East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century

Edited by
Siegfried Huigen · Dorota Kołodziejczyk

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East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial: A Critical Introduction

Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen

Immigrants en route to that fair, idyllic country they were sure was somewhere in the West, where people are brothers and sisters, and a strong state plays the role of parent…

Olga Tokarczuk, *Flights* (2017)

East Central Europe: The Allure of In-Betweenness

East Central Europe is a region that imagined itself as a space between, constructing historiographies of bulwarks and borderlands. When European modernity started to be synonymous with imperial powers, central

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and eastern parts of the continent found themselves even more ambiguously in the off-centre position. Not only were they not as "Europeanized" in economic and political spheres as the core European nations, but they were, to a varying degree, included into larger European empires, or remained suzerainties of the Ottoman Empire. The in-betweenness of the region has been inherently contradictory: on the one hand, founded on the strong identification with Europe, and, on the other, driven by the anxiety of incomplete belonging and not ranking high enough to merit the status of Europeanness. In response to this and to launch their own politics of nationalism, East Central European nations and societies developed, from the nineteenth century onwards, a special brand of self-reinforcing peripherality, neatly connected with narratives of fidelity to the European project. Europe was in this off-centre imaginary devoid of ambiguity: premised on the Enlightenment foundations of liberalism, human rights, and civic ethos, it was something to aspire to.

In relation to the Western European modernity, which was to a large degree concomitant with overseas imperial expansion, East Central Europe did not have an opportunity to join the imperialist rivalry. Despite being dependencies of the Prussian/German, Austro-Hungarian, or Russian empires up until the end of World War I, the countries which lost statehood to intra-European imperial domination would not consider themselves colonies. Overseas imperial expansion of European powers was rarely an object of critical reflection from the East Central European peripheries. Even if traces of empathy for or comparison with colonized populations were occasionally an element of nationalist discourse in those subordinated societies, the overall agreement that European imperialism was a consequence of civilizational superiority prevailed until World War II. Being subjected to foreign rule was not regarded a colonial dependence. Insurrectionary nationalism claimed the right to statehood on the criterion of nationhood—if a society had its own language, high literature, which had been preferably developing for centuries, and its own political culture, it merited its own state. The concept of colony was reserved to non-European territories and populations, as those which, arguably, had no national consciousness to speak of. In this, East Central European nationalisms followed here the normative concept of the nation inscribed within a historiography of development reaching its full mature form in Western European nations. In the light of Partha Chatterjee's critique of the division into Western and eastern nationalisms in which eastern nationalism can only emulate the paradigmatic Western nationalism, and,

additionally, deviate from the paradigm, East Central European insurrectionary nationalisms would likewise be classified as eastern (Chatterjee 1986, 2).

As a result of labour migration, East Central European history also includes involvement in the empires of other nations. Not only did large numbers of people from the region migrate to the (former) colonial world, but they also provided personnel to occupy, administer and police colonial empires. Even if largely excluded from colonial politics at an international level, the region played an important role in generating new discourses based on data gathered in the colonial contact zone. These usually were inscribed in colonial ideologies of racial difference and civilizational mission (cf. Ureña Valerio 2019). Although East Central Europeans in colonial territories blended with the colonial ruling class and acted in a transnational capacity as "Europeans," they nevertheless preserved shades of difference. Social scientists, such as Bronisław Malinowski, were able to turn their experience of "in-betweenness" into an epistemic resource. Malinowski reinvented his own ambiguous status as an insider/outsider within colonial society into the ethnographer's ideal subject-position (Lebow et al. 2019). Joseph Conrad's notorious ambiguity concerning the imperial venture stemmed from the East Central European experience of an existence at the edges of modernity. Growing up under the pressure of the Russian empire, observing the operations and development of the Western empires, Conrad exposed in his writing both the bare racism at the foundations of the empire's "civilizing mission," and yet, iterated the deep racial fear of sharing humanity with those whom he considered to remain at a lower level of development. For his representation of Africans as inarticulate and primordial, Chinua Achebe called Conrad, both arguably and contentiously, "a thoroughgoing racist" (Achebe 1978).

With different motivations, this contact continued in the postcolonial period in the form of socialist states' cooperation with the Soviet-supported postcolonial countries (Westad 2005; Kola 2018). If modernity meant for core European powers the consolidation of their imperial status, for East Central European countries it meant the consolidation of their peripheral status. The post-World War II order turning East Central Europe into the Eastern Bloc added to this peripheral indeterminacy— decided already in 1943 in Tehran and sealed in Yalta and Potsdam without the participation of interested nations. It was imposed with some semblance of democratic procedures that were in fact thinly disguised

coups d'état, and it added to the region's experience of modernity as a condition of intermittent dependence.

Notwithstanding divergent political and historical perspectives that collide in various concepts of East Central Europe, the region emerged and solidified as that which considered itself essentially European, but felt it was looked at (and internalized that gaze) as different and lesser. The post-World War II order erased the historical borderland in-betweenness of the region imposing, instead, the binary of Eastern and Western Europe that still bears on contemporary identitarian and political transactions in the region. It emerges both in narratives of the "return to Europe," as the EU accession has often been called, and in narratives of the region's inferior status in relation to Western Europe, or, even, in political discourses framing the European Union as a continued colonial hegemony.

The concept of East Central Europe resurfaced in the decades of state socialism as an expression of a shared sense of the loss of belonging in Europe, the most audaciously expressed in Milan Kundera's essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe" (1984). There, Kundera pitted Central Europe, "the kidnapped West," against Eastern Europe, whose communist rule he straightforwardly defined as part of the Russian imperial project.[1] Central Europe became an identity project founded on the shared agenda of dissidence. Kundera developed a vision of a unique transnational ethos of diversity that historically defined Central Europe and was destroyed by the onset of Soviet domination: "Central Europe longed to be a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety, a small arch-European Europe, a reduced model of Europe made up of nations conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest space. How could Central Europe not be horrified facing a Russia founded on the opposite principle: the smallest variety within the greatest space?" (Kundera 1984, 33). Drawing on Kundera's definition of a European as someone "who is nostalgic for Europe" (Kundera 1988, 1), Svetlana Boym developed her concept of "nostalgia for Europe"—a future-oriented vision uniting anti-communist dissidents via intellectual

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[1] "Un Occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe Centrale" (1983) was the essay's original French title, subsequently translated into English as "The Kidnapped West" by Edmund White, published in Granta, 11 March 1984, and in *New York Review of Books* as "The Tragedy of Central Europe" in April 1984. We are using *The NYRB* title as that which is more broadly used today.

and cultural allegiance to Europe (Boym 2001, 221). Nostalgia for Europe helped sustain the hope for a future return. These combined emotions premised anti-communist dissidence and postcommunist transition on the temporality of loss and return.

This cartographic and historical palimpsest that makes up East Central Europe has given grounds to an intensive debate on the region's condition as Europe's periphery, its close but still discursively and politically subordinated Other, or, in the context of world-system theory, the (semi-)periphery it has continued to be since the onset of modernity (Boatcă 2007; Sowa 2011; Zarycki 2014; Petrovici 2014). The experience of modernity as global coloniality of power (Quijano 2000, 533; Tlostanova 2017, 39–44) has befallen the region since at least the eighteenth century and continued intermittently until the collapse of state socialism in the years 1989–1991. The transition period revealed an ambivalence in reciprocal expectations. Postcommunist countries aspired to join the EU and NATO to seek redress for the decades of separation from Europe and the West. But joining also stirred anxiety in Western Europe about the possible change these new admissions to international alliances and communities could bring. The "Polish plumber" became an emblem of the threat from the "New Europe," first expressed by French politician Philippe de Villiers in 2003 opposing the plans to open labour markets to the new EU member states from 2004.[2] Indirectly, this anxiety transpired in a range of transition discourses which exerted a didactic and disciplining pressure on postcommunist countries (Kuus 2007, 21–38; Gans-Morse 2004, 320–349). The ensuing dialogue of unequal partners was embraced by East Central European countries without much demur. Indeed, the narratives of transition to democracy and to free market enterprise did have a remarkable appeal to postcommunist polities in need of self-redefinition and eager to develop consumer markets for commodities-deprived postcommunist societies.

Whether the postcommunist period be called transition, transformation, or any other process of system change, it was not a unilinear narrative but, rather, a disarray of political visions, economic projects, and cultural imaginaries (Offe 1996, 29–49). Some critics in the social sciences would put the very term "transition" into doubt, arguing in their studies that post-socialist changes could not be all classified as

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[2] See: Villiers: 'La grande triche du oui.' Interview with Philippe de Villiers, *Le Figaro*, March 15, 2003.

pro-democratic or even pro-market. Katherine Verdery as early as 1996 challenged transitology positing that in many post-socialist countries state clientelism looked more like a transition to new feudalism than democracy (Verdery 1996, 204–228). In the same vein, Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery observed that many forms of post-socialist reality were not, as transitologists claimed, direct consequences of socialism-induced inertia and mentality, but unintended consequences of local political and cultural contestation appearing in the fissures between the macro structures of state and economy, and the micro-world of everyday local realities (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 1). Such "autonomous effects" challenged the prescriptive mode of transitology theories, whether in their revolutionary (shock therapy) or evolutionary formats (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 4–6).

Transformation processes had to grapple with legacies of the past in order to cope with the exigencies of the present. Research on the transition period focused on tracing the new formats of identity for the region, and determining their influence on social narratives of change, on collective memory, on the uses of history and devising new historiographic reflection on the conflicting records of the past, as well as attending to the immediacy of change in the cultural and political landscape of the time. These showed the necessity to assess the socialist period beyond the somewhat hegemonic vision of an unflinching regime. For example, feminist discourses did exist in communist countries (even if mostly licensed by the state when convenient), and the ethos of women's employment and social mobility went by and large unquestioned. Contrariwise, the post-1989 transition period brought about a regression to patriarchal values and helped naturalize conservative visions of a woman's place in society. Women had been at the forefront of anti-communist activism and the backlash of the postcommunist transition period once again showed the precarious position of women when national imaginaries are at stake (Penn 2005; Koobak and Marling 2014). The process of transformation abounded in instances of ambivalence and equivocality that challenge any unilinear narrative of modernization and emancipation applied to that period.

Debating a Postcolonial Perspective on East Central Europe

The necessity to find a new language of critical reflection on the region that had shaken off what were considered imposed systems of rule and was busy developing new identities, revising its histories, and devising new polities, led to an interest in the conceptual repository offered by postcolonial studies. The possibility of applying categories of postcolonial studies gave a new impetus to identifying the particularity of this part of Europe. The changes in the "world in pieces," as Clifford Geertz called the post-bipolar world (Geertz 2000, 218–263), concerned as much economy and politics as they did cultures and societies. Postcolonialism offered a way of reframing thinking about East Central Europe, in a broad historical context, as part of European empires, including the communist period, through structural parallels with coloniality. These included strategies of domination on the part of the power regimes that consisted in various forms of coercion; and, on the part of society, strategies of mimicry covering subversive agendas spanning a spectrum from open resistance to passive non-cooperation, as well as ways of accommodating oneself to the system. The post-World War II order as such should be seen from this perspective as the consequence of the coloniality of power engendered by European modernity. The postcommunist transition period, moreover, also showed affinities with the postcolonial situation due to a defunct economy. The deep rift dividing the rich Western Europe and the destitute, by comparison, postcommunist societies, triggered cultural imaginaries of inferiority, backwardness, and, in total, a relative "eastness" measuring the distance from the normative West. Finally, the discourse of modernization pedagogy that asserted its hegemony through the purported universalism of its applicability added to the apparatus of coloniality of power.

East Central Europe has its own, unique experience that could make an important contribution to postcolonial studies and broaden its comparative scope for the discussion of the imperialist grounds of European modernity and its legacies. Thus, a brief survey is requisite of the main lines of the debate on how postcolonial studies has been deployed in the past three decades in East Central European countries to revise their histories, including histories of dependence.

East Central Europe's constitutive in-betweenness locates the region between the colonial and postcolonial. Kristin Kopp even argues that

the region could be considered as part of a colonial cartography that would belie the exclusively overseas definition of colony. In a comprehensive study of German colonial thought since the nineteenth century, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (2012), Kopp argues that colonization of the east was inscribed in the project of German expansion (Kopp 2012, 2), and as such it was also of key importance for the consolidation of Germany as a nation in the second half of the nineteenth century (Kopp 2012, 30). Izabela Surynt located the grounds of German colonial aspirations in a specifically German brand of Eurocentrism premised on the category of cultural progress that, on the one hand, manifested German national expectations and, on the other, relied on an ethnically, culturally and nationally defined Other (Surynt 2007, 29). However, Ureña Valerio is right to stress that "although German rhetoric and policies against Poles were at times violent […], the 1904 mass killings of colonial subjects occurred in German Southwest Africa and not in any of the Polish provinces" (2019, 3). Simultaneously, Polish delegates in the *Reichstag* were in a position to denounce anti-Polish policies.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a different case. In *The Habsburg Empire: A New History,* Pieter Judson (2017) argues that, until the Great War, the Empire as a state consisting of minorities succeeded in binding these minorities to itself in a *Rechtsstaat* (a state that functioned according to the rule of law), with ample room for cultural self-determination in the Austrian part. The state only disintegrated during World War I when the Austro-Hungarian generals went to war, not only against Serbia and Russia, but also against the Slavic populations in their own country. After the Empire's collapse, it was replaced by nation-states that, because of the sizeable minorities they contained, could be regarded as little empires. These nation-states demanded the assimilation of multi-ethnic populations and a subordination of the peripheries to the centre (cf. Ciancia 2020). Most of them soon developed into nationalist dictatorships: "to square the circle of populist democracy and ethnic nationhood" (Judson 2017, 451).[3]

Some critics read the in-betweenness of East Central Europe as proof of an appropriation by the West's Orientalising gaze, for example Maria Todorova in her seminal work *Imagining the Balkans* (1998) or Tomasz

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[3] See also, among others: Feichtinger et al. (2003), Miller and Rieber (2004), Göttsche and Dunker (2014), and Ruthner et al. (2014).

Zarycki in *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (2014).
Others see it as an effect of the region's self-provincializing. Alexander
Kiossev includes East Central Europe in his theory of "self-colonising
cultures" (Kiossev 1999, 114–118) depending on Western Europe's
normative models. Kiossev calls it a "hegemony without domination"
paradigm—a reversal of Ranajit Guha's "domination without hegemony"
pattern of the British rule in India (Kiossev 2011, n.p.). The hegemonic
position of Western European models was challenged by attempts to
reach back to local traditions and revive them in the name of lost or
denied authenticity threatened (yet again) by the rampages of moderniza-
tion. Not quite revivals of tradition, but reinforcements of traditionalism,
these responses to the pressures of transformation and, more broadly, the
new, brought about by a desired, but also feared, West and created an
anti-utopian, conservative cultural wing (Czapliński 2015, 122–139). A
warning that embracing in-betweenness may lead to capitalizing on self-
Orientalisation is issued by Merje Kuus, who points at the dangers of East
Central Europeans identifying with their assigned symbolic location on
the European map bordering on a less developed space—by default signi-
fying the East. In this way, Central Europe still frames itself "as marginal,
a bridgehead, in a precarious borderland location […] in a liminal space,
neither developed nor underdeveloped, neither learned nor wholly igno-
rant, in the process of becoming European though not yet there" (Kuus
2007, 35). However, Dirk Uffelmann points out that reviving the concept
of Central Europe was largely to demand an independent status for the
region and marked the final stage of rejecting Soviet domination in the
region right before the collapse of communism. It was a way of claiming a
shared identity against the power regime directly identified as imperialist,
premising it, however, on anti-Russian sentiments, as the author claims
(Uffelmann 2020, 487, 505).

   The return, since the 1980s, to the concept of "Central Europe"
in place of "Eastern Europe" (denoting the "Eastern Bloc") reveals
the need to reclaim the space within Europe as the rightful restitu-
tion of what was taken away by the Cold War bipolar order. David
Chioni Moore, noting the new/old concept of "Central Europe" with
some bemusement, was one of the earliest critics who advocated broad-
ening the scope of postcolonial studies so that it would include the
post-Soviet space. Listing similarities between the Russian-Soviet and
British/French/Western imperialisms, he identified the postcommunist

societies' need to affirm their belonging to Europe as "a postcolonial desire, a headlong westward sprint from colonial Russia's ghost or grasp" (Moore 2001, 118). The subsequent postcolonially-inspired critique helped conceptualize Russia as an ambivalent empire, while targeting the lingering, tacit superiority of Western Europe towards new member states revealed in patronizing or reductive approaches to the "new Europe." It also helped to critically assess the position of East Central Europe during the period when Prussia/Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary ruled the region, as was indicated above. In sum, the in-betweenness of East Central Europe generated its own brand of what, in a broader global context, manifests itself as an affective and discursive complex akin to a postcolonial sensibility. It can be traced in the region's self-image, its historical and cultural consciousness, and resurfacing often rather surprisingly in post-transformation political discourses (Huigen and Kołodziejczyk 2021, 427–433).

Even a cursory survey of postcolonial approaches in studying East Central Europe shows that the debate cannot be reduced to the issue of whether the region should be considered a postcolonial space. As will be further discussed, rethinking East Central Europe has produced viable forms of translating postcolonial resources into locally sensitive categories. Studies on the region adopting a postcolonial perspective offer substantial material contributing to debates about agency, identity, peripherality, and development, to name the main ones, that overlap with postcolonial concerns. What is at stake here is how to create new epistemologies, rather than new ontologies of (post)coloniality, stimulating the comparative potential of postcolonial studies. Within the field of postcolonial studies, the heuristic value of analysing the difference of East Central Europe is to show that we are not looking for matrices to replicate, but for new patterns in comparative thought to which postcolonialism, world-system theory, decoloniality, and other studies grounded in comparison, effectively can contribute.

Postcolonialism's Désintéressment—A Left-Wing Commitment or Metropolitan Ignorance?

An important question asked directly or implied in research regarding postcolonial theory concerns a visible absence of postcolonialism's interest in massive transformations in the Soviet-dominated Eastern and Central Europe from the 1980s until the system's dissolution. It needed a

comparative vision with which Edward Said concludes his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), where he sums up the 1980s as "the decade of mass uprisings outside the Western metropolis" (Said 1993, 395). Noticing the active presence of Eastern Europe in this global impetus to change, Said highlights the powerful symbolic charge it carried. The dancing South African protesters and wall-traversing East Germans epitomized for Said the global carnival of peaceful revolutions (Said 1993, 396). Partisanship against communism bore so many analogies to anticolonial resistance that indeed it may look like postcolonialism's puzzling omission not to comment on it. The phenomenon was not acknowledged beyond Said's locating it as a part of the truly global unrest caused by the refusal of confinement after the "exhaustion of grand systems and total theories" (Said 1993, 398). David Chioni Moore's plea for including the post-Soviet space in postcolonial studies on the basis of its structural similarity to the processes in postcolonial countries was an isolated attempt to think about the empire in a properly—territorially and comparatively—global way. He observed that the exclusion of the post-Soviet from the expanding scope of postcolonialism was caused by the special use of the "Second World" in much postcolonial writing as a horizon of hope for Third World nations—a use that bespoke of an instrumental ideological treatment of a vast space of the globe shaken by the urge of emancipation, without due recognition of this determination as decolonization (Moore 2001).

While postcolonialism indeed was at a loss as to how to respond to the changes in Eastern and Central Europe after the dissolution of the communist regime, a range of comprehensive studies in how the West created the colonial difference of the region provided grounds for considering the region from a postcolonial perspective, linking modernity and coloniality as two interlocked forces at play in the region. Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994) elaborated the ontology of Eastern Europe as an imaginary, and, thus, an ideological, construct of the Western European othering drive, while Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) rendered a theoretically daring and contextually urgent study of the Orientalist construction of the Balkans from a deep historical and comparative perspective. In 1996, Ariel Cohen analysed the collapse of the Soviet Union as the loss of informal imperial domination of Eastern Europe. Marko Pavlyshyn in the article: "Ukrainian Literature and the Erotics of Postcolonialism: Some Modest Propositions," already in 1993 identified

postcolonial aspects of Ukrainian culture, as did Myroslav Shkandrij in his *Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (2001); and Ewa Thompson's *Imperial Knowledge* (2000) manifested a clear tone of the postcolonial insurrectionary mission in reading Russian literature as complicit in the imperial project. It was preceded by a very significant study on Russian nineteenth-century Orientalism by Sara Layton: *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (1994).

These beacons of postcolonizing Eastern and Central Europe were followed by a wide range of studies across the social sciences and humanities. Developing the concept of Russian serfdom as a form of internal colonization, Alexander Etkind, in *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience* (2011), observed a visible trail of continuity in Russia's development as empire, despite the overall difficulty to prove direct legacies in historical duration, adding that the chief difference between the Western empires and the Russian one was the erasure of race from imperial discourse and legal practice (Etkind 2011, 252). Madina Tlostanova refuted Etkind's claim that the strategy of "nativization" of ethnic others in the Russian empire helped avoid racialism typical of the Western empires and called for acknowledging racial othering at work in the Russian and Soviet imperial practices. Objecting against Etkind's identification of the Soviet Union as a postcolonial space, Tlostanova (2005, 14), instead, branded Russia the "defeated empire," that is, reactivated in the (neo)imperial post-Soviet Russian state. Epp Annus, in her introduction to *Soviet Postcolonial Studies. A View from the Western Borderlands* (2017), regards "strategies of Soviet coloniality as inseparable from the ideals of Soviet modernity" (Annus 2017, 8), directly linking modernity and coloniality as two sides of the same process, and argues that the Soviet colonizing agenda premised on cultural paternalism and the discourse of the civilizing mission was challenged in the Baltics and the Soviet Bloc countries of East Central Europe by identification with the "West-oriented models of modernity" (Annus 2017, 9). These, in turn, allowed for the nurturing of national sentiments and dissident cosmopolitanism against the imposed model of Soviet internationalism.

The fact that anticolonial movements after World War II performed on the Cold War battlefields made it difficult to convince the postcolonial mainstream that the USSR domination in the Eastern Bloc had imperial underpinnings, especially since Marxism provided an important part of emancipation vocabularies in postcolonial studies. Some critics claim that

the interconnectedness between the dissolution of the communist system in the Soviet-dominated Europe, and such a ground-breaking decolonization event as the annulment of Apartheid—an established object of study in postcolonial criticism—went largely unnoticed in the rapidly developing area of postcolonial studies during the decade of emancipation struggles in communist Europe because of postcolonialism's affinity with Marxism (Ştefănescu 2013, 18; Skórczewski 2020, 14). However, this omission was caused primarily by the relative territorialism and monolingualism of the field, and only secondarily by the unwritten consensus that the postcolonial cause needed socialism as a horizon of liberation. "Monolingualism" refers here not only to the language homogeneity that postcolonial studies had a tendency to overlook, privileging literatures written in English, but also to how postcolonialism understood a resistance agenda only within the context of Western empires. For example, Barbara Harlow, in her famous 1987 study *Resistance Literature,* ascribed this type of activism solely to the non-Western indigenous anti-imperialist struggle. Much in line with Fredric Jameson's essay from 1986, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Harlow foregrounds political involvement of these literatures as a form of actual creative labour linking political and social immediacy with literary and discursive response. Even though she underlines that resistance literature is always transnational in that it is a reaction to geopolitical situations, Harlow does not mention even in passing the teeming resistance literature which in fact defined the ethos of literary production in the Eastern Bloc at that time—suffice to mention only the most famous names: Iosif Brodsky, Vaclav Havel, Milan Kundera, Herta Müller, Czesław Miłosz, or Tomas Venclova.

The non-East Central European scholars who engaged in postcolonial studies, let's call them "Western," were rather equivocal about the postcolonial perspective on the region: they would acknowledge the paradigmatic coloniality of power in the region's history, but, at the same time, they were used to looking at the USSR as the useful horizon of the critique of capitalism. Timothy Brennan in his *Wars of Position. The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (2006) observes how in the US the perception of the post-Soviet changes in Eastern and Central Europe was based on subsuming them under one collective notion of "nationalism" (44), and in that way the whole region was set at a distance from the "post-nationalist" West. Brennan notices also a paradigmatic similarity

between postcolonial literatures (albeit he is careful to avoid the category of "postcolonial") and anti-communist literatures, both sharing an inevitable allure of otherness which he calls the "mental space of the politic-exotic" (Brennan 2006, 62). He concludes: "To the North American reader weighing choices, Eastern Europe may not be fully Europe, but it is nevertheless much more like home than is Zimbabwe or Sri Lanka. At the same time, it can claim an attractive otherness for being a version of the colonies 'at home'" (Brennan 2006, 62). Acknowledging the less radically othered position of the cultures from the "Eastern Bloc," Brennan also implicitly critiques postcolonial studies for marketing the difference in the name of "global pluralism" (Brennan 2006, 63), but not in the name of formal or critical innovation, reserved strictly for the centre.

Critical of postcolonialism from a Marxist vantage point, Neil Lazarus, maintains that the postcommunist societies' return to Europe, as a manner of speaking, via the claim to postcoloniality, would be ill-advised. Lazarus regards postcolonialism as a culturalist occlusion of the real power relations which are less about the West and the postcolonial world, and more about capitalism at the (diffuse) core and uneven development at the peripheries. He perceives the postcolonial framing of postcommunist studies as "paradoxical" on account of an assumption that the Soviet Union was a decolonizing force. He admits, though, the imperialist grounds of Russian modernity: "it is necessary to recognize that the Russian imperium and the Soviet order that succeeded it were clearly colonial in character" (Lazarus 2012, 117). Apprehensive of using the postcolonial framework for discussing the post-Soviet or postcommunist situation, Lazarus raises two questions: is renaming the "post-Soviet" as "postcolonial" aimed to turn the actualities of that space into a postcolonial case, or is it a proposition to capitalize on the authority of postcolonialism—thus, to improve the visibility of these literatures and cultures? These questions preclude a possibility of a productive application of postcolonial theory to East Central Europe because they are based on a premise that either way, the effect will be that of a "reactionary ploy" or another case study from the peripheries adhering to what he calls "orthodoxies of postcolonial theory" (Lazarus 2012, 117). Critiquing both the theory and the initiative to take it over and adjust it to a non-Western coloniality of power, Lazarus assumes an undesired effect of reinforcing capitalist domination under the cover of Eurocentrism. That a postcolonial perspective can serve a double-edged critique, seems to escape the Marxist critic.

Towards a Comparative System—Postcolonizing the Postcommunist Europe

We propose a postcolonial perspective that is inherently comparative (Kołodziejczyk 2009, 2010). It is only through the exposure to difference understood as: (1) relationality through analogy, (2) partial similarity, and (3) a challenge to the established theoretical or literary canons perpetuating their monolingualism that postcolonial studies can look beyond its established theoretical grounds of the binary metropolis/(post)colony. In the process of such a transfer, it can open itself up to a translation that does not homogenize and exclude what is beyond homogenization (Menon 2016, 145).

Postcolonizing the postcommunist Europe has created new areas of comparison beyond the usual paradigms of division premised on metropolis/former colony relations, which showed the potential of bringing together such seemingly remote processes as the unbanning of the African National Congress in 1990 in South Africa and the collapse of the communist monoparty rule in East Central Europe in 1989; and India's transition to market economy in the 1990s with postcommunist transformations in the same period. Indeed, the value of the postcolonial perspective lies in the way in which it opens a global perspective of interconnections and develops new ways for tracking, analysing, and understanding the nature of changes after the dismantling of the bipolar world order, rather than in proving the postcolonial status to East Central Europe. The recent phenomenon in populist politics in Hungary and Poland which claim postcoloniality in order to stir anti-EU sentiments and create a narrative of national decolonization from the alleged throngs of the European Union proves how easily academic paradigms can be co-opted to legitimate politics.[4] A similar case is India, with Narendra Modi's

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[4] Hungary under Viktor Orbán and Poland under Jarosław Kaczyński have gained notoriety for setting up the relations with the European Union on the principle of decolonization, charging the EU directly with continued colonizing politics towards its East Central European members or implying the persisting coloniality of power on the part of the EU and Western Europe. Orbán's eviction of the Central European University from Hungary in 2018 (which subsequently moved to Vienna in 2019) on the grounds of not succumbing to Hungarian law, preceded by a defamation campaign against George Soros, was a culmination of the anti-colonial discourse covering up a nationalist and anti-democratic agenda (cf. Taylor 2012). In Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński, the Law and Justice leader and a Eurosceptic, called Poland in 2010 a "Russian-German condominium" in an interview for *Gazeta Polska* on September 3, 2010, and reconfirmed the anti-colonial

upholding of Hindu cultural nationalism (Khair 2015, 404). Both cases, premised on the same paradigm of sovereignty through anti-colonialist rationale, challenge postcolonial studies' implicit victimism of the post-colonial subject, and, subsequently, the empowerment through identity as a desired outcome of decolonial emancipation. When the "postcolo-nial condition" is adopted by the modern right, it turns into a powerful political weapon used to mobilize ethnic and national integralism in the name of emancipation from anti-hegemonic pressures, disguising the turn to illiberal democracy as the politics of decolonisation.

As the above example shows, it is not the claim to the postcolonial condition but a possibility to trace related processes in a global perspective that enables the comparative potential of postcolonial studies. Likewise, a postcolonial perspective in translation to local conditions helps promul-gate knowledge about the unique experience of these intra-European forms of dependence and how they bear on the present in global contexts. Therefore, it is the translation metaphor that should become the guiding principle of deploying postcolonial tools. As this volume sets out to show, this is also a palpable critical practice: it is a way to establish analo-gies as well as untranslatables in a process that yields new paradigms of comparison responding to global pressures. The history of the postcolo-nial debate in the region shows the interaction between two diverging tendencies to use the "postcolonial" as a way to relate the postcom-munist transition and Eastern and Central European countries to the global (post)colonial modernity. The first approach identifies postcom-munist states as postcolonial on the grounds that they were subjected

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stance ten years later, in another interview for *Gazeta Polska*, stating that "Deciding to enter the EU, Poles did not agree to be anybody's colony, and such a subordination would make us and others precisely a colony of the so-called most influential EU play-ers" (Gójska and Sakiewicz 2021). The 2015 elections campaign, victorious for Law and Justice, was premised on an anti-immigration programme and a direct or indirect agenda of "decolonization" through "repolonization" of the media and the politics of "rising from the knees." The ruling camp has continued this anti-colonial framework of refer-ence whenever the EU institutions issue concerns about the rule of law in Poland. Some politicians directly accuse the EU of colonizing policies, see, for example, the nationalist EU MP Patryk Jaki's speech for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs (Jaki 2021). The 2020 presidential elections, founded on the anti-LGBT campaign refusing to recognize people in the LGBTQ+ communities and calling them followers of an "ideology" or a "dictatorship," was also harnessed to the anti-colonial discourse of the right (see, e.g., Wiejak 2021).

to the USSR domination as Soviet republics or as officially independent but practically subordinated satellite states. This claim also applies to the period of post-Enlightenment intra-European imperialism. Within this framework, the "postcolonial" provides the grounds for claiming the status of the oppressed and promoting national identity reconstructions as a necessary process of shedding the burden of coloniality. The second approach, while acknowledging that East Central Europe was subject to the intra-European coloniality of power throughout modernity, seeks, rather, to adopt the postcolonial perspective as a critical force aimed at revising history, memory, and identity. While the two trends often converge in critical approaches represented below, they also yield mutually contradictory results, the former focusing on postcolonialism as a way to reinforce a national discourse, the latter seeing postcolonialism as a critique of national discourse and a way to open up its ambiguities or reticence for appraisal.

In *Postcommunism/Postcolonialism. Siblings in Subalternity* (2013), Bogdan Ştefănescu traces parallels between postcolonialism and postcommunism, the main ones being: the political (and cultural) situation of "redressing through rupture" from domination, processes of "retrospective revaluation," "projection of strategies for identity reconstruction," and "recovering from traumas inflicted by imperial oppressors" (Ştefănescu 2013, 40–41). These structural parallels are brought together to show, despite the contextual differences between postcommunist and postcolonial situations, the similarity of the generic historical situation (Ştefănescu 2013, 80). What needs to be foregrounded here is the acknowledgement that colonialism is a recurrent category that does not pertain to the capitalist system only, but to the shared logic of modernity beneath the structural parallels of colonialism and communism (Ştefănescu 2013, 79). In a similar vein, in *Postcolonial Theory, the Decolonial Option and Postsocialist Writing*, Madina Tlostanova identifies the same rooting for socialism and capitalism: "[t]he socialist world was a stray outgrowth of Western modernity that retained such features as progressivism, developmentalism, the rhetoric of salvation, the fixity on newness, Orientalism, Eurocentrism, and various forms of enforced modernization" (Tlostanova 2015, 29). Tlostanova highlights the mechanics of the imperial domination and suppression in the Soviet world especially in relation to racialized Others (Tlostanova 2015, 29). Despite drawing on paradigmatic similarities, she warns against conflating postsocialism/postcommunism with postcolonialism for two

main reasons. The first is the untranslatability of local processes and histories, and here is where postdependence, the field of studies launched in Poland to create a comparative adjacency with postcolonialism, is a more comprehensive and comparative term. The second reason for refuting the treatment of postcommunist space as postcolonial is that postsocialism—an especially ambiguous space of "a poorly representable semi-alterity"—carries its own potential for decolonial involvement (Tlostanova 2015, 29–30).

Challenges of translatability include negotiating the grounds of comparison, drawing the lines of similarity and difference, or, more importantly, mapping the dynamic border between convergence and divergence (Kołodziejczyk and Şandru 2012, 113–116) and the hegemonic relations between various sites of knowledge production and transfer. In "Irritating Europe" (2013), Frank Engler-Schulze notices favourably the comparative potential of research framing postcommunist countries within the postcolonial perspective. He does ask, though, a valid question: will not qualifying these spaces as "postcolonial" result in the fading of postcommunist studies and taking away its autonomy, since these two are distinct autonomous fields? (Engler-Schulze 2013). But the issue goes far beyond considering disciplinary borders. What is at stake is not to occlude the difference in the task of "translating" East Central Europe with the use of the postcolonial discourse. Cristina Şandru in *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of post-1945 East-Central European Culture* (2012) examines aesthetic and rhetorical parallels between much anti-communist and postcolonial literature. Şandru's study, as an instance of comparative model-building, prompts a context-sensitive, translational reading whose task is to retain the political, historical, and cultural uniqueness, yet with a plea to see it as a manifestation of a broader emancipatory process within the postcolonial scope of interest. In an edited volume *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (2015) by Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrik, the eponymous cluster "postcolonial Europe" is accompanied by a cautious question mark. "Postcolonial" becomes here as much a tool of comparison in the hermeneutics of postcommunist cultural spaces, as it is an object of revision aimed at consolidating a transnational regional project that draws a map of unique topographies of the region and its multidirectional network of connections with the world. There is an adjacent body of work that deploys postcolonial research—especially on hybridization, uprooting, displacement and migration, or subaltern

groups. This research investigates the post-World War II mass population resettlements enforced by border shifts, deportations of the Germans, and communist politics of a mono-ethnic state with the ensuing marginalization or oppression of minorities, particularly unsettling for the region in which the polities were multi-ethnic before World War II.[5] Since a vital part of the Eastern Bloc ideology was communism's anti-imperialist thrust, studies tackling the connections between the Second and Third World highlight the alternative globalization circuits developing during the Cold War (cf. Mark et al. 2020).

In political and social sciences, the "postcolonial" attribute is used to inscribe East Central Europe within the framework of world-systems theory and to delineate its position on the (semi)periphery in the processes of combined and uneven development. The "postcolonial" interrogates here the (im)possibility of carving out a space of autonomy within the horizon of dependence that can be either a plea for "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000), and/or inaugurating an alternative to it. For Viacheslav Morozov and Tomasz Zarycki, the two authors who, each in his own way, analyse the post-Soviet polities and cultures as part of the world-system, the key question to pursue is agency in/beyond/despite the complex network of dependence, and its political substance and potential. Developing the problem further in this volume, Tomasz Zarycki, in *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (2015), examines the centre-periphery paradigm in which dependence on the Western core coordinates signification practices around a set of "prevalent normative ideological frameworks" (Zarycki 2014, 225). The region of East Central Europe, whose position in relation to the Western core, as the author posits, is rather low, produces discourses of eastness that Orientalize the East (Russia and the Soviet Union) and confirm the region's dependence on the West. This is a rather reverse result of mobilizing, through the discourses of eastness, a fantasy of autonomy. Viacheslav Morozov puts forth in his *Russia's Postcolonial Identity. Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (2015) a somewhat provocative thesis that Russia is a subaltern empire—a paradoxical outcome of dependence from the economic capitalist core: "Russia has successfully colonized itself on behalf of Europe but has been unable to assimilate" (Morozov 2015,

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[5] For detailed statistics see: Rothschild (1974).

3, 5)—which would be perhaps another "hegemony without domination" instance posited by Kiossev (Kiossev 1999). Navigating between its postcolonial identity emerging from the process of internal colonization, combined with self-colonization within the world-system (Morozov 2015, 30–32), and its imperial legacy, Russia is locked in a dialectics that produces "ontological insecurity, resulting from a failure to maintain a consistent self-concept as a European nation" (Morozov 2015, 103–104). The question Morozov pursues is how to challenge the specific product of Russia's subalternity—the post-imperial resentment. It manifests itself in the drive to "nationalise" social and political space in order to cover up the crushing of liberal forces identified as "alien." The effect of the "post-imperial" policy—and, neo-imperial, as 2014 annexation of Crimea and parts of Donbas and the subsequent war waged by Russia against Ukraine in 2022 prove—is the replacement of the people with the "sovereign" and disavowal of politics as a form of (popular) agency (Morozov 2015, 149).

The methodological autonomy able to sustain the comparative perspective remains the main concern in research seeking to explain history and cultures of East Central Europe by framing it within the postcolonial perspective. What links these studies is the awareness that no locality remains outside the reach of major geopolitical processes; rather, more often than not, the very peripherality is the product of these processes. Thus, it is not the similarity to postcolonial paradigms (they are all too easy to find), but difference within the space of correspondence that makes these enquiries valuable. The need to negotiate the geo-specific consequences of colonial modernity is what links studies on East Central Europe with postcolonialism. The postcolonial perspective works here as part of a more heterogeneous comparative formula geared to reflecting on the short- and long-term impact of dependence on societies and on how they construct their self-image and their world-image in a confrontation with these legacies.

Conclusion: Postcolonial Sensibility as Critical Thought

The discussion on the postcolonial transfer on East Central Europe delineated above shows that there is a clear division into two types of attitudes in the use of postcolonial categories. The first type comprises researchers who use postcolonial categories mainly for claiming the postcolonial status for postcommunist societies as a form of rectification of historical wrongs

and their long-reaching consequences in economy, politics, culture, and social life. Within this type, the ontological claim to postcoloniality dominates, accentuating the continuing condition of either lack or insufficiency of agency for postcommunist societies which not only were subjected by the USSR, and previously Tsarist Russia, the Habsburg Empire, and Imperial Germany, but which still remain in a situation of dependence because of having to succumb to the West's hegemonizing influence. The second type of transferring of postcolonial thought onto the region which acknowledges the undeniable coloniality of power that befell East Central European societies seeks to develop a space of critical thought in which the postcolonial is less a feature describing a society, but, rather, a diffuse structure for interrogating power relations in cultural, social, and political fields in a range of historical moments as well as in the present.

The key difference between the two approaches is that the first, identity-oriented type of postcolonial investment in East Central and Eastern Europe, develops a kind of national pedagogy whose goal is to raise the self-esteem of the formerly "colonized" and rebuild their collective mentality in the process of recovering their identity (Skórczewski 2011, 312), while the second type uses the postcolonial perspective primarily to revise national historiographies and their underpinning myths in political and cultural discourses to open them up to their own ambiguities, oppressions and hindrances. Ultimately, the second direction, which includes postdependence studies and related critical approaches, works to provide the discursive space for a critical revision of historical, political, and cultural processes which are consequences of dependence. Such an investment is not only to propose a revision of the past, but, primarily, to provide an analytical toolbox for investigating how various forms of the past are structuring and determining the present. What we want to foreground in the discussion on the state of knowledge is that research examining the consequences and legacies of dependencies in East Central Europe should not really devise a new identity for the region. We see the "postcolonial" as less a qualifier referring to a collectivity or identity, and more as a dialogic perspective enabling comparison in the mode of Saidian contrapuntal reading of "intertwined and overlapping histories" (Said 1993, 19). In fact, branding the region "postcolonial" will always ring a false bell or iterate discussions on the inevitability of dependence in the world-system and evoke accusations of derivativeness.

The foundational ambiguity of East Central Europe is grounded in the ambivalence of its self-image within the framework of Europe as

the "core" of social and political hegemonic signifying practices. This in-betweenness determines its equivocal self-perception as both inherently European and different, or, perhaps, made different by historical and geopolitical circumstances. Thepostcolonially-inflected insights have enriched this sense of close otherness (or distant familiarity) of that part of Europe with a new possibility of responding to power structures, institutions, and discourses which contributed to or took advantage of its location on the semi-periphery of European modernity. The deployment of postcolonial concepts helped also to formulate the agenda of critical self-scrutiny necessitated by the radical change after communism. It provided the necessary appendage to the discourses of dissident struggle for democracy and liberation in the Eastern Bloc whose *ethos* had been grounded in universal humanism, precisely by redirecting the focus from universals to the concrete problems of dependence and its consequences triggered by transition. The postcolonial perspective also highlighted the shortcomings of transitology discourses by prompting a critical revision of histories and legacies of the specific colonial modernity befalling that part of Europe. The revisions attuned to the critical thought of postcolonial studies bring to light various modes of ambiguity and ambivalence in processes of identity negotiations, of memory work and politics, and of defining one's position within larger entities of political co-existence as the European Union that still holds the power of the mobilizing and peripheralizing metropolis (i.e. the West).

The postcolonial perspective on the region raises fundamental questions about how the countries and societies in the region construct their self-image, what legacies they are proud of or burdened with, and how they grapple with their sense of inferiority in the process of system transformation and accessing the European community. However, postcolonial paradigms, designed to deconstruct the imperial power-system and its aftermath, may have an unexpected effect of a "postcolonial backlash" (Kołodziejczyk 2017), proving how vulnerable an academic discourse may be to political takeovers. As we argued in *New Nationalisms: Sources, Agendas, Languages. An Introduction* (Huigen and Kołodziejczyk 2021), postcolonial concepts have become in some cases tools legitimating right-wing populist politics, providing the vocabularies of decolonisation, of a national insurgency against the hostile hegemony of the West, of the deprivation of national agency resulting in a domination by hegemonic states within the EU. A major challenge today, as this volume proposes, is how to re-activate the position and ethos of counter-discourse that would

mobilize the vigilance of critical thought to such hostile takeovers that serve to mainstream and normalize anti-liberal forms of governance.

About the Book

East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century is a collection examining how East Central European countries and cultures fared as a border space between the former European empires (Russia/the Soviet Union, the Habsburg Empire, Prussia/Imperial Germany) and how they endured, internalized but, also, contested their joint status of (Western) Europe's close Other since the onset of modernity. We claim in this volume that postcolonial tools help develop a critical reflection on national traditions, historical narratives, cultural contrast and what in general makes up the regional difference, especially vis-à-vis Western Europe that has throughout modernity been both a model to emulate and aspire to, and a contested hegemonic force. Moreover, considering the looming power of the Russian empire in the region, the same postcolonially-inflected apparatus is useful to analyse cultural and political discourses engendered in the region in response to this imperial power. Regarding the post-World War II period, the essays collected in the volume engage in a debate on how to adequately describe the forms of governance and legacies thereof after the collapse of communism between 1989–1991. The postcolonial perspective helps refocus the discussions away from the transformation/modernization model dominant in the social sciences and determining research on the region. Our purpose is to work out a more nuanced model of scholarly inquiry into the cultural, literary, and historical imaginaries that have created a complex identity of East Central Europe. Our intention has been to take care of a cross-disciplinary span of research on the region.

Part I: *Locating East Central Europe Through Comparative Methodologies* opens an inquiry into a comparative potential of combining research on the region with theoretical and methodological repository of postcolonial thought, among others. Claudia Kraft's and Tomasz Zarycki's chapters discuss conceptualizations of space. Claudia Kraft takes a historical look at the development of the concept of East Central Europe. For this purpose, she combines the analysis of East Central Europe's in-betweenness characteristic of the region since the early modern period with a reflection on how political and academic discourses have been

constructing the region. She acknowledges the productive use of post-colonial studies' conceptual repository in reformulating and reinvigorating area studies in relation to East Central Europe. Tomasz Zarycki classifies the fundamental types and features of stereotypical images of the "East" in contemporary Polish identity discourses. They are analysed in relation to postcolonial theory and the cultural/discursive problem of Orientalization. The author differentiates between two basic types of Orientalism which he subsequently links with two ideological orientations: the conservative and liberal one. The conservative Orientalism is a continuation of traditional Polish Eastern Borderlands (*Kresy*) discourse in which the object of Orientalization is Ukrainians as the "others" in the Polish state. The chapter attempts to link the development mechanisms of stereotypical imaginaries of the "East" in contemporary Poland with so-called structural conditions, which means, dependencies of an economic and geopolitical kind.

Part II: *Appraising the Empire from European Peripheries* contains essays discussing one of the most pertinent and sensitive problems engendered by the in-between position of East Central Europe, and one of the least discussed in research on the region espousing a postcolonial approach, namely, the equivocal attitude of East Central European actors towards European empires and their colonies. Róisín Healy sets out to read comparatively the attitudes towards colonialism in Poland and Ireland before and after the achievement of independence in the wake of World War I. Healy argues that Poland's and Ireland's status of objects of colonial oppression in the long nineteenth century had an effect of endorsing moral rather than political authority to assert itself in the early stages of independence and thus embrace anticolonialism. After independence, however, Ireland and Poland developed opposite attitudes to colonialism. Ireland embraced an anticolonial stance, while Poland claimed entitlement to colonies on a par with other European states, as a form of redressing historical wrongs.

Raul Cârstocea continues the historical perspective on East Central Europe's ambiguous positioning in relation to the imperial venture of European powers, and equally ambiguous consequences of that relation. The author argues that the Romanian author, historian, and philosopher Mircea Eliade's scholarly episode in India in the years 1928–1931 was crucial for shaping his views on colonialism, turning him into an advocate of cultural pluralism highly appreciative of non-European cultures and a staunch critic of colonization. Cârstocea suggests that Eliade's political

affinity with the Romanian fascist movement may have been motivated by an emancipatory impulse which he drew from his scholarly pursuits—a way to wriggle away from Western European hegemony (despite the fact that the Romanian fascist movement actively took part in mainstream European fascism) by way of seeking common grounds between the authentically mystic peasants, and Europe's Other, India.

Agnieszka Sadecka explores accounts by Poles travelling to India in the first decades of India's independence. Colonial domination had officially come to an end, although manifestations of British rule were still visible. Commenting on these conditions, Polish reporters, visiting India in 1950s and early 1960s, often condemned the consequences of colonialism in social organization and hierarchies, as well as in Indian culture. However, their task of praising India's socialist economy seems rather perfunctory. Its role was to set the grounds for the overall critique of "American imperialism" and thus inscribe the socialist alliance of India in the Cold War rivalry between East and West.

Jagoda Wierzejska further develops in a case study what Cârstocea brands in a previous chapter as the "in-between epistemology" of East Central European subjects in their ambiguous relation to the Western imperial project, and Healy probes as the puzzling ambiguity of the nation after the experience of oppression developing colonial ambitions. Wierzejska examines the case of the contradictory nature of East Central European subjects oppressed by foreign powers (in a long historical perspective and during war occupation by German and Soviet states), but themselves often assuming privileged or even supremacist attitudes in colonies and semi-independent states where they would seek refuge from the war and the post-war system overhaul. The chapter focuses on the case of a Polish economist, intellectual and writer, Andrzej Bobkowska, who emigrated to Guatemala in 1948. Disappointed with what he saw as the political and cultural weakness of Western Europe after it had yielded to pressures from the Soviet Union and abandoned EastCentral Europe, in Guatemala Bobkowski took on the persona of a white colonialist in exile.

Part Three: *Emigres, Exiles, Settlers—Framing Displaced Identities* contains discussions of how socialist states organized their post-World War II politics of mass (re)settlements quite visibly borrowing from colonial ideologies, while, as the previous section proves, condemning Western imperialism. The collapse of the Soviet empire and the Eastern Bloc brought about further significant displacements in identity and cultural

locations, laying bare the lingering contentious relations between nations and ethnicities along the imperial/national axis as part of the post-socialist and post-Soviet legacies and transformations. The last three chapters discuss the complex population shifts in the wake of World War II and in the wake of the Soviet empire. Kinga Siewior investigates discourses of resettlement whose role after World War II border shifts was to legitimate the fact of Poland's loss of territories to the USSR and the gain of the so-far German territories as not only historical justice, but also as a rightful return of these territories to their native realm. Focusing on photography and fiction, Kinga Siewior claims that strategies underlying landscape representations of the "Regained Territories" (former German territories that were annexed by Poland in 1945), in the art and literature of the Polish People's Republic in many ways duplicated colonial policies of appropriating alien landscape and turning it into a familiar one.

Emilia Kledzik draws a comprehensive picture of the Roma self-representation in literature from East Central Europe in the several decades of post-war policing of minorities in the communist state. The author examines how the assimilation programmes of the communist state, continued after the system change to liberal democracy, produced a mixture of resentment and internalized self-corrective projections in Roma literature in East Central European countries. The chapter shows an evolution of the Roma self-representation under pressure from the majority (state and society). The assimilationist coercion typical of socialist states transformed after system change into a discourse of multiculturalism, albeit not devoid of ambiguities, especially where the apparent recognition of the Roma in the new discourse of cultural diversity is not accompanied by broadening the space of social inclusion for the Roma in the social realm.

