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TRANSCULTURAL CONGO AS THE PERIPHERY OF EUROPE OR A HYBRID AND NETWORKED *ARCHIPELAGO*: TRANSCULTURALITY WITHIN THE VISUAL CULTURE STUDIES

Abstract: The article takes up the issue of imagining and representing the periphery of Europe in the context of colonial and post-colonial reflection. The analyzed examples are art works that can be treated as transcultural representations. The main concept that has been scrutinized is transculturality as proposed by Wolfgang Welsch, who criticizes the existing concepts of individual cultures, as well as the ideas of multiculturalism and interculturalism. The starting point is the belief of Nicholas Mirzoeff that all cultures are transcultures. Within the field of Visual Culture Studies, the concept of transculturality has been replaced by transculturation and transculture, which are involved in the process of constructing networked cultural identities with a hybrid structure. The notions of transculturation and transculture can also be applied to the works of José Bedia. The evolution of Mirzoeff's thinking about transculturality proceeds from the affirmation of the position of the Cuban anthropologist Alfonso Ortiz to the transformation of Welsch's concept. The photographs of Herbert Lang are juxtaposed with the concept of "imperial transculture", which refers to the scopic regimes of Martin Jay. These connotations also direct us toward the understanding of the concept of "imperialism" of Edward W. Said, who treats the Orient as an artificial construct. In this sense, one example of the operation of the visual regime of colonialization can be provided by the *nkisi* figures that appear in the works *Fetish No. 2* (1988) by Renée Stout and *Ta Tele* (1988) by Trigo Piula, which can be interpreted in relation to Marcel Mauss's magic fetishism and Karl Marx's commodity fetishism. Another example of the operation of the visual regime of colonialization is the necropolitics of the civil war in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes and two more works – *Scramble for Africa* (2003) by Yinka Shonibare and *The Chief: he who sold Africa to the colonists* (1997) by Samuel Fosso. The concept of constructing an image of the Kongo peoples presented here is based on the assumption that it is the result of the operation of the discourse created by the European colonizers. This point of view can be also found in the book *The Right to Look*, where Mirzoeff constructs the definitions of visuality and countervisuality.

Keywords: transculturality, Congo, imagining Europe, representing periphery, hybridity, networked archipelago, Visual Culture Studies.

INTRODUCTION

The issues of imagining and representing the periphery of Europe are inextricably connected with the concepts of transculturality and hybridization. Currently, the continent is an ethnic and social space which has been constantly transforming and expanding its boundaries, thus leading to their erasure. In today's transcultural world the provinces or peripheries of Europe are located outside the European continent and the European Union.

The purpose of my article is to analyze the concept of transculturality in the context set by the Visual Culture and Postcolonial Studies. As an example, I have chosen the Congo – a country located in Central Africa on the Atlantic Ocean. Kongo was a crucial part of the so-called "Black Atlantic", and the current spelling of the name of the country, "Congo", reflects the colonial use of English. In the post-colonial world, Congo is like a periphery of Europe. This is particularly visible on the maps created by the Europeans showing Congo as a "European" country divided into provinces. Terry Smith describes a similar process in his study of the colonial representations of Australia which resembled the landscapes of England.[1]

The postcolonial perspective reveals that cultural identity is formed during the process of othering (transculturation),[2] adopting a hybrid structure of cultural networks. Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that the colonized peoples of the Congo are represented as a product of European colonial discourse. This is not a processed (transformed) image of "savages", but an artificial construct, socially shaped just like gender. The Europeans destroyed the indigenous people to create transcultural versions of cultures.[3] The resulting cultural hybrid resembles a network of cultural references in which the Congo is not an "island", but part of a cultural archipelago. These transcultural tendencies can be seen in the works of both European and African art, which clearly shows the social changes currently taking place.

The notion of transculturality was introduced into the field of Cultural Studies by Wolfgang Welsch, who argued that it is connected with the concept of the transversal mind (*transversale Vernunft*). Welsch stresses the

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[1]   T. Smith, 2002, 'Visual Regimes of Colonization: Aboriginal Seeing and European Vision in Australia', in: N. Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader,* Second Edition, Routledge, London and New York, p. 419.

[2]   See H.K. Bhabha, 1994, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 175.

[3]   N. Mirzoeff, 1999, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, First Edition, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 131-132.

importance of three aspects of the mind: subjectivity, pluralism and trans-versality.[4] The concept of the transversal mind directs us towards the issues of identity, which can also be linked to transculturality in the field of the psychology of culture, which understands the prefix "trans-" as meaning "between."[5] Transculturality is also symptomatic of post-modernism and the various processes of globalization, which relate particularly to social processes, an example of which can also be the aesthetization of reality, which leads to its hybridization.

In the essay "Transculturality: A Puzzling Form of Cultures Today", Wolf-gang Welsch criticizes the existing concepts of individual cultures, as well as the more contemporary ideas of multiculturalism and interculturalism:

> If cultures were in fact still – as these concepts suggest – constituted in the form of islands or spheres, then one could neither rid oneself of, nor solve the problem of their coexistence and cooperation. However, the description of today's cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Cultures *de facto* no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries.[6]

Welsch's concept of transculturality is an expression of a particular structure of culture, which includes several levels. The first of these levels is building a network, which Welsch explains as follows:

> Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures. The way of life for an economist, an academic or a journalist is no longer German or French, but rather European or global in tone.[7]

These connections can be found in the understanding of transculturality in Visual Culture Studies, in which the concept has been adapted with many changes that have led to the transformation of its original meaning.

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[4] W. Welsch, 2005, *Vernunft. Die zeitgenösische Vermuftkritik und das Konzept der trans-versalen Vernunft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 830, 843.

[5] Z.W. Dudek, A. Pankalla, 2008, *Psychologia kultury. Doświadczenia graniczne i trans-kulturowe*, „Eneteia", Wydawnictwo Psychologii Kultury, Warszawa, p. 248.

[6] W. Welsch, 1999, 'Transculturality: the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today', in: M. Feather-stone and S. Lash (eds.), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, Sage, London, p. 197.

[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 197–198.

TRANSCULTURE AND TRANSCULTURATION WITHIN VISUAL CULTURE STUDIES

The starting point for Mirzoeff's reflection on the concept of transculture is the assumption that "Culture is never a pure object but always the hybrid product of networks. Or to be brief all culture is transculture."[8] Mirzoeff uses the term "culture", but in a dynamic, fluid way. He adopts the meaning of transculture in accordance with the ideas of the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who insisted it did not mean

> merely acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as de-culturation. In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neo-culturation.[9]

The notion combining Welsch's concept of transculturality with the idea of transculture is hybridization, which characterizes contemporary cultural transformations. Welsch advocates the assumption that we now have to deal with the construction of hybrid "transcultural identity networks"[10], which can be explained as follows: "For every single culture, all other cultures have tendentially come to be internal elements or satellites. This applies on the levels of population, merchandise and information."[11] We can also read that "Cultural conditions today are characterized everywhere by mixing and permeations."[12] Welsch claims that the transformations of social life are the source of many ethnic and cultural hybrids and constitute one of the levels of transculturality.

Hybridization also gains a new meaning in the face of globalization, which has changed communication in a very important way. According to Ryszard W. Kluszczyński,

> The globalization of culture is a process that appeared due to the development and spread of communication technologies. Media and multimedia

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[8] N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Second Edition, Routledge, London and New York, p. 41.

[9] F. Ortiz (1947) 1995, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tabacco and Sugar*, trans. H. de Onis, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p. 103.

[10] W. Welsch, 2002, 'Rethinking Identity in the Age of Globalization – a Transcultural Perspective', in: Taiwan Association of Aesthetics and Art Science (eds.), *Aesthetics & Art Science*, No. 1, pp. 85-94.

[11] W. Welsch, 1997, *Undoing Aesthetics*, Sage, London, p. 140.

[12] *Ibidem.*

art is one of the forms of the use of those technologies. Inevitably, therefore, it is (multi)media art that becomes the expression of the globalization of culture and the basic space of the discourses on globalization.[13]

Contemporary (multi)media art seems to confirm this thesis. Examples can be found in many art works by Douglas Davis, Nam June Paik, Kinga Aray and Vera Frenkel.[14]

In place of "transculturality", Mirzoeff uses the term "transculturation", which is defined as a three-stage process: of expansion, or acquisition of certain elements of a new culture; the loss of others, taking place under duress; and the selection and transformation of the transferred or borrowed formulas into a consistent whole.[15] The concept of transculturation can mean both transculture or the process leading to its creation, depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the structure or the process. Although transculturation resembles the postmodern projects of transculturality, Ortiz does not engage these contexts. We may say that the process of transculturation as understood by Mirzoeff creates the effect of transculture as formulated by Ortiz.[16]

In the second half of the 20th century, the places previously thought to be the focal points of culture experienced transculturation. As noted by Antonio Benítez-Rojo, transculture "takes us to what lies at the heart of postmodern (...) analysis: a questioning of the concept of 'unity' and a dismantling, or rather unmasking, of the mechanism we know as 'binary opposition'."[17] Continuing these considerations within the framework of the modernist opposition between culture and civilization, one may conclude that transculture proposes a method of analyzing the hybrid, syncretic, global diaspora in which we live.

The notions of transculturation and transculture appear in relation to the work of the artists who use visual media. Mirzoeff gives the example of the Cuban artist José Bedia, who worked in Cuba, Mexico and the United States, thereby confirming his transcultural identity. Bedia claims that the trans-

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[13] R. W. Kluszczyński, 2004, 'Historie hybrydyzacji. Sztuka (multi)mediów wobec procesów globalizacji', in: *Kultura w czasach globalizacji*, M. Jacyno, A. Jawłowska, M. Kempny (eds.), Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii Państwowej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa, p. 279.

[14] *Ibidem,* p. 279-286.

[15] N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[16] *Ibidem*, pp. 41-42.

[17] A. Benítez-Rojo, 1996, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. J.E. Maraniss, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p. 154. Quoted in: N. Mirzoeff, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

cultural process is taking place in the field of indigenous cultures. He speaks of himself as a person with roots in Western Europe, who aims to bring together and establish a transcultural dialogue with the various cultures he has experienced.[18]
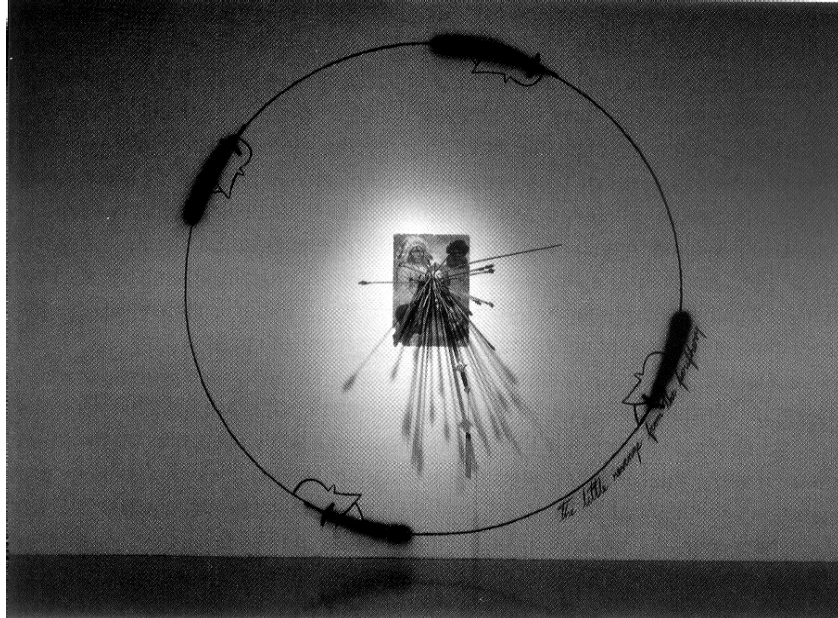
José Bedia: *The Little Revenge From the Periphery* (1993),
The George Adams Gallery, New York

In the piece *The Little Revenge From the Periphery* (1993), Bedia addresses the problems of racism. He recognizes the importance of air travel in constructing the global world. The faces of the people placed in the symbolic circle represent the four races (black, yellow, red and white), arranged according to the 19th-century classification of races, which shows an Indian, an Asian, an African and a monkey orbiting around the white man. The eponymous "little revenge" comes from the fact that numerous arrows and a stone axe pierce the white figure placed in the centre of the image – the tools that cause tension between the modern "city" and its antonym – the primitive periphery. His strategy is based on creating a new cultural map in space and time, which does not circulate around the white man. In this sense,

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[18]   *Ibidem*, pp. 131-132.

transculture is the experience of the periphery, which offers a new understanding of "culture" as something which is always subject to transformation. However, the inscriptions indicating the races in Bedia's work are in English, just as the title of the work. The artist is trying in this way to emphasize the role and popularity of English in the transcultural world.[19] Ivo Mesquita, writing about Bedia, recounts how the work of transculture "resembles that of a traveler who, traversing different landscapes, describes routes, points out passages, establishes landmarks, fixes the boundaries of a specific territory."[20] This description resembles the colonial narratives from the 19th century, which represent the colonized territories as "empty spaces" awaiting the arrival of the Europeans – the colonizers, who only then make them true "locations of culture". The key question seems to be the role of visual culture in redefining culture as a constantly changing experience of transculture, devoid of any boundaries.

Writing about transculturation, Mirzoeff draws attention to the fact that it does not stop after one occurrence, and it recurs periodically, as long as this is allowed by the newly created cultural conditions, which are also subject to transculturation. In Ortiz's concept of transculture, the myth of an "original" or "singular" culture is dismissed, because all cultures are transcultures. For this reason Mirzoeff emphasizes that "the repetition of transculturation means that there is no singular transulture, that all transculture is plural."[21] Ortiz's understanding of transculture refers to the local situation in the Caribbean, whereas, according to Mirzoeff, the phenomenon is rooted in visual culture and can be understood as a feature of "networked globalization." In this case, the patterns of neoculturation and deculturation are constantly repeated. In order to describe transculture, Mirzoeff uses Edouard Glissant's metaphor of "the archipelago" as "a series of connected islands" forming a network. [22] At this point it is worth recalling the approach which understands the archipelago as an effect of travelling and the creation of new network connections and pathways in the age of globalization.

For Mirzoeff the importance of transculture lies in its criticism of the concept of a "singular or original" culture. This is particularly evident in globalization. Today's world is a place of dramatic divisions between European values and those that come from orthodox Islam. However, even Europe, pro-

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[19]   *Ibidem*, p. 132.
[20]   I. Mesquita, 1993, *Cartographies*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, p. 19. Quoted in: N. Mirzoeff, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[21]   N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[22]   *Ibidem*.

claiming the idea of unity within the European Union, seems to be increasingly divided. For example, in Belgium, there is a clear division between the users of Flemish and French. The division of social interests was also to be observed in the UK, where Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the Labour Party called for the unity of the Kingdom, while the Labour leader in Scotland supported the independence referendum there.[23]

Taking into account the evolution of Mirzoeff's position on transculturation, it must be noted that he comes to identify with the concepts discussed by Welsch. Mirzoeff talks about the network connections and cultural hybridization. For this reason, his concept of transculturation approaches the meaning of the term "transculturality". This situation also results from the fact that although Mirzoeff borrows the concept of transculture from Ortiz, he comes closer semantically to Welsch's notion. Transculturation can therefore be understood as transculturality. But when Mirzoeff says that "transculture is plural", he refers to the concept of transculturation as a process which involves many cultures.

TRANSCULTURAL CONGO WITHIN THE PERSPECTIVE OF COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM

The appearance in the 1980s of Postcolonial Studies and the postcolonial turn sparked the development of new theoretical perspectives in many disciplines of the humanities. Within the Visual Culture Studies, particularly important are the changes in the history of art and the formation of so-called "postcolonial aesthetics", which takes as its starting point the concept of non-European art and the transcultural circulation of artefacts.[24] From this perspective, the concept of transculturality is an essential tool of theoretical reflection.

Mirzoeff follows this approach in analyzing the case of the Congo in reference to the concept of "imperial transcultures."[25] His main point is that the Europeans had a large amount of knowledge about the Congo and "seemed wilfully to forget all that they had learned about Africa since the fifteenth century – in Ortiz's terms, they deculturated Kongo in order to

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[23]   *Ibidem.*
[24]   V. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 2003, 'Postkolonialismus' in: U. Pfisterer (ed.), *Metzler Lexikon Kustwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, Metzler, Stuttgasrd and Weimar, pp. 278-282.
[25]   N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit.* p. 129.

acculturate themselves and Africans to the new entity they had created named the Congo."[26] This fact is confirmed by the French philosopher Ernest Renan in his lecture *What is a nation?*, where he says that the key thing in the creation of a nation is to forget what had previously been in the public consciousness.[27]

The process of cultural forgetting (deculturation) can be confirmed visually by what Mirzoeff finds in early modern maps showing specific and detailed knowledge of African geography and containing the local names. On the other hand, in the 19th century, this knowledge was largely ignored. The Europeans tried to create a new image of the "Dark Continent", while there was no real "wilderness", except in the imagination of the colonizers. The map of the Congo River showed areas at the focus of European colonization surrounded by large blank spaces. In this sense we can speak of a post-colonial interpretation, in which the map showing the river Congo provides virtually nothing to see except the empty space to be colonized. However, that space in fact hosted a civilization, which the Europeans destroyed. The kingdoms which existed there in the Middle Ages were demoted to the level of warring tribes by the intervention of the Europeans, who created "wilder-ness" where there had once been culture (through a process of decultura-tion).[28]
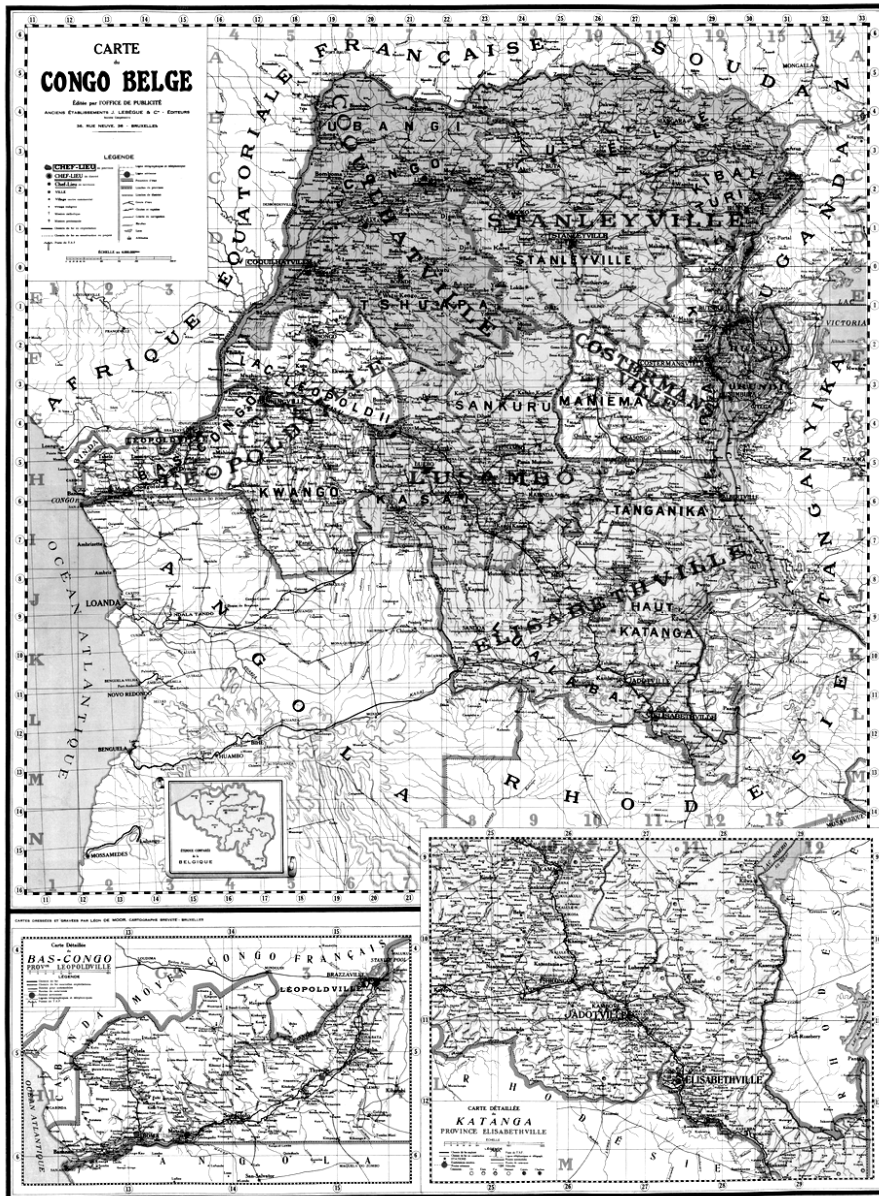
By the end of the 15th century, King Afonso I Mvemba Nzinga (1456–1542) learned Portuguese and established diplomatic relations with the Portuguese king. However, this fact was totally erased from the collective consciousness. In this way, the colonial discourse erased the knowledge of the situation in the region, creating instead an illusion that can be deconstructed by postcolonial discourse. Mirzoeff notes that "The process of deculturation here took the most violent form imaginable, forcing the peoples of Kongo to acculturate to new political realities and create new cultural practices from religion to art and medicine."[29] The notion of Africa is a product of Western colonial discourse, which introduced the image of the division of the African continent between different colonial powers.
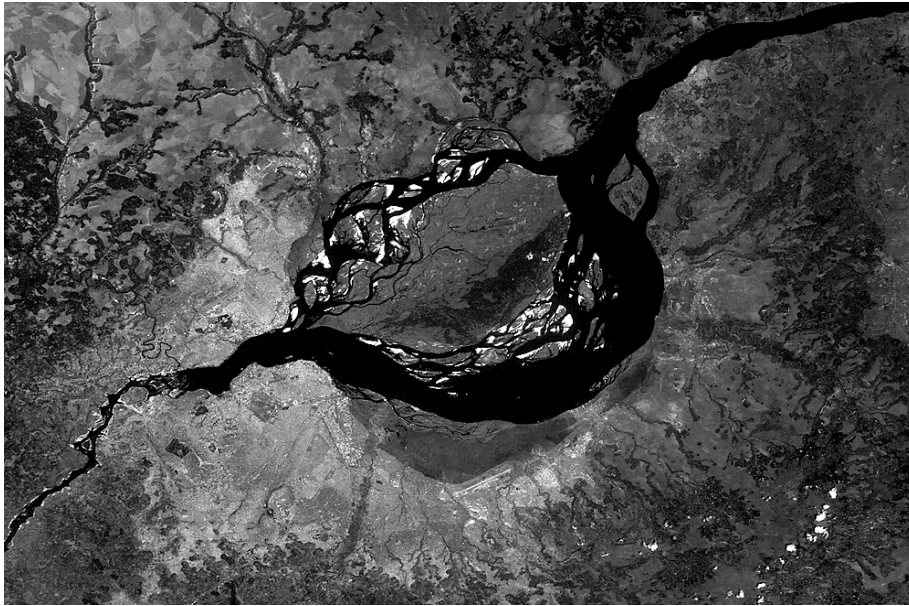
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[26] *Ibidem*.
[27] E. Renan, 1990, *What is a Nation?*, in: H. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 11.
[28] N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit*., pp. 129-130. The same chapter can be found in the first edition of Mirzoeff's 1999, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-161.
[29] N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit*., p. 133.

The map of the Belgian Congo in the colonial period

Satellite picture of Brazzaville, Kinshasa and the Malebo Pool of the Congo River

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Mirzoeff provides examples of photographs by Herbert Lang supposedly showing the "authentic" customs of the local peoples, but in fact presenting an image of the colonial order. For example, in one of the photos showing a tribal chief and his subjects, the former is seen wearing some items given to him by the Belgians, who, according to Mirzoeff, instituted his power over the tribe as part of their colonial expansion. What betrays the artifice of the

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[30]   N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

composition is a figure in the background wearing European clothes. There is also the photograph by M. French-Sheldon showing a black man grinning and baring his teeth, which was used instrumentally in supporting the discourse of cannibalism, allegedly vying with the European civilization. The Belgian government organized a series of stops along the Congo river for the European travellers to provide them with opportunities to take pictures in civilized conditions. In this way the photographs which were to render local cultures presented a hybrid reality shaped by colonialism.[31]
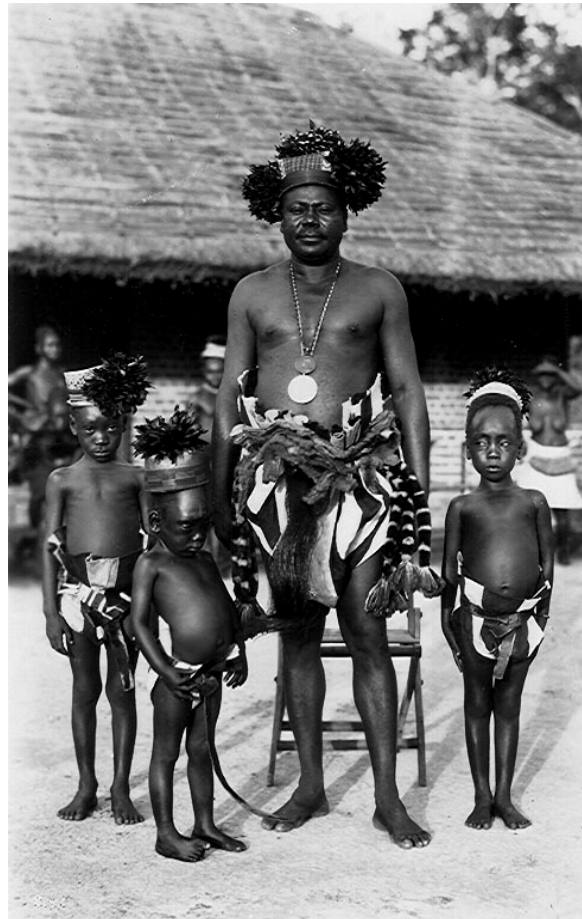
Herbert Lang, *Grand Chief Mangbetu Okodongwe*,
Belgian Congo, 1915

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[31]   *Ibidem*, pp. 135-136.

In the area of visual culture the procedures of photographing the natives may be viewed as part of the so-called visual regime which is a "way of seeing" and a set of cultural practices imposed by colonialism and the exercise of power. In his essay "Visual Regimes of Colonization. Aboriginal Seeing and European Vision in Australia", Terry Smith identifies three visual regimes of colonization that were practised in the Australian colonies, and in North and South America. They are calibration, obliteration and symbolization (aesthetization).[32] It is within aesthetization that one may place the practices of photographing the natives described above. They are about processing the world of experience, treating its selected parts or certain relationships within it as representations of abstract ideas (beauty) or ideological tendencies. Aesthetization was "an open form of visual journeying – a technique for stringing otherwise incompatible sights and sites together."[33] Jane Kromm approaches the issue of travelling in a similar way, writing that

> Travelers, merchants, military operatives, and explorers produced or commissioned depictions of people and scenery that helped to establish the colonizers' visual control over the colonized for consumption by the Western spectators. This imagery in its cumulative effect comprised a style and formal system that was able to pass for a kind of political reality, identified with a visual regime as oppressive as any other type of rule. The main components of this style or regime were the antithesis of Modernism in the West, repeatedly underscoring the passive and inchoate, the damagingly emotional, the nonrational, and the barbaric. These qualities reinforced the truth claims of European colonizing efforts as they presented isolated, exotic cultural phenomenon as exemplary for entire cultures and countries.[34]

This lengthy passage about creating the "ways of seeing" of colonialism is an introduction to the issues described by Mirzoeff. It seems important that they are placed among the problems of imperialism. On the one hand, we are dealing with the problems of transculture and transculturation, while on the other hand Mirzoeff brings in the term "empire" by speaking of "imperial transcultures", which can be applied to the scopic regimes of Martin Jay.[35] In this concept, the images represented by the stereotypical depictions constitute

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[32] T. Smith, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 483.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 484.

[34] J. Kromm 2010, *Introduction*, in: J. Kromm, S.B. Bakewell (eds.) *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization From the 18th to the 21st Century*, Berg, Oxford and New York, pp. 238–239.

[35] See M. Jay, 1988, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', in: H. Foster (ed.), Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture Number 2: 'Vision and. Visuality', Bay Press, Seattle, pp. 3–23.

transcultural "empires of the visual". Paul S. Landau claims that the ways of representing the Africans were established in the Victorian era. He compares Jay's scopic regimes to the results of "synechdochic connections" between stereotypical images and ideological connotations arising out of the exercise of power, which give rise to the "'empires' of visualization"[36]. This comparison is particularly relevant in reference to the photographs of Herbert Lang, which were used for solidifying certain types of images of the Congolese people in the minds of the Europeans, giving rise to these conceptual "empires".

In this case, the understanding of the notion of "imperialism" relates to the conclusions of Edward W. Said, who recognizes the Orient to be an "artificial" construct. It is, in fact, the result of the operation of the colonial discourse created by the European travellers, populating this realm with exotic creatures and placing there love affairs, adventures and dangerous events.[37] According to Paul S. Landau, the ways of constructing the image of Africa ("image-Africa") derive from the European conceptualizations of the Orient.[38] The term "imperialism" is controversial in the context of the contemporary discussions of its meaning.[39] One may thus consider its place in the field of reflection within the Visual Culture Studies. This problem was addressed by Paul S. Landau in his essay *Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa*, in which he uses the phrase "empires of visualization."[40]

Examples of the operations of the visual regimes of colonialization include the *minkisi* figures used by the African witch-doctors, who drove nails into them to curse their enemies. In accordance with the proposal by Marcel Mauss, the name *nkisi* (singular of *minkisi*) and its analogues have replaced the notion of "fetishism". In this sense, the meaning of the word "fetish" moves into the area of magic, which becomes a field of action and the exercise of power, which means the ability to animate someone or something against their own will.[41]

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[36] P.S. Landau, 2002, 'Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa', in: P.S. Laudau and D.D. Kaspin (eds.), *Images & Empires. Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles and London, p. 144.

[37] E.W. Said, 1977, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London, p. 221.

[38] P.S. Landau, 2002, 'Introduction. An Amazing Distance: Pictures and People in Africa', in: P.S. Laudau and D.D. Kaspin (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[39] E.W. Said, 1994, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, p. 5.

[40] P.S. Landau, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[41] H. Böhme, 2012, *Fetyszyzm i kultura: inna teoria nowoczesności*, trans. M. Falkowski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, p. 208.

Nkisi Power Figure from Congo

Nkisi figures appear in the works of European and American artists. One example of such a work is the sculpture *Fetish No. 2* (1988) by Renée Stout, which represents the body of the artist. The title, however, comes from the term "fetish" created within the Western culture. Mirzoeff believes that this figure shows the strength of African-American feminism and the difficult plight of the women in the Congo during the colonial era. The abdominal area of the *nkisi* figures contains a space in which people place herbs, and in this case what one finds there is a postage stamp from Niger, an old photo of
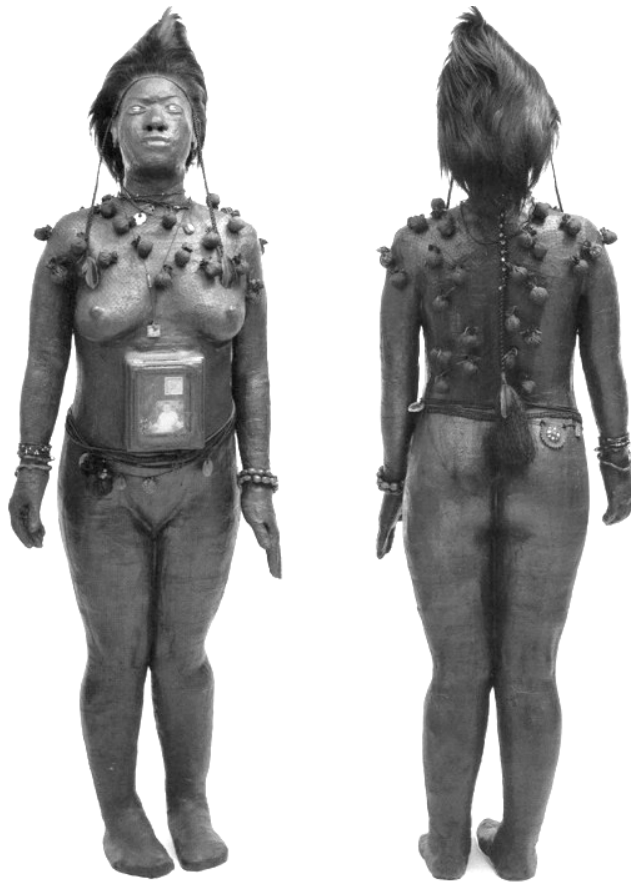
Renée Stout: *Fetish No. 2* (1988),
Collection of the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas

a baby and some dry flowers. It is particularly interesting that the picture of the baby resembles the "hybrid children" (of mixed race), born in the Congo during the colonial era. The postage stamp from Niger alludes to the African diaspora, but also to the European practice of sending home postcards showing the life of the locals. The flowers, in turn, refer to the practice of activating the magical figures to counter the colonial powers. Black female body has always evoked fear and desire in the Western culture. The author does not repress the sexuality of the figure, nor does she emphasize it, focusing rather on the use of the body as a source of power.[42]

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[42]   N. Mirzoeff 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Trigo Piula: *Ta Tele* (1988), collection of the artist

Another piece, *Ta Tele* (1988) by Trigo Piula, shows the audience facing a *nkisi* figure with a TV set located in its abdomen, displaying its face. In the background are two rows of TV screens showing, among other things: talk shows, a football match, beer commercials, Paris with the Eiffel Tower, a white couple kissing, a table with food, and a view of the Earth from space, all of which represent the desires of the audience shown in the foreground as an outline of heads, bearing the symbols (e.g. a knife and fork) of what they desire. This artwork suggests that the Western European need to possess consumer goods is the fetishism that has contributed to the present condition of Africa. This commodity fetishism has a much greater impact on people than the magical fetishism of the *minkisi* figures.[43] However, both kinds of

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[43] *Ibidem*, p. 202.

fetishism mentioned here have a recognizable common source: commodity fetishism was also based on the magical exchange of gifts. Karl Marx's use of the term "fetish" was based on the semantic ambiguity of the Portuguese word *feitiço* and the Latin *factitius*, which mean both "magical" and "artificially produced". Objects become fetishes when their artificiality and their belonging to the realm of the profane is effaced.[44]

One more example of the visual regime of colonization is the necropolitics during the civil war in Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes. Achille Mbembe contrasts biopolitics with necropolitics and explains that "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die, power over who should live and who should die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitutes the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes."[45] The European countries that colonized Africa practise biopolitics, as opposed to the colonized countries, where necropolitics prevails. Genocide in the war was a form of mediated representation, that is one tribe thought of the other as collaborating with the colonizers. The war began when the Hutu attacked the Tutsi, because they treated them as "scapegoats" and identified with the colonizers. For the murderers this particular "revenge for colonization" was not an outbreak of violence, but a "symbolic act." That is why killing was referred to as "work", and machetes and guns as "tools." The identification of the Tutsi with the colonizers was a form of including the problematic of power in the postcolonial discourse. For this reason, the attack of the Hutu on the Tutsi tribe was an act of taking over power, similar to the actions of the colonizers.[46]

As part of the issue of "visualizing the postcolonial", Mirzoeff describes the installation *Scramble for Africa* (2003) by Yinka Shonibare, which shows mannequins without heads at a table with a map of Africa. The characters from the installation are dividing the African mainland in a similar way as the colonizers at nineteenth-century political conferences. However, back then it was the "heads of state" that divided Africa, whereas the mannequins in Shonibare's installation have no heads.[47]

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[44] H. Böhme, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 289.
[45] A. Mbembe, 2008, 'Necropolitics', in: S. Morton and S Bygrave (eds.), *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Essays on Biopolitics and the Defence of Society*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, p. 152.
[46] N. Mirzoeff, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
[47] *Ibidem*, p. 211.

Yinka Shonibare: *Scramble for Africa* (2003),
The Museum of African Art, New York

Another particularly interesting art work seems to be the photograph *The Chief: he who sold Africa to the colonists* (1997) by Samuel Fosso, which shows a dark-skinned character – a leader wearing a hybrid attire with elements of both Western and African culture. In this piece the artist uses his own "visual identity," because the work is also a self-portrait.[48] This hybrid identity is a strategy based on cultural purity, but directed towards drawing on the patterns of Western European culture by combining them with African values.[49]

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[48] *Ibidem*, p. 214.
[49] A. Loomba, 2000, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 173-174.

Samuel Fosso: *The Chief: he who sold Africa to the colonists* (1997),
JM Patras, Paris

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have attempted to present the transcultural Congo as a periphery
of Europe, where the issues of hybrid and networked cultures can be seen in
the context of colonial and post-colonial discourse. The construction of the
images of the peoples of the Congo has been shown to be an effect of the
operations of the discourse produced by the European colonizers. The images
in question can be compared to the concept of discourse as understood by
Michel Foucault. In his writings the notion refers to the level of spoken
language, or to linguistic practices.[50] The discourse is thus any form of the

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[50]   M. Foucault, 1972, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans.
        A.M. Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books, New York, p. 80.

use of language in which it is manifest, but it is not language itself or a statement.[51] The same also applies to images, which can function like textual discourse, but are not discourse themselves.

Such an understanding of Foucault's concept in the context of creating mental imagery can lead to the conclusion that the image is an "artificial" artefact of (colonial and postcolonial) discourse. In this sense, Foucault's discursive "archaeology of knowledge" can be understood as the "archaeology of knowledge about the image", because it puts visuality in the context of discursive practices.[52] This point of view can be also found in the book *The Right to Look*, where Mirzoeff constructs the definitions of "imperial visuality and countervisuality" by referring to the notion of "imperial discourse." According to Foucault, the operations of discourse result in the production of a certain order: "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed as a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to avoid its ponderous, formidable materiality."[53] As a result of the exercise of power, the discourse of visuality/ countervisuality is imposed on those who are colonized.[54] Such was the situation in the Congo, colonized by the Belgians.

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[51] In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Michel Foucault approached this issue in the following manner: "For it is obvious that statements do not exist in the same sense in which a language (langue) exists, and, with that language, a collection of signs defined by their contrasting characteristics and their rules of use; a language in fact is never given in itself, in its totality; it could only be so in a secondary way, in the oblique form of a description that would take it as its object; the signs that make up its elements are forms that are imposed upon statements and control them from within. If there were no statements, the language (langue) would not exist; but no statement is indispensable for a language to exist (and one can always posit, in place of any statement, another statement that would in no way modify the language). The language exists only as a system for constructing possible statements; but in another respect, it exists only as a (…) description obtained from a collection of real statements. Language (langue) and statement are not at the same level of existence; and one cannot say that there are statements in the same way as one says that there are languages (langues)". *Ibidem*, p. 85.

[52] A. Leśniak, 2010, *Obraz płynny. Geoges Didi-Huberman i dyskurs historii sztuki*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, Kraków, pp. 23-25.

[53] M. Foucault, 1981, 'The Order of Discourse', trans. I. McLeod, in: *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston and London, p. 52.

[54] N. Mirzoeff, 2011, *The Right to Look. A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, Dukham and London, p. 196.

TRANSKULTUROWE KONGO JAKO PERYFERIE EUROPY ALBO HYBRYDOWY I USIECIOWIONY "ARCHIPELAG": TRANSKULTUROWOŚĆ W BADANIACH NAD KULTURĄ WIZUALNĄ
(streszczenie)

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę wyobrażeń i reprezentacji peryferii Europy w kontekście refleksji kolonialnej i postkolonialnej. Analizowanymi przykładami są prace artystyczne, które mogą być traktowane jako reprezentacje transkulturowe. Głównym pojęciem, które zostało poddane rewizji jest transkulturowość w ujęciu proponowanym przez Wolfganga Welscha, który krytykuje istniejące koncepcje izolowanych kultur, a także idee wielokulturowości i interkulturowości. Punktem wyjścia jest przekonanie Nicholasa Mirzoeffa, że wszystkie kultury są transkulturami. W obszarze badań nad kulturą wizualną pojęcie transkulturowości zostaje zastąpione przez transkulturację i transkulturę, które uczestniczą w procesach konstruowania sieci tożsamości kulturowych o charakterze hybrydowym. Pojęcia transkulturacji i transkultury można również odnieść do prac artystycznych José Bedii. Ewolucja myśli Mirzoeffa na temat transkulturowości przebiega od afirmacji stanowiska kubańskiego antropologa Alfonso Ortiza do transformacji koncepcji Welscha. Prace fotograficzne Herberta Langa są zestawione z koncepcją „imperialnej transkultury", która odnosi się do reżimów skopicznych Martina Jaya. Przywołane konotacje kierują nas również w stronę rozumienia „imperializmu" Edwarda W. Saida, traktującego Orient jako „sztuczny" wytwór dyskursu kolonialnego. W tym sensie przykładem funkcjonowania reżimu skopicznego kolonializmu mogą być figurki *nkisi*, pojawiające się w pracach *Fetish No. 2* (1988) Renée Stout i *Ta Tele* (1988) Trigo Piula, które mogą być interpretowane w kontekście fetyszyzmu magicznego Marcela Maussa i fetyszyzmu towarowego Karola Marksa. Kolejnym przykładem działania wizualnego reżimu kolonializmu jest nekropolityka podczas wojny domowej w Ruandzie między plemionami Hutu i Tutsi i dwie następne prace, *Scramble for Africa* (2003) Yinka Shonibare i *The Chief: he who sold Africa to the colonists* (1997) Samuela Fosso. Zaprezentowana koncepcja konstruowania obrazu ludów Kongo opierała się na założeniu, że jest on efektem funkcjonowania dyskursu wytworzonego przez europejskich kolonizatorów. Ten punkt widzenia daje się również odnaleźć w książce *The Right to Look*, w której Mirzoeff buduje definicje wizualności i kontrwizualności.

Słowa klucze: transkulturowość, Kongo, wyobrażenie Europy, reprezentacja peryferii, hybrydowość, usieciowiony „archipelag", studia kultury wizualnej.