Regained Landscapes: The Transfer of Power and Tradition in Polish Discourse of the Regained Territories

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Post-Yalta Cartographic Shifts: The Discourse of the Regained Territories and (Post)Colonialism

Przemysław Czapliński, one of the most prominent Polish literary scholars, described the overall condition of culture in post-war Poland by using a single phrase, i.e. *the shift*. Despite its simplicity, the term is highly accurate and provides the basis for an apposite diagnosis. Indeed, in 1945 everything "shifted" in Poland, resulting in an intense and irreversible sensation of estrangement and displacement for millions of people. This common stir developed in four dimensions: (1) geographical and cultural (resettlement); (2) class and cultural (the final demise of the landed gentry, migrations to cities and the accelerated development of the working class); (3) ideological and institutional (change in the dominant ideology and system, i.e. the onset of communism) and (4) ethnic and ethical (the shift of the Poles' status from "majority" to "exclusive nationality") (Czapliński 2016, 189). In this chapter, I am going to focus

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directly on the first dimension, i.e. the territorial changes enforced by the Yalta agreement in February 1945, whose decisions were corroborated by the Potsdam conference in July and August 1945, and the subsequent resettlements of people. The three remaining dimensions will overlap with the issue of migrations and population shifts that I will discuss.

Border shifts were determined during the conferences in Yalta and Potsdam. The eastern voivodeships of the already non-existing Second Republic of Poland (the so-called Eastern Borderlands) were incorporated into the USSR, while the Polish People's Republic gained territories which had previously belonged to Germany, i.e. Silesia, Lower Silesia, the Lubusz Land, Pomerania and the southern part of East Prussia (Varmia and Masuria) that were given the collective name of the "Regained Territories." The redrawing of maps resulted in the migration of millions of Polish and German nationals several months later. The process of displacements affected Polish people (who had previously lived within the Borderlands) and Germans (who used to live in the regions mentioned above), who were forced to hastily leave their "small homelands."[1] The Polish repatriates mostly occupied homesteads abandoned by the Germans. They found their place of destination to be unfamiliar, marked with the centuries-old presence of German culture. An additional level of anxiety was caused by uncertainty about the new system that came with the border shift.

From a psychological perspective, this initial situation can be defined as an axiological shock accompanied by a collective spatial perplexity. Czapliński describes them as follows: "the loss of the Eastern Borderlands [Kresy] and the acquisition of the Western Lands entailed the necessity to create an imagined map that would lead to a merger of the new areas with the phantom contour of the cut-off lands" (Czapliński 2016, 189). The confusion here resulted as much from the encounter with a culturally alien space as from the loss of the "old" national core of the spatial imaginary. The Borderlands used to serve as a bastion of Polish identity and a repository of essential matrices of self-identification that were brought to life during the long ages of Polish political rule there and its cultural expansion, which is now oftentimes characterised as the

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[1] It needs to be stressed that other ethnic groups were also resettled, for example, Ukrainians and Lemkos, either to the USSR or to the Regained Territories, as a result of Operation Vistula (1947–1950), the retaliation of the Polish state against the underground Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Polish variant of imperialism or, simply speaking, colonialism (see: Beauvois 2005; Dąbrowski 2008; Kieniewicz 2008; Skórczewski 2013; Sowa 2011; Traba 2013). In brief, the Borderlands (Kresy) became the space where the Polish colonial project was carried through. Around the end of the sixteenth century, the Polish or Polonised elite would benefit significantly from ruling over these territories. The actions were based on an economic model that resembled relationships between planters and slaves/indentured labourers, and, equally importantly, were camouflaged in Polish culture with a series of colonial discursive practices (comparable to those presented, among others, by Edward Said in *Orientalism*): mythicising the Borderlands space as a national Arcadia or legitimising the civilising mission of the Polish nation (see: Bakuła 2014; Mick 2014; Uffelmann 2013; Zarycki 2014). Cutting off these territories after 1945 resulted in an overwhelming sense of loss (of land and identity), on the one hand, and prompted merging practices carried out within the newly incorporated western territories on the other. Summing up, the cultural integration of the new territorial acquisitions was to a large extent conducted in accordance with colonial rules and models elaborated within the eastern lands.

In this chapter, I am going to focus on these merging practices undertaken within the post-Yalta western territories, which I will call the "discourse of the Regained Territories." Cultural texts (with literature playing a major role) served as the most important medium to introduce contents that domesticated the new territories and consolidated the identity of their newly settled residents. In this sense, the space of these new territories, overlaying itself on the history and myth of the Eastern Borderlands, develops as discourse in correspondence with Orientalist paradigms as defined by Edward Said:

> Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. (Said 1979, 72)

In practice, these three dimensions of Orientalism determine the possibility of defining the imaginary geography that constructs the landscapes of the Regained Territories as a multi-stage rhetorical structure in which subsequent images are strictly subordinated to identity-related and political objectives, such as the legitimisation of rights (including moral rights) to administer the lands, as a result of which they represent not so much the reality itself as the power relation and the structure of dominance which underpins the representation of such a reality.

Nevertheless, the geographical imaginariness of the Regained Territories differs from the imaginariness described by Said and the imaginary import of the Polish Borderlands. The difference lies in the fact that it was contrived as part of the communist ideology in the process of its takeover of the state. Its goal was to produce a massive, complex historico-political-propagandist discourse, imposing a dense network of meanings and values on it. Although covering a wide array of cultural texts varying in genres, the net was in fact based on a rhetoric whose purpose was clearly defined: "persuasive and axiological, convergent with the propaganda language of power, standardised as needed for such a huge territory and the several hundred cities of the Western Lands" (Browarny 2008, 153). In practice, the texts on the Regained Territories would meet the demands of the Polonisation and communisation of the adjoined lands by eliminating any signs of cultural and political difference and historical otherness. Such an identity policy, in turn, was based on a strategy whose chief means of operation was to transpose history into myth. The blotting of the memory of pre-war residents and the creation of a homogenous vision of the Regained Territories as a natural, historically validated, national space was constructed on the basis of references to the Middle Ages (tenth to twelfth century), when representatives of the first Polish dynasty, the Piasts, ruled over a portion of what after the World War II comprised the post-Yalta Western Borderlands. It was the myth of the native Polishness of these regions, proven by the Piast origins, that underlay the definition of the post-Yalta acquisitions as "regained" and the resettlement as the "return to the motherland." A more complicated truth was that, in the opinion of many Poles, the then overused notion of "historical justice," which officially referred to the medieval period of the Polish statehood, in fact entailed a different compensation, that is, a compensation for the annexation of the Eastern Borderlands by the USSR. This was not, however, an articulated position, of course, because such an interpretation of the post-Yalta transformations was inadmissible in the

pro-Soviet historiography of the period of the Polish People's Republic. Watchwords such as "return to motherland" or "historical justice" were completely divorced from the deserted, plundered reality of the post-Yalta Polish west, in which the heritage of the Piasts was barely visible.

Effectively, the Regained Territories were depicted not only as a mythical (ultimately regained) cradle of the Polish statehood, but also as a space which, through the almost complete exchange of people, made room for utopian fantasies of a new socialist society built from scratch. It was a project that defined a double-time horizon, i.e. both retrospective and prospective. The merging narratives were mostly generated and stimulated by official communist institutions, which affected their shape through the use of an extended censorship apparatus on the one hand and an extensive network of literature-related institutions on the other (including, among others, creative scholarships or literary awards for authors of texts devoted to settlement, local branches of the Polish Writers' Union, or the literature lovers' society). The primary function of the Regained Territories discourse was to cater to political demand; therefore, it should above all be perceived as a tool of the communist propaganda.

The properties of the resettlement discourse as a crucial part of the overall Regained Territories propaganda based on legitimating myths and other manipulations of historical and geographical imaginaries, relate it in many ways to colonial discourse. For instance, in her analyses of the history of literature of the Varmia and Masuria region, Joanna Szydłowska talks about the "post-Yalta Occident" as an "imperial discourse which justifies appropriation-related undertakings" (Szydłowska 2013, 21). Arkadiusz Kalin, in turn, describes the literary myth of the "Regained Territories" as a "colonization project prepared long before 1945 which, to a large extent, resulted from reactions to the earlier Bismarck's [myth]," i.e. a response to the (Prussian/German) settlement policies practised earlier in these territories (Kalin 2014, 62). Additionally, when writing about the settlement prose in the context of mimicry and rebellion, Małgorzata Mikołajczak clearly states that it best represents "the features of the colonial situation" (Mikołajczak 2015, 287) and Dorota Wojda uses the example of popular literature devoted to the "Regained Territories" to state that "the settlement did not only mean the recovery of the lands taken away from Poland [centuries before], but also their colonisation with the use of measures taken over from organisations active in the interwar period: the Marine and Colonial

League and the Polish Western Association" (Wojda 2015, 338). The pop-cultural discourse of the Regained Territories is considered to be "de-colonizing and palimpsestial in nature, in the sense functioning in postcolonial studies" (Wojda 2015, 338).

It must be remembered, however, that the Polish (de/re)colonisation project within the lands adjoined after 1945 was characterised by a peculiar multidimensionality or, even, aberration (when compared to the classical models represented by those developed on British or French grounds). First, it is both decolonising and recolonising in the sense that the prefix *de*- means official political and discursive actions against centuries-long German influences and signs of a German presence in those territories, while the prefix *re*- means that such actions replace their "German-ness" with a strictly political and very simplifying vision of their "Polishness." Second, its specificity is also best described by the oxymoronic, yet useful, concept of a "colonised coloniser" proposed several years ago as part of a wider reflection on the Polish (post)colonial condition and the limited empowerment of the Polish colonial subject (Gosk 2010). With reference to the object of my interest, the oxymoron's meaning can be untangled more effectively when supported by claims of the sociologist Tomasz Zarycki, who has described the Regained Territories discourse as typical of centre-periphery relations. He emphasises that during the Polish People's Republic, the Polish state would "sometimes go in for a very aggressive policy of cultural and political homogenisation" (Zarycki 2010, 199). What is important, nonetheless, is that in these actions, Poland remained dependent on another hegemonic power, namely, the Soviet Union. Therefore, what we are dealing with here are doubled relations of power, where the Soviets control the Polish state while allowing some vents for local nationalism as a compensation. This is represented by the Regained Territories discourse, which Zarycki proposes perceiving as internal colonialism or secondary colonialism.

Regained Landscapes

As we can see, postcolonial interpretative tools have already developed a consistent methodology in contemporary interpretations of post-Yalta issues. The thesis that, in the context of post-Yalta world order, the onset of communism was an imposition from outside onto Central and Eastern European countries and, as such, bore clear parallels to the colonising process, has been argued by many researchers advocating a postcolonial

perspective on Polish history. In the context of unpacking the myths and ideologies of the Regained Territories operating in communist discourse on this region and especially conspicuously in young adult fiction, the postcolonial perspective is invaluable, additionally helping to develop a new sense of the local after 1989. Yet, it should be complemented with a more nuanced methodology that would further open the complexities of the region not tackled by postcolonial conceptual apparatus. I would like to propose a more cross-sectional view of reading the Regained Territories discourse. My objective is to trace general directions and methods of transmission of Polishness as well as mechanisms of its establishment in the post-Yalta discourse, in the pursuit of which I am going to refer to examples from the literature that represent several regions, rather than one. To complement the whole picture, I will also analyse an example from visual culture. I will reconstruct the transmission of Polishness by looking at just one element of the imagined geography of the Regained Territories, i.e. the landscape. I will use it to distinguish the crucial *topoi* that make up the textual tissue of the post-Yalta territories and I will trace their origins.

When becoming immersed in the new landscape, oftentimes found "exotic" in some respects, the Polish subject had no choice but to develop a language and symbolic economy that would be appropriate to the situation. In my opinion, however, this language was not radically new, but drew on the circulating meanings and measures developed in other fields of (hegemonic) presence and adapted them for new purposes. In other words: in practice, the language was based on borrowings and adaptations of motives, *topoi* and narrative strategies developed in the (interwar) borderland discourse: "colonial symbols and metaphors were adopted [in the Regained Territories discourse], and given new meanings; or new figures were created through negations of the previous ones" (Wojda 2015, 335). Borderlands discourse as the central site of reference here is usually explained in two ways. Firstly, a significant proportion of new settlers in the Regained Territories came from the east, and therefore the Borderlands provided a pattern of cultural references and were an object of nostalgia. Secondly, but more importantly, the Borderlands discourse constitutes a fundamental Polish pattern of appropriation policy, which is, for that matter, also highly subliminal.

I approach landscape as a cultural construct, following an inspiration from the already classic *Landscape and Power* by W. J. T. Mitchell (2002,

5–34). By treating landscape as a dynamic process of signification subordinated to identity-related functions (more as a medium used to establish the rules of social visibility than as an aesthetic genre crucial for European artistic traditions), Mitchell admits straightforwardly that this system of representation is detached from mimeticism and transparency, and that its main function is to voice power relations. In this concept, landscape serves as a representation of a way of seeing things, mostly dependent on the viewer's figure, his way of perception and what he puts beyond the frames of the picture. The viewer constructs and controls the landscape through a selection of specific objects from reality and their iconic organisation. This is always carried out within the framework of a specific rhetoric of description (ethnographic, naturalistic or, for instance, romantic), recognised by the viewer as transparent.

In Mitchell's opinion, the visual aesthetics, visibility standards and values encoded in landscape construction have an unusual ability to circulate in time and space. The phenomenon of migration to peripheries turns out to be of particular importance here (the scholar describes, among others, the transfer of typically English empire aesthetics to New Zealand and the Holy Land) (Mitchell 2002, 21). It is on the frontiers of empires that the exceptional flexibility of aesthetics comes to the surface. Certain landscape-related genres (for instance the picturesque, the pastoral or the sublime) easily accommodate to new local conditions, thus becoming a language to decode, understand and tame basically alien spaces and incorporate them into the central narrative. In short, they provide a perfect toolkit for epistemological conquest.

Considering the above, I regard the landscape of the Regained Territories as an aesthetic and ideological script; a tool used to manage the political contradictions underpinning the entire discourse. These contradictions have already been emphasised by Jacek Kolbuszewski in his pioneering article *Oswajanie krajobrazu* [Landscape Taming]: "While poets would call Silesia a 'regained home', in colloquial language the Regained Territories were often called the Wild West" (Kolbuszewski 1988, 71). But foregrounding this parallel, Kolbuszewski simultaneously simplifies the issue and antagonises "home" and "the Wild West."[2] In

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[2] The perception of post-Yalta territories as the Polish Wild West has recently been extensively examined by Beata Halicka. It can be summed up as follows: "what they had in common with the American original was the chaos, the law of the strongest, fight for property or unlimited possibilities to make a fresh start" (Halicka 2015, 57).

(literary) practice, however, these terms were usually not mutually exclusive, but, quite to the contrary, served as overlapping semantic fields which, in the processual understanding of Polonisation, would simply represent its two consecutive stages.

Therefore, it can be said that discourse of the Regained Territories is defined by two principal landscaping strategies. The first one revolves around schemes of the well-known American *frontier* narration (but also the local Polish borderland discourse, as the Eastern Borderlands are nothing other than a *frontier*) including, in particular, meanings that connote the territories adjoined as *terra nullius*. The second strategy is focused on the *topos* which I call "fatherland-ness." While the former suggests the lack of identity of the post-Yalta territories, the latter replenishes them with Polishness, nativeness and familiarity, denoting a focus on domesticity and factors of belonging in the *topos* of the Regained Territories place/landscape. *Terra nullius* is the starting point of the process of textual merger, and nativeness is the endpoint.

