

The problematic of colonialism and postcolonialism is mostly discussed in relation to the regions of the Middle East, Africa, and South and East Asia. Although the region of Central and Eastern Europe was already identified as postcolonial shortly after the fall of communism in the so-called Eastern bloc, the broadening of postcolonial studies to post-communist countries came only slowly. The application of postcolonial theory to the region of Central and Eastern Europe has gained ascendancy in the past ten years, especially in Poland and the Baltic countries. Benedikts Kalnačs's book *20th Century Baltic Drama: Postcolonial Narratives, Decolonial Options* draws on and develops this discourse. As he writes in the introduction, his postcolonial take on the Baltic countries is motivated by personal experience of the difference between post-communist society and West European society as well as by "the opportunity to look at things differently" (9).

Kalnačs places Baltic cultures at the crossroads between the West and the East and explores the contexts in which one can see them as colonized by foreign powers coming from both sides. The arrival of the German Knights in the 12th century to the Baltic region laid the foundation for later colonization. Even during the 18th and 19th centuries, when the present-day regions of Estonia and Latvia became part of the Russian Empire, Germans continued their cultural dominance by preserving their laws and German remained the local official language. The end of World War I brought political independence to the Baltic region and the Baltic nations identified themselves as part of European civilization. After World War II they became victims of Soviet colonialism, which Kalnačs interprets as a mimicry of global coloniality. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did the Baltic peoples regain their political independence. Conse-

quently, Kalnačs sees most of the dramatic production of what we can call the long 20th century (approximately from 1880 to 2015) in terms of postcoloniality and decoloniality. However, his interpretation is focused less on the (post)colonial victimhood of the Baltic peoples and more on their resistance against the colonizers and ultimately, following Walter Mignolo, on the decolonial project.

Kalnačs utilizes the comparative research of Baltic literatures of the past decades to present the literary cultures of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania as what we can designate in Dionýz Ďurišin's terminology an interliterary community. Despite considerable language differences, the three countries share a similar political and cultural history. However, Kalnačs does not attempt an exhaustive historical account of Baltic drama. He rather focuses on principal authors and works characteristic of each pattern in its development, which he identifies.

Kalnačs sees six such patterns to which he devotes one chapter each: 1. the national, which is associated with the national self-determination of each of the Baltic countries – Kalnačs focuses on the works of Latvian playwright Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1862–1908) in this chapter; 2. the philosophical, which placed the Baltic cultures in European philosophical and cultural contexts – Kalnačs documents it via the works of Latvian writer Rainis (1865–1929) and Estonian writer Anton Hansen Tammsaare (1878–1940); 3. the historical, which sought to preserve certain historical moments as well as challenge the official interpretation of history in the socialist period – in this chapter, Kalnačs analyses the plays of Lithuanian writers Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius (1882–1954), Justinas Marcinkevičius (1930–2011) and Juozas Grušas (1901–1986) as well as Estonian dramatist Jaan Kruusvall (1940–2012); 4) the contemporary, which focused on daily life, is

documented by the plays of Latvian authors Arvīds Grigulis (1906–1989) and Gunārs Priede (1928–2000) and the Estonian Juhan Smuul (1922–1971); 5) the absurd, which is characterized by political and mental resistance exemplified by the plays of the Estonian Paul-Eerik Rummo (b. 1942) and the Lithuanian Kazys Saja (b. 1932); 6) the postcolonial, which encompasses the period following the fall of the Soviet empire – Kalnačs analyses the works of Latvian authors Rūta Mežavilka (b. 1971), Inga Ābele (b. 1972), Māra Zālīte (b. 1952) and Estonian playwrights Jaan Tääte and Jaan Undusk (b. 1958).

Furthermore, Kalnačs shows that the historical and cultural self-representation of the Baltic nations follows two trajectories. The first one encompasses the national, philosophical, historical and contemporary patterns, and characterizes the period from the mid-19th century to the Soviet occupation of 1940. The second trajectory includes the contemporary, historical, absurd and (postcolonial) national patterns and is characteristic of the development of drama in the second half of the 20th century.

Beside many interesting details about Baltic cultural history in general and Baltic drama in particular, Kalnačs's interpretation of the development of the dramatic pro-

duction in the above-mentioned patterns is definitely the most valuable part of the book especially for those who are not experts on Baltic literatures but are interested in more general cultural processes. The book, published in English, is evidently written with such an audience in mind. It is an important contribution to the understanding of the ascent and character of modernity in the Baltic region. The modernism as manifested in the three countries may be less radical aesthetically but seems to have a strong political undertone which Kalnačs brings forward expertly through the theoretical prism of coloniality, postcoloniality and decoloniality. Moreover, he argues that the 20th century Baltic societies represent “the suppressed side of modernity” (2015) – that they belong to “its darker or colonial side” (216). At the end, in the footsteps of Walter Dignolo, he urges the Baltic societies to be open to a decolonial epistemic shift, i.e. to understand modernity from the perspective of coloniality. Benedikts Kalnačs's book represents a kind of postcolonial/decolonial criticism which is not only an application of a ready-made theory but an interpretation which brings a fresh understanding of the development of Baltic cultures in the 20th century.

RÓBERT GÁFRIK

JÖRG KRAPPMANN: *Allerhand Übergänge. Interkulturelle Analysen der regionalen Literatur in Böhmen und Mähren sowie der deutschen Literatur in Prag (1890-1918)*

Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013. 384 S. ISBN 978-3-8376-2075-7

Jörg Krappmann nimmt die Aufgabe der Philologie in seiner 2013 erschienenen Studie in der Tat sehr ernst, denn die hat es mit Kommunikationssystemen zu tun, die immer wieder neu perspektiviert, wahrgenommen und bewertet werden. Dennoch können wir in diesen Systemen eine gewisse Stabilität beobachten, die jedoch ohne eine ständige, ununterbrochene Bewegung nicht zu haben ist. So gesehen muss jeder

Seiltänzer in Bewegung bleiben, um nicht abzustürzen und auf jede Bewegung erfolgt eine Gegenbewegung. Auch ein literaturgeschichtliches Bild entsteht in ständiger Bewegung, dank einer beweglichen Kommunikationsbasis, die uns ermöglicht, uns aufeinander einzupendeln und uns in einem ursprünglich amorphen Raum zu orientieren. Wir brauchen diese Fixsterne, diese etablierten und anerkannten Anhaltspunkte