Postcolonial Studies and the 'Second World': Twentieth-Century German Nationalist-Colonial Constructs

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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.

Keywords: Postcolonial Studies; Second World; German literature; German nationalist project; German colonial project; the pioneering novel; colonization; the civilizing mission; Gustav Freytag; Poland; Polishness; stereotyping of Otherness

1.

Although in recent years Polish scholars have been debating the applicability of postcolonial studies methodology in such fields as Polish, German, Russian/Slavic studies and other philologies in Poland, these debates have been limited to just a

handful of academic institutions. When we survey recent philological publications available on the market, the traditionalism in formulating and framing research problems in the majority of these texts becomes apparent. For several decades, the dominant paradigm in Polish analyses of German literature has been the schematic and petrified comparative studies, which has led scholars to ask the same research questions over and over again (see Hałub and Dziemianko 2004, Połczyńska 2004). This state of affairs is surprising, given the fact that the 1990s witnessed the publication of several serious studies challenging the one-dimensional quality of research on Polish-German relations (see Orłowski 1998, Brandt 2002). Perhaps the situation can be explained by the fact that foreign philologies in Poland (for instance, German literary studies) have, until recently, been under the strong influence of the national philology, whose methodology was often spontaneously absorbed and transferred. Also within German studies in Germany, postcolonial studies are still on the margins of scholarly interest despite the concerted efforts of a group of scholars (Dunker 2005; Honold and Simons 2002; Dabag, Gründer, and Ketelsen 2004). The above factors, coupled with the presence of a language barrier impeding access to new methodological approaches presented in English or French-language publications, might explain why Polish scholars of German literature have been so slow to reach for these relatively new theoretical concepts and methodologies, though the pioneering attempts to read Polish, Russian, or German literature from a postcolonial perspective have produced interesting results (see Skórczewski 2006a; Thompson 2000; Ketelsen 2004; Ketelsen 2006; Surynt 2004; also see the web-based academic platform <www.kakanien.ac.at>). Analogies with the English discourse on Ireland might also be telling in this context.

   In addition to the fact that assimilating the assumptions and tools of a new methodology takes time, resistance to the postcolonial paradigm may be attributed to the fact that the leading postcolonial studies scholars (Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Leela Gandhi) have limited the use of these tools to the analysis and interpretation of First World/Third World relations, that is, to the relations between the 'white' European West and its far-flung non-white colonies and dominions. The exclusion of the 'Second World'[1] from this network of associations seems to suggest that the process of appropriation through textualization,

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[1] I use the term 'Second World' to designate the smaller countries/nations/communities of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe (i.e. countries that were conquered and subjected to thorough internal colonization). When viewed from the American postcolonial perspective, these countries are quite distinct from both the 'non-white' colonies and from the imperial powers – Russia/the Soviet Union, the German Empire, and the Habsburg Monarchy are not viewed as colonial powers. The only exception is the German Reich, which acquired several overseas colonies in Africa and Asia.

"paternalistic systematizations and reductionist definitions" (Duć-Fajfer 2006: 438), and the "repressive nature of cultural paradigms and matrixes" (Burzyńska 2006: 83) imposed on subordinated peoples within the European-European/Asian constellation are incompatible with analogical processes that ordered relations between the European West and its overseas colonies. I would argue that such claims are thoroughly misleading.

In order to substantiate the argument that the two phenomena are, in fact, comparable or congruent and that postcolonial theory might be applicable to the 'Second World,' I shall focus on the following issues: 1) the connection between the German nationalist project 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 (as exemplified by the pioneering novel *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*) by Gustav Freytag; 3) the analysis of the 'periphery's own voice': Polish reactions to the colonization of 'Polishness' in the 1860s.

2.

According to Anna Burzyńska, "postcolonial studies are primarily concerned with the political and ideological influence of the West on other cultures (particularly those of the Third World), and with ways of constructing meaning within spheres subject to imperialist practices to justify the West's domination over the conquered societies. Strategies of repressing all ethnic minorities that are marginalized by dominant cultures form another focus of postcolonial studies" (Burzyńska 2006: 82). Both postcolonial theory (represented by such scholars as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha) and postcolonial criticism (Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Wilson Harris, and others) are interested in unmasking the rhetorical appropriation of ethnic, national, and racial Otherness [2] in pursuit of imperial interests by countries that have or aspire to the status of colonial power. This unmasking is carried out by means of deconstructing hegemonic cultural narratives about encounters/confrontations with the Other embodied by the conquered society. It thus involves examining written texts for signs of violence towards Otherness and the Other's resistance to domination. Narrated and real colonial conquests are examined on a par with the colonization of human minds (see Duć-Fajfer 2006: 436).

Even a superficial reading of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian and German texts about regions forcibly incorporated into countries aspiring to the

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[2] I treat all three categories as cultural constructs.

status of European powers (for instance, texts by Germans or Russians about Poland and Poles) reveals practices of narrative appropriation, stigmatization, or elimination of the Other by means of (real and/or imagined) cultural/national assimilation, the discrimination of difference, or its forcible erasure from the conquered space. What we are concerned with here are not accidental similarities to the practices of excluding certain social, denominational, or professional groups from a community by creating comparable systems of distinctive features. We are, first and foremost, concerned with the denial of access to public discourse on the basis of such categories as race and ethnicity – categories based on the *a priori* assumption of biological difference and, consequently, the impossibility of changing the imposed *status quo* of object and subject of domination. Analogies between the treatment of the Other in the colonial context and within the context of internal colonization (a term commonly applied to relations between the Eastern and Central European Center and the conquered peripheries) may point to a certain sociological/anthropological constant guiding the behaviour of the conqueror towards the conquered (and vice versa). Such analogies also allow us to perceive similarities in the constitution of identity and self-consciousness on the part of the colonizing and colonized agents.

