

Abstract. The aim of the present article is to document an argument that is increasingly being raised in the context of a current debate in Poland concerning the usefulness of postcolonial theory in Polish philology (and in the humanities in general). The issue at stake is whether a congruence exists between, on the one hand, the relationship between First World colonial cultures and their overseas spheres of domination, and, on the other, the imperial policy of the Central/Eastern European powers towards smaller countries or ethnic/cultural communities absorbed by the larger state organisms. More specifically, the article discusses the relations between Germany (the German states and later the German Empire) and Poland (Poles), as well as eastern Prussia in the nineteenth century. The colonial practices of narrative appropriation, stigmatization, and elimination of the Other, which are characteristic of British and French hegemonic discourse, can also be discerned in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian and German literature. In view of this, the article discusses following issues: (1) the connection between constructions of the nation and the colonial project in the German-language public space from the eighteenth to the twentieth century; (2) the postcolonial deconstruction of the “Polish space” in German nineteenth-century literature, with Gustav Freytag’s “eastern-colonial” novel *Soll und Haben* as a case study; and (3) an analysis of the “peripheries’ own voice,” i.e. Polish responses to the colonization of “Polishness” in the second half of the nineteenth century.