

Multiple Europes and the Politics of Difference Within¹

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The Eurocentrism charge facing the social sciences during the past decades has prompted the emergence of several theoretical models and solutions designed to overcome the Eurocentric condition of mainstream social theory, still under the control of the modernization paradigm and its current avatars. Most new models have focused on the Western concept of modernity – which in turn corresponds to a conception of modernity as something Western – and have replaced it with the notion of multiple, entangled, fragmented, alternative, or simply “other” modernities. Regardless of the theoretical framework within which they have been elaborated, the different concepts of plural modernities share the idea that the original modernity, which served as a model and benchmark for others, has been and still is – the European one (Spohn, 2006; Escobar, 2007). From this perspective, both the East and the South of Europe, as well as Latin America, are only extensions of the initially Western modernity, i.e., copies of the cultural program of modernity developed in the West. However, talking of the multiple European modernity seems, according to Shmuel Eisenstadt, to suggest a simultaneity, even a parity of the developments *within* the continent:

“It is a commonplace to observe that the distinct varieties of modern democracy in India or Japan, for example, may be attributed to the encounter between Western modernity and the cultural traditions and historical experiences of these societies. This, of course, was also true of the different communist regimes. What is less well understood is that the same happened in the first instance of modernity – the European – deeply rooted in specific European civilizational premises and historical experience” (2003: 558).

The same understanding of a Europe ultimately coherent in its main features is apparent in the economic and political project of the European Union, which has been gradually monopolizing the label of “Europe” such that only current member states of the European Union, or those about to become members are considered “European” and consequently included in the term. Although the concept of “Europe” has never had a mere geographic referent, but has always reflected both the geopolitics as well as the epistemology of the various historical moments, with the discourse of the European Union we witness what – following József Böröcz’s (2005) argument about a “moral geopolitics” of the European Union – one could label a “moral geography” of the continent, with profound implications for the identity politics of the excluded countries. While the “moral geopolitics” refers to the civilizing discourse which situates the European Union at the top of the value hierarchy derived from the *historical* legacy and the *current* political role of its member states, viewed as exemplary in both cases², the

¹ This is an enlarged and updated version of a chapter initially published in English in Hauke Brunkhorst/Gerd Grözinger (eds.): *The Study of Europe*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010 pp. 51-66 and in Spanish in: Heriberto Cairo/Ramón Grosfoguel (eds.): *Descolonizar la modernidad, descolonizar Europa. Un diálogo Europa-América Latina*, Madrid: Iepala Ed, 2011

² According to Böröcz, the moral and geopolitical discourse of European exceptionalism and even solipsism obeys the equivalent of what Partha Chatterjee has labelled “the rule of colonial difference” in the European context, and what Böröcz consequently labels the “rule of European difference”: “The rhetoric of European goodness is the centerpiece of the rise of the notion of “Europe” to historic prominence in the civilizational discourse of coloniality. The civilizational rhetoric of European goodness promotes a hierarchical vision of the world, with “Europe” always at the top [...] The cognitive rule underlying it [...] performs two acts of erasing: it wipes away all acts of evil that have taken place within Europe, and sets Europe apart from the rest of the

“moral geography” denotes the symbolic representation of the European continent reflecting this discourse (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Map of EU Enlargement 2004 (blue) and pending (purple)



Source: European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/download/photo_download_en.cfm?id=165031

Such geography presupposes an ontological and moral scale ranging from a Western part, whose modern, democratic and pacific character – and therefore superiority – remain unquestioned, up to a backward, violent and inferior part – as such of questionable Europeanness – almost always located in the Balkan countries. Seen at least since World War I as “the powder-magazine of Europe”, the Balkans³ have recurrently figured in the European literature as well as in its moral geography as “those wretched and unhappy little countries [that] can, and do have quarrels that cause world wars. Loathsome and almost obscene snarls in Balkan politics, hardly intelligible to a Western reader, are still vital to the peace of Europe, and perhaps the world” (Gunther 1940: 437). However, the Balkans only represent the other extreme on the ontological scale of Europeanness, which seems to encompass various intermediate degrees. The criteria for one’s location in any one position on the scale are nevertheless far from clear.

In order to better comprehend the logic behind the new approaches to plural modernities as well as the one behind the “pan-European” model, I suggest replacing the notion of a single Europe producing multiple modernities by the one of multiple Europes with different and unequal roles in shaping the hegemonic definition of modernity and in ensuring its propagation. This does not entail enumerating the Semitic and Arabic origins of premodern Europe, which are usually absent from the supposed unilinear sequence tracing Europe back to a Graeco-Roman and Christian past, and which have been analyzed in detail by Martin Bernal (1987), Enrique Dussel (2000) and Anthony Pagden (2003)⁴, among others. Rather, the focus on

world, occluding the constitutive ties that have since the long sixteenth century linked Europe to locations where evil acts have been committed in its name or service by agents acting on behalf of its states, business corporations, and other organisations rooted in it” (Böröcz 2005: 126).

³ For a discussion of the geopolitical construct of “the Balkans” and its various connotations in the longue durée of the modern world-system, see Bakić-Hayden (1995), Todorova (1997), and Boatcă (2006a).

⁴ For Enrique Dussel, the unilinear diachrony Greece-Rome-Europe is an ideological construct of late eighteenth century German romanticism, which obscures both the Phoenician mythology of the birth of Europe

multiple Europes involves giving pride of place to the relations of power and the different hierarchies taking shape within Europe itself in the modern era.

1. From mental maps to imperial maps

Among the social scientific explanations of patterns of ethnic, religious or inter-civilizational conflict, those making use of graphic representations tend to achieve the highest degree of prominence as well as the strongest impact in- and outside the academia. The debate triggered by the “map” which Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington used in 1993 in order to back up his thesis of a “clash of civilizations” as the next pattern of global conflict is a case in point. In it, the eastern boundary of Western Christianity around the year 1500 is proclaimed as the most significant dividing line in Europe, replacing the relatively short-lived Iron Curtain by a more pervasive divide that Huntington refers to as the Velvet Curtain of culture (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 The Velvet Curtain of Culture



Source: Huntington 1993, p. 30

In Huntington’s view, there have been, at least since 1500, two fundamentally different Europes, the Eastern and the Western one. The border dividing them briefly changed during the Cold War, when it matched the boundary separating the First World from the Second. However, in essence, differences in economic level, political culture and especially religion between East

and the influence of the Arab Muslim world in what is defined as “the classical Greek” and therefore constitutes “a further management concept of Aryan racist Model”(Dussel 2000: 41). Pagden reconstructs the same trajectory of an idea of Europe based on the amnesia of her Asian origins: “Thus an abducted Asian woman gave Europe her name; a vagrant Asian exile gave Europe its political and finally its cultural identity; and an Asian prophet gave Europe its religion. As Hegel was later to observe, Europe was ‘the centre and end’ of History, but History had begun in Asia” (Pagden 2002: 35).

and West remained unchanged during the Communist rule in the region. According to Huntington, the role of each of the two Europes in the construction of modernity – that is, their contribution to the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and industrialization – had been decisive for the maintenance of the disparity. The resulting conflict justifies, in his view, treating the two parts of the continent as belonging to two different civilizations: Western Christianity on the one hand and Orthodox Christianity and Islam on the other. Their respective cultural logic would also dictate the stability of democratic political systems after the fall of the Iron Curtain, such that the West is characterized by stable democracies, while the permanence of democracies in the East appears questionable (Huntington, 1993: 31). The differences between the two Europes can thus be derived from their affiliation with one of the two sides, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Huntington’s “Velvet Curtain of Culture”

Fault lines	North/West	South/East
religion	Protestant/Catholic	Orthodox/Muslim
economic progress	high	Low
role in history of European modernity	central	Peripheral
(future) political system	stable democracy	? (democracy unlikely)

Compiled from: Huntington 1993

Although in different forms, both the model of the clash of civilizations and the project of the European Union suggest particular mental maps of the European continent, or what Lewis and Wigen have called a metageography: “the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world” (1997: ix). While most individual or group-specific mental maps conceptualize differences between the Self and the Other with the help of similar sets of binary oppositions, the truth claims they thereby make tend to remain immanent to their group of origin. In contrast, the mental maps under discussion here combine the typical claim to objective truth with, on the one hand, a territorial project of a colonial or imperial nature that lends legitimacy to the particular representation of the world and, on the other, with the definition power necessary for imposing that representation as valid both to the in-group and to targeted out-groups. They therefore rely primarily on a discursive practice within a power structure – i.e., they are, in Fernando Coronil’s words, imperial maps (see fig. 3).

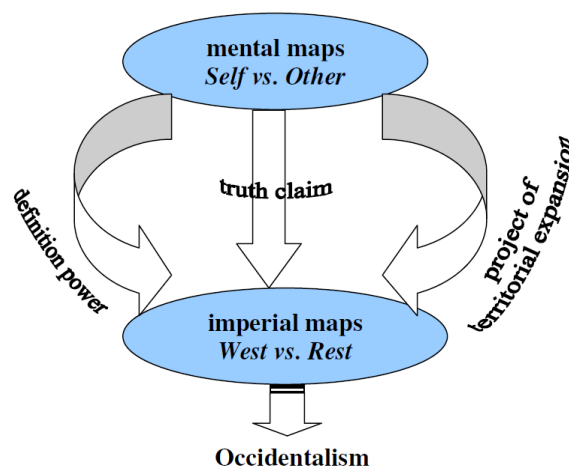


Fig. 3. From mental maps to imperial maps

The question of the historical origin of Europe's East-West divide is still under heavy dispute among social scientists, and – in view of its economic, political, and religious dimensions – probably evinces more than one answer. For the purposes of the present analysis, however, it can reasonably be argued that it was the Orientalist discourse of the 19th century – in the understanding Edward Said (1979) attributed to the term – that decisively shaped the content of the present categories of Western and Eastern Europe and made policies of demarcation from “the Orient” an important strategy of geopolitical and cultural identification with Europe for the latter region. For the Post-Enlightenment period, Edward Said has identified Orientalism as the discourse dominating Western representations of the Other and thus allowing Western European culture to gain “in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said 1978: 3). Representations of the Occident as progressive, rational, civilized, even biologically superior – and as such masculine – relied on scholarly, literary and scientific depictions of the Orient as backward, irrational, in need of civilization and racially inferior – therefore feminine – and as such the legitimate object of European (male) colonization and control. Following Said, Fernando Coronil and Walter Mignolo however argued that the Orientalism of the 18th and 19th centuries could not have been conceived without a previous idea of Occidentalism, whose emergence coincided with the onset of the Western European colonial expansion in the long sixteenth century. As “the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide Western dominance” (Coronil 1996: 57), Occidentalism does not represent the counterpart of Orientalism, but its precondition, a discourse *from* and *about* the West that sets the stage for discourses about the West's Other(s) – i.e., for Orientalism, but also for anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism as well as Islamophobia. Rather than a physical location on the map, the geopolitical concept of the Occident emerging in the sixteenth century was an epistemic location for the production of hegemonic mental maps, i.e., of imperial maps carrying a discursive power component.

What is often neglected in this context is the fact that the Western perspective of knowledge as it emerged with the establishment of Western hegemony as a global model of power is not a mere synonym of Eurocentrism. While Eurocentrism is an essential component of Occidentalism as it is defined here, and both can be treated as to a certain extent interchangeable in terms of their impact on the non-European world, it is imperative to differentiate with respect to the distinct range of the two within Europe.

2. From multiple Orientalisms to multiple Europes

During the first modernity, when the secondary and peripheral Europe of the fifteenth century became the conquering Europe in the Atlantic and at the same time the first center of the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein 1979), both the European territorial dominance and the extent of its epistemic power were still partial. In contrast, since the second modernity beginning in the eighteenth century, hierarchies that structured Europe according to principles similar to those applied to the colonial world gradually started taking shape. If, for Aníbal Quijano, the propagation of Eurocentrism in the non-European world occurred with the help of two founding myths, evolutionism and dualism (Quijano 2000), the same also served to propagate Occidentalism in Europe once the change in hegemony from the old Spanish-Portuguese core to the Northwestern one had been effectuated. On the one hand, the evolutionary notion that human civilization had proceeded in a linear and unidirectional fashion from an initial state of nature through successive stages leading up to Western civilization justified the *temporal* division

of the European continent: while the East was still considered feudal, the South had marked the end of the Middle Ages, and the Northwest represented modernity. On the other hand, dualism – the idea that differences between Europeans and non-Europeans could be explained in terms of insuperable natural categories such as primitive-civilized, irrational-rational, traditional-modern (Quijano 2000: 543) allowed both a *spatial* and an *ontological* division within Europe. By being geographically inextricable from Europe, and at the same time (predominantly) Christian and white, the European Southeast and especially the Balkans could not be constructed as “an incomplete Other” of Western Europe, as in the case of the Far East, but rather as its “incomplete Self” (Todorova 1997). Moreover, Southeastern Europe’s proximity to Asia and its Ottoman cultural legacy located it halfway between East and West, thus giving it a condition of semi-Oriental, semi-civilized, semi-developed, in the process of “catching up with the West”⁵. At the same time, the political, cultural, and economic legacy of empire in the region placed it in a different relationship to the Western European core than the American colonies. While the racial, ethnic and class hierarchies erected in the colonies marked the *colonial difference* (Mignolo 2000) from Western Europe, the less overtly racial, more pronounced ethnic and distinct class hierarchies accounted for the *imperial difference* among the European empires and their (former) subjects. In the same vein, the European South, epitomized by the declining Spanish empire and its Moorish legacy, was gradually defined out of the Western core both for its proximity to Islamic North Africa and for its reputation as a brutal colonizer of the New World, constructed as the opposite of England’s own benevolent colonialism (Cassano 1995, Santos 2006).

Parallel to the construction of the colonial difference overseas, we thus witness the emergence of a double imperial difference in Europe (stretching onto Asia): on the one hand, an external difference between the new capitalist core and the existing traditional empires of Islamic and Eastern Christian faith – the Ottoman and the Tsarist one; on the other hand, an internal difference between the new and the old capitalist core, mainly England vs. Spain: “[...] the imperial external difference created the conditions for the emergence, in the eighteenth century, of Orientalism, while the imperial internal difference ended up in the imaginary and political construction of the South of Europe. Russia remained outside the sphere of Orientalism and at the opposed end, in relation to Spain as paradigmatic example of the South of Europe” (Mignolo 2006: 487).

From this moment on, we have at least two types of European subalterns to the hegemonic model of power, as well as the first imperial map of multiple Europes. In light of both the external and the internal imperial difference, we can thus distinguish between what I would like to call *decadent Europe* (which had lost both hegemony and, accordingly, the epistemic power of defining a hegemonic Self and its subaltern Others), *heroic Europe* (self-defined as the *producer* of modernity’s main achievements) and *epigonal Europe* (defined via its alleged lack of these achievements and hence as a mere *re-producer* of the stages covered by heroic Europe). While “decadent Europe” and “epigonal Europe” were both characterized by a semiperipheral position, their different trajectories in having achieved this position acted toward disuniting rather than uniting them in their interests: In Spain and Portugal, the memory of lost power and the dominion of imperial languages induced the awareness of a decline from the core, i.e. an imperial nostalgia. Instead, in that part of the continent that had only emerged as “Europe” due to the growing demise of the Ottoman Empire – i.e., Eastern Europe and the Balkans – the rise to the position of semiperiphery within the world system alongside the enduring position of periphery within Europe itself made the aspiration to Europeanness – defined as Western modernity – the dominant attitude.

⁵ Maria Todorova speaks in this context of „Balkanism“. Unlike Orientalism, which deals with a difference between (imputed) types, the European (Self) and the Oriental (Other), ‘Balkanism’ as a discourse treats the differences within one type (Todorova 2004: 235), the civilized Western European and the semi-civilized, semi-Oriental Eastern European.

Thus, the subdivisions underlying the imperial map of multiple Europes served to positively sanction the hegemony of “heroic Europe”: France, England, and Germany, as epitomes of what Hegel called “the heart of Europe”, thus became the only authority capable of imposing a universal definition of modernity and at the same time of deploying its imperial projects in the remaining Europes or through them: On the one hand, Northwestern Europe’s rise to economic prosperity, during which hegemony was disputed among Holland, France, and England, would use the territorial gains of the first, Spanish-Lusitanian colonial expansion in order to derive the human, economic and cultural resources that substantiated the most characteristically modern achievements – of which the “Industrial Revolution” is a paradigmatic example (Moraña et al. 2008). However, this will occur without integrating the contribution of either the decadent European South or of the colonized Americas in the narrative of modernity, which was conceived as being both of (North)Western and of inner-European origin.

On the other hand, and especially as of the mid-nineteenth century, the Western European core of the capitalist world-economy benefited from the end of Ottoman rule in the east of the continent by establishing neocolonies in the rural and agricultural societies of the region and thus gradually gaining control of the strategic trade routes of the Black Sea and the Danube. The subsequent modernization of the Balkans and the European Southeast through the introduction of bourgeois-liberal institutions and legislation pursued the goal of making the region institutionally recognizable to the West and financially dependent on it. At the same time, it involved the shaping of political and cultural identities of countries in the region in relation to the Western discourse of power. Consequently, not only Austria, but also Poland, Romania and Croatia defined their contribution to European history through their role “bulwarks of Christianity” against the Muslim threat. Similarly, every country in Eastern Europe designated itself as “frontier between civilization and barbarism” or as “bridge between West and East”, thus legitimizing Western superiority and fostering the same Orientalism that affected themselves as Balkan, not Christian enough, or not white enough.

From such a perspective – that of the instrumentalization of the geopolitical location of “the other Europes” for the purposes of heroic Europe in the long durée – it becomes easier to understand that the Occidentalism directed at the subalterns never represented an obstacle to the Eurocentrism that they themselves displayed toward the non-European world. Quite the contrary. Samuel Huntington accused the Orthodox and Muslim parts of Europe of marginality and passivity with respect to the achievements of modernity, situating them on the other side of one of the fault lines in the future clashes of civilizations. Re-mapping Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the context of a hierarchical model of multiple Europes reveals that the blindness to the (neo)colonial logic prevalent in these areas’ political and identity discourses rather makes them accomplices of the colonial project of power underlying the emergence of modernity.

Table 2. Multiple Europes

Europe	prototype	role in the history of modernity	world-system position	attitude	role in coloniality
Decadent	Spain, Portugal	participant	semiperiphery	nostalgia	founding
Heroic	France, England	producer	core	hegemony	central
Epigonal	„the Balkans“	reproducer	semiperiphery	aspiration	accomplice

Such a classification is necessarily incomplete and meant to serve heuristic purposes, not to exhaustively or even partially explain the trajectory of any European region in the longue durée. This has been systematically done a number of times and has yielded widely differing

taxonomies, depending on whether the focus of the categorization were economic or political criteria or a mixture of the two (see e.g. Therborn 1995, Rokkan 1999). On the basis of its most prototypical examples, however, the model of multiple Europes as sketched above does help illuminate the impact that the direct or indirect involvement in the extra-European colonial endeavor has had on the definition power associated with a region's structural position within the world-system in general and within Europe in particular.

3. Europeanization as a Project, a Process, and a Problem

Especially in the wake of the September 11th attacks and the framing of the terrorist threat as "Islamic challenge" to the entire Western world, Westernization has increasingly become a matter of taking sides in the "clash of civilizations" Huntington deemed characteristic of future global conflicts. Apart from its appeal for this type of discourse, the model of multiple Europes is being reproduced in the majority of the current mental maps of the continent. In this context, the fact that the European Union's current expansion occurs under the heading of "Eastern enlargement" and that incorporation of the Central and South Eastern European countries into the European Union is commonly referred to as a process of "Europeanization" once again points to the bridging character devolving upon the European East in the Western cognitive map. Thus, the general notion of "Europe" used to denote Western, Northern and (parts of) Southern Europe throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has now become synonymous with the European Union, whereas the Eastern parts of the continent have been recast as a region whose political, socio-cultural, or religious institutions are as many proofs of questionable Europeanness and wanting economic and juridical standards. At the same time, the remaining colonial dependencies and overseas territories of European Union member states, although largely Christian through colonization and graphically represented in official European Union maps (see Fig. 1), atlases, and Euro banknotes, are left completely out of the definition of Europe as well as the question of Europeanness.

The discourse of "Europeanization" applied to countries with a century-old European cultural and social tradition (from Poland and the Czech Republic to Hungary and Romania) conforms to this very exclusionary logic. On the one hand, it once again instrumentalizes the Orientalist imagery to imply that distance from the Orient represents the underlying yardstick by which standards of modernity and civilization are measured. On the other hand, it mobilizes the inferiority complexes thus incurred for its own geopolitical projects by means of a mechanism of quantitative inferiorization: As the "Islamic threat" replaced the Communist one in the hegemonic Occidental imaginary, Eastern Europe exchanged its political and economic Second World status for that of a culturally and racially Second World, while remaining within the framework of epigonal Europe: By being (reasonably) white, Christian, and geographically European, but at the same time backward, traditional, and still largely agrarian, epigonal Europe thus reassumes the identity of heroic Europe's incomplete Self rather than, as in the case of Islam and the Orient, its Other (Todorova 1997: 18).

The fact that the theory and practice of the European Union's "eastern enlargement" act as an "orientalising tool" (Böröcz 2001: 6) becomes apparent in the fact that, for now, the last countries to have achieved admission into the European Union should be Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia and that the last to be negotiating it should be Macedonia, Serbia, Iceland, and Montenegro. At the same time, Turkey, whose application for accession dates back more than twenty years, has been repeatedly frozen out of negotiations for membership and currently faces strong opposition from France and, to a significant extent, Germany, who have also repeatedly opposed Romania's and Bulgaria's joining in the Schengen zone. Thus, the sequence of the incorporation of new countries into the European Union and its common agreements seems to closely follow the degree of their connection to or overlap with the Ottoman, and therefore Oriental, legacy, constructed as the opposite of politically desirable Europeanness. These criteria

according to which the performance of the Eastern candidates is evaluated poignantly reflect this Orientalist prism: corruption, human trafficking (especially in the form of forced prostitution) and the missing rule of law, responsible both for the belated accession of Romania and Bulgaria during the fifth enlargement round (European Commission 2006), for stalling negotiations with Croatia until 2010 and currently with Turkey (European Commission 2009), clearly belong to the repertoire of Oriental despotism that prominently featured among the images of the Orient constructed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and that are now being reproduced in relation to the European East. Singling them out as critical issues in the countries under scrutiny not only renders the applicant states exotic and inferior (Kovács 2001: 205), but, more importantly, traces their problems back to a past which the member states have supposedly overcome. The official rhetoric accordingly bears pedagogical overtones:

“This fifth enlargement of the EU had a political and moral dimension. It enabled countries — Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — *which are as European as the others, not just geographically but also in terms of culture, history and aspirations*, to join the democratic European family. They are now partners in the momentous project conceived by the EU’s founding fathers. Bulgaria and Romania set out as part of this group, but their entry process took longer. They joined the EU on 1 January 2007 [...]

Turkey, a member of NATO, with a long-standing association agreement with the EU, applied for membership in 1987. Its geographical location and political history made the EU hesitate for a long time before replying positively to its application. However, in October 2005, the European Council opened accession negotiations with Turkey” (EU 2009, emphasis added)”.

The EU accession rhetoric at play in such statements is therefore in line with the logic of both the imperial and the colonial difference: While connections with traditional Eastern empires is a serious impediment to access, but can ultimately be negotiated (if only on Western terms), the possession of former or present colonies by EU member states is not even allowed to surface in accession discourse: The geographical location of the British Virgin Islands, the Dutch Antilles or the French overseas departments in the Caribbean and South America, although much more clearly non-European than that of Turkey, never made the EU hesitate about the legitimacy of their membership. As long as their colonial status remains unaddressed, the political geography of Europe does not need to be redefined in order to acknowledge that the Western borders of the European Union are in the Americas and have been so for decades.

In turn, negotiations of cultural and racial identities framed in terms of repudiating an Oriental past, stressing one’s contribution to European civilization, and mapping one’s integration into the European Union as a “return to Europe” – and therefore as an act of historical reparation – once again dominate the identity rhetoric across Eastern Europe. On the one hand, national elites have referred to the political and economic transition of both Croatia and Slovenia in the 1990’s as liberation from “Balkan darkness” (Lindstrom 2003: 319). At the same time, the electoral promise of rejoining Europe both institutionally and economically has been grounded on the emphasis placed on the country’s century-old role as “bulwark of Christianity”⁶ against the Ottoman threat in both Croatia and Poland (Bakić-Hayden 1995: 922) and has reinforced claims of historical belonging to Central Europe (rather than Eastern Europe or the Balkans) throughout former Yugoslavia (Bakić-Hayden 1995: 924, Lindstrom 2003: 324).

That the strategy employed by candidates to Europeanness in such negotiations should be focused on the recognition of their historical role in protecting European Christianity, of the current progress of their liberal democracies, or the “whiteness” of their populations (Böröcz, 2001: 32) is of no consequence. The primary objective in all cases is the same: ascending from

⁶ “antemurale Christianitatis”, a title equally claimed first and foremost by Austria, further by Poland and Romania, but explicitly used by Pope Leo X in 1519 in reference to Croatia, in acknowledgment of the role of the Croatian army in fighting back the Ottomans.

the status of an “epigonal Europe” to that of “heroic Europe”, accomplished only in the case of the respective countries’ thorough break with and disavowal of their Islamic, Oriental, or Ottoman legacy. Accordingly, individual strategies of delimitation are contingent upon handing over Easternness, Orientality, and ultimately non-whiteness to newly constructed “others” within the region, thus internally reproducing Orientalism in kaleidoscopic fashion, as Milica Bakić-Hayden has documented for former Yugoslavia:

“...while Europe as a whole has disparaged not only the orient ‘proper’, but also the parts of Europe that were under oriental Ottoman rule, Yugoslavs who reside in areas that were formerly the Habsburg monarchy distinguish themselves from those in areas formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire and hence ‘improper’. Within the latter area, eastern Orthodox peoples perceive themselves as more European than those who assumed identity of European Muslims and who further distinguish themselves from the ultimate orientals, non-Europeans” (Bakić-Hayden, 1995: 922).

Needless to say that, the more the epigonal Europes emphasize their degree of Europeanness, the more they highlight their difference from heroic Europe and reinforce the imperial map according to which the concept of “Europeanness” corresponds to the dominant Western model. Thus, what Immanuel Wallerstein has called “the family feud tonality” of processes of racial othering in kindred cultural spaces makes it possible to include Eastern Europe in the identity of the expanding European Union as well as simultaneously exclude it.