We may, of course, explain the exclusion of the 'Second World' from postcolonial studies by referring to the experience and background of the key theorists such as Leela Ghandi, as Ewa Thompson does in her study of Russian literature: "postcolonial authors are more interested in race than in nationality. This is a sort of reverse racism" (Thompson 2000: 62). Several pages later, Thompson writes uncompromisingly: "The colonization of whites by whites which took place [in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia] does not fit neatly into the colonial theory developed by non-white theorists like Bhabha and Spivak" (Thompson 2000: 68). The argument that reverse racism is now being deployed against scholars who are said to be appropriating postcolonial discourse is unconvincing, if only on account of the category of race and the white/non-white binary which are, after all, solely cultural constructs produced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hegemonic Occidental discourse. I am more inclined to agree with Aleksander Fiut who emphasizes the need to analyze Polish literature from a dual perspective, both as a "voice from the center" and as a "voice from the periphery/colony," allowing for experiences that are not easily compared with those of overseas colonies (Fiut 2000). An even more cogent argument is presented by Dariusz Skórczewski, who points to the archaic structure of Slavic studies in the United States, American postcolonial criticism's reliance on Marxism, and the concomitant loyalty (or perhaps political correctness) towards the Soviet Union – a country that styled itself as the advocate of colonized peoples/nations – and towards its present-day heir, the Russian Federation (Skórczewski 2006: 102-103). (Thompson also refers

to these factors.) But whatever the motives guiding postcolonial scholars positioned within the American academia, and however strong their protests against the inclusion of 'Second-World' countries/communities in the colonial paradigm, the process cannot be curtailed, for the research it inspired has yielded promising results.

Thompson's assumptions and conclusions, and particularly the results of her analysis of Russia's imperial policy as an equivalent or variant of colonial policy, might be profitably applied *mutatis mutandis* to the situation in German-speaking countries (particularly Prussia) in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Her formulations throw light on the imperial policy of the German Empire which, despite a brief though influential episode in the history of colonial expansion, was perceived by contemporary commentators as a country entangled in the European colonial discourse chiefly due to the fact that the German public had a strong colonial consciousness (Ketelsen 2004 and 2006) and took a keen interest in "colonial fantasies" (Zantop 1999).

As far back as the mid-1800s, due to social and economic change brought about by modernization and scientific exploration of countries outside Europe, [3] people in German-speaking countries increasingly came to understand the experience of "progress" as experiencing the history of humanity (Burszta 2004: 29-30). Consequently, the notion of 'progressive' (or 'developed') versus 'backward' (or 'undeveloped') continents, peoples/nations, and social groups became the key element of modern studies in the philosophy of history. Observing cultural difference (sometimes perceived as a civilizational gulf) and making difference the focus of travel accounts gave rise to a narrative model characteristic of most Occidental descriptions of 'savage' cultures and nineteenth-century comprehensive studies in the philosophy of history. The adoption of this perspective led scholars to attribute fundamental meaning to differentiation, evaluation, and the ensuing construction of hierarchies of all the peoples of the globe within a synchronic framework. This, in turn, resulted in the setting of fixed parameters for the reception and evaluation of all cultural/ethnic/racial difference.

Thus the deployment of the modern idea of progress as a category within the philosophy of history produced an entirely new view of humanity. While humanity was still seen as a single entity, from the European perspective it could be ordered hierarchically. Human progress (history) as civilizational and cultural progress, was therefore commonly presented within the framework of the

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[3] We need to be aware that Germans avidly read the literature of exploration, including works by Germany's most distinguished scientist and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, as well as the accounts of overseas travel by George Foster and other British and French explorers with a scientific bent.

evolutionary model of cultural development. Its internal structure was intended to make apparent the uneven and incoherent development of humanity ('asynchronicity of the synchronic') by relegating 'primitive' peoples / nations (usually by infantilizing and exoticizing them) to the status of earlier stages of human development prior to the attainment of 'maturity' – that is, European-style civilized status. This paradigm was also used for producing relational representations of European 'nations' within a network of dependencies. Based on the criterion of cultural inferiority, part of humanity was designated as backward and savage, and then degraded, both discursively and materially, to object status. Consequently, Europeans were able (or obliged) to formulate educational and civilizing programs targeted at this object, articulating and legitimizing the desire to control it.

German nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourse on the philosophy of history (which often provided justification for the German colonial project) characteristically fused the evolutionary model with the concept of culture conceived as an embodiment of the German *Volksgeist* or 'spirit of the nation' which, according to Johann G. Herder, Johann G. Fichte, and, of course, Georg W. H. Hegel, manifests itself in individual and group struggles for freedom. On the one hand, this made possible the deployment of images of the German nation that functioned as symbolic compensation for the political impotence of the middle class and its dissatisfaction with what was perceived as insufficient national and state development. On the other hand, the evolutionary model combined with the 'spirit of the nation' could be used as a tool for measuring the condition of individual 'nations.' Out of the fusion of the discourse on culture and images of the nation and state, overlaid with the main assumptions of the German colonial project, there emerged a Eurocentric model of a gradually developing world. This model, built around the category of cultural progress, expressed then current German national expectations and desires while simultaneously inscribing ethnic, cultural, and national Otherness into a coherent if simplistic paradigm for perceiving and explaining reality.

But Germans were attracted to the idea of colonial expansion not solely as a result of nationalist visions and projects conceived by a handful of intellectuals seeking ways of putting into practice German 'dreams of power'; an equally important factor was the accumulation of real economic problems since the early decades of the nineteenth century. These included the spontaneous mass emigration from the German states to both the Americas. This phenomenon provided a significant impulse for the reactivation of old colonial projects and the development of new ones. As recent studies of colonialism have shown (Gründer 1999; Gründer and Johanek 2001; Fenske 1991; Zantop 1999; Dabag, Gründer, and Ketelsen 2004), German public opinion was preoccupied with various plans for colonial expansion to a much greater extent hitherto imagined:

> With respect to German history, only with the advent of international and interdisciplinary studies was it possible to conclude that the phenomena of colonial culture are not limited to the ostensibly short and inconsequential episode in the history of the German Empire as possessor of overseas colonies. Far-reaching and elaborate projects of colonial expansion have been present in German history and culture since the eighteenth century. (Honold and Simons 2002: 10)

Much as in other European countries, a public debate about the inevitability of Germany's taking on the role of world power had been conducted with considerable intensity since 1813 (that is, after the victory over Napoleon) and gained a broad resonance by the 1830s (Fenske 1991: 87). Yet the culmination of this debate came in the 1840s, when dozens of plans were made for the acquisition and establishment of German overseas colonies by means of purchase and regular settlement by German emigrants (Gründer 1999: 87).

A recurrent motif in discussions about the need for German overseas possession is the discontent caused by the discrepancy between the status quo (the absence of a unified German state and German colonies) and Germans' faith in their special civilizing mission. By invoking the Middle Ages, the splendid days when the German Empire and Hansa participated in world politics, advocates of colonization postulated a return to the former glory, for "Germans can and must again become what they once were" (Fenske 1991: 88). Previous ages thus provided arguments for current projects and material for spinning visions of the German state's glorious future as a world power. According to Hans Fenske, these plans and demands had a compensatory function (Fenske 1991: 89). Suzan Zantop presents a similar view in her study of the German colonial projects (Zantop 1999).

The *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* played a major role in promoting the idea of Germany's development as a maritime and colonial power. Its mission was to popularize the project to establish a German fleet (including a navy) that would contribute to the development of Germany's highly profitable foreign trade and, subsequently, to its acquisition of colonies: "Once we have a fleet, getting colonies will not be a problem." [4] In addition to the traditional mercantile reasons for owning colonies there increasingly emerged new propositions which treated the acquisition of territories outside Europe as a social safety valve. Given the economic crisis and mounting discontent of the masses, the possibility of shipping the radically-minded population out to the colonies was seen as a measure for diffusing tensions without the need for introducing any changes at home. That was the idea referenced by the 'fathers of German nationalism' who tried to harness the

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[4] *Der norddeutsche Handel*, [in:] *Allgemeine Zeitung. Außerordentliche Beilage*, no. 321-324. Quoted in Fenske 1999: 92.

energy of German settlers (imagined as representatives of 'true' culture) to secure German domination in the New World. The prospect of solving several burning internal problems by means of emigration spurred the political and intellectual elites to work hard on state-controlled overseas settlement projects. Such projects involved organizing the settlement of emigrants from German states within limited areas, so that they might be able to retain their national identity and resist the pressure to assimilate. Discussions over this policy gave rise to the idea that South America should be the destination for German emigrants, since it was believed that the Spanish-Americans would not exert as strong a pressure to assimilate as did Anglo-Americans (Gründer 1999: 17). (Similar views were also commonly voiced in the late nineteenth-century Polish public debate prompted by the mass emigration of Poles to the Americas.)

One of the early advocates of a planned emigration policy aimed at protecting national interests was Hans Christoph von Gagern, whose writings contain most of the propositions and arguments that were later used by journalists writing on the subject. For instance, Gagern argued for "a generally positive attitude towards emigration as a chance to diffuse social tensions, and he expressed the related wish that Germans would settle abroad in groups in order to preserve their national identity" (qtd. in Gründer 1999: 94).

It is an incontrovertible fact that regardless of the 'nationalist' solutions to the problem of mass emigration extolled by the press, the consensus between govern-ment circles and liberals who were usually sharply opposed to the government was achieved mainly due to a superficial convergence of goals. For the political authorities, controlled emigration meant they could avoid social and political reforms and preserve the current power relations. For the moneyed class it meant a chance for dynamic economic development. For the 'nation builders' it created the conditions for a 'nationalist' experiment. Meanwhile, the gentry and bour-geoisie saw it as salvation from mass social impoverishment and the 'threat' of the proletariat.

It is therefore clear that German colonial history is bound up with shaping a modern German nation, while colonial thought constitutes a structural element of the German concept of the 'nation' (Dabag 2004: 23, 64). The aim of German colonial policy (in addition to economic benefits and the preservation of the sociopolitical system), was national integration (or consolidation), while the crowning achievement of colonization would be the beautiful future of Germans as conquerors – the guarantee of a firm position in world history (Dabag 2004: 40, 44, 48). The collective narrative about the need for colonial expansion follows a fixed pattern of argumentation which invariably consists of the following elements: the mission to propagate Christianity, the civilizing mission, the evolutionary model of thinking about human development, the effort to demonstrate the

existence of racial/biological differences, and, finally, the importance of colonial conquest for world development within the perspective of the philosophy of history (Brehl 2004: 193).

In view of the above, Ewa Thompson's postulate that we should take into account the ethnic/national factor in the process of actual and rhetorical appropriation of territories in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Asia by 'Second World' empires (Thompson 2000) should be treated as obligatory in studies concerning Polish-German relations in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The main reason for this suggestion is that the contemporary German discourse about Poland is a function of many consonant and dissonant public debates that have preoccupied German public opinion since the second half of the eighteenth century. Consequently, it has been heavily influenced not only by debates about the experience of modernization but also by the intensification of nation-building processes within the territory of the German states. [5] What is less well-known is the overlap between the German colonial project and the discourse on Poland and Poles. Significantly, only a few scholars have made explicit the connection between the understanding of the East (including Poland and Poles) and German (Prussian) colonial thought (Ketelsen 2004 and 2006; see also Surynt 2004 and 2006; Hahn 2001).

As demonstrated above, the debate over the need to acquire colonies, as well as the approval or disapproval of colonization, constituted one of the more important, though extremely controversial, problems debated in the German-language public space with few interruptions since the eighteenth century. Another common narrative practice was the interpretation of internal colonization as a type of colonial practice that was the equivalent of overseas colonization practiced by such European powers as Britain or France – which, in light of contemporary theories, seems to have been an effort to compensate a lack (Zantop 1999).

There are numerous reasons for borrowing a range of methodological solutions from postcolonial studies to analyze power relations, collective identity-building processes, and other Eastern and Central European cultural phenomena. The cultural studies definition of colonialism emphasizes the fact that it is the exercise of foreign rule over a territory that has been conquered, or in some other way incorporated/annexed, or – despite considerable geographical distance – attached to the colonial power. Characteristically, the colonial power makes use of cultural difference to legitimate political inequality (Ruthner). Colonialism is thus, above all, a relation of power between two groups, one of which is a culturally distinct minority of colonizers who resist assimilation and make all the crucial decisions

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[5] There already exists a substantial body of scholarly literature on the subject; see bibliography for the major works of Hubert Orłowski.

affecting the colonized population which is entirely dependent on the external political, economic, social, and other interests of the colonial power (Osterhammel 2001: 21), which the indigenous population does not share. Significantly, colonialism is not only a system of domination that can be viewed within the framework of the history of power structures but also (and perhaps more importantly) an interpretation of that system. In colonial discourse it involves the constant highlighting of three narrative strategies: 1) the construction and appropriation of Otherness which is perceived as less valuable or altogether devoid of value, 2) the propagation of the belief in the colonial power's civilizing mission and its 'sacred' duty to carry out this mission, and 3) "the utopia of apoliticality," or the supposedly apolitical administration of the colonized territories (Osterhammel 2001: 20, 113-116).

Between the Center and the Periphery in modern European national states there exists a similar arrangement of power relations. Moreover, there are clear analogies in the processes of group identity construction (Bokszański 2006; Niethammer 2000), both with respect to the ruling minority and the ruled majority. This is particularly apparent in the formation of auto- and hetero-stereotypes under foreign rule. Indigenous peoples' Otherness is often interpreted as an "existential difference" (Brehl 2004: 203) that can never be adapted to one's own concept of Sameness. Uwe-K. Ketelsen stresses the fact that German representations of the East (including Poland) are based on the assumption of the East's fundamental Otherness and absolute incongruity with the Self (Ketelsen 2004: 80), while the East is perceived as a "fascinating though threatening space of prehistory" (Letelsen 2004: 80). Another characteristic feature of these representations is the erasure of sharp semantic distinctions between the concepts 'different,' 'alien,' and even 'hostile' (Brehl 2004: 204).

In addition to such phenomena as rejection and cutting oneself off from the image of culturally 'backward' groups that are supposedly doomed to being civilized by outsiders (images perpetuated by the ruling minority which, in addition to political and economic power, also wields the power to define and explain reality) there is the no less significant phenomenon whereby the dominated majority internalizes constructions of Otherness programmed and imposed on it by the hegemonic culture. The latter process is not incompatible with discourses of resistance to domination which involve the techniques of mimicry.

Yet another argument in favour of reading the history of Central and Eastern Europe (including Poland's history under the partitions and after it regained independence) through the post/colonial studies paradigm is the multiplicity of utterances in which Prussia/Germany and Austria are presented as colonial powers. Such representations were constructed not only by nineteenth-century German and Austrian bards of modernity or ideologues of the nation and state but

also by members of groups that opposed the ruling elites (see Surynt 2007). The above-mentioned configuration of benefits expected by various social groups and political milieus contributed to the superimposition of the German colonial discourse on plans to 'civilize' Prussia's and Austria's Eastern peripheries. For the ideologues of the Prussian state and of the future German national state, the promotion of emigration served as a contingency plan that only partially secured German national interests. In the eyes of many authors, particularly those associated with Borussia, [6] the real threat to the German nationalist project came from the Eastern parts of Prussia which were under constant threat of centrifugal forces, that is, of the national ambitions of Poles and other communities that were in the process of mobilizing a national identity. It was expected that a change in the direction of emigration from the German states (for instance to the 'dangerous' Eastern regions) would have a number of positive effects. In addition to the benefits discussed above, which were similar to those that overseas territories were supposed to guarantee, Eastwards migration was expected to solve the economic, social, and political problems caused by those 'unstable' parts of the Prussian state.

The burden of justifying the necessity of redirecting the masses of German settlers towards the East of Europe was mainly shouldered by writers who, being 'Prussian in heart and mind,' based their arguments on the history of Polish-German relations perceived and evaluated as a sequence of events demonstrating Germans' cultural and civilizational superiority to the Slavs. By using this pattern of argumentation they first and foremost intended to legitimize Prussia's historic right to assume leadership of the longed-for united German state. Thus, propagating the German civilizing mission in the East served two basic functions: first, the effectiveness of the colonization policy would prove Prussia's superiority to Austria (a rival in the race for power in the future united German state), and second, it would project the future of the German state as a colonial power.

That the borderlands, where the lines dividing the Self and Other were particularly sharp, have an integrating power was a fact long known to those ideologues of the nation who themselves came from the borderland regions – such as Gustav Freytag, born in Upper Silesia (this theme in his writings will be discussed below). In his highly popular 1855 novel *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*), Freytag showed in a paradigmatic manner the consolidating force of ethnic and cultural borderlands. A key scene in the novel depicts the military organizing of all German settlers in the Grand Duchy of Posen – irrespective of region of

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[6] The term 'Borussian' historian is used in German historiography to designate a group of Prussophiles or Prussian-nationalist historians and journalists who propagated a vision of German unification under Prussian leadership but with the exclusion of the Habsburg Monarchy (i.e. on the *Kleindeutschland* – or 'Lesser Germany' – principle). See also Surynt 2005.

origin, social background or denomination – in the face of an enemy of the nation, namely Polish insurgents. Germans who come together to defend their own interests – which are simultaneously the interests of the Prussian state in the east – are shown as taking the first step towards German unity and the establishment of the German national state. Under these circumstances, earlier representations of the German mission in Europe by the first "prophets of nationalism" (Gramley 2001), including Johann G. Fichte, Ernst M. Arndt, and Friedrich L. Jahn, could seamlessly merge with postulates in favour of "German Eastward expansion" as formulated by Karl Adolf Menzel and others (Johanek 2001: 30).

The contemporary German scholar Peter Johanek sums up the Prussophile authors' attitude towards Slavs by quoting a passage from Moritz Heffter's book *Der Weltkampf der Deutschen und Slaven* (*The World Struggle between Germans and Slavs*): "Germans have therefore become the ambassadors of culture in the uncivilized region of Europe where, prior to the arrival of the German settlers, the Slavs were *nothing more than the nomads in Asia or Indians in America*." [7] But such analogies had appeared in German discourse much earlier, in the work of Herder himself, who was highly critical of colonialism and criticized the Franks and Saxons living side by side with the Slavs. On the destruction of Slavic culture west of the Elbe and along the Baltic Sea by Germanic tribes he wrote:

> Already in the times of Charlemagne there were military incursions whose motive was, of course, gaining an advantage in trade, even if the Christian religion served as a pretext. It was clearly more convenient for the heroic Franks to treat as slaves the hardworking nation of farmers and traders than to learn those skills themselves. What the Franks began, the Saxons completed. Throughout the provinces the Slavs were either exterminated or subordinated to serfdom, while their property was parceled out among the bishops and nobility. Their Baltic coast trade was destroyed by the Germanic tribes. The Danes razed Vineta, while the stray Slavs in Germany remind us of what the Spaniards once did to the Peruvians (Herder 2000: 173).

According to Johanek, German nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography readily represented Eastern European territories settled by Germans as an "analogy or equivalent of European overseas colonies" (Johanek 2001: 2). As a possible reason for making such analogies he suggests the 'Borussia' writers' enthusiasm for the Eastern policy of Frederick II, which can be compared with overseas expansion on account of the ostensibly similar urbanization and settlement patterns (Johanek 2001: 29). Even the slogan *Drang nach Osten* (the drive

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[7] Ibid. Johanek quotes Moritz Wilhelm Heffter's *Der Weltkampf der Deutschen und Slaven seit dem Ende des fünften Jahrhunderts nach christlicher Zeitrechnung, nach seinem Ursprunge, Verlaufe und nach seinen Folgen dargestellt*, Hamburg-Gotha, 1847. p. 462.

towards the East) contains an allusion to overseas expansion. But the legitimization of the German appropriation of the European East was mainly based on claims about "historical law" and history's "comprehensive progress" (Lassalle 1919: 33) – that is, on the law of domination of the weaker civilization by the stronger, a domination ennobled by the scientific theory of evolutionary development. Ferdinand Lassalle expresses this approach succinctly: "With this law [historical law] on its side, the Anglo-Saxon race conquered America, France – Algeria, England – India, and the Germanic peoples took over the lands of Slavic-speaking peoples" (Lassalle 1919: 33).

Contrary to the claims of Stefan Simonek, who is critical of the methodology of post/colonial studies, reconstructing the paradigms once used for perceiving and understanding the world, as well as patterns of thinking rooted in hegemonic culture, enables us to study the process whereby the colonial idea was functionalized for advancing national/imperial projects in various countries. We do, however, need to keep in mind that such an analysis of public discourse is limited to the discourse of groups that possessed and wielded power, to the exclusion of alternative concepts. Hence Clemens Ruthner's useful postulate that we expand the postcolonial perspective to include intercultural studies, a strategy that would prevent the colonized groups from remaining "the silent object of hegemonic discourse" and force us to take into account their "own voice" (Ruthner).

3.

Analyzing nineteenth-century Russian literature (Pushkin and Lermontov), Ewa Thompson attempts to show "the way Russian writers mediated the power of the Center, preventing the state's margins from speaking in their own voice and expressing their own experience as subjects rather than as peripheries attached to the Center" (Thompson 2000: 2). Thompson's research thus focused on the "mediating techniques of power" in literary texts. These functioned as the narrative means and tools for acquiring imperial/colonial possession, that is, the cultural appropriation of conquered territories. Such strategies for stabilizing the Center's *status quo* characteristically "condemn the periphery to civilizational invisibility" (Thompson 2000: 42). The space encountered and appropriated by the colonists is shown as a civilizational void; a virtually uninhabited area that has hitherto remained outside history. Commenting on this phenomenon in Russian narratives of the conquest of the Caucasus, Thompson claims: "It is as if native peoples and histories did not exist, or if they did, then solely for the purpose of providing Russians with the mission of directing them" (Thompson 2000: 114).

Thompson also emphasizes that "as in the case of other colonial literatures, the Russian protagonists in the Caucasus talk to each other rather than to the natives. They talk *about* the natives but do not enter into a dialogue with them, as Gayatri Spivak might say" (Thompson 2000: 114, emphasis in the original).

The stance adopted by the imperial-colonial writers towards the silent (and therefore disempowered) object of representation is also significant. It is the "stance of the universalizing subject" (Thompson 2000: 93), whose narrative was to initiate the entry of the hitherto mute and invisible spaces into history. The onset of their existence was marked by the act of appropriation, when the 'backward' or nonexistent social consciousness of the indigenous population was framed within the categories of an external discourse imposed by the "civilized universalized subject." Silencing and then depriving the conquered indigenous peoples of 'their own voice' and replacing it with the voice of the Center – in other words, erasing the former's story from historical memory – was more than a strategy of legitimizing the use of force to take over what was imagined as 'no-man's land.' The goal was to stabilize imperial power by imposing a cultural identity that was almost always in conflict with the "defensive identities of colonized nations" (Thompson 2000: 19). Writers who identified with the goals of their country's imperial-colonial policy thus voluntarily took on the task of legitimizing its actions and, above all, constructing a vision of empire, "unifying it, concealing the cracks and lacunae in its structure and protesting against its disintegration [. . .]" (Thompson 2000: 84).

While Thompson's observations concern nineteenth-century Russian literature about lands conquered by the Russian empire, they can all be applied to the works of German writers who described the German settlement in the eastern border-lands of the Prussian empire. Similar narrative strategies of appropriating the space of the Other are particularly clear in the works of Gustav Freytag, which have already been referred to above, and which will serve here as a case in point.[8]

Gustav Freytag was born in 1816 in Kreuzburg (Upper Silesia). He went on to study in Breslau and Berlin, and then settled in Leipzig (Saxony). He spent the last years of his life in Wiesbaden, where he died in 1895. He first encountered Silesia's leading representatives of national-liberal thought as a student. Later, as the editor of *Die Grenzboten*, a popular liberal Prussian-national magazine published in Leipzig, he propagated a political program based on the idea of constitutional monarchy, which, in terms of the nationalist question, represented the so called *Kleindeutschland* or 'Lesser Germany' faction which hoped for the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership but without the Habsburg Monarchy. While remaining a journalist, he earned celebrity status as a fiction writer, best known for

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[8] A detailed analysis of Freytag's constructions of Polishness is presented in Surynt 2004.

the 1855 novel *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*), a German-language bestseller and pre-1945 longseller. Today his name is remembered mostly by literary critics and German philology students, who know him as one of the first theoreticians of middle-class realism. Freytag also wrote the novel *Die verlorene Handschrift* (*The Lost Manuscript*, 1864), the historical novel series *Die Ahnen* (*The Ancestors*, 1872-1880), as well as a multi-volume work aspiring to historiography entitled *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (*Images from the German Past*, 1855-1866). Freytag's ideas about the ideal German state and nation were influenced by the following beliefs: 1) (derived from Hegel) that 'freedom' (as defined under liberalism) is the prime goal of, and can only be attained within, the community of the nation and state; 2) that the formation and development of the 'spirit' is the fundamental precondition of any free human activity; 3) that the Protestant ethic is superior to all others; 4) that the German middle class is culturally superior to other classes or estates, and therefore predestined to fulfill a special historical mission, namely that of comprising the nation and the German state; 5) that German culture is superior to other European cultures, particularly to Slavic ones – which, in Freytag's view, was most apparent in the Eastern parts of Prussia and testified to Prussia's entitlement to a leading role in the formation of the German state.

