

Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies?

MARIA JANION Poland between the West and East

ALEKSANDER FIUT In the Shadow of Empires

DARIUSZ SKÓRCZEWSKI Post-colonial
Poland – (Im)possible Project

BOGUSŁAW BAKUŁA Colonial and Postcolonial
aspects of the Polish Borderlands Studies

DOROTA KOŁODZIEJCZYK Post-colonial
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Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies?

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Foreword

Ryszard Nycz

Polish Post-Colonial and/or Post-Dependence Studies

1.

The history of Polish society as well as Polish literature and culture could constitute not only a complex and rich, but also almost a paradigmatic case in the post-colonial research in the categories of domination and subordination. Enough to say that the so called First Polish Republic was ranked one of the Central and Eastern European empires in the early modern history (16th-18th century) but then, after the complete loss of independence in 1795, for over 120 years it remained politically non-existent. Polish territories and their inhabitants became incorporated in the structures of the three neighbouring empires of modern Europe: Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and subjected to – in each case slightly different – methods of colonial management and strategies of the center-periphery dependence.

It is important to add that, even though the year 1918 brought the revival of the state independence within the so called Second Polish Republic, it did not last for too long. The beginning of the World War II in 1939 caused the re-erasure of the Polish statehood from the political map and another division of its lands and inhabitants between the battling empires: the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Although the end of the World War II in 1945 resulted in re-establishing the Polish state

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under the name of the Polish People's Republic, the country's sovereignty was limited (as it was subject to full control of the Soviet Union). Two-thirds of its borders were moved, its ethnic composition radically changed and its territory decreased to a similar extent (in comparison to the inter-war period).

Only the 1989/1990 events triggered the re-birth of the full sovereignty in Poland (this also happened in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe) which returned to its previous name of the Polish Republic. Also, only then, from under layers of suppression, concealment, and distortion of the official versions of the past, gradually emerged unworked shocks and traumas, or to the contrary, memories (or fantasies) of the past glory. They were becoming components of rival memory politics and simultaneously – the subject of the analytical, critical attention.

2.

I believe that this almost grotesque summary of Polish history was necessary to demonstrate the palimpsest complexity of the problematic field and the reasons of a slight delay with which post-colonial, post-dependence and (to some extent) post-imperial studies are being included in the research both in the narrower, Polish context and in the broader, Central-European one. Discussing them detail seems superfluous. However, it is worth signalling that they have distinct genealogies and conceptual nets which overlap, cross, and permeate each other with reference to their common problematic syndrome – and in the way they cannot be distributed among separate disciplines.

Although post-colonial studies have their origins in literary and cultural research, already in books written by their "founding fathers," Edward Said and Franz Fanon, it is possible to see aspirations to go beyond those disciplines towards social, historical, and political matters. In the first period – for about two decades – their development was merely limited to the Western world issues and more precisely, it only involved analyses of complex and changeable in time relations of domination and subordination between the so called First and Third World (composed of the former colonies of the first one). Only in the late 1990s, owing to a few articles, but most of all thanks to the monographic study *Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (English edition entitled *Imperial Knowledge*, 2000, Polish ed. 2002, Ukrainian ed. 2006, Belorussian ed. 2009, Chinese ed. 2009, chapter 1 in Russian 2007) – the book considered a "founding" study on the topic – by Ewa Thompson, Polish professor of Russian studies and Slavist from the Rice University, the post-colonial matters entered the so called Second World (the relationship between Russia, then the Soviet Union, and the neighboring countries and nations it had dominated) and gradually paved their way through science as a rightful subject of research within the humanities. It should be added here that, in Poland, a similar, "founding" role in the research over the old-time Polish Republic as a colonizer was assumed by

the books of a French historian Daniel Beauvois: *Les confins de l'ancienne Pologne: Ukraine, Lituanie, Bielorussie XVIe-XXe siecles* from 1988 and particularly his *Ukrainian Triangle: gentry, tsar and people of Volhynia, Podolia and Kyivshchyna 1793-1914* (Trójkąt ukraiński: szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793-1914, Lublin 2005).

The discussion carried on among Polish researchers for several years now did not lead to the full consensus regarding the legitimate use of the term but it made the scope of problems it defines one of the most important themes of the scientific research. This already resulted in first essayist publications such as Maria Janion's *The Amazing Slavdom (Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna)* from 2006 or monographs like Dariusz Skórczewski's *Theory – Literature – Discourse: Post-colonial Landscape (Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny)* from 2013. Generally, it might be stated that this process of "institutionalization" of post-colonial studies within the research conducted in Central and Eastern Europe has been still taking place, being on different stages in given countries. It is perhaps most difficult to be completed in the context of the research concerning Russia and conducted by Russians, as we can assess on the basis of mainly negative and very emotional reactions to Ewa Thompson's book.

The second approach: the post-dependence studies originated, generally speaking, in the economic and sociological research; more precisely, in the research devoted to the situation of Southern American countries, which initially constituted the empirical basis for the dependence theory. It justified the mechanisms of leaving countries under-developed not with internal but with external reasons: the strategy of imperial centers towards peripheries. Its most well-known form was elaborated by Immanuel Wallerstein who made it a global theory of transforming economy and social structure. Recent years have brought, on the one hand, critical revaluation of the ideas behind the dependence theory, on the other hand, its emanation onto socio-cultural and historical-political studies, examples being Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and Richard Wortman's *Scenarios of Power* (2006). Within this approach, one could also fit analyses of the Polish post-dependence discourse understood as a collectively defined set of institutionalized, significant articulation practices – organizing human experience, identity projects, social, political and cultural relations, axiological and symbolic communal imagery, forms of perceiving reality – which were taken up after the situation of dependence was resolved and at the same time, they almost always carried its traces. The effect of these works, combining post-colonial and post-dependence inspirations, are numerous collective volumes, for instance published by the Post-Dependence Studies Centre, and two original books: Hanna Gosk's *The Stories of "the Colonised/Colonizer" (Opowieści „skolonizowanego/kolonizatora")* from 2010 and Jan Sowa's *The King's Phantom Body (Fantomowe ciało króla)* from 2012.

Finally, the youngest of them all (and by now scarcely present in Polish criticism and literature) – post-imperial studies. They derive from politological and historical analyses of modernity and, similarly to the previously described ones, from criticism of dependence theories. In the context of recent books by Stephen E. Hanson *Post-Imperial Democracies* (2010) or Dmitrij Trantin *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (2011), it seems that this perspective still remains dominant. However, post-imperial studies also have their, increasingly strong and interesting, branches in other disciplines. One of the examples could be Rita Sakr's work *Monumental Space in the Post-Imperial Novel* (2012) where the author puts forward her interpretation of the palimpsest monumental spaces impregnated, on the one hand, with cultural memory, ideological missions, symbolic monuments of domination and violence, on the other hand, with subversive practice of emancipation and democratization activities of individuals and communities in the public sphere.

While it is true that Rita Sakr analyses neither monumental spaces nor Russian novels, how cognitively rewarding might be the perspective emerging from the fusion of memory studies, geopoetics, and post-imperial literature, Ryszard Kapuściński argues in the chapter *The Temple and the Palace* of his *Imperium* presenting the fluctuating status and functions of a square in Moscow where in the Tsar period, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was built, then (per Stalin's order) destroyed to make space for the planned Palace of Soviets. Eventually, the latter was not built, while the remaining foundations were adapted for a swimming-pool for Muscovites (though, not permanently: most recently, which could not be observed and described by Kapuściński, the temple has been rebuilt – apparently, we are living in the post-secular times...). It is highly probable that this topic and this type of research may become more keenly analyzed by – not only Russian – literary and culture theoreticians. Eventually, it cannot be ruled out that Kapuściński's *Imperium* itself, also with regards to its quite critical reception by Russian readers, could play in the future a founding role in the field of cultural, post-imperial studies pursued by Russian researchers – similarly to the earlier mentioned books written by other, "foreign" authors who commented on subjects that are "restricted" for "native" representative of a given culture.

3.

Eruption of the traumatic past, intensity and diversity of rival memory politics as well as reactivation of religious and pseudo-religious needs and practices in the areas connected with both public life of the community and individuals' privacy compose a new problematic field of contemporary mentality most recently worked out and elaborated on by post-colonial, post-dependence and post-imperial studies. Their efficiency to a great extent depends on the reception of the shared comparative perspective, confrontation of memory discourses, dialogue-like exchange of

experiences, sense negotiation and in the relations between nations and cultures. These, however, still remain at a deadlock.

Perhaps this happens due to the fact that previous programs of learning other cultures, national images of the past and communal identity patterns were based on the power of sublime art of persuasion in favour of an enriching value for someone who gets to know the Other – maybe this is why they did not prove particularly effective. I believe that it is necessary to re-direct this argumentation, i.e. to admit that an important and inherent part of our self-knowledge, mature self-consciousness, critical self-cognition – so much the community as individuals – is also our image in the others' eyes as well as the ability to take over the external point of view and confront it with our cultivated internal image of ourselves. I am certain that only this simple – but maybe not easy to implement – activity can make development of inter-cultural relations, encounters, and dialogues something indispensable, needed on a daily basis, being of individuals' and communities' interest.

A fairly useful category which can get us closer to reaching this goal we owe Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the most original literature and culture scholars of the 20th century. What I have in mind here is "wnienachodimost" ("outsidedness") – one of the key notions in Bakhtin's glossary. In his work about Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov suggested that this hardly translatable term should be "internationalized" (by reaching out to Greek sources) and called "exotopy," while a Polish translator Danuta Ulicka translated it as „niewspółobecność" ("noncopresence"). Bakhtin introduced it in his works as early as in the 1920s, then frequently used it, systematically expanding the spectrum of its application. The technical term describing "intra-literary" relations between the author and the character eventually turned into the universal category of historical cultural anthropology. In any case, it occupies a well-deserved position in contemporary interpretations of the Bakhtin's theory (and not only), which allows me to avoid here examining its primary meanings.

In most general terms, exotopy is about identification of the "shifted" position of the experiencing and learning subject always situated – timely, spatially, nationally, and culturally – outside of its own object (whether it will be another object, subject, community, culture, or itself). And what is most important: one should not see in it weakness or an obstacle to overcome (for example, by participation or empathy) but an inherent feature of human (self)cognition, a condition of authentic understanding and a marker of inventiveness (creative exploration).

"In understanding," wrote Bakhtin, "the most crucial matter is the (timely, spatial, and cultural) noncopresence of the learning subject in comparison to what he/she wants to creatively comprehend. Yet, a person is not able to truly see even their own looks or to realize it fully. Any mirrors or photographs will not help him with that. Only other people are capable of grasping and understanding his/her real appearance, both thanks to their spatial noncopresence and to the fact that they are **different**. [...] Someone else's culture is only revealed in the eyes of another culture.

[...] We ask the other culture new questions which it wouldn't have posed itself, and we search through it for answers, while the other culture responds, unveiling its new aspects and new layers of meaning"¹.

One could say that in this view, it is still the originally formulated but in fact a classically modern opinion on the value of an external point of view, looking at oneself or confronting the image of oneself in the eyes of the other (in the modern European tradition already initiated by "the strategy of the other" in de Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*). What is more interesting (and less often noticed), however, Bakhtin makes it specifically complemented with a truly innovative conviction. It leads the scholar to rejecting the idea of an individual or a national culture as a kind of a closed container (a view we owe to romanticists such as Schelling and von Herder's concepts of culture as a sphere or an island). As far as the subject is concerned, Bakhtin argues that "one is not given any internal area of independence, one is always on the verge, and delving into oneself, one looks into *the other's eyes* or sees oneself *with the eyes of the other*"². The same concerns culture: "The field of culture should not be imagined as a certain spatial entity with boundaries but also possessing its internal territory. The field of culture hasn't got an internal territory: it is entirely located on the boundaries. They run everywhere, intersect at its every point."³

Let us notice that from this point of view, boundaries between the internal and the external do not distinguish any longer an autonomous identity of the individual or communal entity but quite the opposite: they run within it. For, it originates on the verges, it has a status of the border territory where the external gets internalised, whereas the part considered the most "own" one exposes its external genealogy. I believe that the latter Bakhtin's identity concept – as exotopy, as self-diversifying self, as the internalized Other – not only anticipates the key recognitions of the contemporary thought but it should also constitute the shared assumption concerning inter-cultural dialogues. It somehow extorts (being the very interest of the understanding and effective critical self-cognition) the necessity of self-definition, attention, and respect – towards the Other. The Other who is both within and around us.

4.

It could be said that post-colonial and post-dependence studies, particularly in their initial phases, in their specific way confirm pertinence of Bakhtin's concept, including its simplest dimension: the emphasis on the indispensability of the "other's"

1 M. Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, transla by D. Ulicka, ed. by E. Czaplejewicz, Warsaw, 474.

2 Ibid. op. cit., 444.

3 M. Bakhtin, *Problemy literatury i estetyki*, transl. by W. Grajewski, Warsaw 1982, 26.

perspective to make a member of a given community realize something absorbed by his/her "blind spot." Enough to think about the role a Palestinian Edward Said and an Algerian Franz Fanon played in reinterpretation of the European image of the Orient. But also about the role of an American Larry Wolff in the critical reflection over historical genealogy of the political and discursive shape of Central and Eastern European countries, the role of a French Daniel Beauvois in realization of colonial aspects of the political and cultural tradition in Poland or the role of Ewa Thompson, a Polish-American scholar, in problematizing the colonial and imperial elements of the Russian culture (also in works of its most estimated representatives).

Essays included in this volume examine and "internalize" this point of view of the "other" in order to see it as a tool of independent acts of recognition and cognitive search. The authors are the leading Polish researchers interested in analytical possibilities offered by new theoretical "glossaries." Their function turned out to be productive on many levels and what is most crucial, these glossaries make it possible to pose new questions to texts (even the most classical and "overinterpreted" ones), questions that were hitherto unheard of (and sometimes unbelievable), and to "receive" new, unexpected, revealing answers. The selection of works published in "Teksty Drugie" is representative to the Polish debate in general, also due to the fact that for two decades the magazine has been the main forum of discussions conducted in Poland on this topic.

Undoubtedly, the most heated threads of the discussion were the following three matters: legitimacy of placing old-time Poland in the position of a colonizer; legitimacy of analyzing the Polish history in the 19th century and part of the 20th century in the category of colonizing (particularly in reference to Polish-Russian relations); and legitimacy of pursuing post-dependence studies treated as an alternative or complementary research strategy. Although such debates are far from being resolved, both the course of the discussion registered in the presented works and the constantly emerging monographs suggest that there is space for a consensus and gradual legitimization of post-colonial and post-dependence studies in the Polish academic circles.

Translation: Marta Skotnicka

Maria Janion

Poland between the West and East

1. To the west from the East and to the east from the West

Between the Latin West and the Orthodox East, between Rome and Byzantium, there emerged, a millennium ago, a line of religious cultural division sometimes recognized as “the most enduring cultural boundary of the European continent.”¹ What views reveal themselves in the Polish perspective on this pregnant division? Poland has found itself in an east-western position, or, as Sławomir Mrożek ironically observed, located to the west from the East and to the east from the West. However, it has mostly sought, with the thought of its intellectuals, to outweigh the balance in favor of “the West” and to disassociate itself from “the East.”

I will arbitrarily select works composed a century apart, exhibiting nonetheless a certain consistent tendency. Karol Potkański’s “Konstantyn i Metodyusz” [Constantine and Methodius] appeared in 1905. On the conclusions reached by this prematurely deceased historian, Franciszek Bujak comments that they “belong to the

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¹ J. Kłoczkowski. *Młodsza Europa. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w kręgu cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej średniowiecza*. Warszawa 2003. 12. Further references to this edition indicated by K and page number.

most insightful thoughts of general historiosophy to have been formulated in this country.”² Potkański believed that the great clash between the West and East that had shaken Christianity at its base as well as Byzantium’s separation from Rome were a “historical necessity, one difficult to remedy.”³ He does attribute seniority, maturity, and affluence to the culture of Byzantium, but also stresses that they were the reason for its stagnation and ultimate exhaustion. In the 12th century, Byzantium began to fall apart not only as a result of political events but crumbling under the weight of its over-ripeness. It grew stagnant and torpid and so did its Church. It stopped “in its eternal and continuous procession towards a higher form of existence” (P. Vol. 6.339).

The West behaved differently, having only just begun to make its way, and “pushed forward. Forward pushed the Western Church, and the Western society itself” (P. Vol. 6.338). The idea of eternal progress leads Potkański to believe that between the two powers there began to gape and impassable chasm. “At the core of this antagonism between the East and the West there lied something essential, something that cannot be broken down” (P. Vol. 6.331). Arrested civilizational development of the Slavic countries such as Bulgaria and Rus clearly indicates the cause of the disaster: it was born from the stagnancy of the Byzantine culture. “Centuries of separation and the unavoidable reduction of culture took its toll on the Slavic East” (P. Vol. 6.344). The only chance for salvation was to be found in the universal Latin culture. And that which was truly great in the Greek culture, was inherited by the West. Potkański questions even the cultural importance of the Bogomilist heresy in Bulgaria, and consequently, both the Cathars and the Albigenses, related, after all, to the Bogomils of Byzantium and the Balkans.⁴ Bogomilism was supposed to have originated in “the hazy mysticism brought from the depths of Asia” (P. Vol. 6.392). It was not a road meant to lead the Slavic countries to a “great civilizational achievement” (P. Vol. 6. 342). This criterion of civilization defined through the Western European notions towers above the entirety Potkański’s work.

Conceived in this fashion, the East lacked greatness in all possible sense: it struggled to keep up with the progress of history, even its treasure – the Greek heritage – was better understood by the West, while its radical heresy whiffed

2 F. Bujak „Życie i działalność Karola Potkańskiego (1861-1907).” in K. Potkański *Pisma pośmiertne*, Kraków 1922, 1.1. 45.

3 K. Potkański. „Konstantyn i Metodyusz.” *Przegląd Powszechny* 1905 Vol. 5. 194. Further references indicated by P, volume and page number.

4 M. Lambert. *Herezje średniowieczne od reformy gregoriańskiej po Reformację*. [Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation] Trans. J. Pospowski, Gdańsk-Warszawa 2002. 90.

of Asian mysticism. It is no wonder, then, that in the concluding remarks Potkański observes that it was solely the Western Church that can be said to have raised the Western society. The Slavic nations, including Poles, “have no reason to regret following the West because, ultimately, it is the West that has won the great civilizational procession and it is the West that remained” (P. Vol. 6.345). Such was the triumphant historiosophical conclusion – and the verdict – at the beginning of the 20th century.

Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we obviously have several more published sources at our disposal and the number of commentaries is growing rapidly. Yet, a certain historiosophical tendency remained the same. For instance the already cited work by Jerzy Kłoczowski, over 500 pages long. It concludes 25 years of research whose results were first published in Polish in 1984 as *Europa słowiańska*. [Slavic Europe] Kłoczowski begins by highlighting an essential difference between the Western and the Eastern cultural circles. The West is characterized by “dynamic development” (“dynamic” is the author’s favorite word to describe the Western events) while the Orthodox East can be characterized by “persisting.” As a result, the development of the West leads to its impressive advancement, somewhat pompously referred to by the author as “moving to the forefront of all human civilizations” (K. 12). How about the East? Kłoczowski notes that “despite its cultural religious vitality that we gradually getting to know better, once simply cannot compare the transformations that took place in the areas of Orthodox Christianity with the comprehensive dynamics of the Western cultural circle” (K. 12). In fact, it seems that the West and the East cannot even be measured with the same scale, since what could the impressive “dynamics” of the West have in common with the slow “transformations”?

In Kłoczowski, the Congress of Gniezno in 1000 AD symbolically marks the date of “the birth of civilization of the Christian circle, the birth of Europe within borders set for a millennium” (K. 48). The heyday of Central Europe (the author focuses primarily on Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) is to be attributed to the “Western model” which ensures the development of those states. In Kłoczowski’s somehow modernist turn of phrase, characteristic features of the Western model include “society, grassroots initiatives and autonomy of human communities” (K. 58). Those are the determinants of “the rapid development of the Western cultural circle,” of the Latin *christianitatis*. Byzantium remains on the sidelines, increasingly removed from the Western Christianity and its creative powers. Poland, according to Kłoczowski, despite numerous vicissitudes, managed to find itself luckily within the Western circle.

Writing about the Three Sisters – the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, Laszłó C. Szabó stresses that in the 10th century the three states chose

to position themselves on the side of Rome and its “political religion.” This, according to Szabó, was a necessary survival measure in the face of Teutonic pressures. “Regardless of their internal conflicts and divisions, the strengthening of those states depended on the extent to which they could resemble other members of the universal Christian republic. Had they not become *modern* in their time, had they not made the attempt to keep up with the West, they would have, probably, been fully absorbed by the *Drang nach Osten* and today we would see the Czech, Moravian, Polish, Hungarian and Serbian heritage only in ethnographic exhibitions.”⁵ Only by joining the Christian “political religion” could they save themselves from the terrible fate of the Polabian tribes. Szabó emphatically conveys the dramatic fact of the forced conversion and destruction of the weaker pagan Slavic tribes inhabiting the area between the Elbe and Oder orchestrated by the German bishops. “The bloodiest crusade was waged against the Polabian Slavs, announced, as the Second Crusade to the Holy Land was, by St Bernard of Clairvaux, a fanatical prophet of the Medieval Golden Age. He could not have expected how much blood will stain his hands.”⁶ Let us not forget that Szabó’s remarks are a commentary on a book discussing the Christian Middle Ages in Central Europe by two English, two German, one Czech, and one Polish author (F. Graus, K. Bosi, F. Seibt, M. M. Postan, A. Gieysztor, *Eastern and Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. G. Barraclough 1970).

2. Slavdom

Both of the mentioned scholars, Potkański and Kłoczowski, should devote themselves to the relationship between the church and the language in the “younger Europe”; in particular to the positioning of the native, Slavonic languages and Latin.

Potkański views Cyril and Methodius’s mission to admit the Slavonic language to the Christian liturgy as a “bold innovation” (P. Vol.3.338). But what were the actual chances for success of this experiment in the West? Latin was, after all, the “language of the almighty Roman Empire” (P. Vol.3.391) upon whose ruins the Roman Church raised its imposing structure. Potkański stresses emphatically and several times that the Latin speaking German clergy, the greatest enemy of the Slavic Church, rested itself upon the Roman “organization, the strongest organization the world has come know” (P. Vol.6.328). “The assumption that Latin was the proper language of liturgy

5 L. C. Szabó „Trzy siostry. Europa Środkowa w chrześcijańskim średniowieczu.” Trans. E. Miszevska-Michalewicz *Więź* 1989 Vol. 11-12. 115.

6 Ibid. 124.

firmly established itself in the West" (P. Vol.3.393). Latin's preponderance was well recognized and well constituted. There happened, naturally, certain aberrations described by Potkański as "utterly disproportionate" – for instance, the teaching of Apostles' Creed in Latin which the folk could not understand (P.Vol.3.394), however, the author is firmly convinced that there was *no middle ground*. The last service in Latin, Greek and Slavonic was held in 885, over Methodius's body. Later, an uncompromising solution was necessary: "either to abolish completely the Slavic Church and introduce a unified Latin liturgy, or – on the contrary – to admit only the Slavic one. There is no way these two could have coexisted" (P. Vol.6.315). Because of their mutual hatred, among other reasons.

The author of "Konstantyn and Metodyusz" believes the choice of the Latin Rite to have been the right one. It was a choice made by Poland deciding to join the *Latin universalism*, Latin perceived as "the only recognized language of culture and civilization" (P. Vol.6.340). Poland moved away from the disadvantageous "Slavonic church language" seen as the cause of separation from the world and disconnection from cultural exchange with Europe. It is a view shared by numerous Polish scholars. One should also add that Potkański underestimated a certain aspect of the Bogomilist heresy in the 10th century Bulgaria. Some view the dissemination of Bogomil dualistic teaching as a religious revolt by the Slavonic Balkan peasants resenting the Byzantine-Greek rulers of Constantinople and their local representatives. The Bogomilist heresy set Slavic peasants against their Bulgarian masters who were of Tatar origin and who themselves were converted at some point by the Byzantine missionaries; it set the Greek-speaking church hierarchy against the Slavonic rural priests.⁷ Thus, we can speak of a resistance of the Slavonic language against the Greek of the masters and the church.

"The Bogomilists recognized no authority, neither secular, nor ecclesiastical. As a result, they were a dangerous social element in the age when feudalism was taking shape."⁸ Feudalism was seen as non-Slavic, mostly German. Some speak of the possible influence of Bogomils – Bogomilists on the Polish monks in the 11th century,⁹ and their impact on the "Bosnian Church." Kłoczowski mentions Bosnia's own national religion established in the 13th century and surviving until the 15th. It might have been a "folk, agrarian syncretism steeped in magic and doctrinally very weak" (K. 312), not

7 See: Ch. S. Clifton, *Encyklopedia herezji i heretyków*. [Encyclopedia of Heresies and Heretics] Trans. R. Bertold, Poznań 1996. 48.

8 F. Kmiotowicz *Kiedy Kraków był "Trzecim Rzymem."* Białystok 1994.70

9 Ibid.

a conscious Bogomilist heresy. He also writes about the Slavo-Wallachian folk religiosity different from both the Orthodox and Roman Christianity (K. 313). Similar Slavic folk efforts continued to resurface. In the early 15th century also Jan Hus attempted to “bridge the gulf between the clergy and the laity,” demanding for the congregation a Communion in two forms, of both wine and bread, and a liturgy in Czech.¹⁰ One could posit that the Slavonic element in religion had more far-reaching consequences than it had been assumed by Potkański.

Kłoczowski, too, recognizes the Moravian mission of Cyril and Methodius as “extremely bold and innovative,” but at the same time stresses that “it must have raised serious concerns of the Latin-Frankish missions in Moravia, and of Rome itself” (K. 40). In fact, Kłoczowski’s words echo the fears of the German clergy. He joins them in a “strict response” (which, let us not forget, included the imprisonment and torture of Methodius) that, as he continues, was “fully understandable, regardless of the political contexts surrounding the matter” (K. 42). One assumes that Kłoczowski’s explicit judgment stems from the conviction that “while the need for teaching and ministry in the native languages was understandable,” “preserving the deposit of faith in its authentic form remained a special concern” (K. 41). The confusion of tongues and the Tower of Babel can be treated as a biblical warning, the author adds.

This position could be contrasted with a thoroughly different opinion that the apostles of Slavs liberated the Christian faith from the *classical bonds* through a dramatic struggle against the so called “trilingual heresy” that allowed the preaching of the Church to be conducted only in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. “And how is it – Cyril asked his opponents in Venice – that you are not ashamed to recognize only three languages, and to command all the other peoples and tribes to be deaf and dumb?” Apostles acted against the “enclosure within a single experience of faith believed to be self-sufficient and absolute.” They did it in the name of the “virtue of *aggiornamento* (modernization and openness to changing times) seen as one that has always accompanied evangelization and the experience of faith.”¹¹

Closing his work, Kłoczowski recalls D. S. Lichaczow’s estimations indicating that in the countries of Byzantine-Slavic Christianity literacy reached much higher levels than in the Western sphere. If one is to measure the culture of a country with the ability to read and write among its residents (excluding clergy) one must recognize much higher achievement of the Byzantine-Slavic circle in this regard. “Clearly,” Kłoczowski explains “the basic study of reading

10 Ch.S. Clifton *Encyklopedia...* 90-91

11 G. Eldarov. “Święci Cyryl i Metody – ojcowie teologii słowiańskiej.” *Cyryl i Metody. Apostołowie i nauczyciele Słowian. Studia i dokumenty*. J. S. Gajek and L. Górka (eds) Vol. 1 Lublin 1991. 53-54.

and writing in the native Slavonic came much easier than the study of Latin in the West" (K. 417). Local literacy resulted from Slavic Christianization. Kłoczowski views the translations of the Greek texts into Church Slavic as astounding work, especially as accuracy of translation – that was a condition of purity of the Orthodoxy – was its prime concern (K. 421). One could therefore assume that authenticity of expression of the deposit of faith constituted the highest purpose also in this case.

Those are the attributes of Slavic nativeness, ones not to be disregarded. In his famous work on orality and literacy, Walter Ong discusses Learned Latin as a language that is sex-linked, a "language written and spoken only by males, learned outside the home in a tribal setting which was in effect a male puberty rite setting, complete with physical punishment and other kinds of deliberately imposed hardships."¹² It was a language inaccessible to women (with insignificant exceptions). Learned Latin, "devoid of baby-talk, insulated from the earliest life of childhood where language has its deepest psychic roots" was father tongue, or rather, mother tongue, to none of its users, as no mother ever used it raising her children. As a result, Ong continues, Learned Latin "had no direct connection with anyone's unconscious."¹³ It was a male language fully detached from the mother tongue. Consequences of this state of things had to be extensive, including the relationship to the social and political powers of women.

However, what is of interest to us is right now, is how this type exclusion could have impacted the sense of Slavdom. Clearly, it meant something entirely different to the Old Polish writers who shifted rather harmoniously from Latin to Polish and mimicked Latin literary genres, and to the Romantic writers who were deeply affected by the disconnection from Slavdom and who, with the use of native folk art and its transformations, attempted to restore its forgotten greatness. By being labeled "Slaviphilic," those attempts were actually often belittled, as at that time they could give rise to the suspicion of a connection to Russia and her imperialist claims to Poland, hidden beyond the slogan of "Slavic unity."

Slavdom was often repressed into the unconscious of the Polish Romantics and their animosity towards Latin took various forms. Repressed Slavdom returned in the form of a secret rite of communicating with the dead, hidden from the master and the priest (as in Mickiewicz's *Dziady*), in the form of utopian past – pastoral and cruel at the same time, drawing both on the Piast idyll and Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* where "cruelties are meant

12 W. J. Ong *Oralność i piśmiennictwo. Słowo poddane technologii*. Trans. J. Japola, Lublin 1992. 155. [Here based on the English edition, Routledge 1982.]

13 Ibid. 156, 155.

to signify the charisma” of the ruler¹⁴ (as in Słowacki’s *Król-Duch*); through a tale of imposed Christianity, feudalism and the annihilation of the Slavic freedom in the spirit of Lelewel (Berwiński’s *Bogunka na Gople*), as a sublime figure (in the young Kraszyński where a Slavic female vampire, modeled on the Transylvanian countess, inhabits the native Opinogóra), or through the images of vague disasters, ruin, and destruction in Kraszyński’s novels.

The attitude of Latin missionaries to the pagan mythology and to the religion of the Slavs also warrants a commentary. They were so utterly neglected and so ruthlessly destroyed that many scholars believe they hardly existed in the first place. “Christian missionaries and medieval chroniclers lacked curiosity, interest and will to look into the spiritual life of peoples they were converting.”¹⁵ Hence the erased old days, hence the tabula rasa, hence the opinion, expressed quite recently, that nothing seems to indicate that Slavs actually had tales of divine beings, their lives, deeds and kinship. This would make them, as one of the historians of Slavic religion puts it, “a strange exception among the cultures of the world.”¹⁶ But such is the extent of the (undeserved but very real) contempt for the “primitive” Slavdom.

Things look very different in the remote island of Ireland, converted in the 5th century and never belonging to the Roman Empire: Ireland adopted Latin but retained its separateness. Thomas Cahil believes that “the survival of an Irish psychological identity [within Christianity] is one of the marvels of the Irish story.”¹⁷ The Irish did not fight to root out the pagan influences (Halloween survived till this day), their monks mastered Latin and Greek, copied the endangered works of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian culture, but also preserved in writing all of Ireland’s indigenous literature. “It is thanks to such scribes that we have the rich trove of early Irish literature, the earliest vernacular literature of Europe to survive.”¹⁸ The Slavic Poland was not as fortunate as the Celtic Ireland.

In Romanticism, the uncanny Slavdom was a sign of a torn identity. Unknown disaster from the past explodes in frantic images that dismantle the imposed order and allow for the resurfacing of something alien and familiar at the same time, something both *heimlich* and *unheimlich*.

14 B.A. Uspieński, W.M. Żywow. *Car i bóg. Semiotyczne aspekty sakralizacji monarchy w Rosji*. Trans. H. Paprocki, Warszawa 1992. 22.

15 A. Szyjewski. *Religia Słowian*. Kraków 2003. 9.

16 Ibid. 11.

17 T. Cahil. *Jak irlandczycy ocalili cywilizację. Nieznana historia heroicznej roli Irlandii w dziejach Europy po upadku Cesarstwa Rzymskiego*. Trans. S. Barańczak, Poznań 1999. 151 [Here after the original]

18 Ibid. 161. [Here after the original]

Awareness of the uncanny Slavdom of Poland may allow for an alternative reflection on our place in Europe. It does not have to be determined by a clear line delineating the East and the West. Poland does not have to boast its “Western” character, it can freely embrace “Eastern” self. The latter will not be detrimental provided that our social leaders perform certain intellectual operations resulting in an understanding of own position and prejudice.

3. Europe but not Europe

At this point we need to revisit Edward W. Said’s groundbreaking work from 1978 (published in Poland in 1991). The author adopts in it a particular meaning of “Orientalism.” It does not denote the sum of European prejudice against the so called Orient but is a system of ideological fictions. Those are built upon binary oppositions meant to separate “us” and “them.” The visualization of the East (“them”) is aimed at a self-identification of the West (“us”). The process is governed by the principle of inequality: “the narrative shape, continuity, and figures are constructed by the scholar [or a writer, or traveler] for whom scholarship [literature] consists of circumventing the unruly (un-Occidental) nonhistory of the Orient with orderly chronicle, portraits and plots.”¹⁹ The body of work, messages and observations is ordered in a manner by which “Orient takes on a discursive identity that made it unequal with the West.” Orient is placed within a special epistemological frame so that it can be presented as a “geographical - and a cultural, political, demographical, sociological and historical - entity” traditionally controlled by the true Europeans.²⁰ Orientalism evokes a sense of absolute superiority of the West over the East, hence the “will to power,” often to imperial power.

What results from setting the West against the East is the following division of qualities: the West is logical, normal, empirical, cultural, rational, realistic. The East is backward, degenerate, uncultured, stagnant, illogical, despotic, and does not contribute creatively to the world progress.

As in Poland’s case we also face religious differences and antagonisms, we should direct attention at essential features of the West and the East in this regard as well. Differences between the Orthodox and Western Churches can be ordered (and *clearly simplified*) as follows:

- customarily unwritten tradition – religion as a philosophical system
- apophatic, negative theology, based on what we cannot know – scholastics, Latin rationalism; tradition of the Eastern Orthodoxy “rejects all strict

19 E.W. Said *Orientalism*. Trans. W. Kalinowski, Warszawa 1991. [Here after the original]

20 Ibid. 234 and 322.

definitions” – the word “God” is a call addressing the Unspeakable²¹; “direct spiritual experience instead of discursive reasoning”²²; “should the basis for the split of the Eastern thought from the Western one (and the other way round) not be found in the fact that the former, consistently and from the very beginning focused itself on theology of existence, while the latter (until St Thomas Aquinas) on theology of essence?”²³

- unresolved antinomies – strict dialectical logic
- forgiveness for minor deviations – legalism inherited from scholasticism; “the West had a simpler, stricter and more logistic concept of the proper faith while the East was more tolerant toward the less important doctrinal discrepancies and placed the borders of orthodoxy within the sphere of liturgy.”²⁴
- aversion to authority – special position of the bishop of Rome, “when medieval Europe was taking shape, when the unity of the Western Church was founded on the hierarchical center of Rome, Eastern Churches were unified by Mount Athos and its spiritual radiation, with no jurisdiction above them.”²⁵
- refraining from seeking external influence (with the exception of Tsarist Russia) – strong authority of the Church in the West; “in the West, the Church was seen as an institution whose operations can be defined in legal terms, in the East it was a sacramental community connecting heaven and earth [...] For the West, the primacy of Rome meant absolute power of the pope above all churches, the East saw it only as a honorary precedence and the right to represent symbolically the *orbis Christianorum*.”²⁶

Finally, according to Runciman, Eastern Orthodoxy fears dogmatic definitions that the Roman Church delights in. “The Greek Church did not and could not produce a Thomas Aquinas. It still has no *Summa Fidei*.”²⁷ Klinger describes the difference in the context of comparisons between Catholicism

21 P. Evdokimowy *Posnanie Boga w Kościele Wschodnim. Patrystyka, liturgia, ikonografia*. Transl. A. Liduchowska, Kraków 1996. 9.

22 J. Klinger „O istocie prawosławia.” *O istocie prawosławia. Wybór pism*. Warszawa 1983. 171.

23 A. Siemianowski *Filozoficzne podłoże rozłamu chrześcijaństwa*. Warszawa 1991. 11.

24 A. Flis *Chrześcijaństwo i Europa. Studia z dziejów cywilizacji Zachodu*. Kraków 2001. 291.

25 O. Clement, after J. Klinger *O istocie*... 165.

26 A. Flis *Chrześcijaństwo*... 283 and 286.

27 S. Runciman *Wielki Kościół w niewoli. Studium historyczne patriarchatu konstantynopolitańskiego od czasów bezpośrednio poprzedzających jego podbój do wybuchu greckiej wojny o niepodległość*. Trans. J. Łoś Warszawa 1973. 13. [Here after the original]

and Protestantism: "in its numerous controversies they are often quite close to each other, as they find themselves on the same plane of constructing an intellectual dogmatic doctrine, while in Orthodoxy there is a predominance of liturgical contemplation."²⁸ Clement mentions a confrontation of the intellectual West and the spiritual East.²⁹

Naturally, I am not speaking here of any sort of "superiority" of one religion above the other. I am recapitulating only basic differences to highlight the possibility to use them with a purpose of comparing the West and the East. They can be variously interpreted, too. Andrzej Flis writes about the *conservatism of the East*, manifesting itself mainly in the attitude of the Orthodox Church to strictly guarded tradition, and *innovativeness of the West* whose "essence lies in the questioning of the autonomous value of tradition" as well as in "the instrumental attitude toward the past popularized in the Latin culture by the Catholic Church."³⁰ Jerzy Klinger presents an entirely different approach, emphasizing that the "timelessness of Orthodoxy" should not be identified with "stagnation."³¹ One can see here how religious differences affect description and assessment of general cultural differences between the West and East.

Let us return to the category of "Orientalism." It is commonly used, although, perhaps, without sufficient awareness of its character.

In modern Poland, the function of "the East" was assigned mainly to Russia. The "Orientalization" of Russia (in the Saidian sense) emphasizes that Russia is not part of Europe (an idea shared by some of the Russian thinkers, from Chaadayev to Victor Erofejev). Polish self-identification is carried out by portraying Russia as a less worthy but dangerous Other. Such procedure should come as no surprise in the context of Poland's persistent struggle against Russia's military violence and its lasting resistance against the policy of conquest via russification, even more sinister as relying on a kindred, Slavic language. Western civilizational superiority of Poland is supposed to justify immeasurable contempt for the alien "Asians." Such methods of self-identification, conceived already under the Russian rule in the 19th century, intensified in the propaganda of the 1920s, during the Polish-Soviet War. Ewa Pogonowska aptly juxtaposes entire series of common stereotypical beliefs where the European Pole has to fight against the Asian-Muscovite, a barbarian from the savage East. The axis of the enemy portrayal "rests upon a basic

28 J. Klinger *O istocie...* 171.

29 O. Clement. *Byzance et christianisme*, Paris 1964. 122.

30 A. Flis *Chrześcijaństwo...* 316 and 321-322.

31 J. Klinger *O istocie...* 172.

binary opposition projected onto entire world of values and triggering complementary responses: Europe means civilization, Russia – lack of culture, anti-civilization, primitivism, savagery, banditry.” Polish self-stereotype is characterized by a sense of superiority toward the Muscovite resulting from Poland’s inclusion in the Western civilization, into the Western Catholic community.”³² Abundant anti-Bolshevik poetry offers a model delineation of the opposition of “Europe” and “Asia,” of “East” and “West,” still Romantic in character but ultimately sharpened to the extreme. “Go back to Asia, descendant of Genghis Khan!” is a battle cry that excludes all negotiation.

4. Polish “Orientalism”

Let us take a look at two examples of contemporary “Orientalization.” The first one is the Orientalization of the Byzantine East in the already mentioned *Młodsza Europa* [The Younger Europe] by Kłoczowski. How does the author proceed? First of all, he uses the West as a measuring standard presenting degrees of deviation from it. Kłoczowski emphasizes that only a limited range of Western patterns reached the Slavic-Byzantine circle. On the other hand, full reception of the Western models in the countries of the “new Christianity” only brought benefits. The price for structural assimilation of “our countries” into the Western model was often very high, but it was a necessary condition for their great and comprehensive development. The Roman Church, fulfilling its ideals of unity and centralization, created a dynamic civilizational circle that the Eastern Church could have joined as well, however, Byzantium’s anti-Latinism prevailed. Kłoczowski does mention the conquest of Constantinople by the Western crusaders in 1204, but does not discuss the disastrous plundering of the city. In the chapter titled “The Crusade against Christians.” S. Runciman writes: “The sack of Constantinople is unparalleled in history. ... Even the Saracens would have been more merciful, cried the historian Nicetas, and with truth.”³³ No wonder Byzantium detached even more from Western Christianity.

“There are several traces of activity and development of the [Eastern] Church, as well as progressing Christianization, but one is struck by its shutting itself off, by the lack of openness to others” adds Kłoczowski (K. 82). Admittedly, nearing the end of his work (K. 408-409), the author admits that one should not speak of exceptional stagnation and stillness of Byzantium, but he had already done it himself. Concluding remarks include a reservation

32 E. Pogonowska. *Dzikie bieśy. Wizja Rosji sowieckiej w antybolszewickiej poezji polskiej lat 1917-1932*, Lublin 2002. 92-93.

33 S. Runciman *Dzieje Wypraw Krzyżowych. Vol. 3 Królestwo Akki i późniejsze krucjaty*. Trans. J. Szwakopf, Warszawa 1993. 125 [Here after the original]

that the “Byzantine civilization was a European civilization” but to a limited extent, “through its attachment to the ancient tradition, the sense of continuity of the Roman Empire, Hellenistic language and culture” (K. 410). In other words, it was European in the sense of its ancient Greek heritage. But it could not develop this heritage appropriately, as it evaded the spirit of great Western reforms (K. 82). The processes of occidentalization and byzantization take up much of Kłoczowski’s work. As the author admits, his sharp portrayal of differences is used to emphasize and separate [the concept of] Central Europe. Ties to the Western culture are the deciding criterion during this operation (K. 22). They, in fact, constitute Central Europe.

Imperium (1993) by our great reporter, Ryszard Kapuściński, will be the second example. Reviewing *In the Shadow of the Sun* and *Emperor* for the *Times Literary Supplement*, John Ryle, anthropologist and co-director of a documentary about a Sudanese tribe, judges both books rather harshly, claiming that Kapuściński – despite his fervently anti-colonialist attitude – nonetheless performs in his writing on Africa a form of literary colonialism, or Orientalism, of an imagined land.

In an analysis of Kapuściński’s *Imperium*,³⁴ Maxim Waldstein reveals how the book, written after 1989, “Orientalizes” Russia (in the Saidian sense). As usual, the procedure has a historiosophical basis: Egypt, Sumer, Byzantium, exhausted with the extent of created work and unable to develop it, are contrasted with Europe that teems with energy and rapturous desire for life.³⁵ Kapuściński declares to be interested the most in the “mental and political decolonization of the world”³⁶ and it is also the case of *Imperium*. But apart from extensively reasoned criticism of Russian-Soviet imperialism and totalitarianism (similarly to Jan Kucharczyński, the author of the famous multi-volume *Od białego caratu do czerwonego*), Kapuściński does not differentiate between the tsarist and the Soviet empire), *Imperium* presents a new quality: we are dealing here with a resident of Poland, itself a former Soviet semi-colony, that – as Waldstein notes – subjects the very same empire to an “imperial” Orientalizing “gaze.”

It is a clear reversal of earlier relations (although the Russians did not “Orientalize” Poles, attributing to them an even higher degree of “Westernness” than was probably deserved). By “reversal” I mean a sense of domination, at least an intellectual one, over the Empire. Maria Dąbrowska, who in 1920s

34 M. K. Waldstein „Nowy markiz de Kiustin, ilipolskij trawelog o Rossii w postkolonialnom proczenii.” *Nowoje Literaturnoje Obozrenie* 2003 Vol. 60.

35 Kapuściński *Imperium*, Warszawa 1993. 52-53.

36 Ibid. 309 [309] [page numbers in brackets here and further in the essay refer to the English translation by Klara Głowaczewska, Vintage 1995.]

attended literary-philosophical meetings organized in Warsaw by writer Dymitij Filosofov, emigrant from Soviet Russia, could not stand his “persecution mania with regard to Polish attitude to Russia.” But even if – Dąbrowska comments in her *Diaries* – this relationship was, in fact, what Filosofov believed it to be, it would have been justified: “In its relations to Russia Poland was instructed by a bloody and cruel history, a history including Suvorov, Apukhtin, Muravyev, Pashkevich, Hurko, Siberia and the gallows. It is a lesson difficult to erase.”³⁷ Dąbrowska very poignantly compiles the names of butchers from the period of Russia’s reign in Poland and their basic repertoire of punishment meted out to “Polish rebels.” One should add to her list the not-so-distant reprisals from the day of Soviet domination in Poland after WWII, as well as the invasion of September 17, 1939, and the deportations (a moving description of which opens Kapuściński’s book.)

However, it may be worthwhile to take a closer look at the peculiarities of an “Orientalizing” text written by a resident of Central Europe. While visiting Russia, he assumes the perspective of a traveler who is both a foreigner and a Westerner (resident of the West). He often emphasizes that he belongs to the outsiders who found themselves within the borders of the Empire, that he looks as if “from the outside.” He sometimes mentions things and events “incomprehensible to a European.” That is why Waldstein ironically calls Kapuściński a new “Marquis de Custine” (author of the famous and still reprinted *Russia in 1839*). But what was natural in a Frenchman’s outlook on Russia, cannot be such for a Pole, which is a consequence of the “ambiguous cultural status of Poland and Eastern (Central) Europe in the consciousness of both the Eastern and the Western Europeans.”³⁸ Was Kapuściński a “real” foreigner? Did Poland find itself on the other, Western side of the Iron Curtain after 1945? Of course not. Naturally, for the peoples of the Empire, for the Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians – it was a land of freedom “close and inaccessible, almost alien, surrounded by an impassable wall and yet local, of this world, and as such, available.”³⁹

Kapuściński, nonetheless, has to portray the traveler as a foreigner, just as – in the process of carving a Central European identity – he has to portray Russia as another, strange civilization. It is a civilization characterized by boundless fatalism, entirely alien to the spirit of European rationalism. Kapuściński notices it everywhere, especially in relation to power (“The thoughtlessness or brutality of the authorities is just one of the cataclysms

37 M. Dąbrowska *Dzienniki* [Diaries] Warszawa 1988, Vol.2. 135.

38 M. K. Waldstein “Nowy...” 129.

39 M. Riabczuk *Od Mabrosji do Ukrainy*, trans. O. Hnatiuk i K. Kotyńska, Kraków 2002. 190.

that nature so liberally dispenses,” after all, no one rebels against a flood or an earthquake.⁴⁰) Fatalism is also reflected by the typical sayings of the Russian folk: “Well, that’s life.”⁴¹

The strongest expression of fatalism with regard to nature and dictatorship can be found in Siberia. Here, whiteness reigns, “whiteness everywhere, blinding, unfathomable, absolute” [29] and white may be read as a color of death: “whiteness is here the color of acceptance, of a surrender to fate.” [30] It is here, in the vast, monotonous spaces that one loses track of time and the sense of change weakens, “man lives here in something like a state of collapse of numbness, of internal paralysis,” [32] and it becomes clear further in the book that this, in general, is how man lives in Asia. In Kapuściński, paralysis – contrasted with Europe’s dynamic movement – is a feature of non-Europeanism. The Siberian Buryats “look upon white Siberia as a temple inhabited by a god. They bow to its plains, pay homage to its landscapes...” [30] Waldstein reads Kapuściński’s descriptions of Siberia as both echoes of the already existing stereotypes and a more general fetishization the Russian mind that bows to mere symbols and is contrasted with the rationality and humanism of the European mind.⁴²

Kapuściński’s assessment of Russian religiousness is performed in similar vein. He treats the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome as a univocal, as if it has not changed at all since it was formulated at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries and as if it has always been something quite beyond comprehension. The worship of “Moscow” as the “New Jerusalem” seems bizarre to Kapuściński. “Russians were capable of believing in such things profoundly, with conviction, fanatically.”⁴³ [90] Apart from the fact that several “New Jerusalems” were founded in several other geographical areas, Kapuściński fails to realize the combination of cosmological and historical notions. “In the cosmological [and eschatological] perspective, Moscow was received as New Jerusalem, and later – already in this context – as New Rome.” Cosmological notions were primary to historical ones, timeless cyclicity combined itself with linearity of historical evolution. Without cosmological perspective, the idea would not have been able to affect consciousness with the same strength.⁴⁴

40 Kapuściński *Imperium*... 169 [165].

41 Ibid. 40, see also 189 [33]

42 M. K. Waldstein *Nowy*... 129–132.

43 Kapuściński *Imperium* 93 [90].

44 B.A. Uspienski “Percepcja historii dawnej Rusi i doktryna ‘Moskwa – Trzeci Rzym’.” *Religia i semiotyka*. Trans. B. Żyłko, Gdańsk 2001. 51–52.

Similarly, Kapuściński views the idea that “Tsar is Almighty” or “His earthly reflection”⁴⁵ as a peculiar aberration. Bolshevism attempted to use this faith, transforming itself into a “new God.” [105] Supposedly, the principle of worship is the same in Orthodoxy and Bolshevism and consequently, Kapuściński believes the process of desacralization of power – through television broadcasting in the 90s – to have been “salutary and liberating,” contributing greatly to the collapse of the Empire. As “the belief in the mystical nature of power had been one of the tenets of Russian political culture.”⁴⁶

Kapuściński largely simplifies the issue. As Uspienski and Żywow prove, sacralization of the ruler in itself is not an exceptional phenomenon, one finds it in Byzantium and in the Western Europe, with canonization of monarchs being even more typical of the Western Europe than of Byzantium. Byzantium transferred to Old Rus the ideal of parallelism of Tsar and God, not their identity – and this is what one of the most important debates within Orthodoxy centered upon. The identification of Tsar and God was treated as a blasphemy. There was a “conflict between the sacralization of the monarch and Orthodox theology.”⁴⁷ This is very far from the “sacralization of power” in Bolshevism. As presented by Kapuściński, Orthodoxy indeed may seem a religion of national self-worship as opposed to the universalism of Catholicism (oftentimes questioned, one might add).⁴⁸

Kapuściński believes the Russian language to reflect in its essence the characteristics of Russian nature. In the period of *perestroika*, the abundance of produced speech was encouraged by “the Russian language itself, with its broad phrasing, expansive, unending, like the Russian land. No Cartesian discipline, no aphoristic asceticism.”⁴⁹ Naturally, all of this sets it apart from the Western styles and languages. In Russia, one has to wade and wade through words before “one arrives at a sentence of value” (*id.*). It is indeed truly amazing that Kapuściński did not read such texts in Polish or French. Perhaps, as a devotee of Cartesianism, he has never encountered them.

Waldstein believes that Kapuściński takes the “self-Orientalizing” discourses of his Soviet informants on faith as they fit his project of de-Orientalizing Central Europe (“Orientalized” by the West). The image of a pathological Other, in other words, of Russia, allows him to present Central Europe as simply “Europe.” By operating with sharp, clear and consistent dichotomies

45 Kapuściński *Imperium*. 109 [105].

46 *Ibid.* 320–321 [321]

47 B.A. Uspiensky, W. M. Żywow *Car i bóg...* 25–26 and 38, 112.

48 M. K. Waldstein *Nawoj...* 137.

49 Kapuściński *Imperium* 315. [315]

he seems to have achieved his goal. “‘Russia’ is methodically pictured as collectivist, authoritarian, nationalistic and immobile, with Europeans as individualist, liberal, patriotic and historical. Moreover, Kapuściński never hides his belief that only the latter is fully ‘human’ and universal.”⁵⁰

To conclude after Waldstein, Europeisation of Central Europe (the latter notion was popularized in 1984 by Milan Kundera) uses a monolithic image of the Other – Russia – setting itself apart from the Great Void to the east and establishes a boundary between “us” and “them”; one could only add, perhaps, that not only Kazimierz Brandys pointed out the dangerous closeness of “us” and “them.”

This image of Russia is disputed by Mariusz Wilk in *Wilczy notes* [Wilk’s notebook] (1998). Taking advantage of the semantics of his name,⁵¹ Wilk sets his own trail whose character is defined among others, with a critical reference to Kapuściński’s *Imperium* that Wilk believes to be “the last foreign report on the Euro-Asian empire, or to be more precise, on its collapse.”⁵² Wilk sees Kapuściński as a writer directed by a random choice of visited places and an equally random selection of cited works. “Kapuściński’s method is as simple as a tourist expedition: a couple of days here, a couple of days there, and then a postcard-chapter about each visited place, like a souvenir snapshot. Naturally, a great writer will also take great pictures but for what purpose? To write a comic strip about the Empire?”⁵³

It is a method that Wilk radically rejects. Wandering instead of “collecting tourist impressions” becomes his principle of “experiencing Russia.”⁵⁴ This is also how the author settled down in the Solovetsky Islands that he understands to be the “essence and anticipation of Russia at the same time” (*id.*). Wilk believes he had to both settle down and wander for several years as he did not want and could not assume the perspective of a Western foreigner. For Kapuściński, it was the only viable position: to remain a foreigner in the Empire, and “with patience (but not superciliousness!) ... maintain distance with a calm, attentive, sober gaze”⁵⁵ (26).

Wilk discovered something else. He quotes Fyodor Tyutchev famous verse from 1866 (whose lines found their way also into Kapuściński’s collection of

50 M. K. Waldstein *Nowyj...* 132-133. [Here after the English essay version, from: *Social Identities*, Volume 8, Number 3, 2002. 481-499]

51 [PL “wilk” is equivalent to EN “wolf”, “wilczy” to “lupine, typical of wolves” - AW]

52 M. Wilk *Wilczy notes*, Gdańsk 1998. 58.

53 *Ibid.* 60.

54 *Ibid.* 14.

55 Kapuściński *Imperium* 33. [26]

quotations, cited as a proof for the Russians' belief in Russia's mysticism and mysteriousness):

Russia is baffling to the mind,
Not subject to the common measure
Her ways – of a peculiar kind...
One only can have faith in Russia⁵⁶
(trans. by Avril Pyman)

Wilk was irritated by the verse that his Russian friends used to fend off his questions. (This happened to me as well, in Moscow in 1956, clearly it is a common Russian custom.) He managed to tame it eventually: "I replaced 'faith' in one of Tyutchev's lines with my own word – 'experience.' We need to experience Russia ourselves."⁵⁷ This is why Wilk refers to the motto of his book as a "mimicry of Tyutchev":

Russia is baffling to the mind,
Not subject to our measure
It is a different dimension
Russia must be experienced

A significant shift has taken place here: it is not reason and faith that are set against each other, but reason and experience. This is how Wilk strips Tyutchev's words of the possibly anti-rationalist tones and moves their meaning to the plane of understanding through experiencing (Dithley's *Erlebnis*). It is a conscious departure from the distance of a Western foreigner (nonetheless accompanied by a conviction that he will always and everywhere be alone, "on the sideline – a wolf that I am") followed by locating oneself for a long time in the very heart of Russia, as this is how Wilk perceives the Solovetsky Islands ("for centuries in the center of Orthodoxy, a powerful locus of Ruthenian statehood in the North"⁵⁸) This is where we find a broader description of the Islands, where one can "see Russia as one sees the sea in a drop of water" (14).

"One has to leave a piece of one's life here... forever"⁵⁹ the author declares, elaborating on his view on the peculiar identification with Russia: "To understand the Russian reality from the inside means to look at Russia through the

56 [Here trans. by Avril Pyman. In Kapuściński: "One cannot comprehend Russia with one's reason ... one can only have faith in Russia." Kapuściński, *Imperium*. Vintage 1995. 309. Trans. Klara Głowaczewska. – AW]

57 M. Wilk *Wilczy...* 12.

58 Ibid. 15.

59 M. Wilk „Korespondencja z Sołowek.” *Przegląd polityczny* 1999 Vol. 40-41.

eyes of a Russian and only later translate this somehow into own language"⁶⁰ – in a different way then, than the Westerners who never made such attempt. And with what result?

Wilk certainly had decided to view himself as a pioneer of the knowledge of Russia in Poland. Hence the *Glossary* of expressions used in Russia and unknown in Poland included in *Wilczy bilet*. Some of the definitions are, in fact, rather unnecessary (for instance, Russian *isichazm*, known in Poland as *hezychazm*, hesychasm). But the dictionary is a testimony to the work of translation the task of which Wilk has set for himself. Often, "experience" resurfaces in translation through a large number of lexical and structural calques from Russian appearing on almost every page, especially where the author attempts to mimic the Russian rhythm. We know that this is dangerous. Miłosz claims that Poles give in too easily to the Russian rhythm and therefore should avoid it even more. But Herling-Grudziński had an entirely different opinion on Wilk's writing, seeing in it "an amazing, suggestive mixture of Polish and Russian, so ingenious and poignant that sometimes seeming to be an entirely different, new language."⁶¹ (Recently, having spent a decade in the polar circle, Wilk moved from the Islands to a small village by the Lake Onega, also in the North. Having complained that Poles criticize his Russicisms, he was asked by a Russian journalist: "Have you considered switching to Russian, perhaps? Like your Conrad switched to English?" Wilk replied: "So far, I have not, although more and more often I have the impression of being a Russian writer writing in Polish."⁶² Perhaps this is a reply to Herling-Grudziński's remark as well.)

The "experience of Russia" is strengthened in *Wilczy notes* by existential undertones of the decision to settle down in and wander the Solovetsky Islands. Wilk recalls his introduction to the island: "Up until now I have always chased something, acted, traveled, I had no time to think, to look at myself from a distance: what are you chasing, wolf? The answer appeared on its own: we're staying." In *List z Północy* [Letter from the North] from January 1999, Wilk describes his fascination with the Solovetsky life "on the brink," "between existence and non-existence." "And so I have reached the edge. Nothing further ahead, only ice, snow and permafrost. No trace of man, no ruins [...]. And the final boundary ... after all, the Sami believe that the Islands lie halfway on the road to the other world – jak cela monacha, jak zona" (*id.*). This sequence

60 M. Wilk *Wilczy...* 55.

61 G. Herling-Grudziński „Dziennik pisany nocą.” *Rzeczpospolita*, „Plus-Minus” 14–15 Dec. 1998.

62 M. Wilk *Dziennik Północy. Dokończone dzieło Lenina*. *Rzeczpospolita*, „Plus-Minus” 4–5 Oct. 2003.

of images shows what existential strangeness – always sensed and further reinforced in Solovki – has come to mean to Wilk.

His experience of Russia is deeply imbued with a feeling of separateness, of being “on the sideline,” and at the same time with a sense of communication with those, who – like the author did – found themselves on the edges. This is the most important narrative feature of *Wilczy notes*. When it comes to revealing truths about Russia, the book hardly contains revelations, as some of the reviewers (P. Huelle, A.S. Kowalczyk) rightly pointed out. “The same topics continue to reappear: poverty and helplessness of the Solovki residents, alcoholism, mud, corruption, incompetence of authorities, civilizational and ecological disaster”⁶³ Reviewers were also critical about the author’s blunt description of Kapuściński’s *Imperium* as a collection of tourist snapshots. Wilk himself examines in Solovki the encounter of two Russias: the Empire and Mother Russia.⁶⁴ He finds the latter more interesting and this is also what sets him apart from Kapuściński.

Jerzy Giedroyc’s statement that among the new Polish prose only Wilk seems to be worth something is only initially puzzling; Giedroyc had published chapters from *Wilczy notes* in *Kultura Paryska* before appeared in print and his “Eastern politics” assumed the change of the image of Russia in the Polish consciousness to be a task of primary importance. The “Orientalization” of Russia, discussed earlier in this essay, certainly was not conducive to such transformations and strengthened, in fact, the rigid stereotypes. The key value of *Wilczy notes* lies in its reformed attitude, in a complete rejection of “Orientalizing” Russia to contrast it with the “better Europe.” This, I believe, is what earned Giedroyc’s respect and lead him to consider Wilk “an exceptional scholar of Russia.”

I cannot fail to note that so far the latest voice in the struggle with the imagined “Russki” belongs to the famous novel by Dorota Masłowska, *Snow White and Russian Red*. In a mature literary creation, Masłowska perfectly captures the stream of language, mostly gibberish, determining contemporary Polish identity, grotesque and usually self-contradictory, where opposing phenomena (such as anarchism and capitalism) mix (to a degree) but “so it goes” – phantasms of ideas blend together and one can live with that. Lumpen-Messianism is something absurd but it exists nonetheless. The narcotic trance talk composed of clusters of languages heard on television, in soap operas, *Big Brother*, school and office reflects what goes on in the minds of Poles. Masłowska recreated – and created – the language of aggression as

63 A.S. Kowalczyk “O Wilku mowa” *Res Publica Nowa* March 1999.

64 M. Wilk *Wilczy* 12–15.

elementary Polish, *basic Polish*. The Polish-Russki War is also fought through hateful and violent talk.

It is a language that constitutes itself through an opposition to the “Russki.” As the enemy, “Russki” fundamentally cement the xenophobic Polish identity. The complex of Polish secondariness to the West finds a relief in the conviction that the Russki are even more secondary and worse. At the same time, however, they are a sinister force. Russki need to be hated and traded with. Masłowska reaches the peaks of stingy irony in the following narrative sequence: it is better to buy the national flag for the No Russki Day from the Russki, as theirs are cheaper and biodegradable: “I bought from the Russkis, because it’s cheaper. Boy Scouts also sell them. But they’re more expensive. It’s known. And from artificial materials. Nonbiodegradable.”⁶⁵ The narrator and hero of the story, Nails, protects his Polish-national purity (you are either Polish, or you are Russki) as well as the heterosexual one (in a panic fearing accusations of homosexuality). At some point, in a drug-induced hallucination, a despised “Russki” merges with the “woman”: the “woman” is a “Russki spawn.” “Maybe they’re Russkis and they’re just euphemistically called women. And we men are going to drive them out of here, from this town, where they perpetrate misfortunes, plagues, droughts, bad crops, debauchery. They ruin the upholstery with their blood, which flies out of them like nobody’s business, soiling the whole world with permanent stains. A real River Menstruation. Angelica, a serious disease. The severe penalty for lacking a maidenhead. When her mom finds out, she’ll put it back.” [107–108] In this daring logorrhea, the hatred of Russki intertwines with a disgust for female physiology and a magical fear of women’s blood. The allusion to Żeromski⁶⁶ (and, perhaps, to the famous scene with alleged menstrual blood on Salusia’s bed sheets in *The Faithful River*) reveals, nonetheless, the connection of Poland and the woman; further in the novel, Nails deciphers the meaning of white and red: “On top a Polish pill [methamphetamine], on the bottom Polish menstruation.” [102] But the Russki and female weakness and inferiority need to be rooted out from our towns.

In the wake of Masłowska’s novel, the beginning of the 21st century deconstructs Poland’s Romantic military myth. The sense of Polish – that is European – superiority over Russia was its basic ingredient.

And may it end once and for all.

Translation: Anna Warso

65 D. Masłowska, *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białą-czerwoną*, Warszawa 2003, 86, [114] [This and following quotations after *Snow White and Russian Red*. Trans. Benjamin Paloff. Grove Press, 2005. Page numbers in square brackets]

66 [Masłowska’s “wierna rzeka Menstruacja” translates literally to “faithful River Menstruation” – AW]

and attitudes, ways of thinking and of perceiving reality, influencing not only all aspects of daily life, but also morality. The imprint of subjugation has been stamped everywhere on the region and is hard to erase. But can it be described?

Claire Cavanagh, in her incisive and thought-provoking essay entitled "Postcolonial Poland: An Empty Space on the Map of Current Theory," points to the ideological hypocrisy of the analysts of postcolonialism who consistently ignore the imperial conquests of Russia, and later the Soviet Union. She correctly attributes the tendency to dwell exclusively on the cultural and economic imperialism practised by West European powers to the adherence, both tacit and overt, to the tenets of Marxism.

"In fact," as Cavanagh points out, "Poland, which for almost two hundred years was continuously dominated by the three neighboring powers and, at the beginning of the Second World War, was ruthlessly carved up by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, has earned the right to participate fully in the debate surrounding the issues related to post-colonial cultural dependency."

"In spite of these impressive post-colonial credentials, though," she adds, "only one European country has thus far been exempted from the binary 'First World-Third World' model now governing post-colonial studies. This is Ireland which is, as Seamus Deane remarks, 'the only Western European country that has both an early and a late colonial experience' (...) Deane is careful to distinguish here between East and West; still the Polish experience of colonization remains terra incognita in recent theory."³

It is difficult to disagree. On the other hand, however, it seems that in order to break the conspiracy of silence concerning Russia's colonial practices one might also suggest that they be analyzed not only with respect to Poland, but also with reference to other nations that still remain in the grip of the former Soviet empire. Such an approach would certainly open up a fertile field of research, embracing both Russian and Soviet literature in the light of its openly expressed and hidden, imperial presuppositions. Ewa M. Thompson's book, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (2000), highlights the advantages of such treatment.⁴

But why not look at the problem of cultural dependency from the opposite angle and use post-colonial methodology to analyze the literature of East

3 C. Cavanagh, *Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej teorii*, „Teksty Drugie” 2003. 63-64. All quotations are from the Author's manuscript in English. Abbreviated version of this text: *Postcolonial Poland*, "Common Knowledge," Vol. 10, Issue 1 (Winter 2004), 82-92.

4 See: E. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 2000.

European nations conquered by Russia or, after the Second World War, by the Soviet Union? Why not see it as testimony to both open and camouflaged colonial procedures? On the one hand, this literature reflects all manifestations of terror and ideological pressure as well as the efforts to impose another model of civilization – or rather of anti-civilization – that destroys the cultural heritage of those countries. On the other hand, it reveals and documents all possible games with the censorship apparatus, the purpose of which was to smuggle into the officially accepted literature values cherished by the occupied nations, values that represented and strengthened their feeling of national identity, and which were for this reason forbidden or merely tolerated in the state-directed [state-controlled] literature.

It is worth stressing that this kind of approach to national literature is gaining acceptance not only in Poland but also in other countries of the region, most of all in Ukraine. The collection of essays by Mykoła Riabczuk entitled *From Little Russia to Ukraine* is a good example of where post-colonial methodology has been applied to the analysis of Russia's metropolitan practices in that author's country. The same approach may soon appear in the Baltic States and even in Belarus.⁵

Understood in this way, Polish literature could offer a valuable means of enriching information about the dynamics of cultural dependency. It provides if not a complete, then at least a clearly defined presentation of Russia's techniques of enforcing political and cultural supremacy, aimed not only at the Poles but also at every nationality inhabiting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth both during the period of the partitions (1772-1918) and after World War II.

It should also be stressed that this region lay at the crossroads of three great powers and that, as a consequence, the territories of both the German and the Austro-Hungarian empires should be included in post-colonial studies, in the same way as the countries of Africa and South America. The dominance of German cultural models in Bohemia, Hungary, and the Balkan states, the friction between native elements and those that have been imposed, as well as the various forms of counteraction that led to the creation of new cultural forms – these issues have not been yet confronted, described, or analyzed. There is also the problem of the Ottoman Empire and its centuries-long hostile, oppressive presence in South-Eastern Europe. It is still visible, even menacing traces in Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania are undoubtedly worthy of closer examination. I would like to make it clear that it is not my intention to equate the colonization of both North and South American continents, Asia, and Australia with the sequence of wars and invasions that shaped

5 See: M. Riabczuk, *Od Małorosji do Ukrainy*, transl. O. Hniatuk, K. Kotyńska, Kraków 2002.

the political map of the continent of Europe. I only wish to emphasize here the uses of post-colonial methodology for the analysis of different kinds – and manifestations – of cultural dependency created by a dominant and menacing external culture.

To some extent post-colonialism can be compared with feminism in the sense that both methodologies, if applied judiciously, without an ideological bent, can be very useful in defining research problems clearly and in formulating entirely new questions.

To return to the Polish example: the thesis advanced by Clare Cavanagh seems most useful, even inspiring, but it portends a danger of replicating, albeit not vociferously, of the worn out and exhausted image of Poland as martyr, unjustly persecuted and always crushed under the invader's heavy boot. The image of ghastly suffering in a partially refashioned post-colonial garb is not very attractive to look at. So, how can it be counterbalanced? It seems to me that what is necessary is a total revision of perspective.

First of all, let us acknowledge the fact that in the course of Poland's history there were periods of Polish domination, rather than submission, particularly in those territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Until the end of the 19th century the supremacy of the Polish cultural pattern in the territories of today's Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine was regarded, at least by the Poles themselves, as self-evident, and suitable for the purpose of fostering a sense of a civilizing cultural mission. This attitude is amply documented by the Polish-language literature of these regions. In short, the question arises as to the role of this literature in both accurately reflecting and distorting the relationship between the dominant Polish culture and the mostly folkloric culture of nations under Poland's domination. Are the reciprocal cultural connections between Poland and other cultures presented truthfully, or do they simply reflect the Polish point of view? Were the distortions caused by lack of knowledge or by the conqueror's pride?

To obtain reliable answers to such questions it will be necessary to conduct detailed research, taking into consideration materials gathered by historians representing both sides of the question. Similar questions could legitimately be raised with regard to the literatures of other countries in the region which also experienced a transformation of the colonizing power into the victim of colonization and *vice versa*.

In other words, I would like to suggest applying a set of concepts for interpreting post-colonialism that would be free of ideology-generated exaggerations, of the tendency to perpetuate outdated attitudes, and the desire to indoctrinate the outcome. In one of my publications I have already postulated the need for a new approach to the issue of "Polish colonial discourse."

Let me add that future research on the literature of Eastern Europe would certainly profit from introducing the category of assimilation into the relationship between the culture of the conqueror and that of the conquered. The English-language literature of postcolonialism offers two very useful terms in this regard: “mimicry” and “mockery.”

It seems also that much clearer distinctions need to be made between such frequently applied terms as cultural syncretism and hybridity and that the concept of synergy, as interpreted by students of post-colonialism, should be introduced. As a result, the culture of multi-ethnic territories would be viewed as a function of many different factors, which in the process of interacting with one another lead to the creation of a new entity that turns out to be more than the sum of its components. This brings in the notion of transculturation, or a set of reciprocal forms of representation and cultural practice of both the colonies and the metropolis.

Mary Louise Pratt observes that the area of transculturation represents a social space where “disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath – as they are lived out across the globe today.”⁶ Asymmetry is more important than any other aspect of this phenomenon, particularly in the context of an attractive but otherwise blurred and only superficially ideologically neutral image of a “borderland.” Of the utmost importance is also the need for critical autoreflection in relation to the various prejudices, including those expressed through literature, regarding “strangers” and “outsiders,” as well as the various means by which “others” as well as “ourselves” are introduced and represented.

Let us return again to Clare Cavanagh’s essay. It opens with a quotation from Czesław Miłosz’s *The Captive Mind* where he reflects on diaries he had recently read which recorded the crimes committed by the Spanish conquistadors in North and South America.

Cavanagh’s comment reads as follows: “The revisionist take on the ‘triumph’ of Western civilization; the rage at the fate of native peoples extirpated by ‘knights fighting with faith and a sword’; the angry unmasking of the ostensibly Christian values that justified such atrocities: all seem remarkably timely today. Were it not for the language of the original citation, the passage might easily be taken from one of countless recent efforts to redress the strategic forgetfulness it laments by filling in the blank spots of the history of Western imperialism and examining its divisive legacy in modern post-colonial reality. Edward Said, Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, Gaytri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Seamus Deane – these are merely a few of the most prominent critics

6 M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London 1992. 4.

to address in recent years the vexed relations between culture and empire in past and and present alike.”⁷

It is difficult to refrain here from quoting another, equally perspicacious passage, from *The Captive Mind*. In the chapter entitled “The Lessons of the Baltics,” Miłosz writes as follows: “The three sparsely settled countries underwent an intensive colonization, chiefly German and Polish, which marked the advance of Christianity. The result was that two different languages entered into use here: the masters, that is the landholders, spoke German (in Estonia and Latvia) and Polish (in Lithuania) in part because the local nobility adopted them. The common people, however, spoke their native tongue and preserved their cultural heritage from a legendary past.”⁸

What a striking similarity! But how could the Commonwealth be called an “empire?” And, first and foremost, is “colonization” an appropriate term in such context? Perhaps a “velvet” colonization would better reflect the truth, but such a version of the term could only be applied to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania since the Ukrainian territories witnessed much violence and bloodshed. One should also remember that *The Captive Mind* was addressed to a western audience for whom the countries and cultures east of the Iron Curtain were *ubi albae leones*. Thus the label “colonialism” was applied by Miłosz to the realities of that region simply for the sake of convenience, in an effort to make comprehensible, to an extent at least, a tense, complex, and multilingual area. But many so-called “true” Poles would wince at the very thought of being lumped together with the “colonizers,” and the German ones to boot.

Since his school days this “true” Pole has been taught to think that Polish culture was so enticing and the privileges enjoyed by the Polish nobility so worthy of emulation, that the Lithuanian and Ruthenian nobility were all eager to adopt the same standards. Nevertheless, such an idyllic image, long-cherished by the “true” Pole, cannot be sustained. With time, social divisions, interlaced with religious ones, caused severe clashes between various loyalties, which were made more intense by the fact that – until the 19th century at least – religious affiliation offered the only means of asserting identity, particularly among the lower classes. Such observations must be made and some precision in terms must be insisted upon, if post-colonial methodology is to be successfully applied to the so-called Second World, including the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The sequence: imperialism, colonialism, and cultural domination has been assumed, if only by implication, in the methodology of post-colonial studies

7 C. Cavanagh, 2003, 18–19.

8 Cz. Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, transl. by J. Zielonko, Penguin Books, London 1985. 225–226.

and is derived from the fundamental theses of Marxism. But the dating of colonialism as a phenomenon in the history of the world has been quite unstable. Some interpreters trace it only to ca. 1880, i.e. to the beginning of the demand for raw materials by industrialized countries, others go back much further – to the conquest of North and South America and to the establishment of missions and the beginning of the era of exploration in general.

This lack of consistency results, albeit indirectly, from the inclination of those who practice the current methods of post-colonial analysis to try to somehow revive the Europe-centered myth of uncontaminated primordiality, a vision of some authentic, pure culture. In this process fertile ground is created for mythmaking and ideological slants of all kinds. So, in the end, all criteria of distinction between the theory of conquest as such, which is at the root of almost all European states, and colonization.

Given these circumstances it seems necessary to break, as it were, the methodological chain and closely examine all its links. First of all, a new approach should be developed to such categories as imperialism and colonialism. Secondly, cultural domination should be analyzed with respect to those areas and periods in which it was not preceded by brutal conquest. Thirdly, the changing historical context in which all these phenomena took place should not be ignored.

It would be more helpful to abandon our enthusiasm for “sweeping narratives” and our faith in their ability to resolve all problems since they usually serve as a cover-up for some kind of coercion. Ignorance often serves to disguise arrogance while indifference conceals a sense of superiority. It seems that we would profit instead from “small-scale narratives,” from careful analysis and examination of different points of view and attitudes, and from seeing various positions as complementary and necessarily limited in their scope and usefulness.

One should also be skeptical of declarations containing expressions of good will towards “outsiders” as well as a desire to understand and accept as necessary and valid national, cultural, and religious divisions. Such common constructs as “half-breeds,” “half-brothers,” and “locals” are not, as is often suggested, expressions of respect for the complexity of multinational groupings, but serve as a device for camouflaging cultural bias and discrimination.

The refreshingly new image of one's own national culture that may emerge from these purifying actions will be, without doubt, strikingly different from the one implanted in the consciousness of most people. Such a revision will probably provoke a spontaneous emotional rejection and may perhaps even hurt national pride, but let us hope that it will also be closer to the truth and liberate us, to some degree at last, from the lingering shadows of empire.

Translation: Benajmin Koschalka

Grażyna Borkowska

A Post-Colonial Perspective on Polish Soil: Some Questions of a Skeptic

Having established my attitude toward post-colonial studies conducted in Poland or pertaining to Polish reality already in the title,¹ I will remain faithful to my assumed role: I will ask questions and express surprise.² I admit that I have a problem with understanding how we might expand the definition of post-colonialism to our home, to Polish³ and inter-European

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- 1 An extensive bibliography can be found in Ewa Domańska's afterword to L. Gandhi's book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* trans. by J. Serwański, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2008, 157-165.
 - 2 Such a perspective is allowed in the Polish context without any objections. The article by M. Golinczak entitled "Postkolonializm. Przed użyciem wstrząsnąć" from the magazine *Recykling Idei*, vol.10, 2008 would be an exception. A thesis about the paradoxical character of Polish post-colonial discourse is also presented by M. Klimowicz in the article "Retoryczność polskiego dyskursu postkolonialnego" (*Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, edited by Stępnia, K., D. Trześniowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2010), 63-70.
 - 3 Even the latest book on the subject does not remove doubts. It is a collective volume, *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, where the least convincing, or rather evasive articles, are those articles that are written precisely to show the perspectives of examining Polish culture according to a post-colonial method. See

turf.⁴ To explain the nature of those doubts, I return to *Orientalism* by Edward Said, a seminal book, which clearly specifies the requisite research assumptions for the field; a book which is transparent, passionately written, and combines knowledge with the ethical sensitivity of its author. In the "Introduction," Said writes the following:

Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says. What he says and writes, by virtue of the fact that it is said or written, is meant to indicate that the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact. The principal product of this exteriority is of course representation: as early as Aeschylus's play *The Persians* the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar (in Aeschylus's case, grieving Asiatic women). The dramatic immediacy of representation in *The Persians* obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient. My analysis of the Orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations as representations, not as "natural" depictions of the Orient.... The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient. "Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden," as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.⁵

It seems that the act of representation, replacing an "original" voice with an exterior discourse is a key element of Said's concept of "orientalism" and "post-colonialism." The post-colonial relation establishes structures of power, but is not entirely included within those very same structures. It is not enough to dominate militarily, politically, or economically. One must likewise assume a position of domination from within the world of discourse, in the world of culture. From the other side, one has to remain in a submissive position,

Wawrzyszek, I. "Badanie kultury polskiej w perspektywie światowych studiów postkolonialnych," 11-19.

4 An example of such extension to, among others, the Baltic states is provided by D. Ch. Moore. See Moore, D. Ch. "Is the Post – in the Postcolonial the Post – in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique" in *PMLA*, vol. 116, no.1, January 2001.

5 Said, E.W. *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.

a position of the “poor relative,” who can exist in the world of culture only due to the mediation of the wealthy patron with access to the languages of the “world,” knowing how to reach an audience. In my understanding, the imbalance described by Said refers specifically to situations in which an exotic culture, barely known or unknown to the Western recipient (the dominant figure) functions in a form derived from his – the man of the West’s – imaginary figurations of the subject in question. The exotic character of objects constituting the subject of research and their distance from the position occupied by the researcher and his readers is not an addition to the theory, but the very condition, *sine qua non*, of its strength. Proof of the importance of exoticism as the foundation of Said’s theory can be found in his explanation of omitting Russia in the perspective of his post-colonial research: “Russia, however, conquered mostly through adjacency. Other than Great Britain or France, which kept reaching out across thousands of miles beyond their borders, to distant continents, Russia kept moving further and further East and South, swallowing countries and nations that existed next to it.”⁶ These remarks appeared in *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993, having in mind Russia’s expansion in Central Asia. It is an important remark (although one should add that the Russian annexations also took place in the North and West). Russia developed its empire at the cost of its neighbors, conquering new territories, but can we simultaneously say that it colonized them according to Said’s definition, meaning that it imposed its own view of the conquered cultures and nations on the rest of the world? It might have done so with respect to the nations of the Central Asia, but it had little chance of achieving such ends in relation to European countries, thinking of Poland and the Baltic states. Hence, one should not confuse political expansion and its effects on conquered nations with cultural or mental colonization.⁷ If we do, literary studies turns into political studies and an unwillingness to look into nuances concerning states dependent on Russia within the West, or even the inability to pass judgments about them from afar, will become a measure of knowledge about our part of the world and experience.

For this reason, the definition of post-colonialism should not be stretched over every historical instance of imperial violence through which the opposition of dominant and dominated emerges. Clare Cavanagh seems to think that

6 Said, E.W. *Culture and Imperialism*...

7 It seems that concepts by E.M. Thompson in her *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* are based precisely on such radical simplifications, and in particular her articles dealing directly with the situation of modern day Poland. See “Said a sprawa polska. Przeciwnik kulturowej bezsilności peryferii,” *Europa – Tygodnik Idei*, issue 26 (65), 2005, 11; and “W kolejce po aprobatę. Kolonialna mentalność polskich elit,” *Europa – Tygodnik Idei*, issue 38 (180), 2007.

such an approach is acceptable. When writing about the partitions of Poland and the country's position after being erased from the map of Europe for over a hundred years, she concludes the following: "It is hard to find more impressive post-colonial references. It would be difficult to find in the First or Third World a more wholesale indictment of the hypocrisies and human costs that have underwritten the achievements of Western civilization."⁸ Here, there are nuances concerning the reasons for the Poland's fall, which is certainly not meaningless in this instance, given that the post-colonial perspective once again divides the world of Polish history between victims and perpetrators. Let us agree that violence has occurred, one way or the other. But was it post-colonial violence? Did Poland lose its right to self-representation after the partitions? In some ways, yes: actions undertaken by the censorship office made it difficult to send messages outside, to an audience in the West. We know the term "cordon" and the difficulties involved in traversing its borders. However, the function of representing Polish culture and Polish interests by free Poles (or even those who were not free) did not disappear. It survived in many different, more or less perfect, forms (art created through emigration, transfers through Aesop's speech, contraband enabling access to forbidden books, etc.). Perhaps yet another situation, mentioned only briefly and in passing in Cavanagh's text, is closer to the post-colonial perspective as understood by Said: it is possible that after the Second World War we were a land of political and cultural exoticism for the West that was explained through proximity to communist ideology, or in the spirit of pragmatics resulting from the post-Yalta agreements. But even here, it is hard to decidedly state that this was the prevailing interpretation of post-War Polish history in the West, that there were no alternatives, including those formulated by the Polish native speakers.

Cavanagh's article refers primarily to the post-colonialism identified with the relations between Poland and Russia. The impossibility of including those relations in the post-colonial scheme is manifested, in my opinion, by the influence – unthinkable in the post-colonial relationship – that Polish culture has exerted over Russian readers and Russian culture in general. Of course, one can always say that the works published in Russia have been subject to censorship. However, it seems that the corrections forced on the works have not changed the tone or the message of the novels in any significant way, but obviously one can always debate that statement in the end. Let us just say that the reception of Orzeszkowa's work in Russia meant translations simultaneous with the first Polish editions, polemics with her works, rich correspondence between the author and her Russian readers, often very intimate. Kazimierz Zdziechowski,

8 Cavanagh, C. "Postcolonial Poland," *Common Knowledge*, vol. 10.1, 2004, 82–92.

who at the end of the 19th century studied in Russia, kept assuring the writer that she was being widely read by the Russian youth and that even those who preferred to play cards and avoid reading knew her name. It was similar with Sienkiewicz. He was translated and read. Slightly less popular were Prus, Konopnicka and Krasiński. There was a celebration held in honor of Mickiewicz's birthday in Petersburg in 1898. Also, in other historical periods Polish culture seemed attractive to the Russian audience. The reverse influence, of Russia over the "Polish soul," is also of great importance. Authors such as Miciński, Żeromski, Żychliński, or the already mentioned Orzeszkowa, all wrote about that aspect. The influence was usually judged critically and Russian culture was perceived as a source of nihilism, socialism, or communism. The assessment was nevertheless not so simple or straightforward, as such caricatures might suggest, particularly if we manage to reject the stereotypes which tell us to treat the above mentioned ideas as alien imports and the products of discursive violence imposed from the outside. Even the fascination in question has a far more complicated genesis and cannot be fully expressed in one scheme. Clare Cavanagh regrettably suggests as much:

Heart of Darkness (1898) is a key, if controversial, text for postcolonial critics, while the connection between the novel and the country that Norman Davies has called "the heart of Europe" remains at best sketchy. Miłosz and Zdzisław Najder have labored to show how Conrad brought his Eastern European experience to bear in chronicling the growth of Western empires, but the impact of their efforts has been minimal.⁹

The position of Conrad in creating a Polish post-colonial discourse is fundamental.¹⁰ He was supposed to evaluate the influence of both empires: that of the West and Russia on the fate of countries and nations at the crossing of major political trails. He was supposed to expose East and West, a double man – a *homo duplex*. But by politicizing Conrad, we ruin the existential gesture that has established him as a great writer, since it opened the path to his artistic fulfillment: we tend to forget that he wanted to run away from political dependencies and the weight of patriotic tradition. And even if that escape was not entirely successful, if he had been writing just as before, through conscious or unconscious references to the Polish past, the change of place and language remains a factor in understanding Conrad's condition, as well as the condition of his works. He is a sign of far larger complications and lack of proper exposure than those mentioned by Cavanagh. Conrad once wrote that "*Homo*

9 Ibid.

10 Moore calls upon Conrad's example in his previously mentioned work as well.

duplex has in my case more than one meaning.”¹¹ This duality of Conrad is not a duality stemming entirely from his European and Polish identity, from him being torn between the East and West, or his Polish past and British present, as Cavanagh would like. It is a duality coming from the conviction that in order to live one’s own life, one has to forsake this enormous and terrifying Polish heritage. In one of his books – *Prince Roman* – about the ruthless imperative of the love of a motherland formulated by the Polish culture, he added: “There is something terrifying in the very thought about those postulates.”¹² Conrad turned away from that terrifying prospect, he moved away not only to escape imperial violence, but also to avoid a symbolic, Polish, and patriotic, violence.

But when writing about the importance of Conrad’s case in the aforementioned circumstances, foreign scholars are limited by circumstances in their reception of the message sent by Polish speaking authors, they turn to his works in order to illustrate with his indirect prose a thesis, which does not need any extraordinary proofs: Russia has committed violent acts. But were they post-colonial acts of violence, and hence grounded on absolute otherness combined with domination? Conrad himself, in his biography, went back to the themes of Pan-Slavism (his cool headed uncle kept discouraging him from them) and, according to dr. Bernard Meyer, the poor health condition of the writer after the publication of *Under Western Eyes* was partially caused by the author’s identification with the Slavic spirit. Colonial theory has never heard of such a case.¹³

The general situation is far more complicated than that of Conrad’s and absolutely fundamental for understanding the scale of advantages introduced by the post-colonial perspective for thinking about Polish culture. It seems that post-colonialism takes away the relative independence and freedom of biographers and works of art. It challenges every attempt to step outside political stereotypes. The unfortunate weight of Polish history which hierarchized the subject of research interests for years by imposing a field of problematics and the language of description (for example, the themes of fighting for independence in the Romantic period and most of the 19th century) keeps coming back, demanding us to follow the political dependencies of every gesture at each stage. Since even Conrad was unable to escape that mode of thinking, what are the writers living for years under Russia’s yoke supposed

11 Conrad, J. *Listy*, edited by Z. Najder, translated by H. Carroll-Najder, s. 223, Warszawa: PIW, 1968; after C. Cavanagh *Postcolonial Poland*.

12 Najder, Z. *Życie Conrada-Korzeniowskiego*, vol. 2, p. 143, Warszawa: Alfa, 1980.

13 Bhabha’s theory will not be useful in this case, no matter how much we would like it to be. See Bhabha, H. “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.”

to do? Clare Cavanagh quotes poems by the few contemporary Polish poets who, according to her, directly, or in a more “masked” manner express their attitude toward the Russian empire. But she does not mention those who wanted to turn their attention away from political thinking. Sometimes, those were the same people caught in a different moment of life, in different roles, different states of imagination. For example, Miłosz or Zagajewski, both reveal political conditioning and strive toward the rejection of any historical ballast. They are also a part of the broad category of “double men,” functioning on home soil. Dually double.

There are also others who carry a burden of a duality understood in an entirely different way. Such as Prus, who experienced the political character of his times personally and continued to convey, in *Lalka* and his other works, a message of a peculiar kind when seen from our perspective: it is not politics that is important, but existence, or life. The fact that one is. In existence, that which is important comes to us from the outside. It happens. It takes place. We have no influence, no ultimate influence over groundbreaking existential events: birth, love and death. Wokulski is frustrated and helpless when faced by this perspective. If so, is there a reason to be preoccupied with details? Fight for whatever is left over? Not only politics, but a social life, career, and money – all of that fades when confronted by the fundamentally undefeatable markers of human fate.

The attempt to draw attention to the fact that Poland was colonized by Russia in the period of partitions does not bring any new revelations. In any case, it is hard to combine this idea of colonization with a common conviction that was challenged by only the most courageous publicists of the 19th century (among others by Aleksander Świętochowski) that we are above Russia; Russia which was identified with Asian culture, barbarity and savageness. The thesis about post-war colonization is in conflict with thinking based on the same beliefs: that we are better, more cultured and civilized. Is an uncivilized savage capable of conquest? Yes. But can he perform an act of colonization as understood by Said? In my opinion, no. Ewa Domańska, when analyzing the Festival of Soviet Songs in Zielona Góra and, in particular, video recordings from the concerts that became a hit of 1989, ascribes features of a farce to them: the Polish audience laughs at what the recordings show, for example, at footage from the war that was edited in the concert’s recording. By acting in such manner, the audience confirms its affiliation with the past epoch and its dependence on the standards imposed by the aggressor.¹⁴ Is that a proper

14 Domańska, E. “Obrazy PRL-u w perspektywie postkolonialnej”, in *Obrazy PRL-u*, edited by K. Brzechczyn, Poznań: IPN, 2008. Available also on-line: <http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~ewa/Domanska,%20Obrazy%20PRL%20w%20perspektywie%20postkolonialnej.pdf>

explanation for the scene in question? Is that the only explanation available? And is closer to the truth? Does Bhabha's theory about mimicry and mimicking the behavior of the colonizer fit? Maybe the festival in Zielona Góra was accepted by the audience as a whole, without entering into political analysis? Maybe the festival, when watched as a part of a series of the funniest film chronicles from the People's Republic of Poland, was funny in a different way? Maybe there is nostalgia hidden behind the smile, nostalgia not for the old regime, but for the communal fun we used to experience in days past? Or maybe it is sympathy toward Russia, more present than we assume, which returns when it is not forced? If the post-colonial perspective would serve to revise accumulated myths and prejudice, there would be reasons to introduce it. However, if the only profit coming from its introduction is the reaffirmation of stereotypes about the involvement of our fate in a geo-political situation that still exists, not as a tragedy but as farce – in a form that is devoid of an uplifting character – maybe there is no reason to try.

More convincing, I believe, is the effort to activate the colonizers' perspective from the other side; that is, to put Poles in the role of the colonizers, and not the colonized.¹⁵ It seems that such a perspective makes sense with regard to particular places and times, thinking of the application of the politics of colonization to the Eastern Borderlands at different times in history. The Borderlands fulfill all the requirements established by Said: these areas were, for the Polish observer, the embodiment of the exotic; they were not entirely savage, but certainly culturally "younger," and they were subject to replaced representation in language and literature for much longer. The Polish politics of colonization have been discussed and written about previously, before Said wrote his seminal works: Daniel Beauvois and later Czesław Miłosz, Bogusław Bakula, Aleksander Fiut, German Ritz, and Hanna Gosek have written about it, for example. But first was Józef Obrębski.

An outstanding Polish sociologist and ethnologist, he wrote, as we know, not about the Eastern Borderlands, but about Polesia.¹⁶ Not all of the theories

15 Among Polish works dedicated to the subject of post-colonialism, precisely works concerned with Eastern Borderlands seem to be the most interesting, in particular: Fiut, A. "Polonizacja? Kolonizacja?" *Teksty Drugie*, issue 6, 2003; Bakula, B. "Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki)," *Teksty Drugie*, issue 6, 2006.

16 Obrębski's works about Polesia, bibliography, as well as a list of works on the author one can find in Obrębski, J. *Studia etnosocjologiczne*, vol. 1: *Polesia*, edited by A. Engelking, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2007; quotes from that work I will be localizing as follows: title of the essay, *P*, page number. I have written about the achievements of Józef Obrębski as a scholar of Polesia in the article "Daleko od mitu. Kresy według Obrębskiego," in *Prace Filologiczne. Seria Literaturoznawcza*, 2008. I will use some of the conclusions from that article in this work.

pertaining to *Polesia* can be transferred onto the Eastern Borderlands, but some of them can be transposed and generalized. The author himself mentioned this fact in one of his later works. When pointing to the phenomenon of a violent clash of primitive culture with the civilization in the 19th century, he concluded the following:

[This process] is not an individual characteristic of Polesia. Polesia shares it with [the whole area of the] Eastern Borderlands, as well as with Euro-Asian Soviet villages, tribes of Congo and the society of Morocco, Indochina and Siam. It shares it, in general, with all the areas that, while being a place of contact between different cultures, races and civilizations, but firstly a stage of conflict between the primitive culture and civilization, display similar phenomena and face similar problems [and show only particular examples and phases of the entire process]. ("Dzisiejsza wieś polska," *P*, 33-34)

Which features of the villages of Polesia can we approach *pars pro toto* as the features of the Eastern Borderlands? Firstly, the contrast between the peasantry and nobility. This contrast is a feature of the old Poland in general, but in Polesia and the Eastern Borderlands it takes up a radical form: the gap between the poor, the falling apart of peasant homes, slightly more comfortable than the manger and the magnificent palaces of the magnates, built on the endless latifundium is vast. When commenting on Kraszewski's work, *Wspomnienia Polesia, Wołyń i Litwy* (1860), Obrębski wrote:

The image of Polesia, commemorated by Kraszewski, is not an image of peasant paradise. It is an image of a peasant life in a land of masters, land of princes and magnates, ex-princes and "Borderland Bisons" (term used for nobility - trans.). On his path, only once has Kraszewski stumbled upon the visible sign of the royal, hidden underneath the cloak of peasantry, when, while in the local tavern, he saw a richly embellished carriage with four horses, carrying a group of nonchalant golden youth of Polesia's nobility. A peasant cottage, half way sunk in the ground, half-naked peasants and a parade carriage are not only elements of Polesia's landscape but symbols of Polesia's social structure: its simultaneous royalty and peasantry. ("Polesia archaiczne," *P*, 33-34)

Nowhere else and never before has the contrast between the masters and their subjects been so stark and the division of the society into castes so radical as in the Eastern Borderlands in the times before enfranchisement. Nowhere else and never before have the differences between the castes meant such deep gap: on the one hand "the most noble species of the Polish magnate – princes of the Borderlands, on the other the lowest kind of

peasant – Russian *mużyk*” (Ibid., *P*, p. 34). Never before and nowhere before have the differences between the master and the peasant been so great: they were divided by everything, including language and faith.

The Borderlands were helpful – according to Obrębski – in not only creating magnate fortunes, but also in developing the very concept of royal nobility. Far from the king and the court, the rich magnate was the master of life and death for his subjects. The idea of noble democracy turned out to be a fiction. Being dependent from the magnate made the nobility into his obedient tool. Radziwiłł, my Dearest Sir, “runs his almost kingly court in Nieśwież and saw a king as a parvenu” (Ibid., *P*, p. 37). It was not different among the families of Potocki, Czartoryski, Ostrogski or Sapiecha. The elegance and wealth were combined in the Borderland mansions, or even in the manors of nobility with an incredible splendor and “oriental pompousness,” according to Obrębski. On top of that, this Borderland lifestyle ostentatiously cut itself from its surroundings and disconnected itself from the country, as Kraszewski used to write: from “forest, sand, mud, and plains.” An arbor in Radziwiłł’s Alba was stylized after the Hagia Sophia Basilica in Istanbul, tables in Nieśwież carried the most exotic dishes, including reindeer meat and the treasures were filled with the most beautiful gems and pearls of the world. When listing, following the scholars researching the pre-partition era, all of the goods found in the Borderland mansions and manors, Obrębski highlights that they were not connected with any individual tastes of the magnates. This was the official lifestyle of the entire nobility:

[An] institution that created bonds of mutual dependency between the spenders and gainers, givers and receivers; an institution that trapped allies and friends, regulated increases and decreases in personal clout and popularity, at the same time pointing to proper place in the diverse and complex hierarchy of the world of nobility. It was also a means of expression of master’s capability to waste (Ibid., *P*, 42).

Such a lifestyle, in the post-partition era, made the common acceptance of the political *status quo* easier. New inhabitants of the magnate mansions, such as Tutolmin, the governor of the empress in Nieśwież, after taking over the estates and wealth of the magnates, had no problem with acquiring support of the local nobility. He would organize extravagant parties and recruit noble youth to the Russian army. Obrębski highlights that this royal lifestyle did not disappear after the partitions. Owners of the huge estates spent fortunes on beautiful china, one-piece glass imported from St. Petersburg, crystal lamps, bronzes, antiques, expansive fabrics imported from Lyon, or extravagant foods and alcohols from all over:

The court of magnate was a focus of everything that was most unique, expensive, best quality and sublime in the country and abroad. But the source of that luxury was in the work of an uneducated Russian *mużyk*, who, under the yoke of the court, using the strength of his muscles and primitive tools he built himself, turned the fruits of Polesia's soil into a product and a merchandise that was shipped to the same foreign markets that provided the expensive artifacts and tokens of the royal lifestyle. In the great magnate economies, a whole army of servants, economists and overseers overlooked the whole process; a process that turned peasant's work and life into the master's wealth and the wealthy possessions of the master. In the modest manors of self-supporting gentry [PL: *hreczkosiej*] this complicated apparatus was reduced to a simple noble chest and a whip. And that is why, even though not every mansion resembled Versailles, each of them had something in common with the Bastille. (Ibid., P, 43-44)

For Obrębski, it is obvious that thanks only to the primitive peasant and the land, the whole outburst of Borderland culture could have shone with its brightest light:

Without the land and without the peasant, mansion turned into a common hut – and the master turned not entirely into a gentry and not entirely into a peasant himself, but into a peculiar mixture of both: a backwoods noble, who with the scraps of royal culture fed his illusions of his royal creed and with his stately megalomania covered the reality of peasant-like existence. (Ibid., P, 44)

This very process, already observed by Kraszewski in the time between the uprisings, intensifies after the enfranchisement.

The Eastern Borderlands were a breeding ground not only for social contrasts. They were also a prolific ground for an economy of exploitation. The resources of Borderland's nature seemed infinite. And they were being used without any limitations. Forests and vast swamps were a natural habitat for many animal species. Wild boars, moose, deer, hares and bears were hunted. Not only single animals, but dozens at once were hunted, using nets that made the whole process incredibly efficient. There was also fishing: Sturgeon, ruff and loach were so vast in number that one could pick them out by hand when the water levels were low. From some of the accounts we learn that pigs sometimes went to the river to feed on fish that jumped right in their mouths! Beavers were popular game. Kazimierz Kontrym, author of *Podróż po Polesiu*, published in 1839 wrote: "They hunt for them with nets called *żelazo* on the paths they make in the snow when leave their homes and come back. Sometimes

they catch them in *kliny* (a type of net) they use to fish by the mills.” (quote after: Ibid., P, 51) The same observer debates the thesis of Borderlands’ magnates breeding cattle from Switzerland and Tyrol on their estates. He is of the opinion that the new breeds were imported for fun, without regard for costs. But the scene of the most prevalent and intensive exploitation is the forest. Trees are cut down in massive quantities and processed on the spot and turned into planks. Some of the trees are floated immediately and some are used for heating. Tar and potash are produced on a massive scale. Factories and manufacturing craftsmanship are a rarity, on the other hand. Sometimes one might encounter factories producing fabric, soap, porcelain, or iron tools. Thirty years later, when the enfranchisement reform put an end to the feudal system in the Eastern Borderlands, the economic model remained almost entirely the same. The nobility saves itself from debt with lumbering and forest exploitation and the peasants will look there for food, killing even the game that is under protection. The example came from above.

Obrębski’s reflection combines two spheres of reality that are separated in other discourses: social radicalism and a nostalgic attachment to the culture of Polish nobility. The scholar shows an irreducible connection between the two; a combination of violence and the mechanisms that create culture:

Speculating with the forest and the peasant resources in the most basic and easiest way changed the master’s right of ownership of the land and man into the master’s goods and consumption artifacts. By destroying the forest and the peasant, the speculation turned a prosaic element of the peasant’s landscape of Polesia into poetry and the charm of the master’s Borderland mansion and his cultural – both homegrown and exotic – wonders. This poetry and charm, the same in a small manor and mansion, were the mainspring of economic activity of a noble landowner and the main goal of his backwards, exploitative, wasteful and irrational managing of resources. A noble landowner was a type of consumer-landowner and not a producer; an eater and not a creator of goods. (Ibid., P, 69)

If we were to add the problems stemming from serfdom, the right of the first night, punishments, forced draft, etc., we are bound to ask if the peasant from the Eastern Borderlands suffered more than the one from central Poland. It seems that a feeling of alienation was another element composing his otherness: cultural, linguistic and religious otherness. Master-the-oppressor turned into *Lach*-the-oppressor:

The myth of a *Lach*-the-oppressor was not some regional passing literary theme in the peasant traditions of Polesia. Its genesis was in the centuries of the history of Russian peasantry within the borders of the Polish

Commonwealth, in the historical processes of expansion of Polish culture and the Polish nation's nobility on the ethnically Russian territories. In those lands, being Polish was historically combined with oppression and peasant slavery. Serfdom and being one's subject were not a local invention, the creation of a spontaneous evolutionary processes of the local Russian-Lithuanian society. These were Polish imports, brought and installed along with the political expansion of the Polish nobility on the Russian territory. (Ibid., P, 107)

Obrębski does not use metaphors, he calls things by their name and ruthlessly deals with the Borderlands' myth. His achievement rests with creating a logical cause-and-effect narration describing the relations between the master and the servant and providing the final word in the matter of genesis of the Borderlands' culture. The Borderlands, according to Obrębski, are a space of imposed power, one that does not care for the locals, is ruthless toward people and exploitative toward nature. Borderlands are a space of huge contrasts between the royalty (wealth) and peasantry (poverty and violence). The high culture of the Borderlands region is a direct effect of exploitative Polish politics toward stolen land. *Mużyk's* hut and the magnate's mansion are two sides of the same coin. The wealth and power of those clans were built with peasant's suffering. He has his own, specific and almost entirely silent input into the legend of the Eastern Borderlands of the Polish Commonwealth.

Obrębski was a myth destroyer, but this was never his primary goal. Anna Engelking recollects, in the introduction to his works, that the scholar planned on writing a polemic with a functioning myth of the natives of Polesia. (Ibid., P, 28-29) From the remaining fragments, we can conclude that the sociologist was not interested in the relationship between social reality and literary fiction. He assumed that works of art "are not a form of research analysis, but a literary montage of social sentiments, or – despite all the masquerade – simply a myth and a legend." ("Legenda leśnych ludzi," P, 438) He was more interested in compromising pseudo-knowledge about the Polish Borderlands, propagated by the regime in the twenties and thirties, or in the words of Said – the colonial discourse of the authorities:

Chapters dedicated to Polesia in different journals, these special issues about the region, photographs of Polesia natives, or the samples of landscape, pseudo-ethnographical, pseudo-informative, or propaganda articles, etc. – these are the bits and pieces of, today obviously crystallized, well designed according to the subject and coherent from the literary perspective, legend of the people of the forest. Pseudo-objective, semi-informative and somewhat ethnographic character of this type of

production should not mislead anyone. Despite all the attempts to look objective, these are nothing else but propaganda. There is no objective, critical, or scientific information to be found there. Their form, their pseudo-scientific character, is extremely characteristic of the contemporary way of myth creation. In order to sanction its claims, it will turn to the repository of already used up and clichéd religious dogmas that keep hiding behind the halo of the, still rising in power, authority of science. (*Ibid.*, *P*, 438)

Obrębski paid special attention to exposing a certain type of “reading” of the Polish Eastern Borderlands. Anna Engelking, his editor and a commentator on his works, was right when she looked for the inspirations for his theoretical stands, on the one hand in Bronisław Malinowski’s functionalism, on the other in the humanistic sociology of Florian Znaniecki. Both those inspirations had one thing in common – an attempt to see through the described world, based on a conviction about the closeness of both the researcher and his subject and about the possibility of mutual understanding. I believe, however, that Obrębski’s stand is not exhaustively described by those analogies. When writing passionately about the paradoxical connection between the magnate mansions and the slave labor of a Russian boy, Obrębski calls upon the Marxist ideology as well. And it is no accident that his great works seem to be so similar to the essays of Walter Benjamin. They are fundamentally different, of course, in that Benjamin described the beginnings of capitalism, early modernity, the development of the city and contemporary technology, while Obrębski remained the scholar of Polish-Russian poverty, the archaic village and its backwardness.

Wonderful in terms of style and methodology, based on years of field studies, Obrębski’s articles were created in the 1930s. The pioneering character of his studies in the Eastern Borderlands against the post-colonial perspective is obvious, but this is not what interests me the most. Maybe, in some other parts of the world, similar observations have been made, ones that we do not know about because of the “exotic” (“exotic” for us, because that designation is always for someone) character of their subject and the language of the study. Something else is much more surprising: a total omission of that cognitive tradition in Polish post-colonial discourse that seems to be developing very energetically. Why do we try – in my opinion forcefully and without critical thought – to adapt “oriental” problematics to the Polish reality, while paying so little attention to homegrown “colonialism” and solid works on that subject? The answer to my question, however, is an entirely different story.

Translation: Jan Pytalski

Włodzimierz Bolecki

Postcolonialism and Modernism¹

1.

The weak reception of concepts created by Western literary scholars is a result of the assimilation of theoretical terms deprived – in Polish praxis – of their original extraneous connotations, primarily their political and historical applications in studies of social history phenomena. We repeatedly acquired robust terminologies, each divested of references to its original subject; that is, cultural issues that spawned both the theory and its associated terminology. I already wrote about the host of young deconstructionists who spent years without deconstructing anything worthwhile.² The reason for the lack of action was fairly straightforward – the inability/reluctance/fear of adapting foreign theoretical languages (and their contexts) to the realities of Polish social issues.

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1 Previously published under the title: "Thoughts on Postcolonialism," *Second Texts*, no. 1, 2007.

2 "Some Questions Regarding the Subject-matter of Literary Studies," *Second Texts*, no. 1-2, 2005. My complaints – as all figures of speech inevitably do – simplified the subject, and I ignored multiple laudable and talented exceptions in order to focus on mass mediocrity.

Tracing the fortunes of the term “postcolonialism” in Poland provides an excellent example supporting the abovementioned thesis. It has been lurking in the shadows of Polish literary studies and literary criticism for years; its career in the humanities abroad has been nothing short of illustrious, whereas it has been mostly absent from Polish writing, as if somehow unserviceable and therefore ignored. Initial attempts to adapt the term “orientalism” (including the writings of G. Borkowska and M. Janion) have been accompanied by serious efforts to popularize and interpret the concept (including the excellent articles by D. Skórczewski), as well as the publication of numerous special topical issues of respected journals (e.g. *Comparisons*). However, except for a few “excursions into postcolonialism” performed by individual scholars, no large-scale in-depth explorations of the subject have ever appeared in Poland – despite the fact that the youngest generation of Polish philologists have been handed a concept allowing them to revise a large section of the Polish literary realm. Nowadays, propositions like these are becoming increasingly frequent and each year sees the publication of articles and volumes on postcolonialism in Polish literature. Despite all of this, however, it’s hard to say that profound change has taken place in the field – the list of scholarly achievements is still fairly small and comprehensive monographs thoroughly exploring the subject have yet to be published.³

Of course, adapting the term “postcolonialism” in a country whose modern history includes a nearly 200-year-long period of subjugation must give rise to some doubts. Without them, the thoughtless application of “postcolonialism” to Polish realities has to result in either caricature or intellectually sterile insights. That is why I find it necessary for future studies to discriminate between “colonization” and “conquest.” The climax of the former consists of violence, exploitation, and domination, whereas the latter leads up to extermination – genocide and ethnic cleansing. This, however, is a whole other subject.

The heart of the matter lies elsewhere: instead of the exact meaning of the term (and its synonyms, e.g. *orientalism*), it is the phenomena of modern history that the term describes (also in literature) that should not only inspire but challenge us to face the problems of modernity.⁴ Before I arrive at what

3 cf. D. Skórczewski, “Postcolonial Poland – an (Im)possible Project,” *Second Texts*, no. 1-2, 2006; “The Colonized Poland, the Orientalized Poland. Postcolonial Theory Facing the Other Europe,” *Comparisons*, no. 6, 2009; *Second Texts*, no. 1-2, 2005, *Comparisons*, no. 5, 2008, and *Comparisons*, no. 6, 2009.

4 Even the publication of Ewa Thompson’s excellent book on the subject, released in Poland over a decade ago, did not lead to any attempts of undertaking a similar revision of Polish literary and historical contexts, cf. E.M. Thompson, *Trubadurzy imperium: literatura rosyjska*

I mean by that, I need to write down a few synthetic remarks on the phenomena behind the term “postcolonialism” (everyone familiar with Western works written on the subject will not find anything new here – aside from a heavily simplified refresher on things and notions explored in-depth elsewhere).

2.

The term „postcolonialism” is something of an import in the field of literary studies, or quasi-literary, to be more precise, as they revolve around more than just literature. Even a short list of terms associated with postcolonial studies (colonization, neocolonialism, postcolonialism, metropolis, Westernization, globalization, Americanization, imperialism, segregation, domination, exploitation, identity, nation, nationalism) clearly demonstrates that postcolonialism is primarily the focus of social sciences, including political science, sociology, cultural studies, international relations studies, modern history, etc. However, „postcolonialism” quickly managed to annex a large portion of literary studies and other humanities programs at Western universities (primarily in the US), and became the lens through which the body of international literature considered canon was to be interpreted.

Criticism of the colonial period (emphasized by the „post-” prefix) was the most important factor behind the rapid development of this new field of study as well as its increasing prestige. Postcolonialism is – in the most general of terms – supposed to explain the mechanisms that drove colonialism. From the perspective of US researchers, the colonial period started with the establishment of the United States of America in the late 18th century and the Haitian Revolution of 1803. From the European perspective, it started 300 years earlier. Although the latter half of the 20th century is generally considered to mark the end of the colonial era, some researchers do not agree with the claim mostly due to the differences in interpretations of colonialism as a historical phenomenon. Postcolonial scholars are still debating whether the field is supposed to investigate contemporary forms of colonialism or an era generally considered to be concluded.

Postcolonial studies are dominated by American researchers. Given that the foundation of the United States is, on the one hand, an outcome of the

i kolonializm [Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism], transl. A. Sierszul-ska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000). Nowadays, similar attempts are more frequent (n.b. only the influence of E. Thompson's articles and books made their existence possible), cf. *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, ed. K. Stępnik and D. Trzeźniowski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2010), *Słowniki postkolonialny*, ed. M. Kuziak, (Bydgoszcz: Teatr Polski, 2010), cf. M.A. Kowalski, *Kolonie Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2005).

American Revolution, and on the other hand, the beginning of another period of modernization of Western civilization, colonialism is perceived as a product of the post-revolutionary era and the birth of the industrial society associated with it, as well as a product of modernism in culture.

The field of postcolonial theory was pioneered by in the 1950s and 1960s by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi – both were heavily influenced by Hegel's idea of history (and his master-slave dialectic) as well as Marx's concepts of revolution – who laid the foundations for the development of the revolutionary discourse espoused by postcolonial activists. Also, bear in mind that during the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of former European colonies in Africa were granted independence and invited to join the United Nations; the period also marks the high point of tensions and violence between white and black Americans.

Postcolonial studies focused primarily on categories like state and nation, on racial differences, the rise of nationalism in (post)colonial states as a form of expression of national identity and consciousness, social stratification of (post)colonial states (the bourgeois elites versus people from the province and the countryside). Therefore, it was natural for contemporary postcolonial discourse to consider the category of difference (whether social or racial) to be the primary determinant of colonialism (e.g. apartheid).

The problems of historically-oriented postcolonial theory revolve around issues such as types of colonies (native and administrative), similarities and differences between African and Asian colonies (the case of Rhodesia, French Algeria, India, and Hong Kong), as well as the legitimacy of applying postcolonial terminology to describe Western European experiences (e.g. Northern Ireland). The legal consequences of the colonial period for the former colonial powers were also the subject of multiple debates, e.g. the immigration issue, highly politicized in both France and Great Britain: which of the inhabitants of former colonies should be granted the right to immigrate to the former colonial powers. Historical revisionism is an integral part of postcolonial studies (with Russian and Soviet realities ignored by design, as brilliantly pointed out by E. Thompson).

In subsequent decades, the focus in postcolonial research moved towards anthropological issues, primarily the category of (post)colonial identity as hybrid in nature, i.e. a split identity shaped on the intersection of opposing *loci*, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious.

Postcolonial theory was also used to describe (1) the relationship between so-called Native and white Americans and (2) the phenomenon of so-called multiple ethnic identities (usually dual), e.g. Asian American, African American, European-American or multiple racial identities (Americans with skin color other than white), etc. Abandoning the "race" category and focusing on

the concept of “ethnicity” – so popular nowadays – proved to be a watershed moment in the development of the field.

Other common topics explored by postcolonial scholars include otherness, identity, and authenticity, as well as the concept of nationality (the renaissance of the idea of nation) especially as a consequence of globalization understood, on the one hand, as a determinant of the future model of a post-national world, and on the other, as another name for Westernization, Americanization, or even neocolonialism, and therefore a threat. From the perspective of former colonies, the latter of the three nowadays appears under entirely new guises, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

Contemporary meanings attached to the term “postcolonialism,” which also function in the field of literary studies, have been filled with completely different connotations. Postcolonialism, hitherto described using categories like nationality or statehood, is now explored primarily using the category of discourse.⁵ Another breakthrough moment came about when postcolonial theorists started applying the so-called postmodern concept of discourse in their research. The most important role in this process was played by Lyotard’s interpretation of Kant’s theory of the sublime, which states that “post-modern” phenomena cannot be described using traditional categories associated with “modernity,” meaning that categories specific to the colonized world (racial diversity, domination, submission, subordination, inequality, oppression, etc.) are impossible to express within colonial discourse.⁶ Scholars also widely employed a thesis popularized by Althusser, which claims that text alone (discourse) is “unaware” of the notions and presumptions contained within its body.

The emergence of new issues related to postcolonialism and its staggering success and adoption at American universities were primarily the result of the publication of E. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). Said infused postcolonial studies with a wholly new theoretical status by creating his own concept of “postcolonial discourse.” He managed, however, to retain the specifics of the idea of postcolonialism, wherein methodology provides the axiology used to describe the world (a reality divided into polarities: colonial powers and the colonized, us and them – also in the ethical dimension).

5 For an in-depth exploration of this particular subject, see: M.P. Markowski, “Postkolonializm” in *Teorie literatury XX wieku*, vol. 2 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006).

6 Paradoxically, this thesis contradicts its own deep structure, given that postcolonial discourse is based entirely on key categories introduced by theorists who developed the discourse of Western civilization (Hegel, Marx, Althusser, Foucault, Lyotard, Lacan, etc.)

Building on his experience as a theorist of discourse, Said employed, *inter alia*, Foucault's concept of discursive formations, here construed as mechanisms creating their own representations of reality, meaning that they are *de facto* discourses creating reality according to their own hidden presumptions and values. Said claimed that texts produced by Western culture follow the principles of colonial discourse, which is nothing more than a representation of the world created by colonial powers. In his concept, Said emphasized power and domination as being the key aspects of colonial, or as he understood it, imperial, discourse. Thus, subjects such as (1) the enquiry into forms of discourse that gives rise to perceptions of colonized countries in the discourse employed by colonial powers, and (2) the exploration of forms of resistance against colonialism in (post)colonialist states were also included within the purview of postcolonial criticism. In both cases, postcolonial studies touch on issues like national identity, nationalism, decolonization, neocolonialism, etc.

Bear in mind, however, that postcolonialism in this particular case is nothing more than a description of national cultural, religious, and moral stereotypes comprising the vocabulary of the language used by Western civilization (also in literature) to characterize cultures other than European – a well-known element of European scholastic tradition. Entire libraries have been written on this subject. To put it tritely – the goal of postcolonial studies on colonial discourse is to demonstrate that, e.g. the portrayal of Asians or Africans in the language of Western civilization is incongruous with their true culture; it's merely a projection of negative impressions of and prejudices about these cultures espoused by the colonial powers (Americans, the British, Germans, Spaniards, etc.) – that includes the negative stereotypes held by white Americans (the colonizers) about Native American tribes (the colonized).

Thus, according to this concept, the colonial discourse employed by Western civilization does not contain anything natural, no mimicry of any sort, no truth about cultures other than European with which their representatives could identify; instead, it dispenses only stereotypes, phobias, simplifications, and inverted signifiers of Western cultural values. Colonial discourse, as its scholars claim, introduced the unwarranted division into high and primitive cultures, and it was the same discourse that created the category of Orient (and orientalism) as the embodiment of the Other – in opposition to Western Culture (thus creating a host of “us” vs. “them”, “natives” vs. “aliens” polarities).

Another area recently included within the purview of postcolonial studies were issues revolving around the so-called “internal colonialism.” They were split into several different currents, including the matter of emancipation of national minorities living in socioethnic ghettos (African American,

Asian Americans, Native Americans), with its popular slogan claiming that ghettos in the US are becoming “internal colonies.” This particular issue was thoroughly explored and analyzed in (1) the extensive body of literature produced by the Harlem Renaissance movement, (2) the matter of multiculturalism, as well as in a seemingly unrelated topic, namely feminism. The study of so-called “Black feminism” is a contamination of the first and the third position from the list above (n.b. researchers rightly note that race became the privileged determinant of “colonialism” in this particular trend, in contrast to trends emphasizing supra-racial and supranational factors). In the case of feminism construed as a strain of postcolonial criticism, it’s treated as a discourse focused on (1) enquiring into the state of women as colonized by patriarchal discourse (male, phallogocentric, patriarchal, etc. – whichever you prefer), and (2) the fact that Western feminist discourse contains hints of colonial power relations (e.g. in the way European women describe Asian women). That is the thesis underlying the works of Gayatri Spivak inspired by Derrida’s analyses. By the way, Spivak extends the allegation so that it also covers men and Western intellectuals and claims that they do not consider their position dominant given their association with and participation in the discourse of Western civilization. Bear in mind, however, that there is no single theory of postcolonial discourse, and its signifiers evolve depending on the concepts utilized by individual scholars.

No postcolonial discourse is a “cold” language used to describe above-mentioned social phenomena. Each one is lined with a peculiar “Prometheism.” Their ideological (emancipatory) goal was to create a consciousness that would allow all colonized people to express their identity from an autonomous perspective instead of from the perspective of an imposed, homogeneous world, and further enable them to develop the criticism of its colonial institutions (e.g. vast metropolises vs. the “Third World”).⁷

Scholars emphasize that colonial discourse was thoroughly Manichaeic, with Western civilization representing all that is good and holy and colonized countries as the epitome of backwardness and ignorance. Paradoxically, this Manichaeic dualism became the driving force behind postcolonial discourses wherein technological, intellectual, and economic expansion of Western civilization was portrayed as the enforcement of colonialism’s (and neocolonialism’s) inherent wickedness and iniquity, while the cultures of postcolonial states embodied the inevitable decline and annihilation of the diversity of the (Third) world. The confrontational division into “us” and “them” remains

7 cf. A. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2005); L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); R.J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

the ironclad rule of postcolonial discourses. Note that one radical version of postcolonial discourse is utilized today by Islamic fundamentalists.

In literary studies, postcolonialism competes, in a way, with traditional comparative literature. In this particular case, the term "postcolonialism" means the literary output of colonized countries (in contrast to colonialist literature) and replaces the term "Third World literature," so entrenched in Poland (or "Commonwealth literature" in Great Britain). From a methodological perspective, it is fairly easy to notice that categories employed by broadly defined criticism overlap nearly completely with basic themes and categories of anthropological concepts espoused by Western poststructuralism, e.g. colonized people are either people who lost their voice, who remain subordinate, suppressed (the central part of subalternization is the removal of the subaltern's voice so that he cannot be either heard or read), and oppressed, or those who were homogenized by the dominant discourse or are altogether deprived of representation in Western (colonizing) discourse, etc. That's why metatheoretical discussions revolve around debates on the relations between postcolonialism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism (especially in the works of Homi Bhabha, who applied categories from Lacanian psychoanalysis to postcolonial discourse). Shifting the emphasis from describing social, political, and historical issues towards discourse and from there to the abstract mental sphere opened up a new avenue of interpretation covering the specifics of the so-called psychological "postcolonial situation." It might be assumed, then, that postcolonial theory will soon reach for other interpretative ideas.

But let's circle back to the beginning. What made postcolonial studies so popular among students of Western universities? Aside from the reasons I have already mentioned, scholars also point towards a host of other causes behind the rapid development of all kinds of postcolonial studies – especially in the US. These include: (1) changes in academia – new tenures for scholars from all over the globe, primarily Africa and Asia. They became the driving force of research investigating relations between America, Africa, and Asia; (2) the development of capitalism, economic globalization, with intellectuals serving as its supposed "emissaries," and emancipation of the Third World; (3) anti-racist organizations and human rights movements; (4) Marxist inspirations – actually, the term "postcolonialism" replaced the favorite category of the language of Western leftists, that is Lenin's "imperialism" (n.b. Said's 1993 treatise is entitled *Culture and Imperialism*).⁸ The assertion that colonialism was really imperialism (and racism) turned out to be the endpoint of postcolonial

8 cf. F. Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism" in T. Eagleton, F. Jameson, E.W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

studies. In this particular sense, we might say that postcolonial studies returned to their ideological roots, meaning to the Marxist ideology that inspired the majority of postcolonial scholars and activists. Without risking too great of an inaccuracy, we could easily reduce all Promethean-like manifestos behind postcolonial research to the slogan: "colonized of the world, unite!"

3.

Dismissing the ideological and political lineage and goals of postcolonialism leads to a complete evisceration of the project's historical foundations, and most of all, it leads to caricature – one example of the latter includes juxtaposing the Polish state, which didn't even exist in the 19th century, with colonial empires like France, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain, etc. Practicing postcolonial criticism must be preceded by the precise definition of who acted as the colonial power, who was colonized, and what methods were used to achieve it. The ideological and political lineage of postcolonialism is also apparent in its aberrant, completely ahistorical interpretations of the literary (art) canon, according to which the white man, and especially the white male, should be asking forgiveness for the fact of his birth from the moment he's conceived.

However, reducing postcolonialism to nothing more than its origins would also be an aberration. Regardless of its political and ideological connotations and its own inherent simplifications, patterns, taboos, and interpretative deviations, postcolonialism introduced a healthy dose of a revivifying turmoil into the revision of historical events and their portrayal in all forms of discourse. In this sense, it has enriched political and historical discourses while putting its own peculiar, recognizable stamp on them. Postcolonial discourse can be practiced, rejected, argued with, ridiculed, but we cannot dismiss that it revolves around social problems still plaguing the part of the world it attempts to describe.

Nothing of that sort, however, has happened in Polish literature – as if Polish history wasn't replete with analogous (not identical!) phenomena, the investigations and analyses of which continue to fill up entire volumes of postcolonial writings.⁹

4.

"Postcolonial" themes, that is analogous to topics within the purview of postcolonial criticism but requiring separate a nomenclature and place in

9 Pointed out by C. Cavanagh in her excellent essay "Postcolonial Poland: A Blank Space on the Map of Contemporary Theory," *Second Texts*, no. 2-3, 2003.

the historical context, easily cover the entirety of Polish modern history. It's fairly hard to miss the fact that the beginnings of colonialism in the US (end of the 18th century) coincide with the collapse of the Polish state (excluding the expansion of the First Polish Republic in the 16th and 17th centuries). What an excellent space for drawing historical parallels! Or the fact that the ideological provenance of postcolonialism can be traced back to European Tyrtenean and Promethean traditions: from "Arise, damned of the Earth," "arise prisoners of starvation," through "return our homeland to us, Lord," to "onwards, youth of the world."

"Postcolonial" themes have been present in Polish literature for centuries, at the very least due the multicultural and multiethnic pedigree of the Polish state and nation. Meanwhile, Polish literary output on the subject of postcolonialism has for years included examples that became *loci communes* for every Western literary study on the topic. The writings often engaged in a nearly automatic repetition of names and titles, including Shakespeare's (and his *Tempest*, analyzed from all possible angles), Jane Austen's (*Mansfield Park*), Kipling's (his *Jungle Book* was required reading), E.M. Forster's (*A Passage to India*), Joseph Conrad's (*Heart of Darkness*, of course), and on rare occasions, J.M. Coetzee's and André Brink's.

In recent years, Polish authors have begun to tear away from this slavish imitation, but the Polish literary canon still contains a long list works that warrant a thorough postcolonial examination (that, however, would require creating our own categories of analysis befitting the peculiar nature of Polish history).¹⁰ The list would include, e.g. Żeromski's *Ashes*, as the Polish expedition on Saint-Domingue described by the author (and many others) took place during the Haitian Revolution, one of the opening chapters of postcolonial history.¹¹ What about other events from the Napoleonic legend (and the French Revolution)? The history of Polish national uprisings? And *Konrad Wallenrod* – the classic poem about the clash between the Duchy of Lithuania and the Teutonic Knights has all the telltale marks of a colonization narrative. What about Sienkiewicz's entire body of work? Prus' *The Outpost*? What about the *Kulturkampf* and German plans of colonizing Polish lands from Bismarck to Hitler (and, lest we forget, Stalin)?

10 cf. *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature*, ed. Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

11 Luckily, the number of similar works is steadily increasing, cf. K. Stępnik and D. Trzeźniowski, *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, M. Kuziak, *Słowniki postkolonialny*; cf. E. Domańska, "Badania postkolonialne," the afterword to the Polish translation of L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*.

What about Gombrowicz and his themes of “master and slave” or the hybrid national identity of Poles and Argentinians? What about Polish literature written on the subject of German and Soviet concentration camps? What about the issue of the Holocaust (both the historic event and its subjective interpretations)? The social stratification under Communist rule (the “red bourgeois” vs. the rest of society, n.b. in the People’s Republic of Poland, it was said that rural areas are just “internal colonies” of Communism)? What about Herling-Grudziński’s *Podróż do Burmy*? The works of Józef Mackiewicz (including his concept of the “East” as a figure composed of ideas and notions espoused by the West, which preceded Said’s book by decades)?¹² What about Polish travelogues describing journeys to the East? Memoirs and reportages written by Poles about “encounters” with the Bolsheviks (Goetel, Ossendowski, Vincentz, et al.)? What about Stalinist literature? What about Miłosz’s use of “ketman” – a precise equivalent “colonial mimicry” (yes, yes)? And Miłosz’s “Balts” – as classic victims of colonization? I will not even mention the works of Kapuściński as they have been extensively examined from a postcolonial perspective... by Western authors.¹³

5.

Postcolonialism is mentioned alongside other disciplines considered to be part of the poststructuralist paradigm – the concept of postcolonial discourses is especially poststructuralist. However, if we take a look at the names of the authors behind the literary canon examined by postcolonial critics, we will quickly notice that the majority of them are considered to be modernist writers, regardless of whether they are from Poland or not. In other words, there’s nothing more rewarding for postcolonial criticism (its Polish variety might be a specific example) than unearthing “colonial sins” in modernist literature. In this sense postcolonial criticism is a practical deconstruction of modernist literature.¹⁴ However, if we ignore the ideological trappings of

12 I wrote about it years ago in *Ptasznik z Wilna* [*The Birdman of Vilnius*] (Kraków: Arcana, 2007), cf. the chapter “Nowoczesność Mackiewicza” [“Mackiewicz’s Modernity”]

13 cf. C. Cavanagh, “Postcolonial Poland.”

14 cf. P. Childs, *Modernism and the Post-Colonial: Literature and Empire 1885-1930* (London: Continuum, 2007), *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*, ed. G. Fincham, J. Hawthorn, A. De Lange, J. Lothe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); *Conrad at the Millennium: Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism*, ed. G. Fincham, A. De Lange, W. Krajka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). On the subject of interpreting Conrad as a “colonialist writer” cf. C. Cavanagh, “Postcolonial Poland”; *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature 1899-1939*, ed. R. Begam, M.V. Moses (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

postcolonialism and focus on looking for a specific language of interpreting literature within the theory, a language that abandons speculative intraliterary (philosophical, psychoanalytical, etc.) interpretations in order to concentrate on issues linking literature with its social and historical context, then post-colonialism – especially in Poland – might reinvigorate the efforts of literary scholars investigating modernist literature.

Translation: Jan Szelągiewicz

Ewa Thompson

It is Colonialism After All: Some Epistemological Remarks

The fifth issue of the 2010 volume of *Second Texts* includes articles arguing with the concept of colonialism and post-colonialism as it relates to Poland.¹ The authors of these articles, otherwise great literary scholars, recommend replacing colonial and post-colonial perspectives with “dependent” and “post-dependent” perspectives. They provide the following arguments to justify that position: Poland was “dependent” on the Soviet Union after WWII (we might add that it was “dependent” on Russia, Prussia, as well as Austria during the partitions). Polemists claim that this specific dependency can’t be called colonialism, as the latter primarily covers overseas conquests while Poland shared or shares a border with countries it was subject to. Proponents of the “dependency” theory claim that overseas

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¹ Articles in *Second Texts*, no 5, 2010: L. Koczanowicz, “Post-post-communism and Cultural Wars,” 6-21; D. Kołodziejczyk, “Post-colonial Transfer to Central/Eastern Europe,” 22-39; G. Borkowska, “A Post-colonial Perspective on the Polish Soil: Some Questions of a Sceptic,” 40-52. The *Slavic Review* decided to go with a completely different approach by publishing Elżbieta Ostrowska’s “Desiring the Other. The ambivalent Polish self in novel and film” (*Slavic Review* 70, no.3, (2011), 503-523). This particular piece holds the postcolonial perspective throughout its entirety.

conquests are colonial in nature, while the more proximate, overland conquests are not. Besides, the physical presence of Soviet hegemony was not apparent or obvious in Poland (except in the first few years after the end of WWII), a direct opposite of the Indian experience, where a British viceroy, appointed by the sitting British monarch in London, was the actual source of authority and where the rules were enforced by stationed British troops. In the People's Republic of Poland, the First Secretary of the communist party, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and multiple other officials were of Polish extraction. Furthermore, the authors posit that colonialism induces the settlement of the colonized territories by the colonizing nation which, in turn, results in the imposition of a foreign language (English, French, Dutch) on local education, administration, and intellectual life. Colonialism translates into direct political and economic dependency on the metropole; meanwhile, our authors suggest that the same does not hold true when the relationship is one of dependency. Given these considerations, the polemist argue, researchers working in the field of cultural, social, and most importantly literary studies should employ post-dependent instead of post-colonial terminology.

Let's start with the problem of overseas conquests as supposedly requisite for colonialism to even take place. If "*outramer-ish*" invasion is prerequisite for calling a territory colonized, what should we do with Scotland or Ireland, two Celtic countries subjugated by the English? Can we really call the crossing of the narrow stretch of water separating Ireland from England an overseas invasion? That Ireland was colonized is beyond dispute and its situation slightly resembles what Poland went through. Irish national identity was preserved at the cost of significant blows to demographic, economic, and cultural development - the infamous "potato famines" of the 19th century which forced a host of Irish to emigrate to the US being one example. The number of people of Irish-American descent living in the United States is currently nine times the number of Irish people living in Ireland. And lest we forget, the Scottish Parliament, disbanded by the English invaders in 1707, was reconvened as recently as 1998. Michael Hechter's book on the colonization of Celtic nations on the fringes of Western Europe became one of the founding texts of "internal colonialism" in Europe.² Following in the footsteps of the Celtic researchers, Russian émigré and cultural scholar Alexander Etkind classified the majority of Russian conquests as "internal colonialism."³ Even if we were to dispute

2 M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); B. O'Leary and J. McGarry, *Understanding Northern Ireland. Colonialism, Control, and Consociation* (London: Routledge, 2012).

3 A. Etkind, *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience*, (London: Polity Press, 2011).

some of Etkind's and Hechter's conclusions, it is hard to object to the taxonomy they propose.⁴

Thus, the argument concerning the "overseas" nature of colonies suggests rather the timid character of scholars who are not yet ready to construct their own theories of nationality-based adjacent colonialism. The discourse on overseas colonialism becomes a measure that delineates the limits of discourse on the Polish situation. As the overwhelming majority of French and English postcolonial texts actually concerns colonies establishes overseas (in Africa and Asia), it is generally assumed that colonialism has to be an overseas phenomenon. This position reflects one of the problems plaguing postcolonial studies in Poland and, more generally, in non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe. I described it another publication as submitting to the gaze of the surrogate hegemon at every attempt to establish theoretical frameworks.⁵

The situation is similar when it comes to settlement and language. Why should Central and Eastern Europe retrace and repeat situations that took place in Africa or Asia? Once again, we're dealing with something I'm inclined to call scholarly docility. As foreign scholars established that African and Asian colonialism included efforts to impose a foreign language as official and set up settlements populated by colonists, it was immediately assumed that the same would have happened in Poland had colonialism ever transpired there. But the essence of colonialism lies in the subjugation of both territory and people whose national consciousness is either already developed or is still developing under colonial domination, political and economic exploitation of a given territory, as well as hindering or even halting development.⁶ And that is where the Polish situation perfectly fits the colonialist taxonomy. When Poland remained under foreign domination in the 18th and 19th centuries and right after the end of WWII, Polish national consciousness was no

4 The body of literature on colonialism in Scotland and Ireland is already quite substantial and includes M. Kelly's "Irish Nationalist Opinion and the British Empire in the 1850s and 1860s" published in *Past and Present* 204, no. 1 (2003), 127-154, as well as L. Connell's "Modes of Marginality. Scottish Literature and the Uses of Postcolonial Theory" published in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, no.1-2 (2003), 41-53.

5 E. Thompson, "Whose Discourse? Telling the Story in Post-Communist Poland," *The Other Shore. Slavic and East European Cultures Abroad, Past and Present* 1, no. 1 (2010), 1-15.

6 The capitals of Sweden, Norway, and Finland present one politically neutral example of "white on white" colonialism. Stockholm is a beautiful city with striking 19th century architecture, whereas Oslo was clearly a creature of the 20th century and Helsinki retained its small-town character. After visiting these capitals it becomes abundantly clear that Sweden acted as hegemon towards the two other nations. It is worth adding that Sweden withdrew from Norway in a truly gentlemanly fashion, by first permitting a referendum on the matter of Norwegian independence and then formally ceding authority in 1905.

less developed than the consciousness of either the English or the French,⁷ but Polish development capabilities were considerably diminished,⁸ while the lack of mass Soviet settlement on Polish lands was the result of local conditions and circumstances. In contrast to Great Britain or France, both of them countries that exported their excess population to the colonies (recall Dickens' Mr. Micawber and his voyage to Australia), population density in Russia was so low that it could not afford to dispatch its own citizens to its more sparsely populated colonies. Secondly, in contrast to African and Asian possessions, the infrastructure of Russia's Central European colonies in most cases surpassed Russia's own infrastructure in quality, thus the colonizing power did not have to invest in building roads or establishing institutions facilitating the transfer of wealth from the colonies to the metropole. When the Marshall Plan was bringing Western Europe back to its feet with a cash influx to the tune of about \$12 billion, a similar sum was being siphoned out of the Central and Eastern European economies by Russia.⁹ That's why discourse on colonialism in Poland has to differ from postcolonial deliberations of Gayatri Spivak or Homi Bhabha, representatives of two nations who, while benefiting from Western technology, were at the same time victims of exploitation perpetrated by the metropolises.

What we are touching on here is the issue of essentialism. Postmodern scholars of literature (including the proponents of the theory of "dependency") are generally considered critics of essentialism, as this is the direction that Western literary criticism has been developing in. However, colonial theory *sans* any modification, often invoked by the "dependence" crowd, is a clear example of essentialism. Why is it so often invoked then?¹⁰ Polish

7 I am referring, of course, to classes which formed and later cultivated said national consciousness.

8 Huge museums, universities, and scientific institutes were founded in St. Petersburg and Berlin, not in Warsaw; when wishing to have a taste of the imperial and then share it with their own citizens, the rich and powerful of those times visited not Warsaw but Berlin and St. Petersburg. Poland was not a country people left behind, and not one they would visit. It is hard to overstate the advantages a prestigious metropole has over a provincial capital which commands little to no interest. These benefits are often hard to quantify, but they are very real.

9 R. Pearson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 28–31; R. Bideleux, I. Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe. Crisis and Change*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 461.

10 I would also like to add that there are many different essentialisms: False essentialism was described by Edward Said in reference to Bernard Lewis. What Said meant was that the *cognoscenti* from Western think-tanks depicted subjugated Arab societies as unchanging, ossified in their backwardness and primitivism, in direct contrast to the societies of Western Europe whose capacity for change and development the same scholars considered self-evident (E. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 315–321).

researchers who employ the logic arguing that “the British established multiple settlements in Africa, while the Russians never did the same in Poland” seem to believe that the concept of colonialism has to remain unchanged from the time when it was formed by Western cultural scholars. God forbid should it be modified and adapted to the conditions of Central and Eastern Europe. Contending that colonialism is immune to changes in definition is an example of both passive acknowledgement of theories worked out in conditions far different from those in Poland as well as misunderstanding essentialism itself. Thus, my argument is with the way in which colonialism is situated amidst essential entities and the mindless carbon-copying of Western-produced descriptions of colonialism.

Proponents of the “dependency” theory have additional arguments. Leszek Koczanowicz argues against using the concept of (post)colonialism in Polish contexts thus: despite significant efforts to transform it into a metropole, the Soviet Union never became a cultural metropole to countries it subjugated. In Poland, the West retained that position. Thus, Poland was never a Soviet colony. The author rightly notices that for 20th century Poles (as well as for those living in the 19th century) Paris and not Moscow was the metropole.

It is a classic example of reaching for the surrogate hegemon (Paris) in order to prove that Poles never submitted to the real hegemon. I concur that Paris and New York were Poland’s cultural hegemon, whereas Moscow never assumed that role. But the habit of emulating the “more cultured” is a by-product of being colonized. I highly doubt that in the time of Włodkowic or Kochanowski, that is back when Poland was nobody’s colony, Poles considered Europe divided into parts, some of them better than the others. When Paweł Włodkowic appeared at the Council of Constance in 1414 to argue for granting amicable and unwarlike pagans a right to live in peace and condemn the Teutonic Knights’ pillage and bloody conquest of the Eastern lands, his speech was not tainted with any sort of feelings of inferiority towards Western Europe. There are no documents from that time that would bear witness to our feelings of inferiority towards “Paris.” Yes, families sent their sons to study in Italy as the universities over there were still superior, but the proud metropole/meek periphery dichotomy simply did not exist back then. The fact that Poles internalized this dichotomy centuries ago and then made it a cornerstone of their outlook on life is in and of itself an expression of feelings of inferiority generated by colonialism. The utter lack in their capacity to form intellectual theories, in direct contrast to thinkers from Western Europe or the US, is characteristic of colonized peoples. Such peoples think that they should espouse metropole-produced theories because the peripheries cannot articulate themselves and the world around them, while texts created in the peripheries are inherently less valuable and meaningful than texts written by

authors located in the metropolises and employing their language.¹¹ In other worlds, looking to the West as an example suggests the colonization of the minds that followed the political debacles of the First and Second Polish Republic. The argument that the West remained a metropole for the Poles and that this fact nullifies the legitimacy of the claim that Poland was colonized by the Soviets is incorrect. It actually confirms it.

Despite the common characteristics I mentioned above, each colonialism is a separate case, British colonialism in India, the Spanish effort in Mexico, and the Belgian occupation of the Congo, each of them was different. Protestant (Anglo-Saxon) colonialism was racist (the United States struggled with the consequences of that until the late 1960s), whereas Catholic (Spanish) colonialism did not outlaw interracial marriage – one of the outcomes of the latter approach is the reshaping of the population structure in Latin America, which nowadays is mostly of Spanish-Native American extraction. The metropole was not necessarily a source of generally recognized and appropriated cultural models: in British-colonized China, the English political and cultural model was never considered superior to the Chinese one. Colonialism in Poland or, broadly speaking, in non-Germanic Central Europe, was not a copy of some other method of subjugating weaker entities but had its own individual character and peculiarities which revealed themselves in the postcolonial period. The rejection of concepts related to the process of colonizing Poland is an unnecessary tribute paid by Polish scholars to Western European narrative of literary criticism accompanied by fear of overstepping its boundaries.

In light of the above, we might ask which of the two concepts, colonialism or dependency, better reflects the situation that Poland was in after the Second World War. When trying to answer that question, we should not forget that employing a concept involves accepting all sorts of baggage that might be attached to it and how it was put into practice in the past. As Tolkien rightly observed, concepts are like stalactites because they accrue new meanings over time. That's where their capacity and multifaceted character comes from. How, then, do the two terms at the center of this argument look like in this context?

The word "dependency" certainly has a lot more capacity than the word "colonialism." A child can be dependent on its parents and our choice of outfit can depend on the weather. Our capability to contribute to the intellectual life of society depends not only on our innate abilities but also on the education we receive. We associate it with a host of dependencies we encounter in real life, as we all depend on something: the environment we inhabit, the

¹¹ I would like to emphasize that marginal remarks about Poland written by second-rate scholars are still being cited, while Polish researchers are consistently ignored.

remuneration we receive for our work, the genes we inherited from our ancestors. Dependence is everywhere in nature and societies. We inhabit a nexus of interrelated dependencies: material, social, intellectual, and spiritual. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T.S. Eliot wrote about the inevitable dependence of contemporary writers on the output of those who came before them. All of the implications of the term "dependence" are introduced into the space where we plan on utilizing the concept. Thus, using the term obscures the essence of the matter in the case when certain territories and national entities inhabiting them are commanded by force to develop along the lines laid down by some external power, or their development is halted altogether by that same outside actor. It is an indisputable fact that between 1945 and 1989, the majority of high-level decisions that determined the fate of Poland and its citizens were made in Moscow and not Warsaw; in the back-secrecy-shrouded rooms of the Politburo, and not in the back rooms of the Sejm (let me reiterate: I am talking about macro- and not micromanagement of the country). A similar relationship existed between New Delhi and London as well as Dublin and London. Given that there is another, narrower concept that accurately describes similar situations, and does so better than the term "dependency," I do not see a reason to use it. That is why it is "colonialism" instead of "dependence." After all, we should be using words in a manner that best conveys our intended meaning. Placing political, economic, and social subjugation in the fairly expansive conceptual framework of "dependency" transforms this type of relationship into something normal, commonplace, something that requires no further explanation. Given that we depend on a plethora of different factors, as do ethnic groups and territories, it is fairly easy to consider dependent relationships something normal. Currently, Poland is a sovereign nation but it is still "dependent" on the European Union. Our dependence on the Soviet Union, however, had a completely different flavor. The term "colonialism" clearly implies that the relationship it describes is not a result of mutual agreements, but rather an injurious, one-sided exploitation and therefore not normal. Colonialism is imposed and enforced with violence, which the proponents of calling the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union dependence do not seem to notice.

The claim that the concept of post colonialism should be limited to Anglophone countries (where it was worked out) while in conversations about Central and Eastern Europe we should use the term "post dependency" is a classic *non-sequitur*, akin to stating that because capitalism first appeared in country A and B, we shouldn't try to use the term in countries C and D. Each colonialism is *sui generis*, but all of them have common characteristics that are fairly easy to discern and express, with violation being the key one among them. Colonialism begins with violence, with conquest, with a lost war, with

coercion, elimination of the elites of the colonized peoples, destruction of books and national identity. That is an apt description of what happened in Poland in the 1940s. National and tribal identity is an important factor in the process of colonization, without it we can talk only of conquest. Proponents of dependency theory do not take nationality issues into consideration, maybe because there is no place for these issues for postmodern epistemology. Nationality played a key role in the efforts of colonizers on Polish lands and it simply cannot be ignored. Between 1945 and 1989, Polish intellectual discourse was a discourse of a colonized nation. We have to consider nationality matters if we want to understand historic events like the Katyń massacre, deportations to Siberia, the elimination of the Polish intelligentsia, and the purging of Polish libraries launched in the 1940s.¹² Therefore, colonialism is a form of inflicting violence on a population whose national consciousness is already formed and its effects include the hindering or halting the development of colonized societies and significant changes in the intellectual life of said communities. Postcolonial discourse attempts to articulate these disadvantages and restrictions.

I'm skeptical about Dorota Kołodziejczyk's assurances that "analysis would reveal...."¹³ Why does the author not bring up any citations that would question the relationship between the political ideology of Anglophone postcolonialist authors and their peculiar blindness with respect to Soviet colonialism in Central Europe? According to the author, the reason for the ignorance of Soviet efforts demonstrated by American colonialism theorists is their bias towards researching primarily English-speaking countries. However, exiles and émigrés from Eastern Europe, from Miłosz to Gulag survivors, have produced a host of books in English that clearly indicate that Russian and Soviet colonialism was no less brutal in its efforts to destroy collective identities than the Western European one. Why weren't these tomes noticed by, let us say, Gayatri Spivak who so eloquently depicted the silencing of subalterns in India? Those are all rhetorical questions. The overwhelming majority of postcolonial scholars teaching at American universities are still associated with the leftists, who considered the Soviet Union a natural ally (the movement was also financially supported by money from Moscow). That's why scholars are so reluctant to notice the elephant in the china shop: Soviet Russia as a "par excellence" colonial empire. It is telling that proponents of dependency theory in Poland are so quick to justify their Western counterparts' reluctance.

12 The list of books intended for removal from public libraries were published in *Sarmatian Review* XIV, no 1 (1994), 214–217. The registries from 1949, 1950, and 1952 were found in the Central Archives of Modern Records and copied by the author of the article.

13 Kołodziejczyk, "Post-colonial Transfer to Central/Eastern Europe," 22

Dorota Kołodziejczyk admits that the concept of postcolonialism enabled the development of critical awareness in regards to “colonial dependency,” which, according to the author, includes issues related to imposing the colonizer’s language on the colonized nation and “situating the (post)colonial subject in relation to the empire functioning as administration, economy, and specific framing of history and culture”¹⁴ – but then quickly adds that after a short period of euphoria, postcolonialism turned out to be nothing more than just “postpessimistic optimism.” Well, that might be the case in Africa, but the situation is different in Central Europe where the articulation of colonial subjugation has just begun and where the development of post-colonial sensibilities might bring about the purging of Polish discourse from accretions carried over from the People’s Republic of Poland era.

Fairly few post-colonial literary scholars have been born in countries that are natively Anglophone – the fact that they are publishing in English is rather due to the fact that this particular language has a wider audience than, for example, Hindi or Arabic. Postcolonial literary scholars are well-versed in the actual geopolitical balance of power and it would be naïve to think that their political sympathies do not influence whether they took any interest in the lands conquered or annexed by the Russians, either during the czarist or the Soviet period. Polish proponents of the “dependency” theory seem to ignore this involvement. The absence of Central and Eastern Europe from Western postcolonial discourse is one of the byproducts of Marxist leanings exhibited by some of the most famous postcolonial scholars.¹⁵ As Terrence O’Keefe rightly noticed, “many European intellectuals—western, eastern and Mediterranean—joined or supported the Communist Party with the idea of playing a ‘leading role’ in the utopian transformations of society that the Party alleged it would bring about.”¹⁶ The lack of interest in Soviet and Russian colonialist efforts among Anglophone intellectuals is a result of their sympathies towards the Soviet Union and Russia’s power. We should also remember that followers of the Frankfurt School, which is currently enjoying record popularity, are waging war on the concept of nationality by excluding it from their human organization projects.¹⁷ Just like other social theories worked out in the

14 Ibid., 25

15 This was noted in an article by David Chioni-Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique”, *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001), 111–128.

16 T. O’Keefe, *Mitteleuropa Blues, Perilous Remedies. Andrzej Stasiuk’s Harsh World in Sarmatian Review* XXXII, no.1 (2012), (under review).

17 For a good introduction to the precepts of the Frankfurt School, see Leszek Kołakowski’s commentaries in his *Main Currents of Marxism*, Volume 3.

privacy of a professor's office, the tenets of the Frankfurt School do not take the experiences of Central and Eastern European nations into consideration, following György Lukács' credo: "when (...) 'facts' (...) appear to contradict the process: 'So much worse for the facts!'"¹⁸

The texts written by proponents of the "dependency" hypothesis lack any sort of reflection on whether separating the Central European struggle for independence from Western postcolonial discourse is a specific instrument of marginalization, wielded by Western postcolonial scholars and their Polish followers to suppress claims voiced by entities that were colonized by Russia. Reducing the process of annihilating the national identity of colonized peoples to nothing more than "government paranoia" is a very shallow interpretation and in no way does it cover the systematic purging of the national consciousness of Poles (and other Central and Eastern European peoples) of anything that might provide historical continuity. If silencing the "grand liberation narrative" (this beautiful phrase was coined by Dorota Kołodziejczyk) and the identity narrative is to become an integral part of "postdependency" studies, we risk turning it into nothing more than a dead field, just as it happened with literary criticism of "socialist realism."

In William Faulkner's novel *Wild Palms* (1939), Polish workers are portrayed as people who don't understand that the world is full of cold-blooded swindlers. The mine that they work in has been abandoned by the rest of the immigrants (both European and non-European); only the Poles have remained on site. They simply cannot fathom that someone could decide to exploit them so mercilessly and then condemn them to a slow and agonizing death in the wilderness. In his novel Faulkner managed to capture a set of distinct features of the Polish peasant from the turn of the century, features that later made him a subject of ridicule and humiliation in American pop culture. Tracing this literary motif and then placing it in a colonial matrix would be a huge success. This naïve simplemindedness that could not fathom that the mine owner is never coming back to Utah to pay his employees was undoubtedly a national trait, but can we call it a byproduct of colonialism? We saw it in Sienkiewicz's *For Bread and Bart the Conqueror*, in the works of Konopnicka as well as Wajda's legendary *Man of Marble*. In the novel, Faulkner touches upon an aspect of Polish identity that has never before been explored by researchers of colonialism in Poland in the 19th and 20th century. It turns "dependency" terminology into an exercise in the absurd.

18 György Lukács as quoted by Leszek Kołakowski in the third volume of *Main Currents of Marxism* (Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3:265).

Dorota Kołodziejczyk correctly notices that in *Troubadours of the Empire*, I use postcolonial categories “in opposition to the model established in Anglophone postcolonial studies.”¹⁹ True, I am a proponent of interdisciplinary approaches and I find it easy to fluctuate between literary studies, history, and political science. Kołodziejczyk’s claim reveals the full dependence of “dependency scholars” on what happens and what is thought in “Anglophone research institutions.” The current generation of postcolonialist scholars is more and more focused on nominalist discourse and less and less involved in talking about historical reality (with African literary scholars being the only exception). Would it not be better to express categories befitting the Polish situation than to emulate those that were formed in reaction to different historic and social conditions? Mimicry, hybridity, and subalternity are all useful terms, but they are not sufficiently exhaustive as to explain every colonial situation that took place in history. Introducing additional ones, including “revolution from abroad,” as well as nationality and pro-European categories seems necessary in this situation. Postcolonial studies conducted by English-speaking Asians or Africans are usually anti-European, but from the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe, Europeanness is not the enemy, given that this part of the continent has felt an intrinsic part of the commonwealth ever since its historical beginnings. I am deeply convinced, however, that despite the innumerable associations, imitations, and linkages, Russian culture still competes with European culture while managing to remain separate from it. This particular model of Russianness, one that has been winning Russian hearts and minds for centuries, is a mortal enemy of Europeanness. Postcolonial discourse is not a discourse about abstractions, it is about historically shaped communities. It should not consent to some facts being discounted simply because power structure-affiliated institutions coordinating international discourse do not consider them to be pertinent. Anglo- and Francophone postcolonial scholars are occupied primarily with the technology of domination exerted by European nations over non-European ones; a portion of the discursive technology of domination they articulated is in no way applicable to Central and Eastern Europe. Jan Tomasz Gross was right to call the events that took place in Poland between 1939 and 1989 “a revolution from abroad.” A revolution aimed at specific nations. And calling that revolution and its consequences “dependency” is nothing more than a malapropism.

It is also hard for me to take a stance on Grażyna Borkowska’s comment, as it seems to me that she read her Said fairly perfunctorily. The author claims that in *Orientalism*, Said laid down his research hypotheses very

19 Kołodziejczyk, “Post-colonial Transfer to Central/Eastern Europe,” 34.

precisely,"²⁰ while it is precisely the other way around: the book's methodology is basically *in statu nascendi*, as it often happens with most pioneering works in any field. Methodologies are polished and improved only by epigones. Said vacillates between essentialism and the rejection thereof, between "fire in the chest" and discourse. I'm not writing this to attach any sort of label to the man, on the contrary: I am an admirer and a follower of Said, which means I am a proponent of involved research projects, studies that are not indifferent towards moral quandaries raised by the presence of either the West in the Middle East (in Said's case) or Soviet Russia in Central and Eastern Europe. Grażyna Borkowska seems to think that one the greatest sins a literary scholar can commit is directing discourse towards reality rather than trapping it in Derrida-inspired *écriture*. In contrast to Derrida, Said never used his books to paint himself a critic and philosopher tackling only text, he rather appeared to be a man interested in how history shapes discourse.

After the partitions, Poland never had the opportunity to fully interpret itself, not only due to institutionalized censorship (which Professor Borkowska reduces to nothing more than a factor limiting the capacity for self-expression), but primarily because a society engaged in resisting colonization efforts expends the overwhelming majority of energy it has at its disposal. In societies that are not threatened by colonization, that surplus energy is spent on producing material and cultural goods, and thus, on broadening intellectual discourse. Print censorship is fairly easy to circumvent, as Eastern European inventions like *samizdat* and *tamizdat* clearly demonstrate. But the most crucial fact is that social energy is being expended on resistance against the government instead of being spent on productivity. Nor should we forget about the damage to social cohesiveness caused, for example, by the seizure of property following the Soviet invasion in 1939. Similar seizures were employed fairly often; examples include the liquidation of the Belarusian Unitarian Church in the 18th century and the dissolution of Roman Catholic monasteries and orders after the January Uprising. Those and other "social breaches" precluded the normal development of society for generations. These processes cannot be nullified by the establishment of friendship societies fostering Polish-Soviet and Polish-Russian relations, whose tasks include making sure that Russian books are translated into Polish and vice versa.

The following example will illustrate the translation issue. In the 1970s, the Czytelnik publishing house printed 4,280 copies of Zbigniew Herbert's *Collected Works*, whereas the short stories of Valery Bryusov, a third-rate Russian

20 Borkowska, "A Post-colonial Perspective on the Polish Soil," 40.

symbolist writer, were issued in 10,290 copies. This sort of disproportion was fairly common back then. The authorities fed readers mediocre Russian literature, while keeping pre-eminent Polish writers from reaching the mass market and intended audiences.

Contemporary 50- and 60-year olds are poorly versed in Polish history and literature because, among other reasons, this particular education and publication policy was implemented and enforced for more than two generations. The marginalization of vital facts about colonization, as well as intellectual and economic subjugation, cultural continuity, and national autonomy proceeded without any major obstruction in that period. It was already obvious for Adam Mickiewicz that the construction of St. Petersburg and its opulent palaces was carried out primarily at the expense of Lithuania and Poland. Reading through Agata Tuszynska's *Russians in Warsaw* quickly makes one realize the cost which both the Polish language and Polish culture paid after the Uprising, when Russian was declared the new official language in Warsaw. I have already written about this issue in "Kultura."²¹ The lack of awareness of these issues might be called a postcolonial hump which postcolonial studies could "fix."

In this particular context, Grażyna Borkowska's assurances that Russian readers were familiar with Sienkiewicz, Prus, Orzeszkowa, and that Aleksander Świętochowski thought Poland "towers over Russia,"²² etc., sound rather pathetic. The fact that Sienkiewicz was translated into Russian is of no consequence to the problem of Russian colonialism in Poland. The British also read the *Upanishads* and other traditional Hindu texts. That didn't, however, change the fact that India was a British colony and that crucial decisions regarding the country were made with the colonialist interest in mind, rather than the local people or their culture. Add to that the loss of international prestige which the Poles, along with other nations of Central and Eastern Europe, have not since fully reclaimed. As political scientist Nancy Fraser observed, in the 20th century prestige became an important international currency frequently used in foreign policy matters.²³ Does Professor Borkowska really believe that actions like translating Sienkiewicz into Russian really balance out the anomalies in political, cultural, and economic development?

Postcolonial studies in Poland could help to nullify the perception in Western European and American discourse of Poland being nothing more than

21 E.M. Thompson, "Polish-Russian Dialogue," *Kultura* (Paris), Sep. 1991, 155-160.

22 Borkowska, "A Post-colonial Perspective on the Polish Soil," 43, 45.

23 N. Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review*, no. 3 (2000), 107-120.

a Russian annex, a country without history and profile. This perception goes unseen by the majority of Polish nationals, but long-term work engagements at American universities make it very apparent. The marginalization of Polish culture cannot be abolished by establishing institutions that practice misnomers like “dependency.”

Talking or writing about colonialism touches upon one of the greatest issues that humanity is currently facing: the obsession with power and the unending acts of violence perpetrated by the stronger on the weaker. Colonialism is a very peculiar form of violence, albeit a form that is fairly common in the modern and postmodern world. Writing will not eradicate it singlehandedly, it can, however, serve to diminish its scale. I would like to take an opportunity to use a (postcolonial) paraphrase of Derrida’s observation that “the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command.”²⁴ Texts written in Polish and in other languages, generated during the colonialist period in Poland, should be interpreted in a way that guarantees that the textual methods and results of exclusion are clear to both Polish and non-Polish readers.

Polish postcolonial discourse is still in its infancy. The first order of business should be taking a closer look at Polish literature written in the last three hundred years and then placing it within the postcolonialist taxonomy. A few young literary scholars, with Dariusz Skórczewski at the head of the herd, are already doing just that. His analyses of Paweł Huelle’s *Castorp* and Słowacki’s *Salomea’s Silver Dream* are examples of the correct approach to the problem.²⁵ This type of studies should give rise to a map of colonial and postcolonial space in Polish literature, which we should then compare with a “map” of Polish literature from the pre-partition period.

The problem with terminology – whether we should use postcolonialism or postdependency – is related to the possibility of rewriting the last few hundred years of the history of Polish and European culture. Solving Poland’s contemporary cultural problems requires us to make a decision as to the type of identity we want to choose – either the type which includes self-determination suppressed by the colonial period, or the one purging Polishness of all substance. We have to accept colonial baggage and the influence it exerts over Polish thought if we want to construct a narrative of

24 J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, transl. G. Spivak, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 158.

25

D. Skórczewski, “Why did Paweł Huelle write ‘Castorp’?”, *Second Texts*, no. 3 (2006), 148–157; “Salomea’s Silver Dream’ as a Parade of Hybrids,” *Literary Memoir*, no. 1 (2011), 47–75.

Polish culture that will touch upon the most essential matters and reach beyond Polish borders. The originality of Polish culture lies in the fact that despite being violated by stronger neighbors over two hundred years ago, what I call “sarmatism” managed to come back to life again and again and then resurface, either in literary and non-literary texts or in social life. And dipping it in the murky and shallow waters of “dependence” utterly obscures and obfuscates this originality.

Translation: Jan Szelągiewicz

Dariusz Skórczewski

Post-colonial Poland – (Im)possible Project

We were many, from Jassy and Koloshvar, Wilno and Bucharest,
Saigon and Marrakesh

Czesław Miłosz, *Bypassing Rue Descartes*

Is there then a world
where I rule absolutely on fate?

Wisława Szymborska, *The Joy of Writing*

1.

Why is Polish literature not recognized as post-colonial? There exist at least two answers to that question. But before providing those answers, we need to specify what we understand by the term “post-colonialism.”

“Post-colonialism” within the realm of literary studies, contrary to its initial, political meaning, does not delineate a new era, “after colonialism,” in the history of literature. It is a term from the field of literary theory, not the history of literature. If one were to talk about post-colonialism in the categories of periodization, the most appropriate definition would probably reference distrust toward the “progress” that marks the colonial era in the

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western world.¹ Such distrust assumes distance which prohibits post-colonialism from being equated with decolonization, a process that has lasted throughout nearly the entire 20th century. It was started in the territories conquered by Western empires, emerging as independent from European powers. Therefore, what is “post-colonialism”? It is a perspective that strives to understand and analyze complex cultural phenomena connected to colonization and to place it within various systems of reference: literary historical, socio-political, ethnographic, anthropological, religious, geographic, as well as economic frames of reference. The post-colonial point of view is based on the conviction that the experience and/or idea of colonization shapes the presentation of reality by both imperial writers and writers representing nations and communities that were subjugated. Common to all these experiential phenomena is a deeply embedded imperial foundation, which leads, in the case of former, to an apology or tolerant attitude in relation to acts of colonization, and in the case of the latter – to the resistance or adaptation.

Post-colonialism – as opposed to anti-colonialism, which similarly questions the hegemony of colonial empires – does not frame cultural relations between the colonizers and colonized in simple bi-polar categories, but recognizes the complexity of these systems and interrelations existing between them.² Post-colonial criticism’s goal is to examine the cultural effects of colonization that include both works belonging to the “center,” as well as to the “peripheries,” both from the period of colonization and its aftermath. It strives to grasp artistic representations of the mechanisms of power present in imperial discourse or to reconstruct the image of the “Other” in that very discourse, as well as to recognize and interpret the strategy with which writers and poets of the former colonies deconstruct the mythical image imposed on them by narrations of their metropolis. Tracing the cultural mechanisms of the empires, as well as their heritage in literature and other discourses of the metropolis and its peripheries – this is the main area of interest for post-colonial politics. That kind of critique goes back, as we can see, moves between older and contemporary texts. It proposes reading works by excavating meanings created imprinted with the effects of colonization. This is a “distrustful” reading which leads to revealing hidden imperial ideologies within literary discourse, as well as the cultural processes that are its product.³

1 See *Postcolonial Criticism*, edited by B. Moore-Gilbert, G. Stanton, W. Maley, London-New York: Longman, 1997, 2.

2 See Bassnett, S. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford, UK-Cambridge, USA, 1993, 78.

3 Compare a definition of the *post-colonial reading* in: Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin *Postcolonial Studies The Key Concepts*, London–New York: Routledge, 2000, 192–193.

This essay will not attempt to describe the entire complex of problematics formulated by post-colonial criticism. It is worth to recognizing, however, the magnitude of the phenomenon, as well as the interpretative possibilities of that perspective. In an introduction to classical post-colonial work entitled *The Empire Writes Back*, we read the following:

More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the shared experience of colonialism. It is easy to see how important this has been in the political and economic spheres, but its general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples is often less evident. Literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions are expressed...⁴

2.

Let us go back to our initial question. The first possible answer points to the seemingly methodological, but ideological in point of fact, character of the source of Poland's absence in post-colonial discourse. The answer finds its explication in an article by Clare Cavanagh.⁵ The post-colonial critique, according to Cavanagh, is to a large extent (but not entirely, which we will discuss soon) in both its lineage, as well as its scholarly practice a current related to Marxism that is still popular at American universities – the main bastion of post-colonialism. Marxism found a fraught expression in the form of Soviet communist ideology and totalitarianism – and so, in a conviction that is not spoken out loud, but common among the post-colonial critics with a left-wing leanings – it would be untactful to apply this approach to Russia (long praised by the Western, and particularly American, humanities and remembered as the spokesman for the colonized peoples of Africa and Asia on the UN floor). It would constitute an act of methodological suicide – recognizing the Soviet empire and conquered countries as its colonies.

The post-Soviet sphere does not seem to fit entirely within the post-colonial paradigm of American critics. However, this is only a matter of appearance. As Said observes: "Unlike Britain or France, which jumped thousands of miles beyond their own borders to other continents, Russia moved to swallow whatever land or peoples stood next to its borders, which in the process kept

4 Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, p. 1, London–New York: Routledge, 2002.

5 "Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie teorii" ["Post-colonial Poland"] in *Teksty Drugie*, vol. 2-3, 2003, 60-71.

moving farther and farther east and south”⁶ – as well as west, of course. The question of Soviet conquests as classic examples of colonization deserves the treatment of a historian.

The second reason is slightly more complicated. That is why we need to pay even more attention because its acknowledgement allows us to realize why Ireland is recognized as a post-colonial country, while Poland is not. The decision was not based on the fact that Great Britain did not support its conquests though Marxist ideology or by masking its imperial actions by characterizing itself as a defender of militarily weaker ethnic groups, as the USSR tended to do. The true answer can be found elsewhere, in the archaic structure of Slavic studies in the United States. The imperial model created in the 1950s that favors the metropolis while marginalizing the peripheries (nations deprived of independence) is still at work in the university. It reminds us of the situation in which, at the beginning of the 1980s, the literature of former British colonies was, for a long time, pushed to the margins of English-language literary studies by both British and American scholars who would either ignore or appropriate literary traditions other than those designated as “purely” British.⁷ Dominated by the legions of historians of Russia and the USSR, as well as scholars of Russia raised in the cult of Pushkin, Tolstoy, and the Russian ballet, American Slavic studies continually minimized the importance of the literature of Central-Eastern Europe, which led to a preservation of their unequal status in relation to “great” Russian literature. This approach only strengthened an imperial vision of culture, a vision with which the scholars of English, French or Spanish dealt with long ago. We need to add that Slavic studies, in its current state (with rare exceptions), turns out to be unprepared for a discussion about the methodologies of Said, Gayatri Spivak, or Lella Ghandi. After looking at the main journals of Slavic studies in the United States, it is not difficult to understand how the Russo-centric perspective effectively mutes voices dedicated to the cultures of other languages and nations: in particular, “Slavic and East European Journal” and “Slavic Review.” The assumed point of view in those journals leaves very little space for studies on what happened in the part of Europe that was under the shadow of Moscow until very recently. The explanations of American and partly Western European scholars are rather unconvincing in claiming that the lack of interest in the literature of Eastern Europe from international humanities scholars is principally due to a “lack of linguistic competences necessary to study them.”⁸ The minor interest in the

6 Said, E. W., *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1993, 10.

7 Brydon, D., H. Tiffin *Decolonizing Fictions*, Dangaroo Press, Sydney 1993, 7.

8 *Comparative Literature: Matter and Method*, edited by A. Owen Aldridge, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1969, 2-3.

matter that can be found among American Slavic scholars is generally followed by a strong conviction about the great “delicacy” with which the post-colonial subject should be treated regarding the former USSR and its satellite countries. Who does not follow the protocol risks being ostracized by society.

Seen from this angle, the work of the American Slavic scholar Ewa Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, is a breakthrough in the field of studies on Russian literature.⁹ Its meaning for the questions posed in this article is impossible to overestimate. Firstly, what is particularly important for Polish critics and scholars, Thompson has proven her thesis and demonstrated that a post-colonial critique can be practiced without relying on Marxist ideology. Among the various important conclusions for a post-colonial interpretation of Polish literature by Thompson, two should be listed: recognition of the imperial myth as an idea penetrating the works of Russian prose and poetry in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the description of the strategies of representation that helped this literature generate a suggestive image of outstanding Russians and Russia and thereby impressed the West with its culture and suffering, while simultaneously creating a stereotypical image of colonized nations (including Poles). Thompson points to the fact that despite curious similarities between the mechanisms of hegemony in the discourse about “Others” in the works of Russian and British writers

Interpreting Russian literary texts as fundamentally free from being engaged in its military actions, Russian and western commentators fall prey to the spectacular ability of those texts to avoid the look of a critic that could reveal their work for the empire. Russian literature achieved an amazing success in leading, prompting and managing the discourse about itself in a way that allowed it to avoid going under the scrutiny of research that the post-colonial scholars imposed on the British, French, or other Western literatures.¹⁰

3.

Does the post-colonial view on the literature of Russia and the USSR proposed in *Imperial Knowledge* find its parallel in the works dedicated to other Slavic literature? Not entirely, although filling up the “blank spot” on the post-colonial map through sketching the outline of Poland’s borders would not

9 R.F. Starr highlighted the fact in his review, “National Identity and Expansionism,” (*Modern Age*, Fall 2000), 408–410.

10 Thompson, E.M. *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood, 2000.

be without precedence in American Slavic studies. Such precedence exists with respect to another country from the former “Eastern Block” – Bulgaria. Roumiana Deltcheva, an American Slavic scholar of the Bulgarian origin, devoted a number of essays to contemporary Bulgarian literature, identifying traces and marks left on the worldview of Balkan writers (for example, Viktor Paskov) by the presence of the Soviet colonizer, as well as by his disappearance.¹¹ Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, a Canadian scholar born in Hungary, on the margins of his cultural studies, as well as comparative work pertaining to the varying literature of Central Europe, writes about Soviet colonization as a peculiar experience common to many countries of the region, which demands a post-colonial perspective. In order to describe the experience, he introduces his own concept of the “filtered type of colonialism,” distinguishing it from the “classic” incarnation of the phenomenon. According to Tötösy, Soviet colonialism, as opposed to the British or French variety, was supposed to have a secondary character and realize itself with the help of ideological, political, social, and cultural means.¹² One can debate this view, since it could be difficult to identify, perhaps with the exception of Yugoslavia or Romania, meaningful differences between the overseas conquests of Great Britain and political and military expansions of the USSR in our region. What is more, Tötösy talks about a second direction in which the colonization of the countries to the east of the Oder River progressed (and still progress). It is an intellectual colonization that has its central hubs in the cultural centers of the West, including Germany, France, and Great Britain, as well as, to a continuously greater extent, the United States. And so, according to the scholar, the most recent history of our region would be the scene of a clash between opposing forces in culture, stemming from two centers: Western and Eastern, pointing to the “periphery” that is Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, etc. Central-Eastern Europe would thereby constitute a region that has a status of a dual periphery, according to current post-colonial theory: from the perspective of the West (as a sphere for the export of ideas and not their fair exchange) and the East (a territory to be conquered in the most literal sense). Without a doubt, the inferiority, or more precisely the

11 See Deltcheva, R. “East Central Europe as a Post-Coloniality: The Prose of Viktor Paskov,” in *Colonizer and Colonized*. Vol. 2 *Of the Proceedings of the XV Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association “Literature as Cultural Memory,”* Leiden, 16–22 August 1997. (*Text Studies in Comparative Literature* 26.), 589–598, edited by T. D’Haen and P. Krüs, Rodopi, Amsterdam–Atlanta 2000 (“*The Difficult Topos In-Between: The East Central European Cultural Context as a Post-Coloniality*,” in *Sarmatian Review*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1998)

12 Tötösy de Zepetnek, S. *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application*, Amsterdam–Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998, 131–132.

complex of inferiority, constitutes a characteristic cultural image of the cultures and societies of nations that were under the USSR's dominion until recently.¹³ In order to describe this phenomenon, Tötösy introduces the notion of a "peripherality that results from suspension, from being 'between,'" an in-between peripheral zone, as characteristic of the literary discourse of the region. Peripherality is yet another post-colonial category which produces interesting results when used in the interpretation of literary works of the former colonies produces interesting results.¹⁴

Tomislav Longinović, a Slavic studies scholar with Serbian roots, in his study dedicated to the culture of the borderland and the politics of identity based on selected works of literature, traces the constructs of identity based on an awareness of the borderland in Gombrowicz's work, amongst others.¹⁵ His study is poorly anchored in post-colonial methodology, however, and as a result it is hard to characterize his interpretations as representative of that approach. His book makes us aware of certain problems that a comparatist interested in a literary work of Central-Eastern Europe might encounter: 1) the danger of pan-Slavic ambitions and simplifications when attempting to synthesize the experiences of non-Russian nations; 2) the need for cultural differentiation between Slavic regions 3) the difference between totalitarian and colonial experiences (Longović, similar to Cavanagh, too quickly equates the two, where in reality there are differences which make differentiate the critique of totalitarianism with post-colonial attitudes). As a consequence, despite the fact that *Borderline Culture* takes up issues important questions of identity from the post-colonial point of view, the proposed take leaves much unsaid, in part because of the aforementioned pan-Slavic insertions.

Independent of the methodological deficiencies that characterize such approaches to research, these examples reveal post-colonial theoretical problematics in relation to countries that have belonged, in the immediate past, to the Soviet empire.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the presence of this region within the discourse of post-colonialism is still too weak to assume a permanent place within the paradigm of the field.

13 See *Comparative Central European Culture*, edited by S. Tötösy de Zepetnek, Indiana: Purdue UP, West Lafayette, 2002.

14 See Deltcheva, R. *East Central Europe...*

15 Longinović, T. *Borderline Culture: The Politics of Identity in Four Twentieth Slavic Novels*, Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993.

16 The greatest achievement in this field can be claimed by an American Ukrainian studies (I am thinking about works by Marko Pawłyszyn and Mirosław Szkandrij).

4.

In contrast to Slavic studies, English studies in the USA, as well as in other areas of Anglo-Saxon culture, has been successful in giving new life to elements of post-colonial theory. First of all, such effects have already been present in the early 1980s (soon after the publication of Said's famous *Orientalism*, published in 1978), in the form of the revision of the canon, the reinterpretation of English classics, along with many studies dedicated to the work of writers from the so-called Third World, who were recognized, almost *ex officio*, as post-colonial. The number of studies conducted in the field goes into hundreds, if not thousands. Amongst these, we can separate several dozen classics, fundamental for this trend in Anglo-Saxon critique.

Looking at the body of work of post-colonial critique gives an indirect answer to the question concerning the Polish absence from the map of post-colonial studies. The framework of the field has been created by literary theorists coming principally from university circles in the United States, with many or most of them originating outside of America. The experience acquired in their country of origin (usually in one of the countries of the so-called Third World) formed their perspective and significantly influenced the range of their interests. Said never hid his Palestinian origin.¹⁷ Similarly to Bhabha, or Spivak who highlighted their Indian origins, basing their analysis of Western imperial influences in literature and education on their private experiences. The same goes for the scholars from Australia (B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin) and Ireland (G. Smyth), whose involvement in constructing post-colonial discourse necessarily meant breaking the taboo surrounding the imperial domination of certain white societies over other white societies, ultimately including territories such as Canada, Australia, Ireland and Scotland within the realm of post-colonial literature.

We should not, however, conclude that the subject with post-colonial status has the only right or any special prerogative for exercising the post-colonial discourse. This kind of "nativism," or "reversed ethnocentrism" is based on a false theoretical assumption that only the experience of being colonized gives one a right to take up post-colonial discourse.¹⁸ This is not the case, of course. However, it is impossible to deny the influence that literary scholars coming from former colonies have had on the emerging field and its discourse; a discourse which, founded on the methodological and philosophical traditions of the West, cleared the path for to the global "market of ideas"

17 His interviews are suggest a widely popular position in the USA: *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, edited by G. Viswanathan, New York: Pantheon Books, 2001.

18 See Moore-Gilbert, B. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, London–New York: Verso, 1997, 87.

for countries that had otherwise been denied access, discriminated against, or to put it mildly, remained imperceptible for and by the West itself. A similar role ought to be played, it seems, by scholars and critics from Central Europe if they want their literature to be included in the globalized humanities. This is an inclusion that it certainly deserves. From that perspective, the awareness that post-colonialism is not an exclusive property of ethnic groups from the so-called Third and Fourth Worlds, but also to body of work of “white” societies dependent on power structures of the empire.¹⁹ The process behind the emergence of that awareness also coined the term “white colonialism” – but has still not embraced the nations and cultures of Central-Eastern Europe. The example of Ireland and its colonial dependence on a stronger neighbor also merits attention, since many Polish and Irish writers have pointed to this experience as a parallel for the Polish fate.²⁰ The introduction of Ireland to post-colonial discourse was clearly marked by the appearance of the book *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*.²¹ Not without significance for that groundbreaking publication was the fact that Seamus Deane and Terry Eagleton, two of the four authors of the included essays, are Irish. Thanks to the works of David Lloyd and publications devoted to contemporary and older Irish literature, the country has been permanently included in the sphere of post-colonial research.²²

Recognizing the colonial dependency of territories inhabited by white people was not a straight forward process. On the contrary, many post-colonial critics question the phenomenon of “white colonialism,” claiming that colonialism, as such, is inherently connected to the dominance of whites over others, non-whites. They tend to ignore, at the same time, the phenomenon of colonialism in Europe and concentrate on less complicated methodologically (and, let us add, more politically correct, as race is utilized as a primary criterion) cases of so-called Third World countries. All of this takes place despite the fact that there exists, as Michael Hechter highlights in his monograph dedicated to the “internal colonialism,” a particular model of a colonial

19 Compare Brydon, D., H. Tiffin *Decolonising Fictions*.

20 See Żeromski, S. “Literatura a życie polskie,” in *Kartografowie dziwnych podróży. Wypisy z polskiej krytyki literackiej XX wieku*, edited by M. Wyka, Cracow: Universitas, 2004, 160.

21 Eagleton, T., F. Jameson, E.W. Said *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

22 Lloyd, D. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993; Cairns, D. S. Richards *Writing Ireland, Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture*, Manchester–New York: Manchester University Press, 1988. Special issue of a journal was devoted to Ireland: *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies: Ireland, Postcoloniality, and Contemporary Irish Literature* (Spring 2001).

dependency in which white people are both colonizers and the colonized (the case of Ireland, as well as Scotland and Wales comes to mind). And David Lloyd, on the example of works by Seamus Heaney, Samuel Beckett, William Butler Yeats, and James Joyce, has proven that Irish literature does not constitute an anomaly, as compared to existing models of post-colonialism.²³ As is not hard to observe, such an approach leads to the marginalization of the cultures of European countries conquered by colonial empires such as Great Britain, but also Germany and Russia. The experience of the European peripheries of England are often denied colonial status (a fact which Irish critics have learned the hard way) – an action which pushes those places even further into the background, making them yield to the literatures and cultures of the West (that is the empire cultures), as well as yielding to the literatures of the former overseas colonies that are promoted by post-colonial critique: India, South Africa, the Caribbean, Polynesia, etc. The post-colonial critics from the former white colonies – Ireland, Australia or Canada – concentrate most of their energy on legitimizing the post-colonial status of their own cultures in the discourse of Western humanities. For these reasons and others previously identified, it is that much harder to fight for the place of Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in post-colonial discourse. How can this inclusion be achieved?

5.

In her work, Ewa Thompson observed that while the West, by means of its post-colonial critics, conducted a thorough analysis and assessment of its imperial actions, reflected in literature and other texts of culture, the critique of Russia still remains unthinkable.²⁴ It is the “ideology of imperialistic guilt,” as Lewis Feuer²⁵ has called it, that has become a foundation of the decolonization process and lead to the emergence of a post-colonial stance in university circles in the US and Western Europe. And how does the project of a post-colonial history of Russia appear when seen through the eyes of

23 Hechter, M. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1953-1966*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

24 “To allow Spivak or Bhabha to shape the academic reactions of the West to the Western imperialism is like inviting, let us say, Poles, or Lithuanians to instruct students at Russian universities in Russian imperialism. The unimaginability of such a project suggests the distance between the relative openness of Western discourse and the continuous damping of the discourse in the Russian Federation” (Thompson, E.M. *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood, 2000.)

25 Feuer, L. *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind*, Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986, 104.

Polish historians? Based on the historiographic materials dedicated to the Russian and Soviet empires, it is easy to observe and trace the phenomenon, pointed out by Tötösy, of resistance among Central-European intellectuals to recognizing their own countries' colonial status in relation to Russia and the USSR.²⁶ Józef Smaga, author of *Rosja w 20 stuleciu*, observes: "The Tsar's empire could not have been a tool of exploitation of conquered nations the same way other colonial empires of the past (Spain, Portugal) were, because its logic of creating empire was different."²⁷ Similarly, the territories adjacent to the former USSR are not considered in the categories of colonial conquests, but are described by means of outdated Cold War rhetoric with arguments pointing to the expansion of a sphere of influence.²⁸ The central place in the historian's narration is taken by figures of Soviet leaders and executioners of their orders. There is no analysis of mechanisms that were used by Russia to build and continuously exert its power, based on the conquests of territories in Asia and Eastern Europe. As a consequence, despite highlighting Russian expansion and Soviet totalitarianism, the reader is presented with a distilled image in which, although Russia remains a country of dictatorship supported by society's submission, its politics toward its neighbors seems to be free of the stain of colonization. Smaga does not see that even though Russian imperialism was indeed realized in a different style than the Western-European model – principally because it was colonizing adjacent rather than overseas or distant territories, taken in conjunction with its visibly regressive character²⁹ – the very nature of the phenomenon: the political, social and cultural dependence of nations and ethnic groups from Russia, especially in culture, remains unchanged. In this regard, the works of many Polish historians devoted to Russia do not diverge from the conclusions of Western historiography, where, for years now, the role of a standard textbook has been assumed

26 In many cases, intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe, especially those who are more nationalistic in their attitudes, categorically oppose even the very possibility of an existence of a cultural colonialism on the behalf of USSR [...] Their objections are based on ungrounded conviction that "the Soviet colonialism did not affect – and none for some – other cultures. They reject a view according to which the culture and literature of the region are influenced by ideological, economic, social, etc. factors that came from the Soviet center." (*Comparative Literature...*, 134)

27 Smaga, J. *Rosja w 20 stuleciu*, Cracow: Znak, 2002, 14.

28 Ibid., 161-162

29 "Progressive imperialism raises the standard of living and culture. It introduces the education and art to the backwards regions.... Regressive imperialism... is aiming towards continuous exploitation or extermination of the peoples, regardless of the level of its civilizational level." (L. Feuer, *Imperialism...*, 4).

by Nicholas Riasanovsky's *A History of Russia*.³⁰ Not even a single page out of the almost seven hundred within this vast work indicates a realization about the colonial nature of Russia and the USSR's politics toward their neighboring countries. Riasanovsky successfully copies the stereotypical image of suffering in the "Great Patriotic War" of Russia and its neighbors, who appear, as if spontaneously, under its wing, not even asking the mechanism for the inclusion of European and Asian territories into the USSR and Eastern Block and what would be the price for the nations inhabiting those territories, which suddenly became the peripheries of the metropolis, for being included into its sphere of influence.

These examples prove that the need for studies that would – modeled after those devoted to the British, French, or Dutch empires – show the scale of the Russian colonial undertaking, basing their research on detailed data from various areas: politics, economy, geography, demography, as well as literature and culture. One should not disregard information such as the number of Russian books printed in translation in the languages of Central-Europe, including Polish, in comparison with the number of publications in the native language of a given country.

Independently of the historians, however, the decisive point in whether Polish literature will exist on the map of post-colonial critique belongs to scholars of literary studies, on whether they will be willing to reach for the methodology sketched by Said. However valid Cavanagh's outrage might be when she notes that the "impressive post-colonial references" of Poland do not translate into the inclusion of Polish literature into interest by scholars of post-colonialism – we should not blame American or Australian scholars for this fact. The initiative should come from the Polish scholars.

6.

Of course, this is not about using a fashionable "-ism" to sell Polish works to an international audience, while dressing them up as something they are not. It is more about discovering that content and excavating it in the light of day using the proper instruments. Post-colonial methodology brings tools which allow us to reach a double goal. Firstly, the categories worked out by post-colonialism would allow us, most likely, to see many of our works through the optics of universal human experience of most continents from the last two hundred years. It would allow Polish literature, as well as the discourse surrounding it, to break free from the vicious circle of "Polish particularity" and arrive at the reader who speaks another language and is educated

30 Riasanovsky, N.V. *A History of Russia*, New York–Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000.

in a different culture and tradition. Works of our writers would function in a general circulation in a way in which the readers will think about them, according to Conrad's conviction that "a man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men."³¹

On the other hand, for the Polish reader the studies exploring areas so far unexplored and unanalyzed without post-colonial instruments would be of value. Here are examples of questions that could be tackled: 1) a "dichotomy" of our literature (discourse of the colonized and of the colonizer)³²; 2) experiences of colonization and its literary representations, identifications and refutations (here, one could analyze the complex of inferiority – feeling of intimidation, alienation, etc., as well as literary practices of ignoring these feelings); 3) identity formed in the face of and in opposition to the "Other" with whom there is a relation of colonial submission (the "Other" as a colonizer is perceived by the colonized, but the colonized are also seen through the eyes of the colonizer); 4) the literary image of women and men (with a focus on the de-masculinizing of men in Polish literature as an inseparable effect of being colonized);³³ 5) connections between works of art and the socio-political discourses of the empire revealed in language, modes of representation, etc.; 6) mechanisms of constructing counter-hegemonic discourse with respect to discourse of the empire in literature. Also, the literary phenomena known and described from different perspectives and in different languages could reveal in the post-colonial perspective their interesting, unsuspected dimension. I am thinking about the poetics of "coming home" (Zagajewski and Miłosz), the literature of "small motherlands" (the prose of Huelle, Chwin, and Stasiuk), creations of "imaginative space" and space in general, especially urban space (Herbert, Tyrmand, Nowakowski, and Konwicki), and finally the motifs of dislocation and displacement in their literary incarnations (Maciewicz, Chwin, Zagajewski, and Jurewicz).

31 Conrad, J. *Under Western Eyes*, New York - London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1911, 13.

32 For the need of exploration of the imperial dimension of the Polish literature, Aleksander Fiut pointed to in his *Polonizacja? Kolonizacja? (Teksty Drugie, vol. 6, 2003, 150-156)* However antagonizing to both directions of post-colonial research this might be, even when supported by the best intentions, it can only hurt undertaking in the long run. One has to highlight that tracing the colonizer's discourse in our poetry and prose, as well as in literary studies, even though it opens interesting perspectives for post-colonial studies, should not lead to forsaking the studies of the cultural results of being colonized. These studies, contrary to Fiut's fears, should not aim at "preserving ... the traditional and stale image of Poland-victim, suffering and bullied by its conquerors" (152). Post-colonial problematics, along with the methodology constructed within that current of thought, is much more complex and allows for a more subtle look than could be gathered from the essays presented here: those of Cavanagh and Fiut.

33 My thanks go to Ewa Thompson for directing my attention to that issue.

The contours of the project I am attempting to sketch here is not risk-free. The fate of Ewa Thompson's book allows us to assume that the task will not be easy. An American edition of *Imperial Knowledge*, which has been positively reviewed by a conservative journal entitled *Modern Age*, has been treated in some circles of Slavic studies as the product of a rowdy scholar.³⁴ Hence, one has to take into the account the possibility of critique, especially from the direction of traditionally practiced Russian studies and Slavic studies, as well as – possibly – a Poland-centric and suspicious toward any kind of "novelties" Polish studies. And yet, the undertaking seems worthwhile. Especially since the image and reception of our work in the contemporary world are what is at stake. The Polish literature of the last two centuries has contained unique experiences of a double colonization, the obscurity of which impoverishes the modern world, especially the Western world. A blank spot on the map of theory, localized by Cavanagh, has to stop terrifying us with its emptiness. But first and foremost, it needs to be recognized, along with its rich and diverse problematics, which can be revealed by post-colonial methodology.

Looking at Polish literature from that perspective, and perhaps an eventual creation of a *History of Polish Literature* based on the methodology initiated by Said, is not only a possibility but a need. It is necessary to introduce our literature into global circulation, in which, as a nation with a rich writing heritage, we are almost non-existent with exception of several names known to the poetry aficionados. In the light of the above observations, however, it is clear that we have to undertake the task ourselves.

Translation: Jan Pytalski

34 See R.F. Staar *National Identity...*; P.I. Barta, "Slavic and East European Journal" Fall 2002, vol. 46, no. 3, 595-596; K. Hokanson, "Comparative Literature Studies" 2001, vol. 83, no. 3, 264-266.

