

Habsburg postcolonial? Postcolonial perspectives on entangled spaces

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For the last several years, postcolonial theory has been present in Central Europe as a tool to analyze history and present of this region.¹ So far, however, most research from this angle has been made by literary historians, while classical historians remained predominantly aloof and skeptical. In this paper I want to bridge this gap by applying postcolonial theory to Habsburg Galicia in the nineteenth century. I claim that Polish intellectuals of this time have been trapped in a discourse of hierarchical world order, translated here into colonized-colonizer, or civilized-barbarian dualisms. Mental images produced by this ordering of global and regional space, like orientalisations, have been powerful discursive tools not only when applied towards population of Eastern borderlands, but also when Polish intellectuals described “the West” and Polish relation to it. While this hierarchizing discourse is neither exclusive for Polish intellectuals,² not for Central Europe in general, it can help to tune the tools of analysis of nineteenth century intellectual and political history of this region.

In the following I will start by shortly outlining the state of CEE postcolonial theory as I see it today, and then discuss three examples of discourses of Central European hierarchy in 19th century Galicia. The first one is concerned with language, and two latter deal with socioeconomical issues. All three belong to topics not only widely discussed at the time, but also in the historiography, which has, however, read them through national(istic) categories concentrating on their claims of Polish cultural emancipation. In my paper though, they should rather reveal some facets of self-positioning of intellectuals of the region, their strategies of cultural emancipation and their geopolitical orientations.

Postcolonial Theory and Central Europe today

Postcolonial theory had greatly developed since scholars like Fanon, Hall or Said wrote first works anticipating it.³ From the early wave of postcolonial writing, one can observe a divide developed to be

¹ It is a remarkable parallel, that two texts who established postcolonial studies in Central Europe appeared almost simultaneously: Cavanagh, Clare, „Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej teorii”, Transl. Tomasz Kunz. *Teksty drugie*, No. 2-3, 2003 and Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (ed.), *Habsburg postcolonial. Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Innsbruck: StudienVerlag 2003.

² Some interesting parallels can be found in the so called Czech Question, a debate about Czech identity in 1890s, see Miloš Havelka, “A Hundred Years of the 'Czech Question' and The Czech Question a Hundred Years On,” *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 3 (1995) 1, 7-19.

³ In the following part I concentrate only on mainstream postcolonial studies, for most part concerned with India. Spanish postcolonialism (see, for instance Gudrun Rath, “Hybridität und Dritter Raum. Displacements

crucial in the following years and which will be guiding theoretical line of this paper. One group of scholars dealing with post-coloniality, mainly literary and cultural scholars, wrote about cultural phenomena creating and sustaining the idea of cultural and civilizational backwardness. Dealing with discourses producing in this way, moved them to become politically active intellectuals, making postcolonial theory and postcolonial practice merge.⁴ Others, most notably Michael Hechter writing about internal colonialism of Ireland, concentrated on economic exploitation, supported by and at the same time creating certain behavioral patterns to legitimize hegemonic claims of the metropolises over peripheries.⁵

Further step in the process of theorizing colonial relations were the subaltern studies, which translated the postcolonial theory into a more general theory of culture concentrating on effects of imperial rule on colonized and colonizing subjects – keywords like hybridity, mimicry, culture as translation, etc. were guiding lights of these theories, and as such, they introduced two crucial changes. First, the idea of cultural purity at any stage of history became merely a rhetorical tool to sustain domination by yet another hegemonic discourse and culture became a process of negotiations of differences, contacts, mimics and so on. Descriptions following cultural dualism, characteristic for the early postcolonial writers, became thus obsolete, replaced by culture as a dynamic, constantly interweaving entity. Second, while still referring to imperial and colonial frameworks, subaltern theory became interested in the processes of domination not limited to the metropolis-colony divide, but also within these entities as well. The cultural subjugation of women, workers or farmers became subjects of postcolonial analysis, as much as the processes linked with migration and multiculturalism (both in no ways reserved for metropolis only).⁶ Herewith, postcoloniality became also a global condition,

postkolonialer Modelle,“ Eva Esslinger, Tobias Schlechtriemen, Doris Schweitzer, Alexander Zons (eds.): *Figuren des Dritten*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2010, 137-149), while being fruitful and in fact more suitable for Central European imperial phenomena, had hitherto played only a marginal role in the discussions.

