

Provincializing Europe, Orientalizing Occident or Reproducing Power Imbalance? Representations of the UK in Post-2004 Polish Migrants' Narratives¹

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Abstract

The unprecedented wave of post-2004 migration from Poland to the UK could not but lead to the re-conceptualizations of the images of the receiving society. In this article we consider this recent intercultural contact from the overlapping perspectives of postcolonialism and post-communism. We place migrant narratives in three dimensions of (quasi)postcolonial context: British imperial past, Poland's partitions and Soviet domination history as well as urbanization as experienced by migrating peasants. Our main question is whether the power relations between Poland and the UK set out by the (quasi)postcolonial context are being challenged on the basis of the first hand lived experience of the receiving society. In particular we try to find out whether one of the three strategies of resistance is present in migrants' narratives: Provincializing Europe, Orientalizing the Occident or reproducing the power imbalance.

Keywords: *post-2004 migration, the UK, Polish migrants' narratives, postcolonialism*

The application of postcolonial studies paradigm² to the post-communist context is challenging, yet in our view it allows tackling the important question of the relation between post-communism and postcolonialism³, on the one hand, and test the

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² E.g. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction* (Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Whiting and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (NY: Pantheon, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxist Interpretations of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, 271-313 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

³ Cf. Jill Owczarzak, "Introduction: Postcolonial Studies and Postsocialism in Eastern Europe", *Focaal – European Journal of Anthropology* 53 (2009): 3–19; Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism, Postsocialism, and Space in Eastern Europe," *Social Research* 63, no.1, (1996): 77–95; David Chioni Moore, "In the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Towards a Global Postcolonial Critique," *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, Special Issue "Globalizing Literary Studies" 116, no.1 (2001): 111-128.

generalizability of postcolonial studies paradigm⁴, on the other. Migration from Poland to the “old” EU countries in the aftermath of the 2004 Enlargement is a part of the broader process of systemic transformation and Europeanization in Eastern and Central Europe. Being thereby inscribed in post-communist paradigm, migration is driven by its pivotal ideas: the unification with Europe (“return to Europe”) and living up to the Western standards. Yet, what meaning these ideas acquire if the economic, political and cultural domination of the West over the East is included in the picture? In the proposed article we explore how not only the post-communist but also the postcolonial studies paradigm application as well as situating research within the (quasi)postcolonial context of Polish history can be used in de-coding the cultural representations of the UK and its people in the narratives of post-accession Polish migrants.

Post-Accession Migration from Poland to the UK

Economic migration from Poland to other countries of the EU has gained momentum after the largest European enlargement of 2004. According to the estimates between five hundred thousand and one million people migrated from Poland to the UK and stayed there in the pursuit of individual happiness and better living conditions⁵. This wave of migration created the situation of cultural contact with the “Other” on an unprecedented scale and on new terms. First, compared to migrants from the previous waves, Poles arriving to the UK after 2004 have a considerably improved legal status (including the right to work without permit, in 2011 the obligation to register with the Home Office was also lifted). Second, post-accession migrants are able to make the full use of technological amenities such as cheap communicators (e.g. Skype), low-fare airlines (e.g. Ryanair, Wizzair) and satellite TV (e.g. digital Polsat), all these allowing for an easier and cheaper contact with the sending country, families and friends left at home, and thus making the decisions to leave more open-ended and less dramatic. The scale of migration has also to be specifically emphasized: at no previous period so many people were able to have a first-hand experience of a Western country in such a short time. What previously was in the sphere of myths and dreams has now become “daily bread”. On the other hand, however, the very mechanisms that trigger migration - the asymmetry of economic positions of the UK and Poland that attracted economic migrants – have not disappeared and continue to be an important factor structurally underlying migration to the UK. Moreover, the deeply rooted cultural images of

⁴ Michał Buchowski, “The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no.3 (2006): 463–482; Merje Kuus, “Europe’s Eastwards Enlargement and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no.4 (2004): 472–489; Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą [King’s Phantom Body. Peripheral Struggle with Modern Form]* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011); Tomasz Zarycki, „Interdyscyplinarny model stosunków centro-peryferijnych. Propozycje teoretyczne,” [Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-periphery Relations. Theoretical propositions], *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 1, no.27 (2007): 5–26; Tomasz Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferijnych [Peripheries. New Approaches to Centre-periphery Dependencies]* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2009).

⁵ Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska and Marek Okólski, *Emigracja ostatnia? [The Last Emigration?]* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2009).

inequality between the East and the West (e.g. the West as Promised Land)⁶, could not but affect the migrants' perception of the receiving environment. As it was claimed elsewhere⁷, grand narratives, including the one on economic migration, are astoundingly resilient to social and political change and continue to affect the representations of the home country and receiving society constructed by migrants in private and semi-public sphere. The cultural meanings of the coalescence of these two sides of post-2004 migration experience are negotiated – among other cultural forms – through the representations of the Other (the people of the receiving country) by migrants.

Three Dimensions of (Quasi)Postcolonial Context of Polish-British Cultural Encounter

The cultural contact zone in the analyzed case is the territory of the former colonial empire (the UK), while the cultural agents constructing the representation of the Other are migrants coming from Poland, an ex-socialist country. There is no simple geometry of geopolitical relations to fall back on in the proposed study: the two countries are not directly linked by the relations of either colonialism or socialism (yet, each belongs to an opposite side of the 'East' vs. 'West' opposition that had been cultivated during the Cold War era and propelled the representations of Self and the Other well into post-communist period⁸. There are non-obvious dimensions of (quasi)postcolonial context, however, that constitute the background for the contemporary representations of Britain and its people by post-2004 Polish migrants. We have included the three of these dimensions in our analysis. All three to a greater or lesser extent are entangled in ideas of modernization and civilizational development that were brought to life by the Enlightenment thought. In all three of them modernization process is supposed to be linear and its more advanced stages are simultaneously granted not only political but cultural superiority over the earlier ones.

⁶ E.g. Dariusz Galasiński and Aleksandra Galasińska, "Lost in Communism, Lost in Migration: Narratives of the Post-1989 Polish Migrant Experience," *Journal Of Multicultural Discourses* 2, no.1 (2007): 47-62; Aleksandra Galasińska, "Small Stories Fight Back. Narratives of Polish Economic Migration on an Internet Forum," in *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. A. Galasińska and M. Krzyżanowski, 188-203 (London: Palgrave, 2009); Anna Horolets, "Pulling Europe Closer: the Strategy of Shame in Polish Press Discourse on Europe," in *Das Erbe des Beitritts. Europäisierung in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, ed. A. Kutter and V. Trappmann, 155-169 (Berlin: Nomos Publishers, 2006); Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "The Complex of an Unwanted Child: The Meaning of Europe in Polish Discourse," in *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention Within and Among Nations* ed. M. af Malmberg and B. Stråth, 215-243 (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002); cf. Joanna Kurczewska, "Inne niepokoje polskie (Zamiast zakończenia)" [Other Polish Troubles (Instead of the Conclusion)], in *Niepokoje polskie [Polish Troubles]*, ed. H. Domański, A. Ostrowska and A. Rychard, 401-448 (Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 2004).

⁷ Aleksandra Galasińska and Anna Horolets, "The (Pro)long(ed) Life of a 'Grand Narrative': The Case of Internet Forum Discussions on Post-2004 Polish Migration to the UK," *Text and Talk* 32, no.2 (2012): 125-143.

⁸ Cf. Verdery, "Nationalism, Postsocialism".

Dimension One: Province versus Empire

First, in the dimension of geopolitical relations there is a certain ambiguity about the role of the UK in Polish post-war history. As a member of anti-fascist alliance with the Soviet Union, the UK was a part of Yalta agreement that placed Poland within the Soviet sphere of influence and predestined its dependence on the Soviet Union for the period between 1945 and 1989⁹. Yet, the UK military forces co-operated closely with the Home Army (PL. *Armia Krajowa*, AK) of general Anders. This gave start to the narrative of “brotherhood in arms”, largely supported by British Polonia¹⁰ of post-war generation¹¹. The UK also hosted the Polish government in exile and supported the anti-communist opposition during the “Solidarity” period. Having said that, however, one has to add that the experience of social degradation and discrimination was daily bread of Polish post-war migration¹². Second, in terms of economic and consumer culture narratives, the UK was a part of an affluent West, “the Promised Land” for people who had to live in the conditions of the economy of shortages¹³. Last but not least, in cultural terms the UK was perceived through the seductive images the world’s best universities, excellence in sports and world’s most demanded language, and, importantly, royalty and aristocracy. The latter seems to have a specific symbolic value in the case of Poland, since historically Polish gentry was a social class whose share in the whole population was higher than in other European countries. Gentry was considered the backbone of the nation (cf. the words of the one of the greatest Polish Romantic poets: “there is nothing in Poland but aristocracy... Only we constitute Poland”¹⁴). It is thus not surprising that all of the cultural iconic representations of the UK in Poland were associated with high culture, excellence in education and heights of civilizational development. The economic and cultural factors made the UK an attractive destination for tourism as well as migration, despite the fact that other features of Britishness such as distant and reserved attitude among people or boarding schools for young children were considered rather alien if not appalling.

Yet, the attractiveness of the UK as a destination of mobility is simultaneously the signal of its otherness and remoteness, also in terms of power relations. Being abandoned by the UK (Yalta) or being not wanted (visa regimes and limitations in access to the labor market between 1989 and 2004) are the symbolic figures underlying the contemporary representations of the UK in post-2004 migrants’ narratives. Some historians consider that “the complex of an unwanted child” has its roots in the lag in

⁹ Cf. Anna Horolets, “Collective Memory in Transition: Commemorating the End of the Second World War in Poland,” in *The Post-Communist Condition: Public and Private Discourses of Transformation*, ed. A. Galasińska and D. Galasiński, 47–65 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishers, DAPSAC series, 2010).

¹⁰ Polonia is a self-definition of Polish diaspora.

¹¹ Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants in Britain. The Study of Adjustment* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956).

¹² Cf. Michelle Winslow, ““Forget? No, I Never...” Polish Reflections on the Impact of the Second World War on Self, Family and Community,” *Family and Community History*, 6, no.1 (2003): 33-44.

¹³ Cf. Galasiński and Galasińska; Kathy Burrell, “The Political and Social Life of Food in Socialist Poland,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 21, no.1 (2003): 189-194.

¹⁴ Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Henryka Reeve* [Letters to Henry Reeve], Vol. II, 11-12, 1980. Quoted in M. Janion, *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej. Szkice o egzystencji ludzi i duchów*. [Phantasmatic Critique Project. Essays of People’s and Spirits’ Existence] (Warsaw: PEN, 1991), 43.

industrial and technological development that affected Poland's position among other European countries from XVII century on¹⁵. This is paralleled by "positioning" Central and Eastern Europe as a domain of barbarianism in Western European discourses of the XVII century¹⁶. Poland's peripheral position¹⁷ and the extra-centrism of its political and cultural elites, i.e. considering that centre lies somewhere else¹⁸, are attributed to its experiences of being colonized. Ewa Thompson¹⁹, in particular, pays attention to the change of the tone in Polish literature after the partitions and the emergence of resentment contrasting with a more self-ascertained stance of pre-partitions literature.

Dimension Two: Orientalist Discourses of the Subaltern

If the postcolonial paradigm is to be considered in the case of Poland, its political and economic dependencies during the modern period have to be included in the picture alongside the more general tenets of progress/backwardness debate²⁰. This concerns the relations between Poland and Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungarian Empire, the three powers that ruled over the territory of today's Poland over 125 years (1793-1918), as well as the 44 years of post-war Soviet domination (1945-1989)²¹. Claire Cavanagh²² was one of the first scholars to claim that Poland and other Central European countries should be included in the framework of postcolonial studies due to the fact that the country (or nation) was for over a century the victim of the partitions and did not have a political identity between 1793 and 1918. Moreover, the post-war experience of Soviet domination should also be considered a colonial period. The sociologist Tomasz Zarycki²³ has indicated that the dependence on the USSR can be treated as a period of colonial dependence. Yet, another academic - Aleksander Fiut²⁴ - claims that univocal definition of Poland as a colonized country would silence the periods of Polish history that included what he calls "Polonization" of the dependant ethnic groups and nations (e.g. of Belarussians and Lithuanians over the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795) and Second Republic (1918-1939)²⁵).

¹⁵ Törnquist-Plewa; cf. Jerzy Jedlicki, *The Suburb of Europe. Nineteenth Polish Approach to Western Civilization* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999); Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla*.

¹⁶ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of Enlightenment*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

¹⁷ Tomasz Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferijnych* [Peripheries. New Approaches to Centre-periphery Dependencies] (Warszawa: Scholar, 2009).

¹⁸ Ewa Thompson, "Whose Discourse? Telling the Story in Post-Communist Poland," *The Other Shore* 1 (2010): 1-15.