Bogusław Bakuła

Colonial and Postcolonial Aspects of Polish Borderlands Studies: an Outline

Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent; it has regularly seemed otherwise to me¹

E.W. Said, *Orientalism*

The explosion of knowledge in Poland about the Eastern "Borderlands"

In this article I shall discuss works of literary theory and cultural theory published in Poland after 1989 and dedicated to the subject of the so-called Eastern "Borderlands," i.e. the territories to the east of Poland's current border, which at various times in history were part of the Polish state. We have already witnessed a great wave of interest in émigré thinking and literature belonging to the so-called "Borderlands" discourse, and we have also seen a period of intense development in "Borderlands" thinking in such areas as history, literary theory, ethnology, and

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¹ E.W. Said *Orientalism*, trans. M. Wyrwińska-Wiśniewska, Wydawnictwo Zysk i s-ka. Poznań 2006. 63. [27] Here and further in the essay, page numbers in square brackets refer to the original editions of the quoted texts. [AW]

sociology. Almost everything of worth has been reprinted from those works that arose in émigré circles. It is difficult to count the number of conferences, seminars, collective volumes, and individual works that have dealt with various aspects of this matter. Many new literary texts, memoirs, scientific and academic works related to this field are still appearing. Several tenth websites established by aficionados of the "Borderlands" can be found on the Internet – currently these constitute a separate communication circle. The "Borderlands" surround us on all sides; I would even go so far as to say that their multiplication and hyperbolization in a country the size of Poland are an expression of collective experiences functioning for mythologizing rather than for genuine geographical, political or ethnic reasons.

The vivid fiction of the "Borderlands" in the Polish collective consciousness finds support not only in literary nostalgia. Its real expression is rather the scientific, academic, and recollective literature about the "Borderlands." From the growing corpus of texts, there appears a characteristic image of the world, form of language, and direction of thinking. It is worth considering in what kind of language the "Borderlands" are spoken of, and in what sources support can be found for the emerging image of the world. The term "Borderlands" belongs to a wider structure of thought and image, possessing a specific magical-mythical nature and exerting a considerable influence on the social and political attitudes of the Polish community. The "Borderlands" seen in this perspective become after all that which is most Polish, although – and precisely because – they have been lost, that which *ennobles ex definitione* everyone who talks about them. And conversely – any criticism encounters a sharp reaction and even the accusation of betraying the nation.

The baseless power of discourse...

Daniel Beauvois, author of the recent book *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793-1914*² [The Ukrainian Triangle: The Nobility, Tsarism, and the Peasants in the Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev Regions, 1713-1914], reflects on the astonishing vitality of the "Borderlands" myth, where the Ukrainian borderland assumes both an Arcadian and a catastrophic image.³ He indicates the close connection between them: the idyllic note dominated

2 D. Beauvois. *Trójkąt ukraiński: Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1713-1914* [The Ukrainian Triangle: The Nobility, Tsarism, and the Peasants in the Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev Regions, 1713-1914] Trans. K. Rutkowski, Towarzystwo Opieki nad Archiwum Instytutu Literackiego w Paryżu and Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2005, 813

3 Ibid. 8-13.

in Polish speaking about Ukraine and it is best to state immediately that it was the source of the, usually catastrophic relations between Ukrainians and Poles.⁴ [Beauvois 2005, 11]

Beauvois, when describing the nostalgic attitudes of Poles, does not hide his surprise: "To tell the truth, it is not clear why Ukraine still filled the soul of the average Pole with nostalgia and enchantment even in Communist times."⁵

In this context, the role of literature cannot be underestimated. The overriding discourse that fulfilled the role of supplying source knowledge about the "Borderlands" to Polish public opinion over the last hundred years or more was that of literary fiction, which mythologized reality, drove out any rational historical assessment, particularly at the time of the Partitions and then again during the Communist isolation, and created the mythology of a lost homeland, suffering and sacrifice. It is worth noting, however, that the position of literature as the source of historical, political, and patriotic knowledge is not some aberration in the Polish consciousness, maniacally attached to the "Borderlands," but the psychological effect of a complex of severance, particularly during the Communist period, as well as the need to base that knowledge on a source which could not be entirely falsified – namely the national literature. For *émigrés*, the inevitable idealization of the past created an even stronger impulse, symbolized by the cult of lost lands, irrespective of rational historical circumstances. The results of this literary attachment to the "Borderlands" push the collective consciousness into the sphere of myth, where every claim for restitution is possible. Even today the formula *gente Ruthenus, natione Polonus* still seems to many Poles to be the most beautiful of all possible conceptions of identity in the "Borderlands"⁶ while they entertain no thoughts about its colonial nature.

Beauvois is skeptical about the cognitive value of the "Borderlands" literary discourse in Polish culture. He writes:

The impressive library of books about the "Borderlands" is not capable of providing an imaginative assessment of the sources of misunderstandings. The baseless power of discourse nearly always drowns out the significance of documents, which sometimes leads – as in the case of Ryszard Przybylski's *Krzemieniec* – to a clear twisting of reality.⁷

4 Ibid. 11.

5 Ibid.

6 "The voluntary Polonisation of a few aristocratic Ruthenian dynasties gave the right to such speculations," writes Beauvois. Beauvois, 2005. 12.

7 Ibid. 19

This “baseless power of discourse,” constitutes a kind of spiritual power, and becomes the expression of an overriding consciousness that takes the force out of rational arguments.

Beauvois avoids the term “colonialism,” not wanting to encroach on an area of dispute that he finds uncomfortable. He writes:

This is rather about a conscious ignoring of the other side of the coin, about a continuous construction of a myth concerning the harmonious multiculturalism of the former Republic. And it is precisely this kind of literature that has proliferated after 1989. Myth has this feature that it proposes a second nature, sometimes even stronger than reality.⁸

In contrast to Beauvois, I would like to indicate more forcefully certain features of Polish “Borderlands” discourse that are connected with a colonial type of consciousness, although that discourse is now deprived of the object of colonization, situating itself in the sphere of the language used, the images summoned up, the stereotypes and styles of academic and scientific discussion. Fortunately today, the “Borderlands” discourse, which fulfils the role of a specific supranational historical consciousness, does not lead to the subjugation of anyone other than the Poles themselves. This does not mean, however, that it is received only as a harmless Polish obsession. The former “Borderlands” react negatively after all to their continual “Borderlands-ization.”

The Polish Borderlands – a symbol of exclusion

I use the term “Borderlands” in inverted commas because I am aware of the fact that former and, particularly, present inhabitants of this area do not wish to be regarded as Polish “Borderlands” in any sense understood by the Poles and, therefore, that this term is politically incorrect and determines the kind of relations which they might feel as symbolic of Polish colonialism. In times of sensitivity on the subject of history, identity, ethnic, cultural, and political identity, such reactions may be significantly mollified by the use of pragmatic dialogue. No one in Poland asks whether the Lithuanians, Belarusians, or Ukrainians want to be, metonymically, the “Borderlands” of Poland within either its historical or its present borders, or what they think about it. The “Borderlands” discourse loudly proclaimed as a form of dialogue and above all of multiculturalism reveals its emptiness already at the outset. In this discourse there is no discussion. “Borderlands-ness” and “Borderlands studies” are in any case reserved for Poles and only rarely can we find any active Lithuanians, Belarusians, Jews, or Ukrainians here.

8 Ibid. 17

The well-known and respected researcher, Jacek Kolbuszewski, published in 1996 a popular work entitled *Kresy* [Borderlands] in the series *A to Polska właśnie* [This is Poland as a Matter of Fact]. Kolbuszewski writes about the great, although no longer present, Polish culture in the lands now known as Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. There is no significant mention here of the history or culture of these countries. There is only historical Poland. It would come as no surprise if in the opinion of the inhabitants of these countries Kolbuszewski's work were received as an attempt at domination, an exclusion of their cultures, an attempt at subordination and the promotion of a mythologized (un)truth about the splendour of the "Polish Borderlands." The contemporary Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Lithuanian reacts to this type of work emotionally – the world described therein is not in his understanding the "Borderlands," it is not even Poland, particularly "as a matter of fact" – it is not and never has been. It is as if a German researcher were to write a work entitled *Kreisen* in a series entitled *This is Germany as a Matter of Fact* about Silesia, Pomerania or Masuria. One can imagine how much ink and paper would be wasted here on polemics full of righteous indignation. Many traps of this kind, concealed in seemingly stunning mental shortcuts, can still be found in the contemporary Polish language, and not only in its colloquial form but also in its academic form.

For at least one hundred years, the word "Borderlands" (understood universally as the "Eastern Borderlands," since other geographical designations, e.g. "Western Borderlands," are of a secondary nature) has occupied a central place in the national and state mythologizing discourse. The "Borderlands" were a place of specific political confrontation and struggles for Polishness, which means that they were *de facto* about maintaining the Polish possession. In the word "Borderlands" there lies the unconcealed great power of local patriotism (transferred in the twenty inter-war years as well as today to the official patriotism of the Polish state), exoticism, otherness, colorfulfulness, and uncommonness, which are attractive not only to Poles. On the other hand, there is also in this word the hint of a lowering of status, a specific message indicating the peripheral nature of the "Borderlands" as a world far from the Polish centres and, of course, not exclusively Polish (for both reasons the term "Borderlands" was and still is attacked in Ukraine and rejected as absurd in Lithuania).

According to Edward Said in his *Orientalism*,⁹ the word "Borderlands" would be a typical lexeme in the dictionary of colonial discourse, even though the practice of this "colonialism" is now exclusively historical; in other words, it does not possess a *designatum* and its world consists exclusively of words

9 E.W. Said *Orientalism*.

and symbols. This testifies to the power of the construction of mythologizing historical experiences, concealed by the language of social communication, particularly in literature and in documentary and political texts. The anachronistic word "Borderlands" lives on in social emotions. Even a supposedly unquestioned authority, such as John Paul II, comes in for criticism. During the "Borderlands" conference (Warsaw, 26-28.11.1996), Ryszard Kiersnowski criticized the Pope's statement in which he talked about the Lithuanians of Polish descent (namely, the citizens of Lithuania of Polish origin)¹⁰ and not about repressed Poles. Kiersnowski included these Poles in the world of the "Borderlands" and excluded them from Lithuania as their motherland. Meanwhile, the Catholic citizens of the city of Przemyśl, which is not only Catholic, closed the doors of the garrison church to the highest dignitary of this faith when he wanted to hand over the shrine to the Ukrainian Greek Catholics in the name of good-neighborly relations. According to Kiersnowski's manner of thinking, the "Borderlands" are to be exclusively Polish. For example, the churches: if they are not Polish, then they have no right to exist. And no Pope can change that.

The "Borderlands" constitute, therefore, a site of tribal community. A saccharine image of good, paradise, community, harmony. And at the same time a symbol of suffering and sacrifice. The "Borderlands" are the key to national martyrology and the holy, unquestionable truths. Everyone who raises a wistful voice on the matter of the "Borderlands" is a real Pole. Others are simply, well, Others. Speaking out on behalf of the "Borderlands" situates the speaker at the centre of the Polish national discourse and signifies at the same time the confirmation of an identity based almost on some magic spell. The "Polish Borderlands" are, therefore, a definition of identity that excludes Others.

The "Borderlands" and the marches

The issue of the "Borderlands" is obviously connected with the issue of the ethnic and cultural marches. The difference between these consists in the fact that the "Borderlands" are treated as a phenomenon belonging to the

10 "The Borderland renaissance has suffered a severe blow ... from the least expected side. The awful words of John Paul II spoken in the Dominican church in Vilnius about the 'Lithuanians of Polish descent' gathered there sounded like a sentence of death for the identity of the 'Borderlands' Poles. Because if *Roma locuta*, and this in the words of the Polish Pope, then the matter was is definitely closed. This was the end of a the Polish presence in the 'Borderlands' and therefore the end of the "Borderlands" themselves." Kiersnowski, R. "Kresy przez małe i przez wielkie "K" – kryteria tożsamości." *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, Handke, K. (ed.), Warszawa: 1997. 118.

field of collective memory and above all to national axiology,¹¹ while the term “marches...is in essence neutral and does not arouse such associations. The marches are around and about us, in the places where we meet our neighbors, but the ‘Borderlands,’ because they belong to the field of national consciousness and ideology, are central and everywhere. Each march-land may receive today an enhancing package of ideological “Borderlands-ness.”¹² It will then be a frontier, a line of defense of Polishness. In the semantic field of the term, an important role is still played by military elements – battles, the shedding of blood, the chivalric ethos, guarding the borders, like in the scouts’ song about “the knights of the Borderlands’ watchtowers.”¹³ Another paradoxical effect of the ideologization of the “Borderlands” is the situation in which the marches are perceived as common (i.e. multinational) and the “Borderlands” as exclusively Polish – in such terms as “Polish Borderlands,” “our Borderlands,” “the lost Borderlands” they belong only to the Polish dominium, even if today this is merely a symbolic presence.

The sociologist, Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, has isolated those features of the “Borderlands” which, in his opinion, express conquest, expansiveness, aggression:

zonality, understood, however, more as a tendency than an area; 2. emphasis more on the peripheries than on the centre, particularly the strictly ethnic; 3. aggressiveness and the increasing of the state’s possessions (the advantage of state thinking over national thinking, state assimilation

11 J. Kolbuszewski. *Kresy*. Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1996. 128.

12 From the scientific point of view, it [‘it’ refers to what?] is different. As M. Koter writes: “Not all marches, however, deserve to be called Borderlands, just the opposite quite the contrary in fact.” (M Koter “Kresy państwowe – geneza i właściwości w świetle doświadczeń geografii politycznej” *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość* [Borderlands – the notion and reality] Warszawa 1997. 9) Uliasz sees this differently: “The Borderlands appear because of this as a community of the suffering and the exiled, as an entrenchment of Polishness or, just the opposite[or quite the contrary], as an Arcadian world; they are also regarded as a community of communities.” (S Uliasz “Kresy jako przestrzeń kulturowa.” *Ibid.* 136.)

13 The Borderlands ethos – “the ethos of enduring on at a threatened border-post in the defense of fatherland and faith” (Koter 1997. 31); the myth of the bulwark of Christianity: “the myth of national unity within the Republic in the matter of Polish consciousness, as if integrating, like the children of one mother – the Crown of Poland – the various nations living there, whose consequence was the stubborn dreams dream about of Poland stretching “from sea to sea.” (Koter 1997. 31); “From the time of the nineteenth century, there took place in Poland an interference merging [an integration?] in the notions of the Borderlands and Ukraine and they became almost synonymous. But the sphere of meanings and values of surrounding the notion of “Polish state borderlands” should be broadened to include other areas with similar features and historical pedigrees.” (Koter 1997. 31)

over national counter-culturization); 4. one-sidedness and the feeling of strength, advantage, the automatic sense of belonging to a higher ethno-class, entitled even to arrogance; 5. satisfaction derived from acquisition; 6. a primeval attachment to youth and masculinity and adventure; 7. satisfaction from gaining foreign but loyal followers who will realize one's own aspirations. In contrast to the marches, the Borderlands are not recognized by both sides as Borderlands and they do not even have to neighbor directly onto the central ethnic territory. Their mythologizing effects can, however, modify the imaginings and the aspirations connected with defining the national territory externally and with defining one's own centre of culture internally.¹⁴

The author indicates also the peculiar mental attitude of "Borderlands" identity:

For this are needed a feeling of superiority, advantage, aggressiveness, one-sided aspirations of appropriation, annexation or aggressiveness, a disproportion in the use of force to the resistance encountered.¹⁵

A Polish colonial discourse?

For over one hundred years, the Republic disappeared completely from the map of Europe, existing solely – as Said would say – in 'imagined geography'. The greater part of the last two centuries was spent by Poland, therefore, in bondage to one or other power. It would be difficult to find more impressive postcolonial references¹⁶

So writes the American Polish Studies specialist Clare Cavanagh. Poland experienced this side of the coin deeply and painfully. The other side is shown to us by Beauvois in the previously cited work, *Trójkąt ukraiński*. It is not stated anywhere, after all, that a colonized community cannot display colonizing features. That is why Poles know very well what the world both of the colonized and of the colonizing looks like. They know, but they are not interested in thinking in the categories of responsibility for this dichotomy.

14 K. Kwaśniewski. "Społeczne rozumienie relacji kresów i terytorium narodowego." *Kresy – pojęcie...* 80.

15 Ibid. 69. Elsewhere, Kwaśniewski observes: "There appears the mentality of the sahib, namely of the lord and master (of his country), and the defender (usually, however, against the same people whom he has conquered but sometimes also against a rival conqueror)." Ibid. 72.

16 C. Cavanagh "Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej historii." *Teksty Drugie* 2003 Vol. 2-3.

On the basis of works by Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, a broad definition of “colonial discourse” can be formulated which will take into account the abovementioned experiences. This would be a combination of linguistic, colloquial and institutional (literary, scientific, political) convictions indicating the justified (within its own discourse) feeling of superiority and the right to rule over other areas, peoples, and cultures and also a sense of mission towards them. Quite often these convictions are combined with a refusal to allow the colonized community or people the capacity for independent existence (because of their social and political immaturity, so-called ahistoricity, low civilizational level). Colonial discourse is characterized by paternalism, the conviction of the indisputable domination of one’s own world, which nevertheless gives a voice to so-called multiculturalism, namely controlled multiculturalism. Said states that colonial discourse does not refer to the corpus of texts directly expressing colonial ideology, but rather to the arrangements of practices and rules which produce texts and which make up the methodological organization governing their intellectual content.

To date no one in Poland has directly asked the question as to whether the so-called “Borderlands novel” or the mass-produced “Borderlands” memoirs from before 1939 and published by émigrés were a symptom of colonial consciousness. Were there any reactions at that time anticipating today’s thinking in postcolonial categories? If the question was never asked, then there can be no answers. As early as the inter-war period we were confronted by tensions expressed in the relations represented in texts such as *Pożoga* [Conflagration] (1922) by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka or *Bunt rojstów* [The Revolt of the Marshes] (1938) by Józef Mackiewicz. The first of these expresses a colonial attitude and the second a weaker, because less audible, anti-colonial attitude. Similarly, if the later poem by Andrzej Kuśniewicz *Słowa o nienawiści* [Words about Hatred] (1956) can be seen to constitute an ideological (and therefore false) representation of an anti-colonial attitude, then the émigré memoirs of Father Walerian Meysztowicz *Poszło z dymem* [Up in Smoke] (1973), or the artistic prose of Zbigniew Haupt, could be said to belong to the territory settled by the émigré colonial discourse. I am deliberately not including nineteenth-century writing, e.g. *Nad Niemenem* [On the Banks of the Niemen] by Eliza Orzeszkowa, since the understanding of Polishness and its right to exist is represented differently there from in the period of Polish state independence. Between these extremes is situated *Wysoki Zamek* [High Castle] (1966) by Stanisław Lem – one of the few Polish novels set in Lviv or Galicia to be accepted by Ukrainian readers.

The vast array of “Borderlands” memoirs is a separate and specific problem. A typical example might be the introduction to the memoirs of the

well-known film director, Janusz Majewski, whose roots were in Lviv, *Retrospektywka* [Retrospective]. In particular this fragment:

our next servant was Ukrainian. I think she was called Witka, or maybe Olena. In any case she was definitely a 'Ruthenian małanka' – as my father called those women who passed through our house. The one whom I remembered tried to reach me to read – but unfortunately she muddled up Latin letters with Cyrillic ones. [...] I suspect that my undoubted dependence on Wikta had a subconsciously erotic foundation, because I liked it when she pressed me to her breasts, which were as enormous as loaves of rustic bread.¹⁷

This is a colonial image in an almost crystalline form: The young master from the city, and beside him, the servant, a Ukrainian, initiating him not only into the wealth of culture or civilization, but also into the mysteries of biological, erotic experiences (albeit subconscious ones). We can see here the influence of the literary, artistic and social stereotypes of the "lordly" literature dating back several decades. Perhaps Majewski's imagination had been influenced by nineteenth-century literary stereotypes? The narrator could not remember the woman's name accurately but he did remember her low level of education, the scornful description of the woman as a "Ruthenian małanka," suggestive of unsophisticated entertainment (małanka in Ukrainian is a New Year's Eve party), and the stereotypical erotic experience. The image is full of kindness but it is a kindness which is directed towards lower beings; it is patronizing, and with the necessary dose of superiority for the author to establish his own self-confidence, and to show the hierarchy in the family home, in the social environment, in the multinational city of Lviv.

Said has described the features of colonial consciousness produced in the nineteenth century by scholars and writers, who successfully created an image of the Orient perceived more as a component of Western knowledge than as a society and a culture functioning in its own conditions. The image of the Orient was produced in such a way so as to confirm the positive image of British society, and not the other way round. So what was the aim behind the creation of the Polish image of the "Borderlands," particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Was the aim not the same? And why was the portrait of the Ukrainian servant in *Retrospektywka* so clearly stereotypical? Because it confirms the stereotype of Polish superiority – in Poland.

The presentation of the East in Anglo-Saxon literature, according to Said, was constructed to suit the expected values of the colonizers. Authors showed idyllic nature, antiquity, intimacy, the eternal nature of relations

17 J. Majewski. *Retrospektywka*. Muza, Warszawa 2001. 8.

between the colonizer and the colonized, which always remains the same, while at the same time there is the familiar intimacy and the existence of uncrossable barriers. The colonized culture was also differentiated from the colonizing culture by representing it as existing on a different spatial-temporal plane. By locating the colonized country in distant times, or to one side somewhere (e.g. in the Ukrainian or Belarusian countryside), the authors of the colonial texts applied a particular kind of time, which Said calls the "ethnographic present." This might be compared to an open-air museum. A similar space-and-time surrounds the figure of the Ukrainian woman in Majewski's memoirs.

From such elements, claims Said, arises a national epic about a civilizing mission, about the superiority of one's own culture, about the defense of values and moral norms, about the duty to propagate one's own religious beliefs and about a higher style of life than that of the colonized.

Postcolonial criticism

In Poland postcolonial criticism does not have its own tradition.¹⁸ Yet we can see here not so much a scientific weakness as a mental one. The Poles – who in their own national ideology have a powerful feeling of being victims of history, of being underappreciated, of defeat; who eagerly remain in regressive utopias talking about their historical greatness; who are doggedly reconstructing their shattered historical discourse, do not accept the voices which might weaken this reconstructed edifice. Postcolonial criticism, meanwhile, is first and foremost an unmasking of language, including the deeper structures of the collective consciousness hidden in literary and non-literary texts. We know well how difficult it is to rid ourselves of such strong structures, even in science, which usually takes a more critical attitude. The literary tradition of scoffers, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century (Gombrowicz, Mrożek, Kisielewski, and others), gives these issues a wide berth. No one wished to "scoff" at "Borderlands" history and no one could. It would simply be too painful.

The fundamental task of postcolonial theory in Poland would be to reveal those forms of language, image, and text used in public life (in literature, science, politics etc.), which in a more or less veiled manner store and accept

18 It seems that it was the translation of E. M. Thompson's *Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism* by A. Sierszulska (Universitas, Kraków 2000) that stirred in Poland the discussion of postcolonial theories and provided it with methodological support. In the context of this reflection, one should also mention an interesting work by E. Konończuk *Literatura i pamięć na pograniczu kultur*. (Erwin Kruk – Ernst Wiechert – Johannes Bobrowski) Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, Białystok 2000.

convictions that disable, differentiate, exclude Others, or accept ethnic or cultural domination. Postcolonial criticism emphasizes in detail the following: 1. the verification of a priori demands made by way of literature, criticism, the humanities, which expect recognition of the dominant position of their world in the face of other ethnic groups or cultures; 2. research into the prejudice about the inferiority of the East, i.e. everything that is east of us; 3. exposure of the prejudices that allow the presentation of anyone apart from Western Europeans as exotic or immoral Others; 4. research into the language of literature and science, which includes within it the above convictions and hides a priori, colonial structures of thinking; 5. an approach to the individual person and to personality as possessing a split or mixed identity, composed as if of parts of the colonizer and of the colonized; 6. cultural interaction, and research into the representation of other cultures in literature and science; 7. the revelation of the linguistic hypocrisy of literature and the humanistic sciences, which apply different criteria to themselves and to Others; 8. investigation into the foregrounding of differences in culture and of diversity; 9. analysis of the celebrated hybridity and multiculturalism, particularly in situations where persons or groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture; 10. research into the states of marginality of the Other, seen as a source of energy and potential change.

The theorists of postcolonial criticism underline the significance of research that aims to expose established and naturalized systems of representation, which are in fact attempts to create reality from the perspective of the dominant – and regarded as natural – ethnic, cultural, and political discourse; to undermine totally the ideologemes of that discourse, such as *ethnos*, history or identity; to distrust the language constructions devised on one's own ground and to reject those categories in which there appears the intention of marginalizing other cultures; to emphasize the local nature of every culture. "The basis of postcolonialism is the decolonization of thought,"¹⁹ writes Dorota Kołodziejczyk in her excellent essay. This is probably the most difficult task that awaits every Polish user of the national discourse, at the center of which we find the magic word "Borderlands."

Between colonial and postcolonial discourse

I would like to discuss at some length one of the works by Władysław Panas (1947-2005), a widely respected author of monographs on Polish-Jewish literature, scholar of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania whom I personally believe

19 D. Kołodziejczyk "Trawerses przez glob: studia postkolonialne i teoria globalizacji". *Er(r)go* 2004 Vol. 1 (8). 22.

to be one of the most extraordinary personages of the Polish Studies of the last quarter of the century. At the 1995 Polish Studies Congress (Zjazd Polonistów) in Warsaw, in other words, at the most important summit of Polish Studies in the country, one that determines directions for the developments in the field, Panas gave a presentation entitled "O pograniczu etnicznym w badaniach literackich" [On the Ethnic Borderland in Literary Studies]²⁰ Published later in the conference volume, Panas's presentation illustrates a certain state of scholarly consciousness, both postulated and realized, where two contrasting attitudes to the problem of "Borderlands" oppose each other. Panas opens with an observation that in Poland

there has increased and, in the recent years, culminated, a historical-cultural process of revindication that could be described provisionally as a reclaiming of a context, and a great context, too. Its common, most general and broadest name is the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. ... In literature and literary criticism, in journalism and historical scholarship, in the discourse of culture and art history, and in the truly comprehensive "Borderlands"-themed fashion (also referred to as an "epidemic"!), there take place reminiscence and rediscovery of the abovementioned political organism, its member-states, the Crown and the Great Duchy of Lithuania, as well as her, its, their individual and collective peoples, languages, religions, cultures.²¹

Panas claims that this "process of revindication" and the "discourse" bring back a certain truth: "Today, one could safely say that the most obvious of the unobvious that has been discovered – and continue to be discovered – by this discourse is seeing in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the 'homeland of not Poles only.'"²² Consequently, noticing the Other and the recognition of Otherness "appear to be one of the most important achievements within the Polish humanities, not only of the recent period and not only in the purely cognitive dimension."²³ And while Panas's claim about one of the "most important achievement within the Polish humanities" may astound, the interest in "Borderlands" has become a fact. In the key instances, the author uses the term "*pogranicze*" [to refer to borderlands]

20 W. Panas. "O pograniczu etnicznym w badaniach literackich." *Wiedza o literaturze i edukacja. Księga referatów Zjazdu Polonistów. Warszawa 1995*. Ed. T. Michałowska, Z. Goliński, Z. Jaroński. Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, Warszawa 1996. 603-613.

21 Ibid. 605.

22 Ibid. 606.

23 Ibid.

instead of “*kresy*,”²⁴ treating the latter as a weaker, auxiliary synonym. He probably sensed the ambiguous semantics of the word (briefly mentioned earlier in the present essay), but he does not elaborate on this fact. However, elsewhere, his phrasing seems to suggest that he used both terms interchangeably.

Panas discusses the culture of the “Commonwealth of many nations”²⁵ as an ideal of multiculturalism and an example of historical perfection: “Shortly, literature in the perspective of familial Commonwealth ... Among various neighboring spaces and correspondences where literature is positioned, there is also a space that derives from the ethnic borderland, especially one enclosed by a single cultural system.”²⁶ We should remember the claim, very popular in Poland, that the history of Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Jews, as well as other Others constituting the ethnic borderland, was “enclosed by a single cultural system.” The proposal to enclose the histories and cultures of Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, and Poles within one system of culture, supported only in Poland, today does not stand the test of criticism. Yet, Panas notices and emphasizes the fact that the discovery of the reality of ethnic and cultural borderland has had enormous and positive impact on Polish literature, its study and interpretation. Elsewhere, he presents a weighty idea, one that is crucial for the purport of his text:

On the one hand there appears the possibility of broadening the notion of Polish literature and through this the notion of Polish culture beyond the boundaries defined by language. It could be said that this would be the perspective of the *Polonisation* of Others, including the *Polonisation* of utterances in a language other than Polish.²⁷

One could not have been stated this more clearly. From the postcolonial perspective, the postulate of Polonization of Others is one of the strongest programmatic theses of colonial discourse found in Panas's essay. The author elaborates:

I am speaking of those instances when the Other speaks Polish in literature, and of the ways it manifests its Otherness, more or less noticeably,

24 [PL *kres* (noun, singular) designates the “end of” or “fringe of,” implying a hierarchy of the center and its peripheries, contrastingly, *pogranicze* may appear to be a more value-neutral term to refer to borderlands as an intermediary space – AW]

25 [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*, may also be translated as the “commonwealth of both nations.” – AW]

26 W. Panas. “O pograniczu...” 607.

27 Ibid. Emphasis B.B.

when its Polish creation recalls, in several ways, the reality it “comes from.” ... The creator declares writing in Polish but not being Polish. It seems that those are the instances when one may speak directly about the literature of ethnic borderlands.²⁸

In other words, an author writing in Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian or Yiddish is excluded from the literature of borderlands, represented by

Polish-Ukrainian writers, such as Metropolitan Peter or Saint Dimitry of Rostov, the only Orthodox Saint who wrote in Polish,. There is also Polish-Lithuanian literature and Polish-Belarusian literature. There is the “discovery” of the decade: the Polish-Jewish literature. One can (and should) expand this enumeration to include other ethnic borderlands, especially the Polish-German ones.²⁹

The author follows with a statement that seems to belong downright to classical colonial discourse whose most effective instrument was language. For historical reasons, as the former masters of the “Borderlands,” Poles were left with nothing but the language and in Panas this is of key importance for the constituting of the image of borderlands:

The emergence of an intellectual formation that does identify Polish as the national option is the basic indicator for this phenomenon. Or, in other words, the separation of language from nationality and the acknowledgment that it is possible to express one’s identity, also one’s national identity, in a different language – in this case in Polish.³⁰

Panas considers Polish the “*lingua franca* of the Borderlands,” a universal and unifying code. As a result, he excludes those great writers who, living in the “Borderlands,” continued to write in their national languages and whose works have never been translated to Polish. Naturally, scholars specializing in Polish Studies do not have to be interested in their work but those who look toward Borderlands – should. I should propose to separate the “Borderlands” as a form of Polish ideologization of the past and Borderlands as a multicultural, fully valid form of co-existence of nations in the lands of the former Commonwealth, and later, at the junction of states and nations intermingled to the extreme in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century.

28 Ibid. 608.

29 Ibid. 609.

30 Ibid. 610.

Having described his project for Polish Studies and Borderlands Studies from the position of the dominant, Polish culture, Panas turns away from the proposals he had just formulated, acknowledging the need for a different solution. "In practice, this means that a scholar of Polish Studies must also develop an appropriate Lithuanian, Ruthenian (both Belarusian and Ukrainian), Jewish competence etc."³¹ It is a truly great postulate, an ideal one. But there are no more scholars of this kind in contemporary Poland (not anymore). None of the Borderlands scholars that I know of reads literature in Yiddish (except for the late lamented Panas). Very few among those publishing widely on the topic of Central-Eastern Europe can fluently compare works representing even only two "Borderland" languages and literatures: Belarusian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Lithuanian, and – on the top of that – place them in the context of Polish literature. The Borderlands *pars pro toto* seems, thus, inevitable. Most scholars, unknowingly, Polonize the multicultural perspective of the Borderlands and fringes. In Poland, writing about those subjects is easy. It is enough to know the Polish language. What is problematic, however, is the fact that similarly few representatives of Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Studies have so far moved beyond this barrier. The obstacle lies in the national, restricted nature of their research – officially under the label of multiculturalism. Panas crosses this border carefully in the second part of his work.³² He presents two approaches and two research postulates regarding the heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: to Polonize, to search for a common denominator – or to recognize Otherness, to learn its diversity, to accept it even when it evades the Polish denominator. The former proposal situates itself within the range of classical colonial discourse, the latter, on the side of postcolonial criticism.

The works of "Borderland" studies

The large number of works dealing with the "Borderlands" constitutes a challenge to the reader. I propose to look at a number of these works in which the word "Borderlands" appears, from the perspective of postcolonial theory. Naturally, I can present only my own conclusions. These are the established classics: *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni* [The Borderlands in Literature: Twentieth-century Authors.] edited by Edward Kasperski and Eugeniusz

³¹ Ibid. 612.

³² The methodological question of utmost importance, namely, what scholarly means should be used to represent the literature of a multicultural and multilingual country, state and area, for obvious reasons exceeds the scope of my essay.

Czaplejewicz³³; *Królestwo różnorodności. Teoria i literatura w sytuacji ponowoczesności*. [The Kingdom of Diversity: Theory and Literature in the Postmodern Situation] also by Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz and Edward Kasperski³⁴; Jacek Kolbuszewski's *Od Pigalle po Kresy. Krajobrazy literatury* [From Pigalle to the Borderlands: Landscapes of Literature]³⁵ and, from the same author, *Kresy* [The Borderlands]³⁶; *O dialogu kultur wspólnot kresowych* [On the Dialogue of the Cultures of the Borderlands Communities] edited by Stanisław Uliasz³⁷; *Galicja* [Galicia] by Zbigniew Fras³⁸; *Literatura kresów – kresy literatury. Fenomen kresów wschodnich w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [The Literature of the Borderlands – The Borderlands of Literature: The Phenomenon of the Eastern Borderlands in Polish Literature in the Twenty Years between the Wars] by Stanisław Uliasz³⁹; Bolesław Hadaczek's *Kresy w literaturze polskiej. Studia i szkice* [The Borderlands in Polish Literature: Studies and Essays]⁴⁰; *Kresy, czyli obszary tęsknot* [The Borderlands, or Lands of Longing] by Tadeusz Chrzanowski.⁴¹ One of the earliest works on the “southern school,” as it used to be called euphemistically, Ewa Wiegandt's *Austria felix, czyli o micie Galicji w polskiej prozie współczesnej* [Austria felix, or The Myth of Galicia in Polish Contemporary Prose]⁴², rarely makes use

33 *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*. [The Borderlands in Literature: Twentieth-century Authors.] Ed. E. Kasperski, E. Czaplejewicz. Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa. 1996.

34 E. Czaplejewicz, E. Kasperski. *Królestwo różnorodności. Teoria i literatura w sytuacji ponowoczesności*. [The Kingdom of Diversity: Theory and Literature in the Postmodern Situation]. DiG, Warszawa. 1996.

35 J. Kolbuszewski. *Od Pigalle po Kresy. Krajobrazy literatury*. [From Pigalle to the Borderlands: Landscapes of Literature] Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław. 1994.

36 J. Kolbuszewski. *Kresy*. [The Borderlands] Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław. 1999.

37 *O dialogu kultur wspólnot kresowych* [On the Dialogue of the Cultures of the Borderlands Communities] Ed. S. Uliasz. Wydawnictwo WSP w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów. 1998.

38 Z. Fras. *Galicja*. [Galicia] Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław. 1999.

39 S. Uliasz. *Literatura kresów – kresy literatury. Fenomen kresów wschodnich w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [The Literature of the Borderlands – The Borderlands of Literature: The Phenomenon of the Eastern Borderlands in Polish Literature in the Twenty Years between the Wars] Wydawnictwo WSP w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów. 1994.

40 B. Hadaczek. *Kresy w literaturze polskiej. Studia i szkice* [The Borderlands in Polish literature. Studies and essays] Wojewódzki Ośrodek Metodyczny, Gorzów Wielkopolski. 1999.

41 T. Chrzanowski. *Kresy, czyli obszary tęsknot* [The Borderlands, or Lands of longing] Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. 2001.

42 E. Wiegandt. *Austria felix, czyli o micie Galicji w polskiej prozie współczesnej* [Austria felix, or The myth of Galicia in Polish contemporary prose] Wydawnictwo UAM, Poznań. 1988.

of the term "Borderlands." The place of Polish colonial discourse is occupied in Wiegandt's book by the Habsburg myth, which was devoid of the feature of desiring to regain possession and which tended to be aesthetic, decadent and catastrophic. For reasons of censorship, 1988 was far too early to make open use of "Borderlands" epiphanies. It was only the 1990s that brought the boom in "Borderlands-mania," which is still current today.

As there is no space here to discuss the content of these works, I will summarize their common features, which together constitute the formula for the "Borderlands" discourse after 1989. These works are characterized by: 1. the idealization of multiculturalism with Poland as the centre and as the only key to explaining that world in its entirety; 2. the rejection of languages recognized as "Borderlands" or minority ones, even if a minority constituted a majority in the Borderlands and marches; 3. the demonizing, exoticizing, or idealizing of the Other, the non-Pole; 4. the treatment of the phenomenon of "Borderlands-ness" as a component of the Polish historical and civilizational mission; 5. the avoidance of actual real contact with the Other (the non-Pole) through the erection of a barrier of apparent dialogue, that is of a dialogue which in essence is a monologue of superior Polishness; 6. "Borderlands-ness" as a pluralism that is only apparent, because it is concentrated around the most important value, which is perceived to be Polish culture; 7. paternalism; 8. the Polonisation of the cultural diversity of the marches and the "Borderlands"; 9. the imposing on Others of one's own perspective, terminology and "Borderlands" culture.

Generalizations always falsify the perspective and it must be added that not all of the abovementioned works fit neatly into the model I have just outlined. However, in none of these works can we find any concrete references to other cultures existing alongside Polish "Borderlands" culture. We will not find any footnotes in which the researchers refer to the views of Other researchers, even though the term "multiculturalism" features in their works as an important research category. Polish culture is considered to be fully sufficient in this matter, offering from one side only the images of the Other which it devised and stored. It is surprising to see such an ostentatious lack of interest in how this "multiculturalism," written about so many times from the Polish perspective, might look through the eyes of the Others, in their research and in their dialogue with Polish literature and culture.

It is not surprising that the Others, our neighbors, do not want to participate in the multicultural "Borderlands adventure," because it is not their "adventure," and that they so eagerly participate in projects concerning Galicia and Central Europe.

There is probably no single work of literary or cultural theory at least touching on the subject of the "Borderlands" which does not mention the word "multiculturalism," and yet there is probably no contemporary work which makes this multiculturalism the real subject of accurate research, with a knowledge of the various languages, history, and customs, and taking into account these Other perspectives, which would make the discourse credible and reliable.

Any attempts to state that Polish culture, in certain situations, still behaves as if it were a colonizing culture are at best made timidly. But since it is a long time since there has been an object of colonization, then we are dealing here with a nostalgic theater of gestures, a theater of shadows in which we celebrate the rite of Remembering, resulting in nothing more than a revival of a fading memory. The colonial discourse, based in Poland on recalling the past, depends in this situation upon centralization and upon bringing the whole multiculturalism of the "Borderlands" into the Polish perspective, as the one that can universally explain the entirety of the matter with an almost total disregard for other perspectives and sources. This is accompanied by nostalgia, paternalism, and idealization. If, however, this seems to us to be just an innocent game with memory, then we are mistaken. Above all for this reason: that it makes the dialogue between Polish culture and the neighboring ones more difficult or even impossible and as a result weakens its own position.

Postcolonial Theory and the Polish Determinants

Until recently, the phenomena of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory were perceived in Poland as exotic. Today, the works of Ewa M. Thompson, Marek Pawłyszyn, and Mykola Riabczuk have raised awareness of the importance of the problem from the Ukrainian and Russian perspective.⁴³ The need to apply the postcolonial perspective to the Polish history of the "Borderlands" becomes necessary. Poles see in the "Borderlands" an important element of their identity and history; they write the history of their literary empire in a linear fashion, in the categories of ethnic progress understood as a development of the state and national interest, as a way leading from

43 M. Pawłyszyn *Kanon ta ikonostas*. Kiev 1997. Translation of selected passages were published as "Ukraiński postkolonialny postmodernizm." [Ukrainian postcolonial postmodernism] in *Odkrywanie modernizmu*. [Discovering modernism] Ed. R. Nycz, Universitas, Kraków 2004. The work of M. Riabczuk includes *Od Małoroski do Ukrainy* [From Little Russia to Ukraine] with an introduction by B. Berdyczowska (ed.), trans. by O. Hnatiuk, K. Kotyńska. Universitas, Kraków 2003; *Dylemy ukraińskoho Fausta: hromadianskr suspilstw i "rozbudowa derżawy"*, Kiev 2000; *Dwie Ukrainy* [Two Ukraines] trans. M. Dyhas et. al. Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, Wrocław 2006.

and toward freedom of the Polish nation in the "Borderlands." This entails a reluctance to verify the canon of their own judgments and attitudes toward "Borderlands." In the perspective of postcolonial theory, attempts are made at a revision of canonical history and its collateral threads and currents, revealing other aspects of the past. The question of *map*, or in the words of Guattari, of "deterritorialization and reterritorialization," is another important postcolonial topic, as is the notion of the *border*, not necessarily in the political sense. "Borderlands" seen as *kresy* represents a world oriented at a canonization of the map and a fixing of boundaries, at eliminating the difference, *kresy* is the opposite of *pogranicze*.

Polish culture has created an image whose fictionality it disregards, it is an image still discussed as a real, objective reality. But fictions have their force. They represent a variety of power discourse that relies on solidifying myths and presiding through them over collective imagination and emotions. In this perspective, our Borderlands Studies allow to dominate restructure and retain our lost power in the "Borderlands," to reminiscence about this power and to confirm it symbolically in collective memory. The history of "Borderlands" reveals a convergence with the goals of Polish historiography, and a divergence from the historiographies of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. There are Romantic Borderlands, Sienkiewicz's Borderlands, Borderlands of Piłsudski and the 5th Infantry Division, finally the Borderlands of the "Borderlands prose," but there have never been Borderlands as such, as an "idea" of Borderlands, there were and there are no Shevchenko's Borderlands, no Borderlands of Maironis, Kupala, Aleichem. One should also add that the structure of a discourse as dense as the Borderlands discourse, survived through memory and power. Those two factors elevated it to the level of knowledge which, in turn, endowed it with high status and allowed it to reconnect with the level of power that it also legitimized. Borderlands Studies assume the order of objective explanation, existence of laws of history, regularities, cultural patterns, in other words, they confirm the so called theoretical order, exhibiting at the same time certain characteristics of a colonial perspective, indicating a domination (intellectual, ideological, political, even moral) of the Polish "center" over the "peripheries" inhabited by the Others.

Two key notions and terms appear in the Borderlands discourse, namely, authenticity, understood as national identity, and multiculturalism. Both, as the postcolonial theory has proved, constitute important elements of colonial discourse. In the Borderlands discourse, identity is always threatened, never triumphant, and so it requires special efforts and means that justify any actions taken. The sense of threat absolves from sins, allows to treat the cultural difference as a dangerous phenomenon eroding national and state unity. Today, "Borderlands" relate to multiculturalism in a rather peculiar way,

one that seems to include a certain patronization as an expression of the politics of majority toward minority and otherness. The overuse of the notion of multiculturalism (in its Polish version transformed to *wielokulturowość*) reveals the existence of divisions that we are aware of, but not the ways to amend them. In a way, "multiculturalism" stands for accepting the division between the majority and the minority, the familiar and the other, the better and the worse in the supposedly culturally neutral sphere of humanist reflection. This is probably an undesirable effect of "giving attention" to the Other, often seen as humiliating from their perspective.

Thus, the final conclusion: "Borderlands" as a term, further supported by the notion of national identity on the one hand, and the notion of multiculturalism on the other, has lost its geographical sense a long time ago, gaining mostly an ideological status.

Others on the Polish "Borderlands" discourse

In this discourse, the concept of "exclusion" is crucial. Exclusion from identity and therefore, in principle, assimilation. Is it not the case that in many propositions put forward by Polish "Borderlands" scholars the Other inhabitants of the "East" are treated as members of a formation that is superior to all others – namely, the "Polish Borderlands"? This means that all the other non-"Borderlands," because non-Polish, literary worlds, such as those of Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia, face exclusion from the world of the "Borderlands." It seems that this is where Kwiryna Ziemia locates a space for her "project of internal comparativism."⁴⁴ Said says of this: "the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such real thing as 'the Orient.'"⁴⁵ "Borderlands" studies are the product of Polish culture and Polish thinking about "community." They realize the ideological purpose of this culture and at the same time hide its more or less conscious aim: subordination.⁴⁶

Just how reluctant the reactions of Poland's neighbors are to the Polish myth of the "Borderlands" and to Polish notions connected with this ideological project of existence in the East, can be seen from the Ukrainian reactions in recent years. In 1995, the Ukrainian émigré writer, Ostep

44 K. Ziemia. "Projekt komparatystyki wewnętrznej." *Teksty Drugie* 2005 Vol. 1-2. 72-82.

45 E. W. Said. *Orientalizm*. 56 [21]

46 "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it." Ibid. 56. [22]

Tarnavsky published his memoirs of World War II, entitled *Literaturnyi Lviv 1939-1944* [Literary Lviv], which are also now available in Polish.⁴⁷ These memoirs completely deny the idyllic charm of “Borderlands-ness” as recalled by Polish writers and essayists (leaving aside the fact that Lviv is not exactly part of the “Borderlands”). The Ukrainian writer mentions only in passing the forms of exclusion experienced by the Ukrainian community, the lack of perspectives, the feeling of hopelessness, the tendency of Western Ukrainian intellectuals towards anti-Polonism. This explains their attitude during the war. Poles in their assessment of these events usually confuse causes with effects.

The distinguished Harvard expert of Ukrainian and Slavic studies, George G. Grabowicz published a gloss on Polish “Borderlands” discourse, namely an article entitled “Mythologizing Lviv/Lwów: Echoes of Presence and Absence.” Grabowicz isolates two perspectives in Polish views of Lviv: the first is the conciliatory, empathic perspective of *Mój Lwów* [My Lviv] (1946) by Józef Wittlin, *Wysoki zamek* by Stanisław Lem and Adam Zagajewski’s volume *Jechać do Lwowa* [Going to Lviv] (1985), while the second writes the city exclusively into a Polish national context to the total exclusion of other nations and cultures: the studies by Stanisław Jaworski, Stanisław Wasylewski, Witold Szolginia, Kazimierz Schleyen, and dozens of their imitators who exploit the national myth of Lviv, Galicia and the “Borderlands.” “We can see here the fundamental task of the essentialist approach: dematerializing the Other. In time this will become harsher and more brutal”⁴⁸ writes Grabowicz having in mind Poland’s policy towards Ukrainians in Małopolska, particularly in the inter-war period. A certain weakness in Grabowicz’s article, however, is that he attacks certain Polish mythologists of Lviv from the beginning of the twentieth-century and then certain Polish émigrés for their, it would seem, understandable nostalgia for Lviv, particularly those groups of émigrés who never recognised the division of Central and Eastern Europe agreed at Yalta; that he forgets that the years 1939-1989 were a time of unavoidable degeneration caused by the political situation; and that he does not probe the enormous state of research that has been growing since 1989 in

47 See the Polish edition: O. Tarnawski. *Literacki Lwów. Wspomnienia ukraińskiego pisarza z lat 1939-1944*. [Literary Lviv. Memoir of a Ukrainian writer from 1939-1944] Trans. A. Achraniuk, with an introduction by B. Bakuła (ed.) Bonami, Poznań. 2004.

48 G. G. Grabowicz. “Mythologizing Lviv/Lwów: Echoes of Presence and Absence.” Quoted after trans. from Ukrainian by B. Bakuła, *Porównania* 2004 Vol. 1. 51. The article was first published as “Mythologizing Lviv/Lwów: Echoes of Presence and Absence. Lviv: A City in the Cross-currents of Culture.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*. 2000 [2002] Vol. 24. 313-342, an later in the *Kiev Krytyka* (2002 Vol. 7-8. 11-17) as well as in Grabowicz’s book *Teksty i maski*. [Texts and masks]. Kiev 2005.

Poland, since he would undoubtedly find there not so few confirmations and support for his theses. Grabowicz does, however, notice the contemporary Polish feeling for Galicia and treats it almost as a symptom of revisionism. The American-Ukrainian researcher finds it reprehensible that Poles should be interested in Lviv, that their interest is so deep and emotional and that, unfortunately, it eliminates from the field of vision today's inhabitants. He does, however, accept the exclusion of all Polish traditions in Lviv in Ukrainian literary and scientific works. So we are dealing here with a particular kind of revenge – the expulsion of the Other (the Pole) finds understanding in the work of a literary historian who accepts exclusively the Ukrainian myth of Lviv.

The authors of the work *"Schedni kresy" – pid znakom pol'skoho orla*,⁴⁹ which is about the 1919-1939 period but which is presented from the perspective of the contemporary Ukrainian assessments and needs, see the problem of the "Borderlands" in terms of a sharp political polemic. The note on the title-page already says much about the leanings of the work. It talks about the battle "against the Polish occupying regime in the 'Eastern Borderlands'" and about "the liberation from social and national pressure and from foreign bondage." The work is a typical work of propaganda and it combines national and Communist elements in an image of "pressure on the Ukrainian nation" which is decidedly inimical towards Poland and the Poles. It emphasizes the assimilation policies of the Second Republic and its exploitation to this end of the Orthodox Church and its cooperation with Russia: "Both the reborn Poland and the White Guards of Russia to an equal degree were interested in removing an independent Ukraine from the map once and for all."⁵⁰ Later the authors indicate the cooperation between Poles and Bolshevik Russia in the suppression of Ukrainian independence aspirations. The authors conduct a polemic with Poland's inter-war policy as if it were contemporary policy, zealous in pursuit of its aims and dangerous for Ukraine's existence. This is all the more surprising in that in Poland's recent historiography there have been no serious attempts to justify the actions of Piłsudski's governments regarding the Ukrainian question. The history of the Ukrainian minority, meanwhile, is presented in the Kiev work as the actions of a national liberation movement with all the features of Marxist, anti-colonial discourse: i.e., in terms of nation and class. The term "Eastern Borderlands," quoted in inverted commas, is used to emphasize the usurpation and occupation of the Ukrainian lands, such as

49 O. V. Vlasjuk, B. J. Sidoruk, W. M. Ciatko, W.M. *Skhidni kresy pid znakom pol'skoho orla*. Rivne, 2005. 135.

50 Ibid. 13. Based on the translation from Ukrainian by B. Bakula.

Volhynia, Podolia, and Galicia; the terms “occupiers,” “Polish chauvinism” etc. are all too eagerly used here.

The attitude of Ukrainian researchers, both historians and literary theorists, particularly from Western Ukraine, is decidedly against the loaded meaning of the term “Borderlands,” which is identified with colonizing discourse. When it appears in Ukrainian publications, the (at best) ironic use of the term is intended to undermine its value as a category in the field of historiography or literary studies. However different their research or worldview, Ukrainian researchers decidedly reject the term “Borderlands,” just as they reject the majority of studies on the “Borderlands,” which make of their culture an abstract exemplum serving exclusively Polish culture.

Stefania Andrusiv’s *Modus nacjonalnoji identyczności: Lwiwśkyj tekst 30-ch rokiw XX st.* (Lviv, 2000) is a different case. It annoyed even Grabowicz, who himself is highly critical of the Polish – and, in particular, the émigré – fascination with Lviv. In Andrusiv’s book, essentially programmatic exclusion of the Polish elements from Lviv’s history was taken to extremes. Interestingly, in the particularly anti-Polish passages, the author refers to the views of the Ukrainian emigration. But more important than the emigration is the perspective of semiotic identity and semiotic multiculturalism à la “Lvivian text” Andrusiv writes:

We can speak of a “Lvivian text” in the Ukrainian culture. Lviv “speaks” through the names of its streets (and the very history of changing street names in Lviv constitutes a text), through its alleys, buildings, statues, history, and ideas, and may be perceived as a heterogenous text in two ways: city as a space, and city as a name. Lviv as a space found itself in a difficult relation with the Land; on the one hand, it was isomorphic with the Ukrainian Land in a non-Ukrainian state, embodying in a sense, or representing, this non-existent state (it was a state of the soul), the entire Galicia and, generally, Western Ukraine, it was an idealized model of the Ukrainian universe, at that time fulfilling the role of the center (instead of Kiev). On the other hand, it stayed outside the space it belonged to – that is Poland – remaining at the same time a Polish Lviv (and, to an extent, Jewish), which in itself could have fostered a synthesis of cultures but in that particular political and psychological-social moment resulted only in their opposition and a sharpening of the existential code of the Lvivian text, of the familiar . strange binary (both in the Ukrainian and Polish semiosis of the city that exists even today.)

“Lviv is Ukrainian! Lviv is ours! – not only because we refer to it as such. Lviv is not Polish and will never be Polish, regardless of the fact that Poles continue to usurp it!

Ukrainian scholar closes the paragraph above with a quotation from an émigré author.⁵¹ This is also the end of her discussion of Lviv's any relation to Poland. One may notice a similarity to a "Lvivian text" by a Polish historian, Witold Szolginia, who eradicated the slightest suggestions of a Ukrainian Lviv.

Borderlands and martyrdom

"Polish Borderlands" are not a pertinent Ukrainian issue today inasmuch as after the Volhynia massacre and the post-war resettlements of Poles there is neither an ethnic problem behind it (Poles live dispersed in the area and organize themselves into a federation of Polish organizations rather discreetly), nor a political one (Poland seeks possibly positive relations with its eastern neighbor). Meanwhile, for Poles living in Poland, it is a question of a national myth that permeates culture and consciousness, as well as deep memory. It seems that among many contentious issues, this one is most painful to the Polish community. The Ukrainians have so far refused to address the matter scholarly and openly. But the Volhynia tragedy is not entirely unspoken of in today's Ukraine, there have been a few journalistic and academic articles approaching the subject from the perspective of the Ukrainian historical experience and its own political perspective.⁵² For now, there is no agreement between the parties as to the origin, nature and extent of the crime. It influences the perception of the "Borderlands" as a world of Polish martyrdom, which affects an analogous Ukrainian interpretation, one that points to the colonial historical heritage and the incursive policy of the Second Polish Republic as, among others, the reason for the tragedy.

Ukrainian national mythology is dominated by the image of martyrdom, suffering, and slavery to an even larger degree than the Polish one. It is still believed that Ukrainians have always been victimized by Poles (or Muscovites, or Germans, or Tatars) and as a peasant folk they have never hurt anyone themselves. The Volhynia massacre shatters this idyllic-naïve picture, strongly ingrained in the Ukrainian consciousness, and as such, it is given little attention. Abovementioned image is perpetuated by literature, including, among others, *Volyn*, a famous epic novel by Ulas Samchuk (Vol. 1-3, publ. 1934-1937, translated to Polish in 1938), describing the hard but honest and industrious life of a Ukrainian peasant, abused at the beginning of the 20th century as a result of the solidarity of the gentry (Russian, Polish, and other). Despite several

51 Stefania Andrusiv. *Modus nacjonalnoji identyczności: Lwowski tekst 30-ch roku XX*. Lviv 2000. 123. (Based on the Polish translation of the passage by B.B.)

52 See for instance: Bogdan Gud', *Ukrajintsi – Polaky, Khto vynen? U poshuku pershoprychyny ukrajinsko-polskykh konfliktiv porshoi polovyny XX stolittia*. Lviv, Kalvaria 2000. 189.

obstacles, the Ukrainian Volhynian in the novel retains his national and cultural awareness, which later leads to his social and intellectual advancement. Samchuk's *Volyn* is a novel about growing into the Ukrainian identity, about the peasant ethos that allows for a fight for survival and victimization but not for crime. The publication of the already mentioned *Trójkąt ukraiński* by Daniel Beauvois contributed to the development of similarly oriented interpretations of the Ukrainian history and fate in the last decade.

The issue of martyrdom perceived by both nations as an element of collective identity and an argument in the debate over "whom to blame," is raised in the Polish postcolonial perspective without a reflection on the legitimacy of the use of "Borderlands" as a term and the ideology behind it. In the Ukrainian scholarship it functions as an element of postcolonial discourse with a national orientation, national interpretation of postcolonial scholarship is proposed by Petro Ivanshyn, a literary historian from western Ukraine. In "Dwa postkolonializmy: nacjonalno-ekzystencjalna dyferenciacja"⁵³ Ivanshyn rejects the liberal concept of postcolonial theory, associated with postmodernism, and tends to relate the postcolonial perspective to essentialism, anti-imperialism and natio-centrism. Essentialism, anti-imperialism and natio-centrism are meant here as an assumption of the existence of and a need to look for the truth about the fate of the Ukrainian nation, gradually erased by the anti-national forces, anti-imperialism, as well as a firm political struggle with the colonial past (i.e. Poland and her "Borderlands," the Russian rule and her decrees banning the use of the Ukrainian language), and with the contemporary situation characterized by the imperialistic attack of Russia on the Ukrainian political independence and its culture. Natio-centrism means an existential "fight for the revival and the retaining of the national-cultural identity." The author describes this view as a type of "cultural nationalism" that serves as the origin of this theory of "natiological postcolonialism."⁵⁴ He separates this type of postcolonialism from the postmodernist one. In a confrontation with the Polish Borderlands discourse it becomes clear that the past Polish presence in the Ukrainian territories and the contemporary views actualizing the "Borderlands" as a form of memory will be identified with an "anti-national imperialism" and as such, subject to strong criticism. The majority of Ukrainian authors whose research could support Ivanshyn,

53 Petro Ivanshyn, "Dwa postkolonializmy: nacjonalno-ekzystencjalna dyferenciacja" *Visnyk Lvivskogo Universytetu*, Ser. Filol. 2004. Vyp. 33. Ch. 2. 191-198. See also: *Natsionalno-ekzystencjalna dyferenciacja (osnovni teoretychni ta pragmatychni aspekty)*. Monografia. Drogo-bych, Vydavnycha firma "Vidrodzhennia" 2005. 308 as well as *Ukrajinske literaturoznavstvo postkolonialnogo periodu*. Kiev, Vyd. Centr "Akademia" 2014.190.

54 Petro Ivanshyn, op. cit., s. 197.

develop mostly the postulate of the revival of national identity and of creating “cultural nationalism” on the basis of domestic traditions. Consequently, what is criticized is not only the notion of “Borderlands” as a symbol of Polish imperialism but also the concept of “Borderland” multiculturalism as a ground for common tradition promoted by Poles. Several Ukrainian authors believe that the Polish support for Ukraine’s multiculturalism is a veiled attempt to disturb the stability and integrity of the Ukrainian culture in the territories that are ethnically Ukrainian. Nonetheless, in both countries postcolonial debate acknowledges the interests and sensitivity of the other party. This is undoubtedly a clear advantage in the context of the failed Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Belarusian attempts at dialogue.

New proposals

In his article, Panas unknowingly formulated theses belonging to colonial discourse on the one hand, invalidating and undermining them on the other, by expressing opinions and postulates derived from postcolonial theory. It could be said that this reflects a characteristic way of thinking in Poland today, which tries to reconcile, to use the language of semiotics, the fear of appropriation with the shame caused by its consequences. This is a state typical of the majority of Polish “Borderlands” studies, which find themselves caught halfway between two discourses.

Polish isolationism in “Borderlands” studies (particularly ennobled by references to the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, which are used to legitimize the reflections undertaken), which accepts the Polish perspective as central, is still popular, but I have no doubt whatsoever that knowledge of postcolonial theories in research about the “Borderlands,” the borderlands and the marches will alter the balance, thus allowing Polish scholars to become more aware of something they have so far not recognized in their thinking, their language, their collective and individual identity. If someone were to tell these researchers, who are serious and worthy of respect, that their works bear the traces of colonial discourse, I am sure they would feel incensed and even insulted. “Personally, we are friends of Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Jewish tradition,” they would state firmly. And there is no reason to doubt this. So where does the problem lie? It lies not in declarations, whose sincerity no one doubts, but in the structures of their language, in the images, in defined research routes, in the methodology, in the consciousness that continues to store the same postulate of the “Polonization” of a multinational historical heritage.

In Poland there are only a few experts in the field of Polish literature and culture with competence in Lithuanian, and a few also make use of Ukrainian sources (but not to research into the “Borderlands,” because as soon as they

enter the consciousness of Ukrainian literature, they lose their will to continue). To date, no well-known Polish studies expert has tried to address the question of Belarusian literature and culture in the context of "Borderlands" studies. In my own academic milieu the view is quietly propounded that in writing about Ukrainian literature I am dealing with "second-rate literature." This expression in itself proves how strong the stereotype is of the colonial conception of the "Borderlands" with its "first-rate" Polish literature to the fore. To date, no one in Poland has attempted to confront the several different perspectives of the "Borderlands."

I am convinced that the matter of the borderlands and the marches requires a new scientific language in Poland. Postcolonial discourse is in principle a comparative theory and also in principle, an interdisciplinary one. The idea of integrated comparative studies, which I proposed in my work *Historia i komparatystyka*. [History and Comparative Studies]⁵⁵ comes close to this. Comparative studies today impose new methodological and educational standards; they democratize, teach parallel thinking and thinking deprived of national solipsism. We will not change our post-Soviet world if we continue to live in a zone contaminated by colonial ideology and with a feeling of distrust and fear in the face of the Other. This fear will pass if the language in which we communicate enables authentic dialogue to take place. Polish "Borderlands" discourse remains an ostensible dialogue, but and in essence it is a monologue with images of the past in which the Other play the role of extras. Recent research studies merely repeat this situation. Meanwhile only a common reading of the Borderlands makes sense – without mutual exclusions and treated as the recognition of a common heritage on the basis of integrated comparative studies. In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to wait for a new language, in which the contradictory experiences of all the subjects of the history of the Borderlands will not turn away from one another but will be enabled to reach understanding. Much depends on those who, instead of trying to regain the "Polish Borderlands" on paper or constantly renegotiate Ukrainian, Belarusian etc. injustices, could create an authentic space for dialogue about the Borderlands - in a future language of comparative studies and postcolonial theory.

Translation: Tadeusz Z. Wolański, Anna Warso

55 B. Bakuła. *Historia i komparatystyka. Szkice o literaturze i kulturze Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XX wieku* [History and Comparative Studies. Essays on the literature and culture of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century] Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Poznań 2000.

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Post-Colonial Transfer to Central-and-Eastern Europe

Central-and-Eastern Europe could only enter the field of post-colonial studies' interest with a considerable delay. When post-colonialism was developing in the 1980s in the form of the post-structuralist intervention into the matters of imperial dependencies, particularly focusing on the issue of power/knowledge and deconstruction of the subject, socialist countries were witnessing a process which – embodying an emancipation project, fight for freedom and rejection of the power system perceived as strange and repressive – fulfills the criteria of the process of decolonization. However, as noticed by numerous commentators, the fall of communism and the preceding resistance movement in the countries of the Eastern Bloc has never become one of the post-colonial research's interests. Answering the question why this happened is perhaps much more complex than the customary consensus that it was Marxist sympathies of post-colonial critics that did not allow for including issues related with anti-communist resistance and post-communist transformation in their discipline. Post-colonial lack of interest in, at least potentially, imperial aspects of the Soviet domination in the Eastern Bloc is by all means worth being analyzed, because such analysis

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would reveal that this situation is caused more factors than ideological limitations post-colonial scholars are accused of. The present article is based on a thesis that post-colonialism is not necessary to define the position and role of particular countries of Central-and-Eastern Europe with regards to the former empires or Western Europe in the historical and modern perspective. What is more, it is the reflection over the condition of Central-and-Eastern Europe, i.e. the post-dependence condition that could be a valuable contribution to the comparative potential of the post-colonial studies. The article aims at drafting a trajectory of the mentioned post-colonial transfer and contemplating the usefulness of post-colonial studies as a new direction in the research on specificity of the “post-” condition in Poland and more broadly, in the region.¹ I will hereby present a critical overview of post-colonialism as a theory of a great, but still barely utilized, comparative potential, then I will create a working typology of the ways the post-colonial theory is applied in Poland, and finally, I will situate the post-dependence research in relation to new projects of the global comparative studies.

Expectations that it will be the initiative of the “owners” of the post-colonial theory, thus academic institutions suggesting the direction of the research, to include post-communist countries in the area of post-colonial studies, are for many reasons incorrect. Today, post-colonialism divides into thematic and geographical groups loosely linked by the post-colonial theory which in fact remains a domain of English studies, within the field of either literary or cultural research. The main trend, once noticeable, is now strongly dispersed. And for this institutional and disciplinary reason, American or British scholars’ interest in Central-and-Eastern Europe falls to Slavists or so called area studies – a discipline ideologically located on the opposite pole from post-colonialism. Thus, the initiative to post-colonialize this part of Europe could be derived from these disciplines, especially Slavic studies². This, in turn, did not reverberate in post-colonial centers because they are concentrated on the English-speaking research field and, despite their aspirations to use theories beyond linguistic divisions, they allow for the linguistic otherness of a research subject only in the categories of ethnic minority in the context of its relations within the metropolis. Hence, paradoxically, post-colonialism of the American academia in its research will more eagerly count in writings produced by Spanish-speaking minorities in the USA than for example literature created in national languages of India, even though it straightforwardly belongs to the area of problems taken up by post-colonial

1 Post-dependence Studies Center, www.cbdp.polon.uw.edu.pl

2 For example E. Thompson, *Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism*, Universitas, Cracow 2000.

studies. It is not a question of ideology and nobody negates the importance of a dialogue with the former metropolis in literatures of the post-colonial countries. It is the market that decides whether post-colonialism is present in significant debates – the product will be processed by a theoretical industry the American academia turned into, only if someone proves its marketing value for the cosmopolitan capital which is the global circulation of theories. It will sometimes be work on popularization of translation on the English book market where there is an enormous import deficit in comparison to export. Another time, it will be an attempt to include a local study in the theory of the global flow i.e. a reflection over glocality. Nonetheless, the disproportionate linguistic exchange is a fact and post-colonialism in fact emerged as a theory promoting literature in English coming from the former colonies and as such it contributes to the phenomenon of globalizing English literature. Still, it is in post-colonialism that one finds space for the versatile dialogue with diverse and broadly understood linguistic otherness, because the paradigm of *borderiness* which transposes onto theorization of marginality, migration, hybrid identities, etc. forces post-colonial critics to keep going beyond the – constantly being outlined anew – boundaries of the discipline, research area or theoretical field.

It is worth taking into consideration that, apart from the United Kingdom and the United States, post-colonialism is mainly practiced in institutes of English studies which barely have any contact with institutes of literature and national culture: for example, Polish studies in Poland. This is why the most interesting discussions on the usefulness of post-colonialism in our part of Europe (the post-socialist, post-dependent one) have steered clear of the world's debates on the subject and have had place only where post-colonialism is of a more peripheral value being rather a theoretical curiosity, an exiguous study. Generally speaking, therefore, post-colonialism was discussed in the areas where its application had little chance of intervening into the discipline as such and its theoretical foundations. In order to change that, the debates over post-colonialism in Central-and-Eastern Europe have to function in a specific translation zone³ where the post-colonial transfer to our region would be double-tracked: on the one hand, researchers specializing in culture and national literature of those countries above all would have to adjust theoretical tools typical of post-colonialism to the needs of their own discipline (by design an innovation must introduce a new quality to the current state of research: new questions, new problems and more importantly, new approaches to old problems);

3 E. Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2006, 129.

on the other hand, applications in the new field should be communicated to broader circles of post-colonial research because undoubtedly, these will be propositions of new theoretical developments and criticism of the hitherto state of research. However, without incorporating a constitutive feature of post-colonial studies which is the examination of the emancipation discourse as manifestation of one's own (collective, national, political, historical, etc.) subjectivity negated by the imperial discourse, accompanied by simultaneous criticism of the subject, especially the collective one and particularly in its national emanation (or liberation, nationalist projects), such research will not be qualified as post-colonial. The paradox of affirmation and deconstruction of collective subjectivity shaping any insurrection projects is a foundation of the post-colonial research and this productive internal antithetic nature of post-colonialism should be taken into account in the transfer of the post-colonial thought to the Polish and more broadly, Central-and-Eastern European context as well as, in compliance with the double-tracking rule, the post-colonial reflection should be complemented with the reflection over the post-dependence specificity of the region.

Having suggested that the post-colonial attainments are used to describe the problems of Central-and-Eastern Europe, first of all, it would be good to see what would be a special value for us in this particular discipline. It is true that post-colonialism expanded academic programs with massive amounts of literature from former colonies, introducing to the critical consciousness the complicated consequences of the colonial dependence. Matters related with alienation from the language which is one's own language but also the imperial one imposed in the process of colonial education; positioning of the (post)colonial subject with regards to the empire functioning as administration, economy, well-understood history and culture; finally, the very notion of the colonial discourse based on the dynamics of ambivalence – this is only the most generally drafted critical field where literary production is mainly analyzed as problematic construction and search for subjectivity in individual and social dimensions. For now, the above seem to be only advantageous to the dependence/post-dependence matters in Central-and-Eastern European countries, which can be recognized by means of tendencies to identify the post-colonial theory with the emancipation or liberation discourse, visible in the local discussion on post-colonial issues. Meanwhile, many factors – the above mentioned paradox describing post-colonial research or historical disappointment with the post-colonial state often being the stage for neo-imperial activities in the new system of power oligarchy, and finally, the literary testimony in which *formal search* help sharpen the political and social wit – impose understanding of post-colonialism as

post-optimist pessimism⁴, quoting a well-known expression established by Kwame Anthony Appiah.

Post-colonialism is not a straightforward aftermath of the traditional anti-colonial struggle in the political, social and historical sense but a theoretical reflection over the colonial discourse, imperial knowledge and discursive forms of dismantling colonialism. The anti-colonial idea behind liberation movements, actively co-formed by such intellectuals as Franz Fanon or Amílcar Cabral, is important for the post-colonial theory from both the symbolic and problematic point of view. The fundamental condition of resistance: i.e., affirmation of the collective identity through the contra-discourse reversing the Manichean dichotomy of the colonial thought which logically results in active fight for decolonization, is not so much negated in the post-colonial theory as it is re-interpreted as a purely textual process where the very mechanism of signification challenges the assumed hierarchies and binarisms. Hence, the subtle hypocrisy of post-colonial studies: Fanon and other intellectuals analyzing decolonization processes are anachronically assigned to the post-colonial thought, while the emphasis they have put on the necessity to adopt the definite category of national (ethnic, racial) identity, cultural authenticity as a retrieved value as well as politicized awareness of the colonized as a condition of the decolonization process, is incorrectly and too easily defined as "essentialism" and perceived equally to aggressive nationalism. As noticed by Włodzimierz Bolecki in his preliminary reflections on the usefulness of post-colonial studies in the Polish contexts, the characteristic feature of this type of research is shifting the accent from political and social issues to the needs of the discourse⁵. This tendency was certainly the main force to mobilize drafting the post-colonial theory in the 1980s, under a crucial condition that it was not intended to move away from the political and social *theory's reference* in favor of shifting the notions of activism and causality to the level of language and text⁶. Post-structuralist foundations of post-colonialism granted this critical discourse a very significant impetus of deconstructive reading but at the same time, they limited the possibility to analyze the causality of the colonized as space which is independent of the overwhelming discourse of the colonial authorities. In Homi Bhabha or Gayatri Spivak's deconstructive reading, the colonized can only be a function of the discourse of

4 K.A. Appiah, "Postmodernism, Post-Colonialism: On Differences in the Prefix," Polish translation by D. Kołodziejczyk, *Literatura na Świecie* 2008, no. 1-2, 160.

5 W. Bolecki, "Various thoughts on Post-Colonialism: Introduction to Unwritten Texts," *Teksty Drugie* 2007, no. 4, 11.

6 Strategically expressed in: H.K. Bhabha, *The Commitment to Theory*, [in:] *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. J. Pines, P. Willemsen, British Film Institute, London 1989.

power, while rejecting the hegemony is to a great extent a process of the empire's text deconstructing itself – in the form of colonial mimicry and hybridization (Bhabha) or an alternative colonial narrative (Spivak) which will not be the overturned violent hierarchy (Derrida) but the process of shaping the colonized as the Other deprived of the possibility to speak as a subject. To put it very simply, but also supported by rich evidence, the post-colonial thought might be summarized the following way: post-colonialism, as analyzed by the colonial discourse, follows insurrectional mechanisms somehow built in the logic of the paranoia connected with power and at the same time, it evades accepting numerous forms of anti-colonial resistance as examples of conscious and autonomous political activities of the colonized⁷. The objective difficulty to separate the chauvinist, regressive or simply populist forms of nationalism from the – fundamental for the decolonization process – need to retrieve or create one's own authenticity and subjectivity, in the post-colonial theory, has been lifted to the universal level of deliberation over the possibility to think about authenticity. Post-colonialism was born as – inspired by deconstruction and, generally, post-structuralism – critique of European modernity and its transfer to the Polish and Eastern-European contexts should be done with awareness that it has never been a new great liberation narrative. Thus, according to the logic of a paradox characteristic of post-colonialism, the main area of the post-colonial theory in practice is the Western discourse of modern history: i.e., Eurocentrism in its imperial aspect.

Being critical towards the imperial logic of Eurocentrism, post-colonialism adopted the bipolar perspective according to which the metropolis and periphery remained in the necessary, although remonstrated and ambivalent structure of mutual references. The dichotomy itself was often criticized because the complicated relations it entailed were simplified to the flat binarism: I/the Other⁸. Currently, in the globalization era, post-colonialism cannot be based on such clear bipolarity anymore and is developing as a – slightly uncertain of its own direction – a theoretical research option which conveyed the former relations resulting from the colonial dependencies to the global perspective. Today, post-colonial studies are a base of geographically (and thematically) dispersed descriptions of colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial dependencies coordinated by the discussion over the way globalization

7 See N. Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in Postcolonial World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999; B. Parry, *Postcolonial Studies. A Materialist Critique*, Routledge, London 2004; A. Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, Westview Press, Oxford 1998.

8 T. Brennan, *Humanism, Philology, and Imperialism*, Polish translation by E. Kledzik, D. Kołodziejczyk, "Porównania" 2009, no. 6, 38.

processes should be defined and analyzed. On the one hand, post-colonialism is a significant critical voice in the reflection over globalization processes (Appadurai, Appiah, Spivak, Cheah, Robbins⁹). On the other hand, apart from the synthesizing theoretical approaches represented by authors of a well-established academic rank, the practice of post-colonial studies today refers to geographically determined narrow specializations, without wider historical consciousness. After all, moving away from historicity in criticism, being interested in temporary presentism and anachronistic projecting of modern values and norms is what Marxist critics (Timothy Brennan, Arif Dirlik, Neil Lazarus, Benita Parry) accuse post-colonialism of. The territorial expansion of post-colonialism is rarely translated to the deeper awareness of cultural, economic or political processes. Binarism remains in the geographically stretched territory of post-colonial studies, while dispersion results in losing a deepened theoretical reflection and a dialogue between particular regions of scientific specialization.

The absolute leitmotif of the post-colonial studies is still an identity defined/described within a few variables treated in a non-essentialist manner: nationality, ethnicity and emigration. This syncretism of the local (ethnic, national) and global (migration, the Third World) factors creates a hybrid of the post-colonial identity. All this seems to mirror well the essence of the contemporary post- condition and the transnational mentality as well as the identity practices. However, what appears to be problematic here is that not only was this paradigm petrified in literary criticism long time ago and its automatic appliance in literary texts makes literature be read solely as an identity manifesto, but it also results in something opposite to what was originally intended – this clearly ethnic identity paradigm doesn't allow for real exploration of the fluidity of the "I" – both individual and collective. Quite the contrary, in post-colonial criticism the "I" is more and more often reduced to a discontinuous sequence of still, separate cases of national and ethnic identity in various configurations between traditionalism and multiculturalism. In short, literature depicts the contemporary condition of the multicultural society, especially the mass multicultural and multiracial society in a very sophisticated way, while post-colonial criticism interprets literature as

9 See: A. Appadurai *Modernity at Large: Cultural Domensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn.–London 1996; Globalization, ed. A. Appadurai, Duke University Press, Durham–London 2001; *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. P. Cheah, B. Robbins, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn.–London 1998; P. Cheah *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*, Columbia University Press, New York 2003; K.A. Appiah *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Allen Lane, London 2007; G.Ch. Spivak *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York 2003.

if it was stuck somewhere in a trap of binary metaphors and it cannot liberate itself from this situation. Post-colonial criticism does not give much thought to the language, style or form. What is dominant is sociological perception of the presented world which, in turn, is not helpful in recognizing the role of the aesthetic factor not only in reception of literature but, first of all, in shaping the image of literature as critical commentary to reality.

If this paradigm is not overcome, perspectives for the post-colonialism development – not in a sense of the institution but of the critical program – will not be particularly optimistic. First of all, post-colonialism cannot be a slightly more theoretically refined identity policy because this will result in a phenomenon already quite common in the United States: ethnicization of literary or cultural output: i.e., eliminating enormous areas of literature from the well-understood universal category of literariness and enclosing it in separate critical institutions. This way, involvement of literature in social and political problems is neutralized and locked in a specific academic, ethnic ghetto. This is why, despite the ambitions of intellectual activism, post-colonialism is often accused of intellectual conservatism¹⁰. Additionally, post-colonialism is burdened with the above mentioned monolingualism. Post-colonial studies have never had true contact with multilingualism of literature and culture of the post-colonial regions, treating the language – and I have in mind the language of the metropolis, mainly English, but also French, Spanish and Portuguese – as a transparent medium and not a, to a great extent autonomous, force which actively builds the identity (or actively describes the identity as a state of a permanent crisis or an unfinished project). What is characteristic, the most innovative translation theories emerge outside the area of post-colonial studies, with the exception of a versatile theoretician Gayatri Spivak¹¹. Post-colonialism treats translation from the local language in a given region to the language of metropolis, i.e. often the dominant language, as a model of literary output – as another identity metaphor, and not a practice on the edge of two or more languages which says a lot about formal, aesthetic, political, and market conditions of the cultural production and its critical overview.

The fact that post-colonial criticism is multilingual is, in my opinion, an important reason why post-colonial studies could miss the resistance culture in the countries of the Eastern Bloc in the 1980s and they still cannot adequately relate to the rich output of the post-colonial theory applications in the countries of the Eastern Bloc. The relatively impenetrable nature of the Iron Curtain in the 1980s surely played a certain role in this omission, a greater

10 T. Brennan, *Humanism...*, 15

11 G.Ch. Spivak, *Polityka przekładu* (1993), Polish trans. by D. Kołodziejczyk, [in:] *Współczesne teorie przekładu. Antologia*, ed. P. Bukowski, M. Heydel, Znack, Cracow 2009.

role was assigned to the innate character of the Western academia or even the leftist sympathies of post-structuralist theoreticians. However, it is the above mentioned function of post-colonialism as critical towards Eurocentrism in its imperial dimension and transposition of this mission onto the dialogue between the former colonies and the empire, i.e. the specific monolingualism of the post-colonial discussion were a reason why transformations taking place behind the Iron Curtain were not reflected in post-colonialism, when the rich language of resistance and subversion – both in literature and other types of writing – emerged in the Eastern Bloc. Therefore, post-colonialism, in its ambitious, theoretical form, is currently a crucial element of the critical discourse concerning globalization. Nevertheless, by proposing various concepts of new cosmopolitanism and comparative methodologies, the rich and potentially enriching to post-colonial criticism set of reflections over the Eastern-European culture (as comparable with post-colonialism) is barely noticeable in institutional centers of post-colonialism. For now, only one critical magazine of a clearly post-colonial profile decided to release a special issue devoted to the post-Soviet matters (*South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2006¹²). Nor would we find in the specialist press a commentary or a review of studies and works that would apply the post-colonial theory to Central- and Eastern Europe, even if they are works in English – and these are plenty. This is because the literary and cultural criticism of Central- and Eastern Europe is subjected to the institution of Slavic studies, the dominant identity, which – in the case of the American academia – is neither a national nor linguistic category but it is the symptomatically ethnic one. Additionally, it does not embrace separate fields of Hungarian, Romanian or Albanian. This is why in practice post-colonialism – as a theory which does not create definitions, so it does not restrict its range – limits itself to the areas beyond the already narrow translation zones¹³ of post-colonialism.

What seems most important in view of the future development of the post-colonial reflection over Eastern Europe, is not only the theoretical analysis of transferring the post-colonial categories to the categories of post-communism, post-socialism and post-dependence, but also communication of these ideas to the post-colonial academic institutions in order to overcome the ethnic model prevailing at Western – especially American – universities and to work on comparative models suitable to the challenges of globalization. I am interested in a theoretical and methodological

12 "South Atlantic Quarterly" 2006 no 3 vol. 105 (Duke University Press, Durham). The title of the issue: *Double Critique. Knowledges and Scholars at Risk in Post-Soviet Societies*.

13 E. Apter, *The Translation Zones: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2005

possibility to work out a comparative field, where Eastern Europe – on the one hand, once an invisible region due to remaining behind the Iron Curtain and earlier, on the other side of the ethos characterizing European modernity; on the other hand, as a group of several countries of diverse individual national history and cultural formations – could enter into a dialogue with the post-colonial discourse. The aim would be to articulate and analyze its specific condition – the condition of the most extensive margin of Europe one could imagine¹⁴. Regardless of the ways the post-colonial theory is employed in particular situations, also in post-communism, and independently of attempts to define the domination over the region in the categories of the empire, all these applications serve one goal: they aim at elaborating a new understanding of dependence (and post-dependence) which would make it possible to overcome the old, but still persistent, bipolar division of the world where, paradoxically, the former Second World is invisible in today's global perspective¹⁵. The project of creating a center for research on post-dependence discourses has a great potential to become not only a national (state) center of reflection over cultural, historical, political, economic and many other kinds of subordination parameters, but also a center of the beyond-national character: open to the dialogue with similar research in Eastern Europe and up-to-date in describing the status of the international debate or the global comparative research.

When we talk about the delayed introduction of the Eastern-European matters in the area of post-colonial studies, one should think about who actually was late here. Post-colonial studies in the 1980s and 1990s missed their chance to include Eastern-European resistance cultures in their discipline, and thus to obtain interesting comparative material useful in studying: (anti-colonial, anti-neo-colonial, etc.) resistance; hybrid forms of ideological identification, including the effect of mimicry as simultaneous submission to the power hegemony and its opposition; theorization of antinomy of the public and private space (the fetishes of modernity) overlapping with the categories of the political and the sacral; social inequalities in the nominally classless socialist society; formal- and-linguistic

14 See: M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997 ; R. Deltcheva, *Comparative Central-European Culture. Displacements and Peripheralities*, [in:] *Comparative Central European Culture*, ed. S. Tötösy de Zepetnek, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette 2002; A. Kłobucka, *Theorizing European Periphery*, „Symptome” 1997 no 5:1-2; D. Kołodziejczyk, *Cosmopolitan Provincialism in a Comparative Perspective*, [in:] *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for a New Millennium*, ed. J. Wilson, C. Sandru, S. Lawson-Welsh, Routledge, London 2009.

15 M. Tostanovska, *How Can the Decolonial Project Become the Ground for the Decolonial Humanities? A Few Reflections from the 'Vanished' Second World*, unpublished conference material.

and structural strategies of resistance in literature, i.e. a phenomenon that could be described as “over-coding” literature in order to obviate restrictions of censorship¹⁶, i.e. the unique for these forms of resistance, multi-level character of the artistic message, including its inevitable, not always fully intended, politicization. I do not think that the reasons of this omission were leftist or rather Marxist sympathies of post-colonial critics. However, this accusation seems to be quite true (Thompson, Skórczewski, Cavanagh) – especially if we recall unwillingness of leftist elites on the West to support the opposition in communist countries and their noticeable tendency to define, for example, Solidarity only in the national context or even as a nationalist movement – but it is not very accurate in view of the discipline that was so new in the 1980s. As I underlined at the beginning, post-colonialism was at that time developing its critical strategy of taking over post-structuralist theories to deconstruct – I am using this word together with its trademark – Eurocentrism as a discourse which universalizes the Western subject and discourse. In the new, back then, critical undertaking, the case of Soviet imperialism is not taken into account. On the other hand, what is debated on is territorialization within the British Empire itself or the status of French colonies and countries in Latin America. Territoriality thus is not the most significant problem of post-colonialism at that time, which only seemingly appears as a paradox. Defining the subject of post-colonial research is then a much dispersed process. General definitions are so general that they should really be interpreted as being open to any examples of imperial dependencies, discourses and colonial experiences. One could even say that by fighting with universalizing mechanisms of the Western thought, post-colonialism universalizes the post-colonial experience without fully defining the areas of its critical interests.

Shortly speaking, post-colonialism emerged as a theory knowingly derivative and syncretic, involved in the dialogue with the Eurocentric philosophy on which it built its structure and as such, only slightly translates into the sensitivity practice, local specificity, cultural differences or borders of identities, especially the collective ones. In some sense, therefore, the paradox of post-colonialism lies in its even more strengthened Eurocentrism. In their prime time, post-colonial studies were so much occupied with narcissistic culturalism that such phenomenon of a wider geo-political significance as the Soviet Union's engagement in post-colonial movements after the World War II has never found their place in various post-colonial interpretations of the anti-colonial processes. Except for the appeal formulated by Edward Said

16 See C. Sandru, “Memorializing Totalitarian Terror: The ‘Overcoded Fictions’ of East-Central Europe,” *Echinax Journal* 2008 no 15, 161–176.

in his *Culture and Imperialism*¹⁷ to include the post-socialist countries to the post-colonial field of interest, there are no visible traces of post-colonialism noticing anti-imperial implications of velvet (as most of them were) revolutions in Eastern Europe. Said's voice was, however, the comparatist's voice representing a broader humanist perspective, not at all did the voice belong to a post-colonial critic. In essence, it is a pity that post-colonial studies, in their global range, turned out to be surprisingly provincial, when they failed to refer to the anti-imperial foundations of the transformations taking place in Central-and-Eastern Europe. In Poland, and more broadly, in the post-communist countries, the dominant transformational paradigm was not only, as it seems, hardly helpful to the humanities, but it also imposed, with its neo-liberal tone, a rigid interpretation of the ongoing changes. According to this model, the Eastern Bloc countries were meant to make up for their delay in comparison to Western Europe, i.e. get modernized and the modernization process was represented as a challenge to suddenly subjectivized, so *de facto* enterprising and strong individuals. In a sense, the fact that post-colonial studies did not take notice of the anti-colonial aspect of the Eastern-European transformations resulted in domination of the Eurocentric model of the Western normative modernity over the reflection concerning the region.

The transfer of the post-colonial reflection needed to articulate the specificity of the countries, cultures and societies of Eastern Europe, hence to conduct research of post-dependence discourses, is useful as much as it helps define the position of the analyzed problem in the discourse of modernity. Therefore, a hypothetical, theoretically interesting and historically doubtful post-colonialism of Eastern Europe should be treated as a research hypostasis which might help regain and recreate this comparative space. In such space we would talk about not even an actual post-colonial status of the region in a certain historical sense, but about the colonial difference¹⁸. This formula, no matter whether we speak about India, Algeria, Ireland, the Balkans or Ukraine, enforces being in the border space of modernity which became a category defining Europe. We will be, in such case, situated somewhere inside, but also outside the continent whose conceptual borders most clearly are not the same as the geographical ones. Eastern Europe – which, in my opinion, is not entirely an ex-colonial territory – is post-colonial in a sense that it is connected with the critique of European modernity discussed in post-colonial studies, if we understand them as critical thinking

17 E. Said, *Kultura i imperializm* (1993), Polish trans. by M. Wyrwas-Wiśniewska, Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2009.

18 W. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2000.

aiming at showing the other side of the imperial impulse of modernity and the fact that this other side – the condition and sensitivity of the colonized populations – was an integral part of the world march-past of modernity. What should be interesting to us in this context, is not so much searching for evidence of the post-colonial status of Eastern Europe as it is defining, describing and placing on a cognitive map differences emerging within common paradigms of subordination, omission, exotization and negation of modern civilization¹⁹: i.e., general processes of making Eastern Europe inferior in the historical and cultural dimension.

It is certainly possible to observe an obvious post-colonial sensitivity in a way Eastern Europe articulates its historicity and its present time in reference to Europe as such, in how it conceptualizes the position of the region in the European project, proves its inseparable European character and handles its often sensed separateness or alienation from proper Europe – with a feeling of distinctiveness understood as a difference in the cultural substance but also a feeling of separation stemming from the lack of the European substance²⁰. The post-colonial reflection over Central-and-Eastern Europe should have two directions, as suggested by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek²¹. Firstly, by settling accounts with the former empires in the context of the historical and historical-and-literary discourse, the post-colonial one would be fundamental to the process of re-vindication. Secondly, the relation between Eastern and Western Europe is also symptomatically post-colonial, based on an ambivalent desire of being European accompanied by resistance towards proper Europe, being in fact an imperial power, condemning the rest of Europe to having the status of its worse version – the politically, culturally, civilizationaly, or even nationally indeterminate borderland. “Post” in post-communism and post-colonialism qualifies these discursive territories as a period of a temporary transformation, an unsustainable zone of moving from the condition of dependence to the condition, if not of full independence as this category is heavily beset by arguments and doubts, certainly of the reflection over the consequences of dependence for the contemporary world. Such self-reflective “post” is also a good basis for comparisons between post-colonialism and post-communism, especially in the research devoted to the globalization processes.

19 J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Columbia University Press, New York 1983.

20 S. Žižek, *Eastern Europe's Republic of Gilead*, „New Left Review” 1990 no 183, 50–62.

21 S. Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Cultural Studies and the Study of Central European Culture*, [in:] *Comparative Central European Culture*, 8.

Experiments in the field of post-colonialism in Central- and-Eastern Europe compose quite an abundant source of methodologically much differentiated research. They constitute a specific spectrum. I suggest that on one of its ends, there is research classifying those countries of the region that are undeniably post-colonial (as countries subordinated to the imperial ambitions of their neighbours since the beginning of the modern European statehood and as a territory of the Soviet influences after the World War II). On the other end, one could place a separate field of studies dedicated to cases proving post-colonialism to be more of a repository of theoretical tools than a conceptual apparatus to articulate a certain type of the post-colonial identity specific to the region. On the one hand, therefore, there are synthetic approaches, on the other hand, there are dispersed cases of mimicry, hybridity, subalternity. In between of the two I would locate research on discourses which egotize and orientalize the region, for example the ones present in the German-speaking territories, which – in reference to the Eastern-European countries and generally the Slavic provenience defined the cultural difference between those regions in the category of a civilization gap²². Space was perceived as a virgin territory subjected to civilizational cultivation, while the political forces are legitimized by negation of modernity for the sake of subordinated populations – modernity understood as political maturity.

Here are a few paradigmatic examples of the post-colonial transfer in Poland:

- 1) Ewa Thompson – the author of *Troubadours of the Empire*, made a strong entry into the matters of Eastern-European post-colonialism by defining Russian literature as imperial in toto with the help of Said's concept of orientalism as a power discourse producing subjects of its knowledge in order to subordinate them. In this study – widely quoted and estimated in Poland – there is one issue that particularly attracts my attention. Namely, the study implies the hierarchy of imperialism where the Western model seems to be more binding (being original and based on a type of externality, i.e. racism), while Russian and Soviet imperialism is derivative. Such imperialism is unable to prove to the populations it subordinates its own civilizational superiority. In a certain, very fundamental aspect, the author applies post-colonial categories in total opposition to the model elaborated in the post-colonial studies. According to her, post-colonialism serves – being an institutionalized anti-imperial discourse – as a tool for re-vindication of the nation which, historically and literally, is still oppressed and colonized, while currently, it is relegated into the silence about itself and the region. By definition,

22 Ibid.

post-colonialism is skeptical towards the nation understood as common fate, whereas the large majority of the post-colonial approaches to the nation in the context of colonization is rather a tool in the hands of critics of national constructs. Whereas in this case we encounter visible resentment and a desire to strengthen the national identity in opposition to the totalitarian hegemonies.

- 2) Clare Cavanagh – a poet and translator of Polish literature to English, in her article *Post-colonial Poland: A Blank Spot on the Map of Modern Theory*²³ she defines Polish literature as post-colonial per se in the same way she defines Irish literature. Following criticism of Seamus Dean and Edward Said²⁴, Cavanagh points out that Polish literature is characterized by post-colonial sensitivity and its lack in the post-colonial reflection is attributed by the author to Marxist sympathies of post-colonial critics.
- 3) Bogusław Bakula, Janusz Korek, Michał Buchowski²⁵ – the Soviet domination is analyzed from the post-colonial point of view enabling description of the consequences of dependencies for national discourses, especially contradictions emerging in transformation processes (nostalgias of post-communism).
- 4) Maria Janion – in her book *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*²⁶ and her article *Poland between East and West*²⁷, the author shows intensely orientaling practices present in the Polish identity discourse which, in terms of civilization, describes Russia as strange to Europe and through this mechanism reduces it in the Polish national imagery to the strange/defamiliarized monstrosity. The cost of this opposition strategy towards the empire is, the author argues, the loss of Slavic substance in the Polish identity which, pushed to oblivion, returns as the incredible Slavic. This repudiated ethnic essence locates the Polish identity in the fissure between the open Latin

23 C. Cavanagh, "Post-Colonial Poland: A Blank Spot on the Map of Modern Theory," „Teksty Drugie” 2003 no 2-3.

24 E. Said, *Yeats and Colonization*, S. Deande, "Introduction," [in:] T. Eagleton, F. Jameson, E. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1990

25 M. Buchowski, *The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother*, „Anthropological Quarterly” 2006 t. 79 no 3; B. Bakula, *Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (szkic problematyki)*, „Teksty Drugie” 2006 no 6; J. Korek, *Central and Eastern Europe from a Postcolonial Perspective*, „Postcolonial Europe”, www.postcolonial-europe.eu

26 M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2006.

27 M. Janion, *Polska między Wschodem i Zachodem*, „Teksty Drugie” 2006 no 3.

(Catholic, Western) type of the national discourse and the destructive, concealed, unconscious type of the Slavic character identified with loss and horrible repetition.

The pronounced classification of the Polish culture as the post-colonial one – and this takes place in the thought represented by Thompson, Cavanagh or Dariusz Skórczewski – together with the accusing tone used both towards the Russian culture which is directly identified with imperialism and towards the Western world considered as a discursive hegemony eliminating Poland from participation in the reflection over the European history²⁸ and not accepting our input in its culture, is in fact a demand to grant us the fully legitimate European status. These studies are of an undeniable value to the analysis of the imperial myth constitutive to Russian literature but also to the analysis of the representation strategies serving creation of the colonial image of the Other embodying stereotypical inferiority. However, these critics seem to overestimate the possibilities carried by the post-colonial theory. According to these approaches, post-colonialism appears to transform into the panteoria for any power relations based on exploitation and negation of sovereignty. In this view, one could enquire about the difference between this understanding of post-colonialism and *Derrida's theory from Monolingualism of the Other* saying that every culture is colonial, in the etymological and any other sense²⁹. Post-colonialism functions almost as a discourse magically repairing damages of history by means of describing a given territory as colonial. The question left to answer is: what do we gain by situating post-colonialism ontologically, apart from that fact that it is yet another historiographic project in which old debates are overwritten by new terminology? In too many cases, the post-colonial perspective applied this way only helps intensify national historicism of a vividly conservative ideological program. What also has place is methodological frivolity – for instance, the hybrid or mimicry categories, key to the post-colonial theory, are treated here as fully conscious, subjective opposition activities, and not as a discursive-linguistic mechanism, the way Bhabha sees them through Lacan³⁰.

We often treat post-colonialism as new humanism – a critical interference in European humanism performed by those who were omitted or excluded by this allegedly universal and egalitarian intellectual tradition. Meanwhile,

28 D. Skórczewski, *Polska skolonizowana, Polska zorientalizowana. Teoria postkolonialna wobec „innej Europy”, „Porównania”* 2009 no 6.

29 J. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, Or, the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. by P. Mensah, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1998, 39.

30 H. Bhabha, *Miejsca kultury* (1994), trans. by T. Dobrogoszcz, Wydawnictwo UJ, Cracow 2010.

post-colonialism developed on the grounds of post-humanist or anti-humanist theories: post-structuralism, deconstruction, foucaultism. In this sense, Said remained in opposition to the post-colonial theory which he expressed in his works written after *Orientalism*. Said's inspiration with Foucault had a clearly critical dimension – he didn't agree with the philosopher on the question of the discourse's de-subjectivisation. In Said's eyes, a discourse always had had its author and had always been subjective – here lies the main discrepancy between his humanism and the post-colonial theory of the 1980s. At the same time, Said underlined that orientalism, and more broadly imperialism, was not a feature which was particularly defining for the West. He did not assign the Western world with any subjective intentionality in the imperial undertaking. Said's new humanism distinctly moved away from the culturalism of post-colonial studies where everything could be reduced to discursive mechanisms and identity metaphors. For Said, culture is production – human manufacture of the material background. Combining philological traditions with the materialistic approach to discursive production, Said comes closer to Marxism with regards to one significant issue – he does not give up the historical perspective and does not allow for fetishization of the West as intentional awareness, instead putting emphasis on modernity-structuring forces such as capitalism³¹.

If post-colonialism is supposed to become a new identity category for Eastern Europe, it will bring more problems than profits. I agree with critics who believe that Poland did not produce post-colonial mentality because since the Renaissance, it has had a strong tradition of subjective attitudes³². Talking about the post-colonial status in the historical sense is not the same as being defined through a new identity category – too methodologically blurred to prove it on the basis of the literary or cultural material and too total to be a breakthrough. As noted by many critics, the post-colonial perspective should be subordinated to the superior comparative goal in order to enable efficient introduction of the matters concerning the countries, culture and literature of Eastern Europe to the critical studies of globalization processes including actively present modern comparative studies which develop concepts of new cosmopolitanisms, alternative modernities, peripheral modernity, provincialization of Europe, definition of the world/common literature, etc. The objectives of the research set by the center of research on post-dependence discourses – i.e. working out a theoretical language needed

31 N. Lazarus, *The Fetish of 'the West' in Postcolonial Theory*, [in:] *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. N. Lazarus, C. Bartolovich, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

32 K. Kardyni-Pelikanova, *Na marginesie postkolonialnych odczytań w relacjach polskiej i czeskiej literatury*, „Porównania” 2009 no 6, 110.

to describe the condition of the modern Polish society and, more broadly, seizing in this perspective the difference between Central-and-Eastern and Western Europe – constitute a proposition to build comparative structures which would enable – in the comparative field – a horizontal linkage of the dispersed reflection over post-colonialism and post-dependence, the example of which could be the below list of topics within the main assumptions of post-dependence research:

- 1) the palimpsest system of identity discourses, especially in relation with minorities, minority nationalisms, so for instance models of multi-culture in the historical perspective and the place of minorities in the national project;
- 2) the spectral component of the national identity – ghosts of the lost ethnic, national and cultural heterogeneity;
- 3) the native colonies of collective identity (i.e. mobilization of national sentiments as a symptom of so called new tribalism);
- 4) the discourse of the Eastern-European peripherality and provincialism as well as trans-national, trans-ethnic forms of cosmopolitanism activated in those provincial spaces;
- 5) the discourses of the borderland including mechanisms of class relations in the borderland emphasized by the borders of being Polish³³;
- 6) the space of cultural gender in the national ethos;
- 7) the attempts to retain voices of subordinated groups omitted in the elite national project i.e. peasants and women outside the class-defined ethos of the Mother-Pole;
- 8) the national allegory in opposition literature;
- 9) the types of opposition in literature before 1989;
- 10) the new locality in literature and cultural consciousness (and its border-, beyond- and transnational character).

To make the post-colonial transfer productive, a translative model of theoretical thought over the region needs to be elaborated. In this model the most important element is being faithful to the original, following the critical tradition of Gayatri Spivak³⁴: i.e., in the critical reflection, avoiding situations in which the local difference becomes subjected to the universally applicable paradigm. In the critical discourse with Central-and-Eastern Europe and about it, the post-colonial theory not so much should be utilized as it should be problematized by means of introducing to it a similar but always incommensurate difference between the forms of dependence and

33 See A. Fiut, *Polonization? Colonization?*, „Teksty Drugie” 2003 no 6, 155.

34 G.Ch. Spivak, *Polityka przekładu*.

post-dependence shaping the region. Post-colonialism, therefore, in any way cannot be a matrix for theoretically unnamed areas. The post-colonial transfer should develop into a methodology of translation and comparison – post-colonial paradigms turn out to be particularly useful in the area of translation where it is possible to see how differently cultures construct their space and subjectivity, how in the areas of untranslatability reveals a mechanism of cultural dominations, categorial aporia, incommensurateness of locality and border mutations/transformations of meanings. In such a translation model, post-colonialism as a being, essence would be the first category lost in translation. This is why post-dependence seems to me a much more productive and independent research category, to which post-colonialism could often be an interesting opportunity for a dialogue. The post-dependence category gives us a certain level of theoretical autonomy which allows for entering into the comparative, intersubjective area of translation as open, multi-directional space for a dialogue with post-colonial studies, and not as fragmentary studies on the margin of the theory created somewhere, in the metropolis. Shifting the weight of considerations over the status of Central-and-Eastern Europe from the post-colonial category to the post-dependence one will make it possible to avoid the model of applied theory in which post-colonialism would have a function of another normative Western discourse taking possession of new territories. This is neither a fantasy about a fully autonomous, local theory of the region nor an entirely borrowed theoretical model but a critical intervention in the location of Central-and-Eastern Europe within the European modernity.

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Post-colonial Research and the "Second World": German National-and-Colonial Constructs of the 19th Century

1.

The course of the discussion, in recent years carried on in Poland, about the usefulness of the post-colonial research in the context of the local Polish, German, Russian, Slavic or other philological studies, vividly shows that the range of the debate is still very limited, in fact restricted to a few academic research centers. Perhaps this situation stems from the fact that foreign philologies studied in Poland (for instance, German literary studies) have remained under the strong influence of so called national philologies whose methodological solutions were often spontaneously acquired and adapted. For German studies in Germany, the post-colonial research is still – despite the efforts of a certain highly active group of scholars¹ – on the margin of researchers' interests. This (as well as the language barrier, when innovative methodological concepts are presented in

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1 Cf. *(Post-)Kolonialismus und Deutsche Literatur. Impulse der angloamerikanischen Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, hrsg. von A. Dunker, Aisthesis, Bielefeld 2005; *Kolonialismus als Kultur: Literatur, Medien und Wissenschaft in der deutschen Gründerzeit des Fremden*, hrsg. von A. Honold, O. Simons, A. Francke, Tübingen–Basel 2002; *Kolonialismus. Kolonialdiskurs und Genozid*, hrsg. von M. Dabag, H. Gründer, U.-K. Ketelsen, Fink, München 2004.

English or French) might explain why in German literary studies in Poland these relatively new theoretical and methodological concepts are so rarely reached for, even though the first attempts to read Polish, Russian or German literature from the post-colonial perspective gave some interesting results.²

Apart from the time necessary to get acquainted with the post-colonial theses and instruments, which means getting used to the new methodology, resistance in adopting its assumptions may be attributed to the fact that the use of analytical and interpretative tools of the post-colonial theory and criticism has been reduced by the leading representatives of the discipline (G. Spivak, H. Bhabha or L. Gandhi) to the relation between the First and the Third World, i.e. the "white" European West and its "non-white" overseas colonies and dominions.

The exclusion of the "Second World" from this network of associations seems to suggest that the processes of appropriation through textualization are fundamentally incomparable, while "paternalistic systematizations, reductionist definitions"³ or "repressive character of cultural patterns and matrices"⁴ imposed on subordinated nations in the European-European/Asian constellation are incommensurate to analogical processes characteristic to the relation between the European West and its overseas colonies. In her writings, Clare Cavanagh underlines that post-colonial researchers are specifically resistant to the counter-arguments which expose a visible structural analogy within the domination systems in the two mentioned areas. The author notices that "the very after-war history of Poland appears to be enough of a reason why this country deserves its place in the ongoing

2 E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy Imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, Universitas, Kraków 2000; C. Cavanagh, *Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej teorii*, „Teksty Drugie” 2003 no 2/3, 60–71; I. Surynt, *Das „ferne,” „unheimliche” Land. Gustav Freytags Polen*, Thelem bei w.e.b., Dresden 2004; U.-K. Ketelsen, *Der koloniale Diskurs und die Öffnung des europäischen Ostens im deutschen Roman*, [in:] *Kolonialismus. Kolonialdiskurs und Genozid*, 67–94; U.-K. Ketelsen, *Vier Jungens gehen zur See, vier Jungens werden Landwirt irgendwo im Osten. Die deutsche „Ostkolonization” als diskursives Ereignis*, w: *Germanistischer Brückenschlag im deutsch-polnischen Dialog. II Kongress der Breslauer Germanistik. 3. Literaturgeschichte 18.-20. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. von B. Balzer, W. Kunicki, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Atut”—Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe—Neisse Verlag, Wrocław—Dresden 2006, 11–19; D. Skórczewski, *Dlaczego Paweł Huelle napisał Castorpa?*, „Teksty Drugie” 2006 no 3, 148–157 and id. *Postkolonialna Polska – projekt (nie)możliwy*, [in:] „Teksty Drugie” 2006 no 1/2, 100–112, see also the Internet platform www.kakanien.ac.at

3 H. Duć-Fajfer, *Etniczność a literatura*, [in:] *Kulturowa teoria literatury*, ed. M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Universitas, Kraków 2006, 433–450.

4 A. Burzyńska, *Kulturowy zwrot teorii*, [in:] *Kulturowa teoria literatury*, 41–91.

debate on the post-colonial culture.”⁵ Her reasoning, focusing around Joseph Conrad’s figure and creative output but also referring to later texts (by Miłosz, Herbert, Szymborska, Kapuściński), convincingly depicts the Polish “post-colonial sensitivity.”⁶

This article aims at documenting the legitimacy of a thesis (also formulated by Cavanagh, Thompson and others) stating the comparability or specific congruence between the First World’s colonial culture imposed on conquered territories outside of Europe and the imperial politics of the Eastern-and-Central-European powers towards smaller countries. I shall concentrate on the attitude represented by Germany or rather German states towards Poland and the Eastern borderland of Prussia in the 19th century. The following issues will be, therefore, touched upon: 1) the relationship between national constructs and the post-colonial project in the German-speaking public space from the 18th to the 20th century; 2) the post-colonial deconstruction of the “Polish space” in the 19th century German literature on the example of the German colonial novel’s prototype, the pioneering Gustav Freytag’s book *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*); 3) the analysis of “the periphery’s own voice”: i.e., the Polish reactions to colonization of “Polishness” in the second half of the 19th century.

2.

According to Anna Burzyńska, “post-colonial research is primarily devoted to analyzes of political and ideological influence of the West on other cultures (particularly those of the Third World) as well as methods of constructing meanings in the areas subject to imperialist practices to justify (by means of specific constructs of meanings) its command over the conquered communities. Another area of interest of post-colonial studies are strategies of repressing any ethnic minorities that are marginalised by dominant cultures.”⁷

Both the post-colonial theory represented e.g. by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and the post-colonial criticism (Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Wilson Harris and others) are most interested in debunking rhetorical appropriation of the cultural, ethnic, national and eventually racial Otherness (all those categories are understood as cultural constructs) performed in the process of accomplishing imperial interests by countries already being

5 C. Cavanagh, *Postkolonialna Polska...*, 63.

6 Ibid., 67.

7 A. Burzyńska, *Kulturowy zwrot teorii...*, 82.

or only aspiring to the status of colonial power. The debunking is carried out by means of deconstructing the hegemonic culture's narratives about the encounters/confrontations with the Other embodied by the conquered community, therefore it involves ransacking texts for linguistic traces of violence towards distinctness and its resistance to domination. Consequently, the above concerns not only the recounted or authentic colonial conquests but, equally, the colonization of human minds.⁸

Even a superficial reading of the 19th or early 20th century Russian or German texts about territories violently annexed to the countries aspiring to take the power position in Europe (for example Germans or Russians about Poland and Poles) already reveal similar practices of narrative appropriation, stigmatization or elimination of the Other through (imagined or/and factual) extortion of cultural/national assimilation, discrimination of distinctness and its forcible expulsion from the conquered space. And this is not only about coincidental similarity to acts of excluding certain (social, religious or professional) groups from a defined community by means of creating comparable systems of distinctive features, but above all, it is about using – in processes of eliminating a dominated community from a group entitled to contribute to the public discourse – such categories as ethnicity or race which suggest *a priori* (and allegedly biological) otherness, therefore the inability to change the imposed *status quo* of the object and the subject of the domination. These analogies in dealing with the Other between the colonial context and the internal colonization, as the approach of the Central-and-Eastern European Center towards the included peripheries was usually called, not only may point to a certain sociological and anthropological constant indicating the way the winner behaves towards the defeated (and the other way around) but they also make it possible to notice similarities in the processes of (self) constituting the identity and self-consciousness of agents taking part in colonial and colonization activities.

Assumptions and conclusions presented by Ewa Thompson,⁹ especially the results of her analysis of the Russian imperial politics as an equivalent or rather a variant of the colonial politics, could be transposed *mutatis mutandis* to the situation in German states (mainly Prussia) of the 18th and 19th century and most of all, to the imperial politics of the German Empire. The latter – despite the short, but of far-reaching consequences, episode in the history of colonialism – was perceived by contemporary commentators as a country engaged in the European colonial discourse, mainly due to the colonial

8 H. Duć-Fajfer, *Etniczność a literatura...*, 436.

9 Cf. E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy Imperium...*

awareness¹⁰ deeply rooted in the public opinion and the public interest in “colonial fantasies.”¹¹

Already from the mid-18th century, under the influence of economic and social modernization and scientific exploration in non-European countries (what should be mentioned here is keen reception of research literature represented by the most estimated German scientist and traveller Alexander von Humboldt as well as accounts of overseas journeys by Georg Forster and other travellers with a scientific verve, also from France and England), German states became known for the shared comprehension of experiencing “progress” as experiencing the history of humankind in general. Thus, one of the key elements of modern historiosophical concepts was the opposition of “progressive” (i.e. “developed”) and “regressive” (“underdeveloped”) continents, populations/nations and social groups. The effect of noticing cultural differences (sometimes felt like a civilizational gap) and focusing the narration around them was working out a specific narrative model which was characteristic to the majority of Occidental descriptions of “savage” cultures and comprehensive historiosophical approaches in the 19th century. As a consequence of adopting such a perspective, differentiation, assessment and the following hierarchization of all simultaneously existing populations/nations on the Earth gained a fundamental meaning, which, in turn, triggered designation of some stable parameters for reception and evaluation of any kind of cultural/ethnic/racial otherness.

What is specific about the German historiosophical discourse of the 18th and 19th century (often providing arguments for German colonial projects) is that it is interlaced with a notion of culture understood as an embodiment of the German “spirit of the nation” which – as claimed by Johann G. Hender, Johann G. Fichte and of course Georg W.H. Hegel – mirrors individual and group striving for freedom. On the one hand, it enabled instrumentalization of the image of German culture in order to symbolically compensate both the political impotence of the middle class and the discontent caused by what was perceived as insufficient development of the nation and the state. On the other hand, this instrumentalization could be used as a tool for assessing the condition of particular “nations.” The combination of the discourse on culture and images of the nation and state with the main assumptions of German colonial plans gave birth to the Eurocentric model of the gradually developing world which – by being

10 Cf. U.-K. Ketelsen, *Der koloniale Diskurs...*; id. *Vier Jungens gehen zur See ...*

11 S. Zantop, *Kolonialphantasien im vorkolonialen Deutschland (1770-1870)*, E. Schmidt, Berlin 1999.

centered around the category of culture's progress – expressed current German national expectations and desires. At the same time, it inscribed the ethnic, cultural and national Otherness in the coherent and simple pattern of perceiving and explaining the reality.

German interest in the colonial conquest of the world, however, not only was evoked by national visions and projects conceptualised by a tiny group of intellectuals searching for the possibility to carry out German "dreams of power," but it also stemmed from authentic economic and social problems increasing in the first decades of the 19th century. One of them was chaotic emigration of German states' citizens to both Americas which at that time became a mass phenomenon. This tendency significantly contributed to reactivation of some old colonial projects and creation of new ones. According to the most recent research on colonialism,¹² plans of the colonial expansion attracted attention of the German public opinion in the first half of the 19th century to the much greater extent than hitherto assumed.¹³ The public debate on Germany inevitably playing the role of the world power had been conducted (similarly to other European countries such as Belgium) with much intensity from 1814 (after Napoleon's defeat) gaining wide publicity in the 1830s.¹⁴ However, its culmination had place the 1840s when dozens of plans were made for obtaining (by means of purchase, regular settlement of German emigrants, etc.) and establishing overseas German colonies.¹⁵

A leitmotif in discussions on the need for German possessions outside Europe is discontent caused by discrepancies between the current state of affairs (lack of the united German state and German colonies) and faith in a special cultural and civilizational mission to be fulfilled by Germans. By referring to the medieval history, it was often indicated that in the old, crucial times, the German Empire and Hanza actively participated in the

12 H. Gründer, *Ein „Neu-Deutschland“ in Übersee – Frühe koloniale Propaganda und erste Experimente*, [in:] id. „...da und dort ein junges Deutschland gründen.“ *Rassismus, Kolonien und kolonialer Gedanke vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1999, 9-18; *Kolonialstädte – Europäische Enklaven oder Schmelztiegel der Kulturen?*, hrsg. von H. Gründer, P. Johanek, Lit, Münster–Hamburg–Berlin–London 2001; H. Fenske, *Ungeduldige Zuschauer. Die Deutschen und die europäische Expansion 1815-1880*, [in:] *Imperialistische Kontinuität und nationale Ungeduld im 19. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. von W. Reinhard, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, 87-140; S. Zantop, *Kolonialphantasien...; Kolonialismus. Kolonialdiskurs und Genozid...*

13 *Kolonialismus als Kultur...*, 10.

14 H. Fenske, *Ungeduldige Zuschauer...*, 87.

15 H. Gründer, *Ein „Neu-Deutschland“ in Übersee...*, 13.

world's politics. This is how a postulate of the German return to the former splendour was formulated, for "Germany can and must become again what they once were."¹⁶ Presently useful arguments were, thus, derived from the past, while they also served producing visions of the bright future for the German state as a world power. According to the words of Hans Fenske, those plans and demands were of a compensatory nature.¹⁷ Susan Zantop judges these activities in a similar way in her work on the history of German colonial projects.¹⁸

What played an important role in disseminating the idea of German nautical and colonial projects, was a liberal magazine "Ausburger Allgemeine Zeitung" with its goal to popularise the project of setting up the German fleet (including naval forces) which was supposed to help develop highly profitable overseas trade leading to acquisition of colonies: "Once we have the fleet, we will find the colonies."¹⁹ Beside the traditionally mercantile justification of the necessity to own overseas colonies, there increasingly appeared new propositions, according to which, obtaining non-European properties functioned as a type of a social safety valve. In view of the economic crisis and growing discontent of the masses, the authorities perceived moving the radicalised population to the established colonies as counter-measures easing tension without the need of introducing any changes in the country. This thought was followed by the "fathers of German nationalism" who tried to use the "national" energy of German settlers (imagined as representatives of "real" culture) to secure German domination in the New World. Noticing the possibility of simultaneously bringing solutions to several burning internal problems owing to emigration encouraged the political and intellectual elites to intensively work on projects of the state-controlled settlement politics in the overseas countries. The plan assumed concentrated settlement of emigrants from the German states on a limited territory in order to let them maintain their national identity without giving in to the assimilation pressure. As an effect, there appeared an idea to make Latin America the destination continent for the German emigration because the assimilation pressure perceived as a threat from the side of Spanish Americans was considered to be less intense than the one which – as it was thought

16 H. Fenske, *Ungeduldige Zuschauer...*, 88.

17 *Ibid.*, 89.

18 S. Zantop, *Kolonialphantasien...*

19 Der norddeutsche Handel, „Allgemeine Zeitung. Außerordentliche Beilage" no 321-324, quoted after: H. Fenske, *Ungeduldige Zuschauer...*, 92.

back then – characterized Anglo-Americans.²⁰ (Similar opinions were also widespread in the Polish public debate of the late 19th century evoked by mass emigration of Poles to America).

As a result, German history of colonialism is directly related with the concepts of creating a modern German nation and the colonial thought is one of elements building the German understanding of the “nation.”²¹ It is worth reiterating that the goal of the German colonial politics – apart from economic benefits and preservation of the socio-political system – was supposed to be national integration (or consolidation), while the colonial activities were to be crowned with the beautiful future for Germans as a nation of conquerors, thanks to which they could permanently (and in the brightest of colors) become a part of the world’s history.²² There is one stable pattern of argumentation which is characteristic to the collective narration about the need of the colonial expansion. It invariably contains the following elements: the mission to popularize Christianity, the civilizational mission, the evolutionary model of the humankind development, the exposure of biological and racial differences and the meaning of colonial conquests for the world development in the historiographic perspective.²³

This is why Ewa Thompson’s postulate to realize the importance of the ethnic and national factor in the processes of factual and rhetorical appropriation of Central-and-Eastern European and Asian territories by the empires of the “Second World,”²⁴ should obligatorily be taken into account in research on the Polish-German relations in the 19th and 20th century as well. This suggestion mainly stems from the fact that the modern German discourse on Poland is an effect of numerous harmonizing and interfering with each other public debates occupying the German public opinion since the second half of the 18th century. The discourse, thus, was fundamentally affected not only by discussions linked with the experience of modernization but also by considerable intensification of nation-building processes on the territories of the German states.²⁵ Whereas the least known and

20 H. Gründer, *Ein „Neu-Deutschland“ in Übersee...*, 17.

21 M. Dabag, *National-koloniale Konstruktionen in politischen Entwürfen des Deutschen Reichs um 1900*, w: *Kolonialismus. Kolonialdiskurs und Genozid...*, 23, 64.

22 *Ibid.*, 40, 44, 48.

23 M. Brehl, *„Ich denke, die haben Ihnen zum Tode verholfen,”* 193.

24 E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy Imperium...*

25 H. Orłowski, *„Polnische Wirthschaft.” Nowoczesny niemiecki dyskurs o Polsce*, transl. by I. i S. Sellmer, Wspólnota Kulturowa „Borussia,” Olsztyn 1998.

scientifically analyzed matter is the overlap of the discourse about Poland and Poles with the German colonial project. It should be mentioned that, so far, only a few scholars directly connected the way of comprehending the East (including Poland and Poles) with the German (Prussian) colonial thought.²⁶

As demonstrated above, both the discussions on the necessity to acquire colonies and praise or criticism of colonialism were one of the most crucial, although extremely controversial problems almost incessantly emerged in the German-speaking public space from the 18th century. The common narrative practice was also to interpret internal colonization as a colonial activity equivalent (according to contemporary theories – rather an attempt to compensate the absence²⁷) to overseas initiatives of such European powers as England or France. The definition of colonialism worked out by the cultural studies emphasizes the fact that it is a practice of the foreign rule over a territory conquered or in other way annexed/incorporated, or – despite the considerable geographical distance – combined with the colonial power; a practice which is characterized by operationalization of the cultural difference as a strategy legitimizing political inequality.²⁸ Colonialism, therefore, is a power relation between two groups. One of them is a culturally different and reluctant towards the assimilation minority of colonizers who decide about all fundamental issues concerning the colonized population, being entirely dependent on the external political, economic, social and other interests of the colonial power,²⁹ which are, at the same time, strange/unimportant to the local inhabitants. What is crucial, colonialism is not just a domination system which may be approached from the perspective of the history of power structures but also, or maybe first of all, interpretation of this system. It primarily involves a continuous emphasis on three narrative strategies in the colonial discourse: 1) constructing distinctness, considered to be less valuable or even worthless, and its appropriation; 2) spreading the conviction of the civilizational mission of colonial power and its “clear” duty to complete this

26 Por. U.-K. Ketelsen, *Der koloniale Diskurs...*; id. *Vier Jungens gehen zur See...*; I. Surynt, *Das „ferne“, „unheimliche“ Land...*; ead. *Postępy, kultura i kolonializm. Polska a niemiecki projekt europejskiego „Wschodu” w dyskursach publicznych XIX wieku*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2006; H.H. Hahn, E. Hahn, *Nationale Stereotypen. Plädoyer für eine historische Stereotypenforschung*, [in:] *Stereotyp, Identität und Geschichte. Die Funktion von Stereotypen in gesellschaftlichen Diskursen*, hrsg. von H.H. Hahn, Lang, Frankfurt a.M 2002.

27 S. Zantop *Kolonialphantasien...*

28 C. Ruthner, K.u.K. „Kolonialismus” als Befund, Befindlichkeit und Metapher. Versuch einer weit-eren Klärung, www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/CRuthner3.pdf.

29 J. Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, Beck, Munich 2006.

mission; and 3) "utopia of apoliticality," i.e. allegedly apolitical administration of colonized territories.³⁰

Such organization of power relations is also typical of the relations between Center and Periphery in modern European national states. Moreover, there are evident analogies in the processes of building collective identity,³¹ and this applies both to the ruling minority and the ruled majority. It is outstandingly visible in creating auto- and heterostereotypes in the conditions of the foreign rule. The Otherness of the native population is often interpreted as "existential distinctness,"³² which is by no means subjected to adaptation in favour of one's own concept of Sameness. Uwe-K. Ketelsen underlines that in German visions of the European East (including Poland) prevails a conviction of its absolute incomparability to comprehending itself, its fundamental Otherness,³³ while the very East appears as "fascinating, although threatening space of prehistory."³⁴ What is also typical of these images is the elimination of a sharp semantic boundary between the notions of distinctness and strangeness or even hostility.³⁵

It is important to notice the situation of not only rejecting and definite distancing oneself from images of culturally "regressive" groups which are allegedly doomed to be civilized from the outside – these opinions were disseminated by the ruling minority (not only politically and economically but also in terms of defining and explaining the reality) – but also voluntary absorption of the construct of Otherness programed by some representatives of the dominated majority within the hegemonic culture. This, however, was not an obstacle in conducting a discourse of resistance towards the domination with the help of mimicry techniques.

The overlap of the German colonial discourse with the plans to "civilize" Eastern peripheries of Prussia and Austria was partially triggered by the above mentioned configuration of potential profits for the given social groups and political circles. To the ideologists of Prussia and the future

30 Ibid., 20, 113–116.

31 Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2006; L. Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*, unter Mitarbeit von A. Dossmann, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2000.

32 M. Brehl, „Ich denke, die haben Ihnen zum Tode verholfen.“ *Koloniale Gewalt in kollektiver Rede*, 203.

33 Cf. U.-K. Ketelsen *Der koloniale Diskurs...*, 69, 76.

34 Ibid., 80.

35 M. Brehl, „Ich denke, die haben Ihnen zum Tode verholfen,” 204.

German national state, propagating emigration outside Europe only seemed to be an emergency exit, only partially securing German national interests. The real worry of the German national project were – in many (especially “Borussian”³⁶) authors’ opinion – Eastern parts of Prussia due to the constant threat from the centrifugal forces such as national ambitions of Poles and other nationally mobilized communities. The potential change in the direction of emigration from the German states (for instance to “dangerous” Eastern regions) was expected not only to help achieve the above mentioned benefits similar to those guaranteed by the overseas conquest, but also to solve economic, social, and political problems caused by those “uncertain” parts of the Prussian state.

The effort to provide arguments justifying the necessity to re-direct masses of German settlers to Eastern Europe was primarily made by writers who “thought and felt like Prussians” and who, in their argumentation, used facts from the history of the Polish-German relations perceived and assessed as a sequence of events showing the cultural and civilizational superiority of Germans over Slavic nations. Above all, such argumentation pattern was meant to serve documenting the historical right of Prussia to take lead of the desired united German state. Promoting the idea of the German mission to civilize the East had two basic functions: firstly, to prove superiority of Prussia over Austria (its rival in the race for power in the future united German state) based on the colonial efficiency, and secondly, to design the future of the national German state as colonial power.

