

Teksty Drugie 2014, 1, s. 143-166

Special Issue – English Edition



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

Izabela Surynt

Przeł. Marta Skotnicka

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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

Izabela Surynt professor in the Department of Intercultural Communication of the University of Wrocław. Her research interests include: German nationalism and colonialism, stereotypes, myths and collective memory, Polish-German cultural relations. Published numerous articles.

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 Bhabba 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 our 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 that 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. Johaneck, 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 Wirtschaft.” 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. *Postępowanie, 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 program 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 Johaneck summarizes the attitude of prussophile authors towards Slavic nations by referring to the quotation from Moritx 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 Peruwians.³⁹

According to Johaneck, 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. Johaneck, „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. Johaneck, „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 reevaluation. 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 reevaluation 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