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## Post-Colonial Transfer to Central-and-Eastern Europe

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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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# Post-Colonial Transfer to Central-and-Eastern Europe.

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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 studies<sup>2</sup>. 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

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1 Post-dependence Studies Center, [www.cbdp.polon.uw.edu.pl](http://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 *borderness* 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 zone<sup>3</sup> 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 pessimism<sup>4</sup>, 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 discourse<sup>5</sup>. 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 text<sup>6</sup>. 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 colonized<sup>7</sup>. 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 Other<sup>8</sup>. 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, Robbins<sup>9</sup>). 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 conservatism<sup>10</sup>. 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 Spivak<sup>11</sup>. 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, Znak, 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*, 2006<sup>12</sup>). 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 zones<sup>13</sup> 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 imagine<sup>14</sup>. 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 perspective<sup>15</sup>. 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*, „Symploke” 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. Tlostanova, *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 censorship<sup>16</sup>, 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

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

in his *Culture and Imperialism*<sup>17</sup> 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 difference<sup>18</sup>. 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 civilization<sup>19</sup>: 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 substance<sup>20</sup>. The post-colonial reflection over Central-and-Eastern Europe should have two directions, as suggested by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek<sup>21</sup>. 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, civilizationally, 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 gap<sup>22</sup>. 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,

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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*<sup>23</sup> she defines Polish literature as post-colonial per se in the same way she defines Irish literature. Following criticism of Seamus Dean and Edward Said<sup>24</sup>, 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 Buchowski<sup>25</sup> – 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*<sup>26</sup> and her article *Poland between East and West*<sup>27</sup>, the author shows intensely orientalizing 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, Cavanaugh 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 history<sup>28</sup> 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 sense<sup>29</sup>. 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 Lacan<sup>30</sup>.

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 capitalism<sup>31</sup>.

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 attitudes<sup>32</sup>. 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 Polish<sup>33</sup>;
- 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 Spivak<sup>34</sup>: 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.

*Translation: Marta Skotnicka*