Miriam Finkelstein analyses reciprocal representations of migrants from Russia and different Eastern and East Central European states in contemporary literature. This chapter seeks to answer the following question: what happens when former nationals of the Soviet Union and individuals from former socialist East Central European states who perceivethe USSR as the colonizing power, meet outside their respective home countries? This chapter traces these surprisingly ambiguous attitudes engendered by these overlapping antagonisms. The most ironical outcome of the benign paternalism of the West, epitomized by Germany, is that writers, prompted by funding host institutions into mutual conviviality, act out their post-socialist rivalries, and together manifest a derisive attitude

towards the amicable, yet visibly coercive programme that smacks too much of the familiar pedagogy of socialist writers' meetings.

Foregrounding these multiple zones of productive ambiguity, *East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century* accentuates a convergence with postcolonial studies in an examination of East Central European societies, without, however, constructing a straightforward analogy. Our volume shifts the focus of interest from the prevailing tendency to prove the postcolonial status of the region to an analysis of the culturally and politically resourceful ambiguity of the East Central European location at the intersection of the colonial and the postcolonial. Instead of pitting authenticity against derivation, which has so far prevaricated much of the postcolonially-inflected debate on postdependence cultures in the region, we aspire to a much more decisively postcolonial gesture. The goal of this volume is to turn the east/west binary as, respectively, a recipient and producer of knowledge paradigms, into another border zone where borrowing, appropriation and hybridization processes challenge the centre/periphery division.

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Locating East Central Europe Through Comparative Methodologies

East Central Europe as a Historical and Conceptual Space: On the Production of Knowledge from an (Historical) Area Studies Perspective

Claudia Kraft

In this chapter, I would like to discuss how "East Central Europe" has been conceptualised in historical, cultural, and social science discourses, and how it can be fruitfully applied for a self-reflexive analysis of the history of the region. Because East Central Europe is characterised by multiple periphery-centre relations it may be viewed as a perfect site for researching processes of interconnectedness and entanglements, while highlighting the consequences of specific knowledge-power constellations that are central in postcolonial studies. East Central Europe is in a position of "in-between peripherality" (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999) in several respects. It is seen as an integral part of Europe—especially in the self-description of local actors, but usually also in the perception of Western Europe. However, this affiliation is by no means unambiguous. This is evident in how East Central Europe hints at its "own easts" (Zarycki 2014) in order to further demonstrate its belonging to Europe. On the

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other hand, it is Europe that needs "the East" to reassure itself of its civilisational superiority (Neumann 1999). A postcolonial perspective can help with the examination of these exchange relations and dependencies which can hardly be described as unambiguous.

These power relations play a significant role when it comes to the respective positions of Eastern Europe, East Central Europe, and Southeastern Europe in relation to the idea of Europeanness. It is not only from an economics-based theory of world system that marks these regions as semi-peripheries (Wallerstein 1976). At the same time, these regions have counted, albeit with restrictions, as part of the (Western) European/North Atlantic centre from a cultural and historical perspective, or, rather, have defined themselves very strongly in relation to this centre. This relationality is of great importance for the positioning of the regions in space and, also, time: East Central Europe is not essentially different and has endeavoured to align itself to Europe in order to enjoy the cachet of Europeanness. This does not say anything about the historical development of the centre and its historical specificity, but it certainly establishes the *topos* of backwardness for the description of the semi-periphery (Hirschhausen et al. 2019, 376–377).

Recent methodological considerations, therefore, look for concepts that elaborate the intrinsic values of historical regions without essentialising them because it is not about the description of fixed spaces, but about the fact that concepts of space must always be thought of as transformative, in the sense that critical geographer Doreen Massey has described: "Spatial form as 'outcome' (the happenstance juxtapositions and so forth) has emergent powers which can have effects on subsequent events. Spatial form can alter the future course of the very histories that have produced it" (Massey 1992, 84). Having this observation in mind, I would like to make a strong claim for the further use of space-related historical and social research with regard to East Central Europe. But, in doing so, I do not wish to return to old battles focusing on which territories comprise Central or East Central Europe, how these spatial concepts are to be defined, and where exactly the borders to a Western or Eastern Europe run. The debate on whether we need university-based or generally institutionalised research on East Central Europe at all is still ongoing, proving that the region's complexity cannot be easily contained in fixed conceptual and methodological frames. The critics of the spatial concept argued for a more methodologically oriented preoccupation with concrete spaces and, above all, actors. The proponents, on the other hand, referred

to the pragmatic representation of the "lands between" (Palmer 1970) in a European history.[1]

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the ways in which the study of East Central Europe as a region, characterised by heterogeneity and changing allegiances, has received innovative impulses from the use of research concepts from postcolonial studies that were not initially developed for this part of the world. I also pose the question of the extent to which these approaches can be heuristically sharpened. I am convinced that already established methodological approaches pertaining to East Central Europe contain perspectives that are certainly compatible with postcolonial studies or can even create a new research field within global postcolonial studies. At the same time, one has to bear in mind that the underlying history of academic disciplines related to East Central Europe is itself permeated to a certain extent by colonial thinking and hence needs a critical re-evaluating.

What's New About Area Studies in the Twenty-First Century?

If we look at the debate about the relevance and the heuristic value of area studies concerning Central and Eastern Europe, we can discern a significant shift in the discussions over the last three decades. The end of the Iron Curtain segregation in 1989 and the increasing impact of globalisation on the topics and methods of the cultural and social sciences have had a lasting effect on the self-image of area studies relating to the Eastern part of Europe. The continued necessity of maintaining this geopolitical category was fundamentally questioned after the disappearance of the Cold War divide. The increasing relevance of non-European regions in the cultural and social sciences is another challenge. The clearer it becomes that globalisation cannot be described as an extension of "European" or "Western" patterns to the entire world, but rather as a history of exchange and interdependence, the more important the knowledge produced by area studies becomes (Hirschhausen et al. 2019, 387–389). Global history has long abandoned the idea that there are universal cultural or political

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[1] See the debate in the *Journal of Modern European History* 16/1 (2018) and 16/3 (2018). On the other hand, recent handbooks do not bother too much about a precise location of "East Central Europe" but just refer to the "territory from Russia in the east to Germany and Austria in the west" (Lizeveanu and Klimo 2017).

patterns. Rather, it examines how new developments emerge from the contact of different historical contexts and experiences. It is for this reason that knowledge production about different world regions is absolutely necessary for the writing of a history of globalisation.

Just recently, the debate over regional studies has flared up again, generating new arguments. Featuring the concept of the "global East," the geographer Martin Müller argues for a "strategic essentialism" that adheres to a homogenising concept of the "East" in order to make use of the heuristic added value that arises from the East's semi-alterity and liminal position. The East is thus no longer to be a concrete space, but "a means of transforming knowledge production" (Müller 2020, 750), bringing actors not so much "at the margins" but rather "at the interstices" of geopolitical imaginations to the fore (ibid., 749). However, from the perspective of historiography or anthropology, such a levelling of spatial differences seems problematic. Accordingly, Jan Kubik argues for a "contextual holism": he stresses the relevance of local experiences and the acknowledgement of specific historical legacies as indispensable objects of investigation in an area studies approach (Kubik 2020, 53–60). This context-related approach seems particularly suitable for a region like East Central Europe which was shaped by asymmetrical relations in which colonial and imperial structures became historically powerful, and for which, due to its proximity to or affiliation with (Western) Europe, the linkage of knowledge and power relations were particularly central. For Müller, talking about an East differentiated into sub-regions (Central, East Central, Eastern Europe) means seeing these regions as "stuck in eternal transition," and concepts like Central Europe suggest that a teleological perspective of approaching the "true" Europe predominates (Müller 2020, 736). In the following I would like to make a strong case for "East Central Europe," as both a heuristic and spatial concept, without describing it one-dimensionally as an entity with fixed structural or discursive characteristics.

A Genealogy of Area Studies in Two Postwar Periods

The recent debate on East Central Europe as a heuristically meaningful category is part of a long tradition of reflection. It is important to keep in mind that these debates never had and continue not to have a purely academic grounding but have been more often than not

an effect of (geo)political attributions or intentions. As early as in the interwar period, historians from East Central Europe (Oskar Halecki and Marceli Handelsman from Poland, Jaroslav Bidlo and Joseph Pfitzner from Czechoslovakia) discussed criteria for an internal division of Europe and searched for parameters that made it possible to ascribe a historically and structurally based commonality to the states in East Central Europe that had re-emerged or had been newly founded after 1918. That is, the features which clearly distinguished this region from "Eastern Europe" that was distinctively shaped by traditions of the Orthodox Church, different traditions of political domination and social structures (Kłoczowski 1995; Troebst 2003).

The historians' discussion of the interwar period reflected not only structural-historical parameters, but also the changed map of Europe after the collapse of the great European empires during or shortly after World War I, as well as the transformation of the Russian Empire into the Soviet one. The latter's substantial increase in power as a result of World War II and the precarious geopolitical position of East Central Europe, which was affected by German fascism and Soviet Stalinism during and after World War II, further fuelled thinking about this region. It resulted, for instance, in Halecki's book *Borderlands of Western Civilization* (Halecki 1952) that continued his reflections of the 1920s and 1930s during the Cold War constellation and the political division of Europe. In the late phase of the Cold War, the Hungarian historian Jenö Szücs outlined "The Three Historical Regions of Europe" (Szücs 1983). Looking eastwards, he pointed out, similarly to Halecki, the significance of the confessional dividing line as a region-shaping factor. With regard to the difference between East Central Europe and Western Europe, he emphasised the structures of the "second serfdom" that had become entrenched since the early modern period. This is what he sees as the reason for the slowed socio-economic modernisation, which has continued to have an effect up to the present day.

An interesting example of the close interweaving of methodological reflections on the one hand and historical-political considerations on the other is provided by historical research on Eastern Europe in Germany. Since the time of its institutionalisation at the universities in the late nineteenth century, it has seen itself as being distinctly close to politics. As a result, until the collapse of the imperial order following World War I, the focus was primarily on the Russian Empire as the most relevant political actor east of the German Empire. Only in the period between the

two World Wars did the smaller states of East Central Europe also come into focus, but mainly against the background of unresolved minority conflicts and German revisionist territorial claims (Oberkrome 1993; Hettling 2003). During the National Socialist era and during World War II, a number of German scholars placed themselves at the service of the German expansionist policy and supported the war of aggression (and of extermination) with publications that historically legitimised the political hegemony of the German Reich in that region and ultimately also helped to justify the German policy of deportation and extermination of Jewish and Slavic people with dubious socio-historical or openly racist concepts (Burleigh 1988; Fahlbusch and Haar 2007).

These historical burdens had a significant influence on the development of research on Eastern Europe after World War II. On the one hand, there were historians such as Werner Conze, who now turned formerly *völkisch* concepts into approaches that could be described as structural history (*Strukturgeschichte*) (Etzemüller 2001). The methodological innovation helped the historians who had participated, with their publications, in the National Socialist extermination policy to transform highly problematic concepts such as "genetically healthy peasantry" into seemingly neutral social history concepts of class or impersonal macro processes. With regard to the German Empire of the late nineteenth century, Conze analysed structural processes of modernisation, state-building and nationalisation that had mobilising effects not only for the elites, but for all strata of the population in culturally, linguistically and denominationally mixed regions. For instance, in the Polish-German contact zones in the Prussian East, he referred to these processes as "nation-building through separation" (Conze 1983). After World War II, Conze was considered to be one of the founders of modern structural history that would later become social history in Germany. However, to the extent that he and his colleagues turned their attention to the major processes of modernisation, Eastern Europe lost importance in a historiography that increasingly prioritised the category of time over that of space. Social history became concerned with temporalised processes (industrialisation, urbanisation, etc.) and gave little importance to the spatial dimensions of history. Temporal development processes seemed to be of more importance. These were studied primarily for Western Europe, while the eastern part of the continent was assigned the role of the backward "other."

In a volume dedicated to the potential of a postcolonial perspective on the region, it is paramount to recall another strand of historiography on Eastern Europe that one could describe as *postcolonial studies avant la lettre*. It turns out that it is not only since the imperial or colonial turn of the 2000s that imperial contact zones have proven to be particularly productive for questions of a history of entanglements and interactions. By emphasising the aspect of relational history (*Beziehungsgeschichte*), German historian Klaus Zernack broke with historiographical traditions, which regarded East Central Europe, and Poland in particular, in the worst case as a kind of imperial enlargement area or at best, as a territory that could be described as in a constant catching-up process in relation to a more advanced "West." In his writings, he broke away not only from the attitude of assumed German superiority, which in itself was already a huge progress with regard to the political perspective on Eastern Europe in postwar Western Germany, and from a Prussian-centric paradigm which had long dominated German historiography dealing with its Eastern neighbour, but he also developed German-Polish history into a research paradigm that worked as an antidote to teleological temporalisation. Instead of solidifying backwardness narratives, modernisation could now be described as a differentiated and entangled process (Zernack 1974). With his relational-historical approach, Zernack in a way anticipated the premises of a history of entanglements developed since the 1990s that pointed to the importance of imperial peripheries for the often ambivalent processes of modernisation of the political centre. At the same time, he was obviously part of larger methodological developments of his time and thus strongly influenced by a structural-historical approach that dominated history writing during the 1970s and 1980s. He attributed a set of categories to Eastern Europe (divided into four sub-regions: East Central Europe, Northeastern Europe, Southeastern Europe, and Russia) and explained the historical differences within the European continent with the lasting impact of, for instance, denominational belonging, structure of property relations, forms of serfdom or consequences of geopolitical positioning (Zernack 1977). With this structural-historical approach, he also wanted to strengthen a historiography related to Eastern Europe that was based on more or less objective criteria instead of ideological opinions in order to clearly distinguish himself from the politically contaminated historiography of the war and pre-war periods.

I would argue that already in the 1970s and 1980s, when historiography was dominated by structural approaches, the preoccupation with East Central Europe opened new perspectives that, in a way, were closer to cultural history or to the language sensitivity of postcolonial studies. Generally speaking, historians who deal with this region know the dilemma of assigning terms to historical contexts that are based on Western examples and are therefore only partially suitable for the actual object of investigation. I want to posit that a relational history (*Beziehungsgeschichte*) could furthermore help us use categories in a more reflective manner. We cannot simply do without them, but we also need to avoid using them as matrices suiting all contexts. Moreover, relational history has taught us to understand conceptual categories in a process-oriented rather than an essentialist way. Just as E. P. Thompson pointed out in the context of the social history of the English working class that class is not something fixed that characterises individuals, but rather develops between actors (Thompson 1963), the German-Polish relational history shows that nationality is not something that is embodied, but is produced in historically describable processes.

"1989" AND THE "SPATIAL TURN"

After the *annus mirabilis* of 1989, we again observed a coincidence of macro-political developments and methodological reconfigurations. During the 1990s one influential master narrative of politics declared "a return to Europe" of those parts of the continent which had been within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This political boom coincided with a general shift in the methodologically conservative area studies (which was still focused on fixed regions characterised by structures). As a field based on fragmenting the world, area studies at that time no longer seemed to match the accelerated globalisation of networked societies, which fundamentally challenge the concept of centre-periphery relations. In 1997, a group of mostly Chicago-based scholars who were mainly concerned with non-European regions (and particularly with South Asia) delivered a "white paper" for the Ford Foundation, the institution that contributed significantly to the creation of area studies as a field of research whose mission was to provide political expertise after World War II. In this text, the existing concept of area studies received a rather critical evaluation: "The trouble of much of the paradigm of area studies as it now exists is that it has tended to mistake

a particular configuration of *apparent* [original emphasis, CK] stabilities for permanent associations between space, territory, and cultural organization" (Globalization Project 1997, 2). The authors argued to move away from what they call "trait" geographies that in a way resemble the above-described ideas of a structural history concerned with Eastern Europe towards "process" geographies (ibid., 1) that are shaped by interactions and entanglements, and emerge situationally depending on the specific research question. Apart from advocating a more processual approach and a strong plea for a more attentive acknowledgement of voices "from the region," the authors also discuss the relevance of already existing knowledge about areas under investigation. They underline that these bodies of knowledge cannot be seen as stable or factual but as "artefacts" (ibid., 5) that should be critically re-examined and integrated into a new "'constructivist' architecture" (ibid., 6) of area studies.

Transferring these claims to area studies concerned with Eastern and East Central Europe, it may be noted that scholars have initially adopted the constructivist turn rather than thinking in terms of processes and interactions—even though both recommendations held equal weight in the "white paper." This is particularly true for the 1990s and early 2000s, when discourse-related research had its heyday in East European studies. Researchers at that time looked at the production of knowledge about Eastern Europe and pointed to the long-lasting effectiveness of literary and scholarly attributions (Wolff 1994; Goldsworthy 1998). In some cases, one of the founding concepts of postcolonial studies, Edward Said's Orientalism (Said 1978), has also been used as a kind of starting point, as in the case of Maria Todorova, who with the concept of "Balkanism" refined Said's approach pointing at the ambivalences in Europe's representation of itself and the Southeastern "other" (Todorova 1997). In this context, the reference was made not only to the reality-shaping function of texts, but also of maps, and a perspective on spatiality was developed based on the concept of mental maps (Schenk 2002). But somehow this historiography, which focused mainly on textual/discursive imaginations, appeared to be in some way lifeless: the actors with their experiences that had been actively involved in shaping and perceiving space seemed to disappear behind the overwhelming power of imaginations of space. Talking about an invented Eastern Europe and imagined differences leaves the researcher who is interested in processes of differentiation very often dissatisfied. Nevertheless, the spatial turn at the start of the millennium proved to be an important paradigm shift in research on Eastern

and East Central Europe. It not only emphasised the power of cognitive maps, but also because researchers like Karl Schlögel (2003) pointed to the history-shaping power of the category of space—taking into consideration how geographical specificities affected historical developments in general and experiences of the actors in particular.

Eastern Europe in a Globalised Science

While research concerned with East Central Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century still tended to surrender to the cogent power of texts and maps, and thus conformed to the constructivist architecture of area studies, the world changed rapidly in the post-Cold War constellation. With the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the advancing political integration of Eastern Europe into the European Community, the danger became apparent that this part of the continent might become a blind spot in the attention economy of scholarship because it no longer represented a constituent "Other." Fortunately, this led to innovative thinking about how East Central Europe could not only be seen as an "application example" for more general theories developed elsewhere but could itself contribute to theory production. To this end, East Central Europe was increasingly thought of as part of a global history that was not conceived in terms of large "civilisations," but, rather, in terms of processes of interdependence and exchange. In what follows, I would like to talk briefly about the expediency of placing the academic study of East Central Europe in larger research contexts in order to emphasise the heuristic productivity of this branch of research.

We could start from the assumption that the spatial turn in cultural studies may seem problematic for East Central Europe, where the idea of historical "progress" has been spatialised in the past and entails the danger that those regions will still be understood in an essentialist manner and categorised as backward. At the same time, however, the study of the foundations and discourse of this narrative of progress offers an excellent opportunity to understand East Central Europe as part of a global history, as Jürgen Osterhammel points out in his seminal book about the global nineteenth century when he identifies notions of time as a particularly suitable example for global intercultural comparisons. It is precisely the conceptions of time of the European philosophy of history since the last third of the eighteenth century that had excluded not only Asian, but also other allegedly "history-less" peoples such as the Slavs

from the European space of time (*Zeitraum*) which was characterised by a linear narrative of progress (Osterhammel 2014, 68–69). Frank Hadler and Matthias Middell interpret such findings of shared experiences of Eastern European and non-European regions as evidence of the important function of a "hinge" that the history of East Central Europe could take on between "transnational history in a traditional Western vein and the coalition of global history and area studies" (Hadler and Middell 2010, 25). Just recently, historian Clara Frysztacka, with her book on notions of time in the Polish press of the nineteenth century, has made it impressively clear—using the conceptual toolkit of postcolonial theories— that locating oneself and others in temporal categories is an extremely powerful instrument in the struggle for recognition and for positioning in a Western narrative of progress. However, she also demonstrates that historical actors have also used "temporalisation" for self-empowerment and to challenge a supposedly universal time (Frysztacka 2020). Additionally, the specific spatial constitution of this region speaks for its consistent integration into global history. Again, reference should be made to Osterhammel, who describes the relationship between peripheries and centres as "the most important spatial configuration" in the nineteenth century, drawing attention to empires as the "largest and most important actors" (Osterhammel 2014, 78, 88).

Without a doubt, empires were the determining territorial framework for the whole of Eastern Europe until 1918. Of particular interest for regional studies is that the legacies of empires retained relevance for the shaping of new social and political orders even after their collapse. Here, the specific character of (Eastern) Europe's spatial condition comes to the fore, as Stefan Troebst has described it: "The map of Eastern Europe as well as of the whole of Europe still resembles a palimpsest, that is, a medieval parchment manuscript whose original text has been removed and replaced by another" (Troebst 2000, 63). However, research should not be primarily concerned with mapping and border shifts, but rather with the spaces of experience and spaces for action of the historical actors; and those spaces mutated permanently due to the multiple interchanges of power and territorial overlaps. The Ukrainians, for instance, could be seen as a particularly striking example (but by no means an exceptional case) for this phenomenon. They have been confronted with multiple imperial overlaps: in early modern times by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire (Snyder 2003; Kappeler 2014); after the partitions of Poland a considerable part became the new Habsburg crownland

of Galicia and Lodomeria (Vushko 2015); after 1868 they had to grapple to a lesser extent with the Habsburg bureaucracy, and more with the claim to power of the Polish nobility, which had gained autonomy within the Cisleithanian part of the Dual Monarchy (Himka 1999; Wendland 2001); and after 1917, confronted by the complex process of the disintegration of the Russian Empire and the construction of the Soviet Union through Soviet Russian (neo-)imperialism (Wendland 2010) that has had a lasting effect until today.

In space, diverse experiences did coexist and overlap. The histories of contact with the alternating imperial powers cannot simply be told as a linear and temporally staggered succession. The "post" in post-imperial contexts, such as in the case of the Ruthenians/Ukrainians, carries the experience alongside previous forms of domination and thus refers to processes of entanglements rather than to fixed identities as units of investigation.

The Habsburg Monarchy seems to be a particularly fruitful field of investigation for authors who are interested in such entanglements. Pieter Judson's survey of the Habsburg Monarchy (Judson 2016) may be considered a central work that examines negotiation processes against the backdrop of unequally distributed power resources. The author presents an analytical framework that does not focus on nationalism and the imperial counter-movements as indissoluble antagonisms, but rather questions the interactions between diverse social movements and the national and regional procedures by means of which social change was set in motion or shaped.

The Habsburg Empire of negotiations, regarding the Cisleithanian half of the empire and at least since 1867, sought ways to come to terms with diversity, which clearly represents a particularly productive field of research for postcolonial studies. Thus, authors refer especially to the aspect of interactional relations between rulers and the ruled, to the manifold processes of appropriation that took place in this network of relations, and to the ambivalences that arose from the attempt to regulate the diversity of the empire (Feichtinger et al. 2003; Kaps and Surman 2012). However, the multi-ethnic Russian Empire and likewise the German Empire with its large Polish-speaking population in the Prussian East also lend themselves to the testing of postcolonial perspectives.

But as different as the spaces for negotiation in the imperial relations of subordination were, as contrasting are today's interpretative frameworks inspired by the perspective of postcolonial studies. For example, there

are studies that are examining Russian rule as colonial rule primarily in terms of the Russification and discursive marginalisation of the "Other," such as in the studies of Ewa Thompson with regard to the position of non-Russian populations in the Russian Empire (Thompson 2000). Other authors present German policies towards Poland in the nineteenth century in a relatively one-sided manner, without asking about the repercussions on German society that resulted from contact with Polish-speaking populations (Kopp 2012). At the same time, there are studies that show that it was precisely these contacts with the "alterity partners" that had a lasting effect on the constitution of the German Reich and its self-image as a nation-state or empire (Ther 2004). Here, recent historiography has done much to break down the dichotomising juxtaposition of rulers and the ruled for both imperial and nation-state contexts. In these publications, the subalterns are not simply attributed agency in a romanticised manner, but, rather, authors elaborate on how historical actors were able to appropriate strategies of subversive complacency for their purposes and what kind of repercussions these appropriations had for the political centre.

Furthermore, research points to the adaptation of the subjugated to the centre and the shifting of the border into their own social space by these very subjugated. For the nineteenth century, this can be clearly seen in the discourses on hygiene (Turkowska 2020; Ureña Valerio 2019) in a German-Polish context; for the twentieth century, for instance, Kathryn Ciancia has pointed to a "universal language of civilisation" that, for example, Polish elites displayed towards the population in the Polish eastern territories during the period between the two World Wars (Ciancia 2021). For the post-socialist period, debates about the *homo sovieticus* developed amongst the self-proclaimed modern elites come to mind. They operated an image of individuals who, after the end of socialism, have remained stuck in their underclass identity dependent on the state because they failed to achieve cultural and socio-economic modernisation embodied by the "West" (Buchowski 2006).

Eastern/East Central Europe and the "Hyperreal Europe"

Thinking about the location of Eastern and East Central Europe in Europe has a long tradition and poses a challenge: both for the historical actors, who strive to position themselves against the respective current

background of experience, and for the academic observers, for whom a clear separation of concepts of historical actors and concepts of analysis is problematic. As early as the 1920s, the Russian linguist Nikolai Trubetskoi (1890–1938) had formulated a negative assessment of Europe, which he criticised for its discursive and normative hegemony. He pointed at the European view of the world, which tended to ignore specific characteristics in those regions that evidently did not belong to the European centre and, therefore, did not fit into the European scheme of knowledge. Criticising the Eurocentrism of the core Europe, he formulated his judgement: "European culture is not the culture of humankind; it is a product history of a very definite ethnic group" (Trubetskoi 1920, 5). The anti-communist émigré, Trubetskoi, argued from a cultural relativist or nativist point of view and did not spare biological analogies to denounce the European gesture of superiority and to emphasise Slavic distinctiveness vis-à-vis the "Romano-Germans" (ibid.). His analysis is both perceptive and disturbing at the same time, since he rightly points at the discursive and political dominance of the only apparently "unmarked" Europeans, while using biologist and racialised arguments to improve the situation of the subaltern "not yet" Europeans.

Eighty years later, the prominent postcolonial theorist of the colonial knowledge-power system, Dipesh Chakrabarty, warns against falling into precisely such patterns of essentialising one's own culture. He pleads for understanding Europe as part of a global history and that it is precisely the actors outside the European centre who were and are involved in the creation of the construct of a "hyperreal Europe" through their permanent confrontation with it. With this notion, Chakrabarty refers to the epistemological power that is exercised when some categories and narratives—which certainly have a historical place/time and are transferred from there to other contexts—are set as universal and inescapable. From this perspective, Europe (which does not exist in this discursive ideal form) provides categories that the peripheral territories must correspond to or emulate (Chakrabarty 2007, 29–30). Maria Todorova argues similarly, when she points out that Southeastern and Eastern European studies have an important role to play in the "provincializing of Europe" called for by Chakrabarty: with the inclusion of Eastern European experiences, the overpowering European paradigm would be differentiated and become clearer in its historical situatedness (Todorova 2012, 74).

Another example from East Central Europe is used here to underline that it is difficult to demarcate Eastern Europe from Europe or from an

idealised "West," but that these spatial constructs become tangible only in their permanent relationality. In a dispute on the "Prague Spring," writers Milan Kundera and Václav Havel discuss the political significance of the reform movement in Czechoslovakia shortly after its suppression at the turn of 1968/1969. While Havel wanted to see it merely as a "return" to the democratic reality of the "West" (Havel 2008 [1969], 45–46), Kundera insisted on understanding the "Prague Spring" as an event of world-historical significance, as a unique attempt to counter the challenges of modern society with a programme that was both socialist and democratic (Kundera 2008 [1968/1969], 42–44; 47–49). As if under a magnifying glass, the indissoluble intertwining of the West with Eastern Europe becomes clear here. Havel, faring from modernisation theory, recognises a "rectifying revolution," similarly to how German philosopher Jürgen Habermas diagnosed the events of 1989 (Habermas 1990). Kundera, in turn, insists on an independent contribution to historical development, which, however, can only be grasped in terms of the "West" (and reaffirms the "hyperreal Europe" precisely through its claimed originality).

This permanent relationality to the European "universality" reveals the heuristic potential inherent in postcolonial studies, which, like gender studies several years earlier (in the 1980s), contribute to a reconceptualisation of history by emphasising relationality and thus condition a specific perspective rather than a fixed object of research. It is precisely the spatial and historical proximity of East Central and Eastern Europe and the particularly intense debate about belonging and exclusion due to this proximity that, on the one hand, constantly affirm the "hyperreal Europe," but, on the other hand, also open up an analytical space in which Europe becomes radically recognisable in its respective historical situatedness and thus visible as just another "province" of a fragmented world.

The Twenty-First Century or Why We Still Need Relational History in a Postcolonial Vein

Arguably, an entangled history of relations coupled with postcolonial approaches can help us cope with present political challenges. Political scientists have recently made a sobering diagnosis of Eastern Europe and stated that since the end of the Cold War, Eastern Europe has found itself in an "era of imitation" (Krastev and Holmes 2020). From this

perspective, dissatisfaction with parliamentary liberal democracy would result from the fact that this political system has been presented to the transforming societies of East Central Europe as if without an alternative. But those who only imitate it, could not develop a positive attitude towards such a system. An intensified search for (ethnonational) identity was, therefore, the consequence (Krastev and Holmes 2020); something that we witness in today's Polish, Hungarian, and recently also Slovenian political landscape. This diagnosis, which has its merit, seems anyway to repeat the old pattern of profiling East Central Europe as prone to nationalism, instead of analysing the current contexts and complexities. And not without reason: political thinkers of the right in Poland already a good decade and a half ago argued for the return to supposedly genuine political traditions of their own that needed to be defended against the West (Krasnodębski 2003). It goes without saying that such a diagnosis uses argumentative patterns of postcolonial approaches in order to enforce a very specific political agenda. Therefore, we can observe how seemingly scholarly knowledge production is used for the political debate. Here again, a form of nativism shines through that theorists of post-colonialism warn against (Kołodziejczyk 2017). However, this nativism is not only the product of the "backward" attitudes in the East, but also an effect of the ignorance of Western opinion leaders who diagnose otherness but ignore the fact that they are also involved in the formation of these supposedly "cultural" antagonisms. Not to be misunderstood—I take a critical view of the complaints of East Central European critics of an alleged Western hegemony that supposedly keeps the region in a "peripheral" or inferior position even after the end of the Cold War. These complaints are part of an ethno-nationally narrow debate. This view must be countered by the fact that East Central Europe is by no means peripheral, but an integral part of a European history. This can only be understood by not thinking of Europe as a centre with peripheries, but, rather, by seeing the development of institutions and ideas as a process of interdependence.

To conclude, I will recapitulate why I consider postcolonial studies to be heuristically extremely productive as a research approach to East Central Europe. The multi-layered understanding of time inherent in the "post" of postcolonial studies is quite accurate for the complex situation of this region: in its case "after" does not merely mean "over" but implies the continued impact of historical experiences that shape the horizon of expectations of historical actors. This means that East Central Europe—or, more generally, any unit of investigation in the realm of

area studies—should not be viewed one-dimensionally as space, but as a space–time intertwining. In a recent research project that reflected on the future of area studies through the example of the specificity of East Central European border regions, this phenomenon was characterised as follows: "Former historical territories have the capacity to shape both the experience and the imagination of a social group and, consequently, to establish regional patterns in a specific domain. This capacity is not permanent but limited to specific historical moments. Phantom borders and phantom spaces appear and disappear depending on the historical and geopolitical circumstances" (Hirschhausen et al. 2019, 386).[2] In its constant (often asymmetrical) exchange with the "West," East Central Europe is at the same time the object of universalising attributions, but also the subject that takes up these attributions, transforms them, and thus contributes to a more precise situating of the "West" that sees itself as producing universal categories. The history of East Central Europe, which is characterised by conflicts and dependencies, can be an excellent field of experimentation with the help of postcolonial studies, in which academia reflects on the always ambiguous character of knowledge production: new knowledge can criticise and reveal old dependency relationships, but, at the same time, it contributes to solidifying or creating new asymmetries of designation.

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Polish Stereotypes of the East: Old and New Mechanisms of Orientalisation in the Regional and Transnational Dimensions

Tomasz Zarycki

Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is to undertake a critical survey of imaginaries which can be collectively termed as Polish discourses of "the East." These include what I propose to call the "internal East" (located within the boundaries of present-day Poland and thus making up discourses of eastern Poland), and the "external East" (meaning that which is located outside the current borders of the Polish state). I would like to look at these discourses in connection with a broader perspective of Poland as an eastern country from the vantage point of the territories of the European core because there are reasons to venture a hypothesis that the way in which the East is imagined in Poland, both the eastern parts of the country and the territories located to the east of Poland, is to a large degree premised on the discursive framework generated in the European core and used to describe Poland itself as well as other states in this part

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of Europe as immanently "eastern" in the negative, Orientalising sense of the word (Zarycki 2004). In both cases, we deal with discourses whose foundations, as many observers point out, can be related to the paradigm of Orientalism as defined by Edward Said (1978). What is at stake, then, is the stereotype of the East as a territory and a social world fundamentally different from the West, a territory perennially backward both in economic and "civilisational" dimensions. Additionally, this territory is simultaneously dangerous and unpredictable, torn by irrational emotions manifested in religious or cultural tensions or in ethnic and national divisions. This affective charge is often seen as the most characteristic feature of the inhabitants of what Said delineates as the Orient (Said 1978, 300–301). This chapter, while it mostly builds on findings from the author's previous studies, in particular *Ideologies of Eastness* (Zarycki 2014), adds a new dimension to interpretations of the discourses under investigation. Namely, it points to the role of what can be called culturalism. Culturalism, and its close counterpart—psychologism, can be seen as permeating all the Polish discourses about the broadly understood East. This chapter proposes a definition of culturalism as a generator of Eastness and explains the primary mechanisms and goals it serves, including legitimisation of reproduction of social, economic, and political inequities.

As many experts in the field point out, Orientalism relating to the regions of East Central and Eastern Europe has more blurred contours than Orientalism relating to the Middle East, where the western images of that region are based on binary divisions. East Central Europe, as well as South Eastern Europe and the Balkan peninsula in particular, as Maria Todorova demonstrated in her *Imagining the Balkans* (Todorova 1997), are perceived not so much as a world totally different from the West, but, rather, as a space gradually growing in separateness, lesserness, and wildness. The blurred border between Western Europe and the other "Europes," especially East Central and South Eastern Europe, gives rise to many interesting phenomena which I have tracked in course of my research project.[1] Especially noteworthy is that the status and symbolic hierarchy of European space becomes covert due to the ambiguities of division dominating at present (Best 2007). Within the European

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[1] The research project on which this text is based has been conducted at the Institute of Social Studies of the University of Warsaw and was entitled "Critical analysis of the Polish discourses on 'the East'," financed by the National Science Center of Poland, NCN (Project no. 4264/B/H03/2009/37).

Union, discourses of spatial, political, and economic integration dominate, suggesting the disappearance of borders and spatial hierarchies. At the same time, valorisations of territories as "better" because they are more "western" and "worse" because they are more "eastern" are carried out on a range of more covert and naturalised levels (Böröcz 2006). Their distinctive feature is that of multi-tiered structure and fractality. What this means in practice is that there is a tendency to transfer one's "Eastness," felt as a stigma, onto variously defined, more eastern, neighbours. The tendency may take the form of an Orientalising chain in which it is often difficult to detect the beginning and the end (Bakić-Hayden 1995). The fractality of Orientalisation, in turn, is revealed in going down through the layers: from the continental level with its division into Western and Eastern Europe, through state and regional levels, down to the local level, where even parts of a city located on the other (eastern) bank of a river (Straughn 2005) can be stigmatised, like the Praga district in Warsaw.

Orientalism and the Dimensions of Dependency in the Eastern Peripheries of Europe

We can assume that a thus defined critical analysis of discourses of the East in Poland most probably indicates broader mechanisms of contemporary knowledge production about the social world. In particular, it may refer to links between various dimensions of domination and dependence, of which three basic ones are discerned from Stein Rokkan, in the analysis of centre-periphery relations: economic, political-state-legal, and cultural (Rokkan 1980). Depending on the context, each of these dimensions (in Bourdieu's language, "fields", Bourdieu 1986) has its own sphere of autonomy. We cannot, therefore, categorise domination in one dimension (e.g. political or economic) with domination in another (e.g. cultural). However, we can trace their interdependence. One of the hypotheses presented here is that a large part of the Orientalising images of the East in Polish discourses has a distinctive functionality stemming from political and economic dependency on higher-level centres (Böröcz 2006). That is, their stereotypes may be seen as playing a legitimising role from the point of view of what can be called the political economy of centre-periphery relations, both on a national and an international scale. This claim can be supported by an observation that a lot of these images contain a range of features which allow the regions or countries making up "the East" to be treated as "backward" due to a large degree at least,

to their own negligence or actions. The key mechanisms for ascribing responsibility to regions for their position in economic and political hierarchies include culturalist, psychological, and historical rhetoric (Zarycki 2010). It is worth pointing out that these rhetorical practices are also frequent in the public sphere, especially in the media, but also in the language of state institutions, especially in central and local government reports.

Culturalism, as understood here, attributes particular sets of cultural features, traditions and patterns of self-organisation to the inhabitants of eastern peripheral regions, which allegedly translates into the meagre economic efficiency of these regions. Culturalism is linked to psychologism, understood here as a way of perceiving characteristics of communities through a psychological or psychologising lens, in particular, in referring to them as "attitudes" (mostly negative, e.g. as a lack of trust in or "openness" to "innovations"), "mentality" (e.g. the postcommunist mentality, a well-known example of which is *homo sovieticus*), or psychological orientations (e.g. authoritarian or conservative), which are supposedly reproduced in the transfer of cultural traditions. In the case of peripheral regions, these psychological features attributed to regional communities have, more often than not, a negative import. Also, they are often connected with Orientalist patterns. These discourses are reinforced by historicism, which operates by representing these cultural and psychological features as reproducing themselves in *longue durée* processes (Domański 2004). These discourses often lead to explaining the relatively lower level of economic development in comparison with western states or central regions as caused by the endemic lack of skills or determination of the inhabitants of these regions to change their psychological disposition or culturally defined habits, which are represented as key obstacles to development. Such approaches assume that inverting negative economic tendencies would be a relatively simple process, requiring mainly some psychological and cultural changes, whose success would chiefly be warranted by the will of the local communities. The lack of such a will to change, and a willingness to "work through" one's cultural, psychological, or historical problems, to reverse cultural patterns that have been replicated for generations, is directly or indirectly represented as evidence of the responsibility of these regions for their dire material condition. In the case of regions that are of interest to us in this chapter, they are often ascribed some kind of an "eastern mentality" understood as, amongst others, an insufficient mastering of western

civilisational standards. In the case of Poland, it is often also accounted for as the communist legacy, although some interpretations reach back to the nineteenth century, when the country was partitioned between three European empires (Zarycki 2007).

As can be proven on the basis of many examples, these popular (in the disciplinary and statistical sense) interpretations are characterised by a range of specific features which can turn them into useful tools of domination for stronger (central) regions over those more peripheral ones. In particular, they deliver a vision of the world where economic and political inequalities turn out to be natural because they are culturally, psychologically, and historically justified, as well as being rooted in the alleged lack of determination of the population of these peripheral regions to change these historically entrenched attitudes, thus blocking the possibility of progress. An important feature of these interpretations is that they ignore broader, supra-national mechanisms of dependence between regions, countries, and other spatially defined subjects (Cumbers et al. 2003). These dependencies do not have to be understood solely as one-sided, because even very weak peripheries can affect the centre. It is, however, worth tracking these asymmetries, and this is something which is particularly rare in discourses on the eastern regions. The above-mentioned popular mainstream interpretations are also often devoid of an analysis of the relation between the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of dependency mentioned above. Likewise, they often tend to ignore the fact not only of the cultural traditions that reproduce themselves in the historical *longue durée*, but of the economic and political dependencies that are also subject to such reproductions. In fact, they rarely consider the possibility that these dimensions play a key role in supporting the processes of the historical *longue durée*.

The ambiguity of dependency can be convincingly illustrated using the example of the conditions for the functioning and reproduction of Orientalist stereotypes. In his classic work on the development of the negative image of Eastern Europe, *The Invention of Europe*, Larry Wolff (1994) postulates that it was created in the Enlightenment period and has been reproduced until now by the force of cultural inertia. The lasting circulation of some stereotypical elements of the image of Eastern Europe for the last 300 years indeed shows a range of observable trends. They include a vision of a savage peasant element, as well as a lack of self-discipline and self-organising skills in Eastern European communities. It is also worth noting that these stereotypes do not persist in unchangeable forms but

are subject to periodic reactivation or fading. These periods can be linked to changes in economic and political relations between particular regions and states. Atilla Melegh, in his fundamental work *On the East–West slope: Globalization, narration, racism, and discourses on Central and Eastern Europe* (Melegh 2006), elucidated how the stereotype of "backward" Eastern Europe would wax with the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to Melegh, 1968 was a crucial year in resuscitating this stereotype—this was when the Warsaw Pact military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 undermined the prestige of the Soviet Union in a critical and irreversible way. The image of the USSR as a modern state, albeit seeking progress via an alternative path of socialism, was gone beyond repair. In the circles of the Western European left, communism started to lose its aura of an attractive emancipatory ideology. The real symbolic crisis of Eastern and East Central Europe deepened in the 80s, additionally linked with the steadily worsening economic condition of the Eastern Bloc. The fall of communism took place already within the context of the dominating image of Eastern Europe as a backward, culturally inferior region, additionally destroyed by communism, which reinforced the negative demeanour allegedly endemic to the communities in this part of the continent for centuries. In this context, the only way to achieve effective modernisation and development seemed to be by adopting western cultural, organisational, and political models, as they appeared indisputably superior to communist or other, native, models. It is worth noting that a similar dynamic of images can be observed on the level of regional narratives. This concerns, most of all, eastern Poland, which from the last decades of the communist period till now has been more often than not represented as backward due to its cultural conditioning (Kukliński 2010; Gorzelak and Jałowiecki 2010; Zarycki 2010). Rural areas in other parts of Poland are likewise subject to this dynamic, especially in regions based predominantly on collective state farms whose employees, often jobless in the course of transition, were often stigmatised as being orientalised and unable to cope with change (Buchowski 2006).

Relying on the categories coined by Stein Rokkan (1980), we could venture a thesis that the region of eastern Poland (similarly to the whole country, but on a higher level) changed its status from interface periphery (the space of criss-crossing influences of two or more external centres) to the status of external periphery, which means, a marginalised one. Simultaneously, processes of economic integration with Europe and the

proximity to Germany were key factors stimulating growth in the western part of the country. The closing of the border required by the Schengen treaty and the cooling down of political relations with Poland's eastern neighbours had a palpably negative effect on eastern Poland, which became much less attractive for investors, and as a result its political role rapidly diminished (Zarycki 2011). We can therefore suspect that there is a correlation between economic and political depreciation of the region in the current geopolitical framework and the region's hegemonic images, which are seriously burdened with Orientalist stereotypes. We can also find solid premises for stating that Larry Wolff's thesis about the inert lasting of stereotypes engendered in the Enlightenment seems to be grounded in a serious simplification and can be challenged by instances when the negative image of Eastern Europe was fading in definite historical periods. These were mainly periods of the most dynamic development of the Russian Empire. For example, we can observe a significant decrease or even disappearance of Orientalising narrations on Russia in the period of the Russian campaign against Napoleon (Maxwell 2011), or in the last years before the 1917 revolution, when Russia experienced an unprecedented economic boom (Zarycki 2012). We could, thus, venture a more general hypothesis that the force of orientalising stereotypes of Eastern Europe as such, and, subsequently, its sub-regions and states, is regulated to a large degree by the relation of inverse proportions between the strength and condition of the state-economic systems in regions that would be able to challenge the force of domination of the western core of the continent and generate their own, competitive narrative aspiring to the universalist status. Thus, the stereotypes get stronger and more pervasive when the region does not fare well, and they decrease or fade when the region's condition improves.

Modern history notes at least three such periods. The first was the time of the peak power of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its gradual disintegration, which coincided with the onset of the Enlightenment and the blooming of its new visions of the world, brought about the emergence of the Orientalist discourses that Larry Wolff discusses. The second such period was the time of the Russian Empire with its periods of economic and cultural upturn, the first at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the other at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth century. The apogee of USSR power can be considered the third such period, when the Soviet Union was one of the two poles of world order, and communism seemed to be an alternative ideological option to

capitalism. Its slow demise, which started in the 1970s and ended in the 1990s, resulted in a major symbolic crisis for the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe. One of the initial manifestations of this crisis was the attempt to bring back to life the project of "Central Europe" by intellectuals who entered the path of opposition against communist regimes in the 80s. The most famous of these counter-communist images was authored by Milan Kundera in his essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe" (Kundera 1984), where he develops a narrative of Central Europe being kidnapped by the Soviet Union.

There is a lack of strong competitive centres of growth that could be compared to those I have enumerated above. In particular, Russia remains a relatively weak state in comparison to the biggest world powers, both in an economic and a cultural dimension. Consequently, in identity discourses in the whole region broadly understood as East Central Europe, we can observe a tendency to disavow the variously understood term "Eastness." Especially unpopular are any references to the past, both in the media as well as in academic discourses, which would represent relations with Russia. This trend is particularly visible in the area of Eastern Poland that was under the Russian administration until 1918. It is this period of the Russian partition that is blamed for being a key factor in determining both the economic problems of eastern Poland that have endured until now, as well as causing its social and cultural problems. The influences of the Prussian or Austrian (Habsburg) partitions are mostly assessed as having been much less harmful than the Russian rule, and sometimes as even having some positive aspects (Zarycki 2007). The memory of the positive aspects of economic growth in that part of Poland which was under the Russian administration until 1918 is usually marginalised. The dominant negative image of the Russian "legacy" understood as a factor allegedly determining contemporary economic processes can be, it would seem, linked to the already mentioned low status of Russia in contemporary economic, political, and symbolic hierarchies, and, especially, the negative image of Russia in Polish identity discourses. By comparison, the image of contemporary Germany and Austria is, on the contrary, positive. The two countries are amongst the dominating players in Western Europe, whose economic, political, and cultural position is very high at present. German and Austrian companies control a considerable portion of former communist states' economies (Drahokoupil 2009), which visibly influences the directions in which cultural and intellectual innovations are diffused, as well as interpretations

of patterns of social organisation which are usually based on assumptions that the cultures of less developed regions and countries are likewise backward. Altogether, they seem to positively affect the evaluation of the past of the regions which had been under the control of Germany and Austria. The historical memory of nineteenth century heritage, in effect, creates useful cultural capital, allowing for a symbolic advancement and legitimation of relative bonuses stemming from the geopolitical and economic situation that benefited some regions in particular (Zarycki 2014).

Postcolonial Approaches to Polish Discourses of the East and Borderlands Ideologies[2]

The unequal value of historical narratives oriented towards relations with eastern and western neighbours is also visible in the ways in which various actors in our part of Europe employ postcolonial theory. We can trace interesting patterns here. Two main ways of applying postcolonial theory dominate in Polish discourses, and they function in connection with the structure of the Polish political scene. On the one hand, we can discern interpretations which depart from a stance that Poland should be considered a postcolonial country due to the historical fact of the Russian domination, and Soviet domination in particular. On the other hand, we can discern interpretations whose pivotal point is the experience of Polish domination in the eastern territories during the First Commonwealth and the interwar period. There are authors who combine both these approaches, like, for example, the pioneer in this field, Clare Cavanagh, author of "Postcolonial Poland" (Cavanagh 2004), which launched the postcolonial discussion in Poland. Most of such postcolonial references are located within either of these two paradigms. The first one is well represented by Ewa Thompson and her already classic *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Thompson 2000), focusing on Russian imperialism along the lines of Saidian Orientalism, while the other paradigm can be exemplified by Jan Sowa and his *Fantomowe ciało króla* [The King's Phantom Body] (Sowa 2011), examining the long-term effects of Poland's imperial presence in the east. These two trends

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[2] "Borderlands" with a capital B refers to "kresy"—the eastern territories in Poland which, after the World War II border shifts, became part of the USSR. In contrast, "borderlands" refers to contemporary discourses of border zones in Poland.

in postcolonial applications have developed a network of complex assumptions and implications. They are linked, though, in that they both either minimise or totally ignore the possibility of recognising Western European subjects as agents in what can be seen as the colonial dependency of Poland.[3] This means that even if they critically assess the dependence of the region from the West, they usually put the blame on their compatriots, invariably finding fault in representatives of the opposite political or ideological option. Within this pattern, then, the conservatives charge the liberals with a passive or even cynical surrendering to western fads and norms, with the effect of deepening their countries' dependency on the West. Such "surrendering" could be called, after Alexander Kiossev (1999), self-colonisation, or, after Ewa Thompson (2007), it can be seen as a wilful adoption of dependency from the West, which has the role of "surrogate hegemon" (whose operation is, first of all, ambiguous). On the opposite pole, the representatives of liberal and left-wing circles put the blame for the dependency of their countries on the western core on native conservatives who, with their provincial traditionalism, block economic and social progress. It is worth noticing that neither of these polarised stances considers the possibility of an interpretation that would indicate and argue, based on the world-systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974–1989), that we are dealing rather with an objectively existing and deeply embedded structural dependency, and changing it, either through liberal or through conservative, or by any other very radical politics, would still not yield results in the short term. We can only suspect that one of the reasons why research in Poland does not seem to endorse an approach inspired by the world-systems theory is that it would likely undermine the "European" identity of Poland itself, suggesting at the same time its peripherality. Such assumptions are unacceptable in the current social and political context, and underlining the innate Europeanness of Poland seems to be the priority of all identity discourses, regardless of their political orientation. The push towards European integration and defence against threats from the East, which are commonly considered the most realistic today, makes it difficult to investigate and

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[3] One can note that besides these two dominant trends in the application of postcolonial theory, one can point to a number of studies focusing on Western, and in particular German, colonialism in Poland (e.g. Surynt 2007 or Orłowski 1996). These works, however, do not shape the mainstream debate in Poland, just as those published abroad with similar applications of postcolonial theory do not.

discuss the mechanisms and genealogies of Poland's dependence on the western core of the continent. In contrast, these dependencies are willingly researched in western academia (e.g. Böröcz and Sarkar 2005; Böröcz 2012; Drahokoupil 2009; Kuus 2004).

The two polarised paradigms of deploying postcolonial theory also determine the two decidedly opposite discourses of the "Polish East." In the conservative paradigm, which sees Russia and the Soviet Union as the main coloniser, the eastern territories, especially those that were within the boundaries of the Polish state prior to the World War II, are treated as lands annexed by the USSR and subjected to effective colonisation. They are mostly referred to as *Kresy* (the Borderlands), although the borders delineating these territories are variously defined. Within this framework, Poland in its entirety is often regarded as a postcolonial country, whose numerous weaknesses today should be interpreted as lingering consequences of Russian and Soviet colonisation (e.g. Krasnodębski 2006; Skórczewski 2007; Thompson 2007). Polish identity can from this perspective appear to derive from the visions of Poland as the "borderland of Europe." Within the broad spectrum of visions under the conservative umbrella, the common set of features uniting them includes: the insistence on Europeanness premised in the conservative paradigm of Christian values, on defence against an external other, often defined as non-Christian and specifically as non-Catholic or Protestant, on heroism, sacrifice for the larger community and so on. The period of communism, defined as the embodiment of evil and eastern barbarity, is treated within this paradigm as an experience of a particular kind—destructive in the material and human sense, but morally strengthening both the Borderlands (that is mostly contemporary eastern Poland, but also Poles who remained beyond the eastern border) as a region and Poland as the borderland of Europe. Ultimately, then, resistance to it was rewarded with success. At the same time, this paradigm fosters a specific borderland vision of countries neighbouring Poland and Poland itself, made unique by its wild nature, exotic culture, and deep spirituality boosted, by the beauty of its women and its famous hospitality, unknown in the West.

In the opposite paradigm, which we can provisionally label liberal, the same region appears to be the victim of Polish colonising domination, specifically wielded by the First Commonwealth, then the Second Commonwealth (the pre-war period) and sustained by the Polish landowners in the region. In this perspective, Poland functions as an

agent, or subcontractor, of European colonialism. The Polish presence in the East is represented as the period of economic oppression (primarily of the non-Polish peasants by the Polish nobility), political oppression (no rights for those who did not belong to the nobility), cultural oppression in the form of Polonisation, and religious oppression (the domination of Catholicism) (e.g. Beauvois 2006; Ritz 2008; Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012; Sowa 2011; Szulecki 2010). Adherents to the liberal paradigm tend to be sceptical about using the term *Kresy* (Borderlands) in the first place. They argue that the term itself functions as a tool of "symbolic appropriation" of these territories, since it is inherently Polish, Polonocentric and rejected by most contemporary representatives of the territories in question.

When analysed in contrast, these two paradigms yield an interesting set of conclusions as well as interpretative and practical recommendations. The desired form of decolonisation according to the conservative paradigm will first and foremost mean an effort to restore the memory of the Polish presence to these territories in Poland, or, at least, to valorise the memory of the First Commonwealth, the statehood of which these territories made up such a crucial part and that in today's conservative discourses is so intensively idealised.[4] Depending on the political affinity and world-views of particular authors, such a restoration of Polishness may take on various forms, from purely intellectual work mostly in Poland to more palpable actions, including support for the Polish minority in these territories. It can be both Polonocentric or oriented towards recreating the supra-national civic political culture of the Commonwealth of Both Nations (1569–1795).[5] In the liberal paradigm, decolonisation will take the opposite direction—to delimit the role or relativise Polish influences in these territories. It can also take various forms, from an

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[4] One should remember here that references to the Borderlands (*Kresy*) in the public sphere were forbidden in the communist period. Poles expelled from these territories not only lost all their property but were usually not allowed to visit this part of the Soviet Union until the last years of its existence. At the same time, the official historiography, in particular school textbooks, presented a very critical vision of the Polish statehood in that region and of the Polish nobility's social status in general.

[5] Formally the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, after 1791 the Commonwealth of Poland, was a dualistic state, a bi-confederation of Poland and Lithuania ruled by a common monarch, who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania.

ideological critique of "Borderlands (*Kresy*) discourses" to more practical action, including support for non-Polish, primarily native national cultures of the contemporary states in the region, or openness towards interpretations which put the Polish presence there in the past in a critical perspective, also from a non-Polish vantage point. The common feature of both approaches will be an unwillingness to include Russian voices into the narratives on these territories. As we may expect, for the conservative voices, Russia will more often than not play the role of the negative significant Other, whose influence and the trace thereof should be eliminated, while in liberal discourses it will be most often, although not always, simply ignored. The latter, in turn, will privilege the voices of the representatives of "titular" states neighbouring Poland, as well as former or contemporary minorities, like Jewish, Roma, or Armenian people.

It is worth noting that even though the conservative paradigm represents, according to the liberal paradigm, national ideology in its imperial mantle, in its own understanding it is rather an attempt to establish a certain model of inclusive universalism. Within this paradigm, the Borderlands (*Kresy*) are usually defined as a period of thriving, multicultural, open, and tolerant European communities (Hadaczek 2011). Liberal critique challenges these visions of the past as Polish myths. One of the most fervent critics of this alleged mythology is the French historian Daniel Beauvois (Beauvois 1994, 2003) who argues that the actual historical record of Polish rule over the region in the seventeenth or eighteenth century is burdened with so many injustices that it does not allow consideration of the heritage of the Borderlands (*Kresy*) as a positive point of reference. The struggle against these myths is becoming a crucial element of de-imperialisation of Polish national identity within the liberal paradigm. In this approach, emancipation of the East would probably mean, first and foremost, freeing it from influences and discursive appropriations by Poland and Russia and handing it to the liberal and pro-European elites of the respective national states in this region. Therefore, we can speak here about two competing universalisms in relation to the Polish propositions regarding the "East." Conservative universalism is founded on the myth of the First Commonwealth as a multicultural space of tolerance, freedom, especially religious freedom, mutual inspiration, and cooperation. Liberal universalism, as can been inferred from its representative texts, is founded on the contemporary European myth, embodied by the European Union. The horizon of emancipation for the eastern part of Europe is delineated in this universalism by the hope of full

integration with the EU, preceded by initial forms of cooperation such as, for example, the Eastern Partnership.[6]

The conservative discourses of the East, especially the Borderlands (*Kresy*) paradigm, have been subject to systematic critique (e.g. Kasperski 2007; Trybuś et al. 2007). Pioneering research in this respect was done by Bogusław Bakuła, who opened up the field in his broadly cited "Colonial and Postcolonial Aspects of Polish Discourse on Eastern 'Borderlands'" (Bakuła 2007). He premised his study on the claim that the Borderlands vision promoted by the conservative paradigm is Polonocentric, Orientalist, assuming the inferiority of eastern nations and their peasant identity likewise conditioning their lesser status. This critique is complemented by Robert Traba's research on other borderland ideologies compared with German ideologies of Eastness (Kleßmann and Traba 2012). The critical approach to the Borderlands (*Kresy*) discourses could also be read alongside, amongst others, Russian ideologies of Siberia and the frontier discourses of the American West. In sum, contemporary Borderlands discourses have a range of social roles, and their historical genesis is often very complex. Besides polemical works it seems, then, it would be valuable to develop an analytical outlook on the Borderlands discourse, tracing its roots and variants in the interwar period and their contemporary reinforcement due to the decades-long censorship ban on these topics, lifted only after 1989. It is important to remember that it resulted in an explosion of Borderlands narratives, leading to the emergence of many Borderlands organisations and an array of writings in many genres and fields of study. All of these, across their ideological spectrum, can be considered as an attempt to fill in the vacuum created by the practical ban on memory about this region in the public discourse (Fuszara 2012).

POLISH DISCOURSES OF THE EAST AND THE BELARUSSIAN, LITHUANIAN, AND UKRAINIAN IDENTITY DISPUTES

Polish discourses of the East can be collated with responses to them from the neighbouring countries and their respective identity discourses.

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[6] The Eastern Partnership is a European Union initiative governing its relationship with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, intended to provide an avenue for discussions on trade, economic strategy, travel agreements, and other issues between the EU and its Eastern European neighbours.

It warrants a broader contextualisation, allowing, in turn, an opportunity to observe the dynamics of political alliances built up around identity issues. In the countries in question, the differentiation of identity discourses is determined to a large degree by the logic of dominant political divisions. The political scenes of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine are divided according to three basic ideological orientations. The first is a national orientation, morphing into a nationalist one. The second is the pro-European liberal option. The third is a pro-Russian orientation directly referring to the Soviet legacy. The first two orientations take Russia as their main negative reference point, seen as the cause of all the evil that befell their countries. For the national/nationalist orientation, the negative Other is also, to a lesser or greater degree, Poland, and specifically its historical embodiments: the First and Second Commonwealths. The negative attitude towards Poland is also shared by the pro-Russian (or neo-Soviet) camp. For both these orientations, the historical visions of Poland produced by the Soviet Union for propaganda purposes still pertain. As researchers of school history course books point out, mainstream school programmes and historiographies, especially in Ukraine and Belarus, are based to a large degree on assumptions developed in the Soviet period (e.g. Gorbaczewa 2007; Jakowenko 2010; Nikžentaitis 2007). Here Poland plays the role of significant Other to its eastern neighbours, as a country that is not only alien but also hostile, persecuting the neighbouring eastern nations, suppressing their liberation struggles and, last but not least, regarding these nations with outright contempt. Even though Lithuania singlehandedly rejected traditional Soviet historiographies, all officially state-supported historical narratives likewise represent Poland as a historical aggressor and oppressor (Safronovas 2009). In all these ideologies, Polishness is defined, both in a cultural sense and as political traditions, as an antithesis of their own national traditions. What follows then is a resolute rejection of the legacy of the First Commonwealth, either as a whole, or as a tradition that Lithuania shared with Poland.[7] As a result, a vision of the Borderlands as a multicultural space of tolerance and liberty is usually rejected as Polish

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[7] The First Commonwealth usually refers in the context of history of Poland to the Commonwealth of Both Nations [1569–1795] as defined in footnote 3. The interwar period Republic of Poland (1918–1939) is known as the Second Commonwealth (*Druga Rzeczpospolita*), while contemporary, post-1989 Poland is often called the Third Commonwealth.

post-imperial discourse, or, even, neo-imperial, in cases where Poland is accused of laying claim to territories it lost to its eastern neighbours, as is sometimes represented in the official Belarussian media (Winnicki 2003). It is worth stressing, however, that in the case of Belarus, we are dealing with the dominant role of the pro-Russian and neo-Soviet orientation, espoused in the official state ideology. Consequently, the marginalised liberal and national options, even if maintaining separate programmes, together create a common oppositional camp, which makes it difficult to clearly differentiate between the liberal and national/nationalist orientations. It is, however, possible in Lithuania and Ukraine, where the separate agendas of these orientations are clearly visible. In Lithuania, the pro-Russian and neo-Soviet option is relatively marginalised. The communist party, like in Poland, transformed itself into social democracy and aligned itself with a liberal orientation. In Ukraine, all three orientations are very distinct. What is interesting is that direct references to postcolonial theory in the countries in question relate almost exclusively to visions in which the Soviet Union and Russia appear to be the main colonisers. A range of works resting on this premise have appeared in Lithuania and Ukraine (Kelertas 2006).[8] In Belarus, Ihar Babkau made ample reference to postcolonial theory (Babkov 2010). Interestingly, Poland appears extremely rarely in the history of these countries and their postcolonial interpretations. Most often, its role in these postcolonial approaches is minimised or entirely omitted. It could be linked with a broader strategy of removing Polishness from the historical legacy of these countries and substituting it with often more abstract references to general Western European influences. In the case of western Ukrainian narratives, these often take the form of privileging the Austrian influences and marginalising the Polish ones (Hrycak 2009). The keenest interest in Polishness can be observed in pro-western liberal discourses, but even here, Poland is also often marginalised or omitted. The western liberal identity in countries located between Poland and Russia has developed on the basis of references to the European classics and direct western influences, whether Austrian, German, French, or English. The role of Russian and Soviet influences is likewise often marginalised in most liberal discourses, or represented as an unambiguously negative factor. The Soviet legacy, in turn, is valued in the discourses with a pro-Russian orientation, which is

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[8] In Ukraine, Mykola Riabchuk is a leading voice in postcolonial interpretations (Riabchuk 2002, Riabczuk 2015).

especially powerful in Belarus and Ukraine. In these trends, as we can expect, references to postcolonial theory occur only rarely. If they do occur, they do so in line with Russian models, in which Russia is a country colonised by the liberal West.

New Identities in Eastern Poland and Orientalism

In the context of the previously described strong Orientalizing pressure, identity discourses in eastern Poland provide an interesting field for observing the mechanisms of how it functions. The "Eastness" of eastern Poland is of course relative, constructed to a large degree by the border established in 1945. Making it in 2004 the eastern border of the European Union, additionally fortified by the insulating effect of the Schengen Agreement, can be perceived as a strengthening of the "eastern" status of the region in the infrastructural, geopolitical, and symbolic dimensions. eastern Poland has indeed become the borderland of the European Union, facing the challenge of building up a new identity narrative. The coterminous processes of decentralisation and the increasing importance of so-called new regionalism (Scott 2009) place additional pressure on the region and its identity reformulations.

In this context, it is interesting to look at how the regional authorities and the intellectual circles they rely on cope with these pressures. In general, three types of strategies can be discerned here. First, the rejection of Eastness, the stress on belonging to the region of central Poland, underscoring the historically relatively fresh character of "Eastness." This strategy can be observed in Lublin, a city where not all intellectual circles accept adopting the eastern identity, an idea which, by the way, has only recently developed as an official city image project. Another strategy comprises the tactics of ignoring the problem of Eastness. Rzeszów is one of the most pronounced examples here. The city has adopted a self-promotion strategy that does not make any links to its location in south-eastern Poland. Instead, the strategy focuses almost exclusively on issues of development and economy. Proclaiming itself to be the Polish capital of innovation, Rzeszów has focused on the aircraft industry and the research sector. In the officially promoted history of the region, the economic past, especially the history of the Central Industrial District (Centralny Okręg Przemysłowy—COP)—the project of statist industrialisation of the interwar period—is preferred over the cultural and political past, including multicultural matters. The third and the most important

strategy from the vantage point of this chapter's focus is the one that redefines Eastness. It has many forms, but they can be narrowed down to accepting or conditionally adopting a relatively eastern identity or some of its aspects, while simultaneously reworking it through a range of definitions which effectively relativise Eastness and further transfer it onto the eastern partners.

The basic strategies of redefining eastern regional identities in Poland can be connected with the two previously mentioned ideologically marked intellectual orientations: conservative and liberal. Despite frequent critical assessments of the conservative narrations which target the Borderlands discourse, it remains attractive in many of its aspects and uses. Its force seems to lie in the rooting of it in mainstream Polish historical narrations. They translate into the dominant ways of perceiving the East and the ways in which Polish history is represented to western audiences. The traditional Borderlands (*Kresy*) discourse is also attractive because it defines the essence of the region basically as Westness, paid for by the sacrifices it needed to make in order to belong to "the West." In this context, firstly, the war atrocities and sufferings which Poland, and especially its eastern territories, occupied both by the Nazis and Soviets, witnessed are referred to. The Polish past of Vilnius and Lviv still provides a significant symbolic capital that remains socially effective. Wrocław, a city in the south-west of Poland, located in an area termed the "Regained Territories" after the World War II, has quite successfully built its image on the role of the "heir to the traditions of the Polish Lwów [L'viv]" (Makaro 2015). The popularity of Borderland (*Kresy*) discourses in branding and promotional projects in e.g. tourism is evidence for their tangible vitality. In the sphere of identity narratives, the Borderland discourses were most markedly present, amongst cities I have investigated, in Białystok in north-east Poland. The city is host to one of the very active Borderland (*Kresy*) societies—the Society of Friends of Grodno and Wilno. The idea to take on some of the symbolic functions of the formerly Polish Wilno [Vilnius] is also fairly popular there. The cultural and religious diversity of Białystok, whose palpable presence in the public space is barely noticeable, apart from a range of Orthodox churches enriching the cityscape (ca. 1/3 of its inhabitants are Orthodox), is sometimes represented as exactly a substitution for the former, proper Borderlands (*Kresy*). However, the idea of Białystok as the Borderlands (*Kresy*) city is supported by a minority and meets with fervent critique. First, activists from the Belarusian and Orthodox communities protest against it, since

they share a critical stance towards the Borderlands narratives as Polono-centric and, even, neo-colonial in their appropriative attitude towards Eastness. But most of all, it is the liberal camp that stands in opposition to the conservative narratives defining the Eastness of Białystok in terms of the Borderlands (*Kresy*) legacy. In liberal discourses, by contrast, Eastness is redefined from a Eurocentric perspective.

So-called borderlands discourse (note the non-capitalised lettering), and especially the new borderlands discourse, has been the foundation for redefining Eastness within the liberal paradigm. We can mention, after Grzegorz Babiński, ideologies of the borderland (Babiński 1997). Eastern Borderlands discourse, as Babiński pointed out, would here mean their old, classical form, which openly valorised the western side of the borderlands as superior civilisationally and politically, and the eastern side as inferior to the degree it posed a threat to the western essence of Polishness. We can see here that classical Borderlands (*Kresy*) discourse rested significantly on the *antemurale* image of Poland as a bulwark for the whole of Western Europe. As already mentioned, the victimhood threads underlying the suffering inflicted by the Russian and Soviet hands played an important part in this discourse. The new liberal borderlands discourse, whose most renowned theoretician and practitioner is Krzysztof Czyżewski, the president of the Borderland of Arts, Cultures, Nations Centre and the Borderland Foundation in Sejny (Zaborowska 2009), stands in stark opposition to the former Borderland discourse championed today in the conservative paradigm. Czyżewski rejects Orientalism operating in the conservative Borderlands (*Kresy*) format and proposes various hybrid forms of cultural valorisation of Eastness which can become, in his understanding, a conscious intellectual choice (Czyżewski 2001). This borderland philosophy is premised on an assumption that it is possible, indeed, necessary, to be free to choose one's identity, and that identity play is available to anyone. The models of Eastness as a chosen and playful identity are developed in the writings of renowned liberal writers such as Andrzej Stasiuk, Yurii Andrukhovych, or Ziemowit Szczerek (Kołodziejczyk 2010, 2011). These writers have created a unique, mystical cultural image of the contemporary Eastness of the region as a destroyed, brought back to life eastern space of multicultural coexistence, which has gained recognition in the circles of the liberal intelligentsia. For some of its proponents and enthusiasts, the significance of that model lies in its power to limit the region's dependency thanks to its subversive, ironical force (which includes playful self-Orientalisations,

mocking the western gaze) (Kołodziejczyk 2010) which can at least partly counterbalance the symbolic hegemony of Western Europe.

The new borderland ideology is grounded in a vision of a borderless world as an imaginary ideal, or, at least, the porousness of borders and the free choice in constructing and performing identities by borderland communities. It can also be seen to be inspired by a vision of the world where actual existing borders should accumulate symbolic energies rather than deepen political divisions. What is essential here is the premise of the equivalence of all sides of the borderland regions and all groups making up borderland communities. We can also spot the postulate in this programme that it is necessary to instil an open identity in the borderland inhabitants, allowing them to know the other groups in the region and thus enabling them to make cross-cultural contacts. However, the new Borderlands discourse often demonstrates its normative aspects and thus it can appear to be a ready-made ideology, generating models for quick implementation and internalisation by the borderland inhabitants (Zarycki 2014). In sum, the new borderlands discourses set up a task for the borderland regions, especially for rebuilding their identity, encouraging the locals to adopt an attitude of openness and tolerance and to fully take advantage of the contact zone of cultures in place. In this framework, multiculturalism in these regions remains a hidden potential still to be opened up and mobilised for productive use. An apt reconstruction of borderland awareness will, in this programme, allow the region to use the diversity of cultures and perspectives it is founded on and to mobilise the innovation skills it has developed in its rich history of border crossing.

It is worth noticing that a lot of the new borderlands discourse is strongly normative and idealistic at the same time. This feature is likely to make it difficult to differentiate between attempts to create empirical diagnoses of the existing social relations and visions of their desired forms. Adopting the normative paradigm of the new Borderlands discourse in academic research may also make it difficult to analyse the existing relations of dependence and power in the region and outside. A region treated as a new, open borderland becomes in fact a virtually free subject and its fate depends on its ability to adopt open attitudes and take advantage of its own multiculturalism. It is linked with connections the new borderlands paradigm has with western intellectual trends, of which new regionalism is one of the key projects (Keating 1998). In this way, the new Borderlands discourse seems to be driven by the control mechanism which Michel Foucault named "governmentality" (Foucault 1980),

especially in the way it assigns the region full responsibility for its own fate. This assignment, which can be considered in the framework of self-disciplining discourse, suggests the key role of cultural and psychological factors in the social and economic mobilisation, with the simultaneous minimising of external factors and limitations.

The key limitations often overlooked in the new borderlands discourses are the still existing borders, in particular those which are politically controlled and partly closed, such as the eastern border of Poland, as well as legal and economic borders which grant the regions in Europe access to various forms of public support and capital market resources in a very uneven way. For example, eastern Poland gets considerable support from the EU structural funds, but their scale is much smaller than the support that regions in eastern Germany are getting from public (mainly state) funds. Economic dependence of Poland on the western core, first of all on its capital flows, both in the form of subsidies and direct investment, reproduce basic structural asymmetries between the European core and its eastern peripheries (Drahokoupil 2009). Thus, while Poland has recorded impressive GDP growth rates in the past two decades, its accumulation of capital is very disappointing, which means that in the case of a larger global economic crisis its economy will be in a much more fragile position than the economies of the global core (Podkaminer 2015).[9] Moreover, cheap labour remains Poland's key competitive advantage, which may also explain why the level of convergence between Poland and the western core, as well as between Poland's wealthiest and poorest regions, is low (Gorzelak 2017). We could, therefore, interpret the new borderlands discourse as symbolic compensation, offered usually to peripheral regions by liberal intellectuals inspired by Western intellectual concepts, especially to those to which the status and role of borderlands can be ascribed. Such an interpretation does not assume any intentional plan on the part of the intellectual actors, who, as is usual in the cultural sphere, define their aims mostly in the autonomous realm of an artistic domain. However, even the most disinterested cultural activities may be seen as indirect legitimisations of the wider power relations in which they are embedded. From such a perspective, the interest in the new borderlands discourse

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[9] As the Deloitte consulting company has calculated, the average total capital stock per capita of Poles in 2012 was 10 times lower than that of the Greeks and 30 times lower than that of the Germans. These estimates include the value of both financial and material resources, taking into account both private and public foreign debts (Deloitte 2015).

amongst the elites in the centre can be perceived as an indirect offer of cultural compensation from the western core. It can be interpreted as a symbolic recognition of the unique and slightly exotic "modernity" of the peripheral regions of East Central Europe. In exchange, an implicit expectation from peripheries can be seen, especially not to contest the region's dependency on the centre in its economic and cultural dimensions. Simultaneously, as many researchers investigating internal social processes in regions characterised by real cultural, ethnic, or religious diversity, point out adopting some formal politics of multiculturalism most often does not help to any significant degree overcome, or even diagnose, for that matter, the existing tensions, inequalities, and prejudice (Czykwin 2010; Sadowski 2009).

THE CITIES OF BIAŁYSTOK AND LUBLIN AND THEIR "EASTERN" IDENTITY

The discourse of new, open borderlands has become part of a common practice of promoting cities and regions within the politics of "place branding." (Kavaratzis 2005). In the case of Białystok, the marketing slogan adopted by the city aptly illustrates the trend: "The Rising Białystok" ("Wschodzący Białystok"), aiming to reverse negative stereotypes of the East and promote the city as a multicultural centre on the rise on the "eastern wall" of the country, as eastern Poland has often been called in the past. The city of Lublin is likewise promoted with a strong reference to its multiculturalism which, however, for historical reasons, can be realised as a project of bringing back the memory of the multicultural past rather than the existing image of social reality. Both Białystok's and Lublin's brand of the new generation border zone is designed to play the role of a mediator in contacting the East. Lublin's marketing slogan is quite literal here: "Lublin – the Gate to the East" or "Lublin – the Gate Between East and West."[10] It is worth noticing that in both these cases we can spot a clear asymmetry. The Polish side of the borderland, at the same time the one creating the borderlands discourse, defines itself as the representative of the West. The role of the West is to provide the East with tangible competences, financial means, and innovative ideas.

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[10] https://lublin.eu/en/lublin/news/the-night-of-culture-lublin-gate-of-the-east,147,1261,1.html.

The East, in turn, represented by Ukraine and Belarus, is to a large degree an enchanted land, offering in exchange for the western gifts its spiritual traditions and cultural inspirations. This tendency to reproduce Orientalist stereotypes disguised as promotional slogans communicating progress, modernity, and multiculturalism inscribes itself in a broader tendency to self-Orientalisation in branding discourses observable in other postcommunist countries (Kaneva 2012).

Identity Dilemmas of the Eastern Borderlands

We could, then, pose a thesis that the new discourse of the open borderland is not free from some forms of Orientalisation, even though formally it tried to be just the opposite. However, this discourse preserves the fundamental difference between East and West, despite the declarative recognition of all identities as equal. Also, the new borderlands discourse tends to make an essential, if inadvertent, difference between the inhabitants already oriented towards the "borderlands" and those who still remain trapped in "border" thinking, meaning those who have not yet developed an awareness of the potential of the borderland's multicultural substance, do not have any knowledge of the reality on the other side of the border, and can even be afraid of representatives of other cultures (Kurczewska 2005). Within this framework, adherents of the Eastern Borderlands discourse also represent the "border thinking" model. They all are expected to accomplish the task of mentally opening themselves up to the borderland and multiculturalism, which, in turn, will be automatically identified with the broad current of European diversity, brave and unprejudiced crossing of physical and symbolic borders and the taking on of "innovative" attitudes. The differentiation between "border-oriented" and "borderland-oriented" local inhabitants also has a temporal aspect. The former are oriented towards the past and present, or, in fact, dwell in those permanently; the latter are already in the future, they are transgressing the limiting frames of the old space divided by borders and becoming true Europeans. The division into East and West is, as we can expect, likewise based on the analogical temporal difference. Theoretically they are equal, but the West is implied to have moved on to the future, while the East remains locked in the past, whose sense is duly bipolar: the negative past is that with which the East still has to grapple, like the legacy of communism, and the positive one, like the eastern Orthodox spirituality which it can share with the West.

We can, therefore, observe that two dimensions of soft Orientalism are hidden in the new borderlands discourse. The first can be categorised as internal—it divides the borderland inhabitants into those who are still oriented towards the border and, thus, living in the past and those who are oriented towards the borderland and thus looking towards the future. The second, external dimension defines the cooperation between the West and East as an exchange of knowledge and financial capital resources from the former for cultural resources from the latter. As we can expect, this unidirectional trend provokes a range of comments and interpretations inspired by postcolonial studies.

The conclusion we can draw from these observations is that it is not possible to entirely avoid Orientalist valorisations in the description of central and eastern parts of Europe. Hierarchisation, establishing the West as superior over the East, is so strong and so pervasively saturates all public and academic discourses that it is not possible to circumvent it. Formal declarations about the equal status and treatment of all parts of the continent cannot change the fact that it is the states defined as western which have the power to generate discourses, effectively assuming the position of universality and being commonly perceived as the desired framework for the emancipation from national, cultural, or economic domination. In other words, we can surmise that in East Central and Eastern Europe, a full escape from Orientalisation and creating a language entirely free from it is not possible today. What is, instead, possible is making attempts to fathom structures of social fields which create this Orientalist mindset to a lesser or greater degree. The research outlined in this chapter is one of the possible examples of this effort.

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Appraising the Empire from European Peripheries

Colonial Ambivalence and Its Aftermath: Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism in Independent Poland and Ireland

Róisín Healy

In a memoir published in 1925, an Irishman recalled an encounter with a Polish priest while travelling across Poland nearly three decades before, in 1896. The priest, upon discovering that his companion was a foreigner and a Catholic, complained at length about the ill treatment of the Poles by the Russians—the restrictions placed on the Polish language, on the Catholic faith, and the plight of so many Polish exiles in Siberia. The priest concluded the conversation, however, by admitting that "one cannot but be proud to belong to such a great and mighty Empire" (O'Dwyer 1925, 86). His companion, Michael O'Dwyer, was much amused by the combination of indignation at the Russians' subjugation of the Poles and pride in the Russian empire. As an Irishman, he was also subject to foreign rule at home and part of another "great and mighty Empire," but, unlike the priest, appeared to regard all complaints about his empire with contempt. He dismissed both Irish and Indian grievances as "sentimental or fictitious", respectively (O'Dwyer 1925, 86). As the former lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, O'Dwyer had defended one of the

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most notorious British atrocities, the Amritsar Massacre of 1919. Yet, as Séamus Nevin has recently pointed out, O'Dwyer's own views were not, in fact, so clear-cut. Shortly before the massacre, O'Dwyer had expressed support for home rule, calling it "a lofty and generous ideal" that befitted Ireland's experience of self-government, although not India's less advanced stage of civilisation (Nevin 2021). Like the Polish priest, O'Dwyer combined enthusiasm for empire with a conviction that his own people should be spared its excesses. Such views point to a complex and even contradictory relationship towards empire among subject peoples across Europe.

This chapter uses a comparison between Ireland and Poland in order to situate the East Central European experience of colonialism within a broader European framework. It draws upon a scepticism regarding the customary division of Europe into distinct historical regions, whether simply east and west or a tripartite division into Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. Despite its position on the western periphery of Europe, Ireland demonstrated many features that are often associated with East Central and Eastern Europe in the long nineteenth century. First, it exhibited a high degree of linguistic and religious diversity. Ireland had a sizeable portion of speakers of Gaelic, a Celtic language distinct from English, well into the nineteenth century. Linguistic boundaries were fluid and bilingualism common, although the trend was clearly towards English mono-glottism.[1] While three quarters of the population was Roman Catholic, the rest was composed of several different Protestant denominations, principally Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists, along with just 5,000 Jews, mostly refugees from the pogroms of late nineteenth-century Imperial Russia.[2] Second, Ireland occupied a peripheral position in the world economy. Apart from a small highly industrialised area in the northeast, the country remained largely agricultural and exported much of its produce to the industrial heartland of Britain. The economic elite of Ireland, much like in Lithuania and Ukraine, belonged to an

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[1] Estimates vary widely, but it is likely that around 40% of Ireland's inhabitants spoke Gaelic as their first language up until the famine of the late 1840s. For a recent study of the language, see Aidan Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[2] The census records from 1821 to 1901 for Ireland were destroyed. The 1911 census gives figures of 73.8% Roman Catholic, 13.1% Church of Ireland, 10% Presbyterian, 1.4% Methodist, 1.3% other Christian denominations, and 0.1% Jewish.

ethnic minority—the Anglo-Irish community descended from sixteenth and seventeenth-century settlers. Although not afflicted by serfdom, Irish peasants were, by European standards, impoverished and subject to unfavourable tenancy contracts until a series of land acts from 1885 provided for the gradual break-up and sale of large estates. Third, Ireland's nationalist tradition was not produced by the state, but against the state. A local intelligentsia developed national consciousness among the population with the purpose of gaining autonomy or even independence from Britain.[3] Fourth, Ireland was subject to its own particular political arrangements and not governed as a normal part of a unitary state. Unlike Scotland and Wales, Ireland had its own civil service, led by a Lord Lieutenant, a minister of the British crown in Dublin. Jürgen Osterhammel has suggested that this makes Ireland a good point of comparison with Eastern Europe, given the huge variety of political arrangements from centralised control to autonomy in operation across the Tsarist Empire (Osterhammel 2008, 24). Andrzej Chwalba has also pointed to the logic of comparing the Irish relationship to Great Britain to that of Poland to Russia (Chwalba 1991, 4). A similar argument could be made for the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, especially from 1867, when new arrangements were created not just for Hungary, but also for Croatia and Galicia.

If Ireland shared enough similarities with East Central and Eastern Europe to merit comparison with them, the question of colonialism is a particularly obvious focus of attention. Historians of Ireland have grappled for over half a century with the validity of the concept for the relationship of Ireland to Britain in the centuries from the so-called second conquest in the seventeenth century through independence and partition in 1922 to the present status of Northern Ireland. Much of the original impetus to studies of colonialism within Europe, such as the special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* in 1979, in fact came from the work of Michael Hechter on Ireland. (Hechter 1975; Stone 1979). Scholars of Central and Eastern Europe are now taking an interest in Ireland as an intra-European example site of colonialism to bolster the case for a colonial reading of power relations in East Central Europe. This is evident in the many references to Ireland in the special issue of

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[3] On the historiographical division of Europe on the basis of state-based versus intelligentsia-led nationalism, see Paul Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 352–354.

Teksty Drugie published in 2014, entitled Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies. Ewa Thompson, for instance, uses Hechter to dismiss claims that colonialism only operated in far-flung sites (Thompson 2014, 68).

Specialists on Ireland and Poland have noted the parallels between them in particular. Most obviously, Ireland lost its domestic parliament in 1801 in the wake of the unsuccessful United Irishmen Rising, just a few years after Poland was fully dissolved into the surrounding three empires after the failure of Kościuszko Uprising (Davies 1979, 18). Two of these empires were not Roman Catholic—the Russian was Orthodox and the Prussian Protestant. Irish nationalists also responded to their country's denigration in similar ways to the Poles, with a mixture of emigration, cultural regeneration, political negotiation, and violence (Foster 1988; Zamoyski 1989). Detailed historical comparisons between Ireland and Poland have now been attempted for a range of themes (Healy 2011; Petrusewicz 2004; Belchem and Tenfelde 2003; Wilson 2010; Eichenberg 2010; Kenney 2012).

In the following I wish to address three aspects of the relationships of both Ireland and Poland to colonialism: first, the extent to which each can be considered objects of colonialism; second, the extent to which each is implicated in the operation of colonialism globally; and third, the ways in which each challenged colonialism globally. Finally, I will suggest some reasons why Ireland, but not Poland, identified itself after independence as an anti-colonial power.

Ireland and Poland as Objects of Colonialism

A strong case has been made for the colonial character of Ireland in the nineteenth century. The fact that the process of conquest two centuries earlier brought a sizeable number of English and Scots to take up land and positions in Ireland means that one can speak of settlement, a criterion commonly found in definitions of colonialism. Literary scholars have highlighted the extent to which British official and popular discourse on Ireland from the time of conquest onwards denigrated the Irish as culturally inferior. The British satirical journal, *Punch*, was particularly prone to such an approach, producing cartoons depicting Irish people as simians, but even more serious publications and national politicians caricatured the Irish as irresponsible and unfit for self-government (Foster 1994). Moreover, Dennis O'Hearne has shown that economic policy helped to produce the very helplessness that such attitudes assumed. British trade

legislation disadvantaged Irish manufactures to the point that the thriving Irish cotton industry collapsed (O'Hearne 2005). The catastrophic losses of the Great Famine of the 1840s further suggest that the British establishment put lesser value on Irish lives. Without succumbing to popular claims that the famine was a deliberate effort to clear the Irish countryside of small peasant farmers, it is clear that Britain failed to respond to the disaster as it might have, had it happened in England, Scotland, or Wales. Despite the obvious decline in incomes in Ireland, the government tried to foist the financial burden for famine relief onto Irish taxpayers rather than drawing on central funds (Kinealy 2005; Ó Murchadha 2013). The fact that Ireland was denied Home Rule until 1914, when it was suspended due to the war, demonstrates the disregard that successive British governments had for the freely expressed wishes of the Irish electorate from the time of Daniel O'Connell in the 1830s and 1840s.

While the status of Ireland as a colony has now been widely if not universally recognised, the same is far from true about partitioned Poland (Moloney et al. 2000).[4] Poland is rarely included in general studies of the colonial adventures of the partitioning powers. With the exception of the recent volume by Sebastian Conrad, for instance, histories of German colonialism do not consider the case of Poland, instead concentrating on territories in Africa and Asia, beginning in 1884 and usually ending in 1919 with the formal loss of the colonies or in 1945 to include the expansion of Germany under the Nazis (Conrad 2012, 154–159; Gründer 1985; Speitkamp 2014; Baranowski 2011). The case for seeing Poland's history as colonial is complicated by the different experiences of the various partitions and the wide variety of features associated with colonialism—political subordination, economic disadvantage, cultural denigration, and settlement. If in the case of Ireland, the colonial model operates plausibly across all four vectors, this cannot be said of any of the Polish partitions. The evidence for colonialism is probably at its weakest in the Russian partition; at least the Kingdom of Poland is ambiguous. This region was more prosperous than the Russian interior, saw minimal Russian settlement, and enjoyed greater political representation than other parts of the Russian Empire from 1815 to

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[4] Irish texts are included in anthologies and handbooks of colonialism, e.g., Douglas Hyde, "On the Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland" in *Colonial Voices*, ed. Michael Brillman (San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2013).

1832 (Kieniewicz 2008). Yet the relationship between Russia and Poland became more colonial in subsequent decades as the Russian authorities suppressed all vestiges of self-government in response to the November Uprising of 1830–1831 and engaged in a renewed round of political repression after the January Uprising of 1863–1864. Sebastian Conrad has pointed out, moreover, that as far as the more industrially developed Germany was concerned, the Vistula Land operated as a colony from which it could draw essential migrant labour (Conrad 2012, 154–159). The case for the Austrian partition is also mixed, although, unlike the Russian part, it became less colonial over time. Larry Wolff has shown that, in the wake of the first partition, Emperor Joseph II and his administrators treated Galicia as a backward region in need of a civilising mission (Wolff 2012; Kaps and Surman 2012). Austrian economic policy did little to raise it out of extreme poverty, leading to high rates of emigration from the province. That said, its political position within the Habsburg Monarchy improved in the late 1860s, especially relative to regions like Bohemia and Slovakia. The Prussian partition offers the strongest evidence of colonialism. As Kristin Kopp and Izabela Surynt have shown, the Poles in this region were subjected to "discursive colonisation," most notably in the work of Gustav Freytag, but also later in the Ostmarkenroman genre which featured tropes that associated Poles with Africans (Kopp 2012; Surynt 2004; Orlowski 1996). The Prussian government institutionalised its contempt for Polish culture by introducing legislative measures to undermine the Polish language and the Catholic faith practised by the majority of its Polish subjects. While the so-called Kulturkampf targeted the Catholic Church throughout Prussian territory, it was implemented earlier and more severely in the eastern provinces where Poles were concentrated (Blanke 1983). Moreover, the Prussian government manipulated economic development to favour the ethnic German community in these mixed provinces. This was evident not just in the ambitious land distribution programme inaugurated by the Resettlement Commission in 1886, which attempted to transfer land in West Prussia and Poznania from Poles to Germans, but also in a state-led reforestation campaign in the Tuchel Heath in West Prussia (Nelson 2009; Eddie and Kouschil 2002; Wilson 2008).[5]

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[5] For a recent assessment of the plausibility of the colonial model for Prussian Poland, see Healy (2014).

The colonial model is not without its critics. Some historians have pointed to alternative frameworks for the Irish experience, centred on confessionalisation in the early modern period or world systems theory (Connolly 1992, 2008). Economic historians have questioned, for instance, the role of sovereignty in promoting economic development. Bogdan Murgescu's analysis of existing or new regimes of self-government in various peripheral nations (Romania, Denmark, Serbia, and Ireland) over five centuries cautions against the assumption that independence would have brought immediate improvement to Poland (Murgescu 2010). The work of Jacek Kochanowicz suggests that the partitioning powers did not hamper Poland's economic growth, but that Poland simply followed general European patterns of growth before and after the partitions (Kochanowicz 2006). The objection in terms of Ireland is all too obvious from recent history: Irish sovereignty may have assisted the emergence of the Celtic Tiger, but it did nothing to stop its demise. Moreover, the focus on ethnic difference at the heart of theories of colonialism may not be that helpful for certain contexts even into the nineteenth century. Klemens Kaps notes, for instance, the continued importance of class in the Polish setting: Polish nobles in Galicia considered their own peasants as outsiders, using terms similar to those used by overseas colonisers to describe indigenous peoples (Kaps 2012). Finally, critics of the colonial model have also pointed out the vast difference in the experience of European and overseas subjects of the empire. It should be acknowledged that both the Irish and the Poles in the Prussian and Austrian partitions, at least, enjoyed parliamentary representation for much of the long nineteenth century, whereas this was not true for the populations of India or Southwest Africa. Jens Boysen also notes that the educational opportunities and legal framework of the Prussian state allowed Poles to develop a national consciousness and improve their living standards, an opportunity that was far less accessible to subject peoples in overseas colonies (Boysen 2016, 163).

Ireland and Poland as Agents of Colonialism

The strongest challenge to the notion of Ireland as simply a British colony is the growing evidence of Irish engagement with the British Empire in Africa and Asia. While Irish Catholics barely penetrated the officer ranks of the British army, so strong was the prejudice against them, this was not

true for the rank and file. This *voluntary* military service, which culminated in the recruitment of 200,000 Irish to fight in World War I, formed part of a much longer tradition dating back to the admission of Catholics into the British army in the Napoleonic Wars and made an important contribution to the expansion and defence of the Empire (Bartlett and Jeffery 1996). In addition, many Irish men and women entered the imperial civil service. For instance, University College Galway prepared many Irishmen, both Catholic and Protestant, for the Indian Civil Service exam, including Antony MacDonnell, a member of an Anglo-Irish family from the north of Galway, who served as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the 1890s (Brillman 2009; Crosbie 2011; O'Leary 2011). While some Irish administrators, including MacDonnell, were relatively benign—his effective management of famines in the region is thought to have saved many lives—others were not, as the example of Michael O'Dwyer shows. Added to these are the numerous Irish missionaries who did so much to promote Christianity within the Empire (Rafferty 2011).

It is becoming increasingly clear that Poles were also implicated in the European colonial project. There is much to suggest that most Poles shared the general European belief in the superiority of European culture. The Polish legionaries who were sent by Napoleon to suppress the slave revolt in Haiti in the first decade of the nineteenth century depicted the local population as marvels of nature rather than fellow humans, speaking of "naked Negroes, Negresses who throw their breasts about the shoulders" in the same breath as pineapples, sea turtles, and monkeys (Pachonski and Wilson 1986, 82–82). Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel, *W pustyni i w puszczy* (1911), clearly placed the Polish protagonist on a par with the English colonial community rather than the indigenous population in Egypt (Rhode 2013, 9). Exhibitions in Cracow and Warsaw museums presented artefacts from the Far East, South America, and Africa as objects of ethnographic interest (Rhode 2013, 9). There is also evidence that Poles were active in promoting colonialism on the ground. If we agree with Clemens Ruthner that Bosnia-Herzegovina was the Habsburgs' European colony, then the 10,000 Poles who settled it on behalf of the Empire at the turn of the twentieth century must be seen in some respects as participants in a colonising project. As settlers, they benefited from privileges denied the local population (Bandić and Drljača 1985; Ruthner 2014). Ironically, as Maria Rhode has recently shown, colonial activity by Poles could result from their own political dependency. Remarkably, the Polish ethnographer, Stefan Rogoziński,

sought to establish a Polish colony in Cameroon to compensate for the lack of a Polish state (Rhode 2013, 29–33). Another Polish ethnographer, Benedykt Dybowski, took advantage of his position in the Polish exile community in Siberia to examine local non-Christian communities, concluding that they were uncivilised and capable only of trading, and thus supporting their political repression.[6]

More usually, however, Polish involvement in the colonial project came as an extension of their careers at home, as servants of the empires to which they belonged. In addition to political exiles like Dybowski, Russia hosted a coterie of Polish nobles such as Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and Jan Potocki, who, as Daniel Beauvois has shown, were willing to collaborate with the state during the partitions. These were directly or indirectly associated with the massive colonial project of the empire. Alexander Etkind has recently shown how Imperial Russia applied the cultural and political tools used by other European powers in overseas territories to colonise territories within and beyond its own borders (Etkind 2011).[7] Despite the growing hostility towards Poles in the wake of the uprisings of 1830–1831 and 1863–1864, Poles were disproportionately represented in the Russian officer corps responsible for directing the conquest of neighbouring lands. In 1897, they constituted ten per cent of officers, but just six per cent of the overall population of the empire (Rhode 2013, 8). Although it did not acquire overseas colonies, Austria too offered opportunities for colonial-style activity. As an ethnic elite within Galicia, the Poles can be said to have exercised a colonial relationship towards the Ruthenian population. In an example of "nesting colonialisms," the Polish community took advantage of its greater wealth and status to undermine Ruthenian demands for greater political and cultural autonomy from the 1860s (Beauvois 2005). The Prussians, unlike the Austrians, saw the Poles as their most unreliable minority and did not call on them specifically to assist in implementing their colonial agenda. Indeed, Poles were virtually excluded from senior officer positions in the Prussian army (Boysen 2008, 62). Nonetheless Poles availed themselves of the opportunities open to them as German subjects, acting in some

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[6] Benedykt Dybowski, "Wyjątki z listów dra Dybowskiego z Petropawłowska na Kamczatce," *Wszechświat* 2 (1883), 419, cited in Rhode (2013, 24).

[7] On Russian indifference to ethnic background, see Lieven (2000, 241–261).

cases as teachers and missionaries in German Cameroon (Daheur 2018).[8]
It is also conceivable that some Poles, like their German colleagues in
the imperial German army, volunteered to serve in the *Schutztruppe*, the
military forces defending the colonies.

As this survey demonstrates, Irish and Polish involvement in colonial
activity was at times deliberate, at times opportunistic, and at times acci-
dental. Some Irish and Polish subjects volunteered to advance the colonial
projects of their empires as senior administrators, teachers, and mission-
aries. Others saw in the colonies opportunities for personal advancement,
whether for simply a steady income or for prestige. Ordinary soldiers
often ended up in the colonies simply as a by-product of having been
conscripted or having signed up to serve in their imperial armies. What-
ever their motives, it is ironic that some of these servants of the empire
repudiated at home the kind of practices they endorsed in the colonies.
For all their professions of national difference, in their commitment to
colonialism abroad they were no different from their British, Russian,
Austrian, or Prussian counterparts. Yet it must be remembered that
the notion that the right of self-determination might be applied to all
peoples was far from an established norm in the late nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries. As the following section will show, this notion
was growing, but its appeal was contingent on the particular political
circumstances in which each nationalist community found itself.

Ireland and Poland as Critics of Global Colonialism

Many Irish nationalists condemned colonialism outside Ireland as well as
inside it. They identified strongly with the Poles and the Hungarians as
fellow victims of colonial-type policies within Europe (Healy 2017; Zarka
2012). They also looked further afield at Britain's overseas territories and
expressed sympathy for other subjects of the British Empire. Examinations
of popular nationalist publications demonstrate a repeated repudiation of
the principles underlying colonialism, which embraced a wide range of
subjects within the British Empire, such as the Indians and the Afghans
and even occasionally the Zulus (Ryder 2006; Townend 2007). Mindful

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[8] Daheur cites the cases of two teachers from Silesia and a Pallottine priest, Alojzy
Majewski.

of British claims that the Irish were unfit for Home Rule, the moderate newspaper, the *Nation*, challenged contemporary racist assumptions by insisting that Indians were capable of self-government (Regan 2008). More famously, Roger Casement condemned the exploitation of indigenous peoples in the Belgian Congo and the Amazon Basin, before coming to the conclusion that his own compatriots in Ireland were also victims of colonialism and colluding with Germans to overthrow British rule in the Easter Rising of 1916 (Mitchell 2003).

That is not to say that Irish nationalists were free of racism or that they were equally supportive of all subject nations—even among East Central Europeans, they privileged historic nations over others, such as the Bosnians and Ukrainians, who arguably faced greater challenges from their imperial rulers. There were also limits to their sympathies for non-European peoples. Irish nationalists were hugely enthusiastic about the Boers' struggle against the British in the Anglo-Boer Wars but overlooked their heroes' treatment of the indigenous black population (Howe 2002, 43–49). Michael O'Dwyer continued to defend the actions of Reginald Dyer at Amritsar and to celebrate the British Empire as a forum for the personal and professional advancement of Irish Catholics even after Ireland broke away from the United Kingdom in 1922 to become a dominion, a move of which he approved (Nevin 2021). Moreover, the intense missionary activity of Irish Catholics in Africa and Asia in the three decades or so after independence has been interpreted as a "spiritual empire" whose reach rivalled that of Britain's political empire (Bateman 2008).

What is clear, however, is that most Irish nationalists saw *themselves* as anti-colonial. When the revolutionary leader and later prime minister and president, Eamon De Valera, visited the Chippewa Indian Reservation in Wisconsin as part of a fundraising tour of America in 1919, he proclaimed his anti-colonial credentials: "Though I am white I am not of the English race. We, like you, are a people who have suffered, and I feel for you with a sympathy that comes only from one who can understand as we Irishmen can. You say you are not free. Neither are we free and I sympathise with you because we are making a similar fight" (History Hub. De Valera—the Chief). This rhetoric even led to Indian nationalists assuming that the Connaught Rangers Mutiny by Irish soldiers in 1920 was motivated by anti-colonial solidarity rather than concern about British actions in Ireland and, more importantly, poor relations between officers and the rank and file, as has recently been made clear (Draper 2020). The

anti-colonial claims of the revolutionary period were matched by an official repudiation of colonialism after independence, expressed by an Irish diplomat in 1935, "The Irish nation has no imperialist ambitions. Though a mother country we covet no colonies and have no dominions. Our sole claim is that the ancestral home of our people, unmistakably delimited by the Ocean, should belong to us."[9] Indeed the Irish Department of External Affairs saw Ireland's history as a colony as allowing it to play the role of a bridge between Europe and Africa and took a lead in promoting decolonisation after World War II (O'Sullivan 2012).

Poles often look to Joseph Conrad as a major critic of colonialism, and the links between his early life as a Russian subject and his subsequent views have been well documented (Etkind 2011, 214–230; McClure 1981, 92). His impact, however one might assess it, should not obscure other instances of Polish anti-colonialism, though. If we agree that the Habsburgs were engaged in colonial rule in at least some of their territories, then one might take the voluntary military activities by individual Poles on behalf of Hungarians and Italians from the 1840s to 1860s as anti-colonialism in action (Feichtinger et al. 2003; Zamoyski 2001). Individual Poles also criticised the German colonial project. While this critique was often motivated by the desire to emphasise the extent of Polish suffering as analogous to that of non-European subjects, it is not possible to discount a certain sympathy for the latter. Take, for instance, the comments made by Polish member of the Reichstag Franciszek Morawski-Dzierżykraj. In March 1914, he lamented that the lack of newspapers and political representation left Germany's subjects in Africa very vulnerable to exploitation by their German overlords (Daheur 2018, 499). Poles also contributed to the international anti-colonial organisations which emerged in the early twentieth century. Poles were members, for instance, of the Subject Races International Committee, formed at the International Conference at The Hague in 1907, in order to promote "the principle of nationality, to claim for each nation the management of its own internal affairs, to protect subject races from oppression and exploitation." Alongside Poles and Irish people, the committee included

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[9] Letter from Frederick H. Boland to Joseph P. Walshe (Dublin), enclosing Éamon de Valera's speech to the sixteenth Assembly of the League of Nations, 16 September 1935. *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy* IV, No. 279 National Archives of Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs 26/94; http://www.difp.ie/docs/1935/Speech-by-de-Valera-at-League/1648.htm.

the Anti-Slavery Society, the Aborigines' Protection Society, the Egyptian Committee, and the Anti-Imperialist League (*Nationalities and Subject Races*; Sluga 2013, 16–18). Polish immigrants in the US were also very supportive of the efforts of Cubans to free themselves from Spanish rule. In 1897, the Polish National Alliance endorsed the struggle, comparing the Cubans to "the Polish heroes of yore" who had sacrificed so much in the national cause (Jacobson 1993, 4–5).

Yet Poland did not make a virtue of its anti-colonialism after independence in the way that Ireland did. Indeed, in their visions of Poland's place in Europe, Polish leaders betrayed evidence of the colonial practices of the partitioning powers they had so decried. Already before World War I, the leader of the National Democratic Party, Roman Dmowski, had elaborated an ambitious agenda for a future Polish state, which should extend to the full reach of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in which the Poles would dominate the other ethnic groups found on its territory, principally Jews, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. His rival and chief of state from 1918 to 1922, Józef Piłsudski, advocated a federation of Eastern European states, which would guarantee freedom and equality to all constituent nations.[10] Yet, in so doing, he too assumed that Poland would play a dominant political role and overlooked the evident desire of the Lithuanians and Ukrainians to enjoy full sovereignty, even to the point of seizing Vilnius, claimed by Lithuania, for the new Polish state on the grounds that the city contained far more Poles than Lithuanians.[11] The Second Republic also engaged in colonial-type policies in the *kresy*, for instance, settling the area with Poles and undermining the Ukrainian language in favour of Polish, which they saw as culturally superior. The government converted most Ukrainian schools into bilingual schools and ensured that the Polish language dominated. It stripped Lviv University of its chairs in Ukrainian literature and turned it into a purely Polish-language institution, leading many Ukrainians to seek education abroad (Fiut 2003, 155–156; Bakuła 2017; Mick 2014).

Moreover, there emerged in the interwar period a lobby for overseas colonies. Plans were mooted for Polish settlements in Mozambique, Liberia, Madagascar, Cameroon, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. Driven by

[10] For a recent analysis of the attitude of the Polish Socialist Party to other ethnic groups in this period, see Brykczyński (2014).

[11] The 1909 census put the Polish population at 37.8% and the Lithuanian at just 1.2%. The rest were Jews and Russians. Snyder (2003, 306).

concern about unemployment, emigration, and ethnic tensions, such plans were not the preserve of eccentrics like Rogoziński, now deceased, but won considerable popular and official support (Jarnecki 2006). One of the main advocates of a colonial policy for Poland, the Polish Maritime and Colonial League, founded in 1918, pledged to work for overseas possessions from 1928 and had gained 250,000 members by 1934. The Colonial Days festival that it organised in April 1938 involved millions of Poles, whether going to special masses, decorating buildings with Polish flags or marching on the streets (Grzechnik 2019, 3–6). Its membership subsequently jumped to a startling 841,278. The Maritime and Colonial League also developed a close relationship with the Polish government from 1930, especially the Consulate Office of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Both as a result of popular pressure and a desire to boost Poland's international prestige, Józef Beck, Polish Foreign Minister from 1932 to 1939, endorsed the demand for overseas colonies and in 1936 asked the League of Nations to expand the ranks of countries eligible to hold mandate territories with this purpose in mind (Hunczak 1967). While Poles had focused initially on former German colonies as easy prey, justifying their claims on the grounds of the strong Polish presence in Imperial Germany, by the late 1930s, they had their eyes on the possessions of other European powers. Beck proposed that Poland take over Madagascar from France and a committee was sent to assess its potential. In this case, the motive was to use it as a "dumping ground" for Poland's "surplus" Jewish population, an idea that the Nazis later took up (Caron 1999; Jarnecki 2006, 2010). The westward shift of Poland's borders after World War II and resettlement of the so-called Recovered Territories provided another vehicle for Polish colonial ambitions. As before, Poland shared its objectives with others. The Soviet Union assisted and facilitated the Polonisation of these territories, having itself seized Polish territory in the east and displaced millions of ethnic Poles and Ukrainians (Curp 2006).

Conclusion

The experience of Ireland and Poland cautions against assuming any simple relationship between subjection to colonial policies at home, involvement in colonial projects abroad, and attitudes towards colonialism after independence. Although the targets of colonial-type policies by neighbouring powers, Irish and Polish subjects appear to have few scruples about subjugating other colonial peoples on behalf of their own

oppressors.[12] Yet the common ambivalence towards colonialism while under foreign rule was not followed by a unified stance once these peoples gained independence, Poland in 1918 and Ireland in 1922. While both states faced the challenge of re-establishing an economy within new political borders and coping with the effects of wars and the Great Depression, Ireland opted, in the words of Andrzej W. Nowak, for the position of "paternalistic companion" of the Third World and Poland for that of "servile bootlicker" of the First World, embracing its colonialism with gusto (Nowak 2016). It is particularly ironic that Ireland rather than Poland embraced anti-colonialism so eagerly, given that Irish participation in British colonialism was, on the basis of evidence currently available, probably more extensive than Polish participation in European colonialism, whether inside Europe, in Austria's colony of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or in the outer reaches of the Russian Empire or in Germany's African and Asian territories.

The explanation for the different paths taken lies in part in the immediate context of the 1930s. It must be remembered that, although colonial discourse was common and the subjugation of Poland's minorities well in evidence in the 1920s, the official drive for colonies only took off in the late 1930s. As late as 1932, Liberia appealed to Poland for assistance in the context of League of Nations' discussions to turn it into a protectorate precisely because it saw Poland as a country that did not seek colonies (Polska na Koloniach 2009). Poland's position in between two Great Powers, both of which had earlier governed part of its territory, made it extremely vulnerable. Once the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Poland's territorial integrity and its very existence were in jeopardy. In this sense, the drive for colonies can be seen as a means of projecting power to compensate for real weakness (Hunczak 1967, 656). Ireland, by contrast, enjoyed relative security by virtue of its location on the periphery of Europe and Britain's acquiescence to its independence in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. The continued enthusiasm for imperialism of maverick Irish nationalist, O'Dwyer, fit well with his sympathy for British fascism (Nevin 2021).

In other respects, however, geography was less important than Poland's erstwhile status as a major multinational empire. For all its apparent tolerance, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had allowed ethnic Poles a

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[12] Marta Grzechnik notes a similar phenomenon among Icelanders under Denmark. See Grzechnik (2018).

privileged political and social position among the many ethnic groups present in the region. The state's relatively late demise, in 1795, meant that statehood was, if not a living memory, a not too distant one for those who founded the Second Republic. Throughout the partition era, political leaders envisioned a future Polish state that went beyond territory occupied by ethnic Poles. Thus, upon independence, virtually all political parties embraced the notion of a multinational state in which Poles would play a dominant role, if to different degrees. There was, by contrast, no precedent for Irish domination of other peoples since the unitary Irish state had dissolved as early as the twelfth century, when the Normans conquered parts of the country, well before the population became so diverse. Irish nationalist demands were thus more modest, limited to self-determination, rather than restoration as a major European power. While Irish nationalists like Poles sought to control areas in which they did not enjoy political support, a majority was ultimately willing to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. This agreement drew the borders of the new Irish state specifically to exclude the main ethnoreligious minority—the Protestant descendants of the original English and Scottish settlers—who were found mainly in the six northeastern counties and who wished to retain the Union with Britain. The homogenous state that resulted deprived the Irish government of the opportunity to exercise colonial ambitions at home in any case. Even the minority of Irish nationalists who rejected the Anglo-Irish Treaty and suffered a military defeat at the hands of the new national government in the Civil War of 1922–1923 came to an accommodation with partition. Although in government from 1932 to 1948, their parliamentary representatives, Fianna Fáil, refrained from military action to claim the North for the Irish state.

The longevity of English rule in Ireland also encouraged the persistence of anti-colonialism among Irish nationalists well after independence. Whereas when seeking international support in the partition era Poles could point to their status as a major European state up to 1795, the Irish had to work much harder to prove their worthiness for self-government because they had not enjoyed a sovereign state in recent centuries. Moreover, the decline of the Irish language and the emphasis on religious discrimination against Catholics by Daniel O'Connell had undermined

their credibility in the eyes of continental nationalists.[13] Even in the aftermath of World War I, there was a clear bias on the part of Woodrow Wilson and the architects of the League of Nations for nations that had already exercised sovereignty in their own right (Mazower 2012, 165–166; Manela 2007). Unlike Poland, Ireland was not invited to speak at the Paris Peace Conference and was not admitted to the League until 1923, three years after its foundation.[14] In this context, Irish nationalists saw the continued value of employing the anti-colonial rhetoric that had helped them gain support beyond Britain—professions of solidarity with oppressed peoples both inside and outside Europe such as the Poles, Hungarians, Indians, Afghans, and Zulus. Anti-colonial positions allowed Irish diplomats to assert their own national identity in the crowded global space of the League of Nations and later the United Nations, while all the time supporting the development of a spiritual empire through the huge scale of Irish missionary efforts (O'Sullivan 2012).

The anti-colonial identification of the Irish state ultimately had little impact on the peoples of Europe's overseas colonies. While Britain received thousands of immigrants from its former colonies in the decades after World War II, the anti-colonial rhetoric of the Irish state disguised the extensive involvement of previous generations of Irish people in the British colonial project and allowed it to avoid responsibility for its legacy. Only in the twenty-first century did Ireland receive large numbers of immigrants, but predominantly from Poland and other EU states rather than former British territories in Africa or Asia. We will never know where O'Dwyer's plea for Irish co-ownership of the British Empire, articulated in his aptly titled *Fusion of Anglo-Norman and Gael*, might have led (Nevin 2021; O'Dwyer 1938). Poland's colonial ambitions had ultimately little consequence for non-Europeans either. Apart from a handful of small-scale Polish settlements organised by the Maritime and Colonial League, they were never realised as Poland fell prey to the invading forces of Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939.

The comparison of Ireland and Poland suggests that factors commonly associated with East Central and Eastern Europe, such as a high degree of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, economic peripherality, anti-state nationalism, and idiosyncratic political regimes, were less important

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[13] On continental nationalist attitudes to Ireland, see Costigan (1973).

[14] On the struggle for inclusion in the international community, see Keown (2016).

in shaping attitudes towards colonialism after independence than longer-term political patterns. The recent experience of statehood and political dominance over other ethnic groups appears to have exercised a decisive role in pushing Poland towards embracing colonial practices both at home and abroad in the aftermath of World War I. This suggests that the attitudes of other East Central Europeans towards colonialism might equally be shaped by their particular domestic political trajectories as well as a common European culture convinced of its own superiority.

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The Unbearable Virtues of Backwardness: Mircea Eliade's Conceptualisation of Colonialism and His Attraction to Romania's Interwar Fascist Movement

Raul Cârstocea

Introduction

In studies of Romanian intellectual history, Mircea Eliade and his multi-faceted academic, literary, and journalistic work occupy a special place. As arguably the Romanian intellectual who is best known internationally, as well as due to his interwar political commitment to the "Legion of the Archangel Michael" (also known as the "Iron Guard"), Romania's native fascist movement, his work has benefitted from unparalleled attention, ranging in tone from unqualified acclaim for his erudition to outright condemnation of his politics, including his alleged anti-Semitism. Surprisingly though, especially given the relatively recent interest in exploring the applicability of post-colonial theory to the area of Central and Eastern Europe and the possible intersections and meeting points

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of post-colonialism and post-socialism (e.g. Wolff 1994; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Strayer 2001; Carey and Raciborski 2004; Kelertas 2006; Chari and Verdery 2009; Tlostanova 2009; Todorova 2010; Ştefănescu 2013; Parvulescu and Boatcă 2022; Kołodziejczyk and Şandru 2016), no studies so far have approached Eliade's work in light of his experience of colonialism and decolonisation in India. Even though Eliade was in India long before socialism, let alone its collapse, his experience of a pivotal moment in India's history, that of the civil disobedience campaign, would subsequently be linked in his reflections to Romania's own position of dependence and peripherality in ways that, I argue, markedly influenced both his scientific productions and his politics.

The few exceptions to this pattern relate exclusively to one of his novels: a semi-autobiographical fictionalised account of the love story of Eliade and Maitreyi Devi, daughter of the philosopher Surendranath Dasgupta, Eliade's host in India (Kamani 1996; Basu 2001; Cirstea 2013). While valuable in themselves for reasons which will be briefly addressed in this chapter, such studies concentrate exclusively on the reflection of colonialism in one of Eliade's literary productions, reaching conclusions that do not appear to be applicable to his scholarly work and, consequently, are problematic when brought to bear on Eliade's general attitude toward Indian society and the process of decolonisation. Furthermore, the lack of such studies is conspicuous for two main reasons. First, Eliade was one of the very few interwar Romanian intellectuals who engaged with research on non-European cultures and societies— even contemplating the establishment of a Chair in Sanskrit and Oriental Studies at the University of Bucharest, a project which eventually did not materialise, but whose very possibility was intended to break Romania's self-perception as peripheral and exclusively preoccupied with its East Central European context. Second, Eliade was perceived as the "leader" of the so-called new or young generation of interwar Romanian intellectuals, who are to this day revered as representing some of the country's finest in the field of humanities. By positioning Mircea Eliade in the context of interwar Romania and its cultural debates that consistently engaged with the country's alleged backwardness and peripherality with regard to mainstream European culture, I seek to trace the impact of his experience of India on both his scientific work and his politics, and, subsequently, establish a link between the two.

I argue that Eliade's vision of colonialism was reflective of the tension prompted by the epistemology of in-betweenness that he (and other

interwar Romanian intellectuals) developed as a response to Romania's marginality, translating in practical terms into a conversion of its peripheral status into a virtue (albeit one that remained uncomfortable) and a weapon directed against Western cultural and political hegemony. Eliade's epistemological stance corresponded, on the one hand, to his genuine cultural pluralism, support for decolonisation, and appreciation of non-European cultures and the challenges they posed to European hegemony, which he perceived as biased and grounded in a "superiority complex" (Eliade 1961, 1); and, on the other, led to his attraction to the legionary movement and its own, 'actualist' view of history (Fogu 2003; Cârstocea 2015). Consequently, the case study of the link between Eliade's scholarship and his politics appears interesting in light of his broader understanding of Romania's position within the global system, as well as of the parallels he drew between colonial scenarios and the historical legacies of countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, which he saw as also indelibly marked by their own experiences of empire. Such an endeavour would definitely far surpass the scope of a single essay. Therefore, my intention here is merely to sketch some of the potential lines of enquiry that my focus on the overlapping research and political engagements in Eliade's output can encourage, as well as their implications for attempts at establishing parallels between conceptualisations of different scenarios of dependence and domination, corresponding respectively, to the former Western European colonies and Central and Eastern Europe. The main sources used for this purpose are various diaries and memoirs in which Eliade described some of his experiences in India; the press articles published upon his return; and elements of his scientific work that illustrate the impact of his perceptions of Indian spirituality and of the beliefs of (East Central) European peasants on his theoretical approach to culture and religion.

Cultural Debates and Intergenerational Politics in Interwar Romania

Despite being written more than 70 years ago, a book that remains one of the most insightful analyses of the interwar Romanian economy, politics, and society opens with the statement: "Rumania is economically one of the relatively backward regions of the world. It is not as backward as vast areas of Asia and Africa, but like them it is faced with the problems of an agrarian society in the twentieth century" (Roberts

1951, v). In straightforward fashion, the author, Henry Roberts, placed Romania from the outset in a comparison with (former) colonial spaces and identified a certain similarity with the problems that countries in such spaces were facing. The explanation he invoked for this association was the country's ultimate dependency on "the West": "the conclusion reached is that the all-pervading influence of the West in the course of the last century or more is the decisive element in this problem. Not only do the outstanding features of the agrarian crisis in Rumania stem directly or indirectly from this influence, but the domestic political activity is understandable only as a variety of responses, involving the copying, modification, or rejection of Western political and ideological models, to the social and economic dislocation which growing contact with the West has brought about" (Roberts 1951, vi). His conclusions, drawn from an excellently documented economic history of interwar Romania, have numerous parallels in studies of Eastern European or "Balkan" culture. Maria Todorova's insightful analysis of the parallels, but also significant differences between "Orientalism" and "Balkanism," and of the implications of "the Balkans' semicolonial, quasi-colonial, but clearly not purely colonial status" (Todorova 2009, 16) represent an excellent starting point.

It is in this context that we can place what has been identified by many authors as the major intellectual debate in modern Romania, one that has aptly been called "The Great Debate" (Hitchins 1994, 292–334). Starting at the end of the nineteenth century and continuing into the interwar period, it involved a split between the so-called Europeanists, also referred to as "modernists," and the "traditionalists" or "autochthonists" (Hitchins 1978, 1995; Jowitt 1978; Ornea 1980; Livezeanu 2002). While such a dichotomy obscures some of the cultural complexity and new distinctions (both cultural and political) that emerged after the First World War (Verdery 1991; Livezeanu 2002; Clark 2012), it is nevertheless useful for delineating two opposing conceptualisations of the Romanian "backwardness" that was a constituent part of this debate. Where the "modernists" were acutely aware of Romania's marginality and sought to redress it, mainly through speeding up the process of modernisation that would align the country with the more developed "West," the "traditionalists" were extremely critical of what they considered the indiscriminate imitation and adoption of Western cultural forms and models of development transplanted into a reality they viewed as distinct and by no

means inferior or backward. The latter extolled the peasant as the repository of the "authentic" values of Romania and rejected the Western model which they viewed as materialistic and decadent. While both positions were fundamentally secular before the World War I, Orthodoxy became an essential component of the traditionalists' view of Romanian culture during the interwar period.

Rejecting both these orientations and arguing for a complete break with the "old" cultural canons, be they traditionalist or "Europeanist," the self-proclaimed "new generation" of interwar Romanian intellectuals aimed instead at a synthesis that would combine the focus on the "authenticity" of Romanian culture (perceived as occupying a unique position between the East and the West) with the adoption of a radical modernism they viewed as synchronic with the European avant-garde. In doing so, they engaged the issue of Romania's backwardness in a much more complex manner, expressing the tension between the trauma it entailed and the view of Eastern Europe's peripheral status as an alternative challenging the hegemony of Western culture. The rejection of earlier cultural models was accompanied by an intergenerational conflict, where anything and anyone considered "old" was denounced as inauthentic—as Eliade wrote in 1927, "between the young and the old there can be no bridge, only the throwing of lances" (Eliade 1927b). Under the guidance of Nae Ionescu, professor of philosophy at the University of Bucharest and the initiator of a Romanian variant of existentialism known as "*trăirism*" (from the Romanian word *trăire*, experience), the "new generation" of young intellectuals denounced positivist rationalism as a product of the ""unnatural" institutions of "bourgeois Europe"" (Hitchins 1978, 146) and proclaimed the primacy of the spiritual over rational knowledge.

In this context, the 1927 article "Spiritual Itinerary," written by a twenty-year-old Mircea Eliade, was to become a veritable manifesto of the "new generation" and establish his reputation as its informal "leader." Its call for "pure, spiritual, absurdly spiritual values" and "the necessity of mysticism" (Eliade 1927a) entailed, however, a much broader, universal vision of spirituality than the focus on Eastern Orthodoxy of the traditionalists. Critical of Nichifor Crainic, the main promoter of Orthodoxy as a central feature of Romanian religious nationalism (Clark 2012), of the notion of Christian Orthodoxy as a unique path to authenticity, and of the Christian faith in general, Eliade was far more interested in religion as an individual experience and as an actualisation of the transcendental. The roots of his interest in non-European religious practices and rituals,

including studies of yoga, shamanism, and the relationship between religion and magic, can be traced to this period, between 1926 and 1928 (Ţurcanu 2007, 69–72, 88–89), and it is also during this period that he published his first articles dealing with Indian spirituality and philosophy (Eliade 1926). In the course of a study visit to Rome, where he attended courses on Indian philosophy, Eliade came across the first volume of the *History of Indian Philosophy* by Surendranath Dasgupta and learned about the charitable work of Maharajah Manindra Chandra Nandy of Kassimbazar; after writing to both, he was accepted as a doctoral student by the former and obtained a two-year scholarship for studying in India from the latter (Handoca 1991, 6). Notably, during this period Eliade advocated an apolitical stance in his press articles and denounced the growing antisemitism of Romanian nationalists, particularly visible among student movements; unlike many of his contemporaries, he was also unimpressed by the fascism regime in Italy during his stay there in 1927–1928 (Eliade 1932; Ţurcanu 2007, 208).

Experiencing India

On 22 November 1928, Eliade left for India, where he stayed for almost three years, returning on 10 December 1931 (Handoca 1991). His notes from these three years, spread across various diaries and memoirs (Eliade 1935a, 1991a [1934], 1991b), as well as the fictionalised account of his love story with Maitreyi Devi, the daughter of his Indian mentor Surendranath Dasgupta, all indicate Eliade's enthusiasm for his experience in India, from where he only returned following a desperate letter he received from his father, an army officer and veteran of the First World War, who urged him to come back to complete his mandatory military service, failing which he would have been considered a deserter by the Romanian army—clearly a dishonour for a military family such as Eliade's (Handoca 1991, 20). Determined to return in 1933, after the completion of his military service, to a place he identified as his "adoptive country" (Eliade 1991b, 253), Eliade eventually never went back to India. Nevertheless, the experience of the three years spent there had a profound influence on both his academic career and his political views. While delving into the details of his time spent in India would go beyond the purposes of this article, in the following, I will draw attention to some elements that are relevant for understanding the impact of his experience of British colonialism and the Indian civil disobedience campaign on his

conceptualisation of Romania's (and Eastern Europe's more generally) peripheral status and ambivalent position with regard to both Western Europe and its own history of empire.

Although arriving in India under the tutelage of two Bengalis, Eliade's entry point to life there initially followed the established pattern for a white European, a position of which he was all too acutely aware throughout his stay.[1] Following the difficulties he encountered in obtaining a British visa at a time of turmoil in colonial India, his first residence in Calcutta was an English boarding house on Ripon Street, which provided him with room and board in exchange for the monthly scholarship of 90 rupees he received from the Maharajah of Kassimbazar (Eliade 1935a, 17). His stay among the English of Calcutta elicited a number of critical comments in his diaries about the excesses of colonial life in India, from the stark inequality between the "Anglo-Indians"—whom he saw as doubly alienated, from India as well as from Britain—and the native population to the debauchery of the former, in which he occasionally participated (Eliade 1935a, 93–102; 1991b, 171–5). Throughout his memoirs, Eliade's perception of the colonial presence in India remained almost entirely negative, an experience he constantly sought to escape by prolonged contact with Surendranath Dasgupta and the pandit teaching him Sanskrit, as well as by travelling whenever his precarious financial situation allowed it. His account of life in Calcutta is in sharp contrast with the enthusiastic tone of the descriptions of his travels, first to Central India (Allahabad, Benares, Delhi, Ogra, Jaipur, Ajmir) and then to monasteries in the Himalayas (Handoca 1991, 11–12). The latter trip brought him to Darjeeling, the summer residence of the colonial governor, which he found "barbaric," with "its tennis courts, dance halls, cinemas. If it wasn't for the staff dressed in indigenous costumes, the hotels would seem European; that is, as hideous as in Europe" (Eliade 1991a, 83). He was quick to add, however, that he was "not disgusted by Europe – superb and immortal reality," but by "the stupid proselitism of Europeans," a term

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[1] In his diary entry about the trip to Jaipur, which was an independent state, he notes "you no longer feel embarrassed about your race" (Eliade 1991a, 71). This is just one of multiple occasions in which Eliade refers to his embarrassment at being a European in India. Additionally, the Romanian "Sahib" is keen to clarify to his many Indian guides and acquaintances that he is not English (see his answer: "No, thank God" to the question of an Indian student "But you are not English?" (Eliade 1991a, 157; also Eliade 1991b, 108).

by which he referred to the colonial transformation and misrepresentation of Asia—which rendered it "suspect and not tolerated in Europe not because of its own substance," but precisely because of European representations (Eliade 1991a, 83), thus anticipating what Edward Said would later define as "Orientalism." Professor Dasgupta's invitation to live with him and his family, which he did starting from January 1930, delighted the young Eliade, who wrote to his mother in December 1929 about the immense privilege of studying and living together with Bengal's "second national glory after Tagore," adding that his return in the evenings from Dasgupta's house to Ripon Street was "like passing from India to Europe, such is the difference. Living with him, beyond the financial and scientific advantage, I will also enjoy a more tranquil life, without the useless bustle of Western cities, breathing an atmosphere imbibed by the spiritual and by art" (cited in Handoca 1991, 16). This period, which he fondly described in his memoirs as the best of his time in India, would eventually end abruptly, due to Dasgupta's discovery of the romantic involvement of Eliade with his daughter, Maitreyi, in September 1930.

It is this double experience, as a not-quite-Western European who was exposed to both the life of the British colonists and that of the native population without really identifying with either (despite his attempts to do so with the latter, wearing a *dhoti* and having his meals on the ground, using a palm leaf instead of a plate) that is reflected in the fictionalised semi-biographical account of his love story with Maitreyi, published in Romanian as a novel of the same name in 1933. The novel was subsequently translated into French in 1950 as *La Nuit Bengali* and into English as *Bengali Nights* in 1993, following a promise Eliade made to Maitreyi that it would not be published in English during their lifetimes (Kamani 1996). The exotic subject of the novel was very innovative for Romanian literature, rendering it an almost instantaneous bestseller with the public and earning Eliade a prestigious literary award. As he bitterly admitted in his memoirs, while the success of *Maitreyi* seemed to many of his friends to prefigure a prominent literary career, none of his later fiction would eventually parallel its popularity (Eliade 1991b, 254). Significantly, the novel is also the only detailed account of a very important period in Eliade's experience of India, those "happiest days" he spent in his mentor's house, when he contemplated the illusion of eventually integrating into Indian society. Outside the novel, there are only very few references in his memoirs to the real Maitreyi and the story is entirely omitted from his two other published diaries dealing with his

time in India. In his memoirs, the few notes regarding his banishment by Professor Dasgupta give the general impression of irreparable loss, of his "terrible suffering at understanding that, together with Maitreyi, I had lost all of India. […] That this India I had begun to know, that I had dreamed of and that I loved, was definitively forbidden to me. I will never be able to acquire an Indian identity" (Eliade 1991b, 190).

Read in a post-colonial key, the novel appears as "blatant colonial-era prejudice and appropriation veiled as romance" (Kamani 1996), as "typical of the broader history of colonialism […] an Orientalist fantasy and a male fantasy" (Fleming 1994), some "unapologetically European male chauvinist's assumptions about Indian women's customs and thought processes" (Wright 1994).[2] While some of the insights provided by such a post-colonial reading are undoubtedly true, the aspects they gloss over pertain to the novel's Romanian context and to Eliade's particular positionality in India, which is in many important ways distinct from the colonial one. As argued by Arina Cirstea, the novel can be better read as indicative of "the extent to which the traumatic encounter between two subaltern cultures was mediated (and possibly undermined) by patterns of colonialist discourse" (Cirstea 2013, 38). The literary choices made by Eliade seem to confirm such a view. To mention but one of them and recalling his "disgust" at colonial attempts to transform India, the substitution of a French engineer, Alain, for himself as the protagonist of the novel is revealing. When written by someone who came to India to study its culture and spirituality, which he viewed as superior to those of Western Europe, his protagonist's commitment to a Western civilising project is profoundly (self-)ironic. In his attempt to transform a reality he does not understand, Alain's perception that "my work on the construction of railway lines through the jungle seemed to me far more useful to India than a dozen books written about her" (Eliade 1994, 15) is the exact opposite of the drive that prompted Eliade to travel to India and epitomises the Western discourse he was most critical of. Not quite English but not Romanian either, the French Alain also stands for the

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[2] Maitreyi Devi, who had in the meantime become a famous Indian poet and novelist, had published a reply to Eliade's novel in which she presented her own version of events, in the form of a novel published in Bengali in 1974, entitled *Na Hanyate*, translated in English as *It Does Not Die*. Most of the comments mentioned above were prompted by the publication in 1994 of an edition including both novels by the University of Chicago Press.

culture that interwar Romanian intellectuals preferentially emulated. As Cirstea notes, "this choice of identity may be read as an ironical commentary to the subordinate status of his own." Indirectly, the conspicuous absence of "Romanian-ness" is a commentary upon the "invisibility" of a culture that has not yet produced an articulated "identity discourse" (Cirstea 2013, 54). Thus, far from expressing exclusively an Orientalist white male fantasy, the novel could also be interpreted along the lines of Eliade's reflection on his own positionality, indicative of the epistemological in-betweenness of his condition as a representative of a peripheral European culture in India. Unlike his contemporaries of the "new generation" in Romania, whose view of Romanian culture as a potential bridge between East and West was played out mostly in the abstract, Eliade could invoke the direct, practical implications of such a position based on his own experience.

Scholarly endeavours dominate in Eliade's diaries and memoirs from India. In the foreword to the first collection of his stories about India, the author announced that "this is not a travel diary, nor a volume of impressions or of memories. […] Adventure has been systematically avoided in this book" (Eliade 1991a, 25). He explained this by his suspicion of travel literature in general, and of a European's superficial perception of the realities he encountered once he crossed the Suez Canal. Confident that to his knowledge "no other European has so far spent six months in a Himalayan monastery; and if they did, they have not written anything about the life and people there," Eliade was declaredly not interested in writing a book about "picturesque and political India," but on "Indian humanism […], those eternal Indian values created to uplift and comfort man, or lead to his salvation" (Eliade 1991a, 27–28). While the fragments he collected in this volume (and his other diaries and memoirs dealing with his experiences in India) offer but glimpses of these values, his entire scientific work following his return from India can be partly read as a tribute to this pursuit. In his diaries, where his notes are consistently linked through interpretation to their "meanings" for the young Romanian scholar, one can observe many of the features characteristic of his later writings: the pervasive dichotomy of sacred and profane (where the two are seen as complementary rather than opposites); his interpretation of reality as hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred in profane form; the ambivalence of the sacred; the belief in the transcendental unity of religious experience; and, most importantly for the chapter, Eliade's perception of an authenticity preserved in so-called traditional cultures

(a term he however dismissed) that had been lost to a significant extent in the civilised "West." The latter was consistently depicted as decadent, "fallen," and "provincial," with the only remnants of authentic spirituality in Europe to be found not in high culture but in folklore, peasants' beliefs, and their "cosmic Christianity" (Eliade 1980, 13).

All other aspects of his experience in India appear to be subsumed to his pursuit of knowledge of Indian culture and tradition, not only quantitatively—"I worked 12 h a day and only on Sanskrit" he would later confess to Claude-Henri Roquet (Eliade 1978, 50)—but also qualitatively, in his constant attempts to understand India on its own terms. As such, the first-person narration of his diary is occasionally interrupted to allow Rabindranath Tagore to "speak directly" to the reader about what India could teach the Occidentals (Eliade 1991a, 144–8), or Srimati Devi to talk about the Indian concept of the woman as a subaltern response to its misperception in Europe and America (Eliade 1991a, 148–151). The deference and respect he shows in all instances to his Indian interlocutors, his laments about needing more time to listen, to learn, to try to understand the country and its people, as well as his pride at the praise he received on his progress (with Sanskrit from Professor Dasgupta, and with the practice of yoga from his Himalayan guru, Swami Sivananda) show a very different attitude from the Orientalist position of many European specialists in Indian studies.

Such an attitude also transpires from his intense correspondence with his colleagues of the "new generation," the many young Romanian intellectuals who wrote to him to express their support for his endeavours and to enquire about them. Like his diaries, the letters Eliade wrote to his Romanian friends focused mostly on scholarly topics: when recounting his experiences in India, when discussing cultural developments in Romania, or with the occasional request for books he could not access in India (Handoca 1991). In the diaries themselves, the very few references to Romania are occasioned by certain people, situations, or experiences that reminded him of similar ones in his country of origin; while often nostalgic, they relate exclusively to landscape, peasant life, or spirituality. A conspicuous absence from both his correspondence and his diaries is any reference to political developments in Romania. Based on the available material, one can assume that he had virtually no knowledge of Romanian politics during that time, and, given that many of his colleagues of the "new generation" with whom he corresponded were quite active politically, it is interesting to note that Eliade never asked them anything

about this subject. This aspect seems to confirm his commitment to the apolitical stance he professed before his departure, as well as occasionally reiterated when discussing politics in India. In a conversation with an Indian student he recounts in his diaries, when asked if he was not ashamed (as a European) of everything he had seen in India in the course of the previous year, Eliade answered that he did not have any sympathies for any cause and that he was apolitical (Eliade 1991a, 157).

However, the few notes that refer to the civil disobedience campaign of Mahatma Gandhi and its repression by the British administration indicate otherwise. All of his reflections on the political events unfolding in India indicate his unwavering sympathy for the cause of decolonisation, in line with the aforementioned contempt he felt for the British colonial administration and its incapacity to understand the culture and spirituality of the country it was ruling and oppressing. Describing with admiration the resolve of the Indians in their non-violent campaign, Eliade also expressed his outrage at the abuses carried out by the colonial police, and most of the (few) pages of his diaries that refer to "the revolution," as he mostly calls it, are vivid accounts of the violence of the colonial police, as well as of the violence of Muslims against Hindus, conducted with the tacit approval of the British administration (Eliade 1935a, 103–115). He mentioned that some of the Indian students he knew sustained serious injuries from the police while protesting peacefully, and that one student was even attacked in her home. In addition to the stories he heard from his Indian colleagues about various instances of police brutality, he also described in graphic detail the cruellest episode he witnessed personally, on 22 April 1930: a cavalry charge of "the glorious mounted police" against peaceful protesters, many of them women and children. The wounded were brought to the library where he was studying, and the sight of them prompted Eliade, who was all too familiar to the customary brutality of the police in his native Romania, to exclaim in outrage: "Cracked heads and broken limbs – these one can see everywhere. But what you can see only in British India: children trampled under horses, children bloodied by hoofs and police batons" (Eliade 1991a, 156).

Initially more moderate in his assessment of the Indian struggle for independence, Eliade eventually became ever more committed to its cause. The instances of appalling racism he encountered among the British (one of whom rejoiced at the prospect that, if the revolution escalated, all the English population would be given weapons, "as in 1925," which would allow him to satisfy some "innocent whims," such as randomly

shooting "negroes" on the street) gradually led him to abandon his neutral stance—he confessed to barely managing to contain his anger and the desire to slap the British who aired such comments (Eliade 1935a, 115). Reprimanded by a character he only identifies as "D" (and whom one assumes from the context is his mentor, Surendranath Dasgupta) for his participation in one of the peaceful protests, where his Indian colleagues passed him for a French journalist reporting on the revolution, he was joyful when someone threw a clay pot at him one night in the street or when Indian children threw stones and shouted "white monkey" at him, laughing happily when telling his mentor how lucky he was "to witness the dawn of a new India" (Eliade 1935a, 109). He explained that he rejoiced at the attacks against him because they "attest the hatred against the oppressors" and that he understood "what an invincible force this hate represents, this supreme collective struggle against a foreign civilisation, against a barbarian race and a barbarian domination. From this struggle a new world will be born" (Eliade 1935a, 109). He was convinced that "British power will weaken when the confidence of the administrators will perish," and, noting that "Indian boys spit in front of 'Europeans' in trams," felt that this is "a truly revolutionary change. The prestige of the whites is crumbling. And the English rule India through prestige" (Eliade 1935a, 109). In an argument all too familiar in post-colonial scholarship, Eliade was convinced that colonial rule rested on the image of inferiority it projected and imposed on the colonised, and that its erosion would inexorably lead to the collapse of colonial power.

As with most of his observations, Eliade ascribed a deeper significance to the non-violent campaign he witnessed than the merely factual one, one which was attuned to his consistent preference for the spiritual:

> This extraordinary madness of India, to come unarmed in front of European tanks and machine guns... If it wins, as I wish it from all my heart to win, a new era begins in history. The spirit will prove once again invincible. Because Indian nationalism draws its force from the instinctive confidence in the spirit, in the magical power of suffering, of non-violence. (Eliade 1935a, 109)

His views received further confirmation from the Indian nationalist he encountered in the library during the cavalry charge he witnessed: the latter told him that

our struggle for independence, *swaraj*, is the necessary conclusion of our entire metaphysics. [...] That is why it is not a political struggle but a mystical one: we reach freedom, as Mahatma says, through purification, through renouncing the individual, through non-violence, through agony. Our politics is an ascetic initiation. (Eliade 1991a, 157–158)

It is by carefully considering these views, and their importance within Eliade's philosophical system, that one can begin to understand his attraction to the legionary movement upon his return to Romania, as the movement also proclaimed its own spiritual and Christian revolution, spearheaded by an elite that cultivated asceticism and martyrdom as its "weapons." The apparent paradoxes of the ambivalent combination of genuine cosmopolitanism and Romanian nationalism in Eliade's political thought or of the frequent parallels he later drew between a legionary movement that was notorious for its extreme violence and Gandhi's non-violent politics can only be untangled by delving into his experience of colonial India, with all its personal, philosophical, and political implications.

The Return from India—Scholarly Work and Political Commitment

Following his return to Romania and the completion of the compulsory military service that had brought him back, Eliade published more than 100 scientific articles dealing with Indian culture, philosophy, and religion. He defended his doctoral thesis on yoga—heavily indebted to his practice of it during the six months spent in the Swarga Ashram in the Himalayas that followed his departure from Calcutta after the fallout with Professor Dasgupta—in 1933 and published it in French in 1936 as *Yoga: Essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne* (Eliade 1991b, 313). His first major scientific work, the volume was to become a reference one in the specialist literature, and many of the ideas he introduced in this study anticipate his later hermeneutics of religion, elaborated in his monumental *History of Religions*.[3] He also lectured extensively on subjects related to

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[3] As it becomes immediately clear to a historian, Eliade's work is not exactly a "history" of religions in the methodological sense of the term. This is in line with Eliade's criticism of the application of analytical or historical methods *sensu stricto* to the study of religion, and his view of this field as more than a discipline, rather "*a total hermeneutics* [...] called

India. Although the Chair of Sanskrit and Indian Studies he kept hoping for throughout the 1930s was never established, his Romanian mentor Nae Ionescu secured a position for him as his assistant in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. There, Eliade taught courses on "Dissolution of Causality in Medieval Buddhist Logic," "The Upanishads and Buddhism," and "Yoga," among other, more general courses dealing with "The Religious Symbol" or "The Subject of Evil in the History of Religion"; he also held conferences on Indian subjects at Radio Bucharest (Gligor 2014, 181–183).

As he later confessed in his conversations with Claude-Henri Roquet, Eliade "became sensitive to politics in India" (Eliade 1978, 108). The available evidence seems to confirm it, as upon his return to Romania Eliade became much more politically engaged than he had been before his departure. The transformation was gradual rather than abrupt, and as late as the spring of 1935 he argued for an attitude of political non-engagement that intellectuals should adopt (Eliade 1935b). However, in an article published on the occasion of Romania's national day in December that same year, Eliade wrote his first acclamation of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of Romania's fascist movement, the "Legion of the Archangel Michael", arguing that "a political leader of youth who had said that the purpose of his mission is "the reconciliation of Romania with God"" carried a messianic message, entailing "first and foremost a transvaluation of values and the clear primacy of the spiritual" (Eliade 1935c). The formulation is strikingly similar to the ones he employed to refer to the Indian civil disobedience campaign, and the parallels would indeed continue throughout the articles he wrote in support of the Legion, which he frequently compared to Gandhi's movement.

The reasons accounting for his gradual "conversion" to legionary ideology—one that is still subject to intense debate in Romanian historiography (e.g. Laignel-Lavastine 2004; Gligor 2007; Țurcanu 2007)—were partly conjunctural. The Legion, in 1928 still a minute dissident splinter group from another far-right organisation with an exclusively anti-Semitic political platform, The League of National-Christian Defence, was by the time of his return a force to be reckoned with, having weathered its first official ban in 1931 to send its first members to Parliament in 1932 (Cârstocea 2011, 83). Eliade's return to Romania in 1931 also

to decipher and explicate every kind of encounter of man with the sacred, from prehistory to our day" (Eliade and Partin 1965, 5; see also Allen 1988, 545–565).

entailed a reintegration with the "new generation" of young intellectuals who had eagerly awaited the return of their informal leader, and who, under the mentorship of Nae Ionescu, started to enthusiastically support the legionary movement or even join its ranks in the course of the same year. Nae Ionescu, who had argued as early as 1930 for the demise of parliamentary democracy and "the instauration of the dictatorship of the masses" (Ionescu 1930), exerted considerable influence on the young Eliade—the dedication of *Yoga*, was, in addition to the memory of the late Maharajah of Kassimbazar, to Surendranath Dasgupta and Nae Ionescu, "the only people I considered my 'masters'" (Eliade 1991b, 313)—and his support of the legionary movement was beyond any doubt. Finally, the background of precarity that young interwar Romanian intellectuals were exposed to, and that Eliade was not spared despite his literary fame and reputation as a promising young scholar, led to his increased disillusionment with the Liberal Party government, and with the corruption and growing authoritarianism of King Carol II and his camarilla (Ţurcanu 2007, 299–314).

Other reasons had to do with some of the peculiarities of legionary ideology: the self-representation of the movement as a spiritual one, its incorporation of elements of "popular Orthodoxy" (Haynes 2006), the peasant spirituality Eliade himself was so fond of, the asceticism of its leadership, the legionary cult of youth, but also of suffering and martyrdom in the service of the cause, and the movement's success at projecting itself in the interwar Romanian political space as the only radical alternative to the corrupt political establishment. None, however, were perhaps more important for explaining its seemingly irresistible attraction to the vast majority of young Romanian intellectuals—so much so that by the late 1930s the list of those who *were not* legionary sympathisers or members was far shorter than that of those who were (Petreu 2009)—than its redemptive promise to abolish (and avenge) what Eliade would later term the "terror of history," and the suffering of an eternal, mythical Romanian "nation" under its reign. In more concrete terms, the typically fascist palingenetic promise of rebirth (Griffin 1993), rephrased by the legionary movement into the Christian trope of "resurrection," promised an escape from the unbearable burden of the typically Eastern European "backwardness," experienced simultaneously as a developmental lack and a temporal lag (Todorova 2005), by recasting it as a virtue, acting as an impulse for a modernist revolt against the decadent Western civilisation that was rooted in tradition and the alleged "purity" of the peasant toilers.

As I have argued elsewhere (Cârstocea 2015), the alternative legionary temporality (or rather temporalities) that the movement put forth, accelerating time toward an imminent redemptive and transformative watershed moment that would inaugurate a bright future of quasi-eternal plenitude (similar to "the thousand-year Reich"), corresponded in many ways to Eliade's understanding of "sacred time" and thus accounted to a significant extent for his unqualified support of the movement in the second half of the 1930s. One of the conclusions of my earlier study was that rather than denoting some form of "fascist political vision," "the correspondences between Eliade's vision of temporality and the legionary one are rather indicative of fascism's ability to convincingly tap into the inexhaustible reservoir of myth and manipulate it for political purposes" (Cârstocea 2015, 96). In the following sections, drawing on the material presented above, I will attempt to put forth some tentative conclusions regarding the relationship Eliade saw between his experience of colonialism in India and his perception of Romania's peripheral and dependent position vis-à-vis Western European culture, as well as its own history of empire, placing them in the broader framework of his scholarly work. In doing so, I seek to explore the ways in which this relationship can account for a politics that accommodated genuine cultural pluralism and support for decolonisation with support for a fascist movement.

Eliade's Reflections on Colonialism and Romania's Peripheral Position

As shown earlier, the position of the "new generation" of interwar Romanian intellectuals rested on the notion of Romania (and the space of East Central Europe in general) as a bridge between East and West. In doing so, they were not only demonstrating their awareness of the constitution of this space through the West's discourse about it—the trope repeats textually Maria Todorova's remark that this metaphor of "a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia" has been so commonly employed that it "borders on the banal" (Todorova 2009, 16)—but refashioning it into a cultural position meant to challenge the civilisational model of Western Europe, to which Romania was bound to remain backward and peripheral, and to propose an alternative that was simultaneously culturally specific and attuned to Western critiques of modernisation. Simply put, this position entailed a refashioning of the backwardness of an agrarian society into a virtue, standing for an

authenticity that had been lost in "the West" in course of the processes of modernisation and secularisation. Given the perception of a profound crisis of Western civilisation (à la Spengler) and the ensuing alienation in a modern, technologically-driven "disenchanted" Europe, the fusion of this "authenticity" with some of the more respectable bases of "European culture" were to provide a solution to this crisis. Such a narrative exposes the cultural trauma engendered by a peripheral positionality and the attempts to tackle it, translating into the formulation of an alternative that would challenge Western hegemony.

However, such conceptualisations, while acute and insightful when it came to "the West," often invoked an "East" that, in the absence of actual direct contact with it (the Romanian intellectuals who actually travelled to Asia or the Middle East were very few), was little more than an abstract, reified notion following the Orientalist representations put forth in the Western cultural canon. In practice, this meant that in the absence of actual cultural reference points about the invoked "East," the "new generation's" proclaimed "drive for synthesis" did not advance much beyond the declarative level, and cultural positions eventually fell back on the familiar Western canon. The existentialism of Emil Cioran and Nae Ionescu, despite their autochthonous elements, paralleled closely that of Martin Heidegger, while the philosophy of Constantin Noica came much closer to German idealism than to any "Romanian authenticity" it invoked. Not so for Mircea Eliade. His in-depth knowledge of Indian culture and familiarity with India provided him with specific insights into the "Orient" that distinguished his cultural output from those of his generational colleagues. The result was his commitment to a universalism that would benefit from the contributions of non-European cultures, expressed in his idea of a "new humanism" that, instead of viewing other cultures from an exclusively Western perspective, would recognise and provide a space for expression to their "autonomous value" (Eliade 1961). This was the "solution" that he saw to what he insistently exposed as the "provincialism" of Western culture. As such, his humanism was not envisioned as the benevolent gesture of an enlightened European "recognising" the inherent value of the voice of the subaltern, but as a historical necessity that would deliver Europe from its (potentially catastrophic) limitations: "With us, it is an old conviction that Western philosophy is dangerously close to "provincializing" itself (if the expression be permitted): first by jealously isolating itself in its own tradition and ignoring, for example, the problems and solutions of Oriental thought;

second by its obstinate refusal to recognize any "situations" except those of the man of the historical civilizations, in defiance of the experience of "primitive" man, of man as a member of the traditional societies" (Eliade 1959, xii).

In Eliade's mind, the dangers posed by Western domination were by no means limited to philosophy. Reflecting in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War on the Holocaust and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which he identified as the greatest horrors in human history and as the destructive consequences of Western modernity, Eliade saw modern man as fully exposed to the "terror of history": "And in our day, when historical pressure no longer allows any escape, how can man tolerate the catastrophes and horrors of history – from collective deportations and massacres to atomic bombings – if beyond them he can glimpse no sign, no transhistorical meaning; if they are only the blind play of economic, social, or political forces, or, even worse, only the result of the "liberties" that a minority takes and exercises directly on the stage of universal history?" (Eliade 1959, 151). The latter aspect touches on Eliade's pervasive anti-elitist attitude that rendered him a staunch defender of the "common man," be it a Romanian peasant or a colonial subject, his belief that the development of "high culture," in Western Europe and elsewhere, was an instrument of subjugation serving the interests of the ruling elite, ultimately responsible for the desacralisation of the world and its "fallen" state (Eliade 1987, 152). As a result, since he believed that the very notion of scientific analysis was inextricably linked to colonialism and Western practices of domination, the only path he saw to the "new universalism" he proposed was through a re-valorisation of spiritual experience as the common ground where different cultures could meet. This argument was supported by his belief in the transcendental unity of the experiences of the sacred and acted as the impetus prompting his interest in developing the field he called "history of religions" (and others "comparative religious studies"). "Religions, if they were many, would be the *same*; but because they are *one*, they are different. And the unity of "religions" will finally be seen when each man has his own mode of approaching God, when the Supreme Being is revealed to each one directly, without the precedent of tradition or collective experience" (Eliade 1991c [1932], 59).

The necessity for a "new humanism" was occasioned by decolonisation, the "historical moment" when "the people of Asia have recently entered history" and "so-called "primitive" peoples are preparing to make their

appearance in the horizon of greater history (that is, they are seeking to become *active subjects* of history instead of its *passive objects*, as they have been hitherto). But, if the peoples of the West are no longer the only ones to "create" history, their spiritual and cultural values will no longer enjoy the privileged place, to say nothing of the unquestionable authority, that they enjoyed some generations ago" (Eliade 1961, 2). This prompted a need for dialogue, but one that, in order to be authentic, could not be limited to the "empirical and utilitarian language" of the colonisers, but would have had to be on an equal footing, taking note of the "central values in the cultures of the participants" (Eliade 1961, 2). By rejecting what Tlostanova (2009), following Sandoval, calls "the asymmetric translation of all *others* into the language of western epistemology" and valuing instead the others' epistemic traditions, Eliade's concept of "new humanism" appears close—save for its insistence on the over-arching importance of the sacred—to a decolonial perspective. The development of such a perspective was not only a reflection on decolonisation and his experience in India, but also profoundly related to the ambivalence of his position as an Eastern European intellectual and the ensuing epistemic position of in-betweenness.

The two elements appear actually as inseparable both in Eliade's scholarly work and in his political views, and both are pervaded by an anti-Western attitude that was simultaneously in line with that of his Romanian contemporaries and articulated differently due to his first-hand experience of colonialism. With regard to understanding Romanian folklore, he was convinced to have come "closer to the very roots of Romanian popular genius by studying the symbolism of the temple in Borobudur, yoga, or Babylonian cosmology – than my philosopher-colleagues who were studying, for instance, Kant. Because no one has yet identified the hidden links between the Javanese or Mesopotamian archaic symbolism and the one residing in the deep layers of Romanian folklore" (Eliade 1991b, 221). Politically, he was equally convinced that by casting in his lot with the legionary movement, he was supporting a "revolution animated by the idea of self-sacrifice," without any parallel in the modern world outside of "Gandhi's national and social revolution, traversed by a Christian and Tolstoian spirit" (Eliade 1937a). In Romanian politics, his aforementioned opposition to the ruling elites took the form of a wholesale condemnation of the entire interwar political class, identified in his homonymous 1937 article as "blind pilots" who were leading the country through "the most stormy, tragic, and dangerous epoch that

Europe has known" toward certain catastrophe (Eliade 1937d). The same anti-establishment attitude was characteristic of the legionary movement, as was the valorisation of the Romanian peasants as "authentic" reposi- tories of the "true," "essential" values of the nation, yet another feature that Eliade was very sympathetic of.

His profession of faith in the legionary cause lays bare the cultural trauma related to Romania's peripherality and backwardness, as well as the desperate attempt to overcome it: "I believe in the destiny of the Romanian nation – that is why I believe in the triumph of the Legionary Movement. A nation that has proven immense creative powers, at all levels of reality, cannot founder at the periphery of history, in a Balka- nised democracy and a civil catastrophe" (Eliade 1937e). Glossing over the movement's extreme violence and its virulent antisemitism, Eliade viewed it not only as aligned with the other revolutionary movements in Europe and elsewhere, but as *superior* to them (as we have seen, in its alleged similarity with Gandhi's movement), operating a fantasy reversal of the Romanian complex of inferiority toward "the West": "Today the entire world stands under the sign of revolution. While other people live this revolution in the name of the class struggle and the primacy of the economic (communism), the state (fascism), or the race (Hitlerism)— the Legionary Movement was born under the sign of the Archangel Michael and will triumph through God's grace. That is why, while all other contemporary revolutions are *political*—the legionary revolution is *spiritual and Christian*" (Eliade 1937e). Typically for Eliade, who related all contingent reality to the universal, in accordance with his concept of hierophany, he attributed to the movement a significance that tran- scended Romania, its "meaning" seen as "different from everything that was done in history until today. And the legionary triumph will bring not only the restoration of the virtues of our nation, a worthy, dignified, and powerful Romania – but will create a new man, corresponding to a new type of European life" (Eliade 1937e). Against the traumatic reality of a semi-colonial dependent condition, Eliade believed that the "rebirth" of Romania through the Legion's "Christian revolution" entailed a "spiri- tual imperialism" legitimating its "historical mission" (Eliade 1937c). This alleged "mission" consisted of the fact that "Romania allowed itself the "madness" [recall his identical formulation for the Indian civil disobedi- ence campaign] to show to the West that a perfect civil life can *only* be fulfilled through an authentically Christian life and that the most superb

destiny a nation can have is *to make history through supra-historical values*"
(Eliade 1937b).

In retrospect, such statements appear ludicrous and, for some authors,
cast doubts on Eliade's entire oeuvre. Similarly, at another interpre-
tive level, in the field of fascism studies, Eugen Weber's association of
the rituals employed by the legionary movement with those of African
messianic cults and cargo cults (Weber 1965, 523–525, 532–533) have
been ridiculed by virtually every serious scholar writing on the Romanian
native variant of fascism. Yet both Eliade and Weber were authors who
were very familiar with the colonial context (this is actually imputed to the
latter for drawing such "wild" associations) as well as with Romania, and
perhaps such a reading of the legionary movement might help to partly
explain Eliade's attraction to it. As mentioned above, the movement's
skilful employment of elements of folklore, its appeal to the "cosmic
Christianity" of Romanian peasants, replete with pre-Christian elements,
was certainly attractive to him, all the more so as he believed that "this
mysticism, which is not *new*, since it has been in our lands since the times
when the Romanian people was being born, coincides with the will of
the entire nation for a spiritual renewal" (Eliade 1937b). The "will of the
nation" might not have been for "spiritual renewal" but for an improve-
ment of the dismal conditions prevailing in Romanian agriculture, where
more than 70% of the population was employed as late as 1941 (Roberts
1951, 360–361), but the promise of such an improvement in a rhetoric
that simultaneously appealed to popular Orthodoxy must have been a very
powerful one indeed for Romanian peasants, who were otherwise patron-
ised or simply ignored by the mainstream democratic parties. At the same
time, despite its many peculiarities related to the Romanian context (a
feature that is characteristic of all fascist movements), as recent studies
have convincingly shown, the Legion was well within the mainstream of
European fascism (Iordachi 2004; Clark 2015; Cârstocea 2020). Unlike
the democratic parties that imitated the West and the communist one that
followed the orders of the Soviet Union even when these virtually decreed
its undoing, the legionary movement could not only claim to belong to
the fascist party family, but even proclaim its superiority over the two
regimes in Italy and Germany (in line with its valorisation of spirituality
and criticism of the latter as too materialistic), which it did at the cost of
compromising cooperation with and support from them. In the absence
of other feasible political models, this appeared as promising to intellec-
tuals tormented by the trauma of their peripheral, semi-colonial status as

the notions of social justice (within national limits) did to peasants and workers.

Conclusion

Eliade's reflections on patterns of domination and dependence, clearly differentiated in his scholarly writings, were unfortunately often unreflexively lumped together in his polemical political ones. His re-coding of an ultra-nationalist exclusionary fascist organisation as a liberation movement from foreign domination (despite the fact that the elites he and the legionaries were militating against were ethnic Romanian) appears easier to understand when taking into account his reflections on Romania's peripherality and its condition as a "victim of history," not unlike colonial India in this respect—a view also shared by Rabindranath Tagore, who had himself visited Romania (Eliade 1991a, 156). It is thus in the framework of his long-standing opposition to Western political and cultural hegemony that one can understand Eliade's cultural pluralism and support for decolonisation, as well as his attraction to Romania's interwar fascist movement. In turn, instead of seeing Eliade's interest in India as prompted by typical European Orientalism, as some of his post-colonial critics have done (Basu 2001), this chapter argues that it might be more fruitful to understand his fascination for India as an attempt to escape the ambiguity and ambivalence of Romania's position in East Central Europe by embracing not the civilisational model of the West, but its "wholly Other," Rudolf Otto's (1959) *ganz Andere* that Eliade cited profusely, the Orient.

In doing so, he articulated a much more sophisticated conceptualisation of Romanian peripherality than that of his contemporaries and made East Central Europe's inherent ambivalence and ambiguity into the essence of "the sacred" to the study of which he dedicated his career. Suspicious of the insistence of most Romanian nationalists on the "uniqueness" and "superiority" of Christian Orthodoxy, which he viewed as a "provincial" response to the "provincialism" of Western culture, he was however ready to embrace its mystical, peasant variety as the localised manifestation of "nonhistorical, universal, mythical structures" (Allen 1988, 561). Finally, the analysis of his political choices also serves as a warning about the ease with which notions associated with a genuine commitment to cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue can be reifying and essentialising in their anti-hegemonic

impetus against a "Western" modernity. The case of Mircea Eliade adds another tragic chapter to the long history of instances when defensive and anti-imperialist emancipatory rhetoric was converted into exclusionary nationalism—and if Eliade left behind that legacy after he left Romania, its long shadow never left him. When viewed also in the context of contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, promises to empower the silent "masses" that share a fate as victims of a Western capitalist-driven process of modernisation, arguments for local or national specificity allegedly suppressed by European—or global—structures of domination (whether the European Union or transnational capital) are still to be found both within the academic literature exploring the potential nexus of post-colonialism and post-socialism, as well as in the discourse of far-right parties

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Reportage from the (Post-)Contact Zone: Polish Travellers to Decolonised India (1950–1980)

Agnieszka Sadecka

Witold Koehler, travelling to India in 1954, was struck by the fact that everywhere he went, he was greeted with a smile. Soon, however, he noticed that not all smiles were genuine, they concealed a nothingness which made him feel strangely "invisible" (Koehler 1957, 47). First, he was puzzled by this, but then he understood the reasons behind such behaviour:

> After all, a European has only recently become a guest here. Before, he was a conqueror, oppressor, one of the many plagues of this country. A sahib would demand submission, he taught people to manifest it with a smile. This smile is stuck to the lips of those that had to deal with him. But, under the mask of a smile, there is coldness. (Koehler 1957, 48)[1]

Koehler realised that, as a European, he would always be associated with the former colonisers, and it would be difficult to escape

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[1] If not otherwise indicated, all translation from Polish are by the author.

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this equation. He relates his experiences in a travel account, *Indie przez dziurkę od klucza* [*India through a keyhole*] (1957), written following his visit to India for the World Forestry Congress in Dehradun. Until the period of the Thaw (1953–1957), opportunities to travel abroad had been limited, which is why the first Polish post-World War II works of reportage from India date from the late 1950s. Other texts analysed here are travel accounts by Jerzy Ros (1957), Jerzy Putrament (1963, 1967), Wiesław Górnicki (1964), Janusz Gołębiowski (1966), Wojciech Giełżyński (1977) and Jerzy Chociłowski (1977).[2] These authors, categorised broadly as reporters, all published nonfictional accounts of their journeys to India in the first three decades of the country's independence. Their narratives are unique, as they represent India through the lenses of reporters from a country that was not fully independent at the time, situated in a liminal position between East and West. Poland belonged to the socialist bloc, which officially supported Third World countries against what they perceived as imperialistic capitalism. The Second and Third World alliance, an integral part of the bipolar world divided by the Iron Curtain, was an important element of the ideology of the communist bloc (Westad, 2007; McMahon (ed.), 2013). Undoubtedly, sending reporters and official representatives abroad was a way for the communist authorities to effectuate a sort of rapprochement between a decolonised country with socialist sympathies and the countries of the Eastern Bloc, but also to convince the societies of the Soviet-controlled countries that the wider world is within their reach, that it was also "their world" (Gorsuch 2011). Despite these declarations of closeness and sharing the common values of socialism, the reporters clearly marked the fact of their belonging to European culture and values, even though this meant that they had to face the burden of the European colonial past in which they had not directly taken part.

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[2] While Ros, Górnicki, Gołębiowski, Giełżyński and Chociłowski were professional reporters, affiliated to newspapers, magazines or the Polish Press Agency, Koehler and Putrament visited India as official representatives. Nevertheless, their accounts were included in this study since they read like reportage: it is the style of the text not the occupation of the author that qualifies them for this category.

A Postcolonial Contact Zone

Although the reporters arrived in India after the country had achieved independence from the British, they found themselves in what may be called a "postcolonial contact zone," to paraphrase Mary-Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (1992, 4). In this postcolonial contact zone, the direct relation of domination was no longer there, but traces of colonial hegemony were still visible. Although the reporters' main goal was to depict the decolonisation and modernisation of independent India, their attention frequently shifted to various traces of the colonial past that could be found in India of their time. They arrived in India as envoys of the Socialist Bloc, expecting a country undergoing great change, industrialisation, and a transformation of society and culture. Nevertheless, as white Europeans, they became inscribed in the old binary divisions between the colonisers and the colonised, the hierarchies formed in a previous era, and more or less inadvertently, they stepped into the role of the British "sahib." This is only one of the paradoxes that characterise this postcolonial—or decolonial—encounter.

Another paradoxical aspect of this encounter is that in their narratives, two seemingly contradictory discourses—a socialist and an Orientalist one—intertwine. The reporters are confronted with the colonial heritage, but also, they are trapped in the web of meanings produced in the colonial era. While claiming to be anti-colonial and calling for a political emancipation of India along the socialist model, they reproduce Orientalist visions of Indian culture and society. For instance, they reach for a cultural text that determines the European imagination of the Orient: Ros labels a group of people as looking similar to "Ali Baba and his forty thieves" (Ros 1957, 236). Koehler likens his trip to a "journey on a magical carpet" (1957, 38) and Putrament compares an Indian palace to a building from "One Thousand and One Nights" (1963, 114). Although Wiesław Górnicki calls for writers to abandon the notions of the exotic when talking about India, in his descriptions of Indian *nizams* and maharajas, he, too, paints a picture of "Oriental luxury" (1964). One can certainly find the familiar concept of "Oriental despotism" in his characterisation of the feudal system. Furthermore, the fact that the reporters return to the rather clichéd topics of Hindu spirituality, mysterious rituals, "strange-looking" *sadhus* and "holy cows" is already proof

that the long-lasting formulas of Orientalist perceptions of India were not only deeply ingrained in the Polish reporters' minds, but also readily activated, even though on the surface they seemed to espouse different views.[3] Indeed, they write about India's industrialisation, the communist movement, central planning and Nehru's socialist sympathies—but their travel observations often remain conspicuously similar to those of their colonial predecessors.

Moreover, the reporters—although anti-colonial in their declarations—could not simply appear as Polish travellers who had nothing in common with colonialism: as white Europeans, they were often associated with the former colonial masters, with all that it entailed. Many of them became conscious of their skin colour for the first time in their life. In India, their white skin meant that they were not able to act as if they were invisible and they could not behave as neutral reporters covering events from a distance. The burden of the colonial past was also the source of their privilege: in no Western European country would a visitor from behind the Iron Curtain receive such attention and special treatment as they did in India. A socialist reporter, expected to champion equality, would thus find themselves in circumstances hardly matching the ideology of their state. Giełżyński remembered how thrilled he was to stay in a luxurious hotel in Mumbai (1977, 8–9), Górnicki noted his impressions from a lavish reception held by a rich German industrialist (1964, 162–163), and Putrament roamed around India with an official delegation, having access to the best products and services India could offer (1963, 96).

Finally, in a larger context, while the reporters inscribed themselves in the ideological discourse of Soviet support of the decolonised Third World, they were themselves not entirely free, since they were subjected to censorship and travel restrictions imposed by Poland's location as a USSR satellite state. They were travellers on an official mission: either, like Koehler and Putrament, they attended international events as representatives of their country, or, like the professional journalists, they were sent as foreign correspondents to India by their news agencies or newspapers. They had to receive permission to apply for a passport and return the document as soon as they arrived back in Poland. To be published, their accounts had to pass through the Central Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Performances. Certainly, they became part of the

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[3] For further discussion on Orientalising India, see: Inden (1986), Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds) (1993) and Prakash (1995).

propagandist discourse of internationalism and the promotion of communism in the decolonised countries of the Third World, and thus the reporters, willingly or not, became "troubadours of the socialist empire."[4]

These paradoxes or inconsistencies are characteristic of such Polish—postcolonial and socialist—encounters with India. To further explore these encounters, the first part of this chapter features a critique of colonialism and its legacies as expressed in the works of reportage analysed here. In the second part, the focus shifts to the ambiguous position of the Polish reporter in postcolonial India.

A Socialist Critique of Colonialism

The critique of Western colonialism is probably the most predictable and obvious element of any socialist travel reportage from India. In the accounts analysed here, however, it is bountifully laced with contradictions. Clearly, such criticism was fuelled by both a condemnation of colonialism as a historical phenomenon, and by the general negative campaign against the West in Soviet Cold-War propaganda. The Marxist–Leninist ideology of anti-imperialism and the Soviet Union's official and unofficial support of anti-colonial, communist revolutions in the so-called Third World, which were to put an end to the capitalist system of exploitation worldwide, would influence Soviet foreign policy for several decades. It sometimes meant the direct involvement of the USSR in various regional conflicts, but after Stalin's death, it was more often a battle of worldviews and ideologies, as well as indirect financial and military support, rather than an armed struggle (McMahon (ed.), 2013). As Geoffrey Roberts points out, the post-Stalin Soviet Union strived to present itself as an advocate of peace (simultaneously projecting an image of an aggressive, belligerent West), and as a supporter of national liberation in the former colonies in the Third World (1999, 36–37). Nikita Khrushchev in particular placed foreign affairs at the centre of his political outlook. According to Roberts, "[H]is foreign policy style was exuberant, bombastic and politically and ideologically militant"; in terms of contents, "he emphasised peaceful, economic competition between socialism and capitalism, but he projected an equally, if not more, competitive policy in the political, ideological and military" (1999, 44). A powerful ally in this

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[4] This term refers to the Polish title of Ewa M. Thompson's book, *Imperial Knowledge* (2000), translated into Polish as "Trubadurzy imperium"—troubadours of the empire.

competition, in Khrushchev's view, were the national liberation movements in the non-aligned countries, as it was expected that their victory would eventually lead to the adoption of socialism in these newly independent states. Support for the decolonised countries of the Third World continued in the Brezhnev era of détente.[5]

Nevertheless, relations with the West remained tense. Even though mutual contacts increased in the late 1960s and 1970s, the propaganda still talked of "American imperialism," the "rotten West," "enemies of the people" and "revisionists with foreign connections"—such language was particularly noticeable in Poland in the Stalinist period, and then again during the nationalist, antisemitic campaign led by the communist authorities in March 1968 (Głowiński 2009, 96). Thus, it was convenient to denigrate the West when the occasion presented itself, especially in the context of the colonial heritage of Western European states. The narrators of reportage accounts from India take many opportunities to deplore India's colonial past and they are eager to vilify the Western colonialists. The intensity of their critique decreases with time, reflecting the change in propaganda newspeak: Ros, travelling to India in the mid-1950s, obviously uses much stronger language than Chociłowski, whose account dates from 1977. The following quotation illustrates Ros' criticism of imperialism:

> On the way to India, once called "the pearl in the British crown",[6] turning the pages of the history of organised robbery—imperialism—it is worth wondering, how long will Egypt and the Suez Canal remain the Aesopian goose laying golden eggs to foreigners? The last months have given an answer to this question. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Egypt and the liquidation of the parasitic Company—became one of the most important political events of the last decade. The spring of the colonial

[5] For contemporary research on Soviet involvement in the Third World, see: Roberts, McMahon, Westad; for scholarly articles on Soviet support to the Third World from the Cold War era, see: Steven R. David's "Soviet Involvement in Third World Coups," *International Security* 11, no. 1 (Summer 1986): 3–36; Mark N. Katz, "The Soviet Union and the Third World," *Current History*, (October 1986): 327–339; Gu Guan-Fu, "Soviet Aid to the Third World: An Analysis of Its Strategy," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 1983): 71–89.

[6] The reporter used an imprecise translation of the British labelling of India as the "jewel in the crown," calling it, instead, "the pearl" in the crown (this corresponds to the analogous expression in Polish).

peoples rejecting the old yokes is an undeniable fact of our era. (Ros 1957, 50–51)

Ros not only calls imperialism "organised robbery," but he uses this opportunity to comment on a contemporary debate on the future of the Suez Canal. Egypt's president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, backed by the Soviet Union, decided to nationalise the Canal in 1956. The Suez Canal was previously managed by the mostly French-owned Suez Canal Company (which Ros calls "parasitic"). This caused international outrage and led to a British–French–Israeli intervention, and to high tension between the Cold War rivals. Eventually, the United States and the Soviet Union exerted pressure on all parties to negotiate a ceasefire, and Egypt kept control of the Canal. Ros underlines the importance of this event, treating it as a symptom of a larger phenomenon of decolonisation. Chociłowski, on the other hand, throughout his account from India does not refer to colonialism or imperialism in a contemporary context—these are memories of the past, certainly negative ones, but without any larger impact on the world politics of his day.

Understandably, the British colonial past features in all the accounts from India analysed here. It is presented as one of the most important aspects in Indian history, marking India's perception of the West forever. According to Jerzy Ros, starting from the first Europeans that reached India, all the successive Westerners that arrived on the Subcontinent can be considered looters and exploiters. Since their arrival, "violence, like a shadow, was ever-present in the march of Europeans, that ravage the country and plunder mercilessly. The traditions of Portuguese sailors are continued by the French, Dutch and English, who followed their suit" (1957, 59). Thus, India is presented as a victim of European oppressors, who continuously attacked it and tried to subjugate it throughout its history. The logic of European conquest and domination was, moreover, prominent in the Marxist–Leninist world outlook, and could serve as a warning to Third World independent states against closer ties with the West.

Although the British colonial rule in India was much more extensive and well-known than the Portuguese domination of parts of the Subcontinent, Ros and his fellow reporter, Janusz Gołębiowski, choose the case of Goa as an example of colonial conquest, not only because it was the region where Vasco da Gama first landed and where the early European conquest of India began, but also because this territory was

in the reporters' times still not part of independent India. Goa features in the reportages of Ros and Gołębiowski as a contemporary example of colonialism. In their reflections on the status of Goa, the two reporters tend to include in the category of colonial oppression, a whole range of phenomena. For instance, they show links between the British colonial domination before India's independence and the contemporary rule of the Portuguese in Goa. In this attempt, they disregard the actual historical and political context only to underline the evils of colonialism in the face of a current event: the ongoing discussions on Goa joining independent India. This eventually happened in 1961, when Goa became annexed to the Indian Union. At other points of their narratives, the reporters liken nineteenth-century British imperialism to the "American imperialism" of their times—again, choosing to disregard the context (Ros 1957, 108; Gołębiowski 1966, 100–105). It is significant that all forms of colonial or imperialist domination by Westerners, real and hypothetical, are boxed together. Indeed, while talking about India's colonial past, the reporters tend to use the term "Western imperialism," rather than British, Portuguese or French imperialism. It is clear that the discussion on Goa and, more generally, on European colonialism, is meant to be a commentary on contemporary world events, affirming the ideological location of the reporters in the worldview of the Eastern Bloc. In fact, their critique is not very far from the views of well-known contemporary critics in postcolonial studies, who unveiled the workings of various forms of Western imperialism. While the Polish reporters did not apply the vocabulary or the theoretical instruments of postcolonial studies, and the style they used was, intentionally, not scholarly, their engaged, bottom-up approach and observations of daily life could very well illustrate the postcolonial condition of India. Thus, their texts in some way anticipated the appearance of postcolonial critique, in a Marxist spirit, which would explore the complex and deep-rooted consequences of European colonial presence in various parts of the world.

Traces of Colonialism in Indian Cities

The anti-colonialism of the reporters is also manifested in their descriptions of British heritage in India. To the Polish reporters, even a glance at Indian cities conjures up the image of the Raj. Jerzy Putrament, arriving on New Delhi's main avenue, Rajpath, which he calls "the local Champs-Élysées" (1963, 90), is struck by the ugliness of the monument to King

George V, placed in the vicinity of India Gate. "What kind of a devil of bad taste has led the English to locate this monstrosity here?" (1963, 90), asks the writer, and describes the lack of proportions of the sculpture, ridiculing the appearance of the British monarch.[7] Putrament is similarly disapproving of colonial monuments that he sees in Kolkata (then Calcutta):

> The English have arranged this terrain in their own way: they have placed plenty of statues of a series of viceroys, and at the other end of the field [Maidan], they have built the horrible "Victoria Memorial," an edifice in a pseudo-Indian style, honouring the queen, or rather the empress of India, who once visited Calcutta. They still carefully preserve the slippers she wore here, and other such relics. We were invited to see this wonder from close up. Somehow, we did not feel like it. (1963, 16)

The colonial monuments are thus a metaphor for the British presence in India, and by demonstrating his disinterest and displeasure with them, Putrament shows his negative attitude to colonialism.

The reporters describe the other specimens of urban architecture left behind by the British: white bungalows, stone churches and colonial residences. Interestingly, while they are critical of colonialism as a form of power, they find such architecture aesthetically appealing, perhaps because it resembles European buildings and evokes a feeling of familiarity among the otherwise vastly different surroundings. Witold Koehler, for instance, observes that New Delhi is a young, pleasant city, whose history goes back only a few decades, and calls it an "English foundling, bearing an indelible beauty of its origin" (1957, 49). Putrament—although a communist official—is even more enthusiastic about the Indian capital:

> A colonial city, designed mostly for "whites," planned in advance, very green: both the lawns and the avenues . . . A city in a constant state of development. Extremely beautiful, ultramodern houses, multi-storeyed and multi-coloured. The American Embassy, an original rectangle. The somewhat classicist edifice of the Soviet Embassy. Hotel Ashoka, slightly touched with "Hinduism," wonderful, comfortable, slightly nouveau-riche . . . (1963, 89)

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[7] Indeed, King George V statue was removed from this prominent position in the 1960s and joined many other statues of prominent figures from the British Raj era at the Coronation Park, situated rather far from the centre of the city, in North Delhi.

Although Putrament puts the term "whites" in quotation marks, he is not particularly troubled by the fact that New Delhi was built by and for the colonisers—the same "Western imperialists" of whom he is so critical. Clearly, the Polish reporters' gaze on British heritage in India is not as ideologically consistent as it may initially seem, and there are ruptures in their anti-colonial stance. When they stray from political and social matters, the reporters do not feel obliged to maintain their criticism of the West—quite the opposite: they take pleasure in being surrounded by aesthetically pleasing and familiar-looking edifices. This troubled, contradictory approach could be seen as a typical instance of colonial ambiguity: on the one hand, colonial power is despised and rejected, but on the other hand, underneath this negative attitude, there is the recognition of the "cultural authority" of the colonisers, as Homi K. Bhabha would call it, and a creeping desire (1994, 105). It is a desire to plunge into the beauty of the colonial creations, to feel part of them—to become *like* the European sahibs in India—in a manifestation of almost colonial mimicry (1994, 107).

Capitalism and Colonialism Intertwined

For the reporters, another way of showcasing the evils of colonialism to their readers is to compare the colonial exploitation of labour in India to the exploitations of workers in early capitalism in the West. In order to do so, they juxtapose images of modern-day Calcutta with those of nineteenth-century London. For instance, Putrament describes Calcutta and focuses on a bridge joining two sides of the city: "A huge bridge on the Hooghly, the local mighty, dirty river, a tributary of the Ganges. A Victorian bridge, tall, with a thick network of bindings, clogged with cars, rickshaws, cyclists. A horrendous mix of the ugliness of nineteenth-century London with Bengali poverty" (1967, 27). It is striking that Jerzy Chociłowski, who visits Calcutta ten years after Putrament, makes an almost identical observation: "Calcutta was built by the English, which is why a European walking around the city centre or the factory and ports district on the banks of the Hooghly river—might feel a bit like in London, Hamburg, Amsterdam, or even Łódź[8] of the previous century"

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[8] Łódź is a city in central Poland, famous for its nineteenth-century development of the textile industry.

(1977, 119). Thus, in both reporters' accounts, Calcutta is placed side-by-side with the main centres of the European industrial revolution; it is one of the elements of the capitalist system that they see as exploitative and unfair. In drawing the readers' attention to these similarities, the reporters attempt to connect various historical phenomena which perhaps are not fully comparable. Indeed, Johannes Fabian, in his analysis of how anthropology has been constructing the notion of Other, places great emphasis on the use of temporal distancing, describing such anti-historical approaches as the "denial of coevalness" (1983, 50, 73). Time and history are disregarded by the reporters, as India appears to them as removed in time. However, by highlighting this connection of the two different places in two different epochs, the reporters skilfully present capitalism as a global, interconnected system which benefits only the privileged.

This emphasis on the fact that economic inequality is a lasting, global phenomenon can also be observed in Górnicki's description of the banking district of Calcutta. He presents it as a dark, gloomy place, haunted by the spirits of the past, which are embodied by the dirty, classicist pillars with figures of Atlases on the buildings' façades. This landscape is static and unchanging:

> For a hundred or two hundred years, the dark fingers of Indian clerks have been writing the same words, names and addresses into white books. Only the numbers are ever increasing. This is the only thing that changes. The dirty Atlases over the gates and the goddesses from allegories, faded from the sun's heat, point their lifeless stare at the crowd . . . (Górnicki 1964, 159)

Górnicki clearly labels those who are the oppressors and those who are the oppressed, introducing a visual (or even racial) difference between "dark fingers" and "white books." He mentions the "increasing numbers," representing the growing income of the colonisers—a fortune made at the expense of the colonised. In his opinion, colonial domination led to a standstill and froze India in time, hindering its development.

Although Górnicki comes to India in the 1960s, he still feels the effects of the colonial era. Once, walking around the crowded streets of Calcutta, Górnicki spots a Chrysler car. "A hallucination?" he asks himself, and describes the passenger sitting in the back of the car as a "pink, robust gentleman with side-whiskers" (1964, 159). The reporter makes an instant connection: "although he does not wear a top hat

and a tobacco-brown overcoat, his neck is adorned with a discreet tie instead of a necktie, but these traits… the blond sideburns… a smirk on his lips… Which century is it, really?" (Górnicki 1964, 159). Thus, for Górnicki, every wealthy Englishman in an expensive car is a living memory of the colonial era; in different clothes, but with the same attitude. He suggests that the business ties between Britain and India were not fully severed at the end of political dependence, and that the British have continued to take advantage of India up to that point through the banking sector, among others. Controlling the finances is, for the reporter, equivalent to having real power over a country. This is not only a critique of economic dependence inherited from the colonial era. It is also a call for reform: if no radical changes are introduced, the effects of colonialism will never disappear. Such calls for reforms, which the reader can easily assume would be reforms in the socialist spirit, appear throughout Górnicki's account, whether he is talking about feudalism, agricultural reform, religion or social systems.

Nevertheless, the attitude towards the former colonisers in India is not merely a rational one, justified by the reporters' political views. In an emotional outburst, Górnicki exclaims: "Oh, Victorian England, red-haired, puritan, with your stiff bustle, England Ruling the Waves, England of cruel admirals and deceitful diplomats—you did not neglect anything that would allow you not to be hated till the end" (Górnicki 1964, 170–171). This personification of England serves to present India's former metropolis as the main villain of history, the cruel, cold and rigid character who imposes its will on others. This depiction of England is not only helpful to Górnicki in describing India's colonial past, but it is certainly meant to reinforce a negative perception of England—representing the capitalist West—among his readers in Poland.

The critique of India's colonial oppression is thus a way to express very contemporary ideological concerns: the growing role of the United States of America in the world, the Cold War rivalry with the West and the pervasiveness of the capitalist system which India—to the displeasure of its socialist partners—is also gradually embracing. Apart from competing for international influence, the two main players in the global arena, the United States and the Soviet Union, are also competing for prestige. By exporting its technology and lending support to the Third World, the Soviet Union not only asserted its military and economic power, but also tried to "woo 'hearts and minds' of the new Third World" (Engerman 2013, 228). The reporters' narratives can be considered as part of this

"wooing": by presenting colonialism and capitalism as outdated Western systems which exploit and create dependence, the Soviet Union appears as a force of modernity, with an ambitious vision and an active global presence. These accounts could also be instrumental domestically: they could help in convincing the citizens of the Socialist Bloc that their leaders are efficient and successful, and that communism is a valid ideology in the world.

The Ambiguous Position of a Polish Reporter in India

It is exactly with this goal in mind that selected writers and reporters were allowed to travel abroad, serving partly as "ambassadors of socialism" (Gorsuch 2011, 108). Not only were they representing their country, and by extension, the entire Eastern Bloc, but they were encouraged to document their experience abroad in travel accounts. These accounts were intended to inform the public at home about the "spring of the colonial peoples" (as Ros put it) and about the global outreach of socialism. It is thus not surprising that the Polish reporters in India describe the activity of the Indian communists, the Indian governments' policies inspired by Marxism, the socialist sympathies of India's leaders and the technological development aided by Eastern European experts. While they are mostly inquisitive and committed to understanding the complexities of Indian society, they tend to offer simplistic explanations for the events they observe. India's poverty and social inequalities are attributed solely to colonial exploitation, and, after Independence, the incomplete adoption of socialism. The reporters tend to diminish the role of other factors, for instance long-lasting social hierarchies, rooted in religious beliefs and hardened by customs, patriarchal models, widespread corruption, distrust between religious communities, difficult access to natural resources or even the challenging climate.[9] Traditions and customs are, however, labelled as "obscurantist," "superstitious" or "backward." Their judgmental and categorising gaze is once again the gaze of an outsider, a Westerner imposing their authoritative view on India.

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[9] So did the Polish authorities—Janusz Gołębiowski describes the failed project of exporting Polish trucks and motorbikes to India: their engines would simply stop working in high temperatures (see: Gołębiowski 1966, 160).

Indeed, to average Indians, they are just like other Europeans, representatives of Western culture. As such, the reporters have to face the baggage of the colonial past associated with the presence of white travellers in India. Ros, a reporter with a strong socialist outlook, who wants to get to know the average inhabitants of India and understand social and cultural phenomena, is particularly troubled by this fact. He realises that wherever he goes, his presence will alter the way people work, the way they refer to his guide, the way they look at him. Whenever Ros wants to talk to local workers, they usually do not react, either not wanting to get into trouble, or expecting that he will demand something of them. The association with the British colonisers even lands the reporter in trouble. Ros goes to a large communist rally held at Calcutta's Maidan. He merges with the crowd, but his presence does not remain unnoticed. People start hissing, pushing, labelling him as an Englishman:

> [D]espite the seriousness of the situation, it would be hard not to notice the paradox of this incident: any time now, a Polish journalist will be beaten up for allegedly being a war instigator. In my thoughts, I curse my light canvas hat, the camera, the freshly ironed shorts and those almost two hundred years of British occupation which taught Indians to see a representative of the despised imperialist world in every white person. (1957, 248)

Finally, Ros manages to pull out his passport from his pocket and the atmosphere suddenly changes. He claims that when he proves to be a Pole, he is surrounded by people patting him on the back and cheering, as he recalls, "long live the USSR and Poland!" (1957, 249).

Apart from this incident, the reporters most often enjoy a privileged status in India. This fact is difficult to reconcile with their socialist beliefs. Putrament faces this problem: while he admits that being a white visitor is sometimes helpful, he openly expresses his ethical concerns. In hotels, there are so many employees, says Putrament, that whenever you want to do something, call the elevator or open the door, someone is there to help. "You know that he is counting on a tip, you don't have money for the tip, you are ashamed that you don't have any, and ashamed that you let them serve you, as if you were an old, impotent man" (1967, 15). However, special treatment is sometimes welcome. When Putrament travels by car with three other Poles, they are stopped by the police. The officer asks for documents, and it turns out that their passports had been

left back at the embassy. The reporter is relieved when the officer lets them go, seeing "three white sahibs" inside the car (1963, 114).

What differentiates them perhaps from their predecessors of the colonial era is that they try to maintain an attitude of a certain humility—they understand that their knowledge of India is limited and that they are not able to escape the burden of being a European in this former colony. While enjoying their privileged status as white foreigners—albeit, with a guilty conscience—the Polish reporters try hard to underline how different they are from their Western counterparts. Górnicki describes his interaction with American visitors to India. He is very critical of these tourists, ridiculing their naiveté or even stupidity:

> A couple of American tourists: Fantastic! Have you seen the snake charmer? How can they live in such poverty? And how many prostitutes! It's so hot, hotter than in Manhattan in the summer! Are you also going to Madurai? Why is this Coca-Cola so warm? What do you think about Nehru? Fantastic! No, we are tourists. (1964, 171)

Górnicki tries to present the American tourists as those who think in stereotypes, who see India as the land of "snake charmers," and of extreme poverty and destitution (surprisingly, he does not notice similar tendencies in himself or his compatriots). He is appalled that they compare everything to what they know from home—heat, Coca-Cola, etc. By painting such a picture of American tourists, the reporter places himself outside the Western travel industry. He is more than a tourist—he is a reporter on a mission to depict the decolonised Subcontinent, and as such, he has more authority to talk about India. Clearly, as representatives of communist Poland, all the reporters analysed here distance themselves from colonialism presented as a Western phenomenon.

Conclusion

The reporters criticise Western influences over India and lament India's colonial past. This criticism is incorporated into the Cold War narrative of rivalry between socialism and the capitalist West. The term "colonialism" is frequently replaced by "imperialism," so that it is possible to draw a parallel between the European and American global presence in their times. It was typical of Soviet propaganda to accuse America of imperialism and of following in the footsteps of colonialism. Nevertheless,

this criticism is not uniform: when it comes to buildings from the colonial era, the reporters appreciate their beauty. They deplore the effects of colonialism on Indian society, but they sometimes reap benefits from their status as Europeans in India. Finally, they ridicule American tourists, but are they really that different from them? Their itineraries are not planned by a tour operator—but are certainly to some extent pre-planned by their superiors or by the Polish embassy in India. Their agency and freedom of expression are also limited, even though they claim to represent a freedom- and peace-loving ideology. In a wider sense, although critical of Western imperialism, they are victims of another imperialism themselves—the Soviet one.

The reporters' identity is also manifold, and different facets of it are manifested at different times. Generally, the reporters clearly identify themselves as Polish, as in Ros' encounter with the local crowd at a communist rally. Furthermore, they stress their belonging to the block of socialist countries. Soviet modernity—rational, secular, egalitarian (at least in theory)—is presented as an alternative to the Western European one, the by-product of which was colonial domination. However, the reporters do feel European, frequently referring to "our norms" or "our, European culture" (Chociłowski 1977, 20). It seems that it gives them particular satisfaction to be treated on a par with other visitors from Europe, although this entails the unwanted association with the colonial past. They actively try to present themselves as anti-colonial and anti-imperialist, and to differentiate their approach from that of their Western European colleagues, but their attempts are not always successful, and their behaviour is full of contradictions. Their symbolic positioning on the world map when visiting India is deeply ambivalent and very telling. They are Europeans, unintentionally reproducing an Orientalist mindset, at times manifesting their superiority towards Indian people and culture and observing India with a colonial gaze (Spurr, 1993). But, they are also Poles, who feel a certain inferiority as citizens of the lesser, socialist world, isolated and marginalised by their Western counterparts. In their ideological statements, they expect India to closely imitate the socialist model of development, and as a result, through this mimetic act, to recognise the legitimacy of such a model and Eastern European authority in the matter. Nevertheless, they are themselves imitating Western Europeans, trying to become like them, subconsciously mimicking their behaviour. This sense of insecurity, barely hidden, reinforces their tendency to objectify, if not degrade, the non-European Others. While denouncing imperialism

and capitalism, they are forever torn between their loyalty to the actual socialist power, embodied by the Soviet Union, and their aspiration to be part of the Western cultural power, even at the cost of embracing colonial attitudes and discourses.

This ambiguous condition in which the socialist-era reporters find themselves reflects a typically Polish condition, described by Hanna Gosk in her 2010 book about the various forms of domination and dependency in Polish literature, *Opowieści "skolonizowanego/kolonizatora." W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku* [The "colonised/coloniser narratives." Postdependence studies on the Polish 20th and 21st c. fiction] (2010, 247). In relation to the long history of being dominated, if not colonised, by foreign powers, rich literary traditions exist of presenting Polishness in relation to victimhood, suffering and resistance to hegemony. However, Polish literature also produced discourses of domination over other groups: its neighbours, particularly those in the east, its minorities or its Others. The various instances of subjugation, dependence, erasing of memory, uncertainty of one's own position, which Sławomir Mrożek humorously described as "to the east of the West and to the west of the East" (Janion 2014, 13), all create an anxiety, deeply influencing the Polish collective identity. In Gosk's words, "Polish identity, suspended between the East and the West, insistently emphasizes its own peculiarities as if afraid that someone will subvert and diminish its belief in its exceptionality" (2010, 247). Hence, the coexistence of guilt and privilege, inferiority and superiority, disapproval and admiration, which characterise the socialist travel accounts, is yet another trait of this ambivalent condition. The narrators of these works of reportage frequently switch sides and loyalties. At times, they refer to one symbolic power, and at times, to another. They can be a *homo sovieticus*, but they can also act as true Europeans. They can drink *chai* with Indian factory workers in the spirit of socialist brotherhood, but they can also mingle with rich industrialists and India's elite at diplomatic parties and complain about India's "backwardness." They may stay in Western-style hotels, where they will write radical critiques of colonialism, but they may also attend communist rallies in colonial-style clothes. These inconsistencies reinforce the impression that the Polish reporters are indeed in a liminal position, culturally identifying themselves with the West, but politically, with their Eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union. They are victims of the Cold War divide, which forces them to take strongly ideological positions, leaving little space for nuance. However, their accounts offer a

unique perspective on India in its first few decades of independence, and on the political atmosphere of those times of decolonisation.

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An East Central European "Sahib" in a Former Colony: Andrzej Bobkowski in Guatemala (1948–1961)

Jagoda Wierzejska

The chapter focuses on the case of a Polish writer, Andrzej Bobkowski, who emigrated to Guatemala in 1948. On the one hand, he was deeply disappointed with the political and cultural weakness of Western Europe, which had consented to the new division of the world leaving Eastern and East Central Europe to the Soviets. On the other hand, being already in mid-forties, this well-educated cosmopolitan, who had been living in France since spring 1939, started to perceive East Central Europeanness as a second-class status. Given these circumstances, Bobkowski's emigration to Guatemala presents itself as a compensatory experience, a way to deny the subordinate position of a Central European in the West during and immediately after World War II. The compensatory dimension of his emigration manifested itself in that he adopted a role of a "sahib" in Guatemala. According to the writer, a Central European is someone who was disregarded in the West, but here, in the former colony, being "white" can elevate his social position and earn him recognition unattainable to him in the West.

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The Polish writer Andrzej Bobkowski (1913–1961) posthumously gained undeniable fame and sympathy from his readers. This "rogue of freedom," as he defined himself, who rode a bicycle along the Côte d'Azur and constructed aeroplane models in remote Guatemala, was indeed straightforward and charming as well as gifted with a considerable literary talent. However, following a wave of enthusiasm for the author and his writing, some scholars sought to look at his work more critically. One of the most notorious of such attempts was an article by Łukasz Mikołajewski revealing Bobkowski's antisemitism. The researcher compared the most famous book by the writer, a wartime diary *Szkice piórkiem* [Sketches made with a stylus], with the manuscript written in France, and discovered that in the post-war edition from 1957 Bobkowski had removed excerpts that were downright anti-semitic (Mikołajewski 2011, 110–131).

Another thread of Bobkowski's work, which requires the attention of literary historians and which I am going to explore in this chapter, is the image of Guatemala and its inhabitants presented in the writer's diaries, short stories, and most notably, correspondence. Analysing these texts reveals how the author overtly or tacitly manifested the mentality of a nineteenth-century coloniser. Even though he truly loved Guatemala, where he had settled in 1948 and lived until his death, his perception of it was grounded in a belief in the superiority of the white man. Such a viewpoint, I intend to point out, resulted not only from a condescending attitude on the part of Bobkowski, who considered himself an emblematic European in relation to the non-European population. His own experience, gained in Western Europe, of being from a (supposedly) second-class world, i.e. East Central Europe, was another important factor determining his attitudes towards the inhabitants of Guatemala whom he tended to turn into non-European others. Thus, I will analyse a curious case of colonial othering manifested by Bobkowski, an immigrant who had come from Poland via France to Guatemala, once a Spanish colony. In a paradoxical manner, this immigrant, whose homeland—at that time a Soviet-dominated country—had experienced subjection to foreign rule since the end of the eighteenth century, took on the role of a white coloniser in another postcolonial space, at least in his attitudes and perceptions.

The Decision of Life and Death

Together with his wife, Barbara, Bobkowski arrived in France in March 1939, when he was not yet 26. The couple's stay was to have a temporary character. They were waiting for the completion of formalities and the onward journey to Buenos Aires where Bobkowski, a graduate of the Warsaw School of Economics, was going to take up a job adequate to his education. This plan misfired, and the outbreak of World War II found Andrzej and Barbara in Paris. They lived there for nine years and, after that period, in 1948, took a step which Bobkowski's acquaintance, literary critic Tymon Terlecki, called "the decision of life and death" (Terlecki 2006, 8). They packed their meagre belongings and on June 28 boarded the "Jagiełło" bound for Guatemala, having no more than 100 dollars in their pockets, hardly knowing any Spanish or anything about living conditions in Central America.

There were several reasons why Bobkowski decided to make such a radical move from the place where he lived. Perhaps an important motivation was the writer's desire to experience an overseas adventure, which he signalled several times. Already before the war, he wrote to his wife's sister, Anna Seifert: "I am simply, humanly, pulled to another world, climate, people, nature. [...] There is something in me that tightens up and rises to the sun" (Zieliński 1984, 87). Three months before the journey he informed his uncle, Aleksander Bobkowski: "Well – one Bobkowski is going to conquer. I really have something of an adventurer in myself. It makes me happy" (Bobkowski 2013a, 43). Apparently, Bobkowski was eager to think about his decision in terms of an exciting, hazardous activity, much akin to adventure books for boys. In a letter to Jerzy Turowicz, the editor-in-chief of the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a weekly for liberal Catholic intellectuals, he seemed proud to be "a wild one" (Bobkowski 2013b, 40), brave enough to take a leap of faith into the unknown.

Another reason why the author moved to Guatemala was his deep disappointment with Europe, which had started right after the beginning of the war and reached the level of complete rejection of the old continent in the late 1940s. In spring 1948, having planned the journey, Bobkowski wrote to his acquaintance, the famous writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz:

I am starting to write all my letters in a "testamentary" mood now. Simply because if nothing occurs, in the first half of May, probably on 13th,[1] I am sailing from Cannes to Cristobal in Panama. From there I am flying by plane to Guatemala. I am starting to bequeath something to everybody. To you I am bequeathing Europe. Actually, the worst thing I have left. It's an embarrassing legacy. (Bobkowski 1986, 77)

Having regarded Europe as the worst, most embarrassing part of his heritage, the writer also depreciated qualities which had formed the basis for his psycho-intellectual disposition and hinted that he saw them as catastrophic. In his diaries, post-war journalism, and correspondence alike, Bobkowski found Europe, and especially Western Europe, degraded and humiliated, first, because it had succumbed to the aggressive politics of Nazi Germany, and second, because it had not resisted Stalin's totalitarianism. As a result of passivity and indifference, the writer pointed out, Western Europe had lost its spiritual identity and revealed an axiological void in its place. It had become conformist and cowardly—the best proof of which was that after the war, it became complicit in allowing the Soviet Union to dominate the Central and Eastern part of the continent, succumbing to a convenient illusion that the Western scrap of the European mainland was the whole continent, and becoming dependent on the aid from the United States. Western Europe, Bobkowski summed up, ceased to be an inspiring, fertile ground. The only thing it was still able to deliver was a disgusting type of man, fleeing from freedom, melted in the mass, stripped of individualism, reduced to null.

Finally, Bobkowski decided to start a new life in Guatemala because, not wanting to stay in Western Europe, he also did not want to go back to Poland, which, after the war, was included in the Soviet zone of influence. He answered the question, "why?" in his fictional diptych "Pożegnanie" ["Farewell"] and "List" ["A letter"], both published in the Polish emigre monthly *Kultura*[2] [*Culture*] in 1948. The protagonist of the latter short story, talking to a friend who chose to return to Poland, says:

[1] The trip, initially planned for May 13, was ultimately shifted to June.

[2] *Kultura*, edited by Jerzy Giedroyć, was the most influential Polish-émigré journal published from 1947 to 2000 by the Literary Institute, initially in Rome, then Paris. Over years it printed and popularised works of many leading Polish intellectuals and writers living in the Polish People's Republic and exiles, such as Witold Gombrowicz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Juliusz Mieroszewski, Józef Czapski, Konstanty Jeleński and many others. Bobkowski published a lot in the series Library of *Kultura*.

> I don't want, and I can't condemn myself to a lifetime of lying […] On behalf of any system and any political orientation I can't be quiet when I know I should speak. […] Here, the thoughts dictate my words, there, licensed words have started to dictate thoughts. (Bobkowski 1998, 65)

Bobkowski, like the protagonist of his short story, knew that there was no place for him in his homeland, which was steadily being converted into a totalitarian panopticon. He rejected Poland, already in the first stage of communist transformation, because he opposed political control over human life. His desire was to stay "a regular, ordinary man" living by his own rules, not an adherent of any political faith who was deprived of "the holy right not to believe" (Bobkowski 2009, 156).

In short, Bobkowski went to Guatemala to realise a boy's "dream of the jungle" he had had "from an early age,"[3] but, first and foremost, to defend his own sense of individualism and dignity. From his perspective, escaping from Europe in general and Poland in particular, was a way to stay free from the petrified, fake pseudo-values of the old continent, which had not withstood the test of World War II.

To Be a Quetzal

Guatemala, a country with a colonial past, whose territory had been conquered by Spanish conquistadors in 1523, did not constitute a stable political unit in the late 40s and 50s of the twentieth century, when Andrzej and Barbara Bobkowski lived there. It was economically dependent on big Northern American concerns and notoriously torn by military upheavals. In 1949, the power of the Communists strengthened, and in 1950 the dictatorship of the leftist President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán—and terror no less than behind the Iron Curtain—began. The most acute was the coup spearheaded by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, supported by the CIA, in 1954. Bobkowski, who detested every form of communism, wrote at that time about the "liberation of Guatemala" and the "defeat of communism" that could have threatened all the territory between Panama and Mexico (Bobkowski 1955, 56–73). The revolution, however, did not

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[3] See: "The jungle! I was always dreaming about it! … From an early age. And here it is!" These words of Bobkowski were noted by Aleksander Grobicki, who visited the writer in Guatemala, in 1959 (Grobicki 1961, 82). All translations from Bobkowski, if not otherwise indicated, are by the author.

assuade the country's internal conflicts. On the contrary, in 1960 the partisan struggle turned into a civil war lasting for decades, with two hundred thousand casualties, mostly civilians.

Despite these, Bobkowski not only became so attached to Guatemala that he called it "his second homeland" (Bobkowski 2013b, 108) and never considered going back to Europe, but he also perceived this country as a land of those who could "breathe freely" (Bobkowski 1998, 74), i.e. those who were internally free, faithful to their own principles, and able to appreciate the value of everyday life. A few months after his arrival, having struggled through starting his own business in manufacturing aeroplane models, he declared: "I am still facing long months of hard days. But these days I can always be in harmony with myself, free, independent, in a position 'at ease' with a cigarette in my mouth. Not at attention in the '*Europalager*'" (Bobkowski 1998, 83). Over time, after settling in Guatemala and getting through the "eye of the storm," as the writer used to call gaining experience in model making, he became convinced that he truly lived only in that "pocket country" where "nobody was in the crowd," feeling a sense of individualism and self-fulfilment. That conviction led him to the discovery of the constitutive properties of his subjectivity, properties that transformed a sense of alienation in a foreign world into a participatory experience lying at the heart of human identity: "I am an emblem of Guatemala, their bird, the quetzal. There existed only stuffed specimens, because caged, they die after a few days. And I do not want to die and to be seen stuffed" (Bobkowski 1986, 90). The excerpts cited above show that, for Bobkowski, living in Guatemala meant following an existential project of a highly ethical character, subordinated to the imperative: "to be a quetzal," i.e. a free man, deciding for himself, and not being subjected to any ideology that does not care about the rights and needs of individuals.

Bobkowski, especially in the essays "Na tyłach" ["Behind the front"] (1949) and "Pytania dzikich ludzi" ["Savages' questions"] (1951), often contrasted Europe with Guatemala or the whole of Central America, and Europeans with Latinos. In both texts, America is presented as a land of freedom, and its inhabitants, although "savage" in terms of erudition, are seen as authentic and sensible. Europeans, by contrast, are in the writer's opinion hypocrites devoid of an elementary instinct of liberty and confusing abstract creations of their intellect with reality. Bobkowski assigned the qualities traditionally associated with the Old World—independence, rationality, and the ideal of authenticity—to the New World to

appreciate America and to prove a thesis that contemporary Europeans were primitive destroyers of their own heritage. "A European who does not want to be free, ceases to be a European. To stay one, I had to leave" (Bobkowski 1998, 77), the author commented, at one stroke defending his life decision and suggesting that "normal cultural Europe" could be found nowadays only far away from the old continent.

Interestingly, Bobkowski occasionally showed an awareness that representatives of the Old World perceived territories and dwellers of their former colonies in a deeply deprecating way. He commented:

> The world, the new world, the third big world. We hardly talk about it, we mock Guatemalans, Costa Ricans, San Salvadorans, and Hondurans, but what do we know about them? It is an incredibly rich area, big and open, full of freedom and still yet in the best traditions of Europe. Who knows, maybe the spirit can survive right here and come to fruition again? I do not feel at all that I am in a small town, in a small country. I feel primarily a continent underfoot, vast, gorgeous, bursting with life. (Bobkowski 1998, 80)

Having asked such questions, Bobkowski not only thematised the problem of the existence of unfair colonial stereotypes, but also sought to argue with them. His letter to Turowicz provides a telling testimony to that fact: "The Spanish discovered these countries [of Central America – J.W.] and covered them with so many lies and humbug that they need to be re-discovered now" (Bobkowski 2013b, 49). In another letter, the writer unequivocally criticised the phenomenon of conquest. From his perspective, the conquistadors of Central America, Hermán Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, and Francisco Pizarro, were "ordinary scoundrels" (Bobkowski 2013b, 78) who at the threshold of modernity sowed violence that resulted in some of the atrocities of the twentieth century (Bobkowski 2013b, 78).

On the surface, the writer's existential project, and the vision of Guatemala subjected to it, do not raise any doubts. The fact that Bobkowski does not notice the inherent qualities of the New World besides the beauty of nature, and describes the New World by incessantly comparing it with his native continent, is of course striking. It proves undoubtedly that Europe remained for him the most important reference point and that, even after 1948, he was attached to the European mainland with strong feelings that revealed hurt and disappointed

love. Nevertheless, considering the aforementioned arguments, leaving Europe for America in order to remain European, at first glance seems a paradoxical but consistent life plan.

Among Caballeros

To investigate the complexity of the writer's vision of Guatemala, one needs to look more closely and critically at his writing focused on Guatemala, as well as his private correspondence with members of his family and his best friends, with whom Bobkowski was very frank. At the outset of such an investigation it is reasonable to ask the author's own question from the essay "Na tyłach": what did he really know about Guatemala when he was starting his new life there? To answer this question, we should keep in mind that one of Bobkowski's intellectual desires was to analyse the character of respective nations, a passion popular at that time as part and parcel of the pursuits of a learned traveller, but today considered a source of harmful stereotypes and rather out of vogue. Among his favourite books were *Letters from Russia* by the Marquis de Custine, Banville's and Michelet's works, but, first and foremost, *The Spectrum of Europe* by Hermann Keyserling, the writer's intellectual master. Bobkowski modelled his image of the Central American macro-region and its inhabitants on Keyserling's *South America Meditations: On Hell and Heaven in the Soul of Man* from 1932. In Keyserling's vision, the continent was still ruled by wild telluric powers that in Europe had already been annihilated, while its people were deprived of any entrepreneurial spirit and controlled by instincts, unconscious reflexes, and whimsical desires. It turns out that, although Bobkowski wanted to see Guatemala as a land of freedom, sensibility, and authenticity, and often represented the country as possessing these vital features, he was not really ready to reconsider Keyserling's views critically and he continued to fully identify with them, especially in his letters. Seven years after his arrival in Guatemala, the author wrote about this openly to Jerzy Giedroyć, the editor-in-chief of *Kultura*, his intimate friend with whom he exchanged many letters:

> One thing is certain, namely what Keyserling wrote in his *Meditations Sudamericanes*: that it is a continent of the third day of creation (reptiles and amphibians), and that something of this came into the people. And that without understanding what is *gana*, something unpredictable in these people, you can't understand them. (Giedroyc and Bobkowski 1997, 302)

Such assessments did not hinder Bobkowski from appreciating and even adoring his second homeland. Privately, however, especially in difficult moments, e.g. during financial crises in his business or political upheavals, he made comments that undoubtedly starkly contradicted such essays as "Na tyłach" or "Pytania dzikich ludzi," in which a positive image of Guatemala persisted. The writer was particularly critical towards Guatemalans, the vast majority of whom were the Ladino—descendants of the Maya, who had the blood of the Spanish conquistadors in their veins. Just like Keyserling, Bobkowski wrote at least a few diatribes against the Ladino *gana*. For him it was a fatal force that he, as a merchant and entrepreneur faithful to the bourgeois ethos (Kowalczyk 2011, 197–213), had to struggle with during the course of his whole stay in Guatemala. He sought to explain that phenomenon to Giedroyć as follows:

> Only here I understood this term *gana* brilliantly picked up by Keyserling. In other words, *gana* is **desire** [**ochota**]. But our desire is after all more concrete and precise in comparison to *gana*. They say in Spanish: Yo tengo gana de bailar = as if I feel like dancing. This *gana* sprouts from everything here. (Giedroyc and Bobkowski 1997, 34)[4]

Surprisingly, Bobkowski combined comments of this kind with an argument in which Central America and Latinos gain characteristics like those of Europe and Europeans, yet—unlike in the essays quoted above—these features are far from positive. In such cases Guatemala, which was to be a space of self-realisation and authenticity, begins to embody that from which the writer had fled in 1948, but in an even more annoying version. According to his diary "Z notatek modelarza" ["From the modeller's notes"], Guatemalans reveal "typically European" disadvantages and turn out to be laden with "a persisting inferiority complex, laziness, lack of will and initiative" (Bobkowski 2006, 144). Moreover, they transform from internally free people into playful "*caballeros*" who resolve problems with revolvers, hunt for sharks using machine guns, and rebel against the elementary principles of order. Such a deprecatory view of Guatemala by its metaphorical identification with post-war Europe and the hyperbolisation of its putative disorder is combined with the writer's exaltation over Guatemalan reality. Unexpectedly, that exaltation is grounded in Bobkowski's origin from … the "old and good" Europe. Therefore,

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[4] The author's emphasis. See also Giedroyć and Bobkowski (1997, 667–668).

Europeanness, degraded and devoid of value after the war, appears to be a very ambiguous frame of reference, whose positive or negative values function always as a defining principle for assessing the other.

Bobkowski also commented on the instability of Guatemalan political life. From the beginning of his stay in the country, he was a witness to subsequent riots and revolts resulting in a varying number of casualties, but he invariably considered them an nonserious grotesque, a tragicomic caricature of stable politics, in short: "an operetta." The humoristic descriptions of those events can be found especially in Bobkowski's correspondence with his mother (Bobkowski 2008) but they recur in some of his essays as well. "Powieść meteorologiczna" ["Meteorological fiction"], for example, a review of Michał Choromański's novel, is dedicated not to the analysis of the novel, but to the semblance of this tiny country, Guatemala, to a dollhouse run by infantile politicians, with miniature wars, and populated by Guatemalans, the puppets who act as if in a theatre "with a full gamut of incredible phraseology and pathos" (Bobkowski 1959a, 202).[5] Tracing the roots of the operetta-like politics in Central America, the writer finds it in the Spanish influences and colonial heritage of the continent. He persuaded Turowicz: "All of them [Spanish conquistadors – J.W.] wanted to be sovereign little kings [króliki].[6] All of them had to cope with their compatriots' conspiracies. […] The conquest continues here. In lack of space,[7] the lust for power has taken its place" (Bobkowski 2013b, 69). In a letter to his mother the author continued the topic:

> This is a seed of Spanishness, a seed of incessant anarchy that is stuck in the soul of every Spaniard, mixed with a desire to be rich, a boiling ambition […], and with a need to satisfy such desires by all means except for a regular job, a constructional and constructive consistency, which are typical for every so-called European. (Bobkowski 2008, 31)

These assertions represent the core ambiguity at work in Bobkowski's writing. Not only did Bobkowski see the negative, long-lasting consequences of Central America's subordination to the colonial rule of the

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[5] The text is a review of Michał Choromański's work *Prolegomena do wszelkich nauk hermetycznych* [Prolegomena to any hermetic studies] (1958).

[6] Untranslatable wordplay: "królik" (pol.) means "rabbit" and "little king."

[7] Bobkowski means the lack of space for further conquests.

Spanish (the consequences that made him perceive Latinos with a sense of superiority), he also manifested antipathy and contempt towards the Spanish themselves. Already on the board of "Jagiełło" and then in Guatemala, the writer met a lot of Spanish people. He and his wife had been given shelter by one of them right after their arrival, before they rented a flat. Nevertheless, his opinions of that nation were always of a deeply derogatory character. "Russians are not Europeans, and neither are the Spanish," is what the author wrote to Giedroyć after observing his host for four days, in July 1948. Statements that the Spanish are not Europeans would be constantly repeated in Bobkowski's correspondence. Despite Bobkowski's bitter rejection of what he saw as Europe in denial of its European ethos, it is Europe, in the end, which remains a model of civilisation understood as culture, behaviours, and attitudes. Bobkowski, a detractor of the exhaustion, passivity, and moral decline of the old continent, nevertheless resurfaces as an apologist of Europeanness.

Given Bobkowski's hatred of communism, it is not surprising that what irritated him most in Guatemala was the spread of that ideology among its inhabitants. He compared Central America with "Sovietized Europe" but considered the former more endangered because, in his words, there, in that land of political children,[8] "the red ideology" merged with "coloured racism" (Bobkowski 2006, 156–157). Bobkowski explained this entanglement in a letter to his friend, Szymon Konarski:

> I wouldn't be surprised if suddenly all over the so-called Latin mainland inhabitants and crossbreeds, so far counting proudly drops of white blood in their bodies and souls, suddenly began to count with pride quarts of coloured blood. This infernal game between dull embodied nationalism and communism has been already wreaking havoc here. All the more that they have as much to do with Western culture, i.e., the culture *par excellence* of white man, as the price of tea in China. […] after more than four years of living here, I have to tell you that my views on the issue of race and so-called "colonialism" have undergone a radical transformation. (Bobkowski 1962, 4)

The direction of that transformation is surprising, because Bobkowski was able to distance himself from the colonising discourse, for his views

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[8] "We, old Europeans, with all our painful and inhuman past, cannot have a lot in common with them [Central Americans – J.W.]. […] Even in comparison to the [Northern – J.W.] Americans they are children" (Bobkowski 2008, 72).

evolved exactly into that which he elsewhere called "supreme remarks" (Bobkowski 1959a, 204), i.e. remarks on the superiority of the European. Such remarks appear, among others, in "Z notatek modelarza" written by Bobkowski during Colonel Armas's rebellion against Guatemalan communists in 1954. The text shows the effort of the author's self-creation as "a white man," "a builder of the whole Western civilisation" (Bobkowski 2006, 157). At a time of emergency, he feels authorised to take the lead of an armed group of "gullible" locals, as he is not a simple example of "one of two dozen of civilisations," but a representative of Europeanness fostered as "something more that is worth defending because nothing of it is worn-out" (Bobkowski 2006, 164). Characterising himself in such a way, the writer seems to reach a feeling of dominating "the wild world." According to his own parallel, he is like a protagonist of Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *In Desert and Wilderness*, Staś, who, protecting and bossing around the African boy, Kali, sees that there is nothing in his eyes but the "brown jungle" (Bobkowski 2006, 164).[9]

The European man's civilising mission out there recurs also in Bobkowski's fiction creates a range of this type of protagonists in his "Guatemalan" short stories. Although, generally speaking, these protagonists discover the authenticity of life in active encounters with the Central American reality, sometimes, unexpectedly, they distance themselves from it and begin to perceive it from the location occupied by the author. For instance, one of the characters of Bobkowski's best known short story *Coco de oro*, Merling, who proudly tells his Polish friend "We are the West" (Bobkowski 1998, 105), sees America as a kind of blank slate, where only after-images of European values become apparent. The unfinished novel Zmierzch [Twilight], whose completion was interrupted by Bobkowski's death in 1961, is the most striking example in this regard. The protagonist, a Pole named Jerzy, a *porte-parole* of the author, recalls "his delightful breaking on through [to the other side] and rising to the surface of half a dollar daily rate" almost entirely in the style of colonisers. Feeling like a winner, he literally uses terms taken from the colonial vocabulary to describe his experience: "A method of conquistadors. I didn't hide from myself that I was moving forward conquest-like" (Bobkowski 2007a, 108).

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[9] See also Bobkowski (1959a, 204).

Coco de oro and *Zmierzch* are works of fiction, but they also manifest the manner of self-understanding that Bobkowski willy-nilly succumbed to in some of his diaries and letters written in Guatemala. On the one hand, having adapted the image of the New World to suit his life project, he perceived that world as a better Europe, a land where true European values still made themselves felt. On the other hand, he attributed features to Central America that effectively contradicted this idealised image. Namely, he suggested that if America resembled Europe, it was equally as bad or worse than the prototype because it had been additionally degraded by "the coloured wiliness" (Bobkowski 2006, 143) of its inhabitants. He considered himself a representative of the old, almost squandered but invaluable culture and civilisation, which according to him "is the work of the white man and nothing can help it, whether one is a racist or not" (Bobkowski 2013a, 94). As a result, his conclusions turn out to be alarmingly close to racism. Here is yet another example.

> One local guy rightly said that the only solution for these countries would be a purchase of a great number of old ships, loading all Indians and crossbreeds, submerging them in the sea and bringing Europeans. [...] Here, in these countries, two cardinal mistakes have their painful consequence: first, that the Spanish did not slaughter all Indians and second, that then no one exterminated the Spanish. (Bobkowski 2009, 76)

This is what Bobkowski wrote to his brother-in-law, Jan Birtus, irritated by the lack of the Guatemalans' resistance to the spreading of communism in the 1950s. Three days later, in a letter to Giedroyć, he repeated that comment almost word for word and added an outrageous conclusion: "As a result of those mistakes, there are millions of [...] incurable 'rasta' of the despicable sort, with whom I don't know what to do. The only way out is to have them by the short and curlies" (Giedroyc and Bobkowski 1997, 136–137). And this was suggested by the writer who simultaneously thought about himself: "I am a quetzal."

A View from the Top Drawer

As can be seen, there is a gaping aporia emerging in the "Guatemalan" work of Bobkowski. One of his texts, if not exactly tackling that aporia, at least throws some light on it. In a letter to Aniela Mieczysławska, a Polish activist in exile and one of Bobkowski's closest friends, the writer

admitted: "I left [France – J.W.] because I felt disgust, because I felt that I will be a pariah there again, a *sale étranger*. And here [in Guatemala – J.W.] they can hate me, but I am a sahib, a white man, for whom they have respect – here I am from the top drawer" (Bobkowski and Mieczysławska 2010, 163–164). Characterising himself, the author uses the word "sahib." Simultaneously, he talks about Guatemalans, usually represented as an undifferentiated mass, with a sense of protectionism and paternalism, as befits a sahib. "And to show them some attention, that a man doesn't feel better than they are, then they respect him twice, then such specimens are ennobled by a relationship with him and feel proud of it" (Bobkowski and Mieczysławska 2010, 164), the author continues in the letter. The second excerpt indicates that despite his declared intention, Bobkowski inadvertently unmasks his sense of superiority: he shows that maintaining relationships with Latinos and treating them as equals means doing them a kind of favour.

Without a deeper interpretation of the letter to Mieczysławska, one could conclude that Bobkowski simply occupies the condescending superior position of a white man and a European towards non-Europeans of a different race and different (lower, in his conviction) cultural and civilisational standards. Apart from the word "sahib" with respect to relationships with Latinos, the author uses the words "pariah" and "*sale étranger*," i.e. "dirty foreigner," to specify how he himself felt in France. After a suggestion that social contacts between Latinos and Europeans exalt the former, while not necessarily the latter, the author asks: "Which Frenchman or Englishman is proud of his friendship with a Pole? None" (Bobkowski and Mieczysławska 2010, 164).[10] This is not a statement of a sahib, but of a subject perceiving himself as subaltern. Bobkowski not only suffered humiliations from the Germans during World War II in France, humiliations which to a considerable extent were shared by him with the whole French population. He also had a first-hand experience of Western orientalising practices towards the land that the West, at least since the Enlightenment, had regarded as Eastern Europe. Bobkowski seemed to be aware that East Central Europe's ambiguous location, as Larry Wolff says, "within Europe but not fully European" (Wolff 1994,

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[10] In his diary written on board of "Jagiełło," shortly after leaving France, Bobkowski made a similar remark in an even more expressive tone: "Even for very intelligent Frenchmen we [Poles – J.W.] will always be a kind of Africa" (Bobkowski 2013c, 95).

11), let Westerners associate this part of the continent with backwardness and barbarism. Although he was an émigré, he realised very quickly, already in the mid-1940s, that East Central Europe, in the aftermath of World War II, would find itself in the Soviet bloc where Communist parties, licensed by Moscow, would establish mono-party totalitarian rule. He moreover saw that the West hypocritically accepted, justified, and even enforced the separation of the East behind the Iron Curtain (Wierzejska 2017, 239–262). The post-Yalta history of Eastern Europe, which ensued directly from the agreement of the Big Three and indirectly, among others, from the image of the macro-region as non-European enclave in the European map, so that history could make an Eastern European cry; and indeed, Bobkowski cried already in August 1944, during the liberation of Paris, because he foresaw that the forthcoming "liberation" of East Central Europe by the Red Army would be the beginning of its new subordination and further degradation.[11] In 1960, referring to his French experience in the 40s, he uses the words "pariah" and "*sale étranger*" in characterising his status in France and in this way to underscore that being from East Central Europe does not give a sense of comfort in Western Europe and can be hardly regarded as a reason to be proud.

Given the writer's reasoning from his letter to Mieczysławska, his decision to settle down in Central America reveals motives beyond his existential project of living an authentic life in the land of freedom. For Bobkowski as an East Central European America appeared as a space of (almost) equal chances for all white people. He discovered that there was scarcely a difference between Eastern and Western Europeans in the American reality because it rewarded nothing but the light colour of the skin. With an attitude of racial othering he manifested towards the Latinos, Bobkowski could perceive himself as "a white man," "a sahib," and, thus, finally achieve the status of simply being European. Bobkowski develops an analogous case of othering in his drama "Czarny piasek" ["Black sand"], published in 1959. The protagonist of the play, Herman Rosenberg, although designed by the author as one of those who begins a new life in Central America after the war, in the eyes of the reader turns out to be a racist burdened with a complex of his Jewish origin. He is

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[11] "And then great boundless joy is superseded by sadness. […] An [American] girl is looking at me and asking in English, why I am crying.

-I am a Pole and I am thinking of Warsaw – I am asking quietly – They [French] can be happy, we [Poles] cannot" (Bobkowski 2007b, 540).

involved in a relationship with a Ladino, but disregards her at the same time, which he explains it as follows: "You know why I'm living with this Rosaria? […] I am living with her because she doesn't even know what it means – a Jew. […] when she passes by a synagogue, she crosses herself, as in front of a church" (Bobkowski 1959b, 61). For Bobkowski and his literary projections, the fundamental difference of being a European, valorised higher than the locals in terms of race, virtually invalidates minor (at least in America) differences such as being Jewish or coming from what he perceives as second-class Europe. Therefore, living overseas had a compensatory dimension. He did not want to acknowledge, however, that this compensation was achieved through imposing the role of the Other on the Ladino, the same role, but with a stronger racist undertone, he had to suffer as an émigré in Western Europe.

Conclusions

How then to account for Bobkowski's "Guatemalan" work with its confusing and troublesome ambiguity? Understanding the historical context of East Central European in-betweenness might explain the social and intellectual limitations of the time and place Bobkowski came from. Manifesting a patronising superiority towards Latinos was, sadly, a natural and obvious attitude for a man born in Europe in the 1910s, educated there in the interwar period, and who, after spending World War II in Western Europe, moved to Central America, disappointed with Europe's indolence at the onset of the Cold War order. Looking at the problem from this perspective, one can risk a hypothesis that it was nothing but the writer's cultural and intellectual formation that trapped him in espousing stereotypical opinions on the character of Latinos as allegedly passive in entrepreneurship and impetuous in emotions. Bobkowski was not interested in observing what was unique in the inhabitants of America and yet untranslatable into European categories. Although he was perceptive and had undeniable analytical abilities, he clearly could not help applying Eurocentric norms to the inhabitants of Central America while creating a sense of superiority on those grounds for himself. This may be the reason why, despite living in Guatemala for thirteen years, he did not see beyond the horizon designated by Keyserling in *Meditations*, and after

reading Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, he considered it the best analysis of the Latinos' nature.[12]

However, considering today's sensibilities, which are strongly affected by postcolonial knowledge, it would be pointless to defend Bobkowski against the charge of racist thinking or at least a colonial mentality in the nineteenth-century style. Drawing on Homi Bhabha, we can see that the "Guatemalan" work of the East Central European writer is penetrated by "the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 2004, 86). Bobkowski clearly does not go beyond the stereotypical perception of the Ladino difference and sees in it the lack of Europeanness. Therefore, his writing confirms and establishes rather than cancels the difference between Europeans and Central Americans, even if, or maybe especially if, the former had been influenced by European culture. The writer's representation of the Ladino—the Other—was strengthened by the fact that Bobkowski himself had been an object of othering in Western Europe. Having come from a country that experienced many forms of denied sovereignty and stereotyping of an Orientalising kind, he found Guatemala a suitable ground to compensate for his complex of being regarded a second-class European. The writer's correspondence proves that it was one of the important reasons why he appreciated his second homeland. "America is a different world, the world that a man can love with all his heart and be happy that he will die here, not in that European shit, not in that French or English snot," Bobkowski wrote to Mieczysławska (Bobkowski and Mieczysławska 2010, 164). No matter, thus, how authentic he wanted to be in his gesture of breaking up with Europe and his encounters with the American reality, he remained a European, or, more specifically, an East Central European, who perceived Latinos through an analogous "lessening glass" that he had once used to take a look at himself. In his need to escape from the old continent, he somehow followed Arthur Rimbaud or Paul Gauguin. However, he resembled Adam Mickiewicz much more: a citizen of Russian Poland, banished to Central Russia for his political activities, who had captured the exotic atmosphere of his journey to the

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[12] Bobkowski read *Nostromo* on Giedroyć' recommendation (Giedroyc and Bobkowski 1997, 608–609). Bobkowski expressed his opinion on Conrad's novel in an essay "Biografia wielkiego Kosmopolaka" (Bobkowski 1998, 239–253). On the postcolonial interpretation of Conrad's work see e.g., Achebe (1988, 251–261), Collits (2005), Hampson (2011, 1–46), and Vogel (2012, 97–112).

Crimea in *Sonety krymskie* [The Crimea Sonnets] (1826). In one of the poems Mickiewicz immortalises the Oriental atmosphere of Bakhchysarai, the former capital of the Crimean Khanate, where "Heaven's harem greets its star array" (Mickiewicz 1917, 11).[13] Symptomatically, when Bobkowski uses the qualifier "exotic," in reference to Guatemala Ciudad under the starry sky, he relies on the same Romantic classic, writing succinctly: "In general, Bakhchysarai by night" (Bobkowski 2013b, 89).

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[13] On the postcolonial interpretation of *Sonnets from the Crimea* see: Skórczewski (2013, 221–245). On Poles' Orientalising perception of Russia, marked by a sense of superiority, see: Janion (2016, 211–256).

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Emigres, Exiles, Settlers—Framing Displaced Identities

Regained Landscapes: The Transfer of Power and Tradition in Polish Discourse of the Regained Territories

Kinga Siewior

Post-Yalta Cartographic Shifts: The Discourse of the Regained Territories and (Post)Colonialism

Przemysław Czapliński, one of the most prominent Polish literary scholars, described the overall condition of culture in post-war Poland by using a single phrase, i.e. *the shift*. Despite its simplicity, the term is highly accurate and provides the basis for an apposite diagnosis. Indeed, in 1945 everything "shifted" in Poland, resulting in an intense and irreversible sensation of estrangement and displacement for millions of people. This common stir developed in four dimensions: (1) geographical and cultural (resettlement); (2) class and cultural (the final demise of the landed gentry, migrations to cities and the accelerated development of the working class); (3) ideological and institutional (change in the dominant ideology and system, i.e. the onset of communism) and (4) ethnic and ethical (the shift of the Poles' status from "majority" to "exclusive nationality") (Czapliński 2016, 189). In this chapter, I am going to focus

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directly on the first dimension, i.e. the territorial changes enforced by the Yalta agreement in February 1945, whose decisions were corroborated by the Potsdam conference in July and August 1945, and the subsequent resettlements of people. The three remaining dimensions will overlap with the issue of migrations and population shifts that I will discuss.

Border shifts were determined during the conferences in Yalta and Potsdam. The eastern voivodeships of the already non-existing Second Republic of Poland (the so-called Eastern Borderlands) were incorporated into the USSR, while the Polish People's Republic gained territories which had previously belonged to Germany, i.e. Silesia, Lower Silesia, the Lubusz Land, Pomerania and the southern part of East Prussia (Varmia and Masuria) that were given the collective name of the "Regained Territories." The redrawing of maps resulted in the migration of millions of Polish and German nationals several months later. The process of displacements affected Polish people (who had previously lived within the Borderlands) and Germans (who used to live in the regions mentioned above), who were forced to hastily leave their "small homelands."[1] The Polish repatriates mostly occupied homesteads abandoned by the Germans. They found their place of destination to be unfamiliar, marked with the centuries-old presence of German culture. An additional level of anxiety was caused by uncertainty about the new system that came with the border shift.

From a psychological perspective, this initial situation can be defined as an axiological shock accompanied by a collective spatial perplexity. Czapliński describes them as follows: "the loss of the Eastern Borderlands [Kresy] and the acquisition of the Western Lands entailed the necessity to create an imagined map that would lead to a merger of the new areas with the phantom contour of the cut-off lands" (Czapliński 2016, 189). The confusion here resulted as much from the encounter with a culturally alien space as from the loss of the "old" national core of the spatial imaginary. The Borderlands used to serve as a bastion of Polish identity and a repository of essential matrices of self-identification that were brought to life during the long ages of Polish political rule there and its cultural expansion, which is now oftentimes characterised as the

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[1] It needs to be stressed that other ethnic groups were also resettled, for example, Ukrainians and Lemkos, either to the USSR or to the Regained Territories, as a result of Operation Vistula (1947–1950), the retaliation of the Polish state against the underground Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Polish variant of imperialism or, simply speaking, colonialism (see: Beauvois 2005; Dąbrowski 2008; Kieniewicz 2008; Skórczewski 2013; Sowa 2011; Traba 2013). In brief, the Borderlands (Kresy) became the space where the Polish colonial project was carried through. Around the end of the sixteenth century, the Polish or Polonised elite would benefit significantly from ruling over these territories. The actions were based on an economic model that resembled relationships between planters and slaves/indentured labourers, and, equally importantly, were camouflaged in Polish culture with a series of colonial discursive practices (comparable to those presented, among others, by Edward Said in *Orientalism*): mythicising the Borderlands space as a national Arcadia or legitimising the civilising mission of the Polish nation (see: Bakuła 2014; Mick 2014; Uffelmann 2013; Zarycki 2014). Cutting off these territories after 1945 resulted in an overwhelming sense of loss (of land and identity), on the one hand, and prompted merging practices carried out within the newly incorporated western territories on the other. Summing up, the cultural integration of the new territorial acquisitions was to a large extent conducted in accordance with colonial rules and models elaborated within the eastern lands.

In this chapter, I am going to focus on these merging practices undertaken within the post-Yalta western territories, which I will call the "discourse of the Regained Territories." Cultural texts (with literature playing a major role) served as the most important medium to introduce contents that domesticated the new territories and consolidated the identity of their newly settled residents. In this sense, the space of these new territories, overlaying itself on the history and myth of the Eastern Borderlands, develops as discourse in correspondence with Orientalist paradigms as defined by Edward Said:

> Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. (Said 1979, 72)

In practice, these three dimensions of Orientalism determine the possibility of defining the imaginary geography that constructs the landscapes of the Regained Territories as a multi-stage rhetorical structure in which subsequent images are strictly subordinated to identity-related and political objectives, such as the legitimisation of rights (including moral rights) to administer the lands, as a result of which they represent not so much the reality itself as the power relation and the structure of dominance which underpins the representation of such a reality.

Nevertheless, the geographical imaginariness of the Regained Territories differs from the imaginariness described by Said and the imaginary import of the Polish Borderlands. The difference lies in the fact that it was contrived as part of the communist ideology in the process of its takeover of the state. Its goal was to produce a massive, complex historico-political-propagandist discourse, imposing a dense network of meanings and values on it. Although covering a wide array of cultural texts varying in genres, the net was in fact based on a rhetoric whose purpose was clearly defined: "persuasive and axiological, convergent with the propaganda language of power, standardised as needed for such a huge territory and the several hundred cities of the Western Lands" (Browarny 2008, 153). In practice, the texts on the Regained Territories would meet the demands of the Polonisation and communisation of the adjoined lands by eliminating any signs of cultural and political difference and historical otherness. Such an identity policy, in turn, was based on a strategy whose chief means of operation was to transpose history into myth. The blotting of the memory of pre-war residents and the creation of a homogenous vision of the Regained Territories as a natural, historically validated, national space was constructed on the basis of references to the Middle Ages (tenth to twelfth century), when representatives of the first Polish dynasty, the Piasts, ruled over a portion of what after the World War II comprised the post-Yalta Western Borderlands. It was the myth of the native Polishness of these regions, proven by the Piast origins, that underlay the definition of the post-Yalta acquisitions as "regained" and the resettlement as the "return to the motherland." A more complicated truth was that, in the opinion of many Poles, the then overused notion of "historical justice," which officially referred to the medieval period of the Polish statehood, in fact entailed a different compensation, that is, a compensation for the annexation of the Eastern Borderlands by the USSR. This was not, however, an articulated position, of course, because such an interpretation of the post-Yalta transformations was inadmissible in the

pro-Soviet historiography of the period of the Polish People's Republic. Watchwords such as "return to motherland" or "historical justice" were completely divorced from the deserted, plundered reality of the post-Yalta Polish west, in which the heritage of the Piasts was barely visible.

Effectively, the Regained Territories were depicted not only as a mythical (ultimately regained) cradle of the Polish statehood, but also as a space which, through the almost complete exchange of people, made room for utopian fantasies of a new socialist society built from scratch. It was a project that defined a double-time horizon, i.e. both retrospective and prospective. The merging narratives were mostly generated and stimulated by official communist institutions, which affected their shape through the use of an extended censorship apparatus on the one hand and an extensive network of literature-related institutions on the other (including, among others, creative scholarships or literary awards for authors of texts devoted to settlement, local branches of the Polish Writers' Union, or the literature lovers' society). The primary function of the Regained Territories discourse was to cater to political demand; therefore, it should above all be perceived as a tool of the communist propaganda.

The properties of the resettlement discourse as a crucial part of the overall Regained Territories propaganda based on legitimating myths and other manipulations of historical and geographical imaginaries, relate it in many ways to colonial discourse. For instance, in her analyses of the history of literature of the Varmia and Masuria region, Joanna Szydłowska talks about the "post-Yalta Occident" as an "imperial discourse which justifies appropriation-related undertakings" (Szydłowska 2013, 21). Arkadiusz Kalin, in turn, describes the literary myth of the "Regained Territories" as a "colonization project prepared long before 1945 which, to a large extent, resulted from reactions to the earlier Bismarck's [myth]," i.e. a response to the (Prussian/German) settlement policies practised earlier in these territories (Kalin 2014, 62). Additionally, when writing about the settlement prose in the context of mimicry and rebellion, Małgorzata Mikołajczak clearly states that it best represents "the features of the colonial situation" (Mikołajczak 2015, 287) and Dorota Wojda uses the example of popular literature devoted to the "Regained Territories" to state that "the settlement did not only mean the recovery of the lands taken away from Poland [centuries before], but also their colonisation with the use of measures taken over from organisations active in the interwar period: the Marine and Colonial

League and the Polish Western Association" (Wojda 2015, 338). The pop-cultural discourse of the Regained Territories is considered to be "de-colonizing and palimpsestial in nature, in the sense functioning in postcolonial studies" (Wojda 2015, 338).

It must be remembered, however, that the Polish (de/re)colonisation project within the lands adjoined after 1945 was characterised by a peculiar multidimensionality or, even, aberration (when compared to the classical models represented by those developed on British or French grounds). First, it is both decolonising and recolonising in the sense that the prefix *de-* means official political and discursive actions against centuries-long German influences and signs of a German presence in those territories, while the prefix *re-* means that such actions replace their "German-ness" with a strictly political and very simplifying vision of their "Polishness." Second, its specificity is also best described by the oxymoronic, yet useful, concept of a "colonised coloniser" proposed several years ago as part of a wider reflection on the Polish (post)colonial condition and the limited empowerment of the Polish colonial subject (Gosk 2010). With reference to the object of my interest, the oxymoron's meaning can be untangled more effectively when supported by claims of the sociologist Tomasz Zarycki, who has described the Regained Territories discourse as typical of centre-periphery relations. He emphasises that during the Polish People's Republic, the Polish state would "sometimes go in for a very aggressive policy of cultural and political homogenisation" (Zarycki 2010, 199). What is important, nonetheless, is that in these actions, Poland remained dependent on another hegemonic power, namely, the Soviet Union. Therefore, what we are dealing with here are doubled relations of power, where the Soviets control the Polish state while allowing some vents for local nationalism as a compensation. This is represented by the Regained Territories discourse, which Zarycki proposes perceiving as internal colonialism or secondary colonialism.

REGAINED LANDSCAPES

As we can see, postcolonial interpretative tools have already developed a consistent methodology in contemporary interpretations of post-Yalta issues. The thesis that, in the context of post-Yalta world order, the onset of communism was an imposition from outside onto Central and Eastern European countries and, as such, bore clear parallels to the colonising process, has been argued by many researchers advocating a postcolonial

perspective on Polish history. In the context of unpacking the myths and ideologies of the Regained Territories operating in communist discourse on this region and especially conspicuously in young adult fiction, the postcolonial perspective is invaluable, additionally helping to develop a new sense of the local after 1989. Yet, it should be complemented with a more nuanced methodology that would further open the complexities of the region not tackled by postcolonial conceptual apparatus. I would like to propose a more cross-sectional view of reading the Regained Territories discourse. My objective is to trace general directions and methods of transmission of Polishness as well as mechanisms of its establishment in the post-Yalta discourse, in the pursuit of which I am going to refer to examples from the literature that represent several regions, rather than one. To complement the whole picture, I will also analyse an example from visual culture. I will reconstruct the transmission of Polishness by looking at just one element of the imagined geography of the Regained Territories, i.e. the landscape. I will use it to distinguish the crucial *topoi* that make up the textual tissue of the post-Yalta territories and I will trace their origins.

When becoming immersed in the new landscape, oftentimes found "exotic" in some respects, the Polish subject had no choice but to develop a language and symbolic economy that would be appropriate to the situation. In my opinion, however, this language was not radically new, but drew on the circulating meanings and measures developed in other fields of (hegemonic) presence and adapted them for new purposes. In other words: in practice, the language was based on borrowings and adaptations of motives, *topoi* and narrative strategies developed in the (interwar) borderland discourse: "colonial symbols and metaphors were adopted [in the Regained Territories discourse], and given new meanings; or new figures were created through negations of the previous ones" (Wojda 2015, 335). Borderlands discourse as the central site of reference here is usually explained in two ways. Firstly, a significant proportion of new settlers in the Regained Territories came from the east, and therefore the Borderlands provided a pattern of cultural references and were an object of nostalgia. Secondly, but more importantly, the Borderlands discourse constitutes a fundamental Polish pattern of appropriation policy, which is, for that matter, also highly subliminal.

I approach landscape as a cultural construct, following an inspiration from the already classic *Landscape and Power* by W. J. T. Mitchell (2002,

5–34). By treating landscape as a dynamic process of signification subordinated to identity-related functions (more as a medium used to establish the rules of social visibility than as an aesthetic genre crucial for European artistic traditions), Mitchell admits straightforwardly that this system of representation is detached from mimeticism and transparency, and that its main function is to voice power relations. In this concept, landscape serves as a representation of a way of seeing things, mostly dependent on the viewer's figure, his way of perception and what he puts beyond the frames of the picture. The viewer constructs and controls the landscape through a selection of specific objects from reality and their iconic organisation. This is always carried out within the framework of a specific rhetoric of description (ethnographic, naturalistic or, for instance, romantic), recognised by the viewer as transparent.

In Mitchell's opinion, the visual aesthetics, visibility standards and values encoded in landscape construction have an unusual ability to circulate in time and space. The phenomenon of migration to peripheries turns out to be of particular importance here (the scholar describes, among others, the transfer of typically English empire aesthetics to New Zealand and the Holy Land) (Mitchell 2002, 21). It is on the frontiers of empires that the exceptional flexibility of aesthetics comes to the surface. Certain landscape-related genres (for instance the picturesque, the pastoral or the sublime) easily accommodate to new local conditions, thus becoming a language to decode, understand and tame basically alien spaces and incorporate them into the central narrative. In short, they provide a perfect toolkit for epistemological conquest.

Considering the above, I regard the landscape of the Regained Territories as an aesthetic and ideological script; a tool used to manage the political contradictions underpinning the entire discourse. These contradictions have already been emphasised by Jacek Kolbuszewski in his pioneering article *Oswajanie krajobrazu* [Landscape Taming]: "While poets would call Silesia a 'regained home', in colloquial language the Regained Territories were often called the Wild West" (Kolbuszewski 1988, 71). But foregrounding this parallel, Kolbuszewski simultaneously simplifies the issue and antagonises "home" and "the Wild West."[2] In

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[2] The perception of post-Yalta territories as the Polish Wild West has recently been extensively examined by Beata Halicka. It can be summed up as follows: "what they had in common with the American original was the chaos, the law of the strongest, fight for property or unlimited possibilities to make a fresh start" (Halicka 2015, 57).

(literary) practice, however, these terms were usually not mutually exclusive, but, quite to the contrary, served as overlapping semantic fields which, in the processual understanding of Polonisation, would simply represent its two consecutive stages.

Therefore, it can be said that discourse of the Regained Territories is defined by two principal landscaping strategies. The first one revolves around schemes of the well-known American *frontier* narration (but also the local Polish borderland discourse, as the Eastern Borderlands are nothing other than a *frontier*) including, in particular, meanings that connote the territories adjoined as *terra nullius*. The second strategy is focused on the *topos* which I call "fatherland-ness." While the former suggests the lack of identity of the post-Yalta territories, the latter replenishes them with Polishness, nativeness and familiarity, denoting a focus on domesticity and factors of belonging in the *topos* of the Regained Territories place/landscape. *Terra nullius* is the starting point of the process of textual merger, and nativeness is the endpoint.

Terra Nullius

If not expressed directly, the Wild West (the American frontier) topics emerge in the discourse of the Regained Territories through synonyms and approximations. This is how one of the settlers in Halina Auderska's novel entitled *Babie lato* [Indian Summer] describes the place of his arrival:

> a promised land, a land of good hope, full of countless opportunities and a variety of goods, a most bizarre land, fertile, ready to bear fruit although only just shattered, a land which is empty yet fit for settlement, with each house ready to be taken, inviting non-natives [….] we took it, it is occupied now, finally our very own land, land, land. (Auderska 1984, 255)

In *Wrastanie* [The Rooting] by Eugeniusz Paukszta, in turn, the narrator says: "In PUR [the State Repatriation Office] they said it was *a brand-new land*, a *second America*, full of miracles […] Now they keep looking for this *Canada*, which they promised in PUR. *Go to the West of Poland. There are houses, land, livestock waiting for you there*. Both true and false" (Paukszta 1979, 8–9). Based on these two fragments only, it is possible to reconstruct the entire semantic field of the Regained Territories, built on partially exclusive meanings: wealth and fertility clashing

with the "shattered" land; the dominance of the elements of nature juxta-posed with the concurrent presence of culture (houses, livestock). These oppositions are brought closer by the fact that it is a no man's land, virtually empty, waiting to be taken possession of.

The narrator in Auderska's novel describes his migration to the new place of residence, emphasising the surrounding void every now and then: "I keep going, a little scared already, and the emptiness is progressing. All villages by the road are shattered" (Auderska 1984, 256), "the village was partially located by the road, and all the houses here are ransacked and empty" (Auderska 1984, 258). After reaching his destination, he adds: "Initially we were hanging around this empty village, dropping in here and there and looking for small livestock. We found nothing but a she-cat that had run wild" (Auderska 1984, 266). Additionally, the characters from *Ziemia* [The Land] by Jan Brzoza "entered the dark streets of the city that fell apart and looked deserted" (Brzoza 1963, 135) while a group of settlers from *Ziemia obiecana* [The Promised Land] by Dionizy Sidorski came to a city with "no traces of man. The streets were full of dirty old pots twisted in most peculiar shapes, broken furniture, cart wheels with no hoops, phone wires and fragments of cables" (Sidorski 1965, 139).

The final fragment defines the post-Yalta emptiness as a lack of people and, even, a lack of any trace of them. In the main part of the narration, the Regained Territories are not space ruled by primordial nature, open areas or fertile rivers, as may be suggested by the initial variant of the Wild West *topos*. They are, instead, marked with ruins, scorched and bombed debris. Additionally, this space of war destruction bears, apart from the evidence of the front moving on to the west, traces of a different, ominous (German) civilisation. The Regained Territories are, first and foremost, ruins, debris, battlefields, overgrown orchards and arable lands shattered by landmines, and, as such, they evoke the sensation of the zero point in the history of post-Yalta territories. It is a post-catastrophic space, where time needs to start running anew.

It is this supposed emptiness that makes it possible to take over and develop the post-Yalta lands. It must be remembered, however, that, as with other uses of the *terra nullius* motif in colonial discourse, the emptiness is ostensible. It is true that some of the German civilians did evacuate together with the retreating troops. Yet, there were also those who stayed in their homesteads or returned there after the front line had

passed. And some natives chose to stay in their houses, too, including Silesians or Masurians. The starting point, commemorated by the discourse of the Regained Territories as a peaceful, collision-free taking-over of the land and property, was in fact marked by a collision of presence. The first settlers would often share their homesteads with the previous residents, as the displacement process only gained momentum after the war (1946). While the indigenous inhabitants appear from time to time in the narration, usually in the role of those who "returned" to the nation, Germans are unwaveringly erased. They may be mentioned in a cursory manner, without much possibility of having any agency or voicing their opinion. They prove to be so insignificant that they even lose the role of an enemy that needs to be fought off. In narrations of the Regained Territories, the fight is waged mainly against the Polish looters and manipulators, who value personal material benefits more than the national wealth.

"Fatherland-Ness"

As I have already mentioned, the aim of the second, crucial phase of the merging practices was to eliminate the "undomesticated" element and develop the space at a symbolic level. In practice, it came down to the Polonisation of this space, i.e. its transformation into a national landscape. After Tim Edensor, "national landscape" can be defined as "selective shorthand for these nations, synecdoches through which they are recognized globally" (Edensor 2002, 39–40). The effect of Polishness is triggered through the migration of well-known symbolic schemes and the conversion of aesthetic forms into peripheral spaces. Such a mechanism, which can be defined as aesthetic transfers, was perfectly described in the context of South-African landscaping traditions by J. M. Coetzee in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988). It was also briefly concluded by David Bunn who stated: "To look at representation in the colonies, therefore, is perhaps to have privileged insight into what is most resilient, most dominant and at the same time most politically constraining in the European landscape tradition" (Bunn 2002, 128). This thesis is true in relation to the representation of the Regained Territories in that it reveals Polish landscaping traditions. In light of the above, how best can we define the Polish national landscape exhibited in the discourse of Regained Territories?

To answer this question, I am going to start by referring to a concept which appears to be less obvious, as it is related to the field of visual

practices. It is older than the period described here and, additionally, it derives from a different spatial source than the Regained Territories. What I mean here is the Fatherland Photography programme, codified in the final years of the Second Republic of Poland by Jan Bułhak,[3] the father of Polish pictorialism, a photographer, theoretician and cultural activist, connected with the Vilnius Region. The Fatherland Photography can be briefly defined as a project of nationalisation of landscape photography, which developed dynamically in the interwar period. The cultural and (equally importantly) political significance of the concept is determined by ascribing a special social and educational mission to photography. It taught patriotism in pictures, and its main task was to preserve (and popularise) the beauty of the national space. By subordinating completely to this objective, Bułhak comes to establish the most recognisable (and universal) pattern of the Polish landscape.

