

and songs, as well as financial donations. While the Irish did not have a very good understanding of the ethnic and social divisions which made the two countries quite different, Poland was viewed as 'Ireland's Alter Ego', serving as a useful parallel to expose British hypocrisy in its foreign policy. Written in a style which will engage both the specialist and non-specialist, *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination, 1772–1922*, is essential reading for anyone with an interest in Ireland's relations with 'New Europe'. Moreover, one hopes that it kick-starts new courses and research on Polish history at Irish universities, as well as inspiring Polish historians to further examine the issue of Ireland in the Polish nationalist imagination.

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Postcoloniality Askance — the Discussion of Viatcheslav Morozov's *Russia's Postcolonial Identity. A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* and Tomasz Zarycki's *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, London and New York 2015)

In 2015 two important books tackling the postcolonial perspective on Eastern and Central Europe came out. Viatcheslav Morozov's *Russia's Postcolonial Identity. A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave) and Tomasz Zarycki's *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge) are key studies addressing the overlapping areas of identity, political and cultural community, constructions of power, relations between power and community, and, last but by no means least, the reactive developments of self-image in response to the Western gaze by societies whose common denominator based on the general location in the post-Soviet (post-communist, post-socialist) space can be named, with an equal but symptomatic lack of precision, "east of the West." Both researchers coincide significantly on the pivotal role of the West in determining the self-perception and subsequently politics, of the off-centre Eastern and Central Europe (including Russia).

Both authors depart from a related claim that, in general terms, could be summed up as follows: little remains for contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, Russia included, but to follow (emulate) or contest (negate) the West as the core of the Eurocentric world. In either case, it will be a reaction to the terms and conditions of signification determined by the West: "contemporary Central and Eastern Europe is a prisoner of what Edward Said called Orientalism. The region can be seen as both a victim of external colonization and, at the same time, as a locus of intensive production of orientalist discourses" (Zarycki, 1), and: "the empty spot in the centre of Russian national identity, as it is constructed by paleoconservatives, is occupied by a

typical Orientalist figure: the imaginary noble savage, uncontaminated by subversive Westernising influences” (Morozov, 6). It seems that the orientalisising mechanics of the Western “power of signification,” to draw on a phrase from Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* leaves no space for a neutral self-image from what both authors term “semi-periphery” of Central and Eastern Europe. The self-image produced will always be reactive — either geared towards identifying with the West or antagonistic in relation to the West. Just like both authors seem to agree that there is no way out of the global capitalist world system, they also seem to follow an implication that due to this location there is, likewise, no way out of the discursive regime of (late) modernity whose site of enunciation remains within the West. Thus, whatever attempt is undertaken to form an identity within the region of Eastern and Central Europe, it will be always already an effect of this discursive colonization.

In both books this signifiatory double bind premised on the semi-peripheral location of the region serves to build analytical models whose purpose is to trace the effects of this constitutive ambiguity. Zarycki observes that the world-systems model offers a way of mapping political/cultural/economic territories in relation to the core, but this core is now rather a diffuse and definitely discursive field of forces rather than a clearly locatable place (which reinforces the claim of no-way-out Western determinism). His focus is on how hierarchies, themselves fluid and complex systems of domination that are less palpable than their premises, which is, the binary logic of dependency/core, foreground “ideologies of eastness,” that is, clusters of discourses produced to keep the negative core — the “East” as much at a distance as possible from an Eastern [sic] and Central European identity formats. The model of the field of power that he develops after Bourdieu (25) serves to identify and locate “cleavages” — areas of antagonism organized along axes stemming from the foundational centre-periphery division — and their mutual relation of conflict. One of the constitutive cleavages splitting the social sphere after the fall of communism would be sometimes open, sometimes implicit division into “cosmopolitans” (adherents to the process of adapting to global forces) and, here the name is rather plural and perhaps should be snatched from postcolonial vocabulary, “nativists.” In Morozov’s study the double-bind of the Western signifiatory hegemony over Russia produces a similar discursive dynamics: Russia is the “east” in the core-periphery binary, but it is the “east” that makes the binary ambiguous by turning its location from definitive (Russia as the West’s “other”) to ambiguous — Russia has fully internalized, over the period of over two centuries, the West as part of its identity thus its “externality” is as much a product of Western orientalisising momentum as it is a discursive, thus at least potentially political, position. Morozov gives a name to this constitutive ambiguity of an antagonism toward what is both internalized and contested — it is Russia as the “subaltern empire” whose dominant political power at the moment, “paleo-conservatism,” successfully capitalizes (*nomen omen*) on national essence embodied variously as the non-Western authentic whose major convenience is that it has been successfully erased by the deprecated process of “Westernization,” and maintained

at the level of the symbolic through the process of “internal colonization” that, as Morozov importantly stresses, was geared towards maintaining the “difference” of the peasant (his non-modernity) with the concomitant ousting him from the space of (potential) social agency (30–31).

To say that liminality is a very dynamic and productive space of interstitial signification would be a platitude in postcolonial theory. Both books, however, offer a reassessment of approaches that they sometimes directly identify as orientalising, and sometimes imply this agenda, mainly in various instances of transitology and postcommunism/postsocialism studies. Postcolonial theory is used by both authors as a way to complement and enrich critical theory with insights that reveal how some categories from social or political sciences that may have been functioning as objective are, in fact, part and parcel of the orientalising machinery. However, the reader will not find a repudiation or judgments in neither book, the “West” is by no means figured as a personage that perpetrates its hegemonic power, as it is often the case in the humanities, postcolonial studies notwithstanding. Both authors, drawing on the rich archive of studies on postcoloniality of Central and Eastern Europe, recognize that there is at least a level of postcolonial identity to the region, but this is less a substantive matter to them, as it is proof how “fields of power” distribute hegemonies and create hierarchies. Most of all, however, postcolonial studies is used as a critical perspective allowing to link some separate fields of study in a dialogic form (Morozov, Ch. 1) and/or to shed light on the processes of knowledge transfer onto new contexts in centre-periphery model (Zarycki, Ch. 5). For both authors, then, the postcolonial perspective offers chances at new meta-level insights into mechanisms of knowledge production, distribution, transfer, recontextualization and interdisciplinary dialogue. The question will arise, however, and in reference to both authors for that matter, whether some of the postcolonial categories they use, the “subaltern” for Morozov and, for Zarycki, the “postcolonial identity” as such, with its implied conservative or retrogressive effect in Poland and the region, or, in more direct terms, as a tool for producing new nativist myths for new nationalist agendas, should not be viewed as rather self-deconstructing terms. Both authors are too aware of ambiguities besieging any attempt to construct a viable analytical model and both are open to polemic, conceding that some stitches may fray. However, in both books an attempt to contest — perhaps falsify and then apply — the postcolonial apparatus would give the whole a more critical edge, since the purpose of both authors at some level is to open up new critical venues.

Morozov premises his study on the following claim: “I argue that Russia must be viewed as a subaltern empire [...] it is the subaltern side of Russia’s condition that in my view is not properly reflected on” (1). The author acknowledges that he is fully aware of the paradoxical effect of this combination and proposes to see it as a more specific category derived from Russia’s semi-peripheral location in world-systems perspective (15). Economic dependency on the global capitalist core (Ch. 3) proven by the structure of trade with the EU (70) frames Russia within the dynamics of com-

bined and uneven development (69). However, as the author notes, the world-systems theory, good for providing “a superb conceptual toolkit for analysing the material aspects of Russia’s position in the international system” (80), itself needs to be teased out by some reframing, as itself rooted in a Eurocentric historicism related to neo-Marxist economic determinism (and reductionism) and enforcing a vision of a teleological progress of history (81), it is unable to show the discursive field of forces at play locally and globally within the system. This universal yardstick cannot measure the array of other factors subsumed under the category of difference (cultural, identitarian, thus, in all ways, ultimately political), showing less the ineffectiveness of world-systems theory as its over-effectiveness. Morozov turns to postcolonial studies in search for an effective challenge, deciding to rely on the idea of “provincializing Europe” [REF] where what is at stake is not an “alternative” to the existing hegemonic model (as in Dipesh Chakrabarty: of world development as a historiography) but an exposition of “difference” already present, inscribed and operating in the system, additionally laying bare its illusory universality as contingency, but, also, proving that there is no “outside” for an “independent” footing. Thus, rejecting the notion of “alternative” development and essence (as in identity, culture), Morozov sets out to examine the postcolonial ramifications of Russia’s place in the world system: “there is no alternative normative system that could provide a point of reference for assessing Russia independently of the West. Given all of that, the Russian case remains what it is: an example of a poorly managed semi-peripheral country where the benefits of dependent development are shared among the elites, while the masses are increasingly marginalised and silenced” (77).

Russia is “subaltern” then, in more than one sense and none of these senses can come separately. First, it is a “subaltern empire,” in the sense of “[b]oth material and normative dependence on the West” (19) realized in a way that is indeed imperialist, but in a peculiar way: by depoliticising its own subjects to the speechless substance of the nation (The People are Speechless), Russia as the empire colonizes its “people” as if by proxy, the true colonizer being the West, against whose sovereign hegemony the Russian empire conducts its pertