

su visión descentralizadora de España, considerando el centralismo como extranjerizante y portador de valores ajenos a la esencia y tradición española. Estos objetivos y planteamientos se vislumbran aquí y se van desarrollando convenientemente a lo largo de la obra. Pese a complementar el núcleo del estudio, el lector puede tener (tal y como reconoce la autora) una ligera sensación de reiteración con esta composición.

El libro conforma un estudio riguroso, rico, que desprende un gran conocimiento del franquismo y su historiografía. La trascendencia de la disciplina de la Historia y la centralidad del ámbito de la cultura en el campo de batalla de la ideología con el rigor que acompaña, hace de este trabajo, sobre las primeras décadas de la dictadura franquista, un aporte de obligatoria consulta. La fundación de mitos e interpretaciones de la idea de nación que forman parte de los intentos de hegemonización político-cultural de los distintos actores políticos; destacan en una obra que nos invita a reflexionar sobre acontecimientos político-culturales y usos de la historia de índole similar que nos acontecen.

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PROZOROV, Sergei. *The Ethics of Postcommunism: History and Social Praxis in Russia*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009.

Post-socialism has been often attached to multidimensional transformations, many of them failed. Also the term was related to a (supposed) historical process of transition and to an emotional rush to the future that had to overcome both a recent past and socialist ideas. To understand the central thesis of Sergei Prozorov's book, I consider convenient to start by acknowledging the ambiguity entailed by the great social transformation that succeed the Soviet collapse as well as to clarify the distinction between socialism and communism. In my view, they both refer to a system of production based on public ownership of the means; yet, whilst socialism grows directly out of capitalism, as the first form of the new society, communism is presented as the further development of socialism, being the higher stage in the Marxist socio-political organization. In this sense, the addition of 'post' to communism describes not just a new reality, but also the end of a utopia. Hence, we are talking about two disappearances: the totalitarian attempt to achieve it and an utopia (in the form of an ideal horizon).

The author brings the term 'Ethics' in this context as a general consciousness of the communist failed attempt. Prozorov goes on by approaching postcommunism experientially, thus detailed as a social condition and mode of being that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the author, postcommunism refers first of all to a state of indeterminacy and the search for new universal or ideal desires. This is, in fact, one of the main novelties introduced by the author, since the immediate postcommunist period is presented not as a failure (to performance democracy and

to establish a political order), but as a colossal attempt to put into practice any of the many possibilities seemingly feasible at the time.

*The Ethics of Postcommunism: History and Social Praxis in Russia* is also devoted to the analysis of the formation and transformation of the notion of postcommunism, arguing the author that the very concept of postcommunist that we continue to rely upon is misleading: “nothing at all is transformed in it and the very idea of transformation appears discredited on the societal level” (Pp. 83). Structurally divided into five chapters, Prozorov starts by comparing Kojève’s (Hegelian) and Agamben’s (free from any confinement) conceptions of ‘End of History’. The author positions himself in line with Agamben’s notion of ‘potentiality’ and ‘profane messianism’, exemplified by the figure of the ‘workless slave’ that breaks the dialectical logic of Hegelian History by simply ceasing to work (*inoperosity*). In the second chapter, Prozorov draws on Agamben’s conception of time to differentiate between two modes of temporality: *chronos* (linear homogeneous time) and *kairos* (the time of rupture or decision). According to the author, the very performance of a disjunction in the chronological time requires a *kairos* mode of temporality, rather than a transitional period between the collapse of the Soviet system and the triumph of a new order.

Prozorov sets these modes of temporality onto Yeltsin’s Russia, presenting the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union as “the very possibility of trying out various courses of political developments that, however could always be played back, suspended or reversed with no consequences for the country” (Pp. 47). The author therefore rejects to present the Yeltsin’s era in purely negative terms, positing, instead, the first postcommunist President of Russia as the guardian of the very possibility of trying out various courses of political developments –rather than of any specific form of order. Bearing on Agamben’s distinction between potentiality and actualization, the author describes how during Yeltsin’s government the political attempts to establish order were constantly reversed, suspended or played back as if they didn’t exist. According to Prozorov, this was possible because of a suspension of History, or, in *Agambean* terms, the assumption of a ‘messianic time’.

The Yeltsin era appears therefore as a period of suspension of the teleological time, rendering impossible any community or order until a new re-articulation of politics is complete. In this sense, Prozorov sees the 90’s as an “extraordinary condensation of potentialities, all of which are, however, suspended in the aspect of their actualization. All things happen without significance or finality, ‘as if they did not’” (Pp. 52). This thesis is developed within the third chapter by using the metaphor of the ‘janitor’, which here refers to the last soviet generation, highly trained yet ostensibly choosing a simple undemanding life that does not make maximal use of their skills.

Within the fourth chapter, Prozorov digs into the disengagement of Russian society from the public space, applying an original study of the underground music scene of that time. Further on, the author introduces the term ‘*bespredel*’ (once a purely jargon word) as signifier of the conjunction of extreme potentiality and utter impossibility, “whereby the absence of limits to the practice of freedom consumes the experience of freedom itself in the perpetual deferral of its actualization” (Pp. 151). At this point, Prozorov turns to the musician Boris Grebenshikov, who serves as a paradigm of counter postcommunist politics. The author presents Grebenshikov as an apostle

who is constantly recapitulating and redeeming a messianic event instead of merely foretelling it, thus constantly introducing an alternative non-teleological storytelling; in other words, Grebenshikov deploys a reminiscent attitude yet not acting as a clear-cut dissident.

Prozorov organises his analysis of Grebenshikov's songs within three distinctive periods in the career of the musician (addressed respectively in chapters 3, 4 and 5). Following this structure, the author outlines how the perception of Grebenshikov's political disengagement evolved, being recognised as a 'resistant' to the Soviet regime during the Perestroika, as a root-seeker in the 90s, and as a 'non-critic' in the 2000s. According to the author, the explicit disengagement of Grebenshikov from the public sphere and the profaning potential of his lyrics serve to demonstrate the ultimate 'powerlessness' and 'meaningless' of the state, which is, for Prozorov, the main feature of postcommunist politics. Furthermore, the figure of Grebenshikov is presented as a paradigm of *inoperosity* and detached resistance, able to parody both the Soviet and the post-Soviet authorities.

Also in his analysis of Grebenshikov's lyrics and public behaviour, Prozorov draws at length upon Agamben's philosophical insights, as for instance applying the *Agambean* understanding of profanation, resistance and power. Moreover, Prozorov challenge of the common understanding of postcommunist is done in purely negative terms of passivity, indifference and inactivity; particularly throughout chapters 3, 4, and 5. Nonetheless, we have to wait until the last chapter to discover what the author aims with these 'ethics of inoperosity', a notion that was however introduced in the second one. Following Agamben, Prozorov claims for a social field no longer regulated by historical tasks and outside the coordinates of any historical project. In other words, the author calls for the re-appropriation of the entire social sphere for free use, as a natural response to the contemporary *Putinism* in Russia.

In line with Agamben's view of state of exception, Prozorov presents 'Putinism' as a process which has reduced politics to executive force: "Perceiving *itself* as illegitimate in the absence of any historical project, authority in postcommunist Russia manifests itself through a snobbish redoubling of its own power, as the power of those who hold power" (Pp. 207). The author also suggests that any postcommunist society is related to an *externalization* of the state, manifested in the transformation of the ideological field into a contingent object of play. As a consequence, formerly authoritative objects have been turned into fetish-like toys that contain nothing but historicity. In this line, Prozorov concludes that the entire matrix of Russian postcommunist politics has been constituted by the dualism of the *Yeltsinite* play and the *Putinite* executive power relying on forms of historicity. In this frame, Putin appears as the single master able to set both the rules of the game and the ritual that affirms the forms of power. This overshadowing process of the form over the content contrasts what happened during the last years of the Soviet Union, when "the system could at least be criticized *in its own terms*, as failing to deliver on its promises, or, as Soviet dissidents were always keen to point out, as not abiding by its *own* laws, norms and declared values" (Pp. 208).

By describing the rise to prominence of the 'Democratic Russia' movement in the late 1980s, the author remarks that the trigger was a protest against the 'privileges'

enjoyed by state and party officials, which contradicted the ritualistic invocations of equality in the official Soviet discourse. Then he goes on by noting how the campaigns against corruption that brought down many incumbent officials during the late-Soviet period have been quite ineffective in the postcommunist period; in his view, because corrupt practices no longer exemplify the transgression of the rule but rather the rule itself.

Also, Prozorov explains the difference of the Russia of the 1990s from other postcommunist states as consisting precisely in the absence of positive ideological construction during the ‘lingering’ of the political. Whilst the postcommunist states of Central and Eastern Europe grounded their newfound independence in the projects of European and transatlantic integration, and the Central Asian states retreated from the chaos of Perestroika into traditionalism, “the Russian society dwelled in the ruins of the deconstructed Soviet ideological edifice” (Pp. 59).

All this leads Prozorov to conclude that the ideological *omnivorosity* of Putin’s regime does not succeed in governing the disengaged society but merely spares us the effort of the critique of ideology. Therefore, it is practically impossible to criticize the system consolidated under Putin in its own terms:

Having suspended the messianic suspension of history, but without thereby succeeding in putting history back into motion, the existing regime lacks the very *terms* in which it could be subjected to a critique, that is, it is devoid of any set of values or ideological content that it could then be accused of perverting (Pp. 208).

Postcommunism is thus exposed in terms of emergence, flux, chance and constant transformation. Likewise, the author presents the so call ‘End of History’ as a suspension of the teleological dimension of social praxis, and not as a triumph of any particular teleological vision (Fukuyama’s original meaning). According to Prozorov, the ‘End of History’ in Russia has to be understood as the end of the state, which is described by the author as an empty shell without real power or meaning.

Overall, Prozorov’s analysis is quite original, connecting transitional studies with continental philosophy, however the author might be criticised for prescribing his own ideological assumptions and imposing theoretical frames onto much complex phenomena. For instance, he directly links the process of emptying the state with the continuous disengagement of Russian society from the public sphere (a phenomenon that in his view began in the post-Stalinist period and was accelerated in 1991). Also his final ideas about the wider implications of the ethics of postcommunism in contemporary global politics lack a solid contextualisation and development (“we *all* live in the postcommunist times and the demise of Soviet socialism has carried serious implications for world politics in general”, pp. 31). Also, *The Ethics of Postcommunism* could appear as too dense in some passages, probably not accessible enough for those readers unfamiliar with the work of Giorgio Agamben.

Prozorov ends then by refusing any idea of ‘transition’ and any demand on the population to submit social existence to future-oriented political projects (Pp. 59). Effectively, this argument goes beyond an exclusively focus on Russia, and the postcommunist condition emerges as linked to the global *Zeitgeist*, rather than regionally or temporally limited. Indeed, in spite of the years past since the publication

of the book, the ideas are still quite actual. The author is a university lecturer at the university of Helsinki and has published several monographs on political ontology, Agamben and Foucault.

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RUEDA LAFFOND, José Carlos; Elena GALÁN FAJARDO y Ángel L. RUBIO MORAGA, *Historia de los Medios de Comunicación*. Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2014.

En pleno siglo XXI, en el que las nuevas tecnologías han impregnado todas las facetas y ámbitos de la vida humana llegando a penetrar incluso en nuestra más trivial cotidianidad, no podemos sino constatar el dominio de los omnipresentes medios de comunicación en nuestra sociedad. Dicha situación, unida tanto al incremento de los estudios relativos a los medios de comunicación como al aumento del interés por los mismos desde ámbitos no única y exclusivamente académicos, hacen pertinente, cuando no necesario, un balance de las investigaciones en este campo de análisis. A este objetivo contribuye la obra que aquí nos ocupa, parcialmente alejada de los clásicos modelos interpretativos propios de una tipología casi propedéutica cómo es el manual.

Los autores -que firman en conjunto el texto colectivo- abogan por deslindar las rígidas fronteras científicas y apostar por la interdisciplinariedad dentro de los estudios culturales. En ese sentido, y aprovechando su respectivo bagaje investigador, abordan los medios de comunicación desde la complejidad, proporcionando un triple acercamiento al fenómeno comunicacional: desde la disciplina de la Historia -José Carlos Rueda Laffond-, desde las Ciencias de la Información -Ángel L. Rubio Moraga- y desde la comunicación audiovisual -Elena Galán Fajardo-. Igualmente, podemos apreciar a lo largo de todo el texto una sugerente y certera imbricación entre la praxis histórica, el discurrir de la narración cronológica, y la teoría de la comunicación. Dicho carácter innovador se aprecia tanto en la estructuración interna del libro como, sobre todo, en la periodización que se establece.

Huelga señalar que, frente a los análisis más conservadores epistemológicamente hablando, cuyo objeto de estudio son los medios de comunicación, aquí éstos no se conciben de forma autónoma -radio, prensa, cine...-, sino que los autores abogan por una aproximación contextual e inter-relacional. De esta forma, son la cronología y el espacio los que delimitan los capítulos, haciéndose un esfuerzo colosal de síntesis e interconexión entre los medios, superponiéndolos e imbricándolos en un discurrir lineal, fundamentalmente -aunque no sólo- desde la segunda mitad del siglo XIX hasta los albores de nuestro presente-, con el continente europeo y los Estados Unidos de América como telón de fondo.