Even in his earliest journalism Freytag presented strategies of constructing the Polish space, which he himself used very successfully in subsequent publications (judging by the unusually large print runs of his books). He decidedly favoured the genre of literary description or travel narrative in letter form, offering an entire arsenal of rhetorical devices that enabled him to manipulate readers' emotions almost at will. This strategy of manipulation involved Freytag's skillful assumption of various narrative personae, from an inexperienced Englishman named William Rogers traveling across Poland, to a keen observer of change – or a naïve average reader of *Die Grenzboten* who records his impressions of Poland for the magazine editors, like the 'author' of the letter below:

> Dear Sirs, Allow me to make several comments to supplement the more general descriptions of the situation in Poland and Russia which were published in earlier issues of *Die Grenzboten*. These are just a few brief im-pressions of a traveler from Germany, a sketch of the region's characteristic features, which may interest the readers of your magazine because they confirm certain views it has publicized. Warsaw is sometimes referred to as the Paris of the North and there is some truth to this comparison. The streets, the noise and bustle, the atrocious filth, and the elegance of the upper classes – many aspects of the two cities are alike. (Freytag 1851a: 437)

Creating such a reporter's persona was a narrative strategy Freytag used consistently when portraying Poland and Poles. The stance adopted by the narrator

was intended to appear neutral, being shaped by a personal and visceral experience of Otherness and by the ostensible readiness to accept difference without prejudice or obsessive moralizing. The constant evocation of a bond of trust between narrator and reader, based on the community of language, education, culture, experience, mentality, as well as worldview, was also a favoured strategy. His most popular novel offers a characteristic synthesis of this optics. As for the descriptive technique used for representing Polishness, Freytag followed the principle of accumulating negative traits, which might be called a poetics of deprivation. Such a poetics motivates and reinforces the exclusion and stereotyping of Otherness through the attribution of solely negative features. The passages quoted below come from Freytag's journalism and concern the general impression made on the German observer by the 'Polish' material reality and by 'Polish' culture. 'The Polish' countryside horrifies the author of the article in *Die Grenzboten*, for "their estates represent the lowest condition of culture, their flocks are wretched, their living quarters are sadly dilapidated, and are often little more than plain blocks with thatched roofs" (Freytag 1848: 39). "Polish" culture as personified by the Polish nobleman fares little better: "Never have I seen such frightful abstruseness, such naïve ignorance combined with bits and pieces of various socialist theories. A spoiled concoction filled this beautiful vessel" (Freytag 1848: 38).

Another marker of Freytag's narrative practice is the 'nationalization' of landscapes, a strategy manifested in ostensibly contradictory representations of nature and the land, combined with efforts to impose a national meaning on this imagery. Whereas Freytag's techniques of constructing and evaluating the Polish 'national character' invariably recycle the same paradigm, his 'Polish' landscapes are subject to reinterpretation depending on the context. On the one hand, he emphasizes the lushness, fertility, and beauty of 'Polish' nature, constructing the land as an idyllic space, an ancient kingdom of nature virtually untouched by civilization; on the other hand, he casts it as wild, empty, and dangerous, plagued by lawlessness and completely devoid of culture, for it is inhabited by people who are ahistorical and silent. As Freytag states in one of his articles in *Die Grenzboten*, "one can often come across places where not a single tree is left standing; all are strewn on the ground. Yet such losses are quickly balanced since the exuberance with which local trees – even beeches and oaks – shoot upwards is astounding" (Freytag 1851: 263).

Built into such representations of Polish nature as 'wilderness' are two modes of perception and evaluation. The first bodes luck and prosperity in the future as a reward for the German work in the 'wilderness' and the imposition of order in the East, while the second symbolizes the Polish 'national character,' suggesting its ineffectiveness, thriftlessness, and lack of civilizational potential. It is those deficits

of the Polish character that legitimate the German claim to the unimpeded colonization of the East. Freytag writes about this quite plainly:

> I toured regions where bogs and marshes covered many a square mile, though with a little effort they could be reclaimed if only the river beds were regulated or widened. Here and there, German colonists have proved how easily the malodorous bogs can be turned into the healthiest and most beautiful fields. But the Poles rarely think of such improvements, whether due to the dubious virtue of making do with little, or the pious attitude towards patrimony, [. . .], or, as the Germans would say, due to ignorance and laziness. (Freytag 1851: 264)

This attitude on the part of Freytag leads to yet another strategy of talking about Poland and Poles: the exoticization/orientalization of nature and landscape, so that Polish forests become jungles and Polish sands turn into steppes and deserts like the Sahara. The inhabitants of these lands are subjected to similar treatment. Freytag shows them as 'wild,' uncivilized nomads threatening travelers and settlers.

In his most popular novel *Soll und Haben* Freytag deliberately uses the strategy of exoticization/orientalizing of Otherness, drawing parallels between the figures of Poles (Polish insurgents) and North American Indians. But such tropes are already present in his earlier works, for instance, in the article in *Die Grenzboten* quoted above:

> As these words were spoken, we came out of the forest and our gaze fell upon a group of [a Polish revolutionary's] well-built companions joyfully calling to us from a nearby hill. In the light of the setting sun they brought to mind a beautiful painting – the work of a master. But may I never again shake the hand of a free man if they seemed to me anything other than a band of wild Indians, a horde of Pawnee Loups in the Missouri river valley, fit for border skirmishes, novels and dramas, but unfit for living.

[. . .]

> When young Poles cry out: make us free and then we will be strong and good and Poland will be happy, they become like the poor Indian who, inebriated with fire water, sings his war song: we will chase the White Man beyond the Great Water and then the earth will belong to the Red Man, and the scattered tribes will gather around the pipe of peace. We listen to this song, it moves us, but we give no credence to it. (Freytag 1848: 43)

This narrative strategy is particularly pronounced in fictional scenes depicting the mounting conflict between Poles and Germans in the former Polish territories, which in *Soll und Haben* already form an integral part of the Prussian state (in this novel critics trace echoes of the 1848 events in Greater Poland). Another instance

of this strategy is apparent in the grotesquely distorted images of the Polish, which may be based on the Krakow-Galicia events of 1846. The descriptions of encounters with insurgents who assault innocent travelers or decent (German) citizens suggest an affinity with images of the American 'Wild West.' Like the 'wild' Indians, Polish insurgents harass peaceful German merchants, carrying off their luggage (spoils of war), stripping them of their clothes (trophies), and finally cutting off their hair (scalps), all the while performing a ghastly dance with scythes (dance of war) and shouting incomprehensible words that sound eerily like magic spells (pagan practices). According to Freytag, the leaders of the uprising are 'tribal chiefs' who have to be treated like 'savages' or children. The idealized figure of the merchant Schröter, accompanied by the novel's protagonist Anton Wohlfart, initiates a conversation with the insurgents, addressing them in the following words: "We are friends! Men of peace!" The scene mirrors scenes representing the difficult contact between the 'civilized' American settlers and the 'barbaric,' infantile Indians. In keeping with the logic of such cross-cultural contact the latter, like children, submit to the cultural superiority of the Germans and withdraw. For Freytag, the border where the Polish-German encounter takes place at the intersection of the two cultures (or of culture and non-culture) is simultaneously the line dividing the 'good' from the 'bad,' the 'civilized' from the 'backward,' the 'familiar' from the 'strange.' It also separates the sphere of the ordinary and quotidian from that which is alien and unfamiliar – a space where one may experience adventures that in the familiar world are possible only in books. This is a mythical borderland separating East and West, the Occident and the Orient.

Polishness is also exoticized by means of parallels with 'Asianness' and the Orient. When describing the 'savage' seats of the Polish gentry which have been taken over by German colonists, Freytag constantly emphasizes their oriental quality. This impression is heightened by analogies between Polish lands and the Sahara, as well as by the recurrent images of merchant caravans trudging across the wide empty spaces of the Polish landscape in search of more 'civilized' places to spend the night – like thirsty travelers in the desert longing for an oasis.

This movement back and forth between attributing to Polishness the quality of 'Indian nakedness' and aligning it with Oriental excess, luxury, eroticism, and ultimately despotism suggests the extent to which Freytag's image of Poland depended on the contemporary assumption that unclaimed, 'wild,' and empty spaces in Asia or the Americas await their (Western European) discoverers in order to enter into history – hence the tendency to impose on the Eastern peripheries of Prussia/Germany (including Polish territories) either the stereotype of the Orient or that of the 'savage' New World.

The topography of the narrated space and landscape is also subordinated to the logic of perceiving and describing Poles as "savages." In the opening passages of

Soll und Haben, which depict a Polish revolution, the topography plays a much less significant role than in those parts of the novel that thematize the German civilizing mission in the East. It is there that Freytag constructs an empty space that has neither been written upon nor touched by the human hand; a wild and untamed void. It is an "ownerless prairie," a no-man's-land, neglected and forgotten by the world. Yet within the world created by Freytag, those flat, one-dimensional, limitless spaces become the promised land that awaits its discoverer and saviour who will open it up to civilizational progress and history. Reading Freytag's imagined borderlands with the aid of a (cognitive-symbolic) mental map we can trace dreams of power and the appropriation of Otherness. His is an image of a primal, archaic world, immobile and suspended outside time. It has no boundaries, roads, walls, fences or bridges – in other words, no signs of civilization. The uniform plain of the Polish landscape is unbroken by any hills or mountains that might symbolize a Center and thus stand for power and authority. Endless, unbounded, and flat, this landscape simultaneously suggests uncertainty and danger, for it cannot be taken in at a glance and thus controlled. This uncivilized void is filled with a single element: the frightening, primeval Polish forest.

A narrative strategy Freytag uses with great relish is a specific semanticization of the Polish forest, as a place where literary heroes have mythical adventures, as well as an allegory of German cultural triumph in the East. To get to the Paradise located across the boundary of the dangerous virgin forest (and thus to attain the goal of civilizing/appropriating Otherness), one must undergo the trial of the forest. This involves penetrating the threatening wilderness and overcoming both external dangers and internal weaknesses in order to be rewarded for one's courage and perseverance. The promise of reaching Paradise is inscribed in the models of the Polish landscape. However horrifying the descriptions of that nature, they augur happiness and prosperity. A patch of green in the sea of sand or a word of praise for the fertile soils farmed by German settlers are a guarantee of plentiful harvests in the future. Covering this space with new signs (new objects and topographical names) that completely obscure its previous character is part of the gradual process of absorption and elimination of the Other – hence the almost ritualistic enumeration of German civilizational successes in the East: the construction of roads, dams, and bridges, the establishment of new settlements, forests cleared and marshes drained and turned into fertile fields. Thompson points out similar elements of 'colonial superiority' in Russian literature, including "a rich literary culture, revulsion at the sight of primitive peoples with inferior customs and the ability to put the resources of the conquered territories to good use (healing wounds, building new houses and parks)" (Thompson 2000: 101-102). Thus narrative colonization, or else the rhetorical taming and appropriation of the Other's space, depends on its defragmentation and complete dismantling, followed

by putting the elements back together to form a completely different whole with clear boundaries. Once constructed in this way, the peripheries are no longer an alien body within the empire but rather an integral part thereof. Thompson comments on the Russian writers' narrative practices in the following words: "Literature was instrumental in the rhetorical appropriation of enormous non-Russian territories. New traditions were also invented that showed the empire's peripheries as no less Russian in character than Moscow itself" (Thompson 2000: 76). This conclusion may safely be applied to the stance adopted by German Prussophile writers. The rhetorical appropriation of Eastern territories conquered by Prussia took place through the invention of new traditions, the erasure of the memory of indigenous peoples from oral history, and silencing the peripheries' 'own voice.' In effect, Gustav Freytag was able unhesitatingly to put the following words full of colonial arrogance in the mouth of *Soll und Haben*'s narrator:

> His life [that of Fritz von Fink, a German colonist] will become a never-ending victorious struggle against the dark ghosts of this land, so that out of the Slavic castle [taken over by the German colonists] there will emerge into the world many strong young men, a new German stock inured in heart and mind, to conquer the earth – a line of colonists and conquerors. (Freytag 1887: 398)

Consequently, the novel can be read as a pioneering/colonial novel, or, as the German literary critic Uwe-K. Ketelsen suggests, an "Eastern-Colonial" novel (Ketelsen 2006). Not only does it employ the narrative model, topic, and symbolic spatial order characteristic of European colonial literature, but it consciously propagates the colonization of the East as both an equivalent of overseas conquest and an alternative to German emigration to the Americas. As a journalist, Freytag often argued against the enthusiasm of many German emigrants and of the German politicians who cheered them on, seeing in emigration a convenient solution to many German internal problems. He vigorously opposed the image of America as an earthly paradise which was very popular in the German public space. Exploding this idyllic image or breaking the spell of America was the overarching aim of a series of articles Freytag published in *Die Grenzboten*, while the novel *Soll und Haben* is clearly an effort to persuade readers that the European East is an attractive destination for German colonists and that this part of the world is really in need of a civilizing mission.

4.

In the final part of this paper I would like to touch on one more key issue in postcolonial studies, namely the question of speaking in 'one's own voice,' which

is associated with ideas of authenticity and mimicry. According to Homi Bhabha, the term 'mimicry' designates an ambivalence in postcolonial discourse involving a specific form of (forced or voluntary) imitation by individuals and/or groups representing a colonized society of the paradigms of hegemonic culture and hegemonic ways of thinking (Bhabha 2000). Mimicry, or the appropriate adjustment to speaking from the dominant position, is not, as Duć-Fajfer points out, "a simple reproduction of the colonizing culture, behaviors, customs, and values; it is a form of parody akin to mockery, but also a threat ensuing from the cleaving of colonial power effected by the potential of mockery. Therefore the threat of mimicry lies not in open resistance but in the suggestion that the similarity between the imitators' identity and the colonizer's is imperfect" (Duć-Fajfer 2006: 441). Bhabha emphasizes the power of mimicry as a strategy of destabilizing hegemonic discourse. From this perspective we can also interpret texts by Polish nineteenth-century writers whose intense reception of German (or, more generally, the invader's) public discourse is reflected in their writing. For instance, ideas about the 'savagery' and civilizational backwardness of Poles perpetuated by German literature and journalism and embodied by the stereotype of the Pole-Indian also feature in Polish constructions of 'Sameness' in this period. The vibrant discussion conducted in the 1870s and 1880s about the future of Polish society (later presented in a program for organic work) demonstrates, on the one hand, a process of appropriating certain models of thinking derived from hegemonic discourse and, on the other, clearly attests to the presence of subversive potential in the adaptation mechanisms. What is at stake here is not so much 'mockery' or 'irony' (as defined by Bhabha) but the possibility of reversing the logical order on which the dominant culture's discourse is based, and of using 'irony' as a weapon against the colonizers.