¹⁹ Ewa Thompson, "Sarmatyzm a Postkolonializm," [Sarmatism and Postcolonialism], *Europa* 137, no.18/11 (2006): 11.

²⁰ Anna Sosnowska, "Tu, tam – pomieszanie," [Here, There – Confusion], *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4 (1997): 61-68.

²¹ cf. Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia*, 203-207.

²² Clare Cavanagh, „Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej teorii” [Postcolonial Poland. White spot on the contemporary theoretical map], *Teksty Drugie* no. 2-3 (2003): 60-71.

²³ Zarycki *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia*, 204-207.

²⁴ Aleksander Fiut, "Polonizacja? Kolonizacja?" [Polonization? Colonization?], *Teksty Drugie* 6 (2003): 150-156.

²⁵ cf. Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia*, 193.

One academic debate is particularly symptomatic of the ambiguity concerning the experience of cultural colonialism on the part of Poland. In 2002 Maxim Waldstein published an article devoted to the analysis of Ryszard Kapuściński's "Imperium" from postcolonial perspective²⁶. Embarking on Bhabha's analytical framework Waldstein paid attention to typically colonial image-set of Kapuściński's reportages on the collapsing Soviet empire (the book is devoted to the early 1990s). These included e.g. the representations of Syberian landscape as vast, inhuman, natural, deadly, dull and the like. Waldstein classified Kapuściński's perspective on Russia as postcolonial since Polish elites – Waldstein postulated – viewed the country as civilizationally and culturally inferior to Poland, although politically superior to it (in certain periods). The perception of Russia as an inferior country was linked by several historians to the rivalry between Catholic and Orthodox Church²⁷. Waldstein's interpretation resonates with the article of Zarycki²⁸, who claims that the uses of Russia in Poland were an important part of relations with the West and included Russia as an underdog (allowing to rescale Polish weaknesses), Russia as Asia (allowing Poland to inscribe itself in Europe), Russia as a threat, Russia as a state of oppression (allowing to emphasize Poland's (spiritual) superiority) and Russia as a mystery (allowing Poland to occupy the position of an expert)²⁹.

The reactions to Waldstein's article among Polish literary critics were mixed: Maria Janion³⁰ has welcomed Waldstein's interpretation, which allowed to depart from the martyrological and heroic (and thus ideologically biased) version of national history³¹, while other commentators considered the work superficial, mechanically applying postcolonial analytical devices to literature that was not fuelled by colonialism³². Interestingly, the debate mostly focused on whether Poland could be considered anywhere close to "perpetrator" position in postcolonial paradigm. Most of the answers given to this question were negative. Waldstein's interpretation of Polish famous reporter's postcolonial stance in representing Russia has not found much appreciation in Polish academia.

We hold that the article by Waldstein³³ and the debate surrounding it probes the question of whether postcolonial paradigm could be used as critical analysis of the practices of cultural and discursive domination writ large or rather be circumscribed to selected contexts (e.g. of the countries whose colonial inter-dependence has been

²⁶ Maxim K. Waldstein, "Observing *Imperium*: A Postcolonial Reading of Ryszard Kapuscinski's Account of Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia," *Social Identities* 8, no.3 (2002): 481-499.

²⁷ cf. Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Pętno Rewolucji. Custine, Tocqueville i Wyobraźnia Romantyczna*. [The stigma of Revolution. Custine, Tocqueville and Romantic Imagination] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995).

²⁸ Tomasz Zarycki, "Uses of Russia. The Role of Russia in the Modern Polish National Identity," *East European Politics and Societies* 18, no.2 (2004): 595-627.

²⁹ cf. Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia*, 194-195.

³⁰ Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*. [Astounding Slavishness. Literature Phantasms] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006).

³¹ cf. Fiut, "Polonizacja? Kolonizacja?"

³² Aleksandra Chomiuk, "'Nowy Markiz de Custine' albo o pewnej manipulacji" ['New de Custine', or about a Certain Manipulation], *Teksty Drugie* 1-2 (2006): 310-319; Ewa Domańska, „Badania postkolonialne (Posłowie)” [Postcolonial Studies (Afterword)], in *Teoria postkolonialna. Wprowadzenie krytyczne [Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction]*, by L. Ghandi, 157-165 (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2008).

³³ Waldstein, "Observing *Imperium*".

unequivocally recognized). We consider that although some criticism of the article is valid, overall the author applied the postcolonial paradigm legitimately³⁴, since the symbolic struggles over Poland's place in Europe included the construction of Poland's Other – culturally backward, politically immature and despotic, underdeveloped and wild, and rather often Russia played this role³⁵. The Orientalizing practices can be considered in this case the means of resistance, the power of the weak. At the same time the other edge of colonial dependence is pointed at the Western world, which is the addressee (the recipient, the one we want to impress) of these images. For Poland the (positive) image of the West is the mirror image of the Eastern Other construed in negative terms.

Dimension Three: Romantic Resistance to Modernization

The third dimension of (quasi)postcolonial context of Polish history pertinent to the lived experience of migration is the most broad one – that of modernization. The dimension of modernization particularly relevant to this study is the rural-urban migration (also when it manifested itself as international migration³⁶). The discourses describing the departure from rural environment and experiencing urban environment as alien and unknown are on the one hand universal for all Europe. Metropolitan discourses on the part of receiving localities that contained colonial (quasi-racist) representations of peasants are paradigmatic all Europe as well³⁷. Peasants (or “cultural entrepreneurs” speaking on their behalf, e.g. XIX century writers like Anton Chekov in Russia) were shocked and puzzled by the hustle and bustle of the cities, in letters of the period the representations of technology as overwhelming and powerful but at the same time inhumane, threatening and weird can be found. The ridicule was also sometimes the strategy used to represent the urban dwellers (of people not noticing anything, of rush), while the countryside was romanticized (although with a degree of ambiguity). Indeed rural-urban migration was one of the important contextual dimensions that contributed to Romanticism (negative) view of civilization and technology, and the one that linked development to ethical degradation. Yet, the counter-Enlightenment discourses that were criticizing cities have not given voice to peasants themselves³⁸. As a group peasants were framed as backward, disregarded and were ridiculed, while their knowledge (including the knowledge of the new environment) was treated as inferior and lagging behind the trends of true understanding of not only “progress” but also of its critics. Peasants' discourses on cities can therefore be treated as a paradigmatic typically European subaltern postcolonial discourse.

³⁴ cf. Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla*.

³⁵ Andrzej de Lazari and Oleg Riabow, *Polacy i Rosjanie we wzajemnej karykaturze [Poles and Russians in Mutual Caricature]* (Warszawa: PISM, 2008); cf. Zarycki, “Uses of Russia”.