4. “There Is No Safe Place”. Open Questions

Can any of the multiple Europes provide the basis for a single notion of Europe, or a unique model for a characteristically European modernity? Given that they all produced imperialist, colonialist, nationalist, racist, or totalitarian ideologies at some point in the history of world modernity, there is no geopolitically and epistemologically safe place representing either a European or a modern essence. On the contrary, just as the history of Europe has been entangled with the history of non-European areas which it conquered, traded with, and defended itself from, so the history of modernity has been shaped by and become inseparable from colonialism, imperialism, slavery, and warfare. Reducing Europeanness to a triumphalist version of modernity restricted to a handful of heroic “founding fathers” therefore fails to take into account the multiplicity of Europes and their respective (and contradictory) contributions to European civilization – not the plurality of modernity as such:

“The future can no longer be thought of as the ‘defense of the Western civilization’, constantly waiting for the barbarians. As barbarians are ubiquitous (they could be in the plains or in the mountains as well as in global cities), so are the civilized. There is no safe place to defend, and, even worse, believing that there is a safe place that must be defended is (and has been) the direct road to killing. [...] Dialogue can only take place once ‘modernity’ is decolonized and dispossessed of its mythical march toward the future” (Mignolo, 2005: xix)

In the context of the self-proclaimed civilizing project of the European Union, this however amounts to a renewed race for identity among those Eastern European and Balkan countries situated on the hem of the “Velvet Curtain” that supposedly separates “proper” Christianity from Islam. For them, the race’s enduring stake – access to Western markets, employment opportunities, and financial aid – amounts to an exercise in “moral geopolitics” (Böröcz 2005: 115) that involves discarding – or at least downplaying – their “Easternness” while professing a will to Westernization. Sharing in Western privileges thus appears a more urgent task than pointing out the power asymmetries within pan-European political and economic structures and investing effort in restructuring them. It has therefore been suggested that, unlike the border epistemology engendered by the clear-cut colonial difference outside of Europe, the epistemic frame of the ex-Second World situated at the border between the European imperial and colonial powers is one of blurredness – of the difference from the West – as well as splitness

– between being the West’s partial Other and its incomplete Self (Ivakhnenko 2006: 604, Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006: 217, Todorova 1997: 18). Following Enrique Dussel’s thesis that dwelling outside the center entails not having any privileges to defend (Dussel 1977: 16), one could therefore add that living on the border means partaking of those privileges at the same time as experiencing oppression.

Arguably, the more privileges there are to defend, the less the transformative potential residing in the subaltern aspect of the border position is explored. This is why, although the entire region marked by the imperial difference can be seen as a host to possible candidates to border epistemology, the probability of engaging in critical thinking is higher among the former subjects of imperial/colonial power (Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006: 215) than in sites – such as Spain or Russia – where pending imperial nostalgias act as accessories to a Eurocentric epistemology.

This chapter has therefore pleaded for replacing the idea of a single proper – namely, heroic – Europe, which has generated multiple modernities worldwide, by the one of multiple Europes, whose cultural, political and economic contributions to European civilization have disproportionately gone into the definition of the specific Western industrial modernity. The heuristic model of multiple Europe proposed here is intended to clarify the different historical paths, the geopolitical linkages and the power hierarchies emerged within the European continent since the colonial expansion. Juxtaposed to it is a discursive model of multiple Europes based upon the same historically developed power hierarchies: Each time *the unity* of Europe becomes the object of a programmatic call, as in the identity politics discourse of the European Union, or – the other way around – each time *the historical division* of Europe is set retroactively along cultural and religious lines over the last five hundred years – as in Huntington’s idea of the velvet curtain of culture – one of the multiple Europes is hyped up as the only valid. A discursive model that defines Europeanness as unity or as uniqueness, respectively, thereby serves to misrepresent the diversity of postcolonial and postimperial Europe as a limitation as well as to reproduce, by means of the above-discussed moral geography of the continent, an internal politics of difference which can only result in the opposite of unity.

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