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# Postcolonialism and Modernism

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## Postcolonialism and Modernism<sup>1</sup>

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### 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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*ikolonializm* [*Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism*], transl. A. Sierszulska (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), *Słowacki 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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”).<sup>7</sup>

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*).<sup>8</sup> The assertion that colonialism was really imperialism (and racism) turned out to be the endpoint of postcolonial

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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.<sup>9</sup>

### 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 Tyrranean 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).<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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, *Słowacki 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)?<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

## 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.<sup>14</sup> However, if we ignore the ideological trappings of

12 I wrote about it years ago in *Ptasznik z Wilna [The Birdsmen 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 postcolonialism – especially in Poland – might reinvigorate the efforts of literary scholars investigating modernist literature.

*Translation: Jan Szelągiewicz*