Postcolonial theory against neo-Nazism – analysis of discourse. My anthropological dream to publish postcolonial theory and practice handbook for teachers

Abstract

The author deliberates the phenomena of neo-nazism in the Internet in the perspective of postcolonial theory. Her aim is to present how neo-fascists construct the representation of “Other” and deconstruct it. Her field laboratory was ethnically and religiously diversified in the Podlasie region in Poland, where the number of racial and homophobic incidents has increased recently. Then, she present her ethnological dream: to publish “postcolonial theory and practice handbook for teachers”, the goal of which would be to struggle against bias and intolerance. As a result, the author perceives the goal of anthropology in general as applied, engaged in public discourses and an instrument to solve real social problems.

Keywords: postcolonial theory, neo-Nazism, education, change, deconstruction, orientalism, occidentalism

In my work I want to show the phenomenon of neo-Nazism in the Internet, where we can find a lot of pages about neo-Nazi ideology. Using the tools of postcolonial theory I will try to show how neo-Nazis construct the representation of “Other” (e.g. orientalism, occidentalism) and attempt to deconstruct them.

Afterwards, I will present Podlasie – the region where I come from (so it is partly the reason why I am interested in it), an ethnically and religiously diversified province on the border with Belarus. Here are living together Catholics, Orthodox, Tatars, Belarusians, Poles and Lithuanians. Recently, the number of racial, ethnic and homophobic attacks on people have grown. Media speak loudly about it but authorities are silent.
I do believe that postcolonial theory has a potential to change ways of thinking. It serves as a good and useful tool for scientific analysis as well as a political project. This theory aims at a real social change, including a revision of the structures of thinking and behavior through deconstruction and reinterpretation of cultural texts.

As an anthropologist I dream of publishing a “postcolonial theory and practice handbook for teachers” about this theory and about methods of using it in teaching, some proposals of lessons, games, workshops and other activities how to cope with aggression and get to know how way of thinking involve our actions. Where teachers could learn about the beauty of diversity and tolerance and communicate acquired knowledge to others.

Phenomenon of neo-Nazism

In my work I will present a research on neo-fascist websites. I found essential materials on the Blood and Honore Website (http://www.bhpoland.org/strona/index2.htm), a page in the Polish language modeled on the British original. The history of the criminal organization Blood and Honore (this name comes from the motto of the Hitler Jugend – Blut und Ehre) dates back to the late 80’s of the XX century – when Ian Stuart founded it in the United Kingdom. Blood and Honore promotes racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism.

The described page contains live reports from neo-fascistic concerts and events like marches. There are a lot of photos of people with hidden faces who are exposing T-shirts with symbols of Hitler, swastikas and emblements of Blood and Honore. Moderators upload latest news about activities of the members of B&H from the whole world in section “World Wide”. In the sections “Commentary” and “Articles” we find the list of books, articles and magazines about their ideology (I will write more about it in the next section of my work). “Redwatch” is a link to a webpage of the movement similar to B&H which works on stalking “enemies of national Socialism”- as they say. They publish pictures and details (like where they live, work, where you can meet them etc.) about the people who they hate – for obvious reasons. Registered users can listen to the online radio. The action “Prisoner” encourages to buy the music created by the bands who identify with the neo-Nazi ideology (such us: Honor, Hussars, The Conquest of 88) – the income will be given to persons who have been convicted of crimes against racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia – it is a kind of solidarity by which they show that they treat themselves like a family. The website administrator recommends extreme caution during making the transfer of money, he advises to enter false data. When somebody wants to contact via email, he/she should use foreign servers. This caution and care is due to fear of law enforcement. In Poland it is forbidden to promote Nazism and totalitarian ideology, as the Article 13 of The Constitution says:
Political parties and other organizations whose programmes are based upon totalitarian methods and practices of Nazism, fascism and communism as well as those whose programmes or activities sanction racial or national hatred, the application of violence for the purpose of obtaining power or to influence the policy of the state, or provide for the secrecy of their own structure or membership shall be prohibited.

On the main webpage of Blood an Honor we can read the following statement:

Blood & Honor Poland supports the National Socialist ideals and establishes its main goal as fighting for Aryan culture, traditions, heritage and the future of our race. Through the National Socialist and White Power ideals we hold the means of the survival of the White Race and our civilization as well as securing the future for next generations. We support politics, decisions and the methods of activism of Combat 18 and we are loyal to our comrades outside our borders. We have no interest in whatever kind of contact the representatives and sympathizers of the Unity Movement as well as people trying to make money on NS / White Power Movement.

Heil Ian Stuart! Heil Blood and Honor!

These statement express an essence of the ideas propounded by neo-Nazis. They will not stop before reaching their goals, not fearing to fight and use of violence. The most important thing is to protect and force appointed ideals. This attitude reflects a classical attempt to colonize. The supporters and members of Blood & Honor Movement desire to destroy everything and everyone who is not Aryans. In their ideological texts we read that they want to achieve the hegemony of the white man in every part of social life: spatial, economical, military, cultural and so called social life.

Neo-Nazi ideology divides the world into two unequal parts – white and non-white. This classical distinction into binary oppositions derives from a petrified essentialist perception of the world – that it is impossible to see the shades of gray or other colors in the social life. The creators of neo-Nazi ideology put themselves into a role of those who can judge and evaluate the criteria of everything. The rest of the people who are non-white do not have even the possibility to adjust, they are on the ropes. The white people who have not yet accepted this “religion” can only save themselves by adopting the ideology of neo-Nazi. All those who have a different skin color than white, those who are Jews, and homosexuals or sexually liberated do not even deserve a chance. They are evolutionary discredited by neo-Nazis. Neo-Nazism represents opinions which relate to the history of science when evolutionism was popular way of explaining the world. Reading Blood and Honor articles I have got an impression that they are not conscious of hundreds of years of science development after the overthrow of evolutionism.

The postcolonial theory creates a humanistic way of critique of contemporary discourse. Scientists who use this practice call it: a psychological analysis of history, it tries to re-read the history written in the memories of people, in scientific researches and in literature; attempts to find old and new contexts of history and its impact on the present. The postcolonial theory endeavours to re-write history from different perspectives, from the point of view of the subordinated and colonized people. It describes and analyzes all the figures of domination and
subordination – like the new hegemonies (e.g. USA against Iraq), the processes 
of globalization, economic relations in the micro and the macro scale, cultural 
dominance, etc.

One of the most popular and most important books about the postcolonial 
theory is *Orientalism* written by Edward Said, first published in 1978. It shows 
that the concept of the Orient is a kind of discourse produced by Western people 
based on Western science, which means that the West constructs an imaginary 
East. It is a cultural way of thinking and the presentation of the East, or the Other 
from the perspective of the West, a binary opposition. This discourse reveals a re-
lationship of domination and subordination. Said points out that that men made 
history, and people's knowledge results from actions and activities already done, 
the perception of the world is also a construction (Said 2005: 12–15). Undeni-
ably – there are regions – such as the West and East. However, *Orientalism* thesis 
focuses on demonstrating that the way of thinking of the West is a construct of 
thought, and orientalism was born in rich and strong Europe as a tool to domi-
nate on others. Said argues that putting an opposition to the Orient and Euro-
pean culture gives a sense of power and strengthens European identity. From this 
representation we can learn a lot about European culture, because it is a kind of 
a mirror image of the Orient (Said 2005: 32). Said in his book emphazises that 
racism in Europe was a long-term process. He contradicts that it started in late 
nineteenth century when the thesis of Darwinian anthropologists and phrenolo-
gist (e.g. Gobineau, Renan, Humboldt, Burnouf, etc.) were popular in a field of 
science (Said 2005: 153–154). The process of racism appeared much earlier in 
people's minds and in their structures of thoughts and it was manifested in the 
language and behavior defining people by dividing them into distinct biological 
groups who shared certain attributes. Schlegal's lectures from the 1800s serve as 
an interesting example of racism. He argued: “The Semits, whose languages are 
agglutinative, unaesthetic and mechanical, are other, inferior and backward” (Said 
2005: 153). Such racist and discriminatory judgments about the language, life and 
culture of the Semits Schlegal uttered with no taboos on the field of science.

This way of thinking which Said deconstructed in *Orientalism* is very close to 
the way of creating representation of the Other by contemporary neo-Nazis. On 
the Blood & Honor website there is a bookmark with articles where they try to 
convince that eugenic was very useful, valid and legitimate. They use a lot of his-
torical dates and names of the scientists from the nineteen century marked by 
numerous quotations and interpretations, such as:

Dr. Lipcówna observed in her study that if you compare for example 2 young individuals: one 
 specimen of a Jewish origin and one beautiful Aryan child of a Polish origin you can notice that 
a Polish child is better developed physically and brighter. The Israelites are opposition – dark 
and poor.

This example perfectly reveals another track of constructing a binary opposi-
tion: “better developed” – “weak”, “light” – “dark”. Discrimination also works in 
spelling such as Aryan adjective is highlighted with a capital letter. Racists specifi-
cally mark language – an author writes about Jewish child like about an animal using word “specimen”, and about described Aryan child – “bright” – it can bring to mind associations with angels or something innocent.

The followers of neo-Nazi ideas demur to religion, particularly Judaism and Christianity. Although there is no mention of Islam, they recognize only the belief in race – “(...) at first we need to take care of religion. A man sees the world through the prism of religion. I mean, the only ‘spiritual cancer’ – Judeo-Christian”. Everything and everyone, who differs from racial affiliation of Aryans, are strangers and enemies. This pseudo-faith includes references to race, nation, tribe and all of man. In the language layer discrimination reappears by reference to the metaphor of religion as a disease.

In 1973, in Florida, USA, Ben Klassen published *Nature’s Eternal Religion*, which has changed the title over the time to *The White Bible*. This publication was the foundation of the establishment of the religion named Church of Creativity – Creator. It represents an ethnocentric, racist vision of the world, where the white race is the greatest and the only authorized group of people to survive. Their motto sounds: RAHOWA (Racial Holy War). They aim to the survival, development and progress of civilization of the White Man. Interesting that neo-Nazis renounce the Christian religion, but at the same time they create the pillars of their ideology using Christian terminology and symbols – there is one God who constructs the world and white race, the philosophy of salvation (but only for the white people). They use also White Catechism where there are several commands that should be repeated by every believer several times a day – something like a prayer. They have something like 10 Commandments, Seven Deadly Sins, etc. which all are copies of the Christian pillars. An incite to holy war derives from an inspiration of Islam. Michał Buchowski explains this phenomenon: “Stealing words, symbols, and designs are regarded as authentic customs and used for self-defence” (Buchowski 2008: 105). Church of Creativity belongs to the registers of the United States of America. In Poland it is not a formal group but we can easily find the translations of basic books of Creativity religion. Below I quote a fragment from the White Book (available on the Blood & Honor webpage PL):

(...) the American Wars, in which mud races were pushed into other areas, when the White people settled in conquered lands, this practices were very useful in the past, it is regarded as “the American way of life”; we should not forget this way of being, we must adopt this successful program to the rest of the world, not only for the U.S.A. but for of the all White Race! We are White Racial Loyalist – Creators and that is not just the fact that we can achieve hegemony of the White Men but what we need to do if we want to survive! We have intelligence, we have the power and the superiority of Nature – this is our right to do so. Our White Racial Religion – Creativity – is providing us not only in the moral right to do so, but it is our moral duty!

This citation strongly suggests that Creators had very a strong imperial attitude to the rest of the world. They are passionate about colonial policy, which they treat as a model. The colonialists who invaded America, Africa and Asia in the early twentieth century were conquering less economically development countries – their argument was civilizing mission, development of education and modernization. In
reality it was covering up conscience, because the core of their actions was to exploit human potential, natural resources and appropriation of indigenous land residents of the colony. Creators – think exactly the same – their moral duty is to rise, capture and exterminate everyone who does not fit their ideal of the White Man. They believe that others are not capable of any change – others determined by genes are dangerous for civilization of the White Man. What is interesting, formulation of “the American way of life” which we commonly associate with popular “keep smiling” or smiling at anytime and anywhere regardless of the situation, in the neo-Nazi minds means something completely different – a constant conquest of new lands.

Another piece is a critique of the Whites who do not agree with the ideology of the Nazis, mostly connected with political left, related with liberal views: liberation of women, feminism, sexual freedom, multicultural policy etc.:

For self-hating white American leftists (whose mind has been polluted and destroyed by the Jewish propaganda), this is a challenge: if you really believe that White Man was wrong in the conquest of America, if you do not believe in American way of life, why do not you redeem yourselves by giving back Mexicans or Indians their properties, renounce U.S.A. citizenship? You should crawl into a hole in the ground and wait for death! This is the end result of your idiotic conclusions, regardless if you can understand it or no.

I can give hundreds of examples like this but I will confine to the above. On the basis of this passage can state that the neo-Nazi ideology is balancing on the edge of Orientalism and Occidentalism. On the one hand, neo-Nazis construct the representation of the Other as a man-child, almost animal, weaker and unworthy to be alive. Members of this movement argue their point of view with pseudoscientific theses, created on the basis of binary oppositions: We – Others, White – Non-White, Good – Bad. Their ideas result from essentialism – one of the main practices of colonizers – they claim that Jews, Negroes and all the non-white people are generally worse and uncivilized. They give general characteristics of discriminated groups and do not allow the consciousness of difference.

On the other hand, neo-Nazis express how they hate the civilized world in a version that they do not tolerance – multicultural policy, countries of friendly migration policy. It is a pure version of Occidentalism: “the image of the West plotted by his enemies, denying humanity to its inhabitants” (Buruma, Margalit 2005: 9).

Arjun Appadurai advances a very interesting thesis in Fear of minorities. Essay on the geography of anger where he writes:

(... weak people, different religion, disability, mobile illegal and not welcome in country – those people blur the boundaries between “us” and “them”, between “here” and “there”, what is “inside” and what is “outside”, what is “health” and what is “disease”, “loyalty” and “disloyalty”, those people are necessary, but unwanted (...) one way or another we need in our national space “groups” (national minorities) to clean latrines and fight on our wars (Appadurai 2009: 50).

He points out two important things. Firstly, the need of the Other – by which the group has the ability to construct the majority by the opposition to minor-
ity, it helps to create strong identity. Secondly, majority requires to have someone under, someone to rule and subordinate, and of course someone who has to take so-called dirty work.

Neo-Nazi ideology is internally inconsistent, it represents the mix of Occidentalism and Orientalism, hate and violence directed to both – the West and East, aversion to religion and faith in White Man, hatred of wealth and ability to make money (personified in Jews) and desire for economic power.

In the article *Postcolonialism: Shake before use* (2008) Michalina Golinczak writes that Postcolonialism is based on decolonization of minds. Thoughts become real with the words, the language is a system of ordering the structure of thoughts. Therefore, in postcolonial criticism it is important to unmask the language. Text analysis allows us to discover deeply rooted structures of the thoughts. The stereotypes imprinted into words. These practices allow us to know the social problems, enable deep analysis and encourage change. Postcolonial criticism can be a useful tool for scientific analysis, but it is also a political project, which aims to bring real social changes (Golinczak 2008: 111). Through the deconstruction and reinterpretation of a cultural text, it has lead to changes in the structures of thoughts and thus to changes in behavior and participation in society. We must realize that stereotypes, resentments or prejudice are part of human condition. We must be also aware that if somebody thinks that others are people “less” than others – it can be very dangerous if it is reinforced with a revolutionary force which leads to real destruction of human beings (Buruma, Margalit 2005: 14–15). Is it necessary now to give examples of these kind of acts written on the pages of our history? We do not need to go back to the distant past to realize how much suffering is induced by some stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and vulnerability to ideological slogans.

**Podlaskie – multicultural region**

Podlaskie Voivodeship or Podlasie Province is located in northeastern Poland. It borders with Masovian Voivodeship in the west, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship in the northwest, Lublin Voivodeship in the south, the Belarusian Voblasts of Grodno and Brest in the east, the Lithuanian Counties of Alytus and Marijampole in the northeast, and the Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia in the north. Its capital is Białystok. This province was created on January 1st, 1999, out of the former Białystok and Łomża Voivodeships and the eastern half of the former Suwałki Voivodeship, pursuant to the Polish local government reforms.

Podlaskie builds a land of the cultures “confluence” – Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian – and is indicative of the ethnic territories limits. Before World War II a lot of Jews also lived in Białystok and the people from the whole world, as said Ludwik Zamenhoff – the creator of the Esperanto language (one of the most popular inhabitants of the Voivodeship’s capital):
Białystok – the place of my birth and childhood gave me a direction to all my future efforts. The residents of Białystok consisted of Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews. And each of these nations held a hostile attitude to the others. In this city, more than elsewhere, sensitive nature feels the weight of plurilingualism. My conclusion is that the differences between the languages is the main reason which divides the human family into hostile parts. I was raised as an idealist, thought that all men are brothers.

Now I will give a few examples of headlines of local newspapers, form last few years: “Aesthetics of a sickle, hammer and the swastika”, “Old habitants of Białystok are still stuck in in communism. Younger are racists and neo-nazis”, “There is a judgment in case of racism pronounced”, “President Tadeusz Truskolaski apologized foreign student for racism”, “French men beaten: racism, xenophobia and aggression. I am a victim, but I know that racists are the minority!”, “Police investigating racist and Nazi symbols in Zielone Wzgórza distric”, “They will not go to jail for fascist slogans”, “Białystok’s fascists detained, the oldest is 14 years old”.

These are just a few titles of the articles appearing in the media over last three years commenting neo-Nazi attacks in the Białystok area – the desecration of memory monuments, such as a monument of the Jews murdered in Jedwabne, vandalism at the Jewish cemetery, arson attempts in the mosque in Białystok, noticed by police direct attacks on the persons of a different nationality, religion or sexual orientation. We can only surmise how many cases of such activities have not been reported. Both local and nationwide media indicate increasing numbers racist attacks like some articles on the first pages of top newspapers and tabloids. They make documentaries and radio broadcasts about the problem of racism, anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination. However, the police and Białystok’ s authorities cannot see the problem of organized crime of a neo-Nazist groups existing there. As said Andrzej Baranowski of Białystok police department:

First of all, we are talking about the people who commit crimes or offenses, and they are in the interest of the police. Whether somebody belongs to a group, associations or political parties is a matter of secondary importance.

This evasive answer to the question how the authorities of the city are going to deal with racist and anti-Semitic attacks corresponds with the utterance of Tadeusz Truskolaski, the president of Białystok: “First of all, I think it is a safe city, and for all of us Białystok can be associated with with multiculturalism and co-existence religions”. When asked about the accidents of April 2012, he responses: “These are isolated incidents that do not change the overall picture of the city.”

In Białystok during the year two multicultural festivals take place: one – Festival of Cultures Podlasie – “Another Dimension. Neighbours” (Days of Jewish

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1 In Białystok city center a group of skinheads, armed with machetes, baseball bats and knives, beat an Armenian man and attacked the people in the pub which is a popular place for the inhabitants with liberate views.
Culture are part of it), and the other – Octave of Cultures. I was born in Białystok and I have lived there for 21 years and I think I can say that these individual events also do not change the overall picture of the city – a location of many racist attacks. These festivals are just an exception that proves the rule that multiculturalism in Białystok is just a slogan to encourage tourist to visit the city.

My anthropological dream

I see the power of postcolonial criticism against neo-Nazi ideology. Perhaps the word “criticism” sounds slightly awkward because it is difficult to change something by criticizing. I think the term should be postcolonial change. Awareness of the impact of history, images and trends (created by society, science, media and power elite) on our way of constructing reality, perception and our way of thinking – this knowledge about discourses forms the first step to change.

The problem of neo-Nazism may seem marginal, however, it still exists. Not only in Poland, not only in Podlaskie, but also in our European neighborhood and in the whole world. Many reden, edited and supplemented websites, like these I described above, function with links to the whole world. According to media reports, we can observe growing popularity of nationalist parties in European governments. Also people whisper. They whisper because they are afraid to talk loud.

Discussed issue may appear to be non-existent in large multicultural cities, where elites live, in the world of science and art. In small towns, villages and in the countryside there are groups who organize neo-Nazi bands concerts and rampant racist criminal activity. As well on the borders, where a man puts himself some questions about his identity, for example in Białystok – a city with 300 thousand inhabitants, including a lot of minority group, near the border with Belarus and Lithuania. The people who experience violence and discrimination do not want to talk about it because they are intimidated.

As an anthropologist I would like to find a way to promote the multicultural attitude among the youngest inhabitants of Podlaskie, to showcase dialogue and tolerance attitudes toward diversity, openness to other cultures, nations, religions and worldwides. I do realize that today it is impossible to change the school curriculums in the spirit of postcolonial critique. But I do believe it is possible to take small steps to change the majority’s way of thinking.

The first step could be the publication of the handbook for teachers which is close to postcolonial theory and the ways and methods of using it in teaching. In this publication there could be some proposals of lessons, games, workshops and other activities. For example: rereading tales and school readings in an alternative way. Who does not know a story about Bambo written by Julian Tuwim, which is a fully stereotype packed rhyme about black men or In the desert and wilderness by Henryk Sienkiewicz, a story taking place in Africa, showing the differences between what is black and white and trying to present how good and wise are the...
people from Europe, e.g. Staś – one of the main characters – urges local tribes to accept Christianity and to live peacefully together.

Other thing is teaching history. The majority of children and teenagers learn various dates of battles, their causes, courses and consequences. Nobody signalizes the details, the dark sides of Polish history, etc. White spots on the pages of history can be multiplied. We should emphasize an alternative, not so popular history, e.g. written by the defeated. Because it can really show how different are our experiences of the past, isn't it?

This book could be interesting and inspiring reading for teachers of the Polish language, history teachers, regional educators and many others. Why do I think so? Because the way how we perceive the world results from the home upbringing, school education, nearest environment (peers, friends, etc.) and media. So not without significance is the way what and how we teach young people. If we speak to our child that there are only three colors in the world, for example: black, white and yellow, how he or she can recognize azure or crimson?

One of my favorite media experts Wiesław Godzic said in his book *Television as a culture* (1999), that TV is not necessarily – as people believe – that it is a stupid and worthless medium. He claims that everything depends on the way of “reading” what TV shows. He discredits a potential of media education to change attitude to TV and an educational worth of TV. Stuart Hall in his publication “Encoding and decoding in the television discourse” (1987) presents 3 ways of watching TV: 1) dominant (hegemonic) code, 2) professional code, 3) negotiated code. He proves that people watch TV in different ways, their transfers differentiate. Both Godzic and Hall want to tell that watching TV creates a process of recognizing and deconstructing. But to be able to do it right we must use tools obtained during the educational process.

Critical analysis of the Blood and Honore webpage can easily pull away a desire of being a part of this organization but to take such decision we should have skills which school do not offer young people. Teenagers look for their identity and acceptance by joining various groups. Especially young boys are impressed by the strength and commitment of neo-Nazi groups but they do not know about some weaknesses and contradictions of this group. I do believe that postcolonial theory and a practical handbook for teachers could be a very good beginning of change – small steps on the road to a different perception of history, science, media, other people and finally to ourselves.
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