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COMPARATIVE STUDIES AT THE CROSSROADS?¹

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Słowa kluczowe: badania porównawcze, kryzys w literaturze porównawczej, intertekstualność, studia postkolonialne, translatołogia, imperializm kulturowy, multikulturalizm

Ключевые слова: литературная компаративистика, кризис компаративистики, интертекстуальность, постколониальные исследования, транслатология, культурный империализм, мультикультурализм

Abstract: Michał Kuziak, COMPARATIVE STUDIES AT THE CROSSROADS? "PORÓWNANIA" 4/2007, Vol. IV, p. 11-20, ISSN 1733-165X. The author of the article attempts to present the situation of comparative studies as a field of research and a way of thinking about the contemporary world on the basis of the analyses presented in *Comparative Literature at a Crossroads?* in the monographic issue of "Comparative Studies" 2006. Much attention is paid to the phenomenon of the crisis of comparative studies connected with a noticeable reluctance towards great theoretical models shared by many researchers, the extensiveness of the topic area and resulting methodological problems, but also the fact that comparatists abandon the studies of other languages. This results in a need for searching for a satisfactory definition of this field of study, its scope of research and applicable research methods. Among the specific issues raised in the article there is, e.g. the case of world literature seen in the context of the classical contradiction between cultural hegemony and cultural pluralism. Moreover, an interesting review of the picture of the Polish culture from the perspective of post-colonial theories and intracultural differences is presented.

Резюме: Михал Кузяк, КОМПАРАТИВИСТИКА НА ПЕРЕПУТЬИ? „PORÓWNANIA” 4/2007, Vol. IV, с. 11-20, ISSN 1733-165X. Автор статьи рассуждает о положении компаративистики как научной дисциплины и как способа восприятия современной действительности, опираясь на исследования, помещённых в монографическом номере „Comparative Critical Studies” с 2006 г., озаглавленном *Comparative Literature at a Crossroads?* Особенное внимание автор уделяет кризису компаративистики, связанному с отказом многих учёных от больших теоретических моделей, с широтой проблематики и вытекающими из этого методологическими затруднениями, а также с уменьшением интереса компаративистов к изучению иностранных языков. В связи с этим появилась потребность в поиске наиболее точной дефиниции данной дисциплины, используемых методов и тематической области исследований. В статье затрагиваются такие проблемы как, например, мировая литература, рассматриваемая в контексте классической уже оппозиции культурной гегемонии и культурного

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плюрализма. Кроме этого в работе затрагивается такая интересная проблема, как ревизия образа польской культуры в аспекте постколониальных теорий и концепции внутрикультурных различий.

I would say, slightly provocatively, that the title of this article can be surprising in two ways. Firstly – what sort of comparative studies? I am referring to the Polish perspective in which the discipline is still of a problematic character. It should also be noticed that apart from publications it is slowly becoming institutionalised in Poland as a result of the appearance of separate units at universities which are aimed at carrying out comparative studies (also published as series or journals³). Secondly – what crossroads? Comparative studies also appear here, as I have already mentioned, and are very popular. It should then be explained that the article is about the problems of comparative studies in the face of cultural, theoretical and institutional changes at the beginning of the 21st century.

The starting point for the ideas in this article is last year's monographic issue "Comparative Critical Studies", edited by Robert Weninger and actually bearing the title *Comparative Literature at a Crossroads*?⁴. This issue gathers the opinions of researchers from all over the world on the status of comparative studies: its intellectual condition and institutional aspects, but also the character of this discipline in Europe, Arabic countries and China. It seems to be crucial that these researchers write about their experience within comparative research and the didactics based on it.

Comparative studies are undoubtedly a discipline which is in a state of permanent crisis which becomes most acute at present due to a general crisis of Theory and the times of many theories (Jonathan Culler emphasises that comparative studies have always been connected with theory of literature, where it has found legalization and inspiration⁵); Gayatri Spivak or Terry Eagleton have even preached about the death of comparative studies – their great theoretical models⁶. It ought to be noticed that this crisis is accompanied by changes in the understanding of the humanities or in a wider sense science, the appearance of awareness of its cultural, political and ethnic character. One should add – the awareness that makes science closer to life experience. Our contemporaneity sometimes seems a time of revision, rewriting the heritage anew⁷. Comparative studies are both a subject of that revision and at the same time they take an active part as they seem most predestined to such a task. I will get back to this issue later in the text.

³ I am thinking about series such as those edited by Katedra Komparatystyki Literackiej UJ – whose initial volume is the book *Dziedzictwo Odyseusza. Podróż, obcość i tożsamość, identyfikacja, przestrzeń*. Ed. M. Cieśla-Korytowska and O. Płaszczewska. Kraków 2007, and about the Poznań-based journal "Porównania".

⁴ Cf. "Comparative Critical Studies", 2006, V. 3. I-2.

⁵ J. Culler, *Whither Comparative Literature?* "Comparative Critical Studies", 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 85-97.

⁶ G. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*. New York 2003; T. Eagleton, *After Theory*. New York 2003.

⁷ Cf. the works on this topic in "Ślupskie Prace Filologiczne. Seria Filologia Polska" 2007, no. 5 [*Co i jak prze-pisać w historii literatury. Zeszyt monograficzny*. Ed. M. Kuziak].

The above mentioned crisis seems to be a symptom of weakness (Thomas Docherty, in the antifundamentalist thought that is at present highly evaluated, presents comparative studies in the context of the phenomenon of the “borderland” which is so important for them⁸), as well as the power which stems from the permanent need to redefine the status of comparative studies, thus leading to the development of a critical self-reflection, methodological awareness and openness to the Other: new areas of research (Docherty) and theories (Culler). The crisis, as many authors seem to notice (also Weninger⁹), is mostly a challenge that becomes an indicator of the liveliness of the discipline and can lead to its success. It provides the ability to adapt to the cultural changes that are taking place.

According to Culler, while national literature and its historiography was shaped in a natural way together with the creation of national ideologies, comparative studies – as a discipline that goes beyond the ideologically (but also intellectually, culturally, linguistically or institutionally) established norms – seemed always suspicious and thus was forced to justify and give reasons for its own status, search for legitimation or, what should be added, is particularly difficult in the present times of crisis of legitimation formulas. Such a situation led to the creation of the many critics that comparative studies traditionally have. Of course, it is not devoid of ideology itself – both in its strong version linked with cultural dominance and a conception of the national and linguistic difference (that is criticised in contemporary comparative research) as well as in its weak version which is critical towards ideology.

The crisis, which, according to Weninger’s introduction to the volume, begins with the status of comparative studies as a discipline (this problem was described already in the Polish literary studies context¹⁰), inter-?, trans-? meta-?, or maybe non-discipline? Comparative texts are published, interdisciplinary approach to research triumphs, discussion on comparative studies appears, however it still lacks a precise formulation of its subject matter and methodology. It is generally not obvious, even more so due to the enlargement of the research area of disciplines such as literary but also comparative studies – as a result of culture change. The issues were mentioned, according to Culler, in the ACLA report in 1993. It is important to add that the issue of crisis pertains mostly to the West. The Arabic authors (Ferial J. Ghazoul) or Chinese (Dan Shen and Xiaoyi Zhou) do not perceive any deadlock in their discipline though they are aware of, .e.g. its colonial entanglements¹¹.

There are many diagnoses of the sources of crisis that are described in many studies: starting with the dominance of methodological rules, treated as universal, the aforementioned colonial character of the comparative studies from the 19th and 20th century, all the way to the previously claimed risk of such a wide area of research and methods and a resulting threat of losing the identity of the discipline, etc. An institutional crisis that touches the academic

⁸ Cf. T. Docherty, *Without and Beyond Compare*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, op. cit., p. 25-35.

⁹ R. Weninger, *Editor’s Introduction*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. XI-XVIII.

¹⁰ I dealt with this issue in the article *Głosy na marginesie polskiej refleksji o komparatystyce*. “Przegląd Humanistyczny” 2001, no. 1.

¹¹ Cf. F. J. Ghazoul, *Comparative Literature in the Arab World*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 113-124; D. Shen, X. Zhou, *Western Literary Theories in China: Reception, Influence and Resistance*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, op. cit., p. 139-155.

status of comparative studies which, owing to their expansion, lose their organizational coherence and are carried out within other disciplines. Culler, e.g., claims that the triumph of comparative studies consists in the fact that studies on national literatures transform into culture studies, which is a failure of institutional comparative research which loses its leading role in the understanding of literature and culture.

A recurring issue in the articles is the idea of a crisis of competence. It is connected with the fact that authors study other languages less and less. It should be added that, e.g. according to Lucia Boldrini the national language is a polyphonic palimpsest – it is varied and creates a varied identity. That is why it can become of interest for the comparatist (Doherty in the deconstructivist vein claims that language is not the original source – we deal with translation thus as an intralingual difference)¹². Moreover, contemporary literature in many cases becomes the literature of many geographical and cultural communities.

As Boldrini, i.a., indicates the notion of crisis pertains mainly to older comparative studies that was based on an essentialist understanding of nationhood. The authors of the particular articles included in “Comparative Critical Studies” from 2006 point to the fact that the new situation of the 21st century – globalization and cultural openness, the development of popular culture, the introduction of writers from the previous periphery, political changes in Europe, but also changes in the literature itself, which becomes international in a specific way – constitutes a challenge for comparative studies which are in want of reformulation of their conception.

The awareness of the researchers mentioned here is a post-post-structural awareness. It is worth emphasizing that, as is underscored in the volume of articles presented at the recent Zjazd Polonistów, the awareness of our comparatists is still determined by the so called Anglo-Saxon school of comparative studies by René Wellek, whereas intertextual theories are novelties¹³. Susan Bassnett, but also Geert Lernout, explicitly say that this attitude is now outdated¹⁴.

¹² Cf. L. Boldrini, *Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century: A View from Europe and the UK*. “Comparative Critical Studies” 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 13-23.

¹³ Cf. *Polonistyka w przebudowie. Literaturoznawstwo – wiedza o języku – wiedza o kulturze – edukacja*. V. II. Kraków 2005, p. 348 and n. The exception is included in the work in vol. I T. Sławek *Literatura porównawcza: między lekturą, polityką i społeczeństwem*. T. Kostkiewiczowa, who is open to new theories and methods, presents her opinion, which is very typical, characteristic in this article: *Komparatystyka a nowsze tendencje w nauce o literaturze* just confines on intertextuality (In.: *Regionalne, narodowe, uniwersalne. Literatura i media w perspektywie komparatystycznej*. Ed. G. Borkowska, B. Darska, A. Staniszewski. Olsztyn 2005). The modern comparative awareness can be seen, e.g in the work of A. Hejmej, *Interdyscyplinarność i badania komparatystyczne*. In: *Literatura i wiedza*. Ed. W. Bolecki and E. Dąbrowska. Warszawa 2006; and also in the methodological thoughts of E. Kasperski, *O teorii komparatystyki*. In.: *Literatura. Teoria. Metodologia*. ed. D. Ulicka. Warszawa 1998 or E. Możejko, *Między kulturą a wielokulturowością: dylematy współczesnej komparatystyki*. In.: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*. Ed. W. Bolecki and R. Nycz. Warszawa 2002.

¹⁴ Cf. S. Bassnett, *Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, V. 3, 1-2 (2006), p. 3-11; G. Lernout, *Comparative Literature in the Low Countries*. “Comparative Critical Studies”. 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 37-46.

The second *leitmotif* – apart from the issue of crisis – that appears in the particular articles is the issue (particularly visible in Djelal Kadir¹⁵) that is ingrained, on the one hand, in research from the post-colonial perspective inspired by Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, on the other hand in deconstruction, it also pertains to self-awareness of the discipline – its fears connected with a cultural imperialism: domination and oppressiveness. This issue is usually related to the book by G. Spivak, a researcher who claims that comparative studies need to go beyond Euro-centrism, Americanism and the market-oriented economy, but also globalism.

The imperialism is a result of the entrenchment of comparative studies in the Western culture as well as its rationality. The 20th century comparative studies, as researchers notice, consolidated the dominance of the Anglophone literature read according to the Anglo-Saxon methods. At present, as Weninger, i.a., writes, even if other non-Anglophone literatures appear within the circle of comparatists' interest, the Western theory of ordering the reality still dominates. Boldrini also writes about the oppressive – and not comprehensive – vision of the European canon. As should be noticed, such a state constitutes on its own a comparative problem and also reveals the complexity of the identity of the researcher that deals with comparing cultures and literatures. Interestingly enough, the authors outside Europe: Ghazoul and Shen and Zhou seem to perceive comparative studies, first and foremost, as a great openness to cultures, though, obviously they are particularly sensitive to the post-colonial issue.

Contemporary comparative studies are supposed to be the old comparative studies' remedy for imperialism – says, e.g., Oliver Ulbrich¹⁶. Culler says that such vision appeared in the ACLA report in 1993. This issue reappears in most of the works. It is developed by Linda Hutcheon in the afterword to the volume¹⁷. The researchers proclaim breaking with the colonial heritage (referring to Spivak and Eagleton's book, who write about the political and ethnic dimension of comparative studies), the openness towards the Other and Otherness. And so, e.g., Boldrini puts emphasis on the phenomenon of widening the canon of great literatures to include authors and works from the peripheries that are frequently former colonies, whereas Docherty writes about comparative studies' role, which is to isolate from the native language and culture and thus undermine their dominance.