⁴ For less known political involvement of postcolonial scholars see Pascale Rabault-Feuerhahn (ed.), *Théories intercontinentales. Voyages du comparatisme postcolonial*, Paris: Demopolis, 2014.

⁵ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, Berkeley 1975.

⁶ As one of earlier publications discussing this see John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis*. New York: Routledge, 2004 For criticism of this approach see, Maria do Mar Castro, Nikita Dhawan, “Mission Impossible? Postkoloniale Theorie in Deutschsprachigen Raum,“ Julia Reuter/Paula Irene-Villa (eds.): *Postkoloniale Soziologie. Theoretische Anschlüsse - Empirische Befunde - politische Interventionen*. Bielefeld: transcript 2009, s. 239-260.

affecting not only former peripheries/colonies, but also former centers or even countries that according to standard accounts stood outside of colonial and even imperial endeavors.⁷

This new theoretical current resulted in criticism from many sides, arguing that the subaltern-grouped postcolonial theory lessened the emancipative fervor of postcolonial studies, which was supposed to facilitate social transition of post-colonial spaces and conceptualize and deconstruct subaltern position in the global world order.⁸ This situation is, by the way, not unlike recent discussions in the gender studies, which grew out of feminism studies are accused of forgetting the political aims linked with them.⁹

The point dividing postcolonial studies at the moment are thus tensions between scholars claiming a colonial situation as a prerequisite of applying postcolonial theory and those developing postcolonial theory into a general theory of global culture(s). And this point is of vital importance for application of postcolonial studies in Central Europe. This, because it is a region to which colonialism in classic version hardly applies,¹⁰ but whose literature does give plenty of examples of cultural imperialism and “colonial syndromes” to use the metaphor coined by Mykola Ryabchuck.¹¹ What is on stake is thus to find a connection between the perception of being a victim of colonization (or, for that matter, perception of being postcolonial, be it after the demise of Central European Empires or after the collapse of the Soviet Union) and the lack of colonial past. And this problem is also about finding a way historians and literary historians can speak to each other, what in case of postcolonial theory is a hard nut to crack.

Translating the discussion about postcoloniality into a disciplinary divide might surprise, but Central European postcolonial studies became most popular among literary historians, with cultural historians beginning to show more interest in it in recent years, and “classic” historians rejecting the approach. I see two main reasons for this objection.

First, historians remain skeptical about the use of postcolonial theory basing their reservations on the fact that the situation in Central Europe differs from the regions postcolonial tools were developed

⁷ Purtschert, Patricia; Lüthi, Barbara; Falk, Francesca (eds.): *Postkoloniale Schweiz. Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien*. Bielefeld 2013.

⁸ E.g. Stuart Hall, “When was ‘the post-colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, London: Routledge, 1996, 242-259.

⁹ Greta Olson. “Gender as a Travelling Concept: A Feminist Perspective,” Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.) *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter 2012, 205-223.

¹⁰ Central Europe, in the meaning applied here, does not include core regions of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, where cultural processes of maintaining Russian/Soviet hegemony were different and shared more with classic colonial situations.

¹¹ Микола Рябчук, *Постколониальний синдром. Спостереження*, Київ: К.І.С., 2011.

for, i.e. British India. This has also to do with the extension of the metaphor of “being colonial” to Central Europe. From three Empires present in the region, Habsburg Monarchy does most poorly as a colonizing empire. While there were clear tendencies of colonial nature prior to 1848, like the colonization of the province in the late 18th century, influx of non-Galician German-speaking officials and clerks, descriptions painting cultural backwardness as well as lack of civilization, they clearly lessened after revolution, and as good as disappeared after 1867. Although the idea of German primacy remained in existence, mostly popping up in politically volatile moments like in the political crisis of Badeni Decrees of 1897,¹² many parts of the empire were autonomous or semi-autonomous.¹³ Most importantly, not only did Poles govern Galicia and Czech co-governed Bohemia, but non-Germans were also prominently represented in the Habsburg governments. In fact, also the Russian Empire does not stick well to the definition of colonialism if one considers its western realms. Existence of industrial centers, hardly stable cultural hierarchies, lack of orientalizations etc. would ask for reconceptualization of the most crucial foundations of the traditional postcolonial theory. Much more compliant to the idea of empire would be Prussia, especially after German Unification. Although here most elements would speak for it being simply a “nationalizing state”, the pervasiveness of culturally driven politics, existence of “imperial mission” discourse and orientalizations of Prussia’s East, speak for colonializing driving force behind the policies towards the East.¹⁴

Second reason behind historians’ reservations toward postcolonial theory can be mentioned here only briefly. It is the way in which some intellectuals use postcolonial theory to underscore a previous colonial past.¹⁵ And also this is a methodological question, because many literary scholars, once they encounter text passages showing traces of discourses similar to those discussed by postcolonial theory,

¹² Badeni Decrees of 1897, issued by Galician nobleman Kazimierz Feliks Badeni, at the time Prime Minister of Cisleithania, required civil service to handle cases in the language they were submitted in. This meant de facto that civil service employees would have to be bilingual. The decrees caused a severe crisis in the Monarchy and were taken back.

¹³ Harald Binder, „Galizische Autonomie“. Ein streitbarer Begriff und seine Karriere,“ Lukás Fasora Jiří Hanuš, Jiří Malíř (eds.), *Moravské vyrovnání z roku 1905 / Der Mährische Ausgleich von 1905*, Brünn/Brno: Matices moravská 2006, 239-266.

¹⁴ Róisín Healy, “From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia”, Róisín Healy, Enrico Dal Lago (eds.), *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past*, London: Palgrave 2014, 109-125.

¹⁵ For a more thorough discussion see Dirk Uffelmann, "Postkoloniale Theorie als Erinnerungspraxis. Die Debatte über die zwei Vektoren von Polens Postkolonialität," *Die Welt der Slaven* 61,2 (2016), 347–368; Stanley Bill, “Seeking the Authentic: Polish Culture and the Nature of Postcolonial Theory”, *nonsite.org* 12, (online: <http://nonsite.org/article/seeking-the-authentic-polish-culture-and-the-nature-of-postcolonial-theory>, last access 28.06.2016), Jan Sowa, “Forget Postcolonialism, There’s a Class War Ahead,” *nonsite.org* 12, (online: <http://nonsite.org/article/forget-postcolonialism-theres-a-class-war-ahead> , last access 28.06.2016),

create a direct link between the written text and author's experience or his/hers mental state – historians would read such sources more as texts driven by certain interests and directed toward certain publics. Clearly, these reading do not completely align, and are partially even incommensurable. Even more problematic are the uses of postcoloniality in political discourse and by scholars writing about postcoloniality in their political-commentaries. To suit political statements, mostly in connection to right-wing/conservative parties, post-coloniality has been designed to denote the time of independence, deeming all previous state formations as colonial – including communism. Decommunisation, anti-Europeanism, nativism and nationalism seem for such scholars as the most suitable way to return to ancient values and the former national glory – mostly in a form of Romanticism-like claims to return to certain point of history, although mostly with Catholicism as an added component.¹⁶ Since the early postcolonial studies tended to paint the world in black-white colors, they constitute in fact a very suitable tool to sustain nativizing claims. It is, however, hard to connect them with cultural theoreticians of the subaltern-branch of postcolonial studies who openly criticized nationalizing tendencies as a part of Western episteme.¹⁷ This might be the reason why writers like Bhabha, Guha or Spivak have been marginalized by authors adjacent to the Central European postcolonial studies approach – the other being the connectedness of subaltern studies to Marxism, similarly rejected as a theory.

(Ironically, this approach seems to follow patterns laid out by Lenin in his criticism of the 19th century imperialism. Further research would be necessary to substantiate this claim, but the Marxist historiography seems to be the one where colonial metaphors and the idea of economic exploitation have been most widespread).¹⁸

Historians' reservations aside, there are certainly many points in which postcolonial theory can be applied to Central European situation. But in the version applied in this paper, they should not evoke an image of colonial empires in this region, but concentrate on patterns of cultural and political imbalance which can be unwoven and deconstructed by tools postcolonial theory developed. Jan Sowa's work on Polish modernity and Andriy Zayarnyuk's analysis of Eastern Galicia villages are best examples of how to do it. As different as these two examples are, they show how bits and pieces of

¹⁶ Examples would be literary historical writings of Ewa Thompson and literary writings of Jarosław Rymkiewicz.

¹⁷ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, s. 43.

¹⁸ See Mark von Hagen, „Pavlo Khrystiuk's History and the Politics of Ukrainian Anti-Colonialism,” Serhii Plokhy, Frank Sysyn, Yaroslava Melnyk, Valerii Smolii (eds.), *Ukraine on the Historiographic Map of Interwar Europe*, Edmonton: CIUS 2014.

postcolonial approach can be put into use not only to achieve new results but also to ask new questions.¹⁹

In the following I want to concentrate on one specific question I believe can be approached best with “postcolonial tools”: the question of how Poles situated themselves in the nexus of colonial/imperial relations being both colonized and colonizers. The question is not new and was asked, for instance, by Maria Janion.²⁰ I want, however, to move the question away from most obvious instances of orientalizing, which I will only briefly discuss below, to more general question of intellectual patterns underlying the self-positioning between metropolises and colonies.

Seen as “nesting orientalism”, Polish civic and later cultural nationalism was producing orientaling and colonizing discourses. In the first place these discourses were directed toward Jews, who were to be acculturated and civilized to serve the needs of the provinces. The designation of *Ostjuden*, to use the German stereotype, was directed especially toward people populating the East (later called *Kresy*) with its small Shtetls, but in general the Rousseau’s metaphor of them being “leeches” on Polish population was employed. Even scholars who were not anti-Semites, wrote with the ideas of Jewish cultural subalternity in mind, claiming that this populace does stand beyond the realm of productive population.²¹

Of a similar nature was the Polish relation to Ruthenian (Ukrainian) population. In the second half of the 19th century, the Polish-Ruthenian cleavage became a matter of utmost political importance because of the claim of primacy in Eastern Galicia and tacit support to Ruthenians by the Habsburg government. From 1848 the issue of Ruthenians was dividing Galician publics among several lines. For many, Ruthenians did not exist at all and were a part of Polish population which through manipulations by Habsburg governor of the province in 1848, Franz Stadion, turned against their cultural affiliated brothers and sisters. For others they were a tribe (*szczep*) or nationality (*narodowość*) on their own. However, exactly those tractates who acknowledge Ruthenians as a separate entity, say a lot about issue of cultural hegemony since even those who preached political equality, did it with a clear idea of

¹⁹ Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą*, Universitas, Kraków 2011; Andriy Zayarnyuk. *Framing the Ukrainian Peasantry in Habsburg Galicia, 1846–1914*. Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies 2013.

²⁰ Maria Janion. “Poland between the West and East,” *Teksty Drugie* 2014, 1 (=Special Issue – English Edition), 13-33 (online: http://rcin.org.pl/ibl/Content/51830/WA248_71041_P-I-2524_janion-poland.pdf , last access 30.06.2016).

²¹ Cf. for instance Christoph Augustynowicz, “Von Branntweinmaßen, Klöstern und Waisenhäusern oder Galizien, langes 19. Jahrhundert und Vampirmotive,” Christoph Augustynowicz, Ursula Reber (eds.), *Vampirglaube und magia posthuma im Diskurs der Habsburgermonarchie*, Wien-Berlin 2011, 179-198

cultural imbalance in mind. Even more, this position is well in line with the ideologies present in “civilizing missions” used to legitimize imperial rule.²²

In comparison to classical “civilizing missions”, Polish-language argumentations are composed from a position of “in-betweens”, i.e. those who acknowledge that they are not only civilizing, but also are being civilized, or are culturally inferior to other cultures. To present the Polish self-ascription on the verge between civilized West and Barbaric East, I want to turn to three examples. By looking on few key texts from 19th century Galicia, I want not only to underscore the “in-between” argument, but also give a hint of which long-lasting effects this positioning had on the subsequent decades.

Galicia’s languages in-between: Dietl and Helcl

First example I want to discuss is a part of the debate on the position of Polish language of teaching in schools and universities in the 1850s Habsburg Monarchy.²³ It took place in a very interesting period in the history of Galicia, as after few years years of liberalization of cultural policy following the 1848 revolutions, the predominance of German has been legally codified in 1853, only to be abandoned beginning of the 1860s when Polish (and partially Ruthenian) became languages of teaching. Over this period a number of writings addressed the issue of best suitable languages of education at the time, employing often culturalizing stereotypes. German was equated with culture and civilization and those scholars, publicists and politicians who were in favor of it being the sole language of education, depicted it as a necessary means to achieve cultural progress. (This will be still widespread argument to ascertain German language primacy until the collapse of the Monarchy, utilized in Bohemia, Moravia or Bukovina.) This depiction of high cultural level of German followed the basic idea that languages develop in a progressive way and form a hierarchy from the most cultured to barbaric languages. Enlightened theoreticians saw for instance French patois as less developed as standard French and intended to eradicate it. German-language Habsburg intellectuals hardly spoke of eradicating languages, but openly stated that languages like Polish or Czech could not be used for educational purposes since they were not adequately formed and perfected. Only when they reached adequate level – “measured” by books published – they could be used in tuition.

²² Boris Barth, Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz: UVK Verlag 2005.

²³ For a more detailed discussion see Jan Surman, “Symbolism, Communication and Cultural Hierarchy. Galician Discourses of Language Hegemony at the Beginning of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Historyka: Studia Metodologiczne* 43 (English Version), 151-174 (online: http://historyka.edu.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/news/Historyka_42/Postcolonial_Surman_.pdf , last access 30.06.2016)

Polish intellectuals of the 1850s remained in the very same mindset, accepting the basic premises how languages differ. They placed, however, Polish higher in the hierarchy, stating that this language is well above, for instance, to Hungarian or Slovak (described merely as dialects).²⁴ But they still acknowledged, that Polish has to develop further in order to be on a par with German, and that usage of cultural language (*Kultursprache*) is necessary for adequate education, especially academic one. There were two significant modifications though which took part at the beginning of 1860s. First, the hierarchy was localized and linked to the mother tongue of local population – thus while German was accepted as culturally leading language in the monarchy, in Galicia it was Polish. Accordingly, education was described to be most successful only in a mother tongue of the provincial population. Secondly, authors writing about the language issue claimed that Polish language can develop only when it is being used in teaching, because only then scholarly literature will be produced.

The modifications listed above, have been prominent in two brochures, by Antoni Helcel (1860) and Józef Dietl (1865).²⁵ These brochures are of particular interest, because they appear shortly after the Franz Joseph decided about language change from German to Polish and/or Ruthenian, Helcel's writing being in fact a direct answer to Emperor's open letter on this issue.

Apart from the arguments about the necessity of abandonment of German in schooling, both authors discussed also the role of Ruthenian as well, using, however, completely different arguments they used for Polish. Both state that Ruthenian was a language that had a place in education, although Helcel speaks of it as a dialect (*patois*), and regards Polish as Ruthenians literary language.²⁶ In both narratives, Polish was the language equated with culture and civilization and Ruthenian was the language of lower classes, especially peasantry. The argument that teaching at all levels was best in native language disappeared, and both stated that place of Ruthenian were only the *Volksschulen*. Also the idea that a language could develop only when it was being use in education is missing, and instead both claimed, similarly as German intellectuals did while opposing privileges for Polish, that the language should develop and then and only then could be used for teaching.

What I find significant in the context of colonized-colonizer discourse, is the easiness two contrary narrations are expressed simultaneously in these two texts. On one hand the narrative privileging vernacular language, on the other hand one stating the necessity for cultural language in education. And these argumentation changes within few pages. And – what is important – neither Helcel nor Dietl

²⁴ This quotation and the ones below are quoted after "Czas", 29. September, 222 (1853), pp. 1-2.

²⁵ Antoni Helcel, *Uwagi nad kwestyą językową w szkołach i uniwersytetach Galicji i Krakowa, osnowane na liście odręcznym Jego C. K. Apostolskiej Mości z dnia 20 października 1860 r.*, Kraków 1860; Józef Dietl, *O reformie szkół krajowych. Zeszyt 1. Stanowisko szkoły, rada szkolna krajowa, język wykładowy*, Kraków 1865.

²⁶ Helcel, *Uwagi*, 39.

contradicted that German stood higher in the hierarchy, but they conceptualized this hierarchy's impact on education in a different way – at least when arguing for Polish. In the arguments concerning Ruthenian, they returned to stereotypical usage of hierarchical thinking.

Galician Economical Backwardness: Powidaj and Szczepanowski

This keyword – stereotypes – leads me to second (and even more to the third) example. More or less at the same time as Helcel and Dietl, L'viv publicist Ludwik Powidaj similarly acknowledged and applied the idea of civilizational imbalance. Most famously in his article "Poles and Indians" (*Polacy i Indianie*, 1864) that took the self-orientalizing metaphor to pinpoint socioeconomic problems among Poles in Prussia and Russia.²⁷ But there was another instance in which he applied the idea of civilizational imbalance – which is important in the context of this paper, but should remain here only a footnote – in an essay on Zaporozhian Cossacks published 1861.²⁸ Here Powidaj presented a narrative of Ukrainians of the Middle Ages and Early Modernity, in which Poles played a crucial role, namely as an instance of civilization. Although while reading the narration of the essay, the civilizational story is always in the background, he made sure to mention several times that his readers should be convinced that for Ukrainians "intellectual and moral impulse" as well as the "civilization (*ucywilizowanie*)" were coming always from Poland.²⁹ The narrative of Polish civilizing mission, the existence of a longstanding superiority complex of Poles toward all Eastern notwithstanding, can be read in context of "Poles and Indians". And is symptomatic for the situation in Galicia at the time, where Polish intellectuals had to ascertain priority of Polish culture.

