western, mediated Russian, or a third-rate colony of a second-rate empire. Possible ways out of this blind alley would have to be closely linked with building of a viable agency negotiating a critical bordering stance in between. The process of epistemic decolonization from the myths of modernity is in full swing today. In Caucasus, however, such processes are slowed by the necessity of proving one's loyalty to the highly repressive Russian state, the remaining zombification of Circassians by modernity discourses and mainly racism, and the idea of belonging to Europe, to progress, to whiteness, to Civilization. This is what prevents Caucasians from forming coalitions with other inhabitants of the global South or from learning

more about indigenous and colonized peoples' thought and positions in other parts of the world. Russian Caucasians have to decolonize from the myth of modernity and start self-critically seeing their own epistemic colonization. It is necessary to start thinking beyond the limits of our own countries or even continents, beyond ethnicities and languages, and to dismantle the peripheral position of Caucasians in the world in order to let its people become a part of the informational and political space of trans-modern thinking and being, and stop acting as pawns tackling the big imperial games of Western and Russian modernity, the Muslim world, or today's rich and poor North.

Notes

1. This term is used by a Circassian diasporic anthropologist Seteney Shami in her article of the same title. See Shami's "Pre-histories of Globalization: Circassian Identity in Motion" (2000).
2. Fukuyama's exclusively temporal rendering of the post-Soviet condition has been criticized many times in the last two decades, yet the catchy slogan used in the title of his book still circulates. See Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).
3. For further information on Ratzel and Lebensraum, see Smith's "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum" (1980).
4. For more details see *The Brandt Commission papers: Selected Background Papers Prepared for the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1978–79* (1981).
5. For more details see Therien's "Beyond the North-South Divide: The Two Tales of World Poverty" (1999).
6. For further insight on global digital divide, see Guillen and Suárez's "Explaining the Global Digital Divide: Economic, Political and Sociological Drivers of Cross-national Internet Use" (2005).
7. For explanation of the intricate interplay of the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, see Mignolo and Tlostanova's "The Logic of Coloniality and the Limits of Postcoloniality" (2007), pages 109–23.
8. See Tlostanova and Mignolo's "Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option" (2009).
9. For the thoroughly theorized concept of the South of Europe, see Dainotto's "A South with a View: Europe and Its Other" (2000).
10. A famous German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach coined this term around 1800 based on his highly questionable craniological analysis of the Georgian skull he discovered several years before. He assumed that the people from Southern Caucasus were the archetype for the European (Caucasian) race, and thus initiated a pseudo-scientific mythology of interpreting the inhabitants of the region as enormously discordant with the ways they have been traditionally interpreted by the Russians. For more details see *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa* (1865).
11. It is particularly graphic in his novelette *Abrag*. See Koshubayev's *Abrag* (2004).
12. Enrique Dussel understands analectics as anti-dialectics. The analectic moment is connected with the fact that each of us always exists beyond, outside (hence the prefix "ana") the horizon of totality. The analectic moment helps unfold the new and not just to negate the old. It takes the dialectic method to its logical conclusion. The analectic moment opens up a specific metaphysical

sphere of otherness wherein the main category is exteriority. For more details, see Dussel's *Philosophy of Liberation* (1985).

13. For more details see Murat Yagan's website at <http://muratyagan.com/site2007/en/en-bio.htm>.

14. For Chela Sandoval a trickster "practices subjectivity as masquerade, a nomadic "morphing" not performed only for survival's sake. It is a set of *principled conversions* that requires (guided) movements, a directed but also a diasporic migration in both consciousness and politics, performed to ensure that ethical commitment to egalitarian social relations be enacted in the everyday, political sphere of culture." See Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), page 62.

Works Cited

- Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich. *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*. 1795. Ed. and Trans. Thomas Bendyshe. London:
- Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1865.
- Brandt Commission. *The Brandt Commission Papers: Selected Background Papers Prepared for the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1978–79*. Leck, Germany: Clausen & Bosse, 1981.
- Castro-Gómez, Santiago. "The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism." *Cultural Studies* 21.2–3 (2007): 428–48.
- Dainotto, Roberto. "A South with a View: Europe and Its Other." *Nepantla* 1.2 (2000): 375–90.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. "Dnevnik Pisatelya za 1877" (Writer's Diary for 1877). *Russkaja Ideya*. Moscow: Iris Press, 2002. 154–62.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Mysterii Yevrazii* (Mysteries of Eurasia). Moskva: Arktogeya, 1996.
- Dussel, Enrique. *Philosophy of Liberation*. Trans. Aquilina Martines and Christine Morkovsky. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1985.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
- Guillen, Mauro F., and Sandra L. Suárez. "Explaining the Global Digital Divide: Economic, Political and Sociological Drivers of Cross-national Internet Use." *Social Forces* 84.2 (2005): 681–708.
- Haushofer, Karl. *An English Translation and Analysis of Major General Karl Ernst Haushofer's "Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean": Studies on the Relationship Between Geography and History*. Ed. Lewis A. Tambs. Trans. Ernst Brehm. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- Kitsikis, Dimitri. *The Intermediate Region : A Common Civilization between the Adriatic Sea and the Indus River, Dialogue of Civilizations?* Tehran, Iran, 1999.
- Koshubayev, Dzhambulat. *Abrag*. Nalchik: Elbrus, 2004.
- Mackinder, Halford John. *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. New York: Holt, 1919.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "Coloniality at Large: Time and the Colonial Difference." *The Enchantments of Modernity : Empire, Nation, Globalization*. Ed. Saurabh Dube. London: Routledge, 2009. 67–95.
- . "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of Decoloniality." *Cultural Studies* 21.2–3 (2007): 449–514.
- Mignolo, Walter D., and Madina Tlostanova. "The Logic of Coloniality and the Limits of Postcoloniality." *The Postcolonial and the Global: Connections, Conflicts, Complicities*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. 109–23.
- . "Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge." *European Journal of Social Theory* 9.1 (2006): 205–21.
- Murat Yagan. <http://muratyagan.com/site2007/en/en-bio.htm>. Web. 10 October 2010.

- Pelipenko, Andrey. *Dualisticheskaja Revoljutsija i Smislogenez v Istorii* (Dualistic Revolution and Meaning-Genesis in History). Moscow: Moscow State University of Culture and Arts, 2007.
- Puti Yevrazii: Russkaja Intelligentsya i Sud'by Rossii*. (Eurasia's Ways: Russian intelligentsia and the Destiny of Russia). Moskva: Progress, 1992.
- Robbins, Bruce. "The Sweatshop Sublime." *PMLA* 117.1 (2002): 84–97.
- Sahni, Kalpana. *Crucifying the Orient*. Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1997.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000.
- Shami, Seteney Khalid. "Pre-histories of Globalization: Circassian Identity in Motion." *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000): 177–204.
- Smith, Neil. *American Empire. Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles & L., 2003.
- Smith, Woodruff D. "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum." *German Studies Review* 3.1 (February 1980): 51–68.
- Therien, Jean Philippe. "Beyond the North-South Divide: The Two Tales of World Poverty." *Third World Quarterly* 20.4 (1999): 723–42.
- Tlostanova, Madina. *Gender Epistemologies and Eurasian Borderlands*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2010.
- Tlostanova, Madina, and Walter D. Mignolo. "Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option." *Kult 6 – Special Issue: Epistemologies of Transformation: The Latin American Decolonial Option and its Ramifications*. Roskilde University: Department of Culture and Identity, 2009. 130–47.