Bułhak's "national" aesthetics glorifies the rural landscape: "No wonder the name of our homeland, 'Poland', contains the word 'pole' [the Polish word for 'field'] which connotes field life and agriculture, meadows and forests, i.e. rural and pastoral properties that describe an agricultural nation, strongly attached to countryside and nature" (Bułhak 1939, 23). The semantic field of thus defined Polishness is constructed by Bułhak based on a catalogue of meticulously selected elements that should feature in the photographs. These are: (1) track and path (rural, with trees on both sides); (2) roadside crosses and shrines; (3) cemetery, rural church, presbytery and chapel; (4) forest and trees; (5) open space (views from hills, fields and meadows); (6) water; (7) housing estates, village, impoverished gentry village, manor house (these motives are crucial, as they present the nation's life); (8) estate of landed gentry, palace, castle; (9) town; (10) farmer and the work of his hands (Bułhak 1939, 26–46). Obviously, these elements are highly imprecise as to their locality, but Bułhak did manage to inscribe them into the geographical and aesthetic context, i.e. the tradition of images of the already mentioned Borderlands, understood as a "space–time continuum of the culture" or, in simpler terms, as imaginary geography. Bułhak linked nativeness to the notions of the Borderlands gentry, the idea of the golden age of the gentry and the

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[3] The symbolic beginnings of Polish Fatherland Photography date back to 1937 and Bułhak's delivery of the paper *Czego nas uczy fotografia hiszpańska*? In the text, he promotes the name of the trend and reconstructs the conditions that permitted its development (see Szymanowicz 2009, 58–86).

idyllic essence of the gentry borderland. This helped him to consolidate the stereotypical genre scenes of life on landowners' estates, i.e. of work on the land (ploughing, haymaking) with landscapes that recall associations with images known from Polish Romantic literature and art. The principal visual code of Fatherland Photography, which eventually became detached from topographic locators, and subsequently became naturalised and standardised in the notion of the Polish landscape, originates from a very specific geographical space (the Eastern Borderlands) and the long-lasting aesthetic tradition of nineteenth-century Polish painting, rooted in Romanticism and neo-Romanticism. Such a connection between geography and imagination is perhaps best highlighted by the fact that Bułhak illustrates his theories with material gathered when wandering across Lithuania, his homeland, looking for traces of the mythical Soplicowo, a Borderlands landowners' village brought to life by the national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, in his epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834). The poem creates a nostalgic picture of the Polish Borderlands gentry and remains the essence of the Polish national imaginary in its Romantic framing.

It should also be remembered, though, that the focus on the past and the very contemporaneous ideological horizon of the Second Republic of Poland—a very new statehood regained in 1918 after 123 years of non-existence—are not mutually exclusive. Bułhak did not hide his engagement in nationalist propaganda, deliberately using his photos as tools to communicate political content which was desired at that time. The fatherland photos were a natural medium of the conservative/nationalist ideology of the interwar governments, the last successors of the "imperial" Borderlands tradition before the war.

Nativeness in Motion

What might be surprising, in fact, is that the formula of visual identification of the national territory developed by Bułhak survived the abrupt change of the political system without too much loss and turned out to be attractive to the communists as well. The best trace of the durability and adaptability of Bułhak's vision is the volume entitled *Fatherland Photography*, published in 1951, already after the photographer's death and during the time of the deepest and most aggressive Stalinism (Bułhak 1951).

In addition to theoretical debates, the book also contains a photographic essay entitled *Ojczyzna w obrazach* [Fatherland in Pictures]. It

is a visual guide to Poland within its new, post-Yalta borders. Next to the industrial landscape so typical of socialist realism (mines, foundries, coal pits), it also contains 27 photographs of Warsaw. The landscapes of ruins quickly transform into images of the heroic work of builders, who erect geometrical scaffolding that gradually turns into Nowy Świat or Aleje Jerozolimskie—landmarks of the post-war capital of Poland. Among other such elements are monuments in Cracow, Lublin or Gdańsk. What prevails there are postcard-sized pictures and close-ups of features from Gothic and Renaissance architecture (Bułhak 1951, 65–123). A special place is occupied by photographs of the Regained Territories, which constitute a follow-up of the pre-war native aesthetics, "untouched by fleeing time." They depict dirt roads, roadside birches, trees and forests, a wooden church with a meadow in the background, an old wooden mill under overcast skies, fishermen in their primitive boats on the water, ripening ears of wheat, sunflowers, harvesters on meadows, ploughed fields, grazing land, empty beaches, low rural buildings and a portrait of a spinner with the traditional wooden spinning wheel. The Regained Territories in the eye of Bułhak's camera are nothing else but rural landscapes, saturated with an Arcadian aura, with an extensive chiaroscuro effect, constructed directly on the basis of the trails described in 1939. The topographic signature is the only thing that differentiates them from the older cycles (Bułhak 1951, 129–149).

What they additionally have in common is a steady development of an illusion of long-lastingness and temporal distance. On the one hand, they confirm the permanence and topicality of the symbolic code in Bułhak's programme, while, on the other, they reveal the constructivist nature and conventionality of the notion of the (national, Polish) landscape as such. In the process of aesthetic transfer and re-contextualisation, the native landscape turns out to be an exchangeable value which can be smoothly transferred into a new symbolic economy to become a tool used in communist identity-related politics. Therefore, the nativity rhetoric reactivated in post-war photographs also proved useful in the new political plan and spatial context. As Szymanowicz put it, "it constructed the myth of the immemorial Polish landscape, which, beyond any doubt, encompassed the regained stretches of the country" (Szymanowicz 2009, 79).

To sum up, the nativity rhetoric became a useful tool of communist propaganda, subordinated to the cultural taming (Polonisation) of the "Regained Territories." This is best shown by the fact that all of Bułhak's travels through the annexed lands (between 1946 and 1947

he travelled around virtually all post-Yalta voivodeships, capturing their landscapes in over 8000 photographs) were financed by the communist Ministry of Transport (Tourism and Transport Department) and selected photographs were not only published in the aforementioned book, but also shown in 1947 and 1948 during official propaganda exhibitions entitled *Piękno Ziem Odzyskanych* [The Beauty of the Regained Territories], and *Pejzaż Ziem Odzyskanych* [The Landscape of the Regained Territories].

The notion of aesthetic transfer is not so obvious, however, as it may at first seem. I do not think that it only boils down to the fact that Bułhak perfectly sensed the ideological demand and was able to find himself in the new communist mission. In a review of *The Landscape of the Regained Territories* exhibition, Jan Sunderland summarised the artist's output as follows:

> Having settled in Warsaw, he begins with what touches him most at the time: he creates a cycle devoted to its ruins, […] Then he proceeds to reconstruct old visions from new motives; thus creating a cycle devoted to Regained Territories […] He is characterized by the same attitude to the rural nature as in days of yore, treating it not only as a theme, but also as a close homeland, a paradise given to him as of God's right. For this reason, it is the photographs of the vast spaces of non-urbanized nature that characterize the artist best and lend to the exhibition an atmosphere of cheerfulness, rest and thinking of eternities. (Sunderland 1948, 18)

Indeed, right before his death, Bułhak would mainly *reconstruct the old visions*: incorporating the motif of the return to the lost landscape of his native lands into new compositions. Without doubt, his selection of motives was dictated by his aesthetic sensitivity developed under a different latitude, which in the post-war period obtained the surprisingly positive approval of censorship. The reconstructions—or returns to the landscape of the native land—reveal one more meaning of such a landscape, closer to the category of a "non-transient object," permanent and well anchored, which I would describe as typical of the circumstances of migration-induced distance. To better understand its mechanism, it may be helpful to get acquainted with the reflection of Kazimierz Wyka, an outstanding Polish essayist, in *Bose ścieżki* [Barefoot trails], which was conceived at the time of Bułhak's travels in the Regained Territories (1947):

> The view from the graveyard hill over my hometown and the vast expanse of fields, bound together with grassy hills, is a central view for me. It is a

centre of permanence, the kind that each of us has under their eyelids. This is where writers' imagination reaches when bringing to existence characters that are closest to their hearts. The entire world is oftentimes memorized as a revolving scene, with only one place that is still. There is always some obligatory horizon, i.e., a line of forests set once and for all, and anything beyond that line results from a decomposition and crash of that obligatory layout and is not so realistic. (Wyka 1978, 13)

A landscape like this, that is, "the centre of permanence," "the necessary horizon" or the "centre of my eyes' patrimony," which satisfies the condition of "absolute permanence"—is borne in people at a double distance, spatial and temporal, and always *post factum*, as a response to the disintegration of the previous order of reality. Wyka tracks it, among others, in the works of Mickiewicz, since it needs to be remembered that *Pan Tadeusz*, in which the canonical image of the Borderlands was consolidated as "native" space, and which served as a source of inspiration for Bułhak, was written in exile in Paris. Wyka calls such landscapes "typical migration phenomena, typical palliatives of longing" (Wyka 1978, 13). The essayist treats the landscape as a means of soothing the pain of longing. On the other hand, as an indirect phenomenon (taken from the author's imagination), it should be treated more universally—as a screen of memory, where the longing is articulated. Could such a representation be of use in the attempt to understand Bułhak's post-war output? By all means, especially if it incorporates the personal context of multiple losses. Right before his death, the photographer had not only left his hometown forever, but also dramatically parted with his entire Vilnius archive (almost all his works burned in one of the war fires in 1945). Therefore, his final project should perhaps be decoded as the works of a displaced person, a Vilnius[4] native and an artist, in mourning for his loss.

So far, I have made attempts to show the significance of the Borderland discourse (as the imaginary geography) in the process of construction of the national landscape on the one hand, while presenting the utility of such a visual structure in the strongly *centralised* discourse of Polonisation of the post-Yalta territories on the other. Yet, the "private" personal, long-driven decoding of Bułhak's post-Yalta photographs undercuts the proposed understanding of the functions of the "native" discourse and

[4] Strictly speaking, the Polish name of the city should be used here—Wilno, because in the interwar period this part of today's Lithuania was part of the Polish state.

the photographs as such start to be perceived not only as an element of the communist vision of a fully Polonised space, but, rather, as individual memorials. Consequently, it may be said that photographs from the Regained Territories create a gap within the official discourse: through direct references to the experience of "loss" of the Borderlands as the small homeland. Nevertheless, as I am going to show later in this chapter, this ambiguity proved to be useful in the official communist discourse as well.

Transitive Landscape

I consider Bułhak's case paradigmatic. First, his works perfectly expose the distinctive features of visual constructions of the national landscape. Second, the paths of development of Fatherland Photography prove how persistent and adaptable he was in the face of changing historical and political circumstances. His post-war project proves the utility of native rhetoric in the process of taming spaces which are completely different at the outset: the post-war photographs serve as an emanation of "nativeness"/Polishness (growing out of the Borderlands discourse) from territories which merely several years earlier had been perceived as German and, in fact, had nothing to do with Poland, as they constituted an element of the German *Heimat*. I find this case important, as it shows the general direction of the transmission of aesthetic schemes and patterns developed in a place that is central to the Polish imagined community (the Borderlands) towards new peripheral spaces, i.e. the Regained Territories. This argument powerfully unmasks the constructivist nature of the landscape of the Regained Territories. Third, given the biographical context, the post-war photos, incorporating the aesthetic patterns elaborated within the Eastern Borderlands into the post-German space, can be treated as an expression of the photographer's personal longing for his small homeland.

Conclusion

I decided to analyse this case because Bułhak's aesthetics connect surprisingly well with the literary landscapes which emerge from the prose of the Regained Territories. The textual representations of the space, originally subordinated to "taming" narratives, are governed by similar scopic rules, with their content rife with elements known from *Polish Fatherland*

Photography. Therefore, at this point, I would like to use nativeness as a more universal figure of perception that organises landscape representations in literary texts.

The micro-analysis proposed below involves a certain degree of speculation. With it, I can assume at the outset that the textual representations serve as a hypotyposis of the perception immortalised in Bułhak's photos. This notion is defined in the dictionary as a visual representation of a text that appeals mainly to visual images, revealing and updating the content of the utterance. In practice, hypotyposis is about a certain characteristic way of imaging, an atmosphere (climate) or a universal idea that refers to some visual image. Hypotyposis is thus, most significantly, a suggestion of similarity, the recognition of which largely depends on the reader's competence. Owing to such a distribution of accents, the term does not necessarily need to be treated as a "procedure strictly connected with the writer's intent […], as he/she may well introduce this figure into his text unconsciously" (Dziadek 2011, 71).

Landscapes resembling Bułhak's photographs appear intermittently in a number of settlement texts, when the character already feels at home in the new place, i.e. once the anxiety, fear and danger related to the initial wild-west character of the settlement space (*terra nullius*) have been overcome. The process of settlement develops on the basis of the paradoxical articulation of longing, and its condition of possibility becomes the realistic logic of the resettlement narrative whose protagonists are, more often than not, immigrants from the eastern provinces of pre-war Poland.

To portray this mechanism, let me quote some fragments from two texts which I consider the most successful and important examples of settlement novels, i.e. *Wrastanie* [Growing Roots], by Eugeniusz Paukszta and the previously mentioned two-part series *Ptasi gościniec/Babie lato* [Bird's Highroad/Indian Summer] by Halina Auderska. For instance, the protagonist of Auderska's novel describes the place from which he will spin his tale about settlement with the following words:

> So, there is this lake with unruffled surface, and the shack – my shack – so similar to my old cabin. And to be honest, I like to come here and look at it, relishing the view. And the view is wide, I must admit; a cart track to the right, a forest behind us, fields and meadows in front of us, and a river to the left. The Oder, I mean. (Auderska 1984, 7)

In *Wrastanie* [Growing Roots], the narrator regains composure on the hill when he sees the nearby town:

> The town is a bit lower down from where we stood. The roof tiles were shimmering in the sun, the houses in the steep, narrow streets seemed to climb up one above another. The castle disappeared behind a clump of sturdy trees. Next to us spread poorly cultivated fields of the agricultural school. A winding line of willows and alder trees grew along the riverbank. (Paukszta 1979, 121)

The forester from Suchodolska's short story *Szeliniaki*—another example of the prose of the Regained Territories—relishes the landscape of a deserted forest track:

> blazed by the carts transporting logs, where tufts of coarse, willow green grass ruffle on the surface, untouched by any wheels. And there is a logging site behind the track. [...] Young pinewoods stand above it, planted thickly and disorderly [...] the May sun shines lightly, and a thin stalk of willow sprigs only just sways in the wind. Yellow dust has covered the fine leaflets, a sign that pines come to bloom. (Suchodolska 1965, 13)

The spatial elements that build up the fragments above contain a direct reference to Bułhak's catalogue and are equally unspecific. Once again, we can see that nativeness can be located and replicated only in imaginary rustic space and somewhat universal provinciality. The view is only perceived as familiar by way of analogy, which stirs the emotional attachment of the viewer and arouses a feeling of comfort and familiarity. The protagonist of *Ptasi gościniec* refers to his homeland using the following words: "it's scary to think how much it resembles that one" (Auderska 1984, 7), while Paukszta's narrator looks at the trees and comments: "I found this landscape peculiarly familiar and close" (Paukszta 1979, 121). The protagonist of *Szeliniaki*, in turn, concludes:

> He didn't know why he liked this place. He sat on the bluff, rested his back against the stump and lit a cigarette [...] The acrid smoke of old tobacco disturbed his thinking. He thought that he could walk along this empty track towards sunrise, and the forest would rise higher and higher until the heavy feet of the pine trees came together above the already razor-thin path and then.... he would run and run through the colourful peat bog

[…] as far as the edge of the oak wood, until the field path. […] It's so good here. (Suchodolska 1965, 13)

The relationship of similarity (hypotyposis) is established here through the use of numerous deictic particles and toponyms and an expanded (re)vision structure. In each case, the landscape being observed becomes legible and absorbable within the cognitive script elaborated elsewhere, i.e. in the past, in a place which, on the level of the depicted world (a character's biography), can be without major doubt called "the primary" and, on the level of representation, "conventional." The impression of familiarity of the space for settlement results not only from today's perspective of the protagonist, but from the work done by his memory, too—a two-staged projection in which two chronotopes, "there" and "here" overlap. Robert Tally calls such structures "cognitive mapping" and considers them to be the "basic method used by the subject to overcome the factual stress entailed by the feeling of being lost" (Tally 2013, 72). The American researcher, drawing on Fredric Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping, states that in the space-taming process, the fantasies and allegories invariably stay equal to referentiality, while (re)construction of the groups of meanings fixed in memory (Jameson 1991, 51) serves as the starting point in the process of regaining the sense of stability (domestication). With such a starting point, it can be assumed that the moments exposed in the quotes above are characterised by a high degree of authenticity and universality, as they bring us closer to a more realistic depiction of the settlement condition. Furthermore, it can be stated that they somehow reflect the direction of Bułhak's photographic activity and can tell us more about their underlying cognitive script. Finally, it should be added that they must not be treated as accidental gaps in the narrative scheme of migration prose, heading for the creation of coherent didactic wholes.

As I have already signalled, the native landscape is shown in these texts as a cure-all (in the sense proposed above by Wyka) for the "suitcase moods" suffered by the new settlers, who were reluctant to unpack and always kept a suitcase ready at hand in case of a sudden order to resettle. The difficulty to put down roots and consider the new place home made up a resettler syndrome of sorts. The domesticated landscape discourse was to be a cure for the uncertainty of geopolitical orders, the impression of their provisional and temporary status of homes as well as the sense of strangeness or reluctance towards spaces marked by the stigma of war.

But on the other hand, it does not contain references to the spectre of senses related to longing for the "small homeland" sickness or any other pathological condition. Quite the contrary, such images perform the function of a vaccine, where the bacteria of longing are injected under strict control, to induce "immunity" in the displaced person.

If we reach for a language less suffused with pharmaceutical metaphors, but still playing with therapeutic overtones, the landscapes that accommodate the alien space in these narratives can be perceived as transient objects whose main purpose is to maintain the order and continuity of identity in a situation of major shock (spatial collapse). Their mobility across historical rifts and border divides results not (only) from the circulatory nature of the view, but rather from their temporariness, in the sense proposed in the psychoanalytical theory of relationships with the object. In this perception, native landscapes would perform the same function as the commonplaces of war-induced migrations—objects taken as tokens of the old, lost world. Symbolically, these are worn-out blankets and shabby teddy bears, classified by Donald Winnicott as objects that serve as a substitute for the original object of love (mother) and whose role is to help the child enter correctly into relationships with the outer world. Their role is to soothe loneliness and frustration after separation from the mother. They are always located on the verge of subjectivity and the objective world. In the proper development of a human being, they are not internalised and do not get transformed into fetishes or objects of nostalgia, but lose their significance with time (Winnicott 1953, 89–97). Therefore, the role of native landscapes as transient objects was to facilitate the process of assimilation and settlement of people in an unfamiliar space.

To conclude, landscape is always a form of intertextuality. It is a cultural text, which combines and distributes specified aesthetic forms developed by individual traditions. Referring to spaces subjected to colonisation processes, David Bunn says that: "the ontological problem of new prospects, new genera, and new races does not result in the formation of new genres, but instead in the persistence of what Edward Said calls a *textual attitude*" (Bunn 2002, 128), concurrently proposing a more psychoanalytical understanding of this attitude:

> what we often find in the colonial landscape is an exaggerated form of analysis, or "propping," of one landscape paradigm upon another. Freud uses the term "analysis" to describe the way desires are propped upon

instincts, having the same site of articulation; this seems an entirely appropriate way of describing the often-unconscious deployment of paradigms, in dependent association with one another and at the same site. (Bunn 2002, 128)

As I have tried to emphasise in this chapter, this mechanism also functions well in the discourse of the Regained Territories. The transfer of motives and schemes known from the Borderlands traditions into novels dedicated to post-Yalta territories manifests the indebtedness to the tradition of Polish imperial discourse epitomised by the phenomenon of the Borderlands, and yet, at the same time, it serves as an anti-colonial project in relation to Polish–German relations. It is all the more important because it encompasses *topoi* which are almost demonstratively contradictory to the ideological assumptions of communist power. The Regained Territories discourse can thus be considered a palimpsest in the sense that, as Wojda put it, "various layers of history showed through it; a history that was non-erasable, as it was an integral part of reality" (Wojda 2015, 339). The palimpsestic nature of the Regained Territories discourse also determines its double semiotics, which makes it impossible to classify it according to a single way of hegemonic ordering. Fatherland landscapes are much closer to the meaning which the already mentioned Mitchell understood as a "dreamwork" of imperialism, "unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of perfect imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence" (Mitchell 2002, 10).

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Between Pedagogy and Self-Articulation: Roma Necessary Fictions in East Central Europe

Emilia Kledzik

The aim of the chapter is to compare the main narrative strategies of depicting Roma in such "necessary fictions" by East Central-European authors after World War II (Holdosi 1978; Lakatos 1975; Šmaus 2005; Staviarsky 2007), e.g. the concept of nation, representation of Otherness (especially the Roma as "the Other") and its (un)solvable social consequences, dealing with common stereotypes and "oral tradition," and prospects for the future.

Studies in post-war Roma communities in Europe reveal a deep rift between the democratic and socialist parts of the continent in the way the states on both sides of the Iron Curtain designed their politics towards the Roma, which still bears on the present condition of this ethnic group. Researchers observed the difference in the situation of the Roma in the east and west of Europe, and the consequences of that division after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They underline the fact that anti-Roma discourse is fairly unified and common on both sides of the former divide, but the lack

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of awareness of differences in the Roma situation between them is one of the main reasons for misunderstandings on various levels of interstate communication. This also includes difficult communication between the Roma from different states (Bogdal 2011; Fraser 1992; Mappes-Niediek 2012; Wippermann 2015). It is problematic to list all the reasons for this state of affairs, but demographic disproportion between Western and East Central Europe is one of the main factors (ca. 1.5 million Roma live in the West, almost 4.5 million in East Central Europe, but the statistics on the Roma population are far from precise[1]). Another important factor contributing to the lack of solid information on the Roma in Europe, in general, is the different historical experience of Roma communities in various regions and states: mainly, the Roma enslavement lasting from the fifteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century in Romania, while in, for example, Poland, anti-Gypsy edicts were issued from the sixteenth century, forbidding the nobility to allow the nomadic Roma to camp on their land (these edicts were not really obeyed); massive migration movements after World War II, but also social advancement controlled from above by socialist authorities, and, in contrast to that, the grass-roots civic movement that developed at the same time in the countries of Western Europe (Gress 2015; Hancock 1986). Despite similar stereotypes across the continent, the deep rift dividing the Roma condition in Western and East Central Europe, respectively, results in the fact that literature about the Roma, and, most of all, written by the Roma, differs remarkably on both sides. The distinguishing feature of Roma literature in East Central Europe is that the struggle to find one's voice and to negotiate between pressures of integration and preserving one's identity is much more pronounced.

This fundamental difference is visible in artistic activity by the Roma and relating to the Roma—for example, the inhabitants of Hungarian Miskolc do not necessarily feel any connection with the crafts for which British Travellers are known. However, this art, cultural activity and writing can play an important mediating, negotiating and educating role. The aim of this chapter is to present several well-known literary texts which provide a synoptic view of the post-war fate of local Roma communities in East Central Europe. Their common feature is that they

[1] 1According to data from 2014, the European Commission estimates the number of the Roma in Europe as six million, of which 4.5 ml live in East Central Europe and 1.5 in Western Europe: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-249_en.htm.

were written for readers from outside the Roma community and with a strong ideological message imposed either by the socialist regime or by nationalist attitudes unleashed after the fall of the system.

The continued underprivileged condition of the Roma in East Central Europe warrants the application of postcolonial interpretive tools to develop adequate research methods that would help investigate Roma voice and modes of self-representation. The community has been entangled in complex dependency from the majority society, manifested also in the literary trend I have signalled above. Postcolonial tools are sensitive to the nuances of narrative and imagological representation of authenticity, difference and agency, especially where we can trail in the text the strategies of appropriation and/or simultaneously giving voice to the Roma subject. This subject, in turn, due to its prolonged declassed status, functions here in a way parallel to the postcolonial subaltern subject. The value of the postcolonial perspective lies especially in its ability to grasp the ambivalence of Roma self-representation in literature. Such self-representation is conditioned by a range of factors resulting from the specific situation of that community. First, due to the community's overall illiteracy, literature has not been a space of identity construction for the Roma. Second, after World War II, due to compulsory assimilation programmes implemented by the communist state, a need appeared, also prompted by the authorities, to create literary opportunities for the Roma. Even though it was a licensed and controlled creativity, the Roma voice which appeared in these literary representations has much in common with the emergence of the postcolonial subject in anti-colonial and postcolonial fiction—seeking self-expression in negotiations between authenticity and social and cultural change, and between literary derivation from available patterns and Roma oral cultural resources. These efforts continued after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. We should, however, remember that although these forms and strategies of representation were imposed on the Roma community from outside (still, a lot of the Roma subjects could identify with them), the horizon of expectations from the majority society created a palpable interpretive space in Roma literature, making the majority society as it were one of the voices. To explain how this phenomenon of mixing self-representation with the external horizon of expectations works, I would like to draw on Homi Bhabha's concept of "necessary fictions." In *Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism,* Bhabha writes about the trap of representation that the subjects released from

colonial domination fall into (Bhabha 1989). Their chief goal is to reveal their own cultural authenticity, unspoiled by colonial heritage. This aspiration results in a wave of literature that functions as native. Since nativity has to be recovered from under the layers of colonial influence, this literature is presumed to go back to pre-colonial times. However, this move back in time is possible only through the use of "historical and ideological determinants of the western civilization," as Bhabha claims (Bhabha 1989, 94). In Roma literature, these pressures become manifest in narratives of the inevitability of modernising change and the vulnerability of tradition. Bhabha underscores the fundamental contradictions that "necessary fictions" are premised on: the search for the pristine authenticity that is reached via the language and/or forms of the coloniser, thus only available as reconstruction, reimagining and translation; and the unwillingness to admit that these are, precisely, constructs mediated by the "conspiracy of historicism and realism" defined as follows: "(…) historical and ideological productions without any of the inevitability that they claim. They are necessary fictions that tragically believed too much in their necessity and too little in their own fictionality" (Bhabha 1989, 97). The critical reading of "necessary fictions" would be less to track the inevitable constructedness of authenticity as a reflection on how such "[re-]invented traditions" produce the so-far missing postcolonial, and, here specifically, Roma subject. Therefore, it is not the "fictionality" of these constructions as their "necessity" that becomes an object of critical analysis for a cultural interpretation.

An essential attribute of the East Central-European genre which I propose to call the "Roma necessary fiction" is its (partial or total) fictionality and a broad temporal horizon which serves a didactic purpose. Such a "Roma novel," with its typological differentiation which I will present later, is a transnational phenomenon that should be interpreted comparatively—it transgresses the borders of nation-states, yet it is, in the context of its ideological message, dependent on these borders, as the Roma identity represented there is not one and unified, but, rather, additionally Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, or Polish. The genre is suffused with a characteristically paternalistic style which the socialist authorities developed in relation to the Roma community, represented as antisocial, criminogenic and unyielding to integration. But the effect of these novels was also that they made the Roma more familiar to readers and helped them understand this community better. In Western Europe, the place of these texts, "translating" the Roma to non-Roma readers, is occupied by

important autobiographical and biographical testimonies (Stojka 2013) and journalism (Wippermann 2015; Mappes-Niediek 2012). These narratives work openly against the stereotype, which does not mean that they are effective in broadening the scope of the Roma voice.

The perceptible social advancement of the Roma in the west of Europe after World War II was also marked by their visibility in the book market and other areas of public space. Surely, the phantasm of "the beautiful Gypsy" is still there in popular literature, but, more often than not, it would be difficult to view it as educational in any measure. The mission that European literature has taken on is carried out in two distinctively different patterns: biography and journalism in Western Europe; reportage and "necessary fictions" in East Central Europe.

For the Right to Free Mobility

Angus Fraser (1992) in *The Gypsies* points at two basic problems with which Western European states had to deal with in relation to their Roma communities. The first related to implementing adequate regulations that would allow free movement for the Roma communities still leading a nomadic lifestyle, accompanied by simultaneous work on including them into civic communities (with rights to medical care, education, social security and so on). Hence began the gradual "de-ethnicization" of the local Roma in Western Europe, called "the Travellers" in the UK, "the Manouche" in France and "Sinti" in Germany (Fraser 1992, 270–319). In England, the Caravan Sites Act was introduced in 1968, which regulated the so-called legal camping sites, having existed in that country since the beginning of the twentieth century. In France and Italy, the situation was more complicated because of the steady inflow of Roma immigrants from the Balkans after World War II, and the problem of migration that does not yield to integration was not solved entirely successfully, leading to the development of shanty town ghettos in the suburbs and the lack of viable integration programmes. The urgent and sensitive question of the Roma camps on the outskirts of Western European cities[2] is,

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[2] See, for example, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/05/rome-ready-demolish-gypsy-camps; http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2579247/Dozens-Romas-flee-camp-50-strong-mob-attack-site-following-claims-two-gypsies-raped-local-girl-Italy.html; https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article105078565/Roma-Lager-stellt-Kreuzberg-vor-Probleme.html; http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25419423.

however, a contemporary phenomenon, overlapping with the new security measures related to terrorist attacks and the increasingly xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes throughout Europe. We can state that before President Nicolas Sarkozy's idea in 2010 to send Roma immigrants back to their country of origin and the wave of anti-Roma protests around that date, measures had been taken to eradicate the illegal camps and shanty towns. In Sweden, the Roma were treated as refugees from communist countries and were given asylum; however, as Wolfgang Wippermann (2015, 96) observes, Roma children were taken away from their parents. The Roma situation was relatively the best in Germany, where, admittedly, while struggles to get the status of the Third Reich genocide victims for the Roma and to secure compensation had lasted for decades, the local grassroots civic activism succeeded in integrating the Sinti with the majority community (Wippermann 2015, 93; Mappes-Niediek 2012, 179–183). Now, we can observe in both Western and Eastern European countries a process of identifying homeless people living on the margins of society with the Roma. This peculiar ethnicisation of poverty rekindles anti-Roma stereotypes and hostile reactions.

They Lived in the Dark Until the People's Authority Thought About Them!

The states in the socialist bloc applied comparable politics in relation to those Roma who survived the Nazi genocide (the Roma Holocaust) during the World War II. It consisted in the declared interest of the authorities in improving the living conditions of the Roma and their integration into the majority society, with a simultaneous and consistent denial of their right to the status of Holocaust victims to the point of blocking the fact of their annihilation in post-war collective memory, and silent acceptance of further discrimination. Biographies of the Roma provided state propaganda with good material for stories about discrimination by bourgeois society before World War II and worked for the socialist state as proof that social advancement of the Roma was needed and plausible (Golonka-Czajkowska 2013). It needs to be stressed that such facts as the increase in literacy rates, compulsory employment and obligatory education for children confirm that this purpose was at least partially achieved. It came, however, at a cost—the state intruded into the Roma cultural model, most of all by forcefully settling clans as well as tampering with the traditional social structure and the way of earning

sustenance. For almost half a century, the socialist state, choosing the effective strategy of forced assimilation, manoeuvred between treating the Roma as a pauperised social group and, at least at the beginning, respecting their ethnic distinctiveness.

However, as Ian Hancock states: "The Marxist ideology gave Roma a social identity, not an ethnic one" (Hancock 2015, XIX–XXX). At the beginning, the Soviet Union served as a model of the politics of recognition—already before World War II, not only had it tacitly accepted the nomadic lifestyle of the Roma (despite the settlement decree of 1926), but it also supported various forms of self-organisation including, among others, institutions of culture, such as the Roma theatre "Romen," active in Moscow since the thirties. However, shortly before the onset of World War II, it radically changed these politics to discrimination against ethnic differences with regard to all ethnic groups in the USSR (Fraser 1992, 278). After the war, all Soviet-satellite states apart from Yugoslavia introduced legislation enforcing Roma settlement.[3]

From the 1950s, the Polish authorities adopted a policy of "soft" encouragement for the Roma communities to change their lifestyle: the Roma were offered apartments, social benefits and help in creating forms of cooperative business and employment, especially in big construction projects that were landmarks of the new socialist state, like the Nowa Huta township in the vicinity of Kraków, which gives the title to this section.[4] When these actions proved rather futile, in 1964 legislation on public meetings and rallies was implemented in relation to the Roma, and compulsory registration was introduced.

In Czechoslovakia, the Roma were resettled from the poor regions of Slovakia to towns and villages in the west and north-west of Czechia, where German speakers had been expelled after the war. In Hungary, the

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[3] It is worth remembering that in East Central Europe, in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Roma had led settled lives since the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nomads included mostly the Polish Roma, Chaładytka Roma and Lovari.

[4] The title of an article from "Budujemy socjalizm," a periodical published in Nowa Huta, the Polish socialist urban experiment initiated in 1949. Some of the first builders of this utopian township were Roma resettled from the south of Poland, from the Bergitka Roma clan (the Polish Highland Roma). Nowa Huta as an urban project of ideal social and architectural proportions had its equivalents in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, such as, Eisenhüttenstadt in the GDR and Ostrava in Czechoslovakia. The latter was also built by, among others, the Roma (Golonka-Czajkowska 2013, 189–230).

representative bodies of the Roma minority were intermittently disman-
tled and set up again, and the Roma were forced to settle down and
take employment in state companies. The situation of the Roma was the
most difficult in Romania and Bulgaria. The socialist state needed them
as cheap labour but refused to grant them privileges that would protect
them as an ethnic minority in general, and as an underprivileged group in
particular. As a result, they were refused any state support in the form of
benefits (Fraser 1992, 274–285).

The system transformation launched in 1989 in the former Eastern
Bloc states sealed the fate of the Roma in the twentieth century, bringing
about a conspicuous decline in their social condition. Apart from the
right to free mobility that many Roma people embraced when emigrating
to the West, official recognition of Roma ethnic identity was the only
positive move on the part of the state. The transformation period meant
the loss of stable employment for the Roma and restrictions in the social
benefits system.

The success of integration during the communist period was of great
propaganda significance for the state. It meant, in particular in those states
in East Central Europe which, unlike Poland, retained their ethnic diver-
sity after World War II, the success of de-ethnicising policies in relation
to ethnic and national minorities. Another crucial element of the inte-
gration policy was an effective fight against illiteracy. That is why the
steady erosion of the traditional cultural model (the patterns of suste-
nance, family structure, etc.), and of the palpable elements of culture such
as, for example, language, were accompanied by superficial compensation
manoeuvres that made space only for the cultivation of the most stereo-
typical attributes of Gypsy identity, reduced to folklore, music, poetry,
dance and so on. Individual life stories of the Roma who chose the path
of integration by learning to read and write, and succeeded in gradu-
ating from universities and/or publishing their own books, were valuable
propaganda tokens for socialist governments. At the same time, they were
losing their position in the local communities, which remained tradition-
ally antagonistic towards any assimilationist practices from outside. The
integrated Roma were to encourage their fellow community members to
follow in their footsteps. These plans, however, met vehement opposition
from traditional Roma communities. They closed ranks and refused to
yield information about their culture.

The story of Papusza, a Polish Roma poet, is a good case in point illustrating these practices. Her literary output, delivered to broader audiences in a strongly interventionist translation by the Polish poet and Roma scholar, Jerzy Ficowski, an enthusiast of folklore and a translator, was used by communist propaganda as a model of successful integration. Papusza wrote several poems in the socialist-realist spirit where she thanked the socialist state for dragging the Roma out of the forests and civilising them. For the Roma author, it meant banishment from the Roma community for her "betrayal" of the secrets of the tabooed language and culture (Kledzik 2013, 210–211). This was also the role to be played by educational novels authored by the Roma, including Menyhért Lakatos' *Füstös képek* (1975) and József Holdosi's *Kányák* (1978) which I will discuss later. They performed a didactic and propagandistic role, developing stories about a great change that occurred in the lives of the East Central European Roma due to the catastrophe of the World War II and the reforms ordained by the communist state. In this sense, they also offered a departure from the monotony of the folkloristic narration branded by Jerzy Ficowski (1952) as "cheap" literature about the Roma.[5] What he meant by this was, most probably, the use of romanticising and brutalising clichés which had clung to the Roma throughout their existence on the social margin in Europe.

Replacing the negative charge of Ficowski's category of "cheap" fiction with the category of "necessary fictions" allows for the avoidance of an evaluative approach to the literary material written by non-Roma about the Roma. Necessary fictions represent the pursuit of equity premised on the need to anchor it in the sense of authenticity that, as mentioned above, has to be recuperated from under the layers of external influences and impositions. However, Bhabha argues, they also warrant the obliteration of the nature of the postcolonial subject, which he defines as the subject of difference. This kind of seemingly "unmediated and universal" fiction emphasises cultural continuity, constructed in contrast to the orientalising fictions of the coloniser. Contrary to this nativist move in

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[5] Ficowski (1952) used this phrase when commenting on a chapter of his unfinished novel *Quenched fires,* which he wrote based on experiences with the Wajs family camp. Nevertheless, the Polish Roma expert gave up his fiction project and took up an ethnographic study entitled *The Polish Roma*, followed by *The Roma on the Polish Roads* [*Nie pogardzam nawet najmizerniejszą wizją. Z Jerzym Ficowskim rozmawia Magdalena Wapińska*, in: *Wcielenia Jerzego Ficowskiego według recenzji, szkiców i rozmów*].

postcolonial literature, the Roma "necessary fictions" are not, due to the obvious oral character of their culture, constructed by the Roma and for the Roma. Their "necessity" results from our non-Roma need to find a place for the Roma in modernity, or, perhaps, to explain the reasons why the rift between the Roma and the majority is so definitive. These are the stories, which, in the face of the total lack of Roma testimonies, are written for the non-Roma readership.

This constructivist impulse in the name of authenticity and for the good of the Roma is the focus of my discussion, and Roma necessary fictions adds an interesting paradox that combines the desire for authenticity with an appropriating gesture of the colonial kind—speaking for the mute or absent subject. This literature, often written by the non-Roma, and, if by the Roma, then the integrated ones who are on the outside of the community they revisit in their narratives, addresses the audience who are representatives of mainstream culture. Likewise, the forms available to the writers are deployed from narrative patterns developed in the majority culture. In this way, the disturbing lack of knowledge about how the Roma lived throughout the twentieth century, and how they imagined co-existence with the mainstream culture, is filled with narratives whose chief role is to cater to the expectations of the majority readership. We do not find in these narratives a story about the successful integration of the two cultures—rather, the Roma continue to live in their decrepit environment without a chance for social advancement, or they forget about their background and assimilate with mainstream culture.

The selection of the four novels I have chosen for analysis is premised precisely on their specific mode of narration, which effectively appropriates the Roma subject for the cause of restoring authenticity. In what follows I want to focus on the paradoxes and ironies of such a recuperation.

The first novel is *Děvčátko, rozdělej ohníček* [Girl, Kindle the Fire] (2005), which was awarded a prize by the Czech Book Club (2005) and is the debut work of Martin Šmaus (2005), an electric technician from the Czech town of Odry. The protagonist, Andrejko Dunka, is born in Polana in eastern Slovakia, in the 1970s or 1980s, at a time when the Roma were forced to resettle in housing projects developed for them by the communist authorities. His life is marked by oppression which he always somehow manages to endure. He experiences practically all kinds of heterotopias that modern society has invented: he is taken away from his mother, forced to beg and steal in Prague, he is sent to a reform

school for young offenders, which he flees and eventually moves into an orphanage. When he falls in love with a *gadjo*[6] girl, he is beaten up and kills one of the attackers. He goes to jail, but becomes mentally ill there, which saves him from serving time for homicide. He is placed in an institution for the mentally ill and leaves on the wave of amnesty after the fall of communism. He returns to Slovakia and starts a family there. Andrejko's wife and cousin, however, provokes the non-Roma with her beauty and her indulgent lifestyle. A tragedy known from other stories about the Roma occurs—after giving birth she is raped and dies soon after. Andrejko decides to deposit his daughter in a children's home and have a fresh start once again.

At first glance, it becomes obvious that Šmaus had two intentions: first, he wanted to present a shortened history of twentieth-century Roma. In retrospective we learn about forced labour and the death camps, where the family of Dunka were transported during World War II. The birth of the protagonist coincides with the forced resettlement of the Roma to urban areas. Subsequently, a change in the political system follows: the time of thaw, the fall of communism and the end of the Czechoslovak state. Šmaus' story does not differ from other local transformation novels critically assessing "the vortex of history" which affects people belonging to the social underclass the most dramatically,[7] additionally deepening their passivity. These people could not find their footing in the post-war system or later in the post-transformation period. The purpose of these kinds of narratives is to show that the abrupt urbanisation of East Central European communities who had up to that point known only provincial, rural life, inevitably led to their annihilation and the rise of pathology and misfortune. The second intention of Šmaus is to "explain" to the non-Roma the cultural specificity of the Roma. For example, the reader may come across seemingly obvious information for teachers that Roma children spoke their own native language, and thus that they should not have been placed in special needs schools only because they did not speak Czech. The implied reality here is that Roma children were often hastily labelled as mentally deficient, while in fact they simply did not speak the majority language. We can find empathy for children who lived in a pathological environment while the majority of society—under the influence of

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[6] The term used by the Roma for the non-Roma.

[7] See, e.g., Stasiuk (2003).

racist clichés—does not warrant help. The author wants to show the ways in which twentieth-century history marginalised the Roma. At the same time, however, by succumbing to the clichés and stereotypes, he indicates that the Roma doom themselves to marginalisation, because in modern society they are the quintessence of otherness. Šmaus explains to *gadjos* where Roma misery comes from: yes, they are victims of history, but they are also indolent and cannot adapt; they are infantile, archaic, impervious to change, closed as a community and stubborn. In the images of endless alcohol feasts in Praha's Žižkow, the Roma live in the constant present, in clear contrast to the well-organised and time-minding *gadjos*. A sumptuous table and music are the only important things for them. Boosted by strong emotions, they do not pay attention to memory, nor do they care to develop plans for the future. This representation of atemporal dwelling and carefree existence on the margins of modernity is a common cliché that has been internalised as natural and obvious.

The paradoxical narrative situation in which the author found himself is that he uses stereotypes to construct the plot, which later on he feels compelled to rationalise and justify by identifying them as alleged Roma cultural rules. The main character—Andrejko—serves here as a good example, being a typical "beautiful Gypsy" (Brittnacher 2012, 130–145), whose life is full of adversities, and who wants to break free from his condition, but is unable to do so due to the social environment and his own nature, which forces him to chase impossible goals. Andrejko, like his literary predecessors, desires an undefined liberty that he associates with closeness to nature, lack of worries, negligence and violent mood swings. During his peregrination through the *gadjos*' heterotopias, he begins to understand that his destiny is to follow the call of the nomadic wild. He never goes beyond the cliché of the Gypsy who cannot assimilate (even though he really wants to). Not only is he not allowed to do so by the hostile mainstream society, but also by his own "blood." His partner, Anetka, is, in turn, a stereotypical "beautiful Gypsy woman" (Brittnacher 2012, 93–124) whose true nature is to provoke *gadjos* to lustful thoughts and actions. Similarly, like her numerous literary predecessors, she keeps her distance from *gadjos* women, excels in beauty over them and despises them, as she is supposed to.

The image of the Roma which emerges from Šmaus' plot resembles Cervantes' *La Gitenilla*, where the Roma are portrayed collectively as noble savages and the innocent children of nature. This motif is also

recognised in modern stories about noble children stolen by Gypsies and raised in their camps (they are more dexterous than their Romany peers, but they do their pickpocketing job unwillingly).[8] Šmaus wanted to convince mainstream society that the unfortunate condition of the Roma population is not wholly their fault. At the same time, however, he reproduced the stereotype of the infantile, inept, but also dangerous Roma living on the margins of modernity, whose foundational fault is that they are unable to assimilate.

Due to the use of free indirect speech, Šmaus' novel is stylised into oral narrative. We find a slightly different strategy in a Slovak short story entitled *Kivader* by Vit'o Staviarsky (2007).[9] Here the narrator speaks from inside a Roma settlement, which radically changes the sender-receiver situation. Kivader's son, Rudko, whom the community refers to as "retarded," is to be given away to an institution for disabled children, as he is growing up and the community is afraid that he would pose a sexual danger to girls. Kivader decides to see his son off to the institution. On getting there, he learns that he cannot leave his son at that place due to the anti-Roma prejudice of the principal. On their way back, he comes across a fair where he gets drunk and loses his son. The next day he does not want to tell his wife what happened, so he lies and tells her that their son was admitted to the institution, while resuming his search. The further adventures of his life are told by Smok (Dragon), a member of the local criminal underworld. Smok decided to see Rudko off to a Roma settlement, but he confused the addresses and eventually took him to another family with a disabled child. While fleeing through the woods, Smok abandoned Rudko to fend for himself in a sudden flood caused by torrential rains. Kivader decided, in the end, to go to the police to report his son's disappearance. The police informed him that Rudko had drowned. Kivader returned home with the sad news, and a moment later his son stood at the door. The moral of the story is that the parents learned to love their disabled son and decided not to institutionalise him.

Staviarsky chooses a completely different strategy of "domestication" of this ethnic group from Šmaus. From his perspective, Gypsies are some

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[8] Cervantes' Preciosa from "La gitanilla" is the matrix of the figure of a noble child kidnapped by the Gypsies. The same motif appears in Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. See: Bogdal, 2011. *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*, 86–140.

[9] Staviarsky Vít'o, *Kivader* (Vista, P. Mervart: Bratislava, 2007).

kind of funny, slightly foolish community living on the margins of society, but not posing any real threat (either to society or to themselves). The narrator—a Roma—embodies the *topos* of the clown, a trickster representing so-called folk wisdom. In *Kivader* the Roma live separated from the non-Roma. The insight into their lifestyle is rendered in the form of an amusing anecdote framed by a superficial anthropological analysis. If they interact with anyone from the *gadjo* community, it is members of the criminal underworld. The Roma camp is a site of mixed orders and endless carnival, which the author renders through a light and witty style of narration aided by the grotesque and stylised into orality. Similar to Šmaus' depiction, the Roma here are also maladjusted to post-transformation modernity, infantile and naive, similarly devoid of a sense of time, but this is precisely what makes them attractive. Staviarsky seems to say that without the Roma, the Slovak countryside would lose its colour and identity as a counter-project to civilisational acceleration. We find here the stereotype of the Roma camp as an idealised place in which people are reconciled to a simple and modest lifestyle that their non-Roma brothers can only dream of (Brittnacher 2012, 198). As can be expected, socialist literature produced a starkly opposite image of the Roma camp, devoid of sentimental idealisation and functioning as the residue of the bourgeois past from which the socialist state rescued the Roma population as a whole.

A story about a Roma camp during pre-war times has been written by Menyhért Lakatos (1926–2007). Lakatos, although raised in a Hungarian Roma settlement, thanks to the determination of his mother graduated from a Hungarian primary school and learned the Hungarian language. Because of the increasing persecution of the Roma, he had to leave secondary school and only resumed his education after 1945. After his high school exams, he studied at Budapest's University of Technology. In 1961, he received his degree and later worked as an engineer. From this time onwards, he was actively engaged in improving standards of education for the Roma minority.

He wrote ten novels, the first of which and the best known, *Füstös kepek* (*The Color of Smoke: An Epic Novel of the Roma*, 2015), was published in 1975. As for the genre, it is an autobiography or ethno-autobiography (Bogdal 2011, 389) with elements of *Bildungsroman*, in the sense that the story is developed in a broad retrospective through a first-person collective voice belonging to a group of Roma. It consists of three parts: the

first is devoted to the childhood of the main character and his early education. The second part narrates vacations spent with a nomadic group of Roma far from the family camp, during which time some initiations take place. In the third part, the main character is affected by repressions in fascist Hungary. The novel ends with a suggestive image of the Roma leaving Hungary in locked wagons going to the north.

If we acknowledge the didactic import of this novel, then it is a story about successful emancipation from a society which does not have any chance of surviving. In an educational novel, the protagonist departs from the point where he indulges in his desires, undergoes a process of transformation to become in the end a willing member of a particular social order. However, in contrast to the post-transformation novels, here the factors which destroy Roma autonomy are not modernity, understood as urbanisation, the acceleration of change, etc. In *Füstös kepek*, the Roma die as victims of mainstream culture that gradually but steadily besets them. The idealised past, which is remembered by the oldest, is the time when the Roma travelled from "sea to sea." Life on the road was upheld by ancient laws and traditions which the community organically understood and obeyed. Demoralisation came with the onset of a sedentary lifestyle. The "Gypsy Paris" is a place controlled by Hungarian gendarmes and kept in isolation from mainstream society. The main character is the only inhabitant of the settlement who had obtained the right to education. The narration is rife with racist confrontations between ethnic Hungarians and the Roma. The ignorance of historical changes among the Roma is so absolute that they learn about the death of Franz Josef I twenty years after the fact. The border between the Roma settlement and mainstream society seals up gradually but ineluctably. After the outbreak of World War II, they lose contact with the outside world completely. Finally, they are transported to concentration camps.

The first-person narrator in the novel, is, like in Staviarsky's story, native to the world presented, but removed at a considerable distance from it. It is not only a distance created by retrospection, but also the distance of an outsider who now belongs to mainstream society, having left behind the Roma world (or what remained of it after the catastrophe of World War II). Even though his story mainly concerns the pre-war period, we can see a trait of Marxist teleology in the narration: the Roma's tragedy is an effect of the class egoism of the Hungarian middle class, and the fact that this class would have become radicalised with the increase of war mobilisation. Lakatos is, however, far from describing the Roma

as victims of the unjust distribution of wealth. The way he describes his native community has some affinities with the colonial phenomenon of mimicry. The name of the settlement alone, "Gypsy Paris," is, after all, an inefficient imitation that connotes an irreducible cultural difference manifested as inferiority (I have in mind a similar scene from *A Passage to India* directed by David Lean, where Indian women recite street names and districts of London by heart). The narrator is, in the eyes of Hungarian society (gendarmes, teachers) a *comprador*—an educated member of the dominated subaltern group, cognisant of both cultural systems, providing mediating services to both sides, but basically working for the hegemonic majority. The auto-creative interventions which he undertakes indicate that he acquires the role of a "sahib," who, thanks to his education, identifies himself with the hegemonic mainstream, while enjoying the respect of his native community for excelling over them. His narration is a kind of embarrassing recognition of the Gypsy guilt and a means of redemption that happens through the releasing of information about Roma life to *gadjos*, who then can turn it into ethnographic knowledge. A good example of such an intimation of insider knowledge are extensive fragments on the Roma's relation with horses and ways of tricking the *gadjos* while trading them. The Gypsy Paris is, in his view, a site of unprecedented poverty and suffering that has nothing ennobling in it, but rather, strips its inhabitants of humanity. And while the situation in the settlement can be justified by the isolationist politics of mainstream society in the eyes of the narrator nothing justifies the demoralisation of the Roma still living "freely" whom the narrator encounters during his vacation wanderings.