Coming back to "Poles and Indians", I want to sketch the way Powidaj, liberal early positivist, positioned Polish culture. In this widely read and commented article, Powidaj took up the metaphor of Native Americans doomed to perish due to their civilizational backwardness. The use of this metaphor was clearly intended to cause stir among Polish public, even if Powidaj took Indians as

²⁷ Ludwik Powidaj, „Polacy i Indianie,” *Gazeta Narodowa*, 1864. No. 285 (part I), 293 (part II). (first published few months earlier in *Dziennik Literacki*; The first publication had, however, few small changes caused by Habsburg censorship).

²⁸ Ludwik Powidaj, *Kozacy zaporozcy na Ukrainie*, Lwów: K. Wild 1862. (First published in *Dziennik Literacki* (1861)).

²⁹ Ludwik Powidaj, *Kozacy zaporozcy na Ukrainie*, Lwów: K. Wild 1862, 217. See also Powidaj's statement on non-existence of Ruthenian nation in *L.P. Odpowiedź p. M.G. na wezwanie do pracy konkursowej w celu zbadania pierwiastkowego pochodzenia Moskali i stanowiska Rusi w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* // *Dziennik Literacki*, 1861. N63. C.507-508.

example of a certain process (or even law in positivist terms)³⁰ and did not equate them with Polish populace.³¹

In short, Powidaj sketched a situation in which Polish population concentrated on spiritual values and remained socially and economically conservative, while it should be embracing new capitalist forms of production, breaking with old values and educating schoolchildren to be workers, entrepreneurs and engineers instead of archeologist and historians. The old, conservative values were manifested not only in the idle love to history and poetry, but also in more mundane economic phenomena: nobles and aristocrats, still owning most of capital, did not invest into manufactures or other forms of industry, but same as their forefathers they remained bound to the agriculture. Moreover, even in the agriculture, instead of modernizing and enlarging their estates, they kept the *status quo* and spent their money on leisure and furniture. Due to lack of industrialization the most productive capital is in hands of foreigners, and Poles who have money are turning into “intellectual proletariat.” And Powidaj even compared Polish aristocracy to “hornets”, which use up all “fruits of civilization”, but do not produce anything – being then endangered by “diligent bees”.³²

On the rhetorical level, Powidaj painted a gloomy picture of Polish culture, but it is more interesting to see how he situated it on the European civilization chart. According to his description Poles were a “half-civilization” (*połowiczna cywilizacja*), far from both being Prussia, symbol of the emerging civilization, or Montenegrins, Powidaj’s symbol of barbarism. And this hierarchy was geographically oriented from West to East, well in accordance with the enlightened rhetoric’s of civilization. Hence, the Germans not only endangered Poles, but were also themselves endangered by more developed French.³³ Finally, the argument of civilization was according to Powidaj so powerfully political, that it was used to justify destroying other nations under the pretense of civilizing them.³⁴ In the case of Central Europe, even those Germans who are most friendly to Polish people considered them children, not destined to grow up and likely to die out on its own.³⁵

Well in the line with acceptance of Polish intermediate place in the European hierarchies, were the solutions Powidaj proposed. The abolition of preserved cultural patterns (idleness, unfounded pride

³⁰ Accepting that Indians were a metaphor serving to demonstrate general laws in positivist sense, considerably weakens the thesis that Powidaj narrative was self-orientalization.

³¹ „Although we are not as wild as they are ... the fact that our de-nationalisation (*wynarodowienie*) will take more time, might be the only difference” (Powidaj, *Polacy i Indianie*, II, 2).

³² Powidaj, *Polacy i Indianie*, I, 1

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

(*pycha*) etc.)³⁶ can occur only through interaction with more civilized peoples, in particular through schooling abroad, helping to bring new ideas and ways of behavior back home. Thus not the return to traditional values was to save Poles from being colonized, but precisely the opposite – cultural interaction and cultural development through interaction with the West to be able to oppose all economical and cultural threats. (This will also be the tone of progressive positivist press in Galicia and Vistula Land in the future decades).

Subsequent discussions of Powidaj's articles, especially direct reaction of T.R.³⁷, have taken up his distinction between overpowering civilization and backward culture, trying to rewrite it in more positive terms. Or even to stress that it is culture which is to be preserved, because this is what sustains Polishness and defends it from "materialism"; although there was only little agreement with Powidaj's gloomy depiction of the state of aristocracy, this was clearly linked with defending their lifestyle. Powidaj's theory of survival of the more civilized states was also countered with the example of Spain and France, where there were no transborder processes involved and Spain was not endangered by the French.³⁸ Other authors criticized that Powidaj wrote about culture in singular while addressing problems of one single class – aristocracy.³⁹ But none countered the principal existence of the civilizational imbalance and the role Poles played in the middle of the hierarchy.

The difference between Powidaj embracing "Western" civilization and criticizing Polish culture and T.R. who tried to defend Polish traditions against materialism shows two models of development competing in the 1860s. T.R.'s romanticism acknowledged shortcomings of Polishness, but saw it as a necessary evil – and he epitomized West as a seat of materialism. Later authors will add culturelessness in general and will strengthen the picture of Poles as defenders of classical values, savior of Europe etc., an image already widely applied in Romantic and Messianic philosophy as well as in the *antemurale*-metaphors. What is characteristic for this approach in comparison with Powidaj is the lack of hope and the helplessness against the overwhelming civilizational power of the West, but also rejection of its categories. Powidaj on the contrary assures that Poles can compete with the Western civilization if they accept capitalist mode of production and reorganize the society to its needs. A more complex question is if this means acceptance of "Western" norms and Powidaj is hard to read in this respect, because a) for positivist civilization was culturally neutral and thus different than cultural

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ T.R. „Prawdy i nieprawdy w artykułach I-II Polacy i Indianie”, *Gazeta Narodowa*, 1865. Nos. 20, 21, 23, 24,25; T.R. stands for Tadeusz Romanowicz (1843-1904) or Teodor Rolbiecki (before 1830-1884?).

³⁸ Ibid., esp. nos. 24-25.

³⁹ X.A. „Zdanie o «Prawdach i nieprawdach»”, *Gazeta Narodowa*, 1865. Nos. 39, 54, 55.

norms and b) he wanted only to reject the negative manifestations of Polishness, and did not foresee cultural convergence beyond factors influencing economy.

Two decades later publicist and politician Stanisław Szczepanowski picked up topics discussed by Powidaj in a statistical booklet “Nędza Galicji” (Galicia’s Poverty, 1888), often read as an example confirming Austrian exploitation of its Eastern province and as a validation of the “colonial” character of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the late 19th century Galicia, colonial metaphors did not grow common, but when applied, they were consciously and strategically employed to show the dependence of Galicia in the framework of the Monarchy and underscore that the backwardness is not self inflicted but a result of fiscal policies of the Habsburg Germans. (Ministers of Treasury in the Habsburg Empire were, however, mostly Galician noblemen, thus this argument always run the danger of backfiring). For instance in his influential *Galicia and Cracow under Austrian Rule* historian near to Cracow conservatives, Waleryan Kalinka, wrote that the foreign rule ‘transformed this beautiful area [i.e. Galicia – J.S.] into a market for manufacturers, into a colony of the Austrian provinces.’⁴⁰ It was exactly “Nędza Galicji” that fueled depictions of Habsburg economic exploitation of Galicia. And this exploitation became to be seen as a cause of cultural backwardness. It is thus of utmost interest to include it into the analysis of Central European colonial discourse. Szczepanowski shared also many opinions with Powidaj, making it a neat example of continuity of the backwardness discourse.

Re-reading Szczepanowski’s text is instructive for another reason, because it also shows how much it was changed in the reception – similarly as in the case of *Poles and Indians*. In fact, most of his brochure criticized Galicia and its elites and not the Habsburg state as such. Szczepanowski panned Galicia for having a scarcely productive economy dominated by farming and blamed local elites for sustaining it. He also sharply criticized anti-Semitism leaving Jews outside of productive population and bemoaned low intellectual level of Polish aristocracy. And – the examples to follow were Germans, Bismarck or Schiller (although these influences should be localized to Polish moral and intellectual characteristics and foreign “trash” and “imitation” should make place for Polishness). Three elements are very visible in the narrative of Szczepanowski – his positivist, although not Comtean outlook, adherence to the ideals of “organic work” (*praca organiczna*),⁴¹ and finally his *laissez-faire* convictions. It were exactly fiscal issues where he saw Galicia disadvantaged most within the framework of the Empire.⁴² Although

⁴⁰ Waleryan Kalinka, *Galicja i Kraków pod panowaniem austriackim*, Kraków 1898, pp. 254f

⁴¹ An approach originating in the Duchy of Posen and privileging cultural work within broader stratas of society instead of concentrating only on elites and their spiritual development.

⁴² Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Nędza Galicji w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa krajowego*, Lwów: Gubrynowicz i Schmidt 1888, e.g. 182; more on this issue in Klemens Kaps, “Kulturelle Trennlinien und wirtschaftliche Konkurrenz. Galizische Modernisierungsdiskurse zwischen Subalternität und Dominanz in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in: Alexander Kratochvil, Renata Makarska, Katharina Schwitin,

Szczepanowski, who lived several years in England and worked in the British *India Office*, was well aware of colonial and imperial settings, he hold back comparisons to Britain and exploitation of Ireland or India. His aim was clearly an appeal to Galician elites to work on the betterment of the province, an aim for which colonial metaphors were only of limited use.

The fragments where Szczepanowski used colonial and oriental metaphors and comparisons are very telling. Their aim was not to underscore the dependence on the imperial power, but they were applied to highlight the picture of province self-inflicted cultural and civilizational backwardness. For instance Szczepanowski opposed Galician productivity to productivity of “civilized countries,”⁴³ wrote that “when we worked with clumsiness of barbarians, we have European desires,”⁴⁴ criticizing also that Galician nutritional customs are similar to those of Bengal and Ireland heading toward the famine of 1846,⁴⁵ and compared the province repeatedly to China and Bengal.

More visible were anti-imperial assumptions Szczepanowski used to design the bigger framework of his statistical inquiry. Well in accordance with positivist writings, he opposed any non-local government, seeing it as draining the country and not understanding its economic needs. So was also his assessment of Hungary before 1848 or current Polish Kingdom. In the latter case, he stressed that until 1863, i.e. in the times of autonomy, economic development was vigorous, but slowed when foreign administration took control over the country and significant parts of profits were transferred to Russia proper. Well according to historiographic paradigms of the time he was also utterly critical to pre-partitioned Poland-Lithuania, whose political and economic choices he regarded as leading to its demise.⁴⁶ Finally, just as Powidaj, he saw progress, and not the return to Sarmatic values, as a guarantee of living on of Polish culture.

Conclusions

To shortly conclude this text, I want to stress, that the examples discussed here are not traces of colonialism in the strict sense of the word. They do, however, show that certain through pattern developed and stabilized, that facilitated thinking in categories that developed to the extreme in the colonial discourse and colonial practice. And intellectuals identifying as Poles made use of them in a twofold way, both accepting Polish subordination to the West (Dietl, Helcel, Szczepanowski and Powidaj) and accepting Polish “civilizing mission” while looking to the East (Dietl, Helcel). And it is both

Werberger, Annette (eds.), *Kulturgrenzen in postimperialen Räumen. Bosnien und Westukraine als transkulturelle Regionen*, Konstanz: UWK 2012, 33-60.

⁴³ Szczepanowski, *Nędza*, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

a case of “nesting civilizing mission”⁴⁷ and a peculiar self-orientalization. Both phenomena are not exclusive for Polish discourses, or even for Central European ones, but are powerful in the post 1918 political and cultural imagination, like current discourse toward Germany and Ukraine.

Importantly, the authors connected to positivism whose writings I cited above and who were entrapped in this discourse, saw cultural interaction as a means of emancipation. Of course others, like T.R., proposed other solutions, often contrary to the mentioned ones, including re-historicization and remodeling of present according to (however invented) ancient past. But all these solutions were kept in the mode of colonized-colonizer, a powerful discourse formation structuring political landscape at least from the Enlightenment. And it is a duty of historians not only to unravel the historical variations of this discourse, but also its current implications.

⁴⁷ For „nesting orientalism“ see Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” *Slavic Review* 54/4, (1995): 917–931.