Terra Nullius

If not expressed directly, the Wild West (the American frontier) topics emerge in the discourse of the Regained Territories through synonyms and approximations. This is how one of the settlers in Halina Auderska's novel entitled *Babie lato* [Indian Summer] describes the place of his arrival:

> a promised land, a land of good hope, full of countless opportunities and a variety of goods, a most bizarre land, fertile, ready to bear fruit although only just shattered, a land which is empty yet fit for settlement, with each house ready to be taken, inviting non-natives [....] we took it, it is occupied now, finally our very own land, land, land. (Auderska 1984, 255)

In *Wrastanie* [The Rooting] by Eugeniusz Paukszta, in turn, the narrator says: "In PUR [the State Repatriation Office] they said it was *a brand-new land*, a *second America*, full of miracles [...] Now they keep looking for this *Canada*, which they promised in PUR. *Go to the West of Poland. There are houses, land, livestock waiting for you there*. Both true and false" (Paukszta 1979, 8–9). Based on these two fragments only, it is possible to reconstruct the entire semantic field of the Regained Territories, built on partially exclusive meanings: wealth and fertility clashing

with the "shattered" land; the dominance of the elements of nature juxtaposed with the concurrent presence of culture (houses, livestock). These oppositions are brought closer by the fact that it is a no man's land, virtually empty, waiting to be taken possession of.

The narrator in Auderska's novel describes his migration to the new place of residence, emphasising the surrounding void every now and then: "I keep going, a little scared already, and the emptiness is progressing. All villages by the road are shattered" (Auderska 1984, 256), "the village was partially located by the road, and all the houses here are ransacked and empty" (Auderska 1984, 258). After reaching his destination, he adds: "Initially we were hanging around this empty village, dropping in here and there and looking for small livestock. We found nothing but a she-cat that had run wild" (Auderska 1984, 266). Additionally, the characters from *Ziemia* [The Land] by Jan Brzoza "entered the dark streets of the city that fell apart and looked deserted" (Brzoza 1963, 135) while a group of settlers from *Ziemia obiecana* [The Promised Land] by Dionizy Sidorski came to a city with "no traces of man. The streets were full of dirty old pots twisted in most peculiar shapes, broken furniture, cart wheels with no hoops, phone wires and fragments of cables" (Sidorski 1965, 139).

The final fragment defines the post-Yalta emptiness as a lack of people and, even, a lack of any trace of them. In the main part of the narration, the Regained Territories are not space ruled by primordial nature, open areas or fertile rivers, as may be suggested by the initial variant of the Wild West *topos*. They are, instead, marked with ruins, scorched and bombed debris. Additionally, this space of war destruction bears, apart from the evidence of the front moving on to the west, traces of a different, ominous (German) civilisation. The Regained Territories are, first and foremost, ruins, debris, battlefields, overgrown orchards and arable lands shattered by landmines, and, as such, they evoke the sensation of the zero point in the history of post-Yalta territories. It is a post-catastrophic space, where time needs to start running anew.

It is this supposed emptiness that makes it possible to take over and develop the post-Yalta lands. It must be remembered, however, that, as with other uses of the *terra nullius* motif in colonial discourse, the emptiness is ostensible. It is true that some of the German civilians did evacuate together with the retreating troops. Yet, there were also those who stayed in their homesteads or returned there after the front line had

passed. And some natives chose to stay in their houses, too, including Silesians or Masurians. The starting point, commemorated by the discourse of the Regained Territories as a peaceful, collision-free taking-over of the land and property, was in fact marked by a collision of presence. The first settlers would often share their homesteads with the previous residents, as the displacement process only gained momentum after the war (1946). While the indigenous inhabitants appear from time to time in the narration, usually in the role of those who "returned" to the nation, Germans are unwaveringly erased. They may be mentioned in a cursory manner, without much possibility of having any agency or voicing their opinion. They prove to be so insignificant that they even lose the role of an enemy that needs to be fought off. In narrations of the Regained Territories, the fight is waged mainly against the Polish looters and manipulators, who value personal material benefits more than the national wealth.

"Fatherland-Ness"

As I have already mentioned, the aim of the second, crucial phase of the merging practices was to eliminate the "undomesticated" element and develop the space at a symbolic level. In practice, it came down to the Polonisation of this space, i.e. its transformation into a national landscape. After Tim Edensor, "national landscape" can be defined as "selective shorthand for these nations, synecdoches through which they are recognized globally" (Edensor 2002, 39–40). The effect of Polishness is triggered through the migration of well-known symbolic schemes and the conversion of aesthetic forms into peripheral spaces. Such a mechanism, which can be defined as aesthetic transfers, was perfectly described in the context of South-African landscaping traditions by J. M. Coetzee in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988). It was also briefly concluded by David Bunn who stated: "To look at representation in the colonies, therefore, is perhaps to have privileged insight into what is most resilient, most dominant and at the same time most politically constraining in the European landscape tradition" (Bunn 2002, 128). This thesis is true in relation to the representation of the Regained Territories in that it reveals Polish landscaping traditions. In light of the above, how best can we define the Polish national landscape exhibited in the discourse of Regained Territories?

To answer this question, I am going to start by referring to a concept which appears to be less obvious, as it is related to the field of visual

practices. It is older than the period described here and, additionally, it derives from a different spatial source than the Regained Territories. What I mean here is the Fatherland Photography programme, codified in the final years of the Second Republic of Poland by Jan Bułhak,[3] the father of Polish pictorialism, a photographer, theoretician and cultural activist, connected with the Vilnius Region. The Fatherland Photography can be briefly defined as a project of nationalisation of landscape photography, which developed dynamically in the interwar period. The cultural and (equally importantly) political significance of the concept is determined by ascribing a special social and educational mission to photography. It taught patriotism in pictures, and its main task was to preserve (and popularise) the beauty of the national space. By subordinating completely to this objective, Bułhak comes to establish the most recognisable (and universal) pattern of the Polish landscape.

Bułhak's "national" aesthetics glorifies the rural landscape: "No wonder the name of our homeland, 'Poland', contains the word 'pole' [the Polish word for 'field'] which connotes field life and agriculture, meadows and forests, i.e. rural and pastoral properties that describe an agricultural nation, strongly attached to countryside and nature" (Bułhak 1939, 23). The semantic field of thus defined Polishness is constructed by Bułhak based on a catalogue of meticulously selected elements that should feature in the photographs. These are: (1) track and path (rural, with trees on both sides); (2) roadside crosses and shrines; (3) cemetery, rural church, presbytery and chapel; (4) forest and trees; (5) open space (views from hills, fields and meadows); (6) water; (7) housing estates, village, impoverished gentry village, manor house (these motives are crucial, as they present the nation's life); (8) estate of landed gentry, palace, castle; (9) town; (10) farmer and the work of his hands (Bułhak 1939, 26–46). Obviously, these elements are highly imprecise as to their locality, but Bułhak did manage to inscribe them into the geographical and aesthetic context, i.e. the tradition of images of the already mentioned Borderlands, understood as a "space–time continuum of the culture" or, in simpler terms, as imaginary geography. Bułhak linked nativeness to the notions of the Borderlands gentry, the idea of the golden age of the gentry and the

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[3] The symbolic beginnings of Polish Fatherland Photography date back to 1937 and Bułhak's delivery of the paper *Czego nas uczy fotografia hiszpańska?* In the text, he promotes the name of the trend and reconstructs the conditions that permitted its development (see Szymanowicz 2009, 58–86).

idyllic essence of the gentry borderland. This helped him to consolidate the stereotypical genre scenes of life on landowners' estates, i.e. of work on the land (ploughing, haymaking) with landscapes that recall associations with images known from Polish Romantic literature and art. The principal visual code of Fatherland Photography, which eventually became detached from topographic locators, and subsequently became naturalised and standardised in the notion of the Polish landscape, originates from a very specific geographical space (the Eastern Borderlands) and the long-lasting aesthetic tradition of nineteenth-century Polish painting, rooted in Romanticism and neo-Romanticism. Such a connection between geography and imagination is perhaps best highlighted by the fact that Bułhak illustrates his theories with material gathered when wandering across Lithuania, his homeland, looking for traces of the mythical Soplicowo, a Borderlands landowners' village brought to life by the national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, in his epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834). The poem creates a nostalgic picture of the Polish Borderlands gentry and remains the essence of the Polish national imaginary in its Romantic framing.

It should also be remembered, though, that the focus on the past and the very contemporaneous ideological horizon of the Second Republic of Poland—a very new statehood regained in 1918 after 123 years of non-existence—are not mutually exclusive. Bułhak did not hide his engagement in nationalist propaganda, deliberately using his photos as tools to communicate political content which was desired at that time. The fatherland photos were a natural medium of the conservative/nationalist ideology of the interwar governments, the last successors of the "imperial" Borderlands tradition before the war.

Nativeness in Motion

What might be surprising, in fact, is that the formula of visual identification of the national territory developed by Bułhak survived the abrupt change of the political system without too much loss and turned out to be attractive to the communists as well. The best trace of the durability and adaptability of Bułhak's vision is the volume entitled *Fatherland Photography*, published in 1951, already after the photographer's death and during the time of the deepest and most aggressive Stalinism (Bułhak 1951).

In addition to theoretical debates, the book also contains a photographic essay entitled *Ojczyzna w obrazach* [Fatherland in Pictures]. It

is a visual guide to Poland within its new, post-Yalta borders. Next to the industrial landscape so typical of socialist realism (mines, foundries, coal pits), it also contains 27 photographs of Warsaw. The landscapes of ruins quickly transform into images of the heroic work of builders, who erect geometrical scaffolding that gradually turns into Nowy Świat or Aleje Jerozolimskie—landmarks of the post-war capital of Poland. Among other such elements are monuments in Cracow, Lublin or Gdańsk. What prevails there are postcard-sized pictures and close-ups of features from Gothic and Renaissance architecture (Bułhak 1951, 65–123). A special place is occupied by photographs of the Regained Territories, which constitute a follow-up of the pre-war native aesthetics, "untouched by fleeing time." They depict dirt roads, roadside birches, trees and forests, a wooden church with a meadow in the background, an old wooden mill under overcast skies, fishermen in their primitive boats on the water, ripening ears of wheat, sunflowers, harvesters on meadows, ploughed fields, grazing land, empty beaches, low rural buildings and a portrait of a spinner with the traditional wooden spinning wheel. The Regained Territories in the eye of Bułhak's camera are nothing else but rural landscapes, saturated with an Arcadian aura, with an extensive chiaroscuro effect, constructed directly on the basis of the trails described in 1939. The topographic signature is the only thing that differentiates them from the older cycles (Bułhak 1951, 129–149).

What they additionally have in common is a steady development of an illusion of long-lastingness and temporal distance. On the one hand, they confirm the permanence and topicality of the symbolic code in Bułhak's programme, while, on the other, they reveal the constructivist nature and conventionality of the notion of the (national, Polish) landscape as such. In the process of aesthetic transfer and re-contextualisation, the native landscape turns out to be an exchangeable value which can be smoothly transferred into a new symbolic economy to become a tool used in communist identity-related politics. Therefore, the nativity rhetoric reactivated in post-war photographs also proved useful in the new political plan and spatial context. As Szymanowicz put it, "it constructed the myth of the immemorial Polish landscape, which, beyond any doubt, encompassed the regained stretches of the country" (Szymanowicz 2009, 79).

To sum up, the nativity rhetoric became a useful tool of communist propaganda, subordinated to the cultural taming (Polonisation) of the "Regained Territories." This is best shown by the fact that all of Bułhak's travels through the annexed lands (between 1946 and 1947

he travelled around virtually all post-Yalta voivodeships, capturing their landscapes in over 8000 photographs) were financed by the communist Ministry of Transport (Tourism and Transport Department) and selected photographs were not only published in the aforementioned book, but also shown in 1947 and 1948 during official propaganda exhibitions entitled *Piękno Ziem Odzyskanych* [The Beauty of the Regained Territories], and *Pejzaż Ziem Odzyskanych* [The Landscape of the Regained Territories].

The notion of aesthetic transfer is not so obvious, however, as it may at first seem. I do not think that it only boils down to the fact that Bułhak perfectly sensed the ideological demand and was able to find himself in the new communist mission. In a review of *The Landscape of the Regained Territories* exhibition, Jan Sunderland summarised the artist's output as follows:

> Having settled in Warsaw, he begins with what touches him most at the time: he creates a cycle devoted to its ruins, […] Then he proceeds to reconstruct old visions from new motives; thus creating a cycle devoted to Regained Territories […] He is characterized by the same attitude to the rural nature as in days of yore, treating it not only as a theme, but also as a close homeland, a paradise given to him as of God's right. For this reason, it is the photographs of the vast spaces of non-urbanized nature that characterize the artist best and lend to the exhibition an atmosphere of cheerfulness, rest and thinking of eternities. (Sunderland 1948, 18)

Indeed, right before his death, Bułhak would mainly *reconstruct the old visions*: incorporating the motif of the return to the lost landscape of his native lands into new compositions. Without doubt, his selection of motives was dictated by his aesthetic sensitivity developed under a different latitude, which in the post-war period obtained the surprisingly positive approval of censorship. The reconstructions—or returns to the landscape of the native land—reveal one more meaning of such a landscape, closer to the category of a "non-transient object," permanent and well anchored, which I would describe as typical of the circumstances of migration-induced distance. To better understand its mechanism, it may be helpful to get acquainted with the reflection of Kazimierz Wyka, an outstanding Polish essayist, in *Bose ścieżki* [Barefoot trails], which was conceived at the time of Bułhak's travels in the Regained Territories (1947):

> The view from the graveyard hill over my hometown and the vast expanse of fields, bound together with grassy hills, is a central view for me. It is a

centre of permanence, the kind that each of us has under their eyelids. This is where writers' imagination reaches when bringing to existence characters that are closest to their hearts. The entire world is oftentimes memorized as a revolving scene, with only one place that is still. There is always some obligatory horizon, i.e., a line of forests set once and for all, and anything beyond that line results from a decomposition and crash of that obligatory layout and is not so realistic. (Wyka 1978, 13)

A landscape like this, that is, "the centre of permanence," "the necessary horizon" or the "centre of my eyes' patrimony," which satisfies the condition of "absolute permanence"—is borne in people at a double distance, spatial and temporal, and always *post factum*, as a response to the disintegration of the previous order of reality. Wyka tracks it, among others, in the works of Mickiewicz, since it needs to be remembered that *Pan Tadeusz*, in which the canonical image of the Borderlands was consolidated as "native" space, and which served as a source of inspiration for Bułhak, was written in exile in Paris. Wyka calls such landscapes "typical migration phenomena, typical palliatives of longing" (Wyka 1978, 13). The essayist treats the landscape as a means of soothing the pain of longing. On the other hand, as an indirect phenomenon (taken from the author's imagination), it should be treated more universally—as a screen of memory, where the longing is articulated. Could such a representation be of use in the attempt to understand Bułhak's post-war output? By all means, especially if it incorporates the personal context of multiple losses. Right before his death, the photographer had not only left his hometown forever, but also dramatically parted with his entire Vilnius archive (almost all his works burned in one of the war fires in 1945). Therefore, his final project should perhaps be decoded as the works of a displaced person, a Vilnius[4] native and an artist, in mourning for his loss.

So far, I have made attempts to show the significance of the Borderland discourse (as the imaginary geography) in the process of construction of the national landscape on the one hand, while presenting the utility of such a visual structure in the strongly *centralised* discourse of Polonisation of the post-Yalta territories on the other. Yet, the "private" personal, long-driven decoding of Bułhak's post-Yalta photographs undercuts the proposed understanding of the functions of the "native" discourse and

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[4] Strictly speaking, the Polish name of the city should be used here—Wilno, because in the interwar period this part of today's Lithuania was part of the Polish state.

the photographs as such start to be perceived not only as an element of the communist vision of a fully Polonised space, but, rather, as individual memorials. Consequently, it may be said that photographs from the Regained Territories create a gap within the official discourse: through direct references to the experience of "loss" of the Borderlands as the small homeland. Nevertheless, as I am going to show later in this chapter, this ambiguity proved to be useful in the official communist discourse as well.

Transitive Landscape

I consider Bułhak's case paradigmatic. First, his works perfectly expose the distinctive features of visual constructions of the national landscape. Second, the paths of development of Fatherland Photography prove how persistent and adaptable he was in the face of changing historical and political circumstances. His post-war project proves the utility of native rhetoric in the process of taming spaces which are completely different at the outset: the post-war photographs serve as an emanation of "nativeness"/Polishness (growing out of the Borderlands discourse) from territories which merely several years earlier had been perceived as German and, in fact, had nothing to do with Poland, as they constituted an element of the German *Heimat*. I find this case important, as it shows the general direction of the transmission of aesthetic schemes and patterns developed in a place that is central to the Polish imagined community (the Borderlands) towards new peripheral spaces, i.e. the Regained Territories. This argument powerfully unmasks the constructivist nature of the landscape of the Regained Territories. Third, given the biographical context, the post-war photos, incorporating the aesthetic patterns elaborated within the Eastern Borderlands into the post-German space, can be treated as an expression of the photographer's personal longing for his small homeland.

Conclusion

I decided to analyse this case because Bułhak's aesthetics connect surprisingly well with the literary landscapes which emerge from the prose of the Regained Territories. The textual representations of the space, originally subordinated to "taming" narratives, are governed by similar scopic rules, with their content rife with elements known from *Polish Fatherland*

Photography. Therefore, at this point, I would like to use nativeness as a more universal figure of perception that organises landscape representations in literary texts.

The micro-analysis proposed below involves a certain degree of speculation. With it, I can assume at the outset that the textual representations serve as a hypotyposis of the perception immortalised in Bułhak's photos. This notion is defined in the dictionary as a visual representation of a text that appeals mainly to visual images, revealing and updating the content of the utterance. In practice, hypotyposis is about a certain characteristic way of imaging, an atmosphere (climate) or a universal idea that refers to some visual image. Hypotyposis is thus, most significantly, a suggestion of similarity, the recognition of which largely depends on the reader's competence. Owing to such a distribution of accents, the term does not necessarily need to be treated as a "procedure strictly connected with the writer's intent […], as he/she may well introduce this figure into his text unconsciously" (Dziadek 2011, 71).

Landscapes resembling Bułhak's photographs appear intermittently in a number of settlement texts, when the character already feels at home in the new place, i.e. once the anxiety, fear and danger related to the initial wild-west character of the settlement space (*terra nullius*) have been overcome. The process of settlement develops on the basis of the paradoxical articulation of longing, and its condition of possibility becomes the realistic logic of the resettlement narrative whose protagonists are, more often than not, immigrants from the eastern provinces of pre-war Poland.

To portray this mechanism, let me quote some fragments from two texts which I consider the most successful and important examples of settlement novels, i.e. *Wrastanie* [Growing Roots], by Eugeniusz Paukszta and the previously mentioned two-part series *Ptasi gościniec/Babie lato* [Bird's Highroad/Indian Summer] by Halina Auderska. For instance, the protagonist of Auderska's novel describes the place from which he will spin his tale about settlement with the following words:

> So, there is this lake with unruffled surface, and the shack – my shack – so similar to my old cabin. And to be honest, I like to come here and look at it, relishing the view. And the view is wide, I must admit; a cart track to the right, a forest behind us, fields and meadows in front of us, and a river to the left. The Oder, I mean. (Auderska 1984, 7)

In *Wrastanie* [Growing Roots], the narrator regains composure on the hill when he sees the nearby town:

> The town is a bit lower down from where we stood. The roof tiles were shimmering in the sun, the houses in the steep, narrow streets seemed to climb up one above another. The castle disappeared behind a clump of sturdy trees. Next to us spread poorly cultivated fields of the agricultural school. A winding line of willows and alder trees grew along the riverbank. (Paukszta 1979, 121)

The forester from Suchodolska's short story *Szeliniaki*—another example of the prose of the Regained Territories—relishes the landscape of a deserted forest track:

> blazed by the carts transporting logs, where tufts of coarse, willow green grass ruffle on the surface, untouched by any wheels. And there is a logging site behind the track. [...] Young pinewoods stand above it, planted thickly and disorderly [...] the May sun shines lightly, and a thin stalk of willow sprigs only just sways in the wind. Yellow dust has covered the fine leaflets, a sign that pines come to bloom. (Suchodolska 1965, 13)

The spatial elements that build up the fragments above contain a direct reference to Bułhak's catalogue and are equally unspecific. Once again, we can see that nativeness can be located and replicated only in imaginary rustic space and somewhat universal provinciality. The view is only perceived as familiar by way of analogy, which stirs the emotional attachment of the viewer and arouses a feeling of comfort and familiarity. The protagonist of *Ptasi gościniec* refers to his homeland using the following words: "it's scary to think how much it resembles that one" (Auderska 1984, 7), while Paukszta's narrator looks at the trees and comments: "I found this landscape peculiarly familiar and close" (Paukszta 1979, 121). The protagonist of *Szeliniaki*, in turn, concludes:

> He didn't know why he liked this place. He sat on the bluff, rested his back against the stump and lit a cigarette [...] The acrid smoke of old tobacco disturbed his thinking. He thought that he could walk along this empty track towards sunrise, and the forest would rise higher and higher until the heavy feet of the pine trees came together above the already razor-thin path and then.... he would run and run through the colourful peat bog

[…] as far as the edge of the oak wood, until the field path. […] It's so good here. (Suchodolska 1965, 13)

The relationship of similarity (hypotyposis) is established here through the use of numerous deictic particles and toponyms and an expanded (re)vision structure. In each case, the landscape being observed becomes legible and absorbable within the cognitive script elaborated elsewhere, i.e. in the past, in a place which, on the level of the depicted world (a character's biography), can be without major doubt called "the primary" and, on the level of representation, "conventional." The impression of familiarity of the space for settlement results not only from today's perspective of the protagonist, but from the work done by his memory, too—a two-staged projection in which two chronotopes, "there" and "here" overlap. Robert Tally calls such structures "cognitive mapping" and considers them to be the "basic method used by the subject to overcome the factual stress entailed by the feeling of being lost" (Tally 2013, 72). The American researcher, drawing on Fredric Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping, states that in the space-taming process, the fantasies and allegories invariably stay equal to referentiality, while (re)construction of the groups of meanings fixed in memory (Jameson 1991, 51) serves as the starting point in the process of regaining the sense of stability (domestication). With such a starting point, it can be assumed that the moments exposed in the quotes above are characterised by a high degree of authenticity and universality, as they bring us closer to a more realistic depiction of the settlement condition. Furthermore, it can be stated that they somehow reflect the direction of Bułhak's photographic activity and can tell us more about their underlying cognitive script. Finally, it should be added that they must not be treated as accidental gaps in the narrative scheme of migration prose, heading for the creation of coherent didactic wholes.

As I have already signalled, the native landscape is shown in these texts as a cure-all (in the sense proposed above by Wyka) for the "suitcase moods" suffered by the new settlers, who were reluctant to unpack and always kept a suitcase ready at hand in case of a sudden order to resettle. The difficulty to put down roots and consider the new place home made up a resettler syndrome of sorts. The domesticated landscape discourse was to be a cure for the uncertainty of geopolitical orders, the impression of their provisional and temporary status of homes as well as the sense of strangeness or reluctance towards spaces marked by the stigma of war.

But on the other hand, it does not contain references to the spectre of senses related to longing for the "small homeland" sickness or any other pathological condition. Quite the contrary, such images perform the function of a vaccine, where the bacteria of longing are injected under strict control, to induce "immunity" in the displaced person.

If we reach for a language less suffused with pharmaceutical metaphors, but still playing with therapeutic overtones, the landscapes that accommodate the alien space in these narratives can be perceived as transient objects whose main purpose is to maintain the order and continuity of identity in a situation of major shock (spatial collapse). Their mobility across historical rifts and border divides results not (only) from the circulatory nature of the view, but rather from their temporariness, in the sense proposed in the psychoanalytical theory of relationships with the object. In this perception, native landscapes would perform the same function as the commonplaces of war-induced migrations—objects taken as tokens of the old, lost world. Symbolically, these are worn-out blankets and shabby teddy bears, classified by Donald Winnicott as objects that serve as a substitute for the original object of love (mother) and whose role is to help the child enter correctly into relationships with the outer world. Their role is to soothe loneliness and frustration after separation from the mother. They are always located on the verge of subjectivity and the objective world. In the proper development of a human being, they are not internalised and do not get transformed into fetishes or objects of nostalgia, but lose their significance with time (Winnicott 1953, 89–97). Therefore, the role of native landscapes as transient objects was to facilitate the process of assimilation and settlement of people in an unfamiliar space.

To conclude, landscape is always a form of intertextuality. It is a cultural text, which combines and distributes specified aesthetic forms developed by individual traditions. Referring to spaces subjected to colonisation processes, David Bunn says that: "the ontological problem of new prospects, new genera, and new races does not result in the formation of new genres, but instead in the persistence of what Edward Said calls a *textual attitude*" (Bunn 2002, 128), concurrently proposing a more psychoanalytical understanding of this attitude:

> what we often find in the colonial landscape is an exaggerated form of analysis, or "propping," of one landscape paradigm upon another. Freud uses the term "analysis" to describe the way desires are propped upon

instincts, having the same site of articulation; this seems an entirely appropriate way of describing the often-unconscious deployment of paradigms, in dependent association with one another and at the same site. (Bunn 2002, 128)

As I have tried to emphasise in this chapter, this mechanism also functions well in the discourse of the Regained Territories. The transfer of motives and schemes known from the Borderlands traditions into novels dedicated to post-Yalta territories manifests the indebtedness to the tradition of Polish imperial discourse epitomised by the phenomenon of the Borderlands, and yet, at the same time, it serves as an anti-colonial project in relation to Polish–German relations. It is all the more important because it encompasses *topoi* which are almost demonstratively contradictory to the ideological assumptions of communist power. The Regained Territories discourse can thus be considered a palimpsest in the sense that, as Wojda put it, "various layers of history showed through it; a history that was non-erasable, as it was an integral part of reality" (Wojda 2015, 339). The palimpsestic nature of the Regained Territories discourse also determines its double semiotics, which makes it impossible to classify it according to a single way of hegemonic ordering. Fatherland landscapes are much closer to the meaning which the already mentioned Mitchell understood as a "dreamwork" of imperialism, "unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of perfect imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence" (Mitchell 2002, 10).

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