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## IMAGINING HEART OF DARKNESS: THE TREATMENT OF SOCIAL TRAUMA IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERARY THEORY<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* This paper deals with the way how postcolonial literary theory, like the discursive criticism which is a part of the broader field of cultural studies, analyzes the phenomenon of trauma, understood as a social or cultural process. The first part of this paper shows the key concepts of the most important representatives of postcolonialism, which include Edward W. Said, Gayatri Ch. Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha. The second part questions the possibilities and the limitations of the analysis of social trauma in literary theory in general. The third section provides a concrete representation of the reinterpretation of classic works that create the Western literary canon, in which postcolonial literary theory reveals biases based implicitly or explicitly on the cultural matrix of western imperialist colonialism. Despite all the criticism, limitations and controversies, it seems that postcolonial literary theory is alive and not fully explored area yet, with promising potential that if properly used can offer significant results in the field of analysis of social trauma.

*Keywords:* social trauma, postcolonialism, literature, discourse, otherness.

### 1. Introduction

The issue of social trauma is especially developed field of interest within the contemporary socio-humanistic researches, understood as essentially different process in relation to individual trauma, often treated on a psychological level. According to Jeffrey Alexander, “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (2004:1). Two essential features of social trauma derive from this position: first, social trauma does not imply an automatic response to certain inherently traumatic experience, which can be real or fictional; second, the presentation and interpretation (as socially symbolic acts) of a particular event as acutely threatening or unpleasant for the established values and the collective sense of a

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group appear as conditions of social trauma. Following this path, Kirby Farrell makes distinction between “clinical symptom” (1998:2), which refers to the experience of injury, and “cultural trope” (1998:2), as a social mediation of the trauma through its symbolic interpretation<sup>3</sup>. Alexander marks this discrepancy between the event and its interpretation as “traumatic process” (2004:11). Neil Smelser joins towards this interpretation of social trauma, making a distinction whereby “cultural trauma differs greatly from a psychological trauma in terms of the mechanisms that establish and sustain it. The mechanisms associated with psychological trauma are the intrapsychic dynamics of defense, adaptation, coping, and working through; the mechanisms at the cultural level are mainly those of social agents and contending groups” (2004:38-39). Smelser offers a formal definition of social trauma, understood as “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is: a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (2001:44).

Interpreted in this manner, colonialism is a form of social trauma, deeply rooted in the collective identity of colonized countries and making affects in their self-identification. In addition, postcolonial theory emerges as an agent creating a proper narration, opinion and symbolic interpretation of colonialism as a social trauma. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* postcolonialism is designated as a “school which developed in 1980s and 1990s... considers vexed cultural-political questions of national and ethnic identity, ‘otherness’, race, imperialism, and language, during and after the colonial period... in order to unravel the complex relations between imperial ‘centre’ and colonial ‘periphery’.” (2001:200) Similar explanation offers *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, arguing that “examining the production and reproduction of discourses produced by and for colonialism, deconstructing their rationales and habits of mind, analyzing colonial representations of the subjugated people, colonial discourse analyses seeks to lay bare the processes through which colonialism was practiced culturally as well as materially, and how ideologies justifying colonialism were disseminated and embedded into consciousness” (2006:184). Simply determined, postcolonialism analyses the images of the world constructed from an imperialist point of view. In addition, the prefix “post” refers less to the time dimension (postcolonialism deals with the historical legacy of colonialism as much as with the modern forms of neo-colonialism), than to indicate the theoretical orientation which bounds postcolonialism with the post-structural and the postmodern paradigm. This means that the classical version of postcolonialism from 1970s that peaked in the works of Frantz Fanon and his preoccupations with political and economic issues differs from the version of

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<sup>3</sup> K. Farrell offers an interesting diagnosis of the post-traumatic culture that occurs at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finding the reasons in excessive sense, i.e. in the infinitive production and reproduction of images (see: Farrell 1998:1-27). This attitude can be interpreted as postmodern criticism, joined by postcolonialism, aimed at Western Enlightenment “narration” associated with the belief in progress and reason, but also with the various forms of hegemony.

postcolonialism proposed by the “holy trinity,” getting its strongest impulse in the field of literary theory and criticism, practicing text access by approaching culture as a discursive category.

## 2. Key concepts of postcolonial literary theory

The key idea of Edward W. Said - “Orientalism”<sup>4</sup> refers to the discursive<sup>5</sup> imaginary construction of the East by Western ethnocentrism (through mechanisms of power/knowledge in Foucauldian sense), where the Orient is represented as “otherness,”<sup>6</sup> which is on the negative side of the binary opposition – “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’.” (1977:40) Different cultural forms, especially novels, take part in the essentialization of the established relationship Occident – Orient, which needs to serve as an ideological justification for the imperialist pretensions of the West<sup>7</sup>. In *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism* Said offers a wide register of works from the Western canon imbued with the imperialistic project, leading to the conclusion that “imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without in some way dealing with the other.” (1993:71)

Gayatri Spivak deals with the extension of the epistemic violence of the imperialistic project in the period of neo-colonialism (nationalism as inverted colonialism), where colonial interests range over class, race, and even gender identities. In the essay *Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism*, through deconstructive analyses, Spivak offers the example of Jane Eyre and Bertha, Rochester’s mad woman with Creole origin, as a necessary contrast,

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<sup>4</sup> The phenomenon of “Orientalism” occupies three overlapping domains: firstly, it refers to the 4000-year of history and cultural relations between Europe and Asia; second, the scientific discipline producing specialists in Oriental languages and culture from the early nineteenth century; and third, the long-term images, stereotypes and general ideology about the “Orient” as the “Other”, constructed by generations of Western scholars (see: Said 1977:1-31).

<sup>5</sup> Discourse as a concept, especially in post-structuralist terminology, means a regulated manner of speech or a mode of production and organization of knowledge by use of language, which at the same time gives relevance to the material and to the social practices from within it occurs. The term has a long history of development, from the structural theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky, through Emile Benveniste and Mikhail Bakhtin, up to the theory of power/knowledge of Michael Foucault (see: Bennet, Grossberg and Morris 2005:91-93).

<sup>6</sup> The matter of “otherness” is the shadow theme in contemporary discussions on identity, with respect to both individual identity and the constitution of the self (in psychoanalysis particularly) and collective identities (in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies). The “other” is what eludes our consciousness and knowing, and it is what resides outside the sphere of “our” culture and community, that is “non-self” and “non-us”. The relation towards “otherness” is ambiguous: on the one hand, the “other” provokes fear and anxiety, often hatred and devalues attitudes based on a radical polarization; but “otherness” may also bring a creative potential for social and cultural replenishment and renewal (see: Bennet et al. 2005:249-251).

<sup>7</sup> Besides the possible parallels, “Orientalism” should not be identified with “Occidentalism”, a set of anti-Western clichés and stereotypes against Western modernity, nor with imagology, interdisciplinary branch of the comparative literature which deals with the literary constructions of the national characters.

wherein “in this fictive England she must play out her role, act out the transformation of her ‘self’ into that fictive ‘other’, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction.” (2006:681) Bertha, in fact, is a figure of ‘subaltern’, an important category in Spivak’s writing (borrowed from Antonio Gramsci), which refers to the inferior groups without a developed class consciousness. Even in the few positive examples (like the monster from *Frankenstein* or Antoinette from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a prequel to *Jane Eyre*), “subalternity” occurs only through the forms of absence, invisibility or exclusion. Hence, the position of Spivak in terms of representing the interests of the “subaltern” is pessimistic, because the “subaltern cannot speak.” (1988:306)

Homi K. Bhabha has different attitudes, although he starts from the same deconstructivist positions. In the book *The Location of Culture* Bhabha leaves the positions of strict binaries, and adheres to the idea of “transnational” or “translational” culture that occurs in conditions of constant migrations and unstoppable global movements, and stands by the cultural-historical “hybridity” (a term borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin), which will lead to a space made of dialogue models of nationalities and identities, involving constant interaction and mutual influence between cultures, thus relativizing and challenging imperialist arguments. In these circumstances, the role of literature is the same as any other cultural form; every novel is “liminal signifying space” (Bhabha 1994:148), affected by the “unbearable ordeal of the collapse of certainty” (Bhabha 1994:149), providing positive opportunities in terms of space for parallel representation of marginalized voices.

The concepts of Said, Spivak and Bhabha clearly indicate the discursive creation of images about oriental “otherness,” which is one of the key tasks of postcolonial literary theory – to make the mechanisms that serve to justify imperialist pretensions of the West visible, often using the novel as a more informative ideological tool, and, of course, the human cost of such activities, where social trauma is one of its most significant consequences. The possibilities of postcolonial literary-theoretical modes in representation of social trauma caused by colonial practices are another issue.

### 3. Representation of social trauma in postcolonial literary theory

The field of interest within the literary theory known as literary trauma theory, which deals with the possibilities of representing the trauma, occurs in the 1990s. The early scholarship popularizes psychoanalytic references about the repressive, repetitive and dissociative impact of trauma over the consciousness, and thus trauma is understood as an unrepresentable and an unsolvable problem. Cathy Caruth offers such explanation in her classic work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, saying that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance –

returns to haunt the survivor later on.” (1996:4) A step further for Caruth is the attempt to display that trauma represents “betrayal of the truth of traumatic experience that cannot be represented.” (1996:154) Although this classic model of trauma as a silent persecutor, unproven void or conundrum can be theoretically useful in certain part (e.g., underlining the profound suffering of the consciousness), contemporary approaches of trauma move toward interdisciplinary and pluralistic models of representation, “away from the focus on trauma as unrepresentable and toward a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience.” (Balaev 2014:3) These contemporary trends in literary trauma theory open wide range of interests in aesthetical and ethical issues, but also refer to rhetorical, semiotic and social implications of trauma, its variability and ambiguity within and between spheres of individual and public space.

Additionally, postcolonial literary theory and the attempts to represent social trauma, in one of the first texts that deal with this issue *Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels* by Craps and Buelens, notes that “the specificity of colonial traumas and the act of postcolonial literature trauma representation in relation to the dominant trauma discourse should lead to alternative conceptions of trauma and of its textual inscription, leading to a revitalization of trauma studies.” (2008:3) In fact, postcolonial trauma theory is trying to overcome double limitations: the classical model of trauma based on psychoanalysis, as well as prescriptive dictate of the “holy trinity” moved by deconstructive textual analyses. Hence, there are several essential questions: collective versus individual nature of the trauma, selection of appropriate narrative techniques, autonomy or dependence of the postcolonial literary theory from Western discourse, and proposed modalities of action.

The representation of a collective experience through personal memory presents postcolonial theory with a risk of extreme positions, where it is necessary to “pursue an approach between homogenizing universalism and nominalist particularism.” (Rothberg 2008:229) Despite of skepticism regarding this transition, Craps and Buelens consider that “refusing to move from the individual psyche to the social situation is bound to have damaging consequences, which ignore and leave unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic abuse” (2008:4).

The trauma theory applied to literary works is often perceived as focusing on the preservation of the trauma, whereupon the possibilities for treatment and/or resistance are overshadowed by discussions about guilt, melancholy, alienation and crippling self-reflexivity. This victimizing perspective means reducing the potent and creative influence of postcolonial literature, which can identify the need for political activism, social change and individual healing, and can promote through textual modalities postcolonial resistance and recovery rather than silence and melancholy. According to Balaev, trauma in fiction produces three significant effects: “The awareness of the multidimensionality of an extreme experience and particularly the social

influence that shape the survivor's personality; the textual modeling of the social aspects of the individual's mind; and the ethics of reading that compel a compassionate correspondence between reader and survivor" (2014:10).

The narrativization of the trauma is never a common imitation of reality, but a fictional literary modification that goes through a process of selection upon technical procedures of organization as well through the ideological and cultural filters of the writer. Postcolonial critique of the naive naturalization of imperialist tendencies often draws inspiration from the postmodern inherent critique of Western authorities, using experimental, nonlinear, self-reflexive techniques of representation that employ literary strategies of irony, parody, intertextuality, magical realism. This kind of references to "liminality" and "hybridity" (in terms of the concepts of Bhabha), or "historiographic metafiction,"<sup>8</sup> are often associated with the work of Salman Rushdie. Yet, Sangari believes that "postcolonial magic realism is independent of antimimetic conditions of postmodernism... producing 'cultural simultaneity' instead of 'cultural synchronicity'." (2000:903)

The weakening of the critical potential due to skepticism and relativistic positions of postmodernism makes numerous authors to advocate emancipation of postcolonial trauma theory from the Western poetics in general, and through establishing authentic native literary practices. Still, the case of the novels of Cnigua Achebe from the negritudinist phase, which propose an "anti-racist racism" as an attempt to promote the African identity opposed to Western influence, run the risk of "promulgating an alternative essentialism, in which African subjects remained locked into European agendas by virtue of seeking to combat their stereotyping practices without changing the grounds of debate." (Thieme 2001:19)

Numerous and ambiguous are the questions, challenges and traps asked, and postcolonial theory tries to address them through an inclusive interdisciplinary approach, understandable and culturally specific, enabling innovative models in the interpretation of the complex nature of the trauma. As Visser pointed out, "the plurality and growing number of responses to trauma theory in postcolonial criticism prove the ongoing appeal of trauma theory, despite the limits of interpretation that it also often imposes on postcolonial readings." (2011:179).

#### **4. Re-interpretation of the Western literary canon: literary pre-text and postcolonial con-text**

"'Writing back', 'counter-discourse', 'oppositional literature', 'con-text'" (Thieme, 2001:1), these are some of the terms that have been used in postcolonial

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<sup>8</sup> "Historiographic metafiction" is a self-conscious critical literary technique, a writing that "meta-fictionally" comments on and investigates its own status as fiction, as well as questioning the ideas of the relation between fiction, reality and truth (see: Hutcheon 1988:105-123).

re-reading of classic literary texts, as a strategy that challenges the authority of the Western canon and demystifies the whole discursive field within which these texts have operated and continue to operate in the post-colonial world. In this sense, Edward Said, although consciously abstains from posing a complete theory on the connection between literature and imperialism, believes that “the time has come in cultural analyses to reconnect their analyses with their actuality”<sup>9</sup> (1994:14).

One of the most analyzed pre-texts in postcolonial con-text is the novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, a classic work of modernism. At the beginning, here is a small passage from the novel:

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness... We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil... We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse...

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their inhumanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough. (Conrad 1994:50-52).

Despite the standard interpretations of the Romanesque physical journey through the river Congo as an allegorical journey into the darkness of human existence, postcolonial theory prefers the delivering of pleasing myths about imperialist domination over African savagery. Achebe, who would mark the novel as racist, addresses one of the fiercest critics, accusing Conrad for “projecting the image of Africa as ‘the other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization... Can nobody see the preposterousness and perverse arrogance in this reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?... The real question is dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world.” (Achebe as cited in Thieme, 2001:18) Unlike Achebe, Edward Said, using “contrapuntal reading,” sought to elucidate “two visions” in *Heart of Darkness*: one of the official imperialist enterprise; and second of an unsettling, non-western world associated with the “darkness” of the story, a perspective

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<sup>9</sup> Said’s position clearly indicates the connection of postcolonial theory to the wider field of cultural studies, where literature is not treated as an autonomous area that offers “comfortable satisfaction”, but as a cultural artifact that emits political implications in the broadest sense of the word (see: Greenblatt 1995:225-232).

which “suggests the presence of a field without special historical privileges for one party.” (1994:28) Despite the limitations of his time, Conrad recognized alternatives, that might be compared to the interesting interpretation of Rushdie for the awareness and knowledge “outside the whale”: “Outside the whale the writer is obligated to accept that he (or she) is part of the ocean, part of the storm, so that objectivity becomes a great dream, like perfection, an unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success”<sup>10</sup> (1992:100).

Salman Rushdie (as an Indian, born in a postcolonial moment, living a good part of his life in Great Britain, receiving resources from both Eastern and Western cultural and literary traditions) is one of the most intriguing and paradigmatic authors for the postcolonial theory. Homi Bhabha would analyze the controversial novel *The Satanic Verses* in terms of the importance of migration movements for the formation of the “third way” in neo-colonial space, suggesting that “only through the process of dissemination – of meaning, time, peoples, cultural boundaries and historical traditions – the radical alterity of the national culture will create new forms of living and writing” (2004:166), while he would interpret the alleged blasphemy of Islam in a direction of “hybridity as heresy” (2004:225), precisely “far from simply misinterpreting the Koran, Rushdie’s sin lies in opening up a space of discursive contestation that places the authority of the Koran within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism.” (2004:226) Further, Gayatri Spivak investigates the “cultural politics,” focusing on the public reactions the novel would cause and noting the marginalized role of women, the female prophets in Rushdie’s novel, obscured by the public attention given to the fatwa and the relation between Ayatollah Khomeini and Rushdie (Spivak in Selden, Widdowson and Brooker 2005:221-223). The novel *Midnight’s Children* is an exemplar for reviewing of the thin boundaries between the individual and the collective, sustaining it by the comic analogy between the micro-history of Saleem Sinai and the macro-history of post-independent India throughout Saleem’s picaresque travels and through the magical telepathic powers he possesses as a child of midnight, “handcuffed to history” (Rushdie 1982:9). Saleem’s right, in the absence of his biological father and mother, to give birth to an “endless series of parents” (Rushdie 1982:258) is significant in postcolonial context at least in two crucial aspects: on a social level, Saleem’s power provides affiliative identification with an encyclopedic range of cultural and communal strands (British colonial legacy, Muslim, Hindu and Catholic elements in India); on a literary level, such a gift relates directly to the text’s practical possibilities of constructing its own literary genealogy from a multiplicity of sources, drawing on a diverse array of intertexts, among them the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Quran*, *Tristram Shandy*, *The Tin Drum*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Saleem Sinai, actually, is in a constant search of his “roots” in the manner of a hybrid genealogy, testifying for “the positive potential latent in the roles of bastard and orphan.” (Thieme 2001:8)

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<sup>10</sup> For the numerous postcolonial debates dedicated to the *Heart of Darkness* see: Thieme 2001:15-32.



The impressiveness of the postcolonial discourse should not deceive and make new essentialization, forgetting the fact of the richness and instability of meanings that lie in the classic literary works. In this respect, Said also accepts that postcolonial con-text is one of the possible ways of reading which is “completing or complementing others, not discounting or displacing them.” (1994:95) Rushdie’s novels, also part of the contemporary literary canon, suggest that, instead of a simple seceding “bloodline” with Western works that leads to unnecessary infantilizing of the postcolonial literature, it is possible to establish a relationship of a free and self-conscious affiliative bond of a critical rethink, acceptance and rejection of a problematic “parentage,” as Saleem Sinai points: “I have had more mothers than the most mothers have children; giving birth to parents has been one of my stranger talents – a form of reverse fertility.” (Rushdie 1982:243)

### **5. Critical review: the limitations and possibilities of postcolonial literary theory**

Postcolonial literary theory, perceived as speech of “otherness” in general, faces aporias inherently tied to the concept of “otherness.” It derives from the fact that, on the epistemological level, “otherness” has no right of existence itself, because its perception is possible only through inclusion and reshaping on the point of view of a particular mind which always starts from universal assumptions, and thus “deconstructive postcolonialism is brought to an impasse having achieved its political limit, complicit at last with the systems it opposes but in which it is ‘intimately mired’.” (Selden et al. 2005:224) That means that the attempt to deconstruct the identities implies a reference point which makes the dichotomy of “us” and “them” (or “hybrid” and “fixed”), wherein the same binaries that deconstruction considers not only false but also dangerous are reproducing, thus introducing the postcolonialism in a new theoretical aporia on an ethical level. In other words, not a single theoretical thinking of “otherness” (and postcolonialism is itself a discourse) can be “pure” and “innocent,” because it brings a range of meanings with possible implications in certain political projects.

Postcolonialism is accused of losing the focus and critical élan, becoming a conciliatory hermeneutical procedure. Often the entire postcolonial theory is considered a fashion strategy of Western immigrant intelligence which, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the creation of unipolar world of multinational capitalism directs toward textual analyses and the discourse as a method that waters down the terms, relativizes and de-politicizes the real problems of the post-colonial world, acting as an extended hand of global capitalism. Tightly worded, Terry Eagleton would mark the complex and confusing style of Spivak’s writing as “The Gaudy Supermarket,” referring to the alleged intellectual sale of Spivak in American academia at the price of incoherence and a condescension in political stances, whereby “like other imports known as ‘third-world

intellectuals', she had served instead to salve America's guilt." (Eagleton as cited in Selden et al. 2005:226)

Misleading and wooing conformism of post-structural-postmodern theoretical paradigm, in combination with the attitude of Caruth according to whom "trauma is never simply one's own and we are implicated in each other's trauma" (1996:24)<sup>11</sup>, instead of pledging on the critical analysis implies a relativistic position which sets the postcolonial theory among what Alexander would later mark as "psychoanalytic version of lay trauma theory." (2004:6) Parry notes that "the task of postcolonial studies today is not, of course, leaving the theoretical sophistication that marks the Oriental discourse, but connection of such meta-critical speculation with studying the actually existing political, economic and cultural conditions, past and future." (2004b:77) Thereby, the postcolonial literary theory could respond to a much broader range of issues and could be a suitable set applicable in different contexts and spaces.

The subjection of the constant traumatic events in their long and controversial history, as well as compatibility to some functional theoretical vocabulary (hegemonic discourse – totalitarian discourse, Apartheid – concentration camp, center – periphery, History – histories) is enough for Benita Parry to bring postcolonialism and postcommunism under the sign of "historical transition and a similar discursive attitude." (2004a:124) Yet, although Maria Todorova in *Imagining the Balkans* does not exclude the similarities, she emphasizes the independence of "Balkanism" from "Orientalism," recognized in the historical, geographical, ideological and religious context, especially in terms of colonial exploitation and racism (2009:3-21). A compromising in-between way suggests Adrien Otoi, for whom it is obvious that the colonial and communist experiences have distinct profiles that cannot overlap, but despite this, however, different historical forces can produce similar effects (2003:87-105).

## 6. Conclusion

It is important to keep in mind that the anti-essentialist discourse of the postcolonial literary theory does not arise from some theoretical order of a postmodern type, but from the truth of the social reality, wars, pogroms and exterminations which marked human history in colossal scale in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, the theoretical revision of the Enlightenment modernity in the way of deconstruction and dismantling of the totalizing narratives which eliminate or forget "otherness", can be understood as an attempt to display and overcome what Hutcheon will mark as "sins of modernity" (1988:35), in which colonialism takes one of the most prominent roles.

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<sup>11</sup> Although this attitude can be interpreted as appealing for cross-cultural solidarity and empathy, "the attempts to include everyone as victims of trauma runs the risk of including everyone as perpetrators" (Balaev 2014:7), which is troubling the issue for taking responsibility for the caused trauma.

The textual analysis of the postcolonial literary theory reveals the thin boundaries between stylization and ideologization of the artwork, but also the fact that the wealth of literary expression is contextual and depends on the position of the critic and/or reader. More importantly, the main point of postcolonialism is that the discourse does not reproduce reality, but reality is created within it with present implicit or explicit ideological assumptions, which, paradoxically, will lead postcolonialism, which is a discourse too, in a position of ethical and epistemological aporias, a danger of new essentialization and, a crisis of representation altogether.

Despite the paralyzing traps known in physics as the Heisenberg effect, the postcolonial theory has to cope with conflicting goals, balancing between finely honed critical scrutiny and a self-reflexive control, which in terms of social trauma will allow postcolonial theory to be respectable "carrier group" (Alexander, 2004:11), a bearer of forms and meanings of colonial traumatic processes. The development of the postcolonial literary theory goes in a direction of abandoning the concept of inherent inarticulateness of the trauma towards the acceptance of the multidimensional nature of trauma with different representations in literature and even more complex consequences in the society. It is important to note that the ambivalent and contradictory relations are not a reflection of weakness, but rather a fresh and innovative charge in the research field. In fact, postcolonial literary theory dealing specially with social trauma can be visualized as a tangled knot wrapped around the trauma as a kernel, and connected to it through interdisciplinary threads of concepts, approaches and therapies, exceeding the reductionist and hierarchical tendencies and encouraging deeper analyses of the multidimensional nature of trauma as a social process. Metaphorically, the traumatic experience of colonialism might be represented through the bay tree in the Morrison's novel *Home*, "a sweet bay tree split down the middle, beheaded, undead" (2012:144), which continues to grow although it is stuck by a thunderbolt. The treatment of social trauma in postcolonial literary theory, as it was shown, is not fully clear, nor simple or unique, but it seems that the good starting position is somewhere on the line of the Saleem Sinai's epiphany amidst the impassability of the rainforest Sundarbani (another allusion to the Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*), which Rushdie theoretically expressed in *Imaginary Homelands*: "To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free." (1992:17)

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## **ЗАМИСЛУВАЈКИ ГО *СРЦЕТО НА ТЕМНИНАТА*: ТРЕТМАНОТ НА ОПШТЕСТВЕНАТА ТРАУМА ВО ПОСТКОЛОНИЈАЛНАТА КНИЖЕВНА ТЕОРИЈА**

**Филип ТРАЈКОВСКИ**

*Апстракт:* Овој труд се занимава со прашањето како постколонијалната книжевна теорија, како дискурзивната критика, која претставува дел од поширокото поле на културните студии, го анализира феноменот траума, определен како општествен или културен процес. Првиот дел од трудот ги прикажува клучните концепти на најзначајните претставници на постколонијализмот, каде спаѓаат Едвард В. Саид, Гајатри Ч. Спивак, и Хоми К. Баба. Вториот дел ги доведува во прашање можностите и ограничувањата на анализата на општествената траума во книжевната теорија воопшто. Третиот дел нуди конкретни прикази на реинтерпретацијата на класичните дела кои го сочинуваат Западниот книжевен канон, во кој постколонијалната книжевна теорија открива наклонетост, имплицитно или експлицитно базирана на културната матрица на западниот империјалистички колонијализам. Четвртиот дел се однесува на најзначајната критика на постколонијалната книжевна теорија, движејќи се од општото, авторефлексивно преиспитување на епистемолошките и етички апории вклучени во концептот „другост“, сè до радикални обвинувања за апологетски став во поглед на интересите на глобалниот капитализам како нова форма на колонијализам, или конверзија на критичкиот дискурс во идеолошки помирувачка херменевтичка постапка. И покрај критиките, ограничувањата и контраверзите, се чини дека постколонијалната книжевна теорија е жива и сè уште недоволно истражена област со надежен потенцијал, кој доколку се искористи соодветно може да понуди значајни резултати на полето на анализата на општествената траума.

*Клучни зборови:* општествена траума, постколонијализам, книжевност, дискурс, другост.