³⁶ Cf. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918–1920).

³⁷ Cf. Tomasz Zarycki, „Interdyscyplinarny model stosunków centro-peryferijnych. Propozycje teoretyczne.” [Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-periphery Relations. Theoretical propositions]. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 1, no.27 (2007): 5-26.

³⁸ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

The three dimensions of (quasi)colonial context outlined above are uneven in their scope and character, yet we consider that we can engage all three in the analysis of contemporary representations of the UK by post-2004 Polish migrants as postcolonial discourses. We will explore how figures that were used to describe the inferior Other in (quasi)colonial context are re-contextualized and applied to the groups that previously were considered to be superior, as is the case of selected representations of Britain and people who inhabit it in migrants' narratives. The representations of the host country and people who inhabit it (the Other) in migrants' narratives are resonant with the images we know from postcolonial studies. We thus suggest to use the postcolonial critique as a generalized tool of making the unobvious relations of power more open to critical inquiry.

Interviews and Internet Forum Postings as Migrants' Narratives

Migrants' narratives are a type of cultural texts that through their intertextual repetitiveness and cross-referencing with other cultural texts (such as press discourses, film and literature) reflect the collective experience (e.g. generation experience³⁹). In the field of migration studies narratives were demonstrated to participate in border crossing, home making and cultural adaptation experiences of migrants⁴⁰. Narratives that constitute empirical material of this study are the narratives elicited in the course of in-depth interviews and narratives appearing at internet forums. In the article we draw on the two types of data stemming from the three research projects. The first type of material are internet forum entries collected by Aleksandra Galasińska within a research project on constructing migration experience through internet forums⁴¹. The entries we analyzed for the purposes of this article are taken from 2005-2009 "Gazeta Wyborcza" online forum. "Gazeta Wyborcza" is one of the most influential Polish daily quality newspaper with highly popular internet forum, whose users constantly address the issues of migration. In some cases the discussions were triggered by an article in the newspaper, at other occasions they were initiated in a bottom-up fashion by users themselves. The second type of material are in-depth narrative interviews collected by the authors of this article as a part of two research projects. In the project carried out by Olga Kozłowska in 2004 and 2005 the research was aimed at studying the employment opportunities by young well-educated Poles who arrived to the UK in the immediate aftermath of the EU enlargement in May 2004. The corpus consists of twenty-two in-depth interviews⁴². In the project carried out by Anna Horolets within the framework of

³⁹ Galasińska, "Discourses".

⁴⁰ Michael Bamberg and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, "Small Stories as a New Perspective in Narrative and Identity Analysis," *Text & Talk* 28, no.3 (2008): 377-396; Mike Baynham and Anna De Fina, *Dislocation/relocation. Narratives of Displacement* (Manchester, UK - Northampton, MA: St. Jerome Publishing, 2003); cf. "Discourses".

⁴¹ For more details on this research and methodology see e.g. Aleksandra Galasińska and Olga Kozłowska, "Discourses of a 'Normal Life' among Post-accession Migrants." in *Polish Migration to the UK in the 'New' European Union after 2004*, ed. K. Burrell, 87-106 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

⁴² For more information on the research project see Olga Kozłowska, "The Lived Experience of Economic Migration in the Narratives of Migrants from Post-communist Poland to Britain," PhD diss., University of Wolverhampton, 2010.

the Leverhulme Visiting Fellowship to the University of Wolverhampton in 2010 and 2011 migrants' leisure mobility was at the core of research interests. Thirty eight in-depth narrative interviews were carried out with post-2004 Polish migrants. By combining the material elicited in the interviews with the material from the internet forum discussions we aim at building the multi-modal corpus of material that is rich in terms of temporal scope and data on social-cultural context of texts and at the same time representing different modes of communication. We also pursue the goal of overcoming the limitations of both types of data: while interviews allow for eliciting information according to research design and provide detailed information of the interlocutors' socio-cultural situation, they are shaped by the interaction between researchers and their interlocutors and therefore contain a degree of bias. At the same time internet forum postings are produced independently of researchers' will and therefore are free from this type of bias, while at the same time the information on the authors' social and cultural features is scarce and unreliable. What is more, mediated communication has its own genre requirements (e.g. the brevity of the entries). Due to pulling the three research corpora together the material that was analyzed for this article covers the period between 2004 and 2011 (7 years) following the EU largest enlargement, and since it has not been elicited specifically for the purposes of this particular study we claim that its content referring to Britain and the British is an integral and stable part migrants' narratives. By applying to this integrated corpus the selected elements of discourse and narrative analysis as well as postcolonial analytical tools we aim at demonstrating the generalizable features of Polish post-2004 migrants representations of Britain and its people.

Representations of Britain and the British in Polish Migrants' Narratives

By comparing the representations of the people in the UK in migrants' narratives to the representations of a) the Other in classical Orientalist discourses, b) Polish discourses on the East (Russia, in particular), and c) the peasant migrants' representations of urban milieu typical of the era of industrialization and urbanization, we aim at demonstrating how the practices of Othering⁴³ participate in power-games, in which social actors question, resist or maintain the existing power relations. In our analysis we have started from tracing the discursive devices paradigmatic to Othering practices in Orientalist discourses⁴⁴, such as the representation of the Other as primitive or wild (uncivilized), technologically backward and dirty. We were also tracing the representations of the Others' food as a part of lifestyle practice linking body and consumption. During the second stage of the analysis we situated the narratives containing the references to these paradigmatic representations in the body/spirit continuum. This analytical procedure was undertaken in order to place the narratives in the framework of postcolonial critique

⁴³ Cf. Teun A. van Dijk *Racism and the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991); Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak. *Discourse and discrimination* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁴⁴ Bhabha; Said; cf. Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

of modernization. We are interested in whether the hegemonic European discourse of modernization is travestied in the migrants' narratives. We aim at demonstrating how the Other is perceived in terms of their body (taking care of body, body protection), the ability to control and organize the environment (human, organizational, technological) and the ability to know self and the environment (the Others' spiritual capability and subjectivity).

These three spheres would allow to see whether Britain is being a) **provincialized** (by undermining the narratives of modernization and development that lay ground to hegemonic position of former colonial powers as described in the dimension one of (quasi)postcolonial context), or b) **Orientalized** (by ascribing it the position of the Other that was earlier reserved i.e. to Russia, as the dimension two of (quasi)postcolonial context would suggest). The third alternative refers to the dimension of rural-urban migration and covers the cases of **maintaining the imbalance of power** inherited from earlier epochs in post-2004 migration experience and narratives. Body/spirit continuum also allows to reflect the spheres of contact with the Other: from private and "low" to public and "high". Postcolonial critique was particularly emphasizing the need to address the space and time metaphors of hegemonic discourse⁴⁵. In all these representations we search for the reflected image of the Self as well as the transformed images of the Other described in the preceding part of the article. We are interested in intertextuality of migrants' narratives. We particularly aim at tracing the presence of alternatives to the hegemonic visions of modernization as a linear process of development or at least the incongruence in applying the modernization paradigm to the representations of Self and the Other in migrants' narratives. We will try to give an answer to the titular question of whether these practices could be fitted within the framework for "Provincializing Europe"⁴⁶ or Orientalizing the Occident. By analyzing narratives as instances of "taking voice" we will re-address the classic issue of whether "subaltern can speak", which has received a negative answer in the original work of Gayatri Spivak⁴⁷.

The Others' Body

The representations of the Other's body (e.g. sexuality, hygiene) may be said to constitute the backbone of Orientalist discourse whereby cultural features get naturalized to the end of legitimizing colonial domination by (innate) inferiority of the Other. In the representations of the British Other in migrants' narratives the Other's body deserves relatively little attention, however. We have also registered more representations of body in private discourses (e.g. in the course of participant observation or in the interviews) than in semi-public discourses such as internet forums. Sexual promiscuity was rarely represented in interviews or forum postings although some mentioning of it were registered by one of the authors in the course of participant observation. We have distinguished the dimension of body and bodily functions that are

⁴⁵ Cheryl McEwan, *Postcolonialism and Development* (London: Routledge, 2009), 24-25.

⁴⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁷ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?".

marked as (symbolically) “low” connected with the “earth”, excrement and “dirt” (farting, lower parts of the body, menstrual blood, vomit etc. in Examples 1-3)⁴⁸.

Example 1⁴⁹

Female, 1980, year of interview: 2005

There are loads of jokes in the company I work in. Jokes all the time. Nobody takes offence... they are English. So for example today, [laughing] the managers played a trick on others and they farted in the office before going out so that it smelled nicely for others [laugh].

Example 2

Female, 1978, year of interview: 2011

I: ... so

R: What do they say?

I: That they [the English] are going there for the stag nights, that they run with their trousers down, that the police have to intervene, that nobody wants them. Of course there are... I know people who went to Krakow and behaved properly. And they appreciated Krakow for its richness and they admitted that it is a nice city.

Example 3

Female, 1986, year of interview: 2011

[This is] because people are animals. Especially the English. The situations happened when you work in a pub and have a responsibility not only to pour beer and clear off the glasses, but also, for example, to clean the toilets after the guests have left and the pub is shut down, and it happened to me not once that I had to wipe blood from a wall, because some lass smeared a tampon all over the tiles, and this happens repeatedly. I will leave aside the vomit, syringes and condoms...

In Bakhtin’s interpretation the carnivalesque representations of grotesque body serve to challenge and traverse social order but at the same time contribute to its revival and maintenance. In migrants’ narratives the representations of the Other’s body as “lowly” have a slightly different function, it appears: they are signaling the instances when migrants perceive that the social order is being breached (the one they were expecting to find in the UK e.g. on the basis of the images stemming from the dimension one of (quasi)postcolonial context). The expected code of behavior (bearing the feature “civilized”) turns out to be its opposite (bearing the feature “uncivilized”).

The second bodily dimension that can be distinguished in research material is related to consumption, especially to food as a type of consumer goods that is at the same time vital to body and becomes processed by the body. In the examples below the food combines the features of being artificial (plastic, not fresh, rubber etc.) and lowly (fit only for dogs or pigs). British food is juxtaposed to “our” (Polish) food as alien on two (conflicting) grounds: being artificial (in this case the feature “civilized” is

⁴⁸ Cf. Mikhail Bakhtin, [1941, 1965]. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ In the examples from the interviews we present the interlocutors by their gender and year of birth followed by the year of the interview. The interviews from years 2004 and 2005 were conducted by Olga Kozłowska, while the interviews from 2010 and 2011 – by Anna Horolets. When only interlocutors speak the quotation is not additionally marked, when the researchers’ voices are included in quotations, the interlocutor and researcher are distinguished by capital letters I and R respectively. The examples from the “Gazeta Wyborcza” internet forum are marked only the posting date and are all taken from the corpus of postings collected by Aleksandra Galasińska who kindly granted us the access to her data. All interviews have been transcribed and all presented data – translated from Polish into English by the authors.

hyperbolized) and being suitable only for (low) animals (in this case the feature “civilized” is minimized), interestingly both are combined in the Example 7:

Example 4

Female, 1980, year of interview: 2004

(...) but this is not, this is simply not as we have it, it's very rarely that you can buy something that is absolutely fresh. Everything is taken from somewhere, packed - neatly, hermetically, it bothers me a lot.

Example 5

Female, 1972, year of interview: 2005

R: what would you take with you from here to Poland?

I: [laughing] what would I take? A piece of rubber bread, so that they see what kind of muck [*świństwo*] they eat here [laugh].

Example 6

Posting 1 from April 2008:

[Reply to:]

>and its quality is much better.

:-) don't blather, the food in the UK is actually worse than in pigsty... what is that you like so much - egg and bacon, pudding or porridge?

Example 7

Posting 1 from June 2009:

So he didn't have anything for the dog [and he] didn't buy anything? He could bring this shit that the Irish⁵⁰ eat and his dog would die right away. [...] One can get used to anything but somehow I couldn't [get used] to this s... in shops, I couldn't. I preferred to bring food by plane from Poland [...] still, maybe I stayed there not long enough, probably the body gets adapted to chemical stuff after 5-10 years.

The scarcity of the Other's body representations through these two dimensions (“low” body and artificial/“lowly” food) in migrants' narratives is counterbalanced by the representations of the Other's environment and control over the environment, that are much more prominent and pervasive.

The Other's Environment: Technology and *Know-how*

We have distinguished this sphere, since it reflects migrants' lived experience and their first-hand contact with the host society in work, home and leisure environments. This is also the sphere that connects body with the outside world both literally and metaphorically and that mainly represents the ways of (practical) control over the environment (through buildings, work organization etc.). In other words it allows to see the representations of the Other through the question: “How does the Other control their environment?” or “Is the Other well organized?”. We thereby aim at addressing the question of whether the modernist discourse prevails in migrants' narratives. If human control over the environment is positively evaluated in migrants' narratives, that would

⁵⁰ This posting refers to the experience of migration to Ireland, we however treat it as paradigmatically equal to the representations of the UK, since the UK and Ireland are often treated interchangeably as “The Islands” [*Wyspy*] in migrants' narratives.

mean that the “Provincializing Europe” project, i.e. the departure from the limitations of the Enlightenment discourses, does not take place, while the practices of Orientalizing the Occident (ascribing the Other features typical of the subaltern minorities) might at the same time occur. In other words, it is not the negative or positive evaluation of the ability to control the environment *per se* that would signal the adherence or resistance to modernist discourse, but the very recurrence to modernist framework as valid and viable legitimating device.

The sphere of control over the environment is often represented in migrants’ narratives through the figures of technological underdevelopment and backwardness as well as dirt. Migrants immediate environment – and also the one that is important in making home while abroad – is house. The examples below demonstrate that British houses become an epitome of Otherness, the metaphor of inhospitable environment but at the same time the representation of British technological backwardness:

Example 8

Female, 1980, year of interview: 2004

Ordinary differences... what we have already talked about, two taps, light that you turn on by pulling a string. I don’t know... such nuances that make... that show ... distinctiveness of England. But they make no sense, they are odd. And it is not a problem but it is irritating. And the windows that open from the bottom somehow.

Example 9

Posting from February 2008:

(...) Average house in the UK is a horrible shit, the ceiling 20 cm lower, junk [*staroć*], “double glaze” [*sic!*] is a kind of f.ing luxury. And the prices of this housing sh.t = accelerated by bank credits (“buy and hire”).

Example 10

Female, 1968, year of interview: 2005

The first shock I had was when I came here and saw the interior of this house, I went “Oh, God, [it’s] tragic, a typically English style”, hideous wall-paper, styrofoam panels [*stypopianowe kasetony*] on the ceiling, a little bit of fungi in the bathroom, humidity in the bathroom. (...) the second thing that stroke me was dirt on the streets, they say that Poland is dirty, but Poland shines bright with cleanness in comparison with what goes on here: papers, food, all this stuff in the shrubs, horrid.

Following Mary Douglas’ interpretation one can conceptualize dirt as something being “out of place”⁵¹, concomitantly the representations of the Other through the figure of dirt can be interpreted as representations of the breaches in the expected (socio-cultural) order. In migrants’ narratives dirt is a recurrent motive of physical environment as well as the Other’s representations, but as the examples above and below illustrate dirt has several meanings, e.g. 1) bad style; 2) lack of care (out-of-place-ness *sensu stricto*); 3) lack of manners (linked to barbarianism/primitiveness); 4) unethical behavior; and, interestingly, 5) lack of humanity or “beast-like-ness”. The streets perceived as shabby and dirty and the houses that are old, junky, and build not according to the latest technological know-how are examples of the representations of the Other that are in contrast with the image of Britishness we presented when describing the dimension one of (quasi)postcolonial context. Also in this case the

⁵¹ Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings. Selected Essays in Anthropology*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999).

feature “civilized” is minimized. These characteristics are further developed in the representations of work milieu (e.g. modern/non-modern hotel; technically defective buses; not professionally advanced work organization etc.):

Example 11

Male, 1957, year of interview in 2011

I: When I came here, when I saw the depot and the buses they drive, I clutched my head in disbelief. It was better thirty years ago in Poland. The buses, my god, I couldn't stand them. Driving them was a nightmare. Nobody would drive them in Poland.

R: So dirty?

I: Dirt is nothing, but I mean technically defective. In such a country, well recently it hasn't been raining much, but it is a wet country... and to leave the depot without the wipers? He comes with a piece of wire and he tells me to drive. Lack of central heating is nothing, but it's cold, faulty, put together somehow...

Example 12

Female, 1977, year of interview: 2005

R: what did the first days at work were like?

I: first days at work? rather pleasant [...] I practically do the same things as I did in Poland, only in Poland I had a more computerized system, and it was easier than here (...) I had thought that in one respect it would be (...) that the hotel would be definitely more modern, but I worked in more modern hotels in Poland actually.

Example 13

Female, 1972, interview year: 2005

R: how did you imagine work in England?

I: [...] I actually discovered that [the clinic] is not at all brilliantly equipped, and perhaps surprisingly it gave me more self-confidence.

Example 14

Female, 1980, year of interview: 2005

R: what similarities or differences do you notice between you and your coworkers?

I: I think that I approach work much more professionally. Jokes are jokes, but work is work. And they have really such an English attitude towards life.

Finally, the representation of private and public services (the immaterial sphere that protects body but also the sphere that links individual to the state or business) are also characterized by the emphasis put on insufficient knowledge, unprofessionalism and simply laziness:

Example 15

Male, 1977, year of interview: 2011

Shoddiness irritates me. If something breaks down, they don't repair it, they use it as it is, they just put some sellotape. It irritates me a bit. They are slob.

Example 16

Posting 2 from April 2008

Sure British [health] care will give you paracetamol for all ailments [...] buhahaha.

The critique of the ways in which the British control their environment is however not coherent, as the example below demonstrates. It often contains the elements of criticism and affirmation that constitute immediate co-text for one another:

Example 17

Posting 2 from June 2009:

[The earlier forum thread fragment quoted:] Sure one can feel offended by the world and run away to a better one.

[Actual forum entry being a reply to the above:] Not a better one at all, a different one, better in some worse in other aspects, if you take this so called Polish backwardness – if you open a bank account there [in the UK] you are tied to it like a dog (to a PARTICULAR branch). You won't get a sh... out of a branch of the same bank even three streets away [...] It is clear [yet] that the roads are better and the minimum wage is sufficient for everything, so you don't have to get education for 50 years to earn 2-3 thousand euro.

The representations of British technological backwardness (and dirt as the characteristic of “being out of place”) are constructed in such a way that they either indirectly or directly challenge the dimension one of (quasi)postcolonial context, in which the image of Britain is the one of civilizational perfection. These representations bring an evidence that migrants' lived experience does not match this image. Although not directly challenging modernist discourse, the depreciation of the British technological development serves Othering goals. The Orientalization of Britain and the British is however frequently accompanied by the practices of self-Orientalization (as in Examples 17). As Dirk Uffelmann noticed in his analysis of recent Polish migrant literature in Germany and the UK, the device of Self-Orientalization is not only a resistance mechanism (aimed against negative stereotyping by the receiving society) but also is a result of the persistent Western-centredness in Poland⁵².

The Other's Values and Spirituality

If the representations of body and the control over the environment do not constitute an unproblematic alternative to hegemonic discourses, the representations of the Other as inferior in spiritual terms could be considered a sphere capable of producing viable alternatives and overcoming postcolonial eccentricity (placing the centre at the outside of one's own group). The representations of the powerful Other's inferiority in cultural (spiritual) terms is a sphere typically associated with how the subaltern describe the powerful Other. For instance, being “deep” and having a “soul” was an argument turned against the West in Russia (that experienced western domination in terms of economic development, e.g. Slavophil rhetoric in the XIX century). Also in the case of Polish representations of Russia, Russians were pictured as lacking finesse and sophistication⁵³. These representations find their continuation in contemporary representations of Russians in Polish literature, e.g. “depth and mystery, which the *Homo Sovieticus* lacks”, “idleness” and “mental lethargy” of the Russians⁵⁴. We have

⁵² Dirk Uffelmann, „Autoidentyfikacja ze Wschodem w narracjach polskich migrantów.” [Self-Orientalisation in Narratives by Polish Migrants]. *Rocznik Komparatystyczny* 1 (2010): 253-277; cf. Thompson 2006.

⁵³ cf. Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Pętno rewolucji. Custine, Tocqueville i wyobrażenia romantyczna*. [The stigma of Revolution. Custine, Tocqueville and Romantic Imagination] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995).

⁵⁴ From Ryszard Kapuściński's *Empire* quoted in Waldstein, “Observing *Imperium*”, 49.

found selected images corresponding to the above figures in Polish migrants' representations of the UK and its people:

Example 18

Female, 1977, year of interview: 2005

I think they are closed to other countries, they are self-centered, 'we are the navel of the world', 'we know everything and you don't know anything,' and they don't know things like where Poland is, I have been asked where Poland is, do we ride camels. So very few people have basic knowledge about what is happening outside the Great Britain.

Example 19

Male, 1978, year of interview: 2011

I think that their imperial past is responsible for their lack of mobility. Even if you think that it was such a long time ago and that it didn't really happen. But first, nobody likes English. They know it and everybody knows it. Because of their imperial past. Because they attacked others, because they made the Irish starve, because they tried to finish off the Scots, because Wales lost independence. Because they exploited but never were exploited. Their imperial past made them feel better than others. And although it is not a popular thought it is true. Firstly, they think that they are better and secondly, they are a bit afraid of a clash with the reality because it often happens that they are not the best, their grandness is gone, and it is not easy to show their face to the world when they are not the best anymore.

While the examples above describe the limitations of mental horizons of the Other more or less directly explaining these features by the history of imperial domination, the critique of the Other's spirituality below is explained by the broader tendencies of modernization and situates the Other and Self in evolutionary model of linear development. Although the "overdevelopment" of the UK that is leading to the loss of spirituality among its people is negatively assessed, the voices below contain the assumption that this vector of development is unavoidable.

Example 20

Female, 1977, year of interview: 2005

R: you said something about cultural differences, you notice here, could you tell some more about it?

I: cultural differences... I think the values certainly, they have different values, that... differ decidedly from ours. I don't know I noticed – I wonder if these are values or fashion – the race after the money, the money is the most important [thing], something is done during Christmas, one goes to the Caribbean, one doesn't go to visit the family, doesn't spend time, family is not the most important here; the holidays are spend in a pub for example, I already have seen Christmas booking [offer] in some pubs, one could book tables already now, I don't know, and also the lack of openness, I think we are a much more open nation, we are much more willing to invite people home, entertain guests than them here.

Example 21

Female, 1980, year of interview 2005

(...) the preparation for holidays, that start here from mid-October, glittering lamps everywhere, sparklers, gewgaws. In Poland such phenomena are observable already and perhaps will reach the same scale in a while but I guess it is never as early and not as barren, however, the holiday tradition in Poland is more deeply rooted in people than here [where they have] simply shopping, Christmas pudding and (...) quick dinner, and that's it, that much of the holidays. I have noticed here first time I was shocked (...) the Middle Age

church has been converted into [shopping] galleries, trifles [...] this is not the matter of the English way of life but European losing oneself in... I don't know materialism, departing from tradition (...).

When post-2004 migrants to the UK articulate the arguments critical of British spiritual degradation due to the country's (excessive) development (the feature "civilized" is hyperbolized), their voice is falling within the two frameworks simultaneously: the anti-modernization discourses of rural migrants to urban areas and the discourses critical of those who reject the modernization logic (e.g. laziness being a backlash of development and something that is negatively evaluated). This makes their arguments ambiguous since by renouncing over-development they also treat it as an unavoidable and even favorable course of events.

Discussion

The migrants' representations of the British Other in all three spheres (body, control over the environment and spirituality) share the feature of ambiguity. In the bodily sphere the ambiguity is revolving around the dichotomy of "not enough civilization" (wilderness, beastliness) versus "too much civilization" (artificial food). In the sphere of "control over the environment" the ambiguity is situated in the contrast between the expectations prior to migration (of "much civilization") and the lived experience in the receiving country (of "not enough" civilization). In the sphere of spirituality civilization is understood as an anti-thesis of culture as a domain of ideas and values. This creates an ambiguous evaluation of modernization and development: they are unavoidable and at the same time lead to the loss of values. The vision of modernization that one can reconstruct on the basis of migrants' narratives is such that it is expected to be a linear process with the leaders and followers. Polish migrants place their own culture and society in a "challenger" position, i.e. the one that is currently not leading but who potentially can take this role. Orientalization of the British Other serves as a strategy of achieving a better position in this process by discrediting the ones who have been holding hegemonic position until recently. The very necessity to develop on the terms laid out by the Enlightenment paradigm is not questioned, however.

While being the form of resistance to postcolonial hegemony (both in very general terms as well as in more narrow terms of post-communist experience) this vision confirms the hegemonic discourses on a more abstract mental level, i.e. does not allow for the "Provincializing Europe" project to be completed in full. It does not cater for making the ideas and grand narratives produced in the course of European history relativized, peripheralized and effectively questioned. Rather the partial Orientalization of the British Other is undertaken, especially in the sphere of control over the environment. There are at least two factors that limit the potential of resistance and change inherited in this strategy, however. One is the concomitant self-Orientalization⁵⁵ and the other is the removing of responsibility for the negative outcomes of modernization from human agents (e.g. the responsibility for technological backwardness). The latter is achieved by discursively backgrounding human agency.

⁵⁵ Cf. Uffelmann, „Autoidentyfikacja ze Wschodem”.

Objects or abstract notions are made “carriers” of the feature “backward” (two taps, double glazing, as in Examples 8 to 10; or “race after the money” in Example 20), thereby the process unfolds itself without an agent. Alternatively, deictic expressions like “he” in the Example 11 or “they” in the Example 15 make statements more open-ended and imprecise with regard to who is actually being described. Removing responsibility from human agents softens the effects of Orientalization strategies through objectifying negative features rather than linking them to human actors.

The ambiguity is also the feature that cross-cuts all three spheres if we consider other narrative and discursive features of migrants' accounts. At the level of narrative constructions, the criticism of some characteristic of British life is often immediately followed by the expressions of appreciation of another features (backward banking system vs. good roads in Example 17; “wild” Brits vs. “cultured” ones in Example 2). This strategy of representation is called mitigation and manifests itself, for instance, in toning down the Orientalizing statement by attaching to it another statement that partially lifts the first statements' suppositions, as in Example 17⁵⁶. The comparisons with own culture and society that are voiced in Examples 7, 11, 12, 17 and 21 contain the premises that are most straightforwardly expressed by an interlocutor in Example 13. In it the observation that the clinic is equipped modestly (i.e. does not bear a feature of “highly civilized”) fills the Polish doctor who has just arrived to work in the UK with relief. If emotions could be “read” semantically, the feeling of relief – as opposed to feelings of e.g. anger or shame – signals the situation, in which the breach of the expected image creates a comfortable situation (by offering more equality). In other words, the image of the receiving country prior to migration was incurring some discomfort due to unfavorable comparison of own society (“less civilized”) to the British society (“more civilized”). The feeling of relief is therefore an articulation of the (hidden) premise about the civilizational superiority of the receiving country. This premise is being challenged and refuted when migrants confront reality of the receiving country. Yet, and paradoxically, this refutation is not fully satisfactory for the migrants, since the very rationale for migrating (search for better life opportunities) is being thereby threatened (cf. Example 12). This feature has to be considered at the background of the “search for normality”, one of the most prominent among migrants' declared motivations for post-2004 mobility⁵⁷. Migrants search and find normality at work and in everyday life in the receiving country. The negative strategies of Other presentation, including Orientalizing the UK, are by no means central to post-2004 migration narratives and in any case not unambiguous. There are more of them in the private contexts and less – in semi-public and public ones.

While the criticism of technological backwardness seems most vociferous, it is the criticism of spiritual degradation of the receiving society that is the most consistent feature of the Other's representations in migrants' narratives. Viewed from the vantage point of postcolonial critique it can be recognized as a discourse similar to the ones produced in the third dimension of (quasi)postcolonial context: these of peasants coming to the cities in the process of industrialization and urbanization. The criticism of spiritual degradation (Other being described as pagan rather than religious, consumerist, closed, narrow-minded, shallow etc.) does not produce an Orientalist discourse. Rather

⁵⁶ Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and discrimination*; cf. Kozłowska, “The Lived Experience”.

⁵⁷ Galasińska and Kozłowska, “Discourses”.

it is a Romantic discourse that does not accept reality, yet at the same time treats it as unavoidable. Romanticism - being a greatest counter-narrative to the Enlightenment - was renowned for its looking into the past, to nature and far away for the alternatives of modernity as well as for condemning the “here and now” rather than trying to change it. In this feature Romantic discourse also overlaps with certain parts of post-communist discourses with their nostalgic overtones and longing for the return to “golden age”. The criticism of the receiving society from the perspective of and using the figures of past-oriented Romanticism is perpetuating an imbalance of power between the dominant and subaltern actors rather than challenging it. This could be also supported by the observation that the lack of spirituality is not linked to the lack of power, quite the opposite – seen as consequences of its excess, as Examples 18 and 19 demonstrate. The Foucauldian knowledge/power device is therefore obsolete here, and the lack of knowledge of Self (as reflected in the images of shallowness or narrow mindedness of the British) does not have political consequences (as they usually do in Orientalist discourses).

If the three possibilities of conceptualizing the hegemonic Other outlined in the title of our article (Provincializing Europe, Orientalizing the Occident or reproducing the power imbalance), are considered, post-2004 Polish migrants’ narrative certainly contain the elements of Orientalization but also self-Orientalization strategies. It seems however, that the reproduction of the power imbalance through the representations of the Self and the Other is still the most prominent strategy, especially in the public domain and especially at the background of the search for normality, that constitutes a crucial part of post-communist discourses. Provincializing Europe understood as questioning of the modernization as such might seem present in the criticism of spiritual degradation but in fact is not, since other elements of the Enlightenment discourse are reiterated and maintained (e.g. such as diligence, the ability to control the environment).

The use of postcolonial critique in post-communist context allows to broaden the analytical framework and account for the unobvious (quasi)postcolonial context of post-communist transformation and Europeanization⁵⁸. When combining the two paradigms this context should be viewed not only literally and historically but also metaphorically. The attempt we made to interpret migrants’ discourses through the lens of peasants’ discourses on cities was an exercise in the application of a semantic model rather than literal comparison of two historical contexts. The question that needs further clarification is to what extent the figures and devices that have been viewed here as postcolonial are also a result of more universal processes of stereotyping and exclusion.

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⁵⁸ Cf. Chioni Moore, “In the Post- in Postcolonial”; Janusz Korek, *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective* (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2007); Zarycki „Interdyscyplinarny model”.

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Provincializând Europa, orientalizând Occidentul sau reproducând dezechilibrul puterii? Reprezentări ale Marii Britanii în ficțiunea polonezilor emigranți

Valul fără precedent de migrări din Polonia în Marea Britanie după 2004 a dus inevitabil la reconceptualizarea imaginilor societății gazdă. În articolul de față vom analiza aceste contacte interculturale recente din două perspective care se suprapun: postcolonialismul și postcomunismul. Există trei dimensiuni ale contextului (cvasi)postcolonial în care vom plasa narațiunile emigranților: trecutul britanic imperial, împărțirile Poloniei și istoria dominației sovietice și, de asemenea, urbanizarea, așa cum au fost ele experimentate de către țărani emigranți. Chestiunea cheie la care încercăm să răspundem este dacă relațiile de putere dintre Polonia și Marea Britanie, așa cum au fost ele conturate de către contextul (cvasi)postcolonial, sunt cumva contrazise, dată fiind experiența nemijlocită a societății gazdă. Încercăm să vedem mai ales dacă vreuna dintre cele trei strategii de rezistență - Provincializarea Europei, Orientalizarea Occidentului sau reproducerea inegalității de putere - e prezentă în narațiunile emigranților.