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Abstract

Can a 'postcolonial' Polonistics exist?

In 2006 Dariusz Skórczewski considered it an axiom that Polish literature was not (yet) recognized as postcolonial. Clare Cavanagh (2003) had in fact previously recognized in the Marxist origins of postcolonial studies the main obstacle to their rooting among those who had suffered the effects of Soviet Marxism. On the other hand, Aleksander Fiut (2003) was afraid that the request to include Poland in the field of investigation of postcolonial studies could rekindle a victim image of the country. For Bogusław Bakula (2006) "it is said nowhere that a colonized community cannot show colonial symptoms". It is therefore possible to outline two currents of Polish postcolonial studies that at first do not seem to interact with each other: one linked to the traditional 'martyrological' connotation of national history, and one attentive to the events attesting to the role of Poland as a colonial and cultural hegemon. Both sides seem to offer interesting proposals for reinterpreting the canon of Polish literature. Ewa Thompson in 2007 proposed a reinterpretation of this canon in the light of a 'poetics of resentments' unknown to Sarmatic culture but rooted in Poland after the XVIII Century partitions. For Grażyna Borkowska, on the other hand, the influence exerted by Polish literature on readers in Russia ruled out any hypothesis of colonial subordination. Since 2011 the postcolonial paradigm has begun to be replaced – not without resistance – by a post-dependency orientation. Already in 2010 for Dorota Kołodziejczyk the category of postcolonialism was not suitable for defining the role of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe from a historical perspective and had to be replaced with that of a "post-dependency condition". Emilia Kledzik in 2015 explained what was hidden behind the resistance to move from the postcolonial to the post-dependency paradigm: "In Central Europe [...] we often see ourselves as excluded from Western civilization, and at the same time we consider ourselves exempt from reflecting about our own subalterns". A post-dependency perspective solves (setting them aside) the questions of definition of what is meant by 'colony' and highlights the ambivalent nature of the Polish colonial discourse, not only in the context of the colonized / colonizing dialectic but also in that of the problem of national identity and geopolitical location.

Keywords: Poland, Polish Literature, Postcolonial, Post-dependency, Colonialism.