The integrative potential in the borderland where lines dividing Sameness from Otherness are outstandingly vivid was long known to the ideologists of the nation coming from the borderline territories such as Gustav Freytag who was born in Upper Silesia (more on this topic later in the article). In his extraordinarily popular novel from 1855 *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*), he presented in an almost exemplary manner the consolidating power of the ethnic and cultural borderland in a scene of military organization of all German settlers in the Grand Duchy of Posen with no regards of their regional or social background or their religion, in the face of the threat from the nation’s enemy – the Polish insurgents. The German tendency to unite in order to fight for their interests, which are simultaneously the interests

36 In German historical science, “Borussian” historians are the common name for a group of German Prussophile or Prusso-national historians and publicists who propagated a vision of the united Germany as the so called “small Germany” united under the lead of Prussia with exclusion of the Habsburg Monarchy. See also I. Surynt, “Transfer ‘wiedzy’ – przestrzeń i strategię komunikacji pomiędzy nauką i literaturą, dziennikarstwem a polityką w XIX wieku na przykładzie autorów ‘borusjańskich,’” *Rocznik Centrum Studiów Niemieckich i Europejskich im. Willy Brandta Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego* no 3 (2005): 47–62.

of the Prussian state in the East, are depicted as the first step towards the common unity of Germany and the German national state. In this situation, older images of the special German mission in Europe, constructed by the first "prophets of nationalism,"³⁷ such as Johann G. Fichte, Ernst M. Arndt, or Friedrich L. Jahn could freely enter into a close relationship with hitherto prevailing postulates of "the German expansion in the East" e.g. formulated by Karl Adolf Menzel.³⁸

A contemporary German scholar Peter Johanek summarizes the attitude of prussophile authors towards Slavic nations by referring to the quotation from Moritz Heffter's book *Der Weltkampf der Deutschen und Slaven* (*The World's Struggle of Germans and Slavs*) in the following way: "Hence, Germans became representatives of culture in the uncivilized area of Europe where it was Slavs who, till German settlers came, were nothing more than savage nomads of Asia or Indians in America." However, these analogies can be found in the German discourse much earlier, for example in the very works by J.G. Herder who criticized the behavior of Franconians and Saxons towards their Slavic neighbours. He describes the devastation of Slavic culture on the West from the Elbe River and at the Baltic Sea by Germanic tribes:

Already in the times of Charles the Great those military invasions began, their cause being of course the desire of profits from trade, although the pretext was Christianity. Obviously, it was easier for heroic Franks to treat the hard-working nation of farmers and merchants like slaves than to learn their skills themselves. What Franks began, Saxons finished; in entire provinces, Slavs were either exterminated or forced to slavery, whereas their properties were divided between bishops and gentry. Their trade at the Baltic Sea was destroyed by Northern Germans; Vineta was ruined by the Danish and Slavic survivors in Germany make us think about the resemblance to what the Spanish did to Peruvians.³⁹

According to Johanek, German historiography of the 19th and 20th century eagerly presented Eastern-European territories inhabited by German settlers as a parallel or equivalent of the European overseas colonies.⁴⁰ He sees one

37 H. Gramley, *Propheten des deutschen Nationalismus. Theologen, Historiker und Nationalökonomien (1848-1880)*, Campus, Frankfurt a.M.–New York 2001.

38 P. Johanek, „Ostkolonization“ und Städtegründung – Kolonialstädte in Ostmitteleuropa, [in:] *Kolonialstädte – Europäische Enklaven...*, 30.

39 J.G. Herder, *Myśli o filozofii dziejów*, selection and introduction by Z. Skuza, Elipsa, Warszawa 2000, 173.

40 P. Johanek, „Ostkolonization“ und Städtegründung..., 2.

of the reasons for such analogy in “Borussian” writers’ enthusiasm to Frederick II’s politics towards the East which could be compared to the expansion outside Europe thanks to – at first glance – similar methods of urbanization and settlement.⁴¹ Even the very expression *Drang nach Osten* (“pressure towards the East”) has some overseas connotations. Legitimization of German appropriation of the European East is mainly based on statements about “the historical law and its comprehensive progress”⁴²: i.e., on the club law in terms of civilization, ennobled by science with the help of the theory of evolutionary development. Ferdinand Lassalle expresses this figure of thought remarkably concisely: “Having this law [historical law – author’s note] on their side, the Anglo-Saxon race conquered America, France conquered Algeria, England – India, and nations of German origins took lands away from Slavic populations.”⁴³

3.

In her analysis of the 19th century Russian literature (works by Pushkin and Lermontov), Ewa Thompson aims at showing “how Russian writers mediated the Center’s power, restraining the country’s borderland from raising their voice and expressing their experience as the subject, not peripheries attached to the Center.”⁴⁴ The most important topic of the reflections became the “mediating power techniques” worked out in texts of literature as they played a role of means and tools of acquiring imperial/colonial possessions through narration, i.e. cultural appropriation of the conquered territories. What is characteristic to this type of strategies stabilizing *status quo* in the Center is “condemning peripheries to civilizational invisibility.”⁴⁵ The space found and annexed by colonizers is depicted as non-existent civilizationaly, almost desolate territories hitherto remaining beyond history. Commenting on this phenomenon present in Russian literature treating about the conquest of the Caucasus, Thompson states: “It’s as if native nations and histories did not exist or existed only to put Russians in the position to govern them.”⁴⁶ The researcher also underlines that “similarly to other colonial literatures, Russian

41 Ibid., 29.

42 F. Lassalle, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, t.1, hrsg. von E. Bernstein, Berlin 1919, 33.

43 Ibid.

44 E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy Imperium...*, 2.

45 Ibid., 42.

46 Ibid., 114.

characters in the Caucasus talk to each other but not to native inhabitants. They speak about natives but they do not have conversations with them, as Gayatri Spivak would say.”⁴⁷

It is also specific how imperial-colonial writers often approached the silent (and so incapacitated) object of presentations, namely “the attitude of the universalizing subject”⁴⁸ whose story was meant to give start to the historical emergence of heretofore invisible and silent spaces. Consequently, the beginning of their existence was marked by the act of appropriation – interpretation of the “regressive” or even self-consciously non-existent native community in the categories of the internal discourse imposed by the “civilized” “universalizing subject.” Not noticing, then taking away the conquered territory and its inhabitants’ “own voice” and replacing it with the Center’s voice, i.e. removing its story from the historical memory, served not only legitimizing forceful appropriation of the imagined “no man’s land.” It was, above all, about stabilizing the empire’s power through the imposition of the cultural identity being nearly always in conflict with the models of “defensive identities of colonized nations.”⁴⁹ Writers who identified themselves with the goals of imperial-colonial politics of their own country, voluntarily legitimized its activities and most of all, constructed the empire’s vision of “uniting it, hiding fissures and breaks in its structure, protesting against its disintegration.”⁵⁰

All the above findings of Ewa Thompson, concerning the 19th century Russian literature telling the story of the lands conquered by the Russian empire, could be perceived in the context of literary works of German authors who described German settlement on the Eastern borderland of the Prussian state. Particularly distinct similarities to the narrative appropriation of the Otherness are manifested in the writings of the already mentioned Gustav Freytag on the basis of which I would like to briefly elaborate on those analogies.⁵¹

Gustav Freytag was born in 1816 in Kreuzburg (Upper Silesia), studied in Wrocław and Berlin, then settled in Saxony (Leipzig), and the last years of his life he spent in Wiesbaden (he died in 1895). Already during his studies, he met leading representatives of the national-liberal thought in Silesia.

47 Ibid., original emphasis.

48 Ibid., 93.

49 Ibid., 19.

50 Ibid., 84.

51 I conducted a detailed analysis of Freytag’s constructs of Polishness in my monograph’s text *Das “ferne,” “unheimliche” Land...* All quotations from Freytag’s texts are in my translation.

Later – as an editor of the popular magazine of a national-Prussian and liberal profile “Die Grenzboten” published in Leipzig – he promoted a political program based in the idea of constitutional monarchy, whereas with regards to the national matter, he opted for so called “small Germany” – united under the lead of Prussia with exclusion of the Habsburg Monarchy. But above all, he was famous for being a writer, especially as an author of a German best- and long-seller from before 1945, a novel entitled *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*) from 1855. Today, he is mainly known among literary theoreticians and German philology students – the latter most often learn about him as one of the first German theoreticians of bourgeois realism. In addition, Freytag wrote a novel *Die verlorene Handschrift* (*The Lost Manuscript*, 1864), a series of historical novels *Die Ahnen* (*The Ancestors*, 1872-1880) and a few-volume work of historiographic ambitions *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (*Pictures from the German Past*, 1855-1866).

Already in his first journalistic texts, Freytag presented strategies of creating the Polish space which he successfully used (the evidence being unusually high circulation of his books) in his other works. One of them is his visibly favoured genre of literary description or letter from a journey which offers an entire spectrum of rhetorical means of expression enabling the author to almost limitlessly manipulate the recipients' emotions. This was possible owing to Freytag's skills to impersonate various narrator's roles – from an inexperienced Englishman travelling across Poland (he published these texts under the pseudonym “William Rogers”), through a keen observer of the ongoing changes, to a naïve, average reader of “Die Grenzboten” sending his impressions from the journey around the country to the magazine's editors. Creating such a correspondent whose stance was intended to seem neutral, affected by his personal experience of Otherness and ostensible readiness to accept distinctness without reluctance and obtrusive moralizing as well as constantly evoking a bond (of trust) between the sender and the recipient by referring to the community of language, education, culture, experience, mentality, and perception of the world, are narrative techniques regularly used by Freytag in portraying Poland and Polish people.

A characteristic synthesis of this optics can be found in the writer's most popular novel. On the descriptive level, however, a technique used for portraying Polishness could be named a principle of cumulating negative features or a poetics of deprivation,⁵² motivating and maintaining the exclusion and stereotyping of Otherness through the attribution of solely negative traits. The fragments quoted below come from Freytag's journalism and concern the general impression not only the “Polish” material reality but also “Polish”

52 Cf. H. Orłowski, „Polnische Wirthschaft.”.

culture makes on the German observer. The “Polish” countryside horrifies the author of the article in “Die Grenzboten” as “their estates represent the lowest condition of culture, their flocks are wretched, their living premises are sadly dilapidated, often being little more than plain blocks with thatched roofs.”⁵³ “Polish” culture as personified by the Polish nobleman doesn’t give a much better impression: “Never have I seen such frightful obscurity, naïve ignorance combined with bits and pieces of diverse socialist theories. A rotten mixture filled this beautiful vessel.”⁵⁴

Another marker of Freytag’s narrative practices is “nationalization” of the landscape manifested in – as it may initially appear – contradictory representations of the Polish nature and land as well as the national dimension of this imagery. In opposition to techniques used by Freytag to create and evaluate the Polish “national character” invariably along the same matrix, “Polish” landscapes, depending on the context, undergo revaluation. On the one hand, the author emphasizes the luxuriance, fertility, and beauty of the “Polish” nature, constructing the idyllic space, the nearly archaic land of nature untouched by civilization; on the other hand, such creation exposes the land as wild, empty and dangerous which is a sign of anarchy and lack of culture. As Freytag writes in one of his articles in “Die Grenzboten,” “there are many places where not a single tree is left standing; all is scattered around on the ground. Yet the losses are quickly balanced since the exuberance with which local trees – even beeches and oaks – shoot upwards is stupendous.”⁵⁵

The representations of the wilderness of the Polish nature contain two modes of its perception and assessment. The first of them foreshadows happiness and luck in the future as a reward for the German work in the “wilderness” and the order introduced in the East, while the second one symbolizes the Polish “national character,” pointing to inefficiency, lack of thrift and civilizational potential. These deficits of the Polish character help legitimize German rights to unrestrained colonization of the East. Freytag puts it straightforwardly:

I travelled regions where bogs and marshes covered many square miles, although they could, with little effort, be eradicated by regulating or widening of the riverbeds. Here and there German colonizers proved how easily it was to transform the stinking marshes into most healthy and beautiful crop fields. But the Polish rarely think of such improvements.

53 G. Freytag [W. Rogers], *Beobachtungen auf einer Geschäftsreise in das Großherzogthum Posen*, „Die Grenzboten” 1848 vol. 2, 39.

54 *Ibid.*, 38.

55 [G. Freytag], *Das stille Leben in den polnischen Wäldern II*, „Die Grenzboten” 1850 vol. 1, 263.

They are confined either by the dubious virtue of being satisfied with little or treating their fathers' legacy with reverence, [...], or, from the German point of view, by their ignorance and laziness.⁵⁶

This attitude results in yet another strategy of speaking about Poland and Poles, namely the exoticization/orientalization of the Polish nature and landscapes (Polish forests are jungles, Polish sandy lands are steppes and deserts like Sahara). The same treatment is applied to inhabitants of those territories whom Freytag showed as "savage" and uncivilized nomads dangerous to travellers and settlers.

In his most popular novel *Soll und Haben*, Freytag deliberately makes use of the strategy of exoticization/orientalization of Otherness, comparing the created personae of Poles (Polish insurgents) and Indians in America, although such figures of thought appear in his works much earlier, for example, in the already quoted article from "Die Grenzboten":

Hearing these words, we came out of the forest and in front of our eyes, on a nearby hill, there was a group of [a Polish revolutionary's] robust companions calling to us cheerfully. In the sunset light, they looked like a beautiful painting – a true masterpiece. But shall I be doomed to never shake a hand of a free man, if they seemed to me anything more than a bunch of wild Indians, a horde of Pawnee Loups in the Missouri river valley, fit for borderline fights, novels and dramas, but unfit for living. [...]

When young Poles cry: make us free, then we will become strong and good and Poland will be happy, they start resembling the poor Indian who got intoxicated with fire water and sings his war song: we will banish the White Men beyond the Great Water and then the land will belong to the Red Man, and all tribes scattered around the steppe will gather to smoke a great pipe of peace. We listen to this song, it is moving, but we give no credence to it at all.⁵⁷

In particular, this narrative strategy is evident in fictional scenes of the intensifying conflict between Poles and Germans on the former Polish territories which *Soll und Haben* already depicts as an integral part of the Prussian state (literary theoreticians trace here the echoes of the 1848 events in Greater Poland) and in exaggeratedly grotesque images of the Polish

56 Ibid., 264.

57 G. Freytag [W. Rogers], *Beobachtungen auf einer Geschäftsreise...*, 43.

uprising and insurgents (perhaps the writer refers to the 1846 events in Cracow and Galicia). The descriptions of encounters with insurgents assaulting innocent travellers or “decent” (German) citizens suggest an affinity with images of the American “Wild West.” Just like “wild” Indians, Polish insurgents bother peacefully oriented German merchants, taking away their luggage (as spoils of war), ripping off their clothes (as trophies) and eventually, cutting off their hair (equivalent to a scalp) together with performing a terrifying dance (war dance) and shouting out unintelligible words which the narrator associates with magic spells (pagan practices). Freytag sees the leaders of the uprising as “tribal chiefs” with whom it is necessary to negotiate like with “savages” or children. The idealized figure of the merchant Schröter, accompanied by the main character of the novel Anton Wohlfart, initiates a conversation with the insurgents by saying: “We are your friends! The men of peace!” This constellation clearly resembles difficult contact between “civilized” European/American settlers and “barbarian” but childish Indians. And, according to the logic of such cultural contact, the latter – just like children – submit to German cultural superiority and give in their positions. The borderline where the Polish-German encounter takes place at the intersection of the two cultures (or culture and non-culture) is at the same time a line that divides the world into the “good” and “bad” part, the “civilized” and “regressive,” the “familiar” and “strange” one, but also into two spheres: one’s own everyday life commonness and a strange, unfamiliar land where one could enjoy adventures hitherto only known from books. It is a mythical borderland separating the East from the West, the Occident from the Orient.

On the other hand, the exoticization of Polishness is performed by means of drawing a parallel with “Asianness” (orientalism). In his descriptions of “savage” country seats of the Polish gentry, taken over by the German colonizers, the author ceaselessly emphasizes its oriental nature. The impression is strengthened by the analogy between Polish lands and Sahara or continuous evocation of images showing merchant caravans trekking across Polish immense wilderness in order to find more “civilized” places to rest, like oases in the desert. The writer’s perpetual oscillation between attributing “Indian nakedness” to Polishness and assigning to it the oriental wealth, luxury, eroticism and finally, despotism indicates how powerfully Freytag’s impressions on Poland and Poles were dependent on the currently dominant convictions, according to which unclaimed, “wild” and empty spaces in Asia or Americas should remain still expecting their (Western-European) discoverers to eventually gain its place in the history. This is why the Eastern peripheries of Prussia/Germany (but also Polish lands) are inscribed in the stereotype of the Orient or the “savage” New World.

The topography of the described nature and landscapes is also subordinated to the logic, according to which Poles are perceived and depicted as "savages." In the opening passages of *Soll und Haben* which treat about the Polish revolution, the topography of the region plays a much lesser role than in other parts of the novel in which the German civilizational mission in the East is the central theme. The author constructs space as unwritten emptiness or a wild and uncontrollable void untouched by the human hand. It is an "ownerless prairie," a no man's land, neglected and forgotten by the world. In Freytag's presented world, however, these flat, one-dimensional, empty, and endless spaces become the promised land awaiting its discoverer and savior who will open it to civilizational progress and history. Interpreting Freytag's imageries with the help of a mental map, one could find in them reflections over the power and methods of appropriation of Otherness. The author builds a picture of the primal, archaic world which exists beyond movement and time. It has no borders, roads, walls, fences or bridges – no traces of civilization. The homogeneous flatness of the Polish landscape is deprived of hills, mountains or summits which would symbolize the Center, i.e. power and authority. Endlessness and borderlessness as well as flatness of this space imply both uncertainty and menace, for it is not possible to embrace it with one look, hence control it. The only element fulfilling this uncivilized void is the fearsome Polish primeval forest.

A narrative strategy Freytag eagerly uses is semanticization of the Polish forest as a place of mythical adventures experienced by literary characters and at the same time, an allegory of the German cultural victory in the East. In order to reach Paradise situated behind the dangerous forest (thus, to achieve the goal of civilizing and appropriating Otherness) one must be put to test of forest. This involves hacking through the threatening wilderness, fighting both dangers coming from the outside and one's own weaknesses to be rewarded for the courage and hardship. The promise of getting to the Paradise is inscribed in Freytag's models of the Polish landscape. Despite the threat in descriptions of the Polish nature, they often contain a prognosis of happiness and luck. Greenness glimmering in the sea of sand or the praise of fertility and abundance of lands occupied by German settlers are a guarantee of abundant harvests in the future. Overwriting old signs with the new ones (new objects and topographic names) which completely cover the previous character of the space, is a process of gradual absorption and elimination of the Other. Hence, the nearly ritual enlisting of German civilizational triumphs in the East: building roads, dams and bridges, developing cities, founding new settlements, clearing forests, drying marshes, and transforming them into fertile crop fields. Ewa Thompson found similar elements of the "colonial superiority" in Russian literature, thus: "rich writings, repugnance towards primitive

people of inferior customs, the ability to use resources of the conquered lands for good purposes (healing wounds, building new houses and parks).⁵⁸

Consequently, the narrative colonization, or rhetorical taming and appropriation of the space belonging to the Other means its defragmentation and total dismantling followed by composing a completely new entity out of these elements, entity arranged along the clear borderlines. Such construction of periphery makes it an integral part of the empire and not an alien body within its frames. The American researcher summarized narrative practices of Russian authors in the following way: "With the help of literature, enormous non-Russian territories have been appropriated. People came up with traditions which showed borderlands of the empire as equally Russian as Moscow itself."⁵⁹ This conclusion may be repeated with no restraints in reference to the stance adopted by German writers who were enthusiasts of Prussia: rhetorical appropriation of Eastern territories annexed by Prussia took place through creation of new traditions and erasure of the local population's memory from oral history together with muting the peripheries' "own voice." Effectively, Gustav Freytag could freely make the narrator of *Soll und Haben* say words full of colonial arrogance and impudence:

His life [that of Fritz von Fink, a German colonist] will be an endless, victorious fight against morose ghosts of this land and from the Slavic castle [taken over by German colonists] a number of strong young men will come out – a new German line, assiduous with their bodies and souls, and will take control of this land: the generation of colonists and conquerors.⁶⁰

In effect, the work can be read as a pioneering/colonial novel or an "Eastern-colonial"⁶¹ one, as suggested by the German literary critic Uwe-K. Ketelsen. Not only does it follow the narrative model, topic and symbolic spatial order typical of European colonial literature, but it consciously promotes colonization of the East as an equivalent of overseas conquest and an alternative to German emigration to America.

4.

In the last part of this article I would like to mention one more issue crucial to the post-colonial research – the "own voice," authenticity and mimicry.

58 E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy Imperium...*, 101-102.

59 Ibid., 76.

60 G. Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, [in:] id. *Gesammelte Werke*, t. 4-5, Leipzig 1886-1887, 398.

61 Cf. U.-K. Ketelsen, *Vier Jungens gehen zur See...*

According to Homi Bhabba,⁶² the notion of mimicry defines specific ambivalence related with the post-colonial discourse. It is a form of imitation (enforced or willingly adopted) of the patterns produced by the hegemonic culture and the way of thinking inscribed in it, characteristic to individuals and/or groups representing the colonized community. Mimicry, i.e. proper adjustment to speaking from the dominant point of view is not, as stated by Duć-Fajfer,

a simple reproduction of the colonising culture, behavior, customs and values is a parody close to mockery but also a threat resulting from breaking the colonial authority by the potential mockery. Threat contained in mimicry, however, does not stem from open resistance but from the way it is suggested that similarity of the imitating identity to the colonized is not absolute.⁶³

On the other hand, Bhabba underlines the power of mimicry as destabilizing for the hegemonic discourse. This perspective could be employed to interpret statements by the 19th century Polish writers intensively learning the German (or more generally, the conquerors') public discourse. This is clearly visible in the case of images of the "savage nature" and civilizational regressiveness of Poles promoted by German literature and journalism. Those impressions found the reflection in the stereotype of a Polish-Indian which also returns in Polish constructs of Sameness of the period.

The heated debate carried on in the 1860s and 1870s over the future of the Polish society (later included in the organic work program), on the one hand, shows the process of taking over certain models of thinking from the hegemonic discourse, on the other hand, distinctly proves that the mechanisms of such adaptation reveals their subversive potential. What is at stake here is not so much "mockery" or "irony" (in Bhabba's understanding) as the possibility to turn around the logical order being the foundation of the dominant culture's discourse and to use it as a weapon against colonizers.

In 1864, Ludwik Powidaj published in Lviv "Literary Journal" an extremely controversial article⁶⁴ which triggered a heated discussion in the Polish press. The historical analogy between Poles and Indians drawn in the text was undoubtedly the effect of the increased reception of German debates on Poland

62 H. Bhabba, *Die Verortung der Kultur*, Stauffenberg Verlag, Tübingen 2000.

63 H. Duć-Fajfer, *Etniczność a literatura...*, 441.

64 L.P. [Ludwik Powidaj], *Polacy i Indianie*, „Dziennik Literacki” (Lwów) 1864 no 53 and 56, quoted by: S. Sandler, *Indiańska przygoda Henryka Sienkiewicza*, PIW, Warsaw 1967.

and Poles. Paraphrasing the widespread stereotype referring to Frederick II's opinion about "Indian" Poles, Powidaj writes:

Since then [the Prussian king's statement], the comparison between Poles and Indians became one of the favourite subjects of Prussian politicians. A few years earlier, one of the Prussian democrats publicly announced from the platform: similarly to Indians (*Rothhäute Amerikas*), Poles are doomed by Providence to complete destruction. Like in the New World, a new strong Anglo-American race pushes the increasingly impoverished and dwarfish Indian generations deep into the ancient forests where they slowly die from hunger and poverty, Polish people evicted from the towns and larger country seats (*Rittergutsbesitze*) and poverty-stricken, they need to give way to Prussian civilization.⁶⁵

The concept of humankind development which shaped Powidaj's vision of the world is based on the popular – since the 18th century and across Europe – model of evolutionary development of culture. As a result, by no means does he challenge the thesis of inevitability of ousting civilizationally "regressive" populations/nations by "higher" cultures. On the other hand, conclusions formulated on the grounds of such perception of the world are definitely different from the ones desired by the German hegemonic discourse. This might mean adoption of a specific mimicry strategy, provided that its subversive force lies not in questioning the symbolic order of the dominant culture through the ironic distance towards it but in its revaluation in its own favour. Powidaj persuades in a quite deceitful manner that what seems to threaten Poland the most: i.e., modern/capitalist economic and social behavior considered by the Polish population of the 19th century as "German," should become the most effective antidote to the "enemy's" practices, if they are taken over and appropriately adapted by Poles. Supporting civilizational development, thriftiness and prosperity growth as well as acceleration of social modernization and fundamental changes in the national Polish mentality are presented as the only chance for the Polish "nation" to survive under occupation and in the further perspective, to liberate from the alien domination.

Another example of undermining (exploding) the hegemonic discourse may be the ironic attempt to transform the stereotype of the "Pole-Indian (of Europe)" into his German equivalent ("German-Indian") by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. In 1877, the author writes from Dresden to the magazine "Echo":

65 Quoted after: S. Sandler, *Indiańska przygoda...*, 57.

On American steppes, it is possible to come across Indian tribes remaining natural in terms of notions and lifestyle but absorbed all attainments of the civilized world through associating with it. They have breech-loading weapons and other pleasurable inventions – fruits of science and work; but their heads host eternal barbarity. Believe or not, it is possible to meet such Indians in Germany. They have all external traces of the civilized nation, they can even read and write, some of them had contact with “Conversations-Lexicon” but when you talk to them, I swear, they’re Indians. In my life I met many of our boys who were illiterate, not with the words, but who were far more knowledgeable than these hastily produced with the help of some schools pseudo-civilized people.⁶⁶

Two matters are striking in the above statement. Firstly, Kraszewski questions the myth of cultural superiority of Germans with arguments he has taken from the same myth, which was extremely eagerly disseminated in the German-speaking public space of the 19th century (and later). Secondly, he remains faithful to the Eurocentric (colonial) optic as he applies the notion of “Indians” in order to discredit (ridicule) Germans perceived as enemies. This split is characteristic to the above mentioned Powidaj who persistently tries to prove the difference between Poles and “really” savage Indians.

Building one’s own counter-hegemonic narration is in both cases supported by the symbolic order of the domination discourse which also undermines the power hierarchies it implies. Interpreting Powidaj’s project from this point of view, one could find in it a conviction that the colonized society will manage to defeat the colonizers when it becomes resemblant to them or even better than they are because, by surpassing them, it will gain power to define reality. Whereas in Kraszewski’s work, the very thinking in the category of progress, typical of the entire 19th century, is not questioned (similarly to Powidaj), but – and this is how a writer differs from a publicist – the notion of “progress” is subjected to critical reflection, therefore a question is: what is “true” progress? In such a constellation, the idea of the “German progress” (and so the German cultural “superiority”) can be semantically translated to a thesis about Germans regress in the history of the humankind development, i.e. their return to the (Indian) barbarity. Kraszewski re-evaluates particular segments of thinking within the same model without disturbing its internal structure.

66 J. I. Kraszewski, *Echo z Niemiec*, „Echo” 1877, quoted after: E. Czapiewski, *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski a Niemcy. Publicystyka pisarza w obronie polskiego stanu posiadania pod panowaniem pruskim i niemieckim*, Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Wrocław 1994, 191-192.

The significant role the world vision based on people's assumptions regarding culture/civilization and progress played in the concepts of the 19th century European intellectual and political elites is shown by not only particular national programs, behavior strategies of the Centers towards Peripheries and modern European nations (national states) towards each other, but most of all, attempts to shape the reality in compliance with its presumptions, especially a desire to make projects for the future. Reading both the German public discourse absorbed from the Polish perspective as an imposed interpretation of the world as well as Polish counter-narratives by means of instruments used by the post-colonial research allows for drawing completely new (quality wise) conclusions regarding the struggle for symbolic power or practices of rhetorical appropriation of nations and territories which had been incorporated to the empires by force. It also enables us to follow the processes of constructing "defensive identities of the colonized nations" and analyze the tactics of busting, and thus questioning the hegemonic discourse – the tactics characteristic to the process of subjectivization, i.e. emancipation of the conquered communities manifesting the fact of obtaining their "own voice." The similarly profiled reading of modern texts is equally beneficial as it indicates mechanisms involved in colonization of human minds and a long way to liberation from this captivity.

Translation: Marta Skotnicka

Leszek Koczanowicz

Post-Communism and Cultural Wars

The notion that people's political choices were driven not only by personal economic interest but also, or even primarily, by the values they espouse and their outlook on life was one of the most important revelations in the field of politics. If politics was considered by some to consist of mostly administrative duties, with political skirmishes amounting to nothing more than competitions yielding the best managers, now it fully revealed itself to be a field wherein diverse cultural patterns clashed with one another. We might say, paradoxically, that fundamental worldview issues are pushed to the forefront in two particular circumstances: when the economic situation in a country is either devolving or barely stable. In politics, looking for fault lines inevitably creates divisions and political options that draw on cultural values. Thus, "culture wars" were thoroughly radicalized.

In one of his books, Terry Eagleton writes that culture wars are not just the domain of humanities departments anymore. Outgrowing the infighting between proponents of canon and apostles of diversity, they became "the shape of the world politics of the new millennium."¹ In other

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1 T. Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 51.

words, culture became a political force to be reckoned with, expanding beyond the traditional approach that portrayed it as either dependent on politics or standing on the sidelines. However, delineating political divisions generated by cultural differences is far from easy. If we take a closer look at the rise of the neoconservative movement, a paradigmatic example of a culture war, we will clearly see that it fosters a notion about two completely different cultures co-existing within a single nation.

Exemplifying this premise is the book written by Gertrude Himmelfarb, a preeminent philosopher, entitled *One Nation, Two Cultures*.² Himmelfarb's deliberations are presided over by Adam Smith's proclamation that within all civilized societies two separate schemes of morality are current at the same time. One is liberal, the other strict and severe. The former is championed by worldly, sophisticated people, while the latter is preferred by the common folk. Naturally, establishing a precise definition of either of the two morality systems is more than problematic and the author is very aware of that. Who are the "sophisticates" and who are the "common people"? The dichotomy does not really overlap with the division into the "rich" and the "poor" or the "educated" and the "uneducated." As examples Himmelfarb provides the idle aristocracy and the art-minded bohemian crowd, the latter a favorite target of the former's ridicule. It seems to me, however, that clearly demarcating individual social groups espousing each of the two aforementioned moral systems is nearly impossible. The author makes claims to the contrary, arguing that the type of morality one stands for, rather than economic or political interest, determines whether we consider ourselves members of a given group. That particular thesis clearly alludes to Max Weber's famous essay on the Protestant work ethic and its importance to the development of capitalism, but the author also builds on, or rather, shifts the meanings of notions put forth by German sociologist towards nearly all spheres of social and political life.

In Western Europe, culture wars manifest themselves primarily during debates on the issue of multiculturalism. These discussions are no longer purely academic deliberations on the possibilities of intermixing distinct cultural patterns, the prospects of translating one culture into another, and ways to foster co-existence of two cultures within one nation. In every political campaign, problems like these are rendered into slogans used by all parties, while political theorists are forced to study complex issues, e.g. denominations in Islam, to understand how to redefine concepts like citizenship.

In Poland, cultural wars are naturally seen in a very different light. We are not facing, at least not right now, problems like mass immigration or

2 G. Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

confrontations with ethnic minorities. The majority of sociological studies seems to confirm the mass acceptance of Catholicism, regardless of how superficial the faith might be. Despite these findings, it is clear that in Poland the beginning of the 21st century also signals the onset of the kind of culture wars that translate into political differences. That particular state of affairs is a result of the fact that the conclusion of the transformation, and with it the post-communist period, ushered in the same processes that took place in every developed Western state, including the emergence of social divisions derived from cultural differences. In my opinion, this is one of the hallmarks of post-post-communism, as I try to call the system that followed post-communism.³ The presidential and parliamentary elections of 2005 are considered to be the symbolic founding date of that particular construct, wherein divisions along cultural and ideological lines replaced previous taxonomies that partitioned the population into post-communists and keepers of the Solidarity legacy. The borders between the new formations, however, seem blurry at best. To some degree, we can draw an analogy between the new camps and the division into “common folk” and “sophisticates” introduced by Smith and then employed by Himmelfarb. In Poland, the worldly “salon” and its representatives were deplored as emanations of elitism that have lost any contact with the realities of the everyday lives of millions of average people a long time ago. The use of this type of rhetoric only escalated after the tragic death of the president and members of his delegation near Smolensk; the attitudes of average people were now contrasted and compared to the attitudes exhibited by members of the elite or, to use a term coined by proponents of the division, pseudo-elites.

That particular division, however, does not introduce clearly delineated differences. Aside from describing characteristics associated, to a degree, with the cultural left, the term “salon” also encompasses traditional postulates and views held by liberals and social democrats. Similarly, during the 2005 elections, the Law and Justice party tried to separate the “Poland of the Home Army” from “post-communist Poland,” or contrast the “Solidarity Poland” with “liberal Poland.” None of these divisions, however, demonstrated sufficient power to embed themselves within the national consciousness for good, and in my opinion they are simply another rendering of the fundamental opposites of “True Poland” and the “Insincere or Inauthentic Poland.” The credibility of the opposites is based on defining the authentic within the life of a nation. In other words, demonstrating that the development of our country was dependent in nature and that the only genuine division

3 The concept of post-post-communism was explained in my book *Politics of Time: Dynamics of Identity in Post-Communist Poland* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 143–148.

separates those who accepted and internalized the dependence from those who are able to return to the “veritable life of the nation,” neglected but still alive, becomes a political necessity. As a consequence, it breeds an opposition deeper than the one fostered by American neoconservatives; it is not about two cultures co-existing within one nation anymore, but about the co-existence of two distinct nations with separate values and goals. Needless to say, only one of them is genuine. Thus, to borrow a phrase from political theories of post-Marxism, a chain of equivalence appears, linking specific political attitudes with the concept of nation, an “empty signifier” that plays a crucial role in Polish discourse.

From this perspective, the issue of criteria used to evaluate the genuineness becomes crucial. One apparent method employed to establish the notion of an authentic nation is referencing tradition and a particular point in history followed by colonization efforts involving not only political, economic subordination but also cultural and mental subjugation. In other words, it is important to identify the onset of conquest. Proponents of this strategy associate it, at least in name, with postcolonial theory. In this case, conquest can be situated in the post-WW2 period as an effect of the imposition of a Soviet-style system. The experience supposedly poisoned the mentality of the Polish nation, leaving the interwar period as the last golden era of the genuine Polish state. Advocates of this concept do not find it inappropriate to simultaneously claim that the society failed to succumb to communist propaganda and that quite the opposite happened – its mental state survived nearly untouched, demoralization afflicting only a select few members of the upper echelons of the ruling class.

I would not like to enter into detailed arguments with these interpretations just yet, so I will just emphasize that there are at least two reasons why applying postcolonial theory to the post-WW2 period in Poland is not feasible. One is that Soviet Union's domination was purely political and never translated into cultural subjugation. In classic postcolonial theory, the metropolis imposes its cultural categories on its subject and furthermore, the subjects themselves have to describe themselves using these categories; that was never the case in postwar Poland (and neither in Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and, to a degree, in the Baltic countries). The West remained the cultural metropolis, and it kept providing the categories we used to describe and interpret our own history and culture. Neither can I agree with the thesis about the breach in continuity, as I consider the opposite to be true: communism “froze” the traditional attitudes which later surfaced under various guises as “currents” or factions in the Party or even in the official discourse of the People's Republic of Poland. Naturally, the discourse itself was limited by state censorship and the apparatus of coercion;

however, complete domination of Polish culture by a foreign one, a condition which I consider necessary for cultural colonization, did not occur as Soviet culture was simply “too weak.” In my book, I described in detail the failure of communists to create their “subjectification,” to borrow a phrase from Foucault. They were doomed to repeat a more or less depleted version of Christian or middle-class bourgeois ethics. Therefore, claiming that communism embedded a new morality within the populace or that negotiations between the victors and vanquished somehow changed the personality of the latter is simply a misunderstanding. Even if postcolonial theory is useful in explaining certain political decisions – for example, building statehood – its reach is limited to this particular sphere, without touching on what we might call its core, meaning the colonized peoples’ usage of categories provided by colonizing powers in the process of constructing their identity.⁴

In the other version of right-wing usage of postcolonial theory, the mythical genuineness of the nation is placed deeper in history – the opposition between the authentic Polish being and Western-imposed ideology is constructed herein. In this context, “sarmatism” appears as an expression of purely Polish authenticity corrupted by Western European thought. Needless to say, Polish genuineness is “better” than any other Western ideology, as Ewa Thompson brilliantly expounded:

Sarmatism implies a Thomist and Aristotelean perception of reality, according to which everyone knows good from evil, justice from injustice, etc. In Poland, and in Polish intellectual life (and, unfortunately, in the political life as well), we often witness displays of such touching naïveté. Poles believe that if we reveal behind-the-scenes scheming to the world, the masses will collectively rise up in disbelief shouting “For shame!” That obviously will never happen. And that is not all; Sarmatism places the human being in the center of attention. The people are of utmost importance, the state, the conquest of neighboring nations, and philosophical systems are all less so. That is why Sarmatism distinguishes Poles from their neighbors. It is the complete opposite of either Russianness or Germanness. In Russia, the state, the office, the institutions are paramount. As Fyodor Dostoyevsky put it, Russians cannot exist outside Russia. Germans, on the other hand, have a very theoretical relationship with reality, manifested in the continuous imposition of new philosophical systems. All of it is complemented by a policy of territorial conquest and colonialism, expressed in concepts such as *Drang nach Osten*. While it is true that after the Second World War that particular

4 Koczanowicz, *Politics of Time*, 89–102.

tendency was successfully checked, in recent years it has started to rear its head again.⁵

Such a perspective might improve the self-esteem of Poles, but at the cost of simplifying the history of Polish culture and its complex, as in all national cultures, relationships with neighboring countries. What distinguishes our country among others is this multifaceted and ambiguous character of our culture. From the influence of radical Arian reformation to Catholic mysticism, from fascination with Western thought to oriental influences, from expansion and cultural assimilation of the Eastern Borderlands to assimilation into German and Austrian culture in Silesia – these are all incredibly complex processes that cannot simply be reduced to a single label of “sarmatism.” Introducing and accepting such a label might be understood only when we consider it a symptom of Polish identity issues arising as a result of ongoing and increasing integration with Western Europe and globalization. In such a case, sarmatism might serve to ostensibly defend the most important elements of Polish culture and identity. This defense, however, quickly turns out to be superficial, as it protects not a complete identity but it was a narrowed-down version, reduced to slogans associated with right-wing political entities. The concept of sarmatism imparts a certain grandeur on these entities and introduces a conviction that we are dealing not with a consciously constructed narrative of culture, but the universal destiny of a nation. In Polish political culture, where the concept of nation is the dominant “empty signifier” organizing distinct discourses, such a definitive reference to history is very important to current politics, as it confers a “hegemonic” political advantage on proponents of specific options.⁶

The ideas of Polish republicanism are presented in the same vein, although without references to postcolonial theory. In this case we are once again dealing with an equally fictional concept of a “special destiny of Polish cultural and historical development,” which resulted in the creation of a particular type of democracy that combined national and religious values with public ones. In other words, liberal or any other democracy that does not respect these moral values is not compatible with the spirit of the nation. The supposed wellspring of these ideas is the ethos of the Nobles’ Democracy, which brings us back once again to the idea of sarmatism. A right-wing pundit once stated that positivist critics of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s literary output simply did not realize

5 E. Thompson, “Polski nacjonalizm jest niezwykle łagodny” [“Polish Nationalism is Unusually Mild”], *Dziennik*, 31 Mar. 2007.

6 Naturally, when using categories like “empty signifiers” or “hegemony” I am referencing the rudiments of the discursive concept of politics created by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

that he alone managed to capture that unique ethos of Polish democracy in his works. In my opinion, even Sienkiewicz would be surprised if he knew that Zagłoba was promoted to a beacon of democracy!

Aside from the abovementioned strategies of constructing the genuine character of a nation, one other option, previously just a blip on the radar, was buttressed after the Smolensk crash. Instead of referencing tradition it tries to utilize direct existential experiences, although it still makes use of specific correlates in history. The authentic existence of the nation was made synonymous with an individual's experience of his own being. Experiences that simultaneously existential and political, like the Smolensk tragedy, intensify political infighting driving them to extremes. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz's widely commented upon poem "To Jarosław Kaczyński" is a classic example of melding existential themes with political agitation:

The motherland is in need again – that is: scoundrels
 Are once again scheming and working their angles
Poland – they say – is truly right and good
But should first apologize to those it hurt
Poland – they say – is well and fine
We'll civilize her by making her kneel on peas
 She should smarten up and change her ways
 Because we can't live with these cantankerous *mohers*
 And again there are two Polands – her two faces
 Jakub Jasiński gets up from Mickiewicz's book
 Poland did not ask him whether he was willing to die
 And he knew – that he had no choice
 Two Polands – the one about which the prophets knew
 And that which the Tsar of the North takes into his arms
 Two Polands – one wants to please the world
 And the other – taken on the gun-carriage ...
 Wearing our blood like a royal standard
 Our ancestor's most sacred hidden wound
 They'll say it's pathos – but we need it
 As it's a matter of our eternal fate
 What shall you do? – ask us our ancestors
 But there's nobody else to answer beside us
 What divided us – it can't be put back together again
 We cannot give away Poland into the hands of thieves
 Who want to steal her from us and sell her to the world
 O, Jarosław! You still owe something to your Brother!

Where are you all going to? What will happen to Poland?
 Questions asked by the scorched corpse
 The thing is, you need to do something about it
 So hang in there, dear Jarosław

Milanówek, April 19, 2010

In the poem, contrasting the authentic nation with the inauthenticity of its existence is the source of dramatic, existential tension. The opposition quickly takes the form of: us/them, or even: the authentic existence of the nation – a nation deprived of its character. The category of authenticity again becomes crucial, but this time it is understood in a very peculiar way. In Rymkiewicz's poem, the "scoundrels" are defined by two distinctive features: they want to modernize Poland and they want to apologize for harm we have inflicted upon others, therefore, they are looking at their own nation from the perspective of the "Other." These features are linked with two others: foreign influence embodied by the Tsar of the North, and the Poland that "wants to please the world." This semiotic chain is based on the figure of otherness, the subordination of Poland to foreign goals and foreign values.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to contrast these tendencies with the "authenticity" of the existence of the nations and, probably, its incarnation within the state. This genuineness is founded on death, it merely guarantees the existence of the nation. When we look at death from this perspective, it is not something that happens for a reason, it becomes a self-contained value that decides the authenticity of a nation. Thus, politics is reduced to nothing more than genuineness which, in turn, is based on existence's openness towards death. The author of the poem, and a plethora of pundits after him, suggested that such an approach is a continuation of Polish Romantic traditions. There is a kernel of truth in the claim, as Polish Romantic tradition is capacious enough to effortlessly "serve" diverse ideological options - from leftist (Władysław Broniewski) to extreme right wing. However, I think that in this particular case the ideas espoused by German "conservative revolutionaries" like Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, and most of all Martin Heidegger serve as the primary reference point. As recent studies show, the latter had no problem with applying his philosophical categories to nationalist political analyses. In his book about the German philosopher's unpublished seminars from 1933-1935, Emmanuel Faye writes:

Heidegger was fascinated with the relationship between man and the *Gemeinschaft*, his ability to fashion (*gestalten*) a community and to create a *polis*, a state. Thus it is not the state that is the condition of politics. The

state is possible only if it is based on the political being of man. Heidegger means to designate by this not the individual will of man but the power of the community that encompasses all. That totalizing – not to say totalitarian – conception of the political community is the foundation of his entire doctrine. He therefore rejects all vision of politics as a limited domain, alongside one's private life, economics, technology, and so on. For him, that conception leads to a degradation of the political, which he assimilates to the politician who knows how to play "low parliamentary tricks" (*parlamentarischen Kniffen*). It makes one wish that the criticism of Heidegger would focus on the term *Schlag*, the murderous blow of totalitarianism; when he uses the term it is, by contrast, to justify that violence and legitimize it by inscribing it within being itself.⁷

Without going into complex specifics of creating the ideologies behind revolutionary conservatism, I would merely like to state that in my opinion, their core category construes the nation to be an expression of the existence of individuals. Thus, the nation becomes neither a cultural nor an ethnic category, but an existential one. But how is the existential being of the nation realized if, at a political level, it is supposed to guarantee its authenticity contrasted with ostensible survival?

I think that using categories borrowed from biopolitics and the works of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Roberto Esposito might be helpful in answering the question above. A genuine nation, or maybe the genuine existence of a nation, is realized outside of any social conditions or, to use Agamben's categories, it exists in the form of "naked life." Categories used to describe a nation in such a state of existence are related exactly to the biological substrate itself: "massacre," "hanging," Poland "taken on the gun-carriage." Jakub Jasiński appears: "Poland did not ask him whether he was willing to die /And he knew – that it was not his place to choose." Naturally, the protagonist is strictly a figure of the naked life, his "empirical" experiences do not matter, and neither does his fascination with the French Revolution or Voltaire. He appears as an emanation of the nation which, in order to survive, has to be reduced or – as the poem's author intends – elevated to a purely biological existence. Thanks to that, a nation can operate outside all social ramifications, as a community that does not owe anything to foreign influence. Such a nation has to be immunized against similar outside influences, which forces it to reach its own limits and contradict itself. Roberto Esposito suggestively elaborated on the subject in his work

7 E. Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 116-117.

on biopolitics, pointing out that the bio-spiritual incorporation, specific to modernity, “was the final result of an immunitary syndrome so out of control that it not only destroys everything that it comes into contact with, but turns disastrously on its own body.”⁸

The abovementioned does not mean, however, that I think any sort of association with or reference to dependence and post-dependence discourse necessarily results in right-wing politics. However, radically changing, or even twisting the nature of the idea of postcolonialism might lead to such a turn of events. According to me, the theory itself is not about discovering the authentic existence of a nation, but rather, to put it briefly, about revealing dilemmas, negotiation strategies, and compromises that are formed during centuries of proximity between two cultures: the dominant one and the subordinate one. Needless to say, the problems are not Poland’s alone, they are a major concern in other countries of Eastern Europe; for Poles, however, the matter is a little more complex, given the fact that our country participated, to some extent, in shaping the culture that was considered dominant. In multiple instances, Polish intellectuals influenced the shape of what was becoming modern Europe. One paradigmatic example of such an intellectual would be Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, a thinker clearly incompatible with the “Aristotelean and Thomist sarmatism” framework, who laid the foundation for, to borrow a phrase from Charles Taylor, the “moral order,” that is the generally accepted social notions that have dominated Western intellectual life since the dawn of the modern era.

Poland, however, far from being the only state in Europe to do so, moved through various stages in its relationship with the western part of the continent. In his well-documented book about the invention of Eastern Europe by the French Enlightenment, Larry Wolff posited that although the region was weird enough to be constructed by the Occident, it turned out to be not as exotic as the Orient and that is why it remained suspended between the two cultural realms.⁹ The East-West dichotomy is a relatively new invention that replaced the previous division of North-South that prevailed in Europe for centuries:

Just as the new centers of the Enlightenment superseded the old centers of the Renaissance, the old lands of barbarism and backwardness in the north were correspondingly displaced to the east. The Enlightenment had

8 R. Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 165.

9 L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

to invent Western Europe and Eastern Europe together, as complementary concepts, defining each other by opposition and adjacency.¹⁰

The invention of Eastern Europe is closely linked with other inventions: the Orient and Western Europe. Eastern Europe is distant enough to serve Western Europe as a mirror; not distant enough, however, as the Orient, a term which implied a complete reversal of civilization and barbarism, making Eastern Europe an entity “in between.”

Wolff also posits that the invention of Eastern Europe took place in six separate intellectual operations: entry, possession, imagining, mapping, addressing, and peopling. As I cannot give a concise summary of these rich passages from Wolff's book here, I will try to provide a few examples instead. In his account of his journeys, Count de Segúr wrote that after entering Eastern Europe one experiences a feeling of strangeness and otherness as “one has left Europe entirely,” while the region seems to be an “inconceivable mélange of ancient centuries and modern centuries, of monarchical spirit and republican spirit, of feudal pride and equality, of poverty and riches.”¹¹ Eastern Europe is also a region where the wildest and strangest sexual fantasies are fulfilled, as are fantasies about boundless possession. One classic example are Casanova's memoirs, wherein he elaborates on his sexual adventures in Poland and Russia. There is no place in them for sophisticated erotica; instead, the memoirs offer tales of buying women and their unconditional subjugation. The situation does not change even though a girl bough in Puławy runs away right after the purchase “like a thief.”¹² Possession was closely related to the image of Eastern Europe as a place pervaded by a strangeness that is hard to understand. In *The History of Charles XII*, which was the primary source of information about Poland in the 18th century, the country is described as a “part of ancient Sarmatia,” while the Sejm, the lower chamber of parliament, was described thusly: “sabre in hand, like the ancient Sarmatians (...) their ancestors, as little discipline, the same fury to attack.”¹³ When Mozart went to Prague to attend the premiere of his *Marriage of Figaro*, he was struck by the strangeness of the culture and language; he wrote to a friend: “I am Punkitititi. – My wife is Schabla Pumfa. Hofer is Rozka Pumpa.”¹⁴ The author

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 19–20.

¹² *ibid.*, 62.

¹³ *ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 107.

of the quoted book mentions that travels through the alien land encouraged the imagination, which resulted in the famous composer effortlessly coming up with new identities for himself and his entourage. Wolff also points out that imagination helped to create imaginary maps of the region as well as beliefs and prejudices about the population inhabiting it. The desire to change Eastern Europe will be a natural consequence of its invention. The author writes about Parisian salon sending physiocrats to Poland, which for him naturally bears a resemblance to emissaries dispatched by the International Monetary Fund to post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Especially interesting is the relationship between Stanisław August and his Parisian caretaker, Madame Geoffrin, the person responsible for establishing one of the most famous salons in the French capital. I will only bring up the final part of the story. After Stanisław August was elected king, he wrote to Mme Geoffrin: "*Ma chère maman*, will I then never see you again? Will I then enjoy no more of the sweetness, the wisdom of your opinions. For from there where you are, you can give me maxims, but advice is out of range."¹⁵ Maybe Stanisław managed to precisely capture the dilemma of relations between these two parts of Europe: "maxims yes, advice no," clearly delineating the limits of allowed interference.

I do not find the fact that this particular books does not really function in Polish intellectual discussions all that unusual, although it would seem that it is a perfect fit with Polish right-wing postcolonialism, given that it touches on themes of ideological subjugation of Eastern Europe by the Western part of the continent as well as constructing Eastern Europe as immature in a civilizational and cultural sense and thus requiring constant supervision. Nevertheless, Larry Wolff depicts how complex such a relationship can become, especially when it does not allow unchallenged assignation of special roles to particular nations or unambiguous indication of who was the victim and who was the tormentor. The most important thing, however, is that Poland does not get a special place in history, it was not particularly persecuted, nor was it chosen to serve a higher purpose. It shared the fate of other peripheral countries of the region and in the eyes of the West it is practically indistinguishable from its neighbors. The mythology of Polish postcolonialism, on the other hand, is rife with familiar tropes regarding the special role and situation of our country. Distinguished historian Maciej Janowski quickly does away with the myth:

For 150 years Poles were fed with tales of their own grandeur, innocence, and – therein lies the rub – uniqueness. The latter is the source of a most

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 244.

fundamental problem. Because Polish history is not unique; no country, regardless of its peculiarities, has a history that could be called unique. The fortunes of Poland are fairly typical for a normal peripheral country with an average, primitive economy, and a normal, unexceptional imitative culture, adopting foreign ideas rather than producing its own.¹⁶

It seems that only admitting that Polish history is normal and average might pave the way to an honest debate on the place of our country in European or even global culture. This is where, in my opinion, we might apply postcolonial theory, by way of using its emancipatory character, to Polish history. Postcolonial theory was not created to impart a rank system on nations, or to fulfill the conservatives' dreams of returning to a utopian, pre-conquest national unity. Its primary message revolves around emancipation, liberation from myths imposed by the colonizing powers and those that nations impose on themselves. In this sense, postcolonialism clearly references Karl Marx and Western emancipatory tradition associated with his thought. The idea was emphatically expressed by Dipesh Chakrabarty in the concluding chapters of his book: "As I hope is obvious from what has been said, provincializing Europe cannot ever be a project of shunning European thought. For at the end of European imperialism, European thought is a gift to us all. We can talk of provincializing it only in an anticolonial spirit of gratitude."¹⁷ Nearly forgotten thinkers, like Ludwik Krzywicki or Kazimierz Kelles-Kraus could be considered Polish counterparts of scholars pioneering early precepts of postcolonialist theory, as both of them read and commented the works of Karl Marx to better understand the problems plaguing the nation. That group should also include Julian Brun, a generation younger than the two aforementioned thinkers, whose famous book *Stefana Żeromskiego tragedia pomyłek*, first published in the *Skamander* monthly, portrayed the tangle of national and social conditions and determinants that shaped the Polish nation in early 20th century.¹⁸ None of these scholars ever referenced the mythology of sarmatism reputedly corrupted by the West in their works. On the contrary, they attempted to point

16 M. Janowski, "Polityka historyczna: między edukacją historyczną a propagandą" in *Pamięć i polityka historyczna*, ed. S.M. Nowinkowski, J. Pomorski, and R. Stobiecki (Łódź: IPN, 2008), 234.

17 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 255.

18 First printed in *Skamander* no. 30 (1923), reprinted in: J. Brun, *Stefana Żeromskiego komedia pomyłek* (Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Księgarska "Książka," 1926). After the war, the latter edition was reprinted with a foreword by L. Kruczkowski and an introduction by J. Kurowicki (Warszawa: Alma Press, 1986).

out how hard it is for a modern nation to shun the spiritual and economic yoke of feudalism and emphasized the necessity of establishing a modern Polish nation through conflict that would merge national and social liberation. In other words, instead of a national policy based on resentment towards the West, it would be a policy of emancipation incorporating Western thought.

Maybe it is this theoretical avenue that Maria Janion opened up with *The Incredible Slavs*; in the book, she formulates a program whose goal is to open Polish culture up to diverse outside influences and thus radically transform the nation. In the conclusion, the author writes:

Poland is a paltry and flat monolith, mostly nationalist and Catholic. That is why it is so tiresome to its citizens, who want nothing more than to leave it for Europe, understood as a space, where culture is unbound. We might even put up with the lack of southern sun if only our culture was more diverse, colorful, and unshackled from colonial and postcolonial obsessions.¹⁹

Janion's position is close to the intentions of the pioneers of postcolonial theory. It is supposed to serve as an instrument of emancipation that will purge the culture of the oppressed of its internal limitations that were imposed on it by the oppressors. Applying postcolonial theory to the situation of our country might have a reinvigorating effect; it would allow us to look at the limitations and idiosyncrasies inscribed within our culture from a new perspective. Overcoming cultural limitations would open up a new political space, free from fears of subjugation and losing identity.

Given my sympathy for this sort of emancipatory therapy for culture and despite the doubts about right-wing postcolonialism I might harbor, I cannot help but wonder whether we humanists are falling prey to a host of illusions in our discussions. Illusions that we might call culturological. We engage in discussions and debates, collectively assuming the existence of continuity of culture and its traces; a continuity that transcends economic, political, and social changes. I do not think, however, that that sort of assumption is in any way legitimate. Furthermore, it might even be dangerous: trigger illusions of continuity where there is none, and create artifacts that have a surprising propensity to become political facts. If the humanities are to be a responsible and accountable field of study, they will have to confront that illusion sooner or later.

Translation: Jan Szelągiewicz

19 M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna [The Incredible Slavs]* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006), 330.



Anna Wieczorkiewicz

The Colonization of the Bodies of Savages

Freak shows

Her face contorted in grimace, her arms raised as if in anger or fear, shrivelled, sagging breasts, torso leading to the tail of a fish – this was the mermaid that passing Londoners could see at a St James's Street café in 1822. So what if the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had published the four-volume work *The Menageries* out of concern for keeping people's minds in order? They still knew that naturalists had not discovered everything. The animal kingdom could not be more enormous and strange, and was not as regular as science would have it. This was a proven fact – there were gigantic beasts and dwarf beasts, living ones and dried-out or fossilized ones.

Wonders, irregularities, and monsters have long attracted both collectors and passing viewers, although the reasons for their curiosity have been various. The value of the specimens showcased in a freak show depended on their peculiarity. The collector of oddities would look for the rare and remarkable. Among his treasures was a reliquary with the remains of a saint, a shell framed in gold, an ivory jewel case, a fly ensconced in amber, an Orthodox icon, a unicorn's horn and a tiny shoe carved out of a cherry pit. Here, the dried exotic fruit found itself next to the mummified "mermaid" – the mermaid was

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not at all out of place in a contemporary world which accepted the existence of monstrous creatures. As taxonomical systems were developed in the field of natural history, increasingly concerted efforts were made to search for the normal, typical, and exemplary. This also brought about a gradual change in the way in which peculiarity was understood. Rather than the vision of reality in which nature appeared as a series of revelations in which God intervened, working miracles and changing the course of events, or creating grotesque beings, increasingly there was a preference for a conception of the world in which exceptions pointed to the rules governing the universal order. Yet there was one area in which the freak retained much of its former character – that of public displays. Excitement remained over the fact that nature was capable of bewildering cases of redundancy – a woman with three breasts, a two-headed creature, or one with only one head, but two sets of limbs. Nature was amazingly inventive, and had been known to give one body the characteristics of both sexes. And sometimes it worked the other way, giving people diminished organs, leaving them out entirely, replacing some with others, changing human organs into animal ones... Sometimes the body of a pig, horse, or dog contained a human intelligence. What seemed curious was both the intellectual normality of people with strange bodies, as well often as the capabilities of those with average ones. Therefore, anything that diverted from the ordinary was sought, lunatics, savages, geniuses and monsters, to be exhibited for viewers' pleasure. Such "freaks" were a mainstay of sideshows, where the real was mixed with the artificial, the living with the dead. People of science often doubted the authenticity of such beings, while specialists spoke of the purveyors of the spectacles as charlatans and exposed the genealogy of the supposed mermaids. The aforementioned dried-out mermaid was in fact produced from the remains of a monkey and a salmon, probably in Japan, the global capital of manufacture of such wonders.¹ Still, though, the 19th century remained a happy hunting ground, and public shows were the stage of rival mermen and mermaids, gigantic whale skeletons and live exotic creatures, half-people and half-animals. The boundaries marked by scientists became somewhat blurred.

These curiosities were followed by physicians. They came to determine whether a freak of nature was really remarkable, and gave their verdict on the scientific value of individual specimens. Medics themselves were extremely interested in anything that might contribute to a better understanding of humankind. For them, the *lusus naturae*, or "freaks of nature," that drew a sensation-hungry public traced a certain order. An exception could be a pathological change, and a monster a missing link in evolution... On occasion, mingling

1 Altick, Richard D., *The Shows of London*, Cambridge, MA and London 1978, 303.

with the crowd of charlatans and owners of fairground stalls, physicians tried to purchase the curiosity, or what remained of it. Particularly cherished were “human oddities” – dwarfs, giants, specimens of extreme obesity or exceptional thinness, as well as “savages” who stood almost on the verge of the animal world. They watched the living from the outside, and subjected the dead to close scrutiny from the inside too. Specialists performed autopsies to verify the nature of the curiosity, after which they embalmed it, preserved it in formalin, and put the skeletons together. The stage career of living freaks also went on after death – appropriately dissected, they continued to draw crowds. Sometimes too a freak of nature would be taken on by the intellectual elite. The skeleton of a 12-year old Sicilian dwarf girl, whose appearances in Ireland and England made her famous, was exhibited at the Royal College of Surgeons, accessible only to scientists. Another type of spectacle concerned Julia Pastrana, who was found among Indians. Of diminutive stature, but with an impressive beard and a head shaped like that of a monkey, for some time she was an attraction at London exhibitions. As well as England, she appeared in the United States, Canada and Moscow. Upon her death, she was embalmed and exhibited at a gallery in London: for a shilling, one could see Julia dressed in the theatrical costume which she wore during her life. One eyewitness wrote the following:

The face was marvelous: exactly like an exceedingly good portrait in wax, but it was *not* formed of wax. The closest examination convinced me that it was the true skin, prepared in some wonderful way. [...] There was no unpleasantness, or disagreeable concomitant, about the figure; and it was almost difficult to believe that the mummy was really that of a human being, and not an artificial model. (Altick 1978: 276 (author's emphasis))

So it was not just Julia who was admired, but also the craftsmanship that had gone into preserving her remains. A journalist from one London paper deemed it appropriate to inform his readers that:

This specimen of modern embalming, by a new and hitherto unknown process, has been most critically acclaimed by many of the first scientific gentlemen in London, and pronounced by them to be the most wonderful and marvelously-successful example of embalming ever recorded.²

We might at first be appalled by this kind of cognitive optimism as an affront to the dignity of a deceased human being. But it is worth considering what lay behind it. Perhaps this was not just about showing off the freak to delight the crowd and make the owner rich. It is true that the public likes to get excited,

2 *Illustrated London News*, 29 March 1862, 316, cited in Altick 1978, 267.

and the sight of a human – dead or alive – awakens especially strong emotions. This triggers an interplay between compassion and self-recognition in confrontation with that which is different. The embalmed Julia is not alive and not a waxwork, yet it is *almost* as if she is alive, and *almost* as if she is made of wax. Though she is dead, she is no decomposing corpse – she has remained *practically* as she was when alive. When living, though, she was *almost* like others; more even – with her linguistic abilities, grace, love of dance and singing, she surpassed many women – but on the other hand she was also *slightly* like a man (how else did she get her beard?), and *slightly* like an animal with her skull, which, as the naturalist Francis Buckland pronounced, was of the orangutan skull *type* (albeit not entirely orang-utan). She was known as Baboon Lady – and we do not know if this was because she had *practically* grown up among animals, or because the Mexicans had deformed her skull, or if this was simply her human-animal nature. Her essence oscillated somewhere on the boundaries, as shown by this “almost,” “practically,” and “slightly.” And it was this that made her interesting.

The curiosity of savages

Was it empty curiosity alone that attracted the crowd? Was it not in fact the question of what we really are that lay beneath? Perhaps this was the setting for a kind of exploration of human nature, brought to life by the question of where the boundary between a human and a non-human truly lies...

Where does normality end? Does non-human mean animals, or is there some group of beings in-between? To find the answer to this question, beings with not entirely clarified identities were observed – individuals known as “savages.” Brought over from faraway countries (often together with botanic specimens, minerals and exotic animals), they evoked images of overseas worlds. They ended up in menageries and at fairs, where it was common for them to be caged and exhibited to paying customers. The same exhibiting system that organized the ways in which animals and madmen were displayed was applied here too. Yet savages were more than just an oddity. They were interesting in a unique way – by igniting the curiosity of viewers, they piqued their sense of identity. We are people – and they? How can they be judged – are they good or bad? Or rather: are they better or worse than us? Turning the question around, it turns out to be a question of our nature being good or bad. But is everything always about us?

It would seem so. Here we have those who differ from us – physically, mentally, culturally – and are called savage, nature’s children, primeval peoples, primitive cultures, and seen as a link in the evolution of the species and civilization, as inhabitants of paradise lost or elements of the world’s cultural

kaleidoscope. Yet it turns out that we need them. Depicting their differences is not just an intellectual and aesthetic adventure, but terrain on which we can recognize our own culture. Two visions of savagery, their various versions floating around for centuries, demonstrating Europeans' ambivalent relationship to themselves. The ideas of the paradisiacal innocence of savages (suggesting that it is the European culture that is the degenerate one) co-existed with images and tales relating their barbarism, and according undeniable values to Europeanness. Generally speaking, their perception was conditioned by conceptual categories which allowed the European consciousness to capture cultural difference. This meant at first the classification of "paganism," attributing to the Other of various types a place in the universal history of the world that began on the day of creation.³

When the Other is markedly different from us, it is not always easy to perceive the humanity in its dissimilarity, which is by no means obvious. The New World represented such a case. At play was on the one hand embodiment of the knowledge of it in an applicable model for understanding the world, and on the other granting the new a certain axiological and aesthetic autonomy. It was also about who could really be seen in the inhabitants of the newly discovered lands. At stake was the identity of otherness, and the savages were defeated in the first round. As Tzvetan Todorov wrote, "Columbus has discovered America but not the Americans."⁴ The Indians for him represented little more than the features of the landscape. "His attitude with regard to this other culture is, in the best of cases, that of the collector of curiosities, and it is never accompanied by any attempt at comprehension." (Todorov 1999: 36) This position may have been reprehensible, but was also popular among the inhabitants of the Old World, and subjects of attractiveness could therefore be played out in shows featuring savages.

Moral examples and scientific proof

When a savage is treated as a spectacle, his body becomes a rhetorical space giving meanings to topoi. In rhetoric, a topos is a form that can be applied to prove various arguments – this is what decides on its persuasive effectiveness. And the spectacular topos of savages also worked in this way. They could be viewed in different ways, treated as living moral *exempla* through which

3 Shelton, Anthony Alan, "Cabinets of Transgression: Renaissance and the Incorporation of the New World," in: Elsner, John and Cardinal, Roger, *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion Books, 1994.

4 Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, 49.

certain concepts could be demonstrated in a condensed form (the simple life, immorality etc.). In one place at one time, *exempla* of very different meanings appeared. In London in 1822, for instance, a family of Lapps could be seen. It was thought that the severe climate and resultant tough conditions had shaped people of exceptional moral virtue (such at least was the civilizational myth). That same year, Tono Maria from Brazil was exhibited, and the meanings of lack of civilization that she invoked were quite different. Each of the (almost 100) scars visible on her body reputedly commemorated an act of adultery she had committed. The moral limitations imposed on Europeans by their civilization seemed to be compensated to an extent by watching the evidence of decadence in the Other.

Exhibitions allowed mythical places to become concrete in the imagination of Europeans. The savages could be remarkable, surprising, or miraculous. This motif of miraculousness accompanied the arrival of the so-called Aztec Lilliputians in 1853: "WONDERFUL! WONDERFUL! WONDERFUL! WONDERFUL are thy Ways, Oh, Providence! How wonderful are thy works!"

There were two of them – a 14-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl. The boy was 111.6 cm in height (3 feet 8 inches), and the girl somewhat shorter at just 96.5 cm (3 ft 2 in).

One can hardly help at first looking upon them... as belonging to the race of gnomes with which the superstition of former times once peopled the chambers of the earth – a tradition which some have referred to the existence of an ancient race, of diminutive stature, dwelling in caverns, and structures of unhewn stones, which have long since disappeared.

Evidence of the existence of such races came in the form of the sculptures of Yucatan and Peruvian masks, now joined by living proof whose ambivalent human-animal-gnomic status was cause for excitement. Reports from New York suggested that these specimens were

Of an entirely new type – a kind of human being which we had never before seen – with physiognomies formed by descent through ages of thought and association of which we had no knowledge – moving, and observing and gesticulating differently from all other children – and somehow, with an unexplainable look of authenticity. (Altick 1978: 284).

The Aztec Lilliputians seemed to be chthonic beings, and factual proof of the correctness of the paths of Western history. They belonged to the world of myths, legends and fantasies, but their remarkable nature also represented a manifestation with scientific value. They stood somewhere on the edge of society, and it was as such that they were displayed, with romantic and scientific themes overlapping in the show. The pair's biographies excited

onlookers and set imaginations racing. The supposed Aztecs had been found in 1849 in Iximaya in Central America. Only one of their three Spanish discoverers had managed to escape the clutches of the bloodthirsty natives – it was he who had brought back the children, who became the subject of precise studies. Their appearance and level of intelligence were examined, they were measured and observed, and assessed. During a lecture at the Ethnological Society, the Aztec Lilliputians played with a pen, ink and paper, and Exhibited the behavior of intelligent English children at two or three years of age. They could pronounce only a few English words, which they had recently been taught – and had evidently no means of communication with each other by language.⁵

All indications suggested that the representatives of the lost race were retarded in their development. There was not even agreement as to whether they could be called people:

In point of size and shape, their heads are identical with the cast of the head of an orangutan [...] Theirs are not malformed human heads, but Simial heads on human bodies. It was therefore not justified to call them human, argued one of the London illustrated papers (Altick 1978: 285).

Arrangement of savagery for the needs of the show

Savages did not necessarily have to be brought over from distant lands. Like freaks or marvels of nature, they were exhibits *created* in specific circumstances, and presented using particular display techniques. The way a show was set up depended on the expectations of the audience. Of course, different histories sold better at different times. This was also the root of the various biographies appended to the “savages,” turning them into pseudo-apes captured in Borneo, African earth people or the beautiful daughters of the east, escaped from harems.

Maximo and Bartola (“the last of the ancient Mexican Aztecs”) were indeed retarded in their development. They suffered from microcephaly, which was why their skulls were small and pointed, and they were not very tall. Their exoticness was a product of the entertainment industry, and the whole enterprise was helped by Americans’ increasing interest in the natural and cultural history of their continent. Maximo and Bartola were born in the village of Decora in St Salvador, in the family of Innocente Burgos and Marina Espina. They were found by an enterprising Spaniard named Ramón Selva, who promised the family that he would take the children somewhere

5 *Athenaeum*, 9 July 1853, cited in Altick 1978, 284.

where they could be cured, before selling them to a certain Morris, who then launched their show business career. The biography of the “last Aztecs” was constructed with the help of John Lloyd Stephens’s three-volume travelogue *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841–1843). The illustrations of the ruins of ancient architecture showed the reliefs of figures with elongated heads – similar to those of Maximo and Bartola. Further inspiration came from a description of a huge walled city inaccessible to outsiders, which Stephens took from the account of a Spanish priest. It was in this city that the children were said to have been found, sitting on an altar and venerated by the locals as the heirs of an ancient holy clan. This was described in the booklet *The Fate of the Living Aztec Children* (1860).

One of the factors determining the show’s success was how the academic world would judge the authenticity of the Aztecs. In Boston, where Maximo and Bartola’s careers began, they were observed by members of the Boston Society of Natural History, and in England by members of the Ethnological Society. They were also exhibited to many of Europe’s royal families. The organizers of other shows observed the way in which Maximo and Bartola were presented and took note for their own displays. At the time, it was not rare to show intellectually backward people as ethnological curiosities. People took advantage of the fact that scientists were unclear as to the causes and roots of this type of deficiencies. Individuals who would today be taken into medical care, diagnosed as sick, subnormal or afflicted by physiological defects, were often Aztecs, Eskimos, Bushmen, or natives of Borneo.⁶ Did the public believe in these fantastic tales? Some were without doubt reckoned to be hoaxes. On the other hand, though, the stories invented by the organizers of sideshows were not entirely at odds with scientific theories. Even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some forms of intellectual deficiencies were explained as regression to earlier phases of species development.

In 1853, the same year as the Aztec children exhibit, two Pygmies, or Earth people, were shown in London, the story being that they lived in caves, like some animals. According to the promotional material, they were much more judicious than the Aztec Lilliputians. The 16-year-old boy and 14-year-old girl were brought to England, where work began on civilising them. The pair mastered English, as well as learning to play the piano and to sing – their savagery was thus overcome. At the same time, once again European culture showed how good it was at certifying its own values. The

6 Bogdan, Robert, *Freak Show. Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

display of the civilized savages was undeniably an example of the mechanism of articulation of European identity.

The limits of humanity

The savage seemed a particularly interesting proposition when it was hard to say unequivocally what species it came from. It was not without reason that the stars of the show, whose main asset was their physical deficiencies, were presented as having something of the animal about them. For instance, a person with undeveloped arms was called a Seal Man, and someone with an excess of hair was a Lion Man. Promotional literature showed animals' bodies with human heads (Bogdan 1988: 100). The descriptions of exotic animals and of the inhabitants of distant lands contained the same fascination with the murky area between man and beast. The African baboon was so similar to people that:

A most strange and wonderful Creature, the like never seen before in England, it being of Seven several Colours, ... resembling a Man, its fore parts clear, and his hinder parts all Hairy; having a long Head of Hair, and Teeth two or three inches long; taking a Glass of Ale in his hand like a Christian. (Altick 1978: 38).

The natives of Black Africa were described in similar terms – they appeared to belong to the same indistinct area between species. One brochure advertising another show said that:

[The Bushmen] show more similarity to Apes than to people.... Notwithstanding their ferocity these Bushmen are nearly harmless, and even the most fearful person can approach and feel all over them with the greatest confidence.

So there was no reason to fear – they were like tamed animals. The Bushmen were also portrayed at the time in a very positive way, resulting from the earlier 18th-century myth of the noble savage – innocent, spontaneous, living at one with nature. Yet this topos could be applied in other ways too.⁷ The depictions of savage peoples stressed various characteristics: the Hotentots were seen as the most primitive, the Zulus as the wildest and cruelest,

7 Corbey, Raymond, "Ethnographic Showcases 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (3) 1993, 347. Representatives of primitive peoples, so-called *Naturvölker*, were sometimes displayed in zoos, included in the same image of nature as wild animals.

Dahomey warrior women were seen as the African Amazons, and Bushmen were viewed as half-human beings of the earth.⁸

The secrets of black women

A perfect example of an inventive exhibition was the history of an African woman named Saartjie, whose case demonstrated how the bodies of savages were used in the civilizing rhetoric describing the identities of the inhabitants of the civilized world. Saartjie was known as the Hottentot Venus, and the Hottentots were a people who in the European imagination occupied a place that was the polar opposite to civilization, providing a distinct comparative background for assessing the values of the Western world. She arrived in London in 1810, having previously been a servant to Dutch settlers in the Cape of Good Hope. They had hatched a plan to send her to Europe, promising that after earning a not insignificant sum of money she should be able to return home. Upon arrival in Europe, her unusual figure, running counter to the European concept of beauty, drew onlookers in their droves. Their reactions were ambivalent. They tended to concentrate on Saartjie's extremely prominent buttocks. Supposedly, this characteristic of Hottentot women, which had long been the focus of attention of European travelers, was evidence of the unbridled eroticism, or even lasciviousness, frothing in black people.⁹ Caricatures in the press and urban ditties went two ways. They took as their subject the incompatibility of the newcomer's appearance with the European canons of feminine beauty, as well as the excessive delight at this curiosity. There was more serious criticism too. Letters to the *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post* during the London shows protested that the Hottentot was a human being, and as such should be treated with decency. Instead, though, she was dressed in scanty dark attire which practically merged with the color of her skin, giving the impression of nudity. Audiences were allowed to touch her ample buttocks to be sure that they were not artificial. Do those who treat humans as animals deserve to be called civilized? The African Association began an investigation to find out whether Saartjie had come to London of her own free will, if she

8 As late as 1922, a pamphlet promoting the appearances of Clicko – “the wild dancing South African Bushman” – proclaimed: “He is as near like the ape as he is like the human. He has a good understanding of things, but with the mind that would correspond favourably with that of a two-year-old child, and we cannot help but wonder of Captain Du Barry has not brought Darwin’s missing link to civilization.” (Bogdan 1988: 192) Clicko, who enjoyed a very long career on stage, entered barefoot, wrapped in a leopard skin, and danced, making “ungodly yells.”

9 Gilman, Sander L., “Black bodies, white bodies: toward an iconography of female sexuality in late nineteenth-century art, medicine and literature,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 1, 213.

was receiving the promised pay, and what she thought of it all herself – was she suffering, or was she happy. One of the Association's members was appalled after seeing her in a cage: "The Hottentot was produced like a wild beast, and order to move backwards and forwards, and come and go into her cage, more like a bear on a chain than a human being."¹⁰

The appropriate checks were made, the relevant people asked, directives issued, and ultimately the show could go on. In December 1811 the Hottentot was christened – from now on she was to be called Sarah Bartmann. It was not just Londoners who could delight in seeing her – she was also displayed around the country, and then taken to Paris for 15 months. There too she was a sensation, inspiring scientists, caricaturists and songwriters; at one theater, a vaudeville performance was composed in her honor. She also posed nude for scientific illustrations. When she died, her body was taken by anatomists. It fell into the hands of the famous naturalist Cuvier, who in 1817 published the results of her research. He claimed that his intention was to present the objective facts, repudiating the false suppositions concerning black people. However, his assumptions concerning the primitiveness of the natives of Black Africa did not diverge from the convictions of his peers. In describing Saartjie, Cuvier stressed her similarity to an ape – not only externally, but also in her behavior: "Her movements were sudden and capricious, like those of a monkey. In particular she had a way of pouting her lips exactly like what we have observed in the orang-utan." (Gould 1982: 22)

All this was of course rather contradictory to the observations made on her excellent memory and linguistic capabilities (Saartjie spoke Dutch quite well, a little English, and in France began to manage some French). But it was in accordance with the general conception of the savagery of the blacks. Like many of his contemporary naturalists, Cuvier was particularly interested in two of the Hottentot's features: her monstrous buttocks and the unusual nature of her sexual organs. Did the protruding rear result from the formation of the fat, muscle or bone structure, they wondered? The fascination with the bestial sexual nature of the Other found an outlet in the legal procedures of science, and the researcher's scalpel helped to clear things up. There was one more intriguing matter to be studied. Whereas her buttocks, albeit seen from the outside, had been the most obvious characteristic and the main thing attracting audiences to the Hottentot Venus, she had never allowed her private parts to be studied while alive. For two centuries, European scientists interested in human nature had been fascinated to hear suggestions that the sexual organs of black women are hidden in the folds of the elongated labia. What was the anatomy of this part, and what conclusions could be made on this basis on the

10 Gould, Stephen Jay, "Hottentot Venus," *Natural History*, vol. 91, 1982, no. 10, 20.

development of human races? Cuvier solved this problem, writing, "I have the honor to present to the Academy the genital organs of this woman prepared in a manner that leaves no doubt about the nature of her *tablier*."

He showed that this was no specific structure uniquely characteristic of Hottentot women (Gould 1982: 23). The results of the examination were kept at the Royal Medical Academy. Saartjie's skeleton was also preserved. Living or dead, savage or baptized, the Hottentot remained in the place where the Other is kept, so that they can be observed and their oddity can amaze and be studied. At the same time, not only in Saartjie's case, the differences were described from a moral point of view. As Sander Gilman points out, thinking about black women and white prostitutes took place on the same terms. Both represented the embodiment of the female element that was seen as the root of corruption and disease.

The association of primitivism with an inability to control oneself, and especially with unbridled sexuality, was a lively topos of contemporary thinking. It is true that the reaction did not necessarily have to be absolute condemnation. In the spirit of the Enlightenment ideal of the nobility of non-civilization, the spontaneous primal nature was sometimes praised. Yet it was more common to see savages as those who had got stuck in an earlier stage of human history – the sight of them gave people the sense of how far Western culture had advanced the ability of self-control. Loss of this capability meant regression to primitive forms of emotion, and sometimes falling into lunacy or giving into one's sexual instincts. Gilman shows that when 19th-century society looked at Sarah Bartmann it was a sexualized gaze. Her prominent buttocks were noticed, which hinted at the "anomalies" she concealed beneath her skirt. A spectator at public shows, like a scientist examining savage bodies, was at the same time a politician of gazing.

Savages and others in the dreams of civilization

The organizers of exhibits sometimes tried to lend a certain gravitas to their enterprises by using descriptions gleaned from ethnography, physical anthropology, and history. An "anthropological-zoological exhibition," as Carl Hagenbeck called his shows, suggested something more than a common side-show. At first, he concentrated on wild animals (as the head of the Hamburg zoological garden and circus), before in 1874 turning his interest and enterprise towards the peoples of nature. At first, he showed Lapps, along with the material products of their culture and reindeer. In 1876 he brought Nubians over from Africa, together with some of the animals typical of their home regions, later exhibiting them in various European cities. Subsequently, it was the turn of the Indians of North America, Inuit, Indians, Zulus, Sudanese, and

Bushmen. Targeting the middle class, Hagenbeck maintained close contacts with the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, stressing that the aim of his work was in fact to further knowledge. This kind of ethnological exhibitions was fairly common. Their twilight would come only in the 1930s as a result of criticism of the moral aspects of imperialism and racism. The role of exhibitions was partly filled by films – ethnographic, semi-ethnographic, and propagating missionary activity (Corbey 1993).

When the fashion for translating grand civilizing narratives into the language of world exhibitions took hold, a specific role was accorded to other cultures. Mastering the world went hand in hand with measuring, describing and classifying, and exhibiting the results of these activities was important from the point of view of civilizational self-confirmation. The broader perspective involved consolidation of the ideology of nation-states and the development of colonialism. Exhibitions were an intermediary link between the official, ideological, political, and scientific discourse and the broader scope of culture. In them, historical and anthropological narratives as well as national and supranational ideologies gained the quality of attractive and instructive entertainment. They were given a certain vibrancy by press commentary and various kinds of educational ventures initiated by religious, philanthropic and scientific societies.¹¹ Tacked on to the official exhibition space were spontaneous show and trade areas which tended towards burlesque and somewhat lewd entertainment, and often parodied the exhibits of the official fair.

The great world fairs offered an especially powerful space for expression. The first of them, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, took place in London in 1851. The huge glass-and-steel structure called the Crystal Palace built especially for the occasion housed displays of individual countries showcasing their accomplishments. The British exhibiting success was soon copied by others. The travels of a European with a taste for such events in the second half of the century sticking to his own continent would have taken him to Vienna in 1873, Brussels in 1883 and 1897, Antwerp in 1893, London in 1862, Dublin in 1853, Florence in 1861 and Amsterdam in 1864. He would have come to know Paris like the back of his hand, as the French outstripped all others in their passion for organizing Great Spectacles: fairs were held there in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900. If the passion of this fan

11 In these "sites of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish," as Walter Benjamin described them, people were seduced by things. See also: "The world exhibitions glorified the exchange-value of commodities. They created a framework in which their use-value receded into the background. They opened up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted." (Benjamin, Walter, "Grandville or the World Exhibitions," in: *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1989, 165).

of great exhibitions had tempted him to visit America, he would have visited New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Buffalo, San Francisco, Seattle, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Nashville. Some of these exhibitions were local events, while others aspired to the status of national or international ones. How did they present the world? What was the place given to the members of other cultures?

At London's Crystal Place, many products were shown made of materials from the colonies. The United Kingdom thereby emphasized its imperial position. The Paris exhibition covered ethnological and archaeological materials. These two types of colonial view of the material and human world (the industrial achievements of civilization and primitivism on the peripheries of the empire) were woven into subsequent exhibitions in various ways. Non-European peoples were portrayed as collective entities, which was in accordance with the general message of the exhibition.¹² The nation-states participating in the development of the world and improving its order were also collective entities. On the stage of the exhibition, national local times were related to a more general perspective – to the civilizing rhythm of the modernization of the world. National histories were thus given a favorable background. The national time of the host represented the time of modern aspirations. This was played out on several fronts, and all the more adeptly as various anniversaries provided a pretext and inspiration.¹³ While these celebrations recalled the nation's history, the general ideology of the exhibition referred to the international time of modernity and human accomplishments.

The representatives of tribal societies, showcased together with the material products of their craft in homesteads and villages arranged for this purpose, were no longer peculiar savages; they were the Other taken as a community with a particular place in the civilizational order. The display of inhabitants of the lands which had been conquered fulfilled a propaganda

12 At the time, two main ways of portraying Others were established: the Hagenbeck-style diversion, making claims to ethnographical reliability, and displays of freaks and curiosities in the style in which the famous circus impresario Phineas Tylor Barnum excelled. Incidentally, this was not an absolute division – Hagenbeck too was known to showcase curiosities. The world exhibitions drew inspiration from both models.

13 The *Exposition Universelle* in Paris commemorated the centenary of the French revolution, the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876 marked the centenary of American independence, and the one taking place in Melbourne in 1888 was held to celebrate 100 years of European settlement in Australia (a hundred years on, Expo '88 in Brisbane was held on the bicentenary of the colonisation). The 1893 Chicago exhibition marked the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America, and New York's World's Fair in 1939 invoked the 150th anniversary of George Washington becoming president.

purpose. If they appeared brutal and ferocious, the role of Western civilization seemed clear: their “inhumanity” needed to be tempered. The exhibitions not only gave visitors an insight into craft and artistic products. They also depicted theatrical scenes of war, those from daily life and showing aspects of ritual activities. Audiences were especially fascinated by representations of acts of war and cannibalism and the practices of headhunters. Later on, alongside Dahomey, Senegalese, and Somalian villages those of Scotland and Ireland were also shown. But the proximity of images of the lives of simple Europeans and the natives of exotic climes by no means indicated that they were qualitatively similar; on the contrary, it emphasized the difference of the “primeval” nature of the Western world and that of the colonies. Whereas “primeval” in non-European societies could refer to an attribute of living ancestors and was part of the civilizing narrative about evolutionary and civilizational development, the latter was linked to the discourse on the ludic traditions of visitors’ own country. The representation of life in these own villages was an image of the national “beginnings,” helping to construct a vision of an internally coherent national culture with traditions rooted in history. However, numerous non-European cultures appeared to be bereft of such a history.¹⁴ Attempts were being made to unify the world, methodologically and in accordance with the laws of science, in an effort to liberate it from non-scientific traditions. Science could be used to sanction and authorize all kinds of acts, and the marriage of scientific discourse and spectacle could be very persuasive. Visitors to world exhibitions could also find out about research on racial characteristics, conducted in specialist anthropometric and psychometric laboratories. The inhabitants of Earth were measured, studied and compared, and all this contributed to the creation of a more general suggestion that it is possible for all exotic diversity to be contained within a certain greater whole. This whole was to be Western culture – an entity capable of consciously and responsibly taking care of the rest of the world, giving it attention, supervision, and control.

Savages needed by progress

At the same time, as informing spectators about the accessibility of the world and the power of science and the institutions introduced by civilization to bring order, exhibitions also strove to capture their hearts and minds. Visitors were seduced by promises of the possibility of an all-encompassing

14 Coombes, Annie E., “Ethnography and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities,” in: Hiller, Susan (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism. Perspectives on Art*, London and New York: Routledge, 189–214.

overview. This would allow them to see a certain metonymically represented “whole,” opening up the world for the eye and the mind, and at the same time closing it within a certain conceptual judging whole.¹⁵ Tony Bennett argues that the “exhibitionary complex” takes various entities from a limited space that is not visible to all into a more open one. He tries to soften the rather common voices that liken exhibiting institutions to the Foucauldian institutions of confinement such as the asylum, clinic and prison.¹⁶ The exhibitionary complex gives audiences the right to take pride in the achievements of civilization and the right to a conscious look at their own society. In this civilizational utopia, the divide is not between the rulers and ruled-over citizens of a country. It has been transferred elsewhere – between the civilizational unity and other, uncivilized peoples. The vision linking the history and civilization of Western nations with other cultures was total. The narratives ran in a set direction, with primitive societies falling from the historical order, arriving somewhere between nature and culture (in some respects this was a space reminiscent of that previously occupied by anatomical curiosities). The history of humanity was painted as an epiphany of progress, and development as the transformation of savagery into civilization. The Europeans stood to the fore, ready to take more retarded societies by the hand. Those who remained behind were looked upon as an artifact from past times, as “contemporary ancestors.” Although those shown at exhibitions were authentic, they tended to be deprived of their own voices and minds. Corbey (1993: 364) puts it as follows: “Their own voices and views – ironically often as ethnocentric and omniscient as Western ones – were neutralized.” They were placed behind a fence, a barrier, or at least a row of benches, a boundary which not only designated the territories belonging to the spectators and the actors, but also defined the great distance of the relationship between the audience and the object of their gaze.

The above outline provides a generalized description of the dominant (albeit not only) trend in the message of exhibitions. The vision of the colonies as providers of raw materials and goods, as anthropological and ethnographical laboratories, or finally as jewels in the imperial crown, was at least the most visible aspect of exhibitions. A certain ambivalence can be seen in

15 Bennett, Tony, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in: Dirks, Nicholas B., Eley, Geoff, and Ortnner, Sherry B. (eds) *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

16 This is shown by Douglas Crimp, for example, who stresses that they are part of the system of institutional relations and are dependent on certain discursive formations (scientific, aesthetic, artistic); and indeed exercise limiting functions (“On the Museum’s Ruins,” in: Foster, Hal (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic; Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1985), 45.

the proud narratives of civilization. The belief in the undeniable values of modern progress was edged with fear of the “degeneration” of the Western world. From this standpoint, colonial cultures could be perceived as enclaves of naturalness or the sources of cultural and civic order. The message of exhibitions was not unanimous, and visitors’ interpretation was therefore not predetermined; furthermore, audiences were made up of individuals who not only “consume views,” but also interpret them. But this would be the other side of the work of rhetoric, allowing savages and the Other to be used in a wide-ranging civilizational self-presentation. All-encompassing civilizational visions only seemed valid for some time. They were appointed in a period when the individual parts of the human environment were set within a historicizing, evolutionary framework of representation. Such practices were gradually repudiated and criticized. The presentation of the Other as living ancestors and as objects submitting to the activities of the heirs of European civilization strengthens the inequality between cultures, in so doing arbitrarily defining the relations between their preferred values. This arbitrariness is unacceptable, just as is the fetishism of collections from other cultures.¹⁷ The criticism accompanied more general changes in the ways of perceiving reality and the methodology of cognizing them, as well as the breaking of grand narratives, and attempts to pay close attention to what cognitive constructs different from those formed in our own culture indicate. These debates concerned the Other as much as ourselves, our place in the narratives which we produce. It turns out that we need those who are different from us (physically, mentally, in their culture or their history), dubbed savages, children of nature, primal peoples, primitive cultures; seen as links in the evolution of the species and civilization, as the inhabitants of a paradise lost, or elements of the global cultural kaleidoscope, to gain a deeper understanding of our own identity. Bit by bit, the “savage” became less and less strange, gaining a soul, a personality, and an identity comparable with our own. In this way, the Other was formed. The savage was denied the right to exist for both epistemological reasons (he emerged from ancient myths and scientific a priori dogmatism) and moral-ethical ones too (the concept of savagery bears the strong imprint of value judgements). The Other should be not just a mirror in which the European sees himself, but an autonomous subject with the right to speak in its own voice. This is the source of the idea of setting the limits of freedom of representing the Other: let their bodies and souls remain free, and let the power of the gaze not be the preserve of just one side. Today, in various

17 Clifford, James, “Objects and Selves – An Afterword,” in: Stocking, George W. Jr. (ed.), *Objects and Others*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, 244.

spheres of entertainment and recreation, we still see ethnic groups presenting traditional dances and rituals, often suitably tweaked and made more attractive for the purpose of the display; we acquire from natives (conscious of their ethnicity) tourist keepsakes known as objects of ethnic art, and we enjoy trying exotic cuisines. As before, the field of public entertainment is the living nerve of culture. Topics of diversity continue to be played out, curiosity and the desire for novelty are still piqued, although the old motifs of curiosities and marvels are now introduced in new ways. But that is an entirely different matter...

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Zofia Mitosek

Charles Marlow the Colonizer, or, the Ironic Necessity

One of the fundamental rules of every ideology is the revision of what has been done in the past, in the history preceding its emergence. To contradict, however, does not mean to break away. Speaking in the name of the truth, ideology attempts to show the illusory character of the former and, at the same time, assesses the practical dimension of uncovered illusions. The choice of the name post-colonialism is meaningful: even though it presents itself not as an ideology but a theory, researchers who represent this current have a similar critical approach. It is not concerned with resistance, with anti-colonialism. It is concerned with reflection, an interpretation of the facts, with the "analysis of world views constructed from the imperial (hence dominant) point of view"¹ and checking "how, *de facto*, it all happened." Interestingly, even though post-colonialism was created primarily by scholars often coming from former colonies, it is primarily a product of American universities, a country that, for at least two hundred years now, feels good about itself, since whatever there was

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1 Burzyńska, A. M.P. Markowski, *Teorie literatury XX wieku. Podręcznik*, Cracow: Znak, 2006, 551.

to be colonized – North America – has been colonized earlier and forms the backdrop of an innocent, full of good intentions and norms, Puritan society on Indian land.

Joseph Conrad fell victim to such judgment as well. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe deals with European colonialism in his works published in the United States: in his view, Conrad, established as a symbol of modern humanism, in truth praises the oppression of savage peoples and the conquest that his writing additionally supported. By quoting the *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Achebe imposes a conviction upon its author, by which the presented image of conquered peoples fully confirms the “colonial vision of the world, according to which the black inhabitants of Africa are not human because they do not belong to the Western culture.”²

The motivation behind the article is very important. At the beginning, the author presents the circumstances that helped him take interest in Conrad's work. In 1974, as an already recognized author, he was invited by the University of Massachusetts to give a lecture on African literature. He was surprised by the lack of knowledge about contemporary Africa among university and high school students. He found confirmation of this lack of knowledge in the work of an Oxford professor, Hugh Trevor Roper, who wrote that Africa has no history. *Belle Lettres* that constitute the American literary canon at the English departments only confirmed the dominant stereotypes of the “savage.” Achebe's goal was to expose such stereotypes, and *Heart of Darkness* was supposed to supply examples.

We have familiarized ourselves with Achebe's views through a textbook by an outstanding historian of literary theory in the twentieth century, Michał Paweł Markowski. In the context of presenting post-colonial theory, he notes the positions of Achebe. The Nigerian critic's interpretations are treated as one of the examples of the post-colonial approach to classical masterpieces. In the *relata refero* mode, Markowski quotes an excerpt from the *Heart of Darkness* after Achebe, one that has become an object of “post-colonial literary revision.” It is hard to sense the attitude of Markowski from the tone of his essay. What seems quite obvious, however, is that one of the authors of *Teorie Literaturny XX wieku* [*Literary Theories of the 20th Century*] read the Nigerian author closely, but it is not obvious if he read Conrad so closely as well. When interpreted through the prism of a re-vindication by an inhabitant of Africa, *Heart of Darkness* is a different work than when read by a European. Jacques Derrida would say that we are not dealing with a distortion: post-colonial discourses are not *wrong* about Conrad, they just interpret him differently.

2 Achebe, Ch. “An Image of Africa. Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*,” in *Research of African Literatures*, Special Issue of Literary Criticism, vol. 1(9), Spring 1978.

On the other hand, one the slogans of more recent theoretical thought is an ethical break with relativism in reading.³ In the name of this ethic, one talks about reliability. We keep arriving at a perpetually current aporia, an insolvable contradiction between an empirical reading and the data provided by the structure of the text.

In writing about the reliability of reading, I expose myself to the accusation of being a traditionalist. Nonetheless, I believe that the position is defensible. If the slogan of an "ethical turn in literary studies" becomes as fashionable as "post-colonialism," then the ethics of Joseph Conrad, built on irony, contradicts 19th century usurpers who based their moral judgments on the opinions spoken by the characters in the novels. But it also contradicts the modern usurpers, like Achebe, who draw their ethical conclusions from literary images. Post-colonialism, by revealing that which "has been hidden under the surface of seemingly transparent discourse,"⁴ does not take into consideration that some of the novel discourses are not even seemingly transparent and the illustrative function of literature, as a result of complicated narrative techniques, achieves ambiguity far from any ideological messages that we so gladly find in post-colonial discourses.

It is therefore the right moment to finally formulate our thesis: *Heart of Darkness* is an ironic narration and situating the object of critique in the characters of Africans is the result of a reading that is as ideological as the texts of those who praise colonialism. Let us go back to the excerpt from the novel that Markowski quotes after Achebe, and which I will quote following Markowski:

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst, of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an

3 Markowski, M.P. "Zwrot etyczny w badaniach literackich," in *Pamiętnik Literacki*, XCL, vol.1, 2000.

4 Burzyska, A., M.P. Markowski, *Teorie Literatury XX wieku*, 558.

enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand, because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories.... The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled, and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly.

This is where the quote provided by Markowski ends. He shortened the excerpt used by Achebe. Below is the remainder of the text:

Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend.

Achebe, on the other hand, stops in a place that, in our opinion, is extremely important for the interpretation of the entire work. Marlow's monologue goes on. Contrary to what his "post-colonial" interpreters might claim, the old sailor who tells his story many years later wants to understand that which he didn't understand before. He wonders:

And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valor, rage – who can tell? – *but truth – truth stripped of its cloak of time.* [emphasis added by the author] Let the fool gape and shudder – the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff – with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags – rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row – is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that Cannot be silenced. Of course, a fool, what with sheer fright and fine sentiments, is always safe. Who's that grunting? You wonder why I didn't go ashore for

a howl and a dance? Well, no – I didn't. Fine sentiments, you say? Fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time.⁵

It is a subject and not an object of the provided excerpt that turns out to be the hero. The choice between rejection (fools – the domain of the colonizers) and a sentimental identification (Rousseau's tradition) puts Marlowe in an uncomfortable position. The escape "into work" is an attempt to avoid an aporia that from the 18th century saturates the mind of Europeans who face the phenomenon of a "savage." Noble Marlow attempts to understand the Other but is unable to quiet his own feelings. Within this difficult comparison, the aborigine appears to him as both difference and identity: as a different, disgusting savage, who at the same time – just like him, the English sailor – is also a human. Marlow does not pretend: he is not ashamed to admit to his disgust, to the hardship with which he comes to accept an identification with the aborigines. And that is, most likely, why Achebe assigned him the status of Conrad's "fool." If we should assume the doubts of the narrator to be Conrad's expression of colonialism, then we will completely ignore the writer's technique – one which, through the character of Marlow, presents conflicting world views and contradictions of the mentalities of a subject unprepared to confront something that different. The drama of that confrontation is what constitutes the deeper meaning of Conrad's narration. It is an effort of understanding that fills his work.

The next accusation is concerned with describing the aborigines as pre-historic peoples, as those who are suspended in motionlessness. Here, the problem is equally serious. Marlow states: "Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings" (109). He continues: "The earth seemed unearthly." The phrase "was like" is in relation to a comparison and not a statement of fact: the comparative subject is what really matters. Similarly, the word "seemed" is not a statement of fact about the world, but a sensation experienced by the observer.⁶ Marlow's experiences are, somewhat, tainted with a "humanistic factor": it is not about treating the Congo's basin

5 Conrad, J. *Heart of Darkness, The Congo Diary*, ed., introd., notes by R. Hampson, London: Penguin Books, 1995, 62-3.

6 That is how Ian Watt interprets Marlow's observations in his *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. Watt writes about the method of "delayed decoding" – it matches our hypothesis about the effort of understanding the Other, interactions between the reason and senses, which are one of the most prominent themes of *Heart of Darkness*. See also Bolecki, W. *L'impressionisme de Conrad et la littérature polonaise*, w: *Joseph Conrad. Un Polonais aux confins de l'Occident*, dir. de M. Delaperrière, Institut d'Etudes Slaves, Paris: 2009.

as a pre-historic earth, but rather about an attempt to express the subjective impressions of that earth. That is why Marlow states: "but truth – truth stripped of its cloak of time." That is his answer to what he found impossible to understand. He himself is far from "a-historicism," from a "pre-historic" landscape that is reached only by the drums of "wilderness." One can also hear the moans of black slaves, who wear the history of their employment along with their chains: history of the "legal time contracts." A historian will ask between whom these contracts have been established. Ryszard Kapuściński's *The Shadow of the Sun* comes to mind. The question of legality and rape have been signaled by Conrad several decades before by Conrad: in the world presented by Marlow, history thuds rhythmically, only without dates and names of places.

Within the complicated processes of observation, aversion, empathy and understanding of the "savage" there is no contempt or rejection. There is also no irony, although the Marlow happens to make a satirical comments, which somewhat match the "colonial" stereotype. He tells stories about the attempts of cannibalism on the part of black members of the ship crew, or the black helmsman – a "fool" – who sheepishly followed all directions, or the slave overseer who imitated behavior of white people... As the plot develops, so does the process of understanding: the potential cannibals are famished and starving, yet they never brake the taboo and the killed helmsman turns out to be an irreplaceable friend.⁷ Blacks, just like a jungle, constitute "a mystery greater – when I thought of it – than the curious, inexplicable note of desperate grief in this savage clamor that had swept by us on the river-bank, behind the blind whiteness of the fog" (122). On other occasions, Marlow talks about "man calm and quiet" who lives in the jungle. His story is saturated by a deep sense of the tragic. It is heightened by the fact that he does not speak the language of the aborigines, that his attempts to understand are limited to superficial gestures and rituals observed every now and then.

The narration makes its way from drama to a bitter irony. The sailor recounts his African adventure to his English friends. He tells them about the journey along the Congo River in the search of Kurtz, the mysterious agent,

7 Achebe quotes an excerpt about the black helmsman during the attack of the aborigines: Marlow calls him a "fool," while observing his panic reactions (he opens the window to shoot his rifle and, as a result, he dies from an arrow that comes through that open window). Later on, however, there is a reflection: "He steered for me – I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies, and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken. And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory – like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment." (*An Image of Africa*) Achebe responds to that, saying that the writer was not far from Albert Schweitzer's statement: "The African is my brother, but a younger brother."

who supplies the Belgian company with hugely profitable ivory. As I have written before, encountering Blacks constitutes a problem for Marlow; it is not the case with other European colonizers. In the attitude toward them, we see how sarcasm is combined with pure critique. Marlow's travel companions and managers of an ivory supply station are "fools." The overwhelming irony is summarized in the name he tagged them with. He never said a good word about those people. Throughout the entire novel he addresses them as "pilgrims": the goal of their pilgrimage was mammon. Their behaviors force him to use terms far more direct: Marlow calls them "filthy pirates," imbeciles and profiteers full of "savage greed." They are the ones creating an image of the Black. It is in their opinions, where an aborigine equals an "idler," "beast," "savage," "rebel," "enemy," "criminal." They stand for and confirm the stereotypes by which Achebe accuses Conrad. As an objective observer, not interested in accumulating "mammon," Marlow enjoys the freedom to make sarcastic comments, especially since he realized that the company and "pilgrims" have trusted him with the task of finding their most talented agent (or his remains). If the post-colonialists would like to look for criticism of imperialism at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries – it is to be found in Conrad's descriptions of the "pilgrims" that they will find the best examples. In any case, this has been done long ago by "scholars of Conrad," hence my surprise over Achebe's interpretation.⁸

The main object of the attack seems to be the hero of the novel "Mr. Kurtz," a man who is admired and envied (hence, wished dead) by the colonizers. He

8 My amazement, however, might not be fully excused in the case of M.P. Markowski's essay, who consequently refrains from any assessments and polemics. Achebe's interpretation evoked a strong response from Watt in his "Heart of Darkness and the Critics" (in: Watt, I. *Essays on Conrad*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.) Swedish writer, Sven Lindqvist, published a book in 1988 entitled *Exterminate All the Brutes* (trans. by J. Tate, New York: New Press, 1996.) in which he tells the story of a modern day journey retracing the path of the *Heart of Darkness*. Linquist fully confirms the anti-colonialism of Joseph Conrad. On the topic of Conrad's humanism, Paul Thibaut has written quite recently on the pages of the "Esprit" magazine, calling *Heart of Darkness* a "radiography of the colonization done by King Leopold the Second" ("Esprit," January 2007), which is confirmed by the following examples from the novel. The Captain meets an elegantly dressed accountant. This is the sensibility presented by the elegant European: "When a truckle-bed with a sick man (some invalid agent from up-country) was put in there, he exhibited a gentle annoyance. 'The groans of this sick person,' he said, distract my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate" (19). When visiting the station, Marlow stumbles upon the body of a deceased black man with a bullet hole in his head. According to the supervisor of the station, it is an example of "energetic efforts," or a "permanent improvement." About that kind of "permanent improvement" achieved by Kurtz, Marlow will soon learn in the former's village. The company's director will comment by saying that the "time was not ripe" for methods used by Kurtz.

is not a “fool,” but a genius manipulator, a demon evoking admiration among simple people and in Marlow. His African mission is unclear: he works for the company harvesting ivory, but he was sent to Africa for scientific purposes. He went there full of sublime ideas. At that moment we begin to understand the reference to the conquest of England by the Roman warriors at the beginning of our era. It was done out of simple greed. Marlow comments:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. (65)

The noble idealist Kurtz was supposed to write a scientific work. He left behind him a report ordered by the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs.” His manuscript contains observations on ways of subduing the tribes to one’s will: “[we] must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings – we approach them with the might as of a deity, and so on” (135). That knowledge was a source of Kurtz’s charisma, charisma that Marlow comments upon by stating ironically: “two shot-guns, a heavy rifle, and a light revolver-carbine – the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter” (135). It was all confirmed by a scribbled conclusion at the end of the report: “Exterminate all the brutes” (135).

The transformation process of an idealist into a tyrant and arrivist is a process of learning that touches not so much upon the object of irony (Kurtz), but upon its subject – Marlow, who is dreaming of meeting Kurtz. I have once described this process as a keystone in the plot that emerges from an incoherent, a-chronological story. I claimed that the plot of the *Heart of Darkness* is “Aristotelian” in character, in that it is based on adversity and discovery, and Marlow’s story about his experiences in the Congo performs a cathartic function.⁹

We observe how the tone of the story about Kurtz changes. Marlow’s interest in the person of the agent grows as the rumors claiming that “he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together” (130). What is the truth, at the beginning seems to the captain to be a rumor coming from those whom he himself does not respect. The statement that “he had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land” (133) has a relative value, given the opinions on the “local demons” was provided earlier

9 Mitosek, Z. *Poznanie (w) powieści*, Cracow: Universitas, 2003. Chapter: “Jak zrozumieć dzikich,” also hers “La narration comme catharsis”, in: *Joseph Conrad. Un Polonais aux confins de l'Occident*.

by Marlow ("*papier-mache* Mephistopheles"). Vicious opinions turn out to be merely a mild echo of the "truth" that is gradually revealed to Marlow. A Russian sailor met by accident tells a story about a nervous breakdown that lead Kurtz "to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which – as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times – were offered up to him – do you understand? – to Mr. Kurtz himself" (135). These incomplete pieces of information earn the status of ironic litotes when we learn that Kurtz actually murdered the Blacks. Marlow, however, was unable to understand the love which the local tribes granted to Kurtz. His strength was based not entirely on brutal crime. Kurtz spoke to the aborigines in their own language. He possessed a gift beyond the reach of the British captain, who himself experienced the effects of the criminal's beautiful speech.

Marlow is left with a tale about Kurtz: he tells it following a tragic realization. He therefore has every right to irony. However, his audience is incapable of understanding that irony; the audience that is being served all the information according to the rules of a proper intrigue, full of traps and deceits. What is intended by Marlow's irony will be recognized as such later in the story, in the light of new information and new events. Here also – as Watt would say – operates the law of "delayed decoding." Before the narrator read the report given to him by the sick Kurtz, a careful look (through a telescope) allowed him to recognize the ornaments on the agent's headquarters: dried heads of the aborigines. Marlow comments:

I have no opinion on that point, but I want you clearly to understand that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him – some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence.

The story gradually "de-demonizes" the hero. Right before his death, Kurtz keeps repeating "live rightly, die, die ...," but Marlow, a year after his death, keeps recalling his "concern," when helplessly ill he remembered that the last shipment of ivory belonged to him and worried that the company will take it away, leaving him without any money. He kept repeating: "I want no more than justice..." (174). The conclusion is clear: "Evidently the appetite for more ivory had got the better of the – what shall I say? – less material aspirations" (146).

Rhetorical irony is matched by the irony of faith, or object rather, in the process of forging the entire intrigue. The co-existence of lofty ideals and material interests is accompanied by a coexistence of the struggle for profit

and struggle for life. Kurtz loses because he is fatally ill: not mentally, but physically. And good health is what constitutes a foundation in the fight for resources that the colonizers try to steal from the “wilderness.” Reality confirms the strength of the jungle: these are waters and swamps and not savage peoples that are the enemies. That is why the merciless criminal dies and a pitiful clerk, whose only strength is good health, will survive. And the station supervisor comments: “Men who come out here should have no entrails” (90). Noble of vile ideas perish in the face of the “ironic necessity” presented by African nature.

And yet, Marlow uses this expression in a different context: he speaks of himself. The simple truth about the destructive forces of nature dawns on him when, after Kurtz’s death, he himself struggles for life. The narrator’s trouble has more than a purely physical character, they are also spiritual dimensions: he has to “look after the memory of Kurtz.” It is precisely then, that the ironic awareness of the piece is revealed for the first time:

There remained only his memory and his Intended – and I wanted to give that up too to the past, in a way, – to surrender personally all that remained of him with me to that oblivion which is the last word of *our common fate*. I don’t defend myself. I had no clear perception of what it was I really wanted. Perhaps it was an impulse of unconscious loyalty, or the fulfillment of one of these *ironic necessities* that lurk in the facts of human existence. I don’t know. I can’t tell. But I went. (173, emphasis added by the author)

How does ironic necessity work? We know the narrator’s opinion of Kurtz. We have observed the reactions of the captain that crop up in his story as he gets to know the “demon.” Yet, contrary to the bitter truth, Marlow acts in favor of the deceased agent. The ironic necessity means acting against one’s own will. Conrad presents two, mutually exclusive, motives. Marlow heard the last words spoken by Kurtz: “The horror! The horror!” That is how this “remarkable man” has “pronounced judgment upon the adventures of his soul on this earth” (168). One could assume that the captain forgives Kurtz for all his sins, since he has condemned himself and the awareness of this self-condemnation saves the agent in the eyes of the listener. The irony is replaced by the sense of the tragic that was revealed in the last words spoken by the “demon.” That is the reason for Marlow’s meetings with Kurtz’s friends in Brussels, including his fiancée. That is one of the possible interpretations. It is ethically fitting. The second possibility is darker. The British captain – a storyteller coming back from Africa – is one of the participants in the adventures. He goes there on behalf of the Belgian company. He does not ask about the goal of the trip,

he is purely interested in the exciting new continent that he has imagined in his childhood. Information he receives on the spot and the events that he is part of are terrifying. He reacts to them with cutting sarcasm, but still fulfills all his obligations toward the company. He is driven mainly by curiosity, he is ready to lie in order to meet his hero. His whole adventure ends with a lie. When he passes Kurtz's report to the administrators in Belgium, he rips out the conclusion: "Exterminate all the brutes." When meeting Kurtz's fiancée, instead of quoting him exclaiming "horror," Marlow states that "The last word he pronounced was – your name" (86).

Marlow's conversation with the fiancée is an excellent example of playing with "double speech": the woman forces him to pass judgments radically contrary to his own, praises radically contrasting with the persona of that "remarkable" criminal. The captain lies: he says something different than he thinks. He is struggling, contradicts himself, but is unable to exclaim the cruel truth. That way – against himself and according to the woman's will – he reinforces the myth of a noble explorer.

It does not mean, however, that this is what Joseph Conrad does. Lying is a similar mechanism to irony. One says something different than what one thinks. But the liar hides what he is thinking from the listener, who – as opposed to the listener of an ironic statement – has no reason to suspect anything. Lying Marlow is fully aware of his hypocrisy. "Ironic necessity" leads to an unhappy consciousness. When he said that he has to take care of the memory of Kurtz, he takes away his own, independent choice. He adds to himself, however: "I've done enough for it to give me the indisputable right to lay it, if I choose, for an everlasting rest in the dust-bin of progress, amongst all the sweepings and, figuratively speaking, all the dead cats of civilization" (136).

In the entire novel, the helplessness and uncertainty prevail and the question about who had given Marlow the right to criticize seems to be coming up again and again. This insightful ironist seems to be the most merciless toward himself. Contrary to the realistic writers of the first half of the 19th century, who claimed the right to judge their own heroes, Conrad recreates the epistemological turning point: his narrator is not capable of disconnecting from the group that is being judged, to distance himself from the condemned hero because "he is one of them." And all the impatient names he calls the black inhabitants of Africa he exclaims as the one who takes part in a massive crime and as the one who is aware of it. The place of sarcastic irony is taken by self-irony.

For the irony to have its desired effect, it needs to find an understanding listener. Conrad dramatizes the sailor's story: it is related by one of the participants of the sailing trip to the mouth of Thames. In a classical *mise en abyme* novel there is a relation of dependence between the two narrators. This

is the kind of relation that seems to be dominant in *Heart of Darkness*. It is not certain, however, if that submission constitutes the coda of the novel. Tragic catharsis is based on self-recognition. The captain keeps repeating the gesture of the agent, his bitter self-assessment. Instead of exclaiming "The horror!" he admits to a lie.

In that way, what so difficult for Marlow – understanding the Other – is passed on to the readers of the novel, which calls for understanding its narrator. The way of telling the story, through ellipsis, parallels, and ironic games all constitute traps for the reader that are difficult to tackle, just like it is difficult to make clear sense out of the narration. The narrator who relates the story of the Captain comments: "to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (63).

The reader – but also the listeners of the story – are not able to determine what bothers Marlow more: the inability to understand the savages, expressed at the very beginning, the observed bestiality of the Belgian colonizers, the compromised "memory of Kurtz," or, finally, the "ironic necessity" that brings the noble captain to the level of the people he criticizes. After all, the memory of Kurtz he has passed on in Brussels, expressed in the adoration of the fiancée and confirmed by the stammering Marlow, as well as the (incomplete) report given to the journalists, continues the fiction of the colonizer. Marlow uncovered the lies of the conquerors of Africa who played the role of the bearers of noble ideas. Joseph Conrad deciphers the lie of an adventurer, who was exposing the lies of others. He showed that there is no exit from the vicious circle of colonial ideology.

The captain shares his confusion with his travel companions. At the beginning of the journey he declared his hatred of lies: "There is a taint of death, a flavor of mortality in lies – which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world – what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do" (98). Now he can feel this mortal rotting on himself. He wants to get rid of it, but the request for understanding is not a request for forgiveness. On the contrary, toward his listeners Marlow tends to be aggressive. He depicts the Belgian colonizers mockingly, but he confesses his lie to the British. He speaks close to London and his stories are accompanied by the lights of "the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth" (5) in the distance:

Absurd! he cried. This is the worst of trying to tell... Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and

temperature normal – you hear – normal from year's end to year's end.
And you say, Absurd! (131)

The butcher and the policeman are the warrants of “non-absurd” being, being that constitutes the lives of “the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.” From that town and from that country comes the employee of the Belgian company, the mess and blood thirst of which he is so critical. That is how the field of irony is entered by the British Empire, the largest colonial power of the nineteenth century. Marlow's lies, which seem to degrade only King Leopold's companies, in fact degrades all colonizing attempts – regardless of intentions – all end just like Kurtz's international report: “Exterminate all the brutes.”¹⁰

Let us go back to the accusations of the post-colonialists about the elimination of history (“pre-historic planet”). The *Heart of Darkness* is not a story about Blacks, it is not their history that interests the writer. He is concerned with the history of those who take away their land and riches, with the motivations behind the conquest, with the description of the identity of the exploration and exploitation, with the compromises reached in the face of ruthless plundering and finally with the impossibility of taking the position of being conquered. This inability precisely, and the inability to understand, in particular, is the theme of Marlow's story. It is a signal of critical awareness, so close to the ideas of post-colonialism. Let us quote Markowski from his article *Ethical Turn*:

How to present that which has been removed from the dominating systems of representation, or hidden under the surface of seemingly transparent discourse. We are talking, of course, about the works devoted to colonialism. [...] the ethical goal of those publications [...] Gayatri Spivak defined as the “experience of impossible,” because the ethical (hence, responsible) representation of the subdued world (“*subalternity*”)

10 See also: “The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and – as he was good enough to say himself – his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz; and by-and-by I learned that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had entrusted him with the making of a report, for its future guidance” (134–135). Reaction of the British towards the customs of Belgian administration in Congo has been symptomatic: Roger Casement, a diplomat, has been alerted to the cruelty of Leopold's envoys from the 1890s and in 1903 he sent an official report to his government that caused an uproar in the international community. All of that happened, of course, with a mutual agreement to – better or worse (for whom?) – colonization. This must have been the “right side” that Kurtz has been standing by. We find the confirmation of that thesis in Lindqvist's book, who writes that basically all of Europe followed the rule of “Exterminate all the brutes.”

is possible only when it is followed by the awareness of inadequacy of that very representation (and mutual understanding).¹¹

And that is what, most likely, Conrad was interested in. The theoretical problem was presented as Marlow's practical choice. As we have written before, the captain poses a question about his own ability to understand the "savage." It does not mean that he doesn't understand them. He goes even further: by criticizing the vicious colonizers, he poses a question about his own right to criticize. It does not mean, however, that he reaches any kind of compromise with them.

This subtlety of writing, this second level of irony that turns into self-irony is what escaped Achebe. The Polish scholar likewise missed this fact, hastily referring to the concept of post-colonialism. If, in Markowski's works, the paradox of self-reference is constantly signaled as one of the exhaustive aporias of twentieth century sciences, then missing the practice of writing from the turn of the century allows us to name that paradox and express it – as Conrad would put it – "something is missing, some small element."

Translation: Jan Pytalski

¹¹ Markowski, *M.P. Ethical Turn...*, 242.

Maria Delaperrière

Where are my Limits? Postcolonialism in Literature

The notion of postcolonialism has been embraced gradually and with a certain degree of reluctance by the Polish humanities. This reluctance could be partially explained as resulting from the period of totalitarian stagnation, but there were other reasons as well. Assimilation of postcolonial theories required a full immersion in successive layers of Polish cultural consciousness, a questioning of traditionally defined identity, a revaluation of stagnant perceptions of nationality, and a stance toward the new processes of globalization. All those phenomena could have settled in the Polish collective consciousness only after the fall of Communism. In the same period, however, Western criticism welcomed several critical works showing clearly that the postcolonial worldview itself has expanded beyond its initial, historical sense and in its scope can now refer to all forms of domination, locating itself within the broad current of contemporary social and cultural thought.¹

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1 B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, London-New York 1989; G. Spivak *The Post-Colonial Critic. Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Routledge, London 1990; H. K. Bhabha *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London 1994. Those seminal works were, of course, preceded and inspired by E.W. Said's *Orientalism* (New York 1978), translated to Polish as late as 1991.

Today, the impact of those works on the development of Polish critical thought seems unquestionable. However, as the boundaries of the notion expanded, the chances to formulate its single and precise definition shrunk accordingly. Postcolonialism did not create a closed system, and it could not have created one, as from the very beginning it denoted, first and foremost, a state of consciousness that reveals itself only in particular situations and circumstances.

Those few observations may help realize the numerous difficulties spawning with application of postcolonial perspective in Polish cultural research, however, one cannot negate the role that the "decolonialization of thought"² plays today in all branches of the humanities, from history and social philosophy to art and literature.

The breakthrough (no longer political but cultural), came with the work of Ewa Thompson.³ Referring directly to Said's *Orientalism*, Thompson focuses on Polish national stereotypes and conducts a thorough reassessment of their historical determinants. Discussions accompanying the process, however, were symptomatic of a series of deeper developments that have pervaded Polish society since the dawn of the post-totalitarian era. In fact, one could view contemporary reflection on nationality, Polocentrism, multiculturalism, racism, ethnocentrism as the determining factors of the specifically Polish postcolonial consciousness that continued to spawn new ideas (I purposefully leave out the questions of gender as a separate domain). Insightful works by W. J. Burszta, A. Fiut, R. Nycz and M. Janion,⁴ illustrative for the processes of "decolonization" of literature, were followed by a debate over the method. Bogusław Bakuła⁵ wisely emphasized the need to investigate the colonial language, while Włodzimierz Bolecki⁶ was equally right to call for an

2 Expression used by D. Kołodziejczyk in "Trawersiem przez glob: studia postkolonialne i teoria globalizacji." *Er(r)go* 2004 Vol. 1 (8), 22.

3 E. Thompson "Nacjonalizm, kolonizacja, tożsamość." *Teksty Drugie* 1999 Vol. 5; *Trubadurzy Imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm* Universitas, Kraków 2001; „Sarmatyzm i postkolonializm, o naturze polskich resentymentów. *Europa-Tygodnik Idei* 2006 Vol. 46; „Said a sprawa polska" *Europa-Tygodnik Idei* 2006 Vol. 26.

4 W. J. Burszta „Postkolonializm i dekolonizacja umysłu" *Różnica, tożsamość, edukacja. Szkice z pogranicza*. T. Szkudlarek (ed.) Impuls, Kraków 1995; . Fiut *Spotkanie z Innym*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2003; R. Nycz „Každy z nas jest przybyszem. Wzory tożsamości w literaturze polskiej XX wieku." *Teksty Drugie* 1999 Vol. 5; M. Janion *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2007.

5 B. Bakuła. "Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki)" *Teksty Drugie* 2006 Vol. 6.

6 W. Bolecki „Myśli różne o postkolonializmie" *Teksty Drugie* 2007 Vol. 4; see also: G. Borkowska „Polskie doświadczenie kolonialne." *Ibid*.

investigation of the “(post)colonial topics” that would go beyond “mechanical copying” of the Western patterns and read with the help of post-colonial filter also Polish classics. Critical attention focused on the fluidity of the border between the oppressor and the victim, the familiar and the strange, the center and the periphery. Each of these concepts, resurfacing repeatedly and sometimes seemingly unconsciously in scholarly analyses (no longer directly tied to American criticism), became an expression of a new sensitivity, one that could be seen (following, in fact, Said’s wish) as a new form of contemporary humanism.

Still, a glance at particular situations suffices to realize that the matter at hand is highly complex, not devoid of self-contradictions and paradoxes tied, despite the appearances, not only to the geopolitical context or a specific ideology, but to the general processes of globalization whose affinity to the postcolonial phenomena will probably serve as a basis of many further reflections.⁷

My analysis concerns a more neutral domain – literature understood as an immanent value and yet, subject to the same selection and hierarchization as national, ethnic, and sexual groups. This, in the Polish context, entails the following question: how does the postcolonial consciousness influence or potentially influence the status of Polish literature within the European – Western – and world literature?

From universalism to geocriticism

One could comment without the risk of exaggeration that literary studies in general and the comparative approach in particular have undergone a revolutionary change, one that has largely relativized traditional notions of the literary canon. Until quite recently, comparative studies assumed as a point of reference the notion of world literature (*Weltliteratur*) which from the day of Goethe served as a universal model for the literary tradition of Western Europe. And it was not that long ago that the great French comparatist, René Etiemble⁸, defended universalism as a set of constant values (invariants) in the name of the principle of primal and essentialist uniqueness of the human being:

7 D. Kołodziejczyk *Trawerses przez...*; E. Domańska *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksja o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2006; D. Skórczewski „Postkolonialna Polska – projekt (nie)możliwy” *Teksty Drugie* 2006 Vol. 1/2.

8 A. Marino “Entiembles, les ‘invariants’ et la littérature compare.” *Le Mythe d’Entiembles; homages, etudes et recherches*, Didier Erudition, Paris 1979.

there is one human being, and so there exists only one literature. Consequently, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the same motifs, images and forms are found in the literatures most distant in terms of time and space⁹

Today, this deeply humanist image of literature struggles to fend off allegations from the postcolonial criticism undermining the principle of selection whose criteria had been so far established at the expense of that which is particular, specific and local.¹⁰ At times, the critique of universalism takes the form of indictment, revealing a sense of guilt. A few years ago, A. Finkelkraut published a telling work on the ingratitude toward cultural heritage that concerns also Eastern Europe,¹¹ and today it is a subject that resonates deeply with the comparativists. Accusations culminate with the charge of European cultural imperialism which seems to result in an unambiguous conclusion that cultures previously deemed secondary could only be compensated with a complete relativization of universal values. Consequently, the theory of invariants that assumes an atemporal stability, is juxtaposed against an image of humanity immersed in historical reality and the border of the familiar and the strange that for many decades has served as the axis of all comparative studies becomes annulled. In the postcolonial perspective the very notion of the exotic reveals itself to be nothing else than another sign of European hegemony. There are also attempts to conciliate between the traditional values and globalizing socio-economic and cultural processes. Those entail dangers that alarmed Auerbach already in the 50s when he made predictions about the standardization of lifestyle and irreversible reduction of languages and cultures, which in consequence, undermined also the point of comparative studies as such.¹² Half a century later, alluding to Auerbach, Didier Coste asks: "can the thought of globalization (of literature, culture) be anything else than a globalized thought?"¹³ I shall return to those aporias further in my essay. For now, let it be emphasized that they have already become the subject of several works raising the problem of the aim of contemporary comparative studies, or – to be more precise – the problem of how comparative studies are to be

9 M. Détrie "Connaissions-nous Etienne? *Revue de Littérature Comparée* Vol. 295 July–September 2000. 421.

10 D. Coste "Les universaux face à la mondialisation: une aporie comparatiste? *Vox Poetica* 21.05.2006. <http://vox-poetica.org/sfglc/biblio/coste.html>

11 A. Finkelkraut *L'Ingratitude, conversation sur notre temps* Gallimard, Paris 1999.

12 E. Auerbach *Philology and Weltliteratur* [1952] cf. M. and E. Said, *Centennial Review* XII.1 (1969). 3.

13 D. Coste "Les universaux..."

approached when, as a result of a general disappearance of differences, one will soon have trouble knowing what is to be compared to what.

One must wonder, if there is still a continuity between the great works of Spitzer, Curtius and Auerbach, who many years before the postcolonial breakthrough exceeded the range of philological binarism, preferring to research cultural topics that build the greater picture of European culture. An answer, even if an incomplete one, is supplied by the field of intertextual research, which itself is not devoid of paradoxes. On the one hand, intertextual approach strengthens and deepens the epistemological knowledge of the work and its cultural ties to what is beyond the canon, placing it at the same within a network of determinants that weaken the work's ontological status. One could nonetheless agree with Ryszard Nycz that the unavoidable "dependence" of the work that reveals itself in intertextual research ensures its "participation in the world of art as well as in the contemporary world of human experience."¹⁴

Such understood intertextuality is very close to what Bourdieu refers to as "denationalization" of literary text, and seems even closer the notion of deterritorialization as used by Bertrand Westphal when he discusses Deleuze in his geocritical writings.¹⁵ The similarity of these notions originates in the act of leaving the stereotype that Deleuze sees as remaining within a given space.¹⁶ Deterritorialization understood as an intertextual act allows to abandon a conceptual framework where particular hierarchical order remains closely connected to localization (*Ordnung/Ortung*).¹⁷ Instead, Westphal proposes to create a new "cartography of imagination" that would delocalize representation of the world. Or, in other words, tear it out of its stagnant state. Such representation contains no division into national spaces; geographical boundaries disappear as well, there is no split between the own and the strange space, as they exist simultaneously in a multiplied gaze that refers at the same time to several perspectives, to observations and experiences that correct each other. Emphasis is placed not on separate cultures but on the connections, relations, and passages that reveal surprising parallelisms of plots, motifs, and phenomena whose existence had not been noted by primary research before. Westphal takes interest, for instance, in the peripheral Europe, but not in its nations. Instead of Poland, Czech,

14 R. Nycz "Poetyka intertekstualna, tradycje i perspektywy." *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*. M. P. Markowski, R. Nycz (eds.) Universitas, Kraków 2006.

15 B. Westphal *La Géocritique, reel, fiction, espace*. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris 2007.

16 Ibid. See also: G. Deleuze, F. Guattari. *AMille plateau*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris 1980.

17 B. Westphal *La Géocritique...* 235.

or Ukraine, he writes about Galicia and Bukovina as cultural systems that exist beyond all geopolitical connections. From Polish literature he quotes Stasiuk's *Moja Europa* [My Europe] and Andruchowicz as perfect examples of the cultural disequilibrium that he views as particularly interesting.

This new perspective resurfaces also in the Polish research where literature itself enforces a re-evaluation of literary canons. Ahistoricity and acculturation as well as the influence of the media weaken the interest in the old culture, which in turn influences the disappearance of diachronicity. The past presents itself as a museum, through incidental evocations, while linear history is consciously rejected. Those phenomena resonate immediately within the realm of literature and its reception, the latter reaffirming the need for writing no longer fully national but rather one that chooses a changeable "touristic" overview of literatures viewed so far as marginal. This is confirmed by the reception of Polish literature in the West, where prominence is given to the translations of Stasiuk, Tokarczuk, Huelle, and Bieńczyk, in other words, to the representatives of minority cultures, lower, peripheral and meeting the expectations of the West.

Interest in otherness is a necessary condition for the disappearance of the differences between the center and the periphery; it sets new goals for literature, claims Westphal, seeing in intertextuality a chance to move beyond the quiescence of one cultural space. It is an optimistic approach, especially considering the fact that until recently, Polish literature was marked by the complex of a periphery and resentment notable in Miłosz, Konwicki, Rymkiewicz, and Zagajewski. Today, in his discussions of Polocentrism, Luigi Marinelli expresses the wish for the notions of the "center" and "peripheries" to become "fully relative and interchangeable" in humanities and historical-literary studies, recalling Kristeva's famous appeal to be "strangers to ourselves"¹⁸ while the first part of Maria Janion's *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna* bears the telling title: *Sami sobie cudzy*¹⁹ [Other to Ourselves]; facts like these vividly illustrate the enormous breakthrough in the process of nullifying cultural hierarchies that has begun to seep into the collective consciousness.

One would present, however, an incomplete picture of the current situation if one failed to discuss the numerous misunderstandings and the previously mentioned aporias.

18 *Polonistyka w przebudowie, literaturoznawstwo, wiedza o języku, wiedza o kulturze, edukacja*. Materials from the Polish Studies convention (Kraków, 22-25 September 2004) edited by M. Czermińska, S. Gajda, A. Lęgożyńska, A.Z. Makowiecki, R. Nycz. Universitas, Kraków 2005 Vol.2. 206.

19 M. Janion *Niesamowita...* 5.

The trouble with otherness

While there is no doubt that the growing interest in the cultures of national and ethnic minorities can be regarded as one of the most positive consequences of the postcolonial pursuit, we must not forget that the period of political division of Europe into the Western and Eastern part strengthened for years historical cultural oppositions that are yet to be fully overcome. Exchanges between cultures are governed by new laws that nonetheless are not very different from the old ones. This leads to several questions: how to negotiate between the Polish presence in Europe and Eurocentrism? Is the triumph of finding our place in Europe, in fact, a Pyrrhic victory? Finally, a fundamental question: to what extent does the postcolonial consciousness, which in itself is an ethical and deeply humanistic value, melt with the processes of globalized “neutering” and, further, can those processes be avoided? The answer is not easy. While the notion of *Weltliteratur* became an anachronism, the dream of a global village is, in fact, a return to universalism, this time grounded not as much in common values but in a mechanical pursuit of homogenization.

Moreover, today, is there any point of view that can claim primacy? When colonial rule ended, many other things were discredited along with it: the domination of one civilization, one color, and one religion over all others and, in the same way, the domination of one sex over another or of one sexuality over others. The hour has come of the copresence of diversity, but now in the silence of God.²⁰

This is the core of the misunderstanding at hand: absence of a unifying collective norm replaced by “heterarchy” (to quote Douglas Hofstadter), in other words, by a desacralized hierarchy where all ideas of priority have evanesced.²¹ At the same time, as mentioned before, postcolonial consciousness converges from the very beginning with the search for not only collective but also individual identities. It is not without importance that Levinas’s name reappears even in the works discussing geopolitical spaces (Thompson, Westphal). Cultural difference and subjective identity are inseparable.

If we view the postcolonial phenomena from this perspective, it becomes clear how the process of broadening the geographic-cultural horizons may be perceived in negative terms, as a process of absorbing the Other. A complete integration, stresses Dominique Quessada in the treatise on “othercide,”²²

20 B. Westphal *La Géocritique...* 14, [based on the English translation by Robert T. Tally].

21 D. Hofstadter *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, Basic Books, NY 1979 after Westphal, *ibid*.

22 D. Quessada *Court traité d’altercide*, Verticales, Paris 2007.

is the most radical form of exclusion. In a society where all difference has been made void, and there are no dialectical relations between the master and the slave, the inside and the outside, between what is of me and what is strange, the Other, while not rejected, is swallowed, digested, and assimilated. This dissolving of the Other becomes a new form of colonization, multiplied, anarchistic, irrational, resulting in an "autistic culture" while the connection between postcolonialism and the processes of globalization reveals itself as "fake altruism."²³

A way out of this deadlock can only be found via a clear distinction between the postcolonial consciousness and the globalizing phenomena, accounting for the fact that the latter refer to processes imposing themselves from the outside and concerning entire humankind, while postcolonial consciousness shows itself through confrontation with the Other not only in the collective but also in the individual dimension.

Where are my limits?

I will allow myself a digression now, foreshadowed by the title of my essay. It is a line from Białoszewski's "Autoportrait as felt"²⁴ and a perfect illustration of the existential disequilibrium that will serve as a point of reference for further reflection. What limits exactly did Białoszewski have in mind? Definitely not the limits of self-determination ("Of all the faces known / I remember least my own.") Self-determination is impossible without the intervention of the Other ("They look at me / so probably I have a face").

I refer to Białoszewski because the subjective space that the poet mentions grows especially important in the encounter with postcolonial humanism. The question of boundaries of subjectivity revealing themselves in the relation with the Other have intrigued both pragmatists and phenomenologists long before the emergence of postcolonial theory. "I am as others see me" Sartre argues in *Saint Genet* and his essay on Jews.²⁵ Sartre emphasizes the relationship between Self and Other from the outside (similarly to Gombrowicz). The shift inwards takes place later, in Levinas. The connection is not only spiritual. The physical tangibility of the contact is important. Corporeality, as we know, is an inherent part of identity. Ricoeur aptly notes that identity consists of

23 Cf. J. Baudrillard *Le crime parfait*, Galilée, Paris 1995; after Lydia Salvayre's presentation at Journée des écrivains du Sud. Aix-en-Provence (28-30 March 2008).

24 Transl. by Czesław Miłosz [AW].

25 J. P. Sartre *Réflexions sur la question juive* [1946] *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr*, Gallimard, 1969.

more than external factors such as *habitus*, social roles and character traits, it also consists of anchoring in one's own body. The body, in turn, is a frame of identification that reveals itself in encounters with the Other. It is a boundary separating me from the Other but at the same time a bridge between the intimate and the external world,²⁶ between the familiar and the strange. But Ricoeur the phenomenologist goes even further, moving towards anthropology: my body can exist among others only after I acknowledge my otherness among the others. This concretization (embodiment) of the Self-Other relation reverts Husserl's principle of seeing otherness as a second "self" or a shadow of my "self" (as noted already by Homi Bhabha²⁷). In Ricoeur, the opposite happens – the Other makes me aware of my own Otherness.²⁸

Taking all of this into account, let us go back to literature. If we treat literary work as an encounter with the Other, each act of reading is a comparative act that can be understood on several planes. In the classical sense, it is an encounter with the Other that is an extension of one's own sphere of psyche, a truism these days. The matter looks differently when a given work is viewed from the perspective of cultural studies. It becomes a space where my subjectivity can meet the subjectivity of the author but only inasmuch as our cultural horizons cross. This, of course, has nothing to do with political or religious beliefs, nor with my or the author's inborn sensitivity. Native works, located within my cultural horizons, can be ideologically opposed to my views but this does not evoke in me a sense of strangeness. (I may disagree with Kuśniewicz's *Mieszaniny obyczajowe* but I cannot resist the pleasure of interacting with the substance of the text located within my cultural isotopy.) It takes an outside look at Polish literature to discover that Konwicki's novels are more metaphysical than they are political, that Kuśniewicz as a writer is more European than Polish and that the messianistic historiosophy of *Dziady* can be radically strange to a Western recipient. For a complete evaluation of a work or literature I need a confrontation with the otherness of the text but also with the otherness of the recipient. This requires more than aesthetics of reception: an in-depth confrontation referring not only to views, ideologies, stereotypes, but also to corporeality as a space of experience and sensation.

Emphasizing the role of corporeality in the subject's encounter with otherness helps to avoid the hypocrisy of "fake altruism" – it is not the Other who

26 P. Ricoeur *Soi-même comme un autre*, Editions du Seuil. Points Essais, Paris 1990. 372.

27 A. Burzyska, M. P. Markowski *Teoria literatury XXX wieku*, Znaki, Kraków 2007. 558.

28 Contrary to Kristeva (*Etranges à nous-mêmes* [1988] Gallimard folio/essays, 1991), who searches for the sources of otherness in the layers of the Unconscious, Ricoeur bases his proposal on cultural anthropology and phenomenology.

needs me, it is me who needs the Other! The Other, removed from me in time and space, becomes a measure of my distance. If a literary text evokes my approval or outrage or distaste, those feelings are not only directed at the sender but also influence my identity as a receiver. What I have in mind here is no longer simple tropism in the form of phantasms or a mirrored self but rather its cultural envelope. In this perspective, the confrontation with the Other leads not to an annihilation of otherness but to the evening out of differences in the crossing of views on what is distant and open.

This is what Gadamer means when he writes about the “fusion of horizons” as a principle of the dialectic of participation and otherness.²⁹ It is an attempt at mutual understanding that will never be complete as the very act of understanding is always an understanding of a certain otherness. Awareness of this truth is at the same time a confirmation of the existence of the boundary between myself and the Other, a boundary that is my own horizon, without which my “I” could not exceed its limit. An act of reading as an act of comparison understood on several planes boils down to interaction and as such can never be definitive as it is a part of the process of socialization that exceeds the frame of a single culture.

Concluding remarks

“Where are my limits?” is a question without a single answer. Each is only partial, insufficient, incomplete, anchored in time that is only my own, time that I cannot share with anyone even if we share the common space of some sort of a mythical “pre-age.” This broad parable by Olga Tokarczuk could serve as a motto for further comparativist reflection in Polish studies, complementing the proposals put forward by Westphal who bases his geocritical argument on spatiotemporality. Westphal refers to Jauss’s beautiful astral metaphor that is worth citing here as well:

Just as looking at the stars in the sky gives an impression of their simultaneous existence and only the work of an astronomer reveals their temporal distance, so does the contemporary critic of literature grasp from the cultural archipelago particular places – islands, investigating their temporal distance, fully aware that Otherness means simply being in a different time.³⁰

29 See P. Ricoeur *Język, tekst, interpretacja. Wybór pism*. Transl. P. Graff, K. Rosner, PIW, Warszawa 1989; K. Rosner *Gadamerowska koncepcja doświadczenia hermeneutycznego* and *Gadamerowskie rozumienie języka*, ibidem., *Hermeneutyka jako krytyka kultury*. Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, PIW, Warszawa 1991.

30 B. Westphal *La Géocritique...* 226. [transl. AW]

The recognition of otherness is one of the most important achievements of contemporary literary and cultural criticism. But it is not free of its own problems. The notion that literature is an act of going beyond the boundaries of my own cultural space (not because it is a negative space but because the Ego cannot fulfill itself in enclosure) has already become an obvious truth.³¹ Literature sets us free from ourselves. The role of the critic is, thus, is to perform a cross-cultural jump that, in the words of Alexis Nouss, a renown researcher of the processes of metisization,³² allows to “tear oneself away from oneself, challenge the laws of gravitation and soar.” Nouss adds: “Instead of a substrate, essence, we should propose otherness and becoming.”³³

Following Nouss's reasoning one feels tempted to add that such a jump requires a trampoline to spring off the ground (and the ground itself should be understood not only as a particular geographical place.) Mobility becomes today an attribute of a multiplied identity that is no longer determined by its belonging to a given place but becomes increasingly a matter of choice. It is language, then, that remains – the ultimate determinant of identity, language understood not only as a mean of human communication, but also as a determinant of the vertical dimension of subjectivity. In the era of spatial shifts and cultural transformations, my “selfness” does not belong to my homeland, it is my homeland that is a part of myself.³⁴

The cultural dimension of literary research and its openness to otherness allow to see that my own world, the world that I accept, could just as well be entirely different. At the same time, however, investigative auto-reflexivity prevents excessive cultural syncretism where all cultures lose their specificity. Only by becoming aware of our own finiteness can we open ourselves up to the horizons of other cultures, not in order to appropriate them but to try and understand them.

Translation: Anna Warso

31 J.-T. Desanti. *Réflexions sur le temps, Conversations avec Dominique-Antoine Grisoni, Variations philosophiques* [1992], Librairie générale française, Paris 1997.

32 A. Nouss. *Plaidoyer pour un monde métis*, Textuel, Paris 2005. 29. See also: Y. Clavaron and B. Dieterle *Métissages littéraires*, Presses universitaires de Saint-Etienne 2005, Actes du Congrès de la SFLGC 2004.

33 Ibid.

34 R. Nycz mentions “settling in without putting down roots” (“Każdy z nas jest przybyszem” *Teksty Drugie* 1995 Vol. 5. 51).

Małgorzata Czermińska

An Exotic Journey and a Turn to the Inside: Non-Fictional Narratives between "Orientalism" and Intimism

For today's readers of Polish non-fiction literature, the publication of Bronisław Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* might seem like the proverbial pebble that started the avalanche, although the author had no such intention. I am thinking not of the debates triggered in 1967 by the publication of the English translation of Malinowski's extremely personal notes, which incidentally concerned his journey to the islands of the South-West Pacific. An especially lively reaction, sometimes with shades of consternation, was caused by the fact that at some points in *A Diary* Malinowski displayed a somewhat different attitude to the natives from that evident in his anthropological works. Readers were shocked by certain "colonial" gestures made by the anthropologist in his description of relations with the natives of the Trobriand Islands.¹ What I am more interested here, though, is a situation that came to light only after the full version of the Polish original was printed

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1 Kubica, Grażyna, Introduction to: Malinowski, Bronisław, *Dziennik w ścisłym znaczeniu tego wyrazu* [*A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*] (intro. and ed. G. Kubica), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002, esp. pp. 26-35.

(2002). With this book, we are forced to entirely revalue the whole tradition of Polish modern non-fiction prose. But rather than an avalanche, it might be better to invoke the image of a pebble thrown into the water, from which larger and larger circles radiate.

It is clear even at first glance that *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* can be read in at least a few ways: in the context of intimism, essay-writing and travel writing. Firstly, without doubt it became one of the most interesting personal journals in Polish autobiographical literature. Secondly, from a different point of view it rightly became part of "Modern philosophical essay-writing in the Polish literature of the first half of the 20th century." This is at once the title of a book by Andrzej Zawadzki,² who was responsible for including Malinowski's work within the sphere of interests of Polish literary studies – and this still at a time when it was only known in its shorter, English-language version.³ Thirdly, it has a place in the stream of Polish non-fiction literature linked with experiencing travel. And this is the aspect that I shall be looking at. I would also like to note that I am thinking of journeys not in a metaphorical sense, but only actual, distant ones, involving an encounter with an entirely different culture, an alien landscape and radically changed climate. In this sense, the personal journal of the founder of modern world anthropology is also part of the tradition of recording experiences of the exotic in Polish literature.

If I can return for a moment to the aquatic metaphor to depict the reception of autobiographical writings, the effect of the circles on the water was consolidated by several other stones being tossed with the publication of the Polish translations of several parts of Mircea Eliade's extensive autobiographical writings.⁴ There is no space to develop at length the comparison of the personal notes of the two authors, but I cannot fail to mention the Romanian scholar's youthful *Indian Diary*, as to read

2 Zawadzki, Andrzej, *Nowoczesna eseistyka filozoficzna w piśmiennictwie polskim pierwszej połowy XX wieku*, Kraków: Universitas, 2001.

3 Malinowski, Bronisław, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, London: Routledge and Paul, 1967. Excerpts from the Polish original from 1908–1913 edited by Grażyna Kubica began to appear in 1998 in the magazine *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*.

4 In order, the following were published: *Zapowiedź równonocy. Pamiętniki 1 (1907–1937)*, trans. and annotations Ireneusz Kania, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989; *Świętojańskie żniwo. Pamiętniki 2 (1937–1960)*, trans. Ireneusz Kania, Kraków: Oficyna Literacka. Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1991; *Religia, literatura i komunizm. Dziennik emigranta*, trans. Adam Zagajewski, London: Puls, 1990; *Dziennik indyjski*, trans. Ireneusz Kania, Warszawa: KR, 1999; "Wędrówki włoskie," in: Eliade, *Przyczynki do filozofii Renesansu. Wędrówki włoskie*, trans. Ireneusz Kania, Warszawa: KR, 2000; *Moje życie. Fragmenty dziennika 1941–1985*, trans. Ireneusz Kania, annotations R. Reszke, Warszawa: KR, 2001.

it sensitises us to many of the aspects of Malinowski's *A Diary* from his time spent on the islands of the Western Pacific. While there are obvious differences in the texts that are crucial for interpreting them, the reader of intimate journals will notice interesting analogies in the depiction of the self-portraits of the two diarists, especially if the main biographical information is used as a frame.

Here we have two extremely talented, ambitious young scholars embarking on global scientific careers, both from Central and Eastern Europe, and led by professional reasons to spend several years in the tropics. Both are working with a passion: one conducting ethnographic research, the other spending hours studying Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. Both reproach themselves for succumbing to their passion for reading novels. The pair of them short-sighted, at times a little helpless in everyday life, rather neurotic, with tendencies to varying degrees of self-analysis, clutching erotic phantasms in their imaginations and recording their sexual accomplishments. Sometimes they dream of finding true love in the future, but fail to accord the same seriousness to the women they actually associate with as to themselves. Both are perceived by the natives simply as Europeans, and at times have an uncomfortable sense of the complexity of their European identity that they find hard to explain to others. They remember that theirs is the "worse" part of the mother continent, lying, as Maria Janion would later put it (for such a divide can still be felt in the 21st century) east of the West and west of the East.⁵

Malinowski and Eliade's diaries both surfaced on the Polish literary scene in a period when the title of best author writing about the Third World was deservedly held by Ryszard Kapuściński. His reportages on Africa, Latin America, Iran and the Asian regions of the former Soviet Union, as well as his recollection in *Travels with Herodotus* of erstwhile travels to India and China, in a sense formed the canon of writing about cultures from other continents. They were also responsible for the popularity of postcolonial thinking in the Polish consciousness much sooner than this theory entered our academic discourse. For Kapuściński, the growing role of the personal element, the increasingly clear manifestation of autobiographism in his books, and the evolution of his methods from journalism to creative writing (while retaining the key characteristics of reportage) must have made the idea of writing a book inspired by the accomplishments of Malinowski seem the most logical consequence of his creative path. Based on the increasing frequency of references to the works of the great anthropologist in Kapuściński's works

5 Janion, Maria, "Polska na wschód od Zachodu i na zachód od Wschodu," *Teksty Drugie*, 2003 no. 6.

in his final years, we can imagine that a book contrasting *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* and *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* with the lives of today's inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands, and thereby referring to *A Diary in the Strictest Sense*, could make for fascinating reading. After all, Malinowski's position as a diarist, sometime close to that of Eliade the protagonist of *Indian Diary*, is in many respects the polar opposite of that taken in Kapuściński's reportage. Yet the place of the book about the Trobriand Islands, along with his other planned one, about the town of his childhood Pinsk, remains on the long shelf of unwritten or lost works, like Karol Szymanowski's *Epebos* or Bruno Schulz's *Messiah*, works of which only legend remains.

Of course, Malinowski and Kapuściński's narratives do not function in a literary vacuum. There was something before, will be something after and was something between them. Polish travel writing has already been rather well researched and described, from Old Polish itineraries to contemporary reportage and essays, so it would seem that there is little that remains to be done here. But we ought to distinguish in the tradition a certain set of texts as a specific background for the two authors, who resemble two summits culminating at distant points in a long mountain range. We should also consider several characteristics of this group of works. First, they are records of actual journeys – present is experience (in the traditional sense) – forming part of the author's biography. The travel does not have to be a continuous trip, but can also be a long stay in one region. However it must – and this is the second important feature – be a stay in a space that is considerably distant and different from the narrator's home world. There must be a sense of otherness of landscape, sometimes scarcely palatable different customs, and a radically dissimilar climate (tropical or far North) that proves a tough challenge for the newcomer from a moderate zone. Third, we should ask of narratives borne out of encounters with such a different world how the newly arrived traveler reacts to the challenge made to his own identity. Fourth, these texts together demand to be asked about categories of postcolonial criticism – but paying close attention to the historical context in which each author was writing. We should ask to what extent they can be regarded as co-creators of Western "Orientalism," described in the late 1970s by Edward Said. If so, what version of it do they present, and do some not go beyond this horizon; to what degree and why? The genre of these texts is immaterial, however; it matters not whether they are travel letters, descriptions, reports, poems, memoirs, diaries, reportage, essays or anything else. In fact, "mixed genres" are common, making such distinctions difficult. To sum up: we are talking about accounts (irrespective of the generic conventions that authors apply) from actual travels, to distant, "exotic" lands, where the traveler has a clear sense of the separateness of his own cultural identity, and in the

interpretation of which we invoke categories of postcolonial criticism, while also referring to historical circumstances.

Chronologically speaking, we can start from the second half of the 19th century, say from Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Listy z podróży do Ameryki* (Letters from America, 1876-1878) and *Listy z Afryki* (Letters from Africa, 1891-1892), assuming that this was a typical example of a writer employing entirely Eurocentric thinking. In the works of later authors, the self-evident nature of this point of view slowly began to erode. Poland's myriad traveler-writers, today less well remembered, included Wacław Sieroszewski (whose subjects included Siberia, Ceylon, and Egypt), Ferdynand Goetel (Central Asia and India), Aleksander Janta-Polczyński (Japan and other Far Eastern countries, Central Asia), Ferdynand Ossendowski (Central Asia and the Far East, North Africa). Gombrowicz's *Rio Paraná Diary* and several other passages from his *Diary* concerning Argentina should also be reread in this respect, as well as the books of Jan Józef Szczepański (Spitsbergen, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas). The younger generation of writers also figure, including Mariusz Wilk (the Russian Far North), Ignacy Karpowicz (Ethiopia) and Olga Stanisławska (the countries of Western and Central Africa). A further factor linking this collection of texts is the presence of sometimes repeated literary references that the traveler-narrators use to interpret and generalize their observations. The main readings they have in common are Conrad, who crops up on a number of occasions starting with Malinowski, then Malinowski himself, and most recently Kapuściński. The last of these has now become a great in the field, somebody not only to be admired, but also from whom one can, and even ought to distance oneself. Each author also has his or her own set of cited writers.

Something that is extremely interesting in stories about exotic travel is the matter of how the traveler-narrator presents himself. And this is not just in a journal that is as consciously and deliberately intimate as Malinowski's. If we read the tales of other travelers through the prism of his text, it is easier to glean the personal traits they display, even if these are concealed behind descriptions of landscapes or events. Traveler-writers display a whole range of strong feelings (or perhaps sometimes expose themselves with them, rather than display them), such as curiosity, fascination, astonishment, fear, experience of loneliness, empathy, perception of the oneness of human nature, terror of foreignness, horror at cruelty, disgust and revulsion. Significant, albeit not always easy to read, are sensory expressions, images of the writer's own body (and those of others), especially in the tropics, where nudity and openness to exposing the body to the elements play a much greater role than in a moderate climate. On top of visual sensations, the impressions experienced by other senses – smell, hearing and touch,

attacked with surprising intensity in the strange environment – prove unexpectedly intense. Moreover, gender – the writer's own and that of others – is a significant issue in these narratives, albeit often in an implicit way. But this goes beyond the stereotypical phenomenon of the male traveler's patriarchal perspective accumulating and strengthening due to the contemporary colonial perspective of the white European.

From this point of view, Olga Stanisławska's *Rondo de Gaulle'a* (De Gaulle Roundabout, 2001) is particularly interesting. The status of the traveler revealed in this text comprises many different aspects: she is a woman, she is white, traveling alone, a journalist of a European newspaper, but from a country that is by no means a European power. Furthermore, she has something of an itinerant style of travelling, like a vagabond from a picaresque novel, and the risk of unexpected danger sometimes rears its head. Stanisławska also tries to convince her readers that on top of the risk, her status and the type of travel adopted by her bring with them cognitive possibilities that could otherwise not be obtained. This means a certain fluctuation, both existential and social, between assimilation and distance. The accusation is levelled at her that her work as a reporter, describing the fate of the people she encounters, makes her a "thief" of the lives of others, but she retorts that she is not stealing anything: "This is my life." She becomes able to identify with a certain social group more closely than is possible for other members of the same African society, for example when she is invited into a space and activities that are the sole preserve of women celebrating their joy at the birth of a baby, where even the father, let alone other men, cannot participate. In other situations men invite her, as a journalist and foreign guest, to participate in meetings which the local women do not attend. At another point, when secretly observing the love dance of the Goran people, she depicts her sudden experience of absolute alienation: "The men – suddenly I became ashamed to talk to them. The women – everyone was dancing. So I became an outsider, non-existent, among people, only a shadow."⁶

Ignacy Karpowicz, in his 2007 book *The Emperor's New Flower (and Bees)*, constructs his identity as a traveler-narrator in a place where various possible lines of identification intersect, but where it seems most important to endeavour not to get stuck in any of them. The narrator knows that it is impossible to get away from them, and does not want to break free from them entirely anyway. He therefore refers to them and uses style to struggle with them. His perspective, grotesque, parodic and also humorous, crosses

6 Stanisławska, Olga, *Rondo de Gaulle'a*, Warszawa: Twój Styl, 2001, pp. 89–90. Cf. also: Tabaszewska, Justyna, "Podróżnicy i kolonizatorzy. Współczesne strategie opisu Afryki," *Teksty Drugie*. 2006 no. 1/2.

with signals of entirely serious erudition. The traveler also utilises his own origins. His arrival in Ethiopia is not from nowhere. Rather, he comes equipped with his regional experiences, as a person from the Białystok region, and the tradition he belongs to is helpful, for example, in penetrating the exotic religious folklore of the Ethiopians and understanding the relations between the Christians and the Muslims there. He tends to accept his own youthful masculinity, and does so not without a little pride. Yet he also studiously eschews the conservative patriarchal style, albeit with a touch of self-deprecation. I would interpret the polemic with Kapuściński's *The Emperor* that acts as a subtext as the young writer expressing his own place in tradition, as well as a generational gesture. Karpowicz seems to be saying: Kapuściński is the 20th century. At the beginning of the 21st century Africa has changed. And Poland has too – as well as the Pole travelling in Africa, a different entity from thirty years ago.

Inextricably linked with the formation of the self-portrait is the sense of how it is perceived by others. I daresay that the Polish experience of travel in the 19th and 20th centuries was characterised by a slightly obscured view and lack of certainty as to the place that the Polish newcomer occupied in the exotic world. The straightforward division into the white colonizers from Europe and the colonised natives is not entirely sufficient. A great deal depends on the kind of Europe that the person arriving in the exotic world left behind. Until the end of the First World War, the Polish traveler journeyed the world with the passport of an invading state, unable to forget his enslavement. An example is Sieroszewski, legally a citizen of tsarist Russia, but actually an enemy and rebel of the state, twice exiled to Siberia. One incident from his journey to Ceylon illustrates very well the conflict of mutually exclusive identities and mutability of place faced by the Polish visitor confronting the colonial order in place on the island.⁷ Owing to the increasing political tensions between England and Russia prior to the war between the two countries that would finally break out in 1905, the British customs officer is restrictive in his treatment of Sieroszewski. This wins the Pole the favour of a native colonial-hating Ceylonese. This liking does not stop the local from extorting money from the traveler, but this is played out in an economic, not political context. After all, the poor native has no choice but to make money from the richer European tourist – even if this tourist is not a member of the hegemonic oppressor nation. Sieroszewski does not fall back on the colonial stereotype of the moral superiority of Europeans,

7 Sieroszewski, Wacław, "Cejlon" and "Aleksandria," in: idem, *Dzieła*, eds. Lam, Andrzej, Skórnicki, Jerzy, vol. 20: *Varia. Reportaże i wspomnienia, publicystyka, wiersze*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1963.

as later, describing a similar, and even more dangerous adventure he had in Egypt, he stresses that he fell victim to a group of Alexandrian Greeks, and was helped by a policeman who was Turkish, and therefore Asian and a Muslim.

Bronisław Malinowski's Austrian passport made his life in the Antipodes more difficult. Since the imperial powers in Europe were at war with one another, the scholar, an Austrian citizen, is severely restricted in his movements within the British colonies in the Pacific, even though as a Pole he does not identify with the Habsburg Empire, of which he is after all also a victim. And an even more interesting and complex situation is presented by Ferdinand Goettel in a reportage from India from the early 1930s.⁸ The dividing line between the English colonizers and the independence-seeking Indians is portrayed as being unambiguous. Though the Poland the traveler leaves behind is now independent, he remembers vividly the struggle with the occupants, and makes numerous mentions of his empathy for Gandhi's movement. On several occasions, he writes directly of analogies between what he knows from the traditions of recent Polish efforts for independence and what he is now observing in India. He criticises the colonizers and attends a huge rally to admire the Mahatma speaking to the crowds. And it is here that he notices that his own situation involves a bundle of contrasting identities that bring forth strong and unsettling sentiments. He notices that in an innumerable crowd he is the only white man, and observes gestures that he takes as a clear sign of aversion towards himself. He therefore leaves the exposed place: where he was able to watch everything going on, but where he also stuck out. Ultimately, he prefers to mix in with the crowd, and even, after explaining to those standing next to him that he is not British, manages to be friendly with them. Yet he is still unable to entirely free himself from a certain discomfort caused by the fact that his appearance marks him out as different from the others. This is reminiscent of Kapuściński's accounts from several decades later of being asked in Africa about where his country's colonies are, and being forced to explain at length to the disbelieving natives that his country was itself colonised by other whites. Goettel follows events at the rally of Gandhi supporters with interest and sympathy, fascinated with the man who is a leader of a great independence movement. His comments on the position of India's white population, whom he was able to observe earlier the same day, are critical, and even contemptuous. So cocksure were they in their conviction as to the indestructability of British rule, so incapable of understanding the

8 Goettel, Ferdinand, "Podróż do Indii," in: idem, *Dzieła wybrane*, eds. Polechoński, Krzysztof, Sadowska, Ida, Urbanowski, Maciej, vol. 1: *Pisma podróżnicze*, ed. Sadowska, Ida, Kraków: Arcana, 2004, pp. 172-190.

gravity of the coming changes, that they were boundlessly indifferent to the events taking place in their city.

At a certain point, though, something happens that Goettel depicts as a sense of conflict on a different plane of identity – now no longer political, but sexual. Gandhi's microphone stops working, forcing him to interrupt his speech. As the wait for repair is taking a while, the Mahatma takes his charkha and calmly begins to spin. The traveler from Poland cannot bear the pressure of such a contradiction to the masculine ideal of the freedom fighter. While he does not go into the details of discussing spinning and weaving as occupations that have been key symbols of womanhood since ancient times, this distant association is clearly playing on his mind. For all Goettel's admiration for Gandhi and fascination with his charisma, this image of the leader of the nation with female trappings in his hands is too much. At a stretch one can imagine a man in the country with a distaff, he writes, the leader of a nation with one is another story.

The comparison of the hegemon with its subject is straightforward with the great colonial powers. It is a much more complicated story in the central and eastern part of Europe. If we analyse the "Orientalist" discourse of over three decades ago led by Edward Said in his classic founding text of postcolonial criticism, we can find marginal indications that for the British, American and French scholars studying the Orient, Slavic cultures were not even on the edge, but rather entirely outside the borders of the Western world. In the late 17th century, the encyclopedia *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697) discussed "such widely divergent histories as the Mogul, the Tartar, the Turkish, and the Slavonic." In the 19th century, either artists (like Goethe on the basis of his *West-Eastern Divan*) or scholars (if they were a "Sinologist, an Islamicist, an Indo-Europeanist") were called Orientalists. In the mid-20th century (1959), the "British government empowered a commission 'to review developments in the Universities in the fields of Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African studies.'" The nations of "Asia and Africa or of Eastern Europe"⁹ tended to be mentioned in the same breath.

Said reveals this in passing, without commenting on the view of Slavic cultures and the situation of Eastern Europe in European-American "Orientalist" discourse. Only in the last decade have there been efforts to present post-Yalta relations in the Eastern bloc in terms of Soviet colonial hegemony towards the countries of the Second World, before reaching back into the past to describe certain chapters from the histories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and interwar Poland in terms of the country's relationship

9 Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House, 1978. Quotations respectively from pp: 64, 51, 53, 275.

with the Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians.¹⁰ Which categories of postcolonial criticism can be transferred to interpretation of intra-European relations (including Russia), and in which situations are the differences so much stronger than the similarities that analogies turn out to be rather distant, with the consequence that a different conceptual net needs to be created to describe the various hegemonic models?

The attitude of Polish travelers towards non-European cultures is also part of our cultural self-identity. Tales of exotic travels always contain important confrontations with the categories of domination and subordination, and even when they occur in far-flung corners of the world this is always with the memory of what remained in Europe. In the history of our part of the world, who really is/was the perpetrator of the oppression, and who was the victim? How does the context of the memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's erstwhile power, its decline in the partition era, the policy of the interwar governments towards national minorities, the terror of the Second World War and the oppression of the Soviet system in the satellite countries before 1989 endure and evolve? Does a collective memory in which the experience of "some you win, some you lose" lingers on, i.e. a perspective of a kind of cognitive swing, open up chances (and not immediate guarantees) of an epistemological perspective that is more open than in societies that have been stable in their development and expanded victoriously? On condition that this interchangeability of the situation of the hegemon and the victim does not become a breeding ground for cultivating two collective complexes: superiority for some, inferiority for others. How are strictly individual modifications of collective mentality displayed in travel accounts when the narrator makes him-/herself the prism through which we view the world?

Ewa Domańska wrote: "Emotionally I am on the side of the victims, but intellectually I see many problems in the methodological directive of 'the cognitively privileged status of the oppressed,'" concluding that:

Instead of applying the interpretational matrix offered by various methodologies and theories used by new humanities to Polish research material, it is worth distancing ourselves from them. Their instrumental application leads to conclusions that are to a greater or lesser degree

10 Cf. e.g. Thompson, Ewa, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood, 2000); Fiut, Aleksander, "Polonizacja? Kolonizacja?," *Teksty Drugie*. 2003 no. 6; idem, "Wokół 'Jądra ciemności'," in: *Poszukiwanie realności. Literatura – document – Kresy. Prace ofiarowane Tadeuszowi Bubnickiemu*, eds. S. Gawliński and W. Ligęza, Kraków: Universitas, 2003; Skórzewski, Dariusz, "Postkolonialna Polska – projekt (nie)możliwy," *Teksty Drugie*. 2006 no. 1/2; Surynt, Izabela, "Badania postkolonialne a 'Drugi Świat.' Niemieckie konstrukcje narodowo-kolonialne w XX wieku," *Teksty Drugie*. 2007 no. 4.

foreseeable. [...] Polish methodology and theory of humanities regarding Western achievements of thought as inspirations, rather than as a “tool box” ready to analyse and interpret our own material, has much to do in this respect.

I have no doubt that Polish accounts from exotic travels offer excellent research material, and a careful interpretation can be a useful field of experience for reflecting on the possibilities and limitations of using the categories of postcolonial criticism.

Translation Benjamin Koschalka

Hanna Gosk

Identity-Formative Aspects of Polish Postdependency Studies

After 1989, it was quickly observed that political and socioeconomic transformations that took place in Poland introduced significant changes to the individual and collective identities of Poles, making both more open to impulses flowing from in Western Europe and thus increasing their ambiguity on the one hand, and on the other hand, closing them off within the hardest stereotypes forged by the martyrologic and messianistic version of history of a country scarred by nearly 130 years of partitions, destruction wreaked by two world wars, psychosocial consequences of Nazi and Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1945, and a long period of curtailed sovereignty after the war.

The duality, or rather, the multinominality of reactions to sweeping change is reflected to a degree in the literature produced within the last 20 years, which deftly portrays the polar differences in world view within the Polish national community, viewed before 1989 through the prism of the relationship between the authorities and the opposition, with both struggling to function as forces representing the silent majority. The former opposition splintered into multiple factions (to simplify the issue, the factions either followed secular-liberal principles or

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aligned themselves with nationalist-Catholic precepts); representatives of erstwhile authorities found themselves in the position of the Other, ethically and morally unfit to function within the reborn and fragile, as it quickly turned out, community.

If we take a closer look at the Polish literary output of the last two decades, we will quickly see books that either contest the new economic and political realities of the Polish landscape (like *The Fourth Sky* by Mariusz Sieniewicz, 2004, Sławomir Shuty's *Zwał*, 2004, and Dawid Bienkowski's *Nothing*, 2005) or point out the old/new victims of exclusion (*We Don't Serve Jewish Women*, Sieniewicz, 2005, Ignary Karpowicz's *Niehalo*, 2006, Jarosław Maślanek's *Haszyszopenki*, 2008, and many more). Some authors have tried, directly or indirectly, to reflect on the mechanisms behind situations facilitating the creation of specific excluded or oppressed identities. I'm thinking about Dorota Masłowska's *Snow White and Russian Red* (2002), Izabela Filipiak's *Absolute Amnesia* (1995), *Italian High Heels* (2011) by Magdalena Tulli, Bożena Umińska-Keff's *On Mother and Motherland* (2008), and Sylwia Chutnik's *Baby* (2010). The mentioned works are part of the debate launched by the publication of Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).¹ It turned out that recently published Polish writing touching upon that subject carries traces of the official discourse on domestic realities (i.e. its description using the dominant final vocabulary) that survived, in different varieties, and functioned for much of the partition period, the occupation, the period of incomplete sovereignty, and ... is still more or less intact.

In Masłowska's novel, it surfaces when revealing the disdainful attitude, shaped by long-term subjugation, towards an oppressor perceived as vicious and primitive.² Russians or "Russkies" are the embodiment of all evil for the characters in the novel – teenagers from the projects, educated in Polish schools, watching Polish television, and brought up in Polish families. The teens apply the derogatory term "Russki" to whatever they consider to be repulsive, worse even than they are, and to all authorities and institutions trying to exert control over the individual and arbitrarily determine who is good and who is bad. Whatever took power and their rightful place in the world away from their characters is, according to them, "Russian." Thus, they intuitively end up constructing the image of a "Russki" according to the norms

1 G. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

2 I wrote about it in a previous article: "'Growing Up in Times of Crisis in Nothing Pleasant': Postdependency Aspects of Recently Published Polish Novels" in *New Two Decades 1989-2009. Diagnoses – Hierarchies – Perspectives*, ed. H. Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010), 93-114.

of colonial discourse, a discourse of violence whose goal, as Homi Bhabha writes, is to create such a depiction of the colonized (here: inferior) to extract their degeneracy, which in turn would justify their submission to the forces that subjugated them.³

The characters in the novel have only second-hand knowledge of the realities of the People's Republic of Poland. Their familiarity with the methods employed by the Communist authorities, as well as their knowledge of the contemporary world, stems only from what they were able to absorb from mass culture, meaning stereotypical platitudes that still remain in circulation, in communication between family members, neighbors, communities, all of it mixed with the precepts we learn in school and the content we absorb via mass media. In their perception of the world, everything is mixed with everything else, creating an untenable signal to noise ratio that, in turn, produces nodes that accrue content around various images of the past detached from the proper context and placed in different ones depending on immediate needs. Their only common denominator is the fact that elements of the depiction of the world are saturated with negative emotions, rage of someone who was refused a place at the table occupied by people who benefited from the transition from Communism to democracy, which entailed a spectacular liberation from the yoke imposed on Poles by their neighbor to the east (some turned out to be weaker in these trying times, and thus they're inferior, more susceptible to being postponed) and the selection of another hegemon - the Western-style free market. The latter also introduced new criteria to determine who's inferior and who's not. The protagonist of the novel, nicknamed Nails, and his cohorts can't really find their bearings in this new reality. Their inability to outgrow the subaltern identity is best evidenced by their language, clearly marred by a dependent structure which immediately sets up their tale about forming identities to fail. Analyzing this phenomenon, Katarzyna Barańska and Claudia Snochowska-Gonzales write: "The protagonist's speech is like scorched earth – trampled by [...] violent discourses: nationalist, capitalist, martyrologic, sexist, racist [...] the language of the subaltern, if it's permitted at all, has to be a gruesome and violent tangle of ideologies attempting to replace its subjectivity."⁴ In a world devoid of unquestionable authorities, with bundled discourses of violence offered in their place, the disciples of the art of enduring transformative times establish,

3 cf. H.K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in *Location and Culture* (London-New York: Routledge, 1994), 121.

4 K. Barańska, K. Snochowska-Gonzales, "Wojna chamsko-pańska," *Recykling Idei. Pismo Społecznie Zaangażowane*, no. 10 (2008), 129.

for their own purposes, including survival, paradigms of quasi-values that are supposed to prevent their identities from disintegrating.

Institutional violence perpetrated by foreign powers is a thing of the past, but their mentalities still readily make use of cognitive structures developed back when Poland was partitioned, reinforced under Nazi and Soviet occupation, and used extensively during the postwar non-sovereignty period. These are matrices of political domination; the detested subordination to representatives of any sort of authority aspiring to superior status; matrices of circumstances relieving individuals from any responsibility for actions dictated by conscious identity-forming choices – so, patterns of diverse psychosocial forms of long-term subjugation that are hard to process.

In 1995, with her *Absolute Amnesia*,⁵ Izabela Filipiak deftly portrayed not only trouble with identity, but identity itself as a matrix filled with literary and real content, and in this particular case, interchangeable as both function in specific Polish realities as stereotypes. She focused on the condition of a woman and a child – characters who the Romantic literary tradition was especially fond of portraying as sublime, ethereal – and depicted them as peculiarly incapacitated, as victims, pariahs, reified entities, that image further reinforced by the constitutive power of cultural stereotypes and representations fixed in the collective *imaginarium* of the Polish national community. The protagonist-narrator of *Absolute Amnesia* has internalized the notions of home as shelter and family as a tight-knit unit and source of mutual support but she is talking about the life of her own household in terms resembling a tale of concentration camp survivor, replete with victims and hangmen.

Filipiak considers the process of shaping the identity of the character crucial, given how much space she dedicates to home and school, both of them places where fundamental values are embedded into the consciousness of individuals; places where real life experiences first shape the human cognitive apparatus. The school in Filipiak's novel, however, is "not a place of learning [...] from the first grade to the last, all you ever do is forget." (50); the school purges your consciousness of anything original, individual, associated with freedom and vulnerability. Therefore, it should not be surprising that in the subplot revolving around reports that the students were supposed to write on the subject of "How I imagine my future?", the overwhelming majority of students "handed in the same, pre-ordained biography of their lives." (149)

The infantile immaturity of the protagonist, combined with the gravity of the threat to the individual's identity posed by being trapped in clichés

5 I. Filipiak, *Absolute Amnesia*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo "Ogłoszenia", 1995). From here onwards, the location of the quoted passages in the novel will be indicated in the main body of the article.

and stereotypes is an indicator of the excellent construction of this literary character, whose identity is founded on the lack of permanent signifiers, functions as a matrix ready to be filled with content. The character exhibits traits of a storyteller recounting tales from human lives, perfectly aware of the importance of the code which clarifies their meanings and places them within a specific axiological aura.

The identity of the protagonist of *Absolute Amnesia* is decided by the grasp of problems revolving around the definition of said identity, and the protagonist considers her own situation rife with contradictions. She does not attempt to purge her memory of that fact in order to maintain the integrity of her own identity; instead, she constructs a cohesive framework of the story that searches for an ethical explanation of the described state of affairs. The constructive aspect of her identity seems to reveal itself only at the meta-level, as the awareness of emptiness and inauthenticity; the knowledge that human identity is a condition, not a process, a challenge rather than settlement; that the we might decrease the discomfort associated with its traumatic and non-autonomous characteristics by trying to gain knowledge about the rules governing the code that allows us to speak about it, as the pattern, the figure of the code is the foundation of the meaning that emerges from the affective relationship between a person, a place, and the events that transpire therein.⁶

The works of Bożena Umińska-Keff and Sylwia Chutnik contain hybrid represented worlds that draw its “implements” both from the dominant narrative of Poland-Homeland and the counter-narratives that destabilize the dominant ones, derived from Romantic paradigms and exposing the selective character of its structure (items evoking images of the others, the excluded, the inferior, Jews, feminists, atheists, communists, etc.), which, in turn, makes them (the represented worlds) hard to internalize in terms of traditional linear reading. This is a result of the fact that they were shaped by various violence-bearing discourses created at consecutive stages of historical transformations, which were perceived by the Polish community as oppressive, and by the process of establishing forms of activities that compensate for legitimate grievances. Many of them are linked with the victim-martyr narrative, which, paradoxically, makes them warrior narratives, requiring absolute subordination and ... absolute dismissal of the opponent (such discourse pronounces the adversary traitor and alien, places an anathema upon him).

6 I wrote about it in the chapter “Problem tożsamości” [“The Identity Problem”] of my book *Bohater swoich czasów. Postać literacka w powojennej prozie polskiej o tematyce współczesnej. Wybrane zagadnienia* [A Hero of His Time: The Literary Character in Polish Postwar Literature Depicting Contemporary Themes: Selected Issues] (Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 2002)

In Sylwia Chutnik's novel, which goes against discourses emphasizing patriotism, martyrology, and duty, the author writes: "Add 'Poland' to your social network, to your newsletter. Give her a chance and you might participate in a raffle with amazing prizes, including: getting out of Fucksville and never coming back (...)"⁷

In the literary works mentioned above, the excluded and marginalized by the violence of dominant discourse of selfless duty translate them into local languages of others, those who shy away from heroism and who do nothing engage in patriotic rituals – all of whom are indirectly defined by the traditional interpretation of the narrative of homeland.

Investigating the aforementioned writing leaves us with one crucial finding: when it comes to the power the dominant discourse exerts over the shaping of national identity, the new social and political circumstances that took hold after 1989 either changed nothing or the changes were very minute, especially given the fact that it now turned out to be a zone of not only control but also exclusion, not only memory but also oblivion, not only exclusion but also voluntary participation in its contents. Danuta Mutter, one of the characters in *Baby*, shouts the following statement: "I accuse history of making me this useless doormat. (...) I create vortices that are supposed to assimilate us, just as I was assimilated by the past of this country, with its wars, uprisings, expulsions, returns, and the new system that changed precisely nothing."⁸

The works of literature mentioned above, touching on the process of shaping the identity of the contemporary Polish citizen, seem to require investigative faculties adequate to the challenges they pose.



Here, I would like to take a break in the historical and literary argument and detour into discussing the importance of the well-known changes that took place at that time, also in Poland, in how we think about the theory of literature and literary studies in general. New methods of inquiry appeared, including the distancing approach that stressed the position of the scholar in relation to the investigated object, and the reflexive approach that focused on observing the instruments of inquiry and their state. The aforementioned fields of study revealed the face of narrative formations, results of using language to communicate knowledge about reality and its literary

7 S. Chutnik, *Dzidzia [Baby]* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2010), 44–45.

8 *ibid.*, 144–145.

representations; formations open to influence from other fields, fascinated with inspirations flowing from anthropologizing and cultural approaches to literary work, viewed in rich historical, civilizational, socio-political, biological, and physiological contexts.

There might also be merit in concentrating on the positive elements in the situation of literary studies as a whole, along with all their ambiguity, interminability, and heterogeneity; elements which impart it with a certain degree of liberty in drawing inspiration from diagnoses of scholars with diverse specialties in order to formulate interpretations of literary works depicting contemporary themes, including those touching on the collective *imaginarium* of society, the canon of values that enables the building of a social consensus or, conversely, hindering or precluding it.

Intuitions drawn from the anthropologizing approach direct us to beware of treating norms, rules governing societies, and other patterns we assimilate to the point where we consider them natural (like the patriarchal and Catholic influences on perception of reality in Poland) as obvious. Diagnoses utilizing instruments of inquiry developed by deconstructionists allow us to ask question about the mechanisms behind the “normalcy/naturalness effect,” due to which answering questions like “Who am I?” does not require deliberation, does not give rise to doubt, and sometimes happens without prior reflection, although its constructive character – were we to closely analyze it – makes the obviousness of such answer problematic.

Proponents of utilizing anthropologizing and cultural approaches in contemporary Polish literature studies, which often take account of the feedback loop between literary and extraliterary (social, political, historical, moral, etc.) inputs in their investigations, are interested in interpreting literature touching on subjects and processes also explored by sociologists, historians, journalists; literature that establishes narratives out of events populating the everyday lives of contemporary Polish society.

Literary scholars, employing approaches created by academics from various branches of cultural studies (from gender, through postcolonial, subaltern, up to eco studies) in their diagnoses and analyzing literary testimonies of the working living tissue of social consciousness which determines the horizons of individual and collective expectations, are taking on interpretative activities which denaturalize circumstances and conditions making up the “framework of events” that define active subjects and activities they perform. They’re interested in the answer to the question of: “Who makes history? And how does that influence them?”; it is a question about the human experience of change over time and the degree of influence it exerts over individual and collective identity; and we know that the relationship goes both ways. Their work might be related to the discursivization of the

reality effect contained in the analyzed literary works, according to Roland Barthes,⁹ who claimed that in modern history, and I would venture to say that also in anthropologizing investigations of literary statements on the subject of reality, legibility is paramount; in this case, legibility means establishing rules governing the code which allows individuals/cultural communities functioning in a certain time and place to express certain things about their existence in a certain and legible way, the latter trait facilitated by the fact that the communication took account of the widely accepted models of communicability/normalcy in the ontological, epistemological, and axiological sense. Grasping the sense of such communications seems easier when we make use of an interpretation guided by the belief in the ambiguity of the sense of reality and the meanings of literary text exploring that reality, which tend to impose themselves on us as natural. Performing such an interpretation requires a close reading and sticking to the letter of the work during the analysis process. A scholar employing this type of approach should demonstrate suspicion towards what seems natural and familiar. Especially given the fact that the norm not only constitutes, but also excludes, functions as both prescription and proscription.



Going back to historical and literary themes occupying Polish literature studies in this context, one subject especially merits a wider approach; although it's fairly ungrateful in practice, it is promising in the long-term. The subject portrays the multinominal effects repercussions of long-term survival in a state of either complete subordination or incomplete sovereignty that ravaged the identities of contemporary Poles (and the literary characters that represent them) and their understanding of normalcy/naturalness, correlated with a specifically "constructed" geopolitical location: eastwards of the West and westwards of the East, so where, exactly? Certainly not at the center which, in the minds of Europeans, automatically confers a certain distinction on the matters to which it is related.

The field I call postdependency studies¹⁰ has a lot of potential to unearth and investigate issues that rarely appear in social communication; they're transparent and as such are barely perceptible, despite the fact that they are heavy with diverse contents; they're the latent constituent of the

9 R. Barthes, "The Discourse of History," *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 7-20

10 I wrote about it extensively in my book *Tales of the 'Colonized/Colonizer': In the Circle of Postcolonial Studies on Polish Literature of the 20th and 21st Century*, (Kraków: Universitas, 2010). This article will reference the assumptions put forth in that book.

individual and collective identity of Poles, while in literature, they fed unwelcome narratives for a long time. These unwelcome, to a different degree, narratives appeared in Polish 20th century literature not only between 1945 and 1989, but also before and after that period, depending on whether we decide to consider two factors that facilitated its "production." These factors are: the functioning of a dominant emancipatory discourse during the interwar period and after the collapse of the People's Republic of Poland (i.e. one aiming to sever any sort of relationship with the unwanted results of past dependencies, remnants of either the partitioning of Poland or the postwar subordination to the Soviet Union); the second factor is a palimpsest-like presence of discourses that were dominant in the past in literature published between 1918 and 1939 and then later after 1989, discourses that were violently imposed by unwanted governments (that were functioning on Polish territory prior to 1918 and between 1945 and 1989).

The narratives that were misplaced in the dominant discourse of its own historical times include, *inter alia*, the interwar Borderlands discourse, not, however, when it talks about the "bulwark" or the "Polish civilizing mission in the East", but when it involuntarily exposes its feelings of superiority and patronizing attitude towards non-Polish inhabitants of the eastern fringes of the Second Polish Republic. The postwar *émigré* discourse, and its counter-discourse fostered by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, polemicalizing with narratives praising acceptance of the socio-political version of Polish postwar reality, and finally – narratives created after 1989, very reluctant to admit to their connection to processes rooted in socialist Poland, and deeply internalized which makes them even more persistent.

Both postdependency discourse as well as the counter-discourse established in times of oppression are strongly linked with the dominant discourse, imposed by the unwanted government, which they rejected and struggled against. Enduring prolonged subordination pushes the subjugated society to reach for the dominant structure, to adapt to them to survive; simultaneously, the vanquished society adapts these structures (insofar as it is feasible) to fit its needs, regardless of whether it considered them foreign or not. All of it exerted significant influence over the process of shaping individual and collective identities of entities involved in the process described above.

One of the methods of adapting to incomplete political sovereignty in the People's Republic of Poland era was described by Jan Kieniewicz in his article "Inteligent i sytuacja: Polska 1978" ["The Intellectual and the Situation: Poland 1978"]. The historian defined the situation in relation to the satirical song written by Wojciech Młynarski in 1976 entitled *Situation*. He described it as "a state wherein one ascribed one's own conformist conduct

to external circumstances out of one's control."¹¹ He also called attention to the fact that we share the "situation" with representatives of the authorities. He reminded us that

the phrase "That's the situation, you see" was popular nationwide and was utilized in a wide variety of situations. These external circumstances might have included the regime and the Polish-Soviet alliance, the awareness of the roles played by the *nomenklatura* and the censors, or connections in local party cliques (...) But it was mostly fear, as a matter of fact. The situation precluded dissent, did not allow free expression of arguments or positions. Simultaneously, however, it provided everyone with an alibi. It allowed people to keep their fear under wraps.¹²

The narrative of fear and humiliation associated with the situation understood that way would be an example of an unwelcome narrative in the repertoire of Polish identity-forming accounts created with either manifest or inadvertent consideration of background relations between superior or subordinate.

Postdependency studies sensitize us to the dialogical nature of the relationship. In this particular case, each reaction of the subordinate to subjugation translates into coming into contact with the subjugator which, in turn, leaves its traces. That is where a variety of issues comes in, including the matter of "autocolonization" of peoples oppressed by the Soviet Union; the description of the latter phenomenon would require utilizing terms belonging to masochist vocabularies: blame and self-blame perpetrated by entities associated with the situation wherein "autocolonization" is linked with the responsibility for one's own "colonization."¹³ Comprehending the way this mechanism operates might be traumatizing, it requires readiness to confess,

11 J. Kieniewicz, "Inteligent i sytuacja: Polska 1978" ["The Intelligentsia and the Situation: Poland 1978"] in *Zwyczajny człowiek w niezwykłej sytuacji. Próba przekazania doświadczenia nieposiadającego wzoru opisywalności* (*Ordinary People in Extraordinary Situations. An Attempt at Communicating Experiences Devoid of Description Patterns*), ed. H. Gosk (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2009), 199–200.

12 *ibid.*, 200.

13 This issue was explored by Vytautas Rubavičius in his article "A Soviet Experience of Our Own: Comprehension and the Surrounding Silence" in *Baltic Postcolonialism*, ed. V. Kelertas (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2006), 82–104. He writes, e.g. about the specific interpretative construction of "silent resistance," which all of a sudden became the default attitude allegedly exhibited by all inhabitants of post-Soviet Lithuania when they were still living under the thrall of the Soviet Union (even the people who belonged to the erstwhile *nomenklatura* of the now-defunct Party). The essay also includes the author's plea to stop blurring the line between adaptation and assimilation and silent resistance.

to change views and opinions following understanding of the situation, and an ability to forgive those who were guilty and those who were wrong.

The difficulty of the task is the reason why scholars are silent about various aspects (including collaborating with the enemy) of life under subjugation,¹⁴ even though thorough examination and diagnoses of said aspects would bring appreciation of the fact that the unwanted world defined by dependence on Russia/the Soviet Union, now a relic of the past, and, to some degree, the increased fascination with the West that it drove, are the Others that constitute a part of the collective identity of Poles – ex-subjects of a peculiar type of Eastern-Western domination.

It is worth noting that the specific character of Polish postdependent¹⁵ condition is based on the fact that it is made up by a plethora of dominant and dependent situations, as well as different combinations of the two, so to speak, that worked out their own discourses. These include:

- firstly, the pre-partition situation, wherein the Noble's republic temporarily played the imperial role, subordinating adjacent territories and making them into its periphery;
- secondly, the partition situation, wherein the Polish Republic became the oppressed subordinate;
- thirdly, the mixed variant of the interwar period: the post-partition situation and the return (although in a much narrower scope) of imperialist policies aimed at non-Polish inhabitants of the so-called Eastern Borderlands;
- fourthly, returning to the position of the oppressed subordinate 20 years later, first during the Nazi and Soviet invasion and later during the incomplete sovereignty era between 1945 and 1989.

Finally, after 1989 – the postdependency situation, wherein the memory of prior roles (both superior and subordinate) is invoked in literature (and many other places) with varied results. Discourses created in the aforementioned situations, animated by the positions assumed by Poles in different

14 Teresa Walas explored these aspects in the context of the People's Republic of Poland in her book *Understanding Our Era* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003).

15 I'll be using the hyphenless spelling of the term "postdependent," keeping in line with the widely accepted spelling of the term "postcolonial," following the definition brought forth by John Thieme in *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English* (New York: Arnold, 1996), XV. For Thieme, the term "postcolonialism" means "a description of a unique and «historically»-embedded aggregation of cultural strategies," whereas "postcolonial" (here: "postdependent") refers to discourses. Quoted from P. Zajas, *Postkolonialne imaginarium południowoafrykańskie literatury polskiej i niderlandzkiej* [A South African Postcolonial Imaginarium in Polish and Dutch Literature] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2008), 21 (ref. 2)

stages of the oppressor-oppressed relationship, as well as (in each case) by memory of the past, have made their mark to a greater or lesser degree on literary narratives produced in each individual stage.

The postdependent perspective is especially useful in diagnosing cognitive structures, the character of which was formed by the subject's experience of long-term dependence/non-sovereignty, and later by their desire to change that state of affairs and abreact. Both stages/processes, in their historically-motivated contexts, have been functioning in Poland as natural, primary, i.e. ones that become the subject's faculties during the culturalization process thanks to Important Others in their immediate vicinity. Both have also been reflected in literary works produced not only in the 20th and 21st centuries. Considering the post-dependent perspective in their reading and interpretation allows us to point out a few problems that decide the specifics of Polish, and partially the Central European, view of reality.

Taking a closer look at any of these problems will allow us to see that similar issues plague other cultures, even ones that are geographically distant from ours, their only common denominator is that all of them endured long-term relationships of dependency. For example, the proclivity for looking to the past, to the era of sovereignty, a past which holds moments of glory and triumph which the present clearly lacks. Or the incredible interpretative effort that was put, from the 19th century onwards, into the reevaluation of numerous defeats: military, political, economic, and civilizational; the self-esteem bolstering effort to rewrite narratives exploring these defeats in a way that portrays them as sublime, pompous, exalted, in line with the motto of "victory after death." This heroization of such defeats carries a wide variety of consequences. On the one hand, it ennoble the vanquished, limits the possibility of criticizing their actions, and concentrates social efforts on commemorating martyrology, instead of revising attitudes and actions that might have led to defeat. On the other hand, it redefines the status of the victim, transforming it almost imperceptibly into the hegemon of the dominant narrative, someone who imposes the terms, dictates the value, decides what is good, honorable, proper, and what's not. In this narrative, being the victim is a value in itself. Therefore, it is recommended to strive for victim status and to hold on to it once attained, to compete with one another in terms of the amount of endured harms that predestine us for the top spot in the imaginary victim ranks (such a theme often appears in Polish-Jewish relations).

Victims cannot exist without those who made them this way – oppressors, tormentors, persecutors, victors employing violence to eliminate any potential resistance of the vanquished. But postdependency studies call attention to the fact that the coercion-retaliation binary minimizes the role of

the dependent's consent to being placed in a position of dependency¹⁶ and avoids thorough exploration of the mechanisms behind the consent. The post-dependent condition implies participation, or even complicity in the errors of the past. And one more thing: Polish identity, suspended between the East and the West, insistently emphasizes its own peculiarities as if afraid that someone will subvert and diminish its belief in its exceptionality. Such an identity, more than any other prone to aspiring to patterns established by the West¹⁷ (despite the West rarely treating it as an equal) should inspire us to take a closer look at it and consider it a special variant of the modernist identity that came about as a direct result of the interaction between superior and subordinate.¹⁸ Overt and covert domination/subjugation and the results of this interactive process comprise an important experience of the 20th century, and not only in the European cultural sphere. It would seem that reflecting on these issues is essential for contemporary Polish literature, however, historical and literary investigations have heretofore ignored the subject.¹⁹

To reiterate, the historical and sociopolitical context of modernization processes taking place on Polish territory from the 19th century onwards prompted a situation, wherein liberation from different forms of oppression, both in life and in literature, was followed by a surge of repercussions of enduring long-term dependency from external powers. These repercussions left their mark on emancipatory processes, deciding their specificity and shaping particular traits of identities of subjects involved in these processes. This particular aspect of the phenomenon becomes possible to grasp and diagnose thanks to the investigative tools provided to us by postdependency studies.

Translation: Jan Szelągiewicz

16 Leela Gandhi writes about it in the colonial context, invoking notions laid forth by Simon During in her book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 173.

17 I am using the term "the West" in full awareness of its constructionist character. That construct might be analyzed in the same way that Edward Said did with the term "the East." cf. E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

18 Simon During wrote about identities constructed in such way in his essay "Waiting for the Post: Some Relations Between Modernity, Colonization, and Writing" in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, ed. I Adam, H. Tiffin, (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 34.

19 Włodzimierz Bolecki more or less confirmed that state of affairs in his essay "Various Thoughts on Post-Colonialism. An Introduction to Unwritten Texts," *Second Texts* no. 4 (2007), 13.

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