Among the stereotypes that Lakatos resorts to, three should be underlined: presentism, greed and unrestrained libido. His relationship with the described community changes—while in the portrayal of "Gypsy Paris" the story is told in a paternalistic-humorous tone; the story of wandering is narrated in a misogynistic-condescending style. He changes the tone of narration probably because the nomadic Roma did not have any jobs (nor even a trade) and had lost all of their old "Gypsy virtues," including cleverness. As a consequence, they became passive and unresourceful. The main character transforms in this story in the way typical of stories about aristocratic children stolen by the Roma, popular in the eighteenth century: he quickly excels over his peers, as a diligent pupil at a Hungarian primary school he is always the top student and the most popular boy. He views the Roma, his once native environment, as a thoughtless herd of animals. Their existence is reduced to the bare satisfying of biological

needs and disregarding of any cultural norms. There are no Roma taboos related to, e.g. nudity, a woman's body, sexuality and eating (which is questioned in the last part of the book, anticipating the *Zigeunerlager* in Auschwitz, when the Roma waiting for transportation are embarrassed to deal with physiological needs in public). The narrator acts as a typical representative of the hegemonic society: he learns to use his intellectual advantage, but his contempt for the Roma does not prevent him from sexual encounters with Roma women. Even the gendarmes visiting the camp treat him as one of "them" and commiserate that his job forces him to be in such "inhuman" conditions. The method of description of this world profoundly dehumanises the Roma, turning them into an unrecognisable bodily mass:

> The rattle of an old fuel pump that was powering the aggregate would stop for some moments, and then I would have an impression that naked thighs were extending, tufts of hair would change into blurry black stains, and wheezing of the sleeping people grew. Among the languishing groaning some were taking blankets from others. Here and there malodorous gases of half-raw bread would fly away, which prompted wriggling and curses. All around I was surrounded by naked asses and relentless rubbing. (…) I was jealous. They were whirling and making one big swarm, males with females. (Lakatos 1975, 169)

Lakatos is not able to bring the two cultures closer together. Instead of integration, he chooses a model of assimilation, suppression and condemnation. Irreversibly endangered by the logos that he officially identifies with, he brings to mind Bronisław Malinowski on the Trobriand Islands—an ethnographer engaged in "participant observation" who tries to grasp the cultural uniqueness of his "objects," but who privately, in his diary, vents his racist, misogynistic fantasy about domination.[10]

The last model I want to discuss is what I propose to brand Roma magical realism. I would like to illustrate it with the example of József Holdosi's Hungarian novel entitled *Kányák* [King's Snakes] (1978). Holdosi was born after the World War II and came from a group of Romungros, the Roma who had lived a settled life in the territory of

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[10] See, e.g., Young, 2014. *Writing his Life through the Other: The Anthropology of Malinowski.* https://publicdomainreview.org/2014/01/22/writing-his-life-through-the-other-the-anthropology-of-malinowski/.

historical Hungary since the Habsburgs' edicts.[11] This is the first important difference—Holdosi represents the group which had for decades led a sedentary lifestyle in contrast to the nomads, the Wallachian Roma. The novel was written in 1978 and its fundamental purpose was to tell the story of a few decades of Roma history: from the relatively calm, although precarious, pre-war time, through the catastrophe of World War II, to the arrival of the Red Army and, with it, the onset of a new social order which the author regards as a chance for the Roma to have a better life. I am more interested, however, in the unique way in which the novel represents the Roma community rather than in this simple ideological thesis to which the stories of the characters are subordinated. This uniqueness bears clear traces of the inspiration from magical realism, popular in the 1970s in communist countries.

First, even though he chooses a narrator from outside the world represented, Holodosi tells the story of a few generations of a Roma family, relying thus on the memory archives of private history. This kind of story is naturally non-linear (based on the generational cycle), oral and non-generalising—which means, in sum, potentially subversive. The opposition between the official and private narration is one of the constitutive features of magical realism—e.g. the story about the Buendia family in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez. Another such feature is the choice of the time and place of the setting. The family lives near the estate of a count, in the so-called Street. Historical events, at the beginning only allusively outlined, become more and more evident with the development of the plot. The initial intention of the author was to create an impression of marvelousness characteristic of magical realism, where the action takes place outside historical time and geographical place. In this Hungarian Macondo, historical and realistic events intertwine in an uncanny way, and the narrator reports them in a rather matter-of-fact tone.

And yet, at the same time, Holdosi's characters are affected by the same history that we know from hundreds of documentaries and fictions

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[11] Maria Theresa and her son Joseph decided to "elevate" the social status of the Roma in the typical Enlightenment manner: by force. In the years 1758–1773, several edicts were issued ordering the Roma to settle, to pay taxes, prohibiting them from having horses, living in their villages, dressing in their traditional way, using their language, marrying other Roma, and even taking all the Roma children over the age of 5 from their parents and locating them in schools and orphanages. See Barany (2002, 93).

about life in East Central Europe in the middle of the twentieth century. They die because of typhoid, they die or barely survive in Nazi concentration camps, they join the army, they desert, move to the city, learn to read, find jobs in a factory, get involved in the communist movement. All along, they are essentially the same Roma as those whom we know from Lakatos' account: quarrelsome, impetuous, poor, superstitious, distrustful and internally divided. The difference between Lakatos' and Holdosi's story lies, again, in the narrator's point of view. While Lakatos chooses the strategy of a detached, seemingly objective ethnographer producing an illusion of an innocent eye, Holdosi seems to understand that a satisfactory aesthetic and ethical effect can be brought about only by contrasting various visions of history. It happens when the object being described is a group so completely saturated with stereotypes, as the Roma minority is, but also any other group that does not accept the model of identity narration imposed by European realism. Magical realism is, in this context, seen as a competitive method of expression of postcolonial societies, as a contestation of the totalising discourse of the centre, as a way of commemorating local history in a form in which it should be told before European modernity came (Warnes 2009). The validation of the "magical" ontology is crucial in this narrative mode. Therefore, the speaking "I" does not question the snakes in the crown, the Gypsy Christ or death as a bodily human figure. These are equal parts of the presented world, and they make this world less European, less logocentric, more local, folkloristic and authentic. In the end, the official policy of forceful integration articulated as a task for the socialist state wins—the novel leaves no doubt that the Roma culture has to disappear because its magical world belongs entirely to the past and has to surrender to the modernising sweep of the socialist order.

To sum up, I would like to propose a model of description of fictional prose on the Roma and addressed to non-Roma audience that I term "necessary fictions" (Table 1).

We can divide these works according to two criteria: the narrator and the narrative strategy. The narrator type belongs to the Roma community or comes from the mainstream society (*gadjo*). This is important, because the reader expects from a Roma author a non-linear narration that imitates the oral style, and, from a non-Roma, an additional usage of classical European modes of storytelling. The second criterion, the "narrative strategy," relates to a cultural framework that the narrator applies to the phenomena he describes. The narrative strategy tends to be premised

Table 1 Fictional prose on the Roma—a model

Narrator → Narrative strategy↓	Roma	*Gadjo*
Essentialising	Carnivalisation (Staviarsky)	Magical-realist mode (Holdosi)
Ethnologising	Brutalising (Lakatos)	Empathy (Šmaus)

on essentialism, which may be observed in an uncritical replication and reinforcement of stereotypes whose role is to show an appreciation of the "Roma" culture and world vision, so that it is represented as a self-contained difference in a multicultural society and somehow of equal status with the *gadjo* culture. On the other hand, the point of departure for "ethnographers" is a belief that the Roma culture and modernity are orders that collide and cannot be brought together. Their narrators seemingly aim at objectivity and try to determine which side of the *gadjo*-Roma cultural conflict is responsible for the degeneration of the Roma culture. In this way, we obtain four models of stories which respond to the four sets of stereotypes present in the narratives I have analysed, but also in their prototypes and continuations. I suppose that each of them goes beyond the domain of literature and can be found in the general discourse of *gadjos* about the Roma, for example in non-fictional accounts such as reportage and other journalistic genres.

The East Central European literature about the Roma, which I have termed "necessary fictions," represents possibilities of problematising in many narrative and discursive ways the deep cultural rift between the world of the Roma and the non-Roma. We can find strategies parallel to colonial and postcolonial writing in this literature, although the real subaltern remains indeed mute. This is what differentiates East Central European "Roma" literature of this time from that of Western Europe—the cultural authenticity that the Roma stands for is always mediated through the *gadjo* optics. This does not have to mean, however, that the literary way of articulating this identity is incompatible with Roma culture. In my opinion, the reason for this muteness lies elsewhere, namely, in the dramatically inferior social status of the East Central European Roma in their deepening "apartheid" (Wolfgang Wippermann's term 2015, 109–128), which blocks their access to education, to fostering their political representation, and so on. In comparison with their Western-European

counterparts, Roma "necessary fictions" testify to, more often than not, the ongoing marginalisation of the Roma minority. Admittedly, they are also proof of the growing interest of the majority society in the matter. However, unless this situation radically improves, the East Central European subalterns will not regain their autonomous artistic voice.

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Soviet Colonialism Reloaded: Encounters Between Russians and East Central Europeans in Contemporary Literature

Miriam Finkelstein

City of Prussians and city of Turks, city of Russians and city of Jews, daydreamers and snobs, city of Poles and city of Americans, city of salsa dancers and city of gays, tubby workers and uniformed saleswomen, city of dogs and garbage, city of unemployed artists and city of overworked *Halsabschneiders*. The Babylonian tower cracked that we might learn nothing, and out of ruin and oblivion, Berlin might grow. (Aleš Šteger 2015, 130)

Introduction

In a series of essays on Berlin as he experienced it in the early 2000s, the Slovene writer Aleš Šteger makes an intriguing observation on the relationship between Russians and Slovenes. After an enjoyable visit to a Russian shop, he remarks: "Slovenians don't really understand Polish, Czech or Baltic *ressentiment* for a Slavic Gulliver. We were not close enough to hate" (Šteger 2015, 117). Disregarding the question whether

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these assessments really apply to Slovenian attitudes, the issue I will address in this chapter is the way in which contemporary literature by writers from Russia, East Central, and South-eastern Europe reflects upon the relationship between Russians and those who, like Šteger claims, hate or hated them. I will focus on reciprocal representations of current and former citizens from the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia and different Eastern and East Central European states in order to demonstrate how contemporary writers from the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, and other countries reflect upon relationships between representatives of the aforementioned states; especially when they meet abroad and come to share the same space, in this case, Berlin.

While recent scholarship on migrant literature(s) has mostly focused on the relationship between the migrant and the host society, frequently depicting it as a homogeneous body (Fachinger 2001), the main assumption here is that anywhere they go in the West, migrants encounter highly heterogeneous societies that consist, to a considerable degree, of other migrants (Breinig et al. 2002, 23). Thus, this article seeks to answer the following questions: what happens when former nationals of the Soviet Union, the colonising power, and individuals from the formerly colonised East Central and Eastern European states meet outside their respective home countries, years after the fall of the Iron Curtain? Does the history of colonisation of these states by Russia/the Soviet Union determine present time encounters and relationships and, if so, in what ways?

To a large extent, these questions are triggered by recent scholarship on Russian migrant narratives. Employing Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (Bhabha 1994), scholars have argued that by combining elements of two cultures, Russian migrants successfully construct a new, hybrid identity, such as "Russian-American" or "Russian-German" (Furman 2011, 2015; Senderovich 2015). This identity, as Yelena Furman points out in both her articles, is different and distinct from both the Russian and the American. However, it does not always eradicate elements of the initial Soviet-Russian one. I therefore argue that residues of the Soviet imperial and colonial "mindset" are vividly present in Soviet-Russian migrants narratives and that this legacy effectively determines their perception of "Others," particularly East Central- and Eastern European "Others." I will demonstrate that Russian-German fiction about Berlin frequently engages in what can be called an aggressive occupation,

a re-colonisation of the city space by Soviet-Russian migrants.[1] Furthermore, I will show how Russian-German writers like Wladimir Kaminer et al. conceptualise Berlin as an international melting pot, but continually exclude East Central- and Eastern Europeans from it.

Furthermore, I will discuss texts by writers from East Central-, Eastern-, and South-eastern Europe, who promptly react to these Russian neo-colonial aspirations (Kołodzieczyk and Şandru 2012, 113–116) and analyse the strategies used by Carmen-Francesca Banciu (Romania/Germany), Jaroslav Rudiš (Czech Republic), and Serhyj Zhadan (Ukraine) in the sense of a postcolonial "writing back" (Rushdie 1982; Ashcroft et al. 1989), so as to demonstrate how they, in turn, deny Russian claims to authority, exclusivity, and dominance of space. Ultimately, I will discuss a third perspective, namely the one of writers from non-European countries, who register the tensions too, but also emphasise the utopian potential of these encounters to create a whole new Central cum Eastern Europe.

City of Exiles: Representations of Berlin in World Literature

After the end of World War II, West Berlin, on which my discussion is focused, began to gain the attention of Western artists and intellectuals as early as 1962, when the New York-based Ford Foundation decided to finance an annual "Artists-in-Residence" programme in Berlin, which is better known today as the "Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD" (Berlin Artist's Programme).[2] As a reaction to the threatening isolation, only two years after the erection of the Wall, internationally acclaimed artists, musicians, and writers (e.g. Iannis Xenakis, W.H. Auden, Igor' Strawinsky) were invited to create a cultural bridge between West Berlin and the rest of the world. The insular city was to become a prominent centre on the world's cultural map and an intersection between East and West. From the very start, therefore, the organisers invited

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[1] In what follows, I will frequently refer to the Russian-German writers as "Russians." I do this for reasons of brevity only, and do not mean to describe them as ethnic Russians or citizens of Russia.

[2] http://www.berliner-kuenstlerprogramm.de/en/chronik.php (last accessed 13 January 2017). Since 1966 the programme has been financed and run by the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), the German Academic Exchange Service.

artists and writers from East Central and Eastern Europe to be part of the project. Between 1962 and 1989 approximately one hundred guests from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, among them prominent figures like Witold Gombrowicz (1963), Zbigniew Herbert and Krzysztof Penderecki (both in 1968), György Ligeti, (1969), and Stanisław Lem (1979) participated in the project.[3] These efforts established West Berlin as a meeting point, a platform for intellectual exchange not only between the representatives of different arts, but also for those of different nations, many of whom were separated from each other not only geographically but also ideologically, by a deep political (as well as economic and cultural) divide that came to be known as the Cold War. For many of them, the sojourn in this city was the only opportunity for an encounter with colleagues from other countries.[4]

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of the city, a whole new era began yet again. Hundreds of thousands of people from across the globe settled down in Berlin. Artists, students, writers, and scientists were attracted by the prospect of "discovering" the unfamiliar and "exotic" Eastern part of the city hidden for decades behind the Iron Curtain, by the cheap living space and low cost of living. To a large degree, however, it was the unique atmosphere of a city in the state of emerging and the prospect of witnessing and participating in a rare historical event, the (re)building of a modern capital, that attracted many people. At the same time, Berlin became home to a huge number of migrants and refugees, mainly, if not exclusively, from the former Soviet Union (after 1990) and from ex-Yugoslavia (after the disastrous wars had begun there). According to official numbers, between the years 1991 and 2004, 220.000 Jewish "quota refugees"[5] and approximately 1,9 million ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union and its successor states settled down in Germany, many of them in Berlin. After the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 and especially after 1 May 2011, when mobility restrictions were lifted by Germany and Austria, they were

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[3] Among the invitees were both émigrés and those who stayed in the respective countries. For a full list of guests see http://www.berliner-kuenstlerprogramm.de/de/gaeste.php (last accessed 13 January 2017).

[4] An inexhaustible source of information about Western musicians, artists, etc. in Berlin is Stuart Braun's book *City of Exiles. Berlin from the Outside In* from 2015.

[5] Numbers according to the Central Council of Jews in Germany http://www.zentralratdjuden.de/en/topic/154.html (last accessed 25 January 2017).

joined by many permanent and seasonal labourers from different East Central and Eastern European states, particularly from Poland but also from Romania, Bulgaria, and other countries.

The sheer presence of people from all continents gave rise to the idea of Berlin as a melting pot, comparable to New York or London, which is clearly reflected upon in contemporary literature. Dozens and maybe even hundreds of literary texts, novels, short stories, and poems about the old and the new German capital have been written by authors from all parts of the world, leading in effect to the creation of what can be called, to borrow Vladimir Toporov's famous notion, a new international "Berlin Text.".[6] A prominent feature of this body of texts is the celebration of the city's unique atmosphere in the 1990s and 2000s.

The characteristic that distinguishes post-Wall Berlin from other European and non-European metropolises is the combination of internationalism with a special spirit of creativity and experimentation, and the easy-going lifestyle of a bohemian society untroubled by financial considerations and unrestricted by the demands of free market economy. Moreover, numerous writers from all around the world were and still are captivated by the tension between the city's difficult past and present on the one hand and on the other, between its twofold experience of totalitarianism, its destruction during World War II, the painful division into two separate entities, and the creation of a new city that is supposed to represent a democratic, liberal, and peaceful modern Germany. Novels like *Allerzielen* (*All Souls' Day*, 2001) by the Dutch writer Cees Nooteboom, *Lifnei Ha-makom* (Upon a Certain Place, 2007) by the Israeli Haim Be'er, *This Must Be the Place* (2008) by the American Anna Winger, *Book of Clouds* (2009) by the Mexican Chloe Aridjis, and *Ladivine* (2013) by the French writer Marie N'Diaye, to name but a few, reflect the simultaneous search for appropriate (both material and immaterial) forms of conservation, reconstruction, and representation of the past and for solutions to the multiple economic, political, and social problems of the present.

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[6] Vladimir Toporov, one of the most prominent scholars of Russian literature of the twentieth century, suggested speaking of a *Petersburg Text of Russian Literature*, implying that over the centuries a huge body of texts about the city was written and these texts share a number of recurrent motifs or *topoi* that wandered from generation to generation (Vladimir Toporov 1995, 259–367).

However, the emergence of this new international "Berlin Text" was not *only* the result of the writers' personal interest in and individual engagement with the city. To a large degree, literary texts about Berlin are *also* a result of intensive institutional efforts to establish and solidify Berlin's new image within the international intellectual and artistic community. Unlike New York, London, or Paris, whose attractiveness does not need special explanation or further enhancement, after its reunification Berlin had to be actively "advertised": it had to *actively attract* people. The reasons for the "image-improvement campaign" were both of a political and an economic nature; they were meant to accumulate symbolic and real, i.e. financial, capital. In many European neighbour states, the reunification and especially the transferring of the capital from Bonn to Berlin gave rise to fears that Germany could become the largest economic power in the EU and as a result come to dominate other states. To dispel these fears, an image of a particularly peaceful, multicultural, and tolerant Berlin had to be created. At the same time, this image was necessary in order to attract more and more visitors, since tourism was and still is one of the city's central sources of income. In both instances, state-sponsored cultural politics were to play a key role.[7]

Apart from the DAAD programme, which after 1990 directed most of its attention to the late Soviet Union and its successor states,[8] from the early 1990s some of the most prominent East Central Europeans and Russian writers were also invited by the "Literarisches Colloquium Berlin" (Literary Colloquium Berlin). Like the DAAD "Artists-in-residence" programme, the LCB was established in 1962 and originally financed by the Ford Foundation too. Like the DAAD, it was a post-Wall transnational effort to invigorate West Berlin's literary life. Since 1993, the LCB too, was developed into an international meeting place. The programme "Autoren aus aller Welt" (authors from all over the world) invites and brings together internationally acclaimed writers who then reside in the grand mansion on Wannsee for a year. Ever since, it has hosted some of the most illustrious contemporary writers from all continents, with many

[7] The efforts encompassed all spheres of cultural life: not only literature, but also music, theatre, etc.

[8] It continued, however, to invite guests from East Central Europe too, numbering more than 130 individuals between the years 1990 and 2017.

East Central and Eastern European authors among them.[9] Remarkably, several of the texts about Berlin that are discussed here, as well as many others, were written during such a stay or afterwards; no less remarkable is that several of the invited authors had already written such texts before being invited.[10]

Apart from these two institutions, countless others have done their share to bring the famous, but also the young and the promising to Berlin by granting them stipends, scholarships, and fellowships.[11] Thus, ever since the 1960s and especially since the early 1990s, a great number of spaces, or in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, *chronotopes* of encounter, and intercultural exchange have been created in Berlin.[12]

However, as the texts I will discuss in the penultimate part of this article clearly demonstrate, these efforts made by Berlin cultural institutions to make space and time for a productive and fruitful exchange of opinions between East Central Europeans and Russian literati were met by them with reservations. In other words, the institutionalised idea of mutuality and sharing is most frequently met with resistance, a resistance expressed by many writers in highly ironic depictions of such staged encounters. But before turning to them, I will first look at texts

[9] Among them Svetlana Alexievich (Belarus/Russia), Andrey Bitov, Vladimir Sorokin, Dmitry Prigov (all three from Russia), László Marton (Hungary), Jáchym Topol (Czech Republic), Paweł Huelle (Poland), Tomas Venclova (Lithuania/USA), Georgi Gospodinov (Bulgaria). For a full list, see http://www.lcb.de/gaeste/.

[10] Serhyi Zhadan was a guest at the LCB in 2005, two years after his book *Big Mac and Other Stories*, in which Berlin plays a prominent role, was originally published in the Ukraine. Jaroslav Rudiš's novel was published in Prague in 2002 after the two-year stay in Berlin (2001–2002); in that time, he was awarded the European Journalists Fellowship at the Free University in Berlin. In 2006, he was invited by the LCB. In the same year, further East Central and Eastern European poets and writers resided at the LCB, among them Mojca Kumerdej (Slovenia), Valzhyna Mort (Belarus/USA), Tadeusz Dąbrowski (Poland), Juri Andrukhovych and Taras Prochasko (Ukraine), and many others. Aleš Šteger, whose book *Berlin* was published in Slovenia in 2007, was invited by the LCB in 2010, a year after its German translation was published (2009). While this issue cannot be discussed here at length, it would appear that at least to some extent the contemporary international "Berlin Text" is an artificial creation of the German cultural industry that specifically promotes this genre.

[11] First and foremost, educational institutions like the Free University, the Humboldt University, etc.

[12] For the term chronotope, see Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal study *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Bachtin 1981).

about non-orchestrated, contingent encounters between Russians and East Central Europeans in other Berlin spaces.

A Russian City: Russians in Berlin and Their Invisible Others

In Wladimir Kaminer's first book, *Russendisko* from 2000 (English edition *Russian Disco* from 2002), which became the cornerstone of Russian-German literature,[13] a strange discrepancy became evident. On the one hand Berlin is presented as a utopian melting pot inhabited by people from all continents: from Asian and African countries, the Middle East, Turkey, and so on. Here, migrants from post-Soviet Russia encounter visibly different and culturally distant Others and these encounters are said to be unproblematic. Moreover, the relationship between different groups of migrants is explicitly characterised as one of solidarity. In the story "Suleyman und Salieri" (Suleyman and Salieri), the xenophobia of the German society of the early 1990s is said to create a strong sense of solidarity and togetherness between different groups of "foreigners" such as Arabs, Jews, Chinese, Turks, or Ethiopians, who are all affected by discrimination (Kaminer 2002, 67–68). Existing racial and/or political conflicts between the groups (e.g. between Arabs and Jews) seem to fade away and disappear in the face of shared problems.

A group of people excluded from this utopian universe is made up from East Central and Eastern Europeans. Thus, there are no protagonists from Poland,[14] the Czech, and Slovak Republics and very few characters from former Yugoslavia (Kaminer was writing his stories at a time when thousands of refugees from ex-Yugoslav states lived in Germany). Furthermore, on the rare occasions where individuals from East Central and Eastern Europe do appear, they are subjected to ridicule: in "Die neuen Jobs" (The New Jobs), the scientist that is derided in this story because of his bizarre invention (he is said to have invented a fully automatic gynaecological chair that is supposed to replace gynaecologists and

[13] For further discussions of his texts, see Uffelmann (2009) and Wanner (2011). I concentrate my discussion on Kaminer, since the strategies he devised that are relevant to my context were employed, without significant modifications, in all later Berlin texts by Russian-German writers.

[14] Which is particularly significant because Polish migrants constitute the second largest group of migrants in Berlin.

that communicates in different languages) is a Pole. The identity of the very few migrants mentioned is itself a subject of doubt: in "Das Mädchen und die Hexen" (The Girl and the Witches) a woman who claims to be from ex-Yugoslavia is strangely unaware of the war in her homeland, which makes her life story implausible; in "Geschäftstarnungen" (Business Camouflage) Bulgarians pretend to be Turks. Thus, these characters appear to be (at least potentially) dishonest and untrustworthy. Unlike them, the protagonist, a Russian Jew, never denies his identity and never disguises it. His honest demeanour combined with his intellectual abilities elevates him morally above all others and makes him an authority that other people, migrants or not, turn to when looking for help and support. Thus, the hierarchy of nations prevalent in the Soviet Union and within the Socialist Bloc—a hierarchy that assumed the superior position of the Russian nation and the Soviet state (Tlostanova 2012, 132)—is transferred by Kaminer with little modification to Berlin. Here, the relationships between the representatives of individual nations are structured accordingly—the Russian (migrant) always being better and cleverer than all Eastern and East Central Europeans. Furthermore, the omission of the latter serves to make the Soviet experience of totalitarianism and that of the dissolution of the communist state look unique; Russian migrants can therefore lay claim to the role of sole authorities on the history of the whole of East Central and Eastern Europe and act as "spokesmen" for the entire former communist bloc.

The overall presence of Turkish, Vietnamese, and other migrants notwithstanding, Kaminer's Berlin seems to be, as Sandor Gilman has pointedly observed, Russianised:

> […] Kaminer's most successful creation of a utopian Berlin multicultural world in which all of the ethnicities and nationalities blur into a Russian-coloured world. This is the hybridity in which the solvent is vodka. (Gilman 2006, 217)

Moreover, the city space is shown to be actively and purposefully (re-) conquered and colonised by Russian migrants. Several stories demonstrate their progressive movement through the city space from the margins to the centre. In "*Die erste eigene Wohnung*" (A First Apartment of My Own), the protagonist moves from the poor suburb of Marzahn to the centre, Prenzlauer Berg, a district soon to become the most fashionable in Berlin, and his sporadic jobs lead him to the posh district of Mitte. The

stories "*Alltag eines Kunstwerks*" (The Everyday Life of a Work of Art) and "*Berliner Porträts*" (Berlin Portraits) describe how Russian migrant artists inscribe themselves in the city, leaving their traces everywhere and virtually overwriting the city surface with their art. In the first story, a strange sculpture by a Russian artist "travels" through Berlin (and other German cities), constantly changing its location until numerous places in the city become associated with it. Similarly, in the second story, a German painter is so impressed by the face of a Russian migrant that he paints it in countless fashionable bars and restaurants. These places become, in Lefebvre's terminology, Russian *espaces de representation* (Lefebvre 1974, 39–43), spaces that make the Russian presence in Berlin visible. In "*Bahnhof Lichtenberg*" (Lichtenberg Station), a poor Russian migrant starts his business selling beer and Coca-Cola at the Lichtenberg train station at the city's eastern periphery. Thanks to commercial talent and perseverance, he soon owns a chain of Russian food stores. This successful expansion does not, however, satisfy the businessman, who plans to leave for America to quench his "imperialistic ambitions" (Kaminer 2002, 120). While these expansions from the–eastern–margins to the centre are only implicitly reminiscent of the Soviet Army's progress from the eastern outskirts to the Reichstag at the very heart of the city during the last days of World War II, a new and no less aggressive conquest of Berlin is made fully explicit in "Stadtführer Berlin" (Berlin Guidebook). Rich Russian tourists are invited to conquer Berlin and fly their own flags over the Reichstag: "Fly your own personal flag over the new German Reichstag – experience and conquer Berlin!" (Kaminer 2002, 142).

Later Berlin narratives by Russian migrant authors have inherited many of the narrative strategies of exclusion and denigration of East Central and Eastern European Others as they were devised by Kaminer. Very much like Kaminer's book and like Berlin texts by other non-Eastern European writers, these texts depict Berlin as a melting pot, a place where people from all around the world come together. Novels like by Nellja Veremej *Berlin liegt im Osten* (Berlin is in the East, 2013), Olga Martynova's *Sogar die Papageien überleben uns* (Even the Parrots Outlive Us, 2010), and, most recently, Kat Kaufmann's *Superposition* (2015) focus on encounters between the protagonist, typically a Russian or a Russian-Jewish immigrant, and different Others. Hereby, two tendencies are visible: while

Martynova and Kaufmann depict the protagonist as a member of intellectual and artistic circles of writers, musicians, actors, etc.,[15] Veremej (and Kaminer) tells the stories of people who, once in Germany, struggle to achieve some degree of social recognition and financial security, living under precarious circumstances, working in menial jobs, etc. These differences notwithstanding, all the texts depict the circles in which their respective protagonists move as distinctly *international*. The world of home attendants, cleaning ladies, and shop assistants is no less international than that of (more or less) famous and well-to-do actors, musicians, and writers; both consist of characters from Germany, Russia, North or South America, Western Europe, etc. What all these texts have in common is that these circles rarely include individuals from Central or Eastern Europe.

City of Russians? Images of Russians in Berlin by East Central Europeans Writers

In one way or another, the Russian presence in post-reunification Berlin has been acutely registered by the vast majority of writers from all the different countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe. For some, like émigrés from post-Yugoslav Croatia and Serbia Dubravka Ugrešić and Bora Ćosić, the city is strongly associated with the Russian émigrés of the 1920s who they think of as moral and literary role-models (Finkelstein 2015, 387–391). Others, like Šteger, choose to focus on contemporary Russian-speaking migrants. Their representations of the latter offer a broad range of highly heterogeneous assessments and opinions about the former citizens of the Soviet Union; similarly, Russian migrants fulfil many different functions in the narratives. Admittedly, however, a positive and unresented acknowledgement of the Russian presence in Berlin such as the one in Šteger's book, whose lines are quoted at the very beginning, is rather rare.[16] Far more frequent are ambivalent and outright negative modes of representation.

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[15] The same applies to texts about Berlin by Russian non-émigré writers, such as Andrei Gavrilov's long poem *Berlinskaia flejta* (The Berlin Flute) from 2002 or Igor' Klekh's short story *Krokodily ne vidiat snov* (Crocodiles Don't Dream) from 2004 (Finkelstein 2015, 365–399).

[16] Another example of a favourable representation is the collection of short stories *Konstruktionen im Haus oder Iwan Iwanytsch am Fenster. Bagatellen und Novellen*

An example of a most far-reaching critique of Russian migrants can be found in the novel *Nebe pod Berlínem* (The Sky under Berlin, 2002[17]) by the Czech writer Jaroslav Rudiš. At first, Rudiš accuses them of unfounded claims to an exclusive authority on Eastern European history and authority on the history of communist totalitarianism *in toto*, only to strip them, in the next step, of all such rights. Like Kaminer's, Rudiš's Berlin is also a multicultural melting pot, an international meeting place (in this case of losers). Both the German characters and the migrants from Russia and Eastern Europe are individuals who have aspired to creative professions and have either failed, or, for different reasons, have been forced to give them up. Notably, the first place in Berlin that the Czech protagonist and his German friend visit is the *Klub der polnischen Versager* (the Club of Polish Losers) (Rudiš 2002, 13–19). The club is a multicultural microcosm where different people, mostly Czech, Polish, and Russian migrants, peacefully interact, talk, drink, and dance together. The only character disturbing the picture is Igor, a Russian Jew from Moscow. In very aggressive tones, he talks about nothing else but Bautzen, the infamous prison in the GDR, where dissidents and political prisoners were detained. At first, Igor's introduction into the novel seems to suggest that he is or will be ascribed an important and positive function in the narrative, that he is the only one to uphold the memory of the totalitarian past and to remind the others—who come to the club in search of fun and parties—of the political repressions and the crimes committed by the communist regimes. Based on the experience of his own family, one half of which was killed by Hitler and the other by Stalin, he claims to be an authority on the history of totalitarianism in general. His interest and his sympathy are seemingly extended to the victims of totalitarian oppression not only in his own country but in others too. His educational objective, his wish to enlighten others about these histories, is directed primarily at people from post-reunification Western Germany, people whom he believes to have no personal experience and little knowledge of Eastern European history in general and of communist crimes in particular (Rudiš 2002, 14). However, as Igor's real positions are revealed, Rudiš strips

(Constructions in the House, or Iwan Iwanytsch at the Window. Bagatelles and Novellas) by the Polish-German poet and prose writer Iwona Mickiewicz (2011).

[17] The book is available in Belarusian, German, Italian, Polish, Swedish, and Serbian translations, not, however, in English. As the title suggests, the novel's major pretext is Wim Wenders' film *Der Himmel über Berlin*.

him of his authority on interpreting and explicating history. When Igor finds out that the protagonist is from the Czech Republic, and thus does not need to be lectured on Eastern European history, he demonstrates a completely different understanding of history, an interpretation diametrically opposed to the one suggested by the previous lines. Igor's account of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the states of the Warsaw Pact under Soviet leadership follows official Soviet propaganda in an unreflected and unfiltered way (Rudiš 2002, 18). His approval of the invasion and the crude idea of a "Slavic solidarity" which does not take the Czech (Czechoslovak) position into account uncovers and exposes his reactionary and Soviet-nationalistic understanding of Eastern European history.

Far more complex and ambivalent than the clear-cut assessment by Rudiš is the position towards Russians taken by the Romanian-German writer Carmen-Francesca Banciu in her collection of autobiographical essays *Berlin ist mein Paris. Geschichten aus der Hauptstadt* (Berlin is my Paris. Stories from the Capital) from 2002.[18] Similarly, as in all the texts discussed above, her Berlin is a multicultural space too, to a greater degree even than that of the other writers. The essays depict encounters with Germans and non-Germans: Americans and Africans, Brazilians and Portuguese, Italians, fellow Romanians, etc. All are treated with equal respect and sympathy by a narrator who explicitly and continuously states her interest in all the people she meets and in their stories. But beneath the shiny surface of mutual understanding and cordial solidarity, tensions become tangible. The essays roughly cover the decade between 1990 (the year when the narrator first arrived in Germany) and sometime after 2001 (09.11.2001 is referred to), very much the same time in which thousands of Russian-speaking migrants came to live in Berlin. And Russian does in fact make its appearance in the essays. In "Babuschka maja" (My Grandma), the narrator encounters a middle-aged man with a dark complexion, dark eyes and a prominent moustache, dressed in shabby clothes, a man whose appearance fully answers the German cliché

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[18] Banciu, Carmen-Francesca. 2002. *Berlin ist mein Paris. Geschichten aus der Hauptstadt*. Berlin: PalmArt Press. For more information about the author and her books in English see http://www.banciu.de/en/content/2017-berlin-ist-mein-paris-new-edition (13 January 2017). The term "Romanian-German" implies here that Banciu (b. 1955 in Lipova, Romania) writes not only in her native Romanian but also in German; she does not belong to the German minority in Romania, like e.g. Herta Müller.

of a migrant. As he tries to help an elderly lady to board a bus, the man is rebuked by her in harsh terms, precisely on the grounds, so we are made to understand, of him being a foreigner and thus potentially dangerous. The man is startled by this fierce reaction and tries to calm her down by addressing her in Russian: "Babuschka, babuschka, milaja maja" (Grandma, grandma, my dear) (Banciu 2002, 87).[19] Significantly, however, the language is devoid here of the eponymous nation. The man proves to be an Armenian, a representative of a nation colonised by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union for many decades. Furthermore, he is a refugee from Nagorno-Karabakh, an immediate victim of (early) Soviet colonial policies in the Caucasus that eventually led to the bloody conflict in the late 1980s.

In the essay "World Literature and Language Anxiety," Robert J. C. Young suggested three different possibilities for the choice of a post-colonial language, the first being to continue using the language of the coloniser(s) but modifying it so as to make it more local (Young 2013, 34). In a continuation of Young's argument, I suggest that, in Banciu's essay, Russian, the language of the colonial power, is "made more local" in the sense that it is now dissociated from all aggression, violence, hatred, etc. From a language of the oppressor, that was aggressively enforced in Armenia, in the mouth of a former colonised subject it turns into a language of empathy and compassion, a language of selfless help that is willingly extended to anyone, anywhere. Banciu's subtle criticism of Soviet colonialism results in an admission to her Berlin universe of its victims and in the banishment of other Russians.

Whereas in her writing Banciu at least allows for the presence of the Russian language, if not, however, that of ethnic Russians, in his collection of short stories *Big Mac ta inshi istorii* (Big Mac and Other Stories, 2003),[20] Serhiy Zhadan, one of the most prominent contemporary Ukrainian writers, chooses an even more radical approach. Several of the eleven stories depict the narrator's journeys to different Western European cities, the first and the last being dedicated to Berlin. As so often, the first story, "Берлін, який ми втратили" (Berlin as we lost it), describes the city as a colourful multicultural space, the last, "Втрати, які нас

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[19] In this story, the Russian words appear in non-academic German transliteration; the word "maja" (my) is misspelled by the author (instead of the correct "moja").

[20] The book was translated into Czech, German, Polish, and Russian; there is no English translation.

роблять щасливими" (Losses that make us happy), as the place myriads of East Central and Eastern Europeans dream of and go through immense hardships to reach. However, both stories exclude the Russian language and Russians altogether.[21] Not only are present-day Russians, migrants or not, absent from Zhadan's Berlin, he has also–markedly–omitted the famous Russian émigrés of the 1920s. Unlike Dubravka Ugrešić and Bora Ćosić, who considered themselves to be political refugees and imagined themselves explicitly as heirs to political émigrés like Vladimir Nabokov, Viktor Shklovskii, Andrei Belyi and others, the Ukrainian writer has no interest in Russian predecessors. Like Ugrešić and Ćosić, Zhadan imagines Berlin as a city of exiles too, a city with a long-standing tradition of offering refuge to those who had to flee their home country. The crucial difference is that he substitutes the tradition of associating Berlin with Russian émigrés with a different one and this substitution has very clear postcolonial undertones. The Ukrainian protagonist and his Czech friends, Silvi and Gašpar, aspiring young artists, travel together to Berlin to meet a much-acclaimed sculptor, Rudi, whose recognition and support they seek. He is an old émigré, not Russian, however, but Czech. Like the man in Banciu's essay, he too is a victim of the Soviet regime and its imperialistic and colonial policies. A non-conformist artist and a friend of Havel's, after the Soviet invasion of 1968 he became a dissident; under pressure from the Soviet authorities, he is forced to leave Prague and emigrates to West Berlin. Furthermore, Zhadan painstakingly emphasises some fundamental differences in the way exile is experienced by Rudi and his Russian non-predecessors. He negates the near-cliché image of an exiled poet/writer/artist as a poor and suffering individual[22]: Rudi is exceptionally successful; his works are widely exhibited and sell well. Whereas many Russian émigrés dream about returning to their home country, Rudi doesn't want to return to the Czech Republic. For him, space cannot be divided into familiar and foreign, space is: "[…] either free or not free, do you understand? I couldn't give a shit about where I live, the only thing that is important is how I live. And here I can live any way I want" (Zhadan 2011, 26). Thus, Zhadan's narrative strategy is basically identical to that of Russian-German writers like Kaminer, Veremej,

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[21] Except for a very brief reference to Russian-speaking men at the beginning of the first story, who are, however, said to have a Belarusian accent.

[22] However, many Russian émigré writers in Berlin indeed suffered severe poverty.

and others, who banned East Central and Southeastern Europeans from their texts. He, in turn, does the same with Russian characters, excluding them from his Berlin and ignoring all memory of an earlier Russian presence.

The Chronotope of Staged Encounters: Kaminer, Šteger, and Be'er

As already discussed above, in Wladimir Kaminer's multicultural Berlin universe the Russian protagonist hardly ever encounters East Central and Eastern Europeans. The only exception to this rule is the story "*Nie wieder Weimar*" (No More Trips to Weimar) which describes a journey the protagonist undertakes together with Polish, Czech, and Ukrainian artists to a cultural event, a "festival" in Weimar. Significantly, the encounter only takes place and the bonds between the artists are only established because a cultural institution, in this case the "Literary Society of Thuringia," *arranges* it and brings them together. The purpose of the gathering itself, a discussion on the processes of transformation in Eastern Europe, suggests that these people have something in common, an idea vehemently denied by the narrator, who emphasises that only the consumption of large quantities of vodka prevents physical violence within the group:

> Invited by the *Literary Society of Thuringia*, for the first time in my life I went to Weimar in order to take part in a festival called "Transformation in Eastern Europe through Revolution and Counterrevolution". Together with two dozen other Eastern European artists, Poles, Russians, Czech, and Ukrainians. Already on our way there it became clear just how different our transformation was. Therefore, our group was a rather poisonous mixture. Only the warm Ukrainian vodka provided for a minimum of tolerance. (Kaminer 2002, 97)

If not for the effort of the "Literary Society," so we are meant to understand, an encounter such as this would never have taken place; commonalities between these individuals—such as them all being from "Eastern Europe" and having first-hand experiences of allegedly similar transformation processes–are only products of the German imagination. The highly ironic depiction of this encounter also points to another aspect, namely the opposition to an apparatus of the state (as represented

here by the Literary Society), typical for so many artists and intellectuals with first-hand experience of the Soviet (and any other) totalitarian regime(s). For Kaminer, this organised and state-sponsored gathering appears to be uncannily reminiscent of Soviet-style internationalism celebrating the brotherhood of socialist states. It is just as arbitrary and artificially imposed upon these artists, forcing them into mutual solidarity and recognition. Placing himself in the tradition of Soviet intellectuals-dissidents and staging himself (implicitly) as their descendent, Kaminer shows the reverse poetics of resistance to such programmed togetherness by foregrounding this gathering as a zone of conflict.

However, it should also be added that the creative potential inherent in conflicts in general and in this one in particular, and the potential for a new discussion that could grow out from the conflict, is not realised here. After completing the compulsory programme and their joint performances in Weimar, the protagonist and the other participants immediately go their separate ways. They do not appear to be interested in each other or in a continuation of the conflict conversation begun earlier on the train. Moreover, on his strolls through Weimar, the protagonist soon meets other Russians and spends the rest of his time in Weimar in their company, in the company of "his own people." Thus, it can be said that Kaminer's criticism of state-organised culture turns out to be superficial because it does not go beyond the stating of dissatisfaction with and protest against imposed togetherness and commonality. No other options are suggested, no creative means to subvert and undermine the institutional policies are devised. In short, denial and refusal are not followed by any particular strategies or actions.

In a similar way, Aleš Šteger describes his stay at the LCB in the last chapter of his Berlin book called "The House of Ghosts," in particular, life and communication among the writers-in-residence. Instead of the animated and stimulating discussions about literature that a naïve reader might have expected, they discuss money issues and watch pornographic movies;[23] in general, the atmosphere between them is no less poisonous than the one Kaminer described:

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[23] This is aimed at the French writer Michel Houellebecq, author of the famous novel *The Elementary Particles* (Šteger 2015, 120).

The presence of so many bulky writers and critics, dressed in grey suits, stirring up the language early in the morning, was terrifying. (…) The act of sipping chamomile tea and licking fingers sticky with honey (…) would shield an author's face, distorted with creative strain, from contact with some Icelandic, Argentine, or Irish grand master slumped at a neighbouring table. The place was endlessly comparative. On the ground floor were photographs of those Stockholm one-point-three-million-dolares-nortamericanos-before-tax recipients who spent only a day or night there but set the bar so high. Competition was followed by post-breakfast business chats: grants, awards, royalties, publishers, contacts (…). No wonder Heinrich Kleist shot himself right here (…). (Šteger 2015, 119–120)

Writers from Eastern Europe are depicted as grotesque characters, gargantuan alcoholics with no future. They seem to have no interest in any kind of exchange or cooperation. Instead, they avoid the house entirely and frequent the trashy local pub, where they stuff themselves with fatty food and alcoholic beverages: "[…] exuberant consumption of the bar's high-fat cooking and spirits, held in the trembling hands of many an Eastern European writer, opened the door to predictable ruin and the road to inevitable downfall" (Šteger 2015, 121). Like for Kaminer, in Šteger's depiction, the carefully arranged space and time for intercultural dialogue fail to fulfil their purpose. The irony in Šteger's depiction here resonates with that of Kaminer, while the question of whether or not Šteger's critical attitude has the same or similar roots as Kaminer's needs closer scrutiny. Taken together, these two examples could point to a tendency that many writers from former communist states actually do have in common, namely a critical attitude towards state-sponsored cultural institutions as well as their scepticism and reluctance towards orchestrated intellectual/artistic exchange as facilitated by these institutions.

The efforts to establish Berlin in general and the LCB in particular as places of intellectual exchange were also registered by non-European writers, such as the Israeli novelist Haim Be'er. On a quest to learn more about the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, the protagonist of his novel *Lifnei Hamakom* (2007), an Israeli writer and alter ego of the author, visits Berlin in the year 2006 and stays at the LCB, the same year in which Jaroslav Rudiš and many other East Central Europeans writers

also lived there (see footnote 15).[24] There he meets the latter, Mojca Kumerdej, and Tadeusz Dąbrowski. Unlike in Kaminer's and Šteger's texts, a serious (and friendly) dialogue does indeed take place between them, but they never talk about literary issues or their countries' past. The (only?) ground, more or less neutral terrain on which they can all meet to have an earnest and relaxed conversation, is something else entirely, namely Germany's Nazi past. But even on this issue, as Be'er makes clear, the differences and the tensions between them are great and no common position is ever achieved. However, on the ruins of the past, an attempt to imagine a future is undertaken by Rudiš. Strikingly, this future is founded on a sense of commonality, if not even solidarity. The writers present are compared to the sons of Noah and thus constitute something of a brotherhood; they are joined by a common language (English), equally foreign to all of them, and a common task:

> Jaroslav (Rudiš–MF) said that here we were like Noah's sons, who, after the flood was over and the water sank, were sitting at the lake next to Mountain Ararat. Like them, we have one and the same tongue and language since none of us were native speakers of English. And who knows, maybe at that moment, without realising it, we were constructing the foundations for a new Tower of Babel (translation is mine–MF.) (Be'er 2007, 73)

Considering that the biblical story ends with the punishment of the people, the idea of the construction of a new Tower of Babel is hardly a truly utopian one, but even so, the other writers are reluctant to share in Rudiš's vision. Dąbrowski is said to be "not happy at all with the alliance his Czech colleague was pulling him into" (Ibid.), while Kumerdej openly disagrees with Rudiš and claims that he is mistaken. Ultimately, even a most tentative attempt to establish commonality fails. Even among East Central Europeans (with no Russians present), the conversation thus ends, as it very often does, with open disagreement and no prospect of reconciliation.

Conclusion

As of today, three elements of the "Berlin text" in contemporary world literature appear to be of utmost significance: 1. The (nearly mandatory)

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[24] Whereas Be'er himself was never a writer-in-residence there.

depiction of the city as a multicultural and tolerant universe, a meeting place for people from all over the world. 2. Therefore, the narrative structure of the texts is most frequently based upon encounters between the protagonist(s) and other characters in this universe. 3. The encounters themselves are depicted either as spontaneous or as prearranged and organised by a third party, most frequently an official cultural institution.

The question central to my investigation is that of the choices authors make in regard to the inhabitants of this universe. In other words: whom are the protagonists allowed to encounter, who is relevant, who is welcomed into this Berlin space, who is made visible and heard–and who is not? In the texts by Russian-German writers, people from East Central and Eastern Europe present a significant lacuna. In the perception of Russian migrants (authors and protagonists), who register–most naturally–the presence of people from Turkey, Africa, Asia, etc. Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are insignificant Others that are rarely seen and encountered; no serious relationships to these are entertained, the few individuals who are mentioned are ridiculed and denigrated. The attempts of German cultural organisations to encourage dialogue and exchange are resisted, any kind of similarity (assumed or real) between the two groups is refused.

This exclusion is further complemented by a very particular mode of appreciation of city space. The descriptions of the Russian presence in Berlin, often containing aggressive undertones, amount to a (renewed) occupation of the city. Similar to the way the Soviet Union looked to colonise Eastern Europe, impose its ideologies, and leave an everlasting imprint upon its neighbours (Moore 2001, 111–128), former Soviet citizens look to "Russianise" Berlin and mark it as a decidedly Russian city. Ironically, the most enduring imprint the Soviet state ever made, it would appear, was that upon its own citizens, who now transfer and resume, spatial and temporal distance to their country of origin notwithstanding, Soviet practices of colonisation to the diaspora.

In turn, East Central and Eastern European writers like Banciu, Rudiš, or Zhadan are acutely aware both of Soviet colonial history and of today's Russian migrants' colonial desires. I therefore suggest reading their texts about Berlin as postcolonial in a twofold sense: they imagine a free life in a tolerant and multicultural place and, at the same time, criticise the former colonial power, very much in accordance with Salman Rushdie's famous dictum "The Empire writes back to the centre" (Rushdie 1982). Moreover, they are well aware that in spite of the demise of the Soviet

Empire, traces and residues of the colonial "mindset" still survive in Russian migrants' texts and attitudes. Unsurprisingly, German efforts to establish a dialogue and instal a sense of solidarity between the parties are met with fierce resistance by them too. Resistance to the establishment of any kind of similarity between the former colonisers and the colonised (e.g., "transformation processes") is more than understandable. When and where a real dialogue, an exchange not orchestrated by third parties and unburdened by their expectations will take place and whether it will take place at all remains to be seen.[25]

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[25] This chapter was written before the begin of Russia's full scale war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and therefore could not take more recent developments into consideration.

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