In 1864, Ludwik Powidaj published a highly controversial article in *Dziennik Literacki*, [9] provoking a heated debate in the Polish-language press. The historical analogy which Powidaj constructs in this text was undeniably the effect of his reception of German discussions about Poland and Poles. Paraphrasing the widely publicized stereotype of Poles as 'Indian-like,' which appeared in a statement made by Frederick II, Powidaj writes:

> [Since the statement made by the Prussian king] the comparison of Poles with Indians has become a favorite topic of conversation for Prussian politicians. Several years ago, a Prussian democrat said publicly from the stand: like the Indians [*Rothhäute Amerikas*], the Poles are destined by Providence to extinction. As the Anglo-Saxon race in the New World is

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[9] L.P. [Ludwik Powidaj]. "Polacy i Indianie" [Poles and Indians]. *Dziennik Literacki* 53 and 56 (Lviv 1864). Qtd. in Sandler 1967.

pushing the increasingly destitute and dwarfed Indians into the primeval forests of the interior, where they gradually die of hunger and poverty, so Poles ousted from the cities and larger country estates [*Rittergutsbesitze*] and made destitute are supposed to make way for the Prussian civilization. (qtd. in Sandler 1967: 57)

The concept of human development that shapes Powidaj's vision is based on the evolutionary model of culture that had been prevalent across Europe since the eighteenth century. It therefore follows that he does not in any way undermine the thesis about the inevitability of the conquering of 'backward' peoples/nations by 'higher' cultures. Yet the consequences of perceiving reality in this way are completely different from those intended by the German hegemonic discourse. Polish intellectuals were concerned with changing the Polish mindset by implementing a program of new patriotism that involved propagating the idea of 'organic work' designed to consolidate the nation by means of economic and social activation. Consequently, we may speak here about a strategy of mimicry provided that we see its subversive power not in undermining the dominant culture's symbolic order by establishing an ironic distance from it but in reordering in one's favour the values assigned by that order. For Powidaj cleverly argues that the very thing that seems most threatening to Poland, namely modern/capitalist socioeconomic modes of behaviour considered by nineteenth-century Poles to be 'German' – should become the most effective antidote to the 'enemy's' incursions if they are adopted and properly adapted by Poles. Assisting civilizational development, thrift and prosperity, as well as a more dynamic modernization of the society coupled with fundamental shifts in the Polish national mentality are shown as the only chance for the Polish 'nation's' survival under the partitions, and – in the long run – for ending foreign domination.

Another example of undermining hegemonic discourse is Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's ironic attempt at transforming the stereotype of 'the Pole as (Europe's) Indian' into its German equivalent: 'the German as Indian.' In 1877, Kraszewski wrote for the magazine *Echo*:

On the American prairie one encounters Indian tribes that still live in the state of nature in terms of ideas and lifestyle, although through interactions with the civilized world they have acquired all of its achievements. They own breech-loaders and other pleasant inventions produced by modern science and human labour, yet ancient barbarism still rules their minds. Believe it or not, one often encounters such Indians in Germany. They possess all the external signs of a civilized nation, they can even read and write, and some have actually come across the *Conversations-Lexicon*, but when you get to talk with them, believe me – they are Indians. In my lifetime I have met many of our own boys who were illiterate, and didn't

> know the time of day, but who were much more knowledgeable than those pseudocivilized people produced in a hurry by some obscure schools. (Kraszewski 1994: 191-192)

Two issues are striking in this statement. First, Kraszewski undermines the myth of German cultural superiority that was so enthusiastically perpetuated within the German public sphere in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Yet he does so by drawing on arguments borrowed from that very myth. Secondly, he remains faithful to the Eurocentric (colonial) optics, for he uses the term 'Indians' to discredit and ridicule the Germans perceived as the enemy. This bifurcation is also present in the passage by Powidaj quoted above, in which the author makes a concerted attempt to show the difference between Poles and 'really' wild Indians.

In both cases, the counterhegemonic narrative is constructed on the basis of the symbolic order of the dominant discourse, but the power hierarchy implied by this symbolic order is challenged. Reading Powidaj's project from this perspective we may find in it the conviction that the colonized community will overcome the colonizer when it becomes just like – or better than – the latter, for by attaining superiority the colonized will be able to define reality. In Kraszewski's text, just as in Powidaj's, the nineteenth-century European meaning of 'progress' remains unchallenged, but 'progress' as a category becomes the subject of critical reflection as Kraszewski asks: What is 'true' progress? Within this context, the idea of 'German progress' (and thus of German 'superiority') may be semantically reworked into a thesis about Germans' regression in the history of human development – a return to (Indian) barbarism. Ultimately, Kraszewski reassigns the values in particular segments of thought within the same model without actually dismantling its inner structure.

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Just how important representations of culture/civilization and progress were for nineteenth-century European intellectual and political elites is evinced by individual nationalist programs, strategies of behaviour of the Center towards the Periphery, and of modern European nations (or nation-states) towards one another, but above all by efforts to shape reality in accordance with its assumptions and, specifically, the desire to plan the future. Using postcolonial theory to read both German public discourse from a Polish perspective and Polish counternarratives enables us to reach qualitatively new conclusions about the struggle for symbolic power and rhetorical practices of appropriating peoples and territories forcibly incorporated into empires. Postcolonial theory also allows us to trace the processes of constructing protective identities for colonized nations and to analyze tactics used to undermine hegemonic discourse. Such tactics are characteristic of the process whereby conquered communities attain subject status and 'their own

voice.' Likewise, reading contemporary texts from a postcolonial perspective is productive since it reveals the mechanisms involved in the colonization of the human mind and the long road to emancipation from this captivity.

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