It could seem that this issue does not constitute a problem for Polish comparative studies. However, on the one hand, they are still entangled in the theoretical and literary discourse that belongs to the paradigm of Western thought. On the other hand, they may (should) function in the post-colonial context. It is also important that the Western canon shaped our own culture as well as how it was shaped by the resistance towards other cultures, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries (Boldrini points to the phenomenon of European colonialism, as does Ulbrich, who writes about German research on totalitarianism and its legacies). Thus, the oppressive character of our culture which appropriates other cultures and deprives them of their independent voice which took place, e.g. in 19th century literature (I am

¹⁵ D. Kadir, *Comparative Literature in a Word Become Tlön*. "Comparative Critical Studies", 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 125-138.

¹⁶ O. Ulbrich, *Comparative Literature – in, from and beyond Germany*. "Comparative Critical Studies" 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 47-67.

¹⁷ L. Hutcheon, *Afterword: Compl(ic)it*. "Comparative Critical Studies" 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 159-162.

thinking about Romanticism which is an example of openness towards Other cultures as well as inscribing them into the dominating model of nationality¹⁸), seems to be of importance.

What are the comparative studies of the 21st century like? Generally, it should be noted that, similarly as with the case of contemporary literary studies, their characteristic feature is a widely understood cultural change. In a more detailed perspective – there are many answers.

Bassnett emphasises for example the role of widely understood translation studies in relation to contemporary influences and reception – a phenomenon of a culture transfer. The translation in the proposed view has a creative character (as starting a dialogue), it is a part of a wider historic and cultural context. The author persuades that comparative studies are not only a discipline but a way of reading texts. Alain Montandon is of a similar opinion¹⁹, however, Boldrini claims that comparative studies do not state the subject matter nor the method, whereas the role of the critic or critique: the interest in the borderland in its many aspects.

Bassnett claims after Benedetto Croce, who is mistrustful towards comparative studies, that comparative research aims at explaining a work of art in all its aspects also including its reception. In the hermeneutic and antitheoretical vein, the author emphasises that the condition of a successful comparison is the emphasis on the text which is devoid of *a priori* assumptions, that respects the historic aspect of the literary text and takes into consideration its wide cultural context and, finally, its interdisciplinary character. Boldrini views this issue similarly.

The issue of translation reappears in Docherty's fragment devoted to Steiner's vision of comparative studies, who seems an enemy of translation as a form of violence towards that which is Different.

Boldrini in a similar vein emphasises that translation should respect the cultural specificity of the issue and its Otherness. Thus, according to the researcher, the aim of comparative studies is to expose all sorts of boundaries – between texts and within them. Modern comparative studies, Boldrini continues, are deeply connected with identities. It shows the complexity of identity and its internal differences. It allows us to rethink the European identity anew – its variety, external and internal borders – and the identity of the particular communities that are shaped by means of meeting the Different.

Lernout underscores particular relations between comparative studies and theory of literature and points out that at present they are determined by the post-colonial perspective (Spivak and Eagleton proposed a vision of comparative studies revival within this perspective), New Historicism, or research aimed at “material archives”, treated as historic documents, connected with the sources of works, their influences and reception but also the contexts of literature.

¹⁸ I wrote about this in the work *Brodziński, Mickiewicz, Mochnecki: Der Alteritätsdiskurs der polnischen romantischen Kritik. Ein Erkundungsversuch*. In: *Romantik und Geschichte. Polnisches Paradigma, europäischer Kontext, deutsch-polnische Perspektive* [in press].

¹⁹ A. Montandon, *World Literature Tomorrow*. “Comparative Critical Studies”, 2006, V. 3, 1-2, p. 77-82.

However, according to Lubrich, comparative studies are a way of cultural communication with the Other, oppressed in the culture. Comparative research creates perspectives for peripheral cultures and languages. Thus, they would be able to handle the challenges of globalization and avoid the totalisation of culture that it brings. Lubrich points to similar theoretical inspirations, similarly to Lernout, however he adds the discursive analysis.

In the discussed issue of “Comparative Critical Studies” there appears a vision of comparative studies that is quite traditional and is present, according to Montandon, in France. This is research that aims at comparing genres, topics, myths, literary travels, translations, imagology, a general cultural exchange (reception, influences), intertextuality or a comparison of literature with other art, etc. Montandon claims that Anglo-Saxon novelties in the widely understood cultural approach are only an issue for the future of French comparative studies that requires further discussion.

Culler, on the other hand, writes that comparative studies in order to protect their own specificity and identity that is threatened by the cultural perspective, should return to literature, join poetics understood as an analysis of discursive practices. It is literature as a transnational phenomenon that is investigated in all sorts of ways and should be the centre of attention of the discipline in all sorts of contexts. The researcher, however, adds that he does not want to reject a cultural perspective – which is connected with an inevitable statement about the cultural character of literature – or maybe rather a cultural paraphrase of structural literary studies.

The issue of comparability frequently appears in the described works. Lernout notices that at present literature is compared with everything (it is a consequence of the aforementioned conception of its cultural character) – which is different to the times of domination of the structural New Critique. It should be noticed that the vision of *close reading*, that is inscribed in the cultural context appears, e.g. in Ulbrich or as I already mentioned in Culler, who demand that a text be read according to the standards of structural and post-structural analysis.

The issue of comparability returns in Docherty in relation to the thoughts on the category of opposition that exists in traditional comparative studies. Opposition is funded by the notion of nationality. The researcher writes about the necessity to go beyond this opposition – in the vein of Jacques Derrida, François Lyotard or Badiou – and opening to the language of friendship, love and not conflict, to the language of the hardships of experience and not cognition; a language that does not lead to total unification, maintaining existing differences.

A similar approach is presented by Ulbrich, who emphasises – in accordance with the inspirations from Jacques Derrida or Bhabha – the inter- and not intracultural differences. He renounces the essentialist thinking about nationality, he distinguishes the intercultural and not the transcultural significance of literature.

Derrida’s inspirations are also visible in the thoughts on the issue of comparability presented by Kadir. He concludes that the essence of comparative studies is its functioning beyond oppositions, i.a. the opposition of comparability and non-comparability. According to

the researcher, both parts of this opposition can lead to violence (globalization – totalitarianism). Kadir is against the idea of comparability that is based on contrasting national differences as was the case with old comparative studies that underscored the barriers instead of eliminating them. Simultaneously, the researcher claims to be against the tendency to discard the category of difference.

Kadir's proposal points to the aporetic, paradoxical thinking, which in order to avoid decisions, liberates from violence. The researcher writes about the aim of comparative studies which is the many directions in the negotiations of different antinomies that were undertaken in the discursive realm and based on binary sets – texts, cultures and identities. This negotiation is not aimed at eliminating the differences (Kadir takes the same stand as Lyotard, against Jürgen Habermas and his vision of consensus), it is supposed to allow going beyond the opposition comparability/non-comparability. A similar thought appears in Boldrini.

Culler also deals with comparability, arguing with the idea of perfection that appears due to the fall of national culture, great narratives, rationality. This idea determines the modern intellectual practice and allows to compare everything with everything, also that what functions without any relations with one another. Culler is aware of the restrictive character of the idea of comparability but also notices its necessity – to defend from other types of violence that result from the idea of perfection which leads to freedom of choice and as a result in the dominance of the bureaucratic order over the intellectual one. According to the researcher, the dimension of text comparability is its introduction into the cultural realm, intertextuality, searching for precise bases of comparisons – in the area of poetics, cultural function of text, cultural geography and history.

However, Boldrini introduces the concept of crucial points of the meeting of cultures, historic forces and aesthetics – as I already mentioned they can take place within one language – that would allow us to carry out comparative research.

Another important issue that appears in the works of “Comparative Critical Studies” in 2006 is world literature. E.g. Schaffer writes about this issue, designing its contemporary understanding. According to the researcher, it is the translated literature that is accessible beyond language barriers. Thus, Shaffer underscores the research that deals with influences, reception of texts that are inserted into a wide cultural context (on the basis of the project of school by Robert Jauss, but also the newest cultural conception and post-colonial theory). This proposal is supposed to oppose globalization by means of emphasising the existence of many culture centres in the world.

Culler also writes about world literature after the ACLA report from 2004, concluding that it is a central issue of contemporary comparative studies. However, the researcher notices that the problem is connected with the phenomenon of cultural colonialism. Nevertheless, world literature is contemporarily a construct that is created from the perspective of the hegemony of centres of Western cultures (Culler writes about the USA). However, an imperative of modern comparative studies is avoidance of dominance. This is why Culler, similarly to Shaffer, goes back to the concept of world literature as a system of discursive

practices in culture in which the innovations are derived from the peripheries – which results in a multicultural and multilingual character.

The traditions of multicultural comparative studies are present not only in the newest cultural and literary theories. Its precursors – as is shown by David Damrosch, who writes about two comparatists Meltzl and Posnet – stem from the 19th century. The researcher finds projects of anti-totalitarian comparative studies from the borderland that constitute an alternative for the comparative studies provided by the notion of nationality²⁰.

Boldrini and Lubrich point to the 20th century researchers, frequently emigrants and people of different cultures, who created comparative studies into the conditions of totalitarianism and oppose it; also Docherty writes that the figure that determines the comparatist is the figure of the other – the refugee. The following names are mentioned: René Wellek, Leo Spitzer, Teodor Adorn, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Auerbach, Walter Benjamin, Györgi Lukács, Ernst Curtius, or Peter Szondi. It should be noticed, however, that Kadir viewing the anti-totalitarian effort of the aforementioned researchers writes that they were stuck in the same Renaissance rationality that was the source of totalitarianism.

The issue of comparative studies in small countries can be interesting from our perspective. Lernout, similarly to other researchers, writes about it putting an emphasis on the cultural differentiation of comparative studies. The specificity of these countries – the articles mention usually Belgium or Holland – seems to be the fact that they constitute a meeting place for the borderland of many cultures but also the clashes and lobbying of different cultural forces. According to the researcher, it is difficult to read texts without references to other cultures. The authors of smaller literatures frequently determine their own identity by means of such references.

An analogy to the Polish situation can also be noticed in the characters of comparative studies beyond the West, in Arab countries or in China. Theory is usage-based and is adapted to the researchers' own needs.

A particularly important issue that appears in “Comparative Critical Studies” is the relation of comparative research with the cultural specificity of the given country. As I already mentioned, the methodological awareness of our comparative studies is not very developed and, apart from some exceptions, we can notice a reluctance of our comparatists towards theory (or maybe its practical applications)²¹. Theory here in Poland only begins to

²⁰ D. Damrosch, *Rebirth of a Discipline: The Global Origins of Comparative Studies*. “Comparative Critical Studies” 2006, V. 3. 1-2, p. 99-112.

²¹ E.g. the small amount of translations of theoretical and methodological works within comparative studies. The publication of *Antologia zagranicznej komparatystyki literackiej*. Ed. H. Janaszek-Ivaničkowa, Warszawa 1997, in fact, shows the tendency in the newest contemporary research. It should however be noticed that recently there have appeared translations of the work of S. T. de Zepetnek *Nowa Literatura Porównawcza jako teoria i metoda* (Transl. by A. Zawiszewska and A. Skrendo, commentary by J. Madejski). In: *Konstruktywizm w badaniach literackich. Antologia*. Eds. E. Kuźma, A. Skrenda, J. Madejski. Kraków 2006.

explore the areas that define the character of world comparative studies. I am thinking here about cultural studies and particularly about post-colonial research – that are treated distrustfully by Polish researchers²².

The researchers from the described issue of “Comparative Critical Studies” write that comparative studies seem to become a revisionist discipline that enables a different perspective of culture and literature than the hitherto proposed ones that are based on the category of nationality. I think that the proposals of post-colonial studies, but also the concept of intercultural difference that stems from deconstruction and inspires comparative research, enable a revising of the vision of Polish culture that was developed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Because of such a perspective, it seems that rethinking our relation with other cultures and rethinking the issue of multiculturalism which was in a sense lost in the 19th and 20th centuries – both due to ideological influences as well as changes in history and the specificity of the dominating theory of literature – are indispensable. I think that modern comparative studies can allow us to regain the lost experience of multiculturalism, e.g. by means of the newest literature²³. In my opinion this is the greatest aim of comparative research in Poland. Thus, it seems that our comparative studies, similarly to elsewhere in the world, have found themselves at the crossroads, among dilemmas which the authors of the articles in “Comparative Critical Studies” in 2006 write about.

Przel. Jolanta Sypiańska

²² The fact that there is only one book on this issue by an American writer, E. Thompson is evidence for that (*Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*. Transl. by A. Sierszulska. Kraków 2000).

²³ A project of thus viewed comparative studies was formulated by K. Ziemia *Projekt komparatystyki wewnętrznej (Polonistyka w przebudowie. Literaturoznawstwo – wiedza o języku – wiedza o kulturze – edukacja*. T. I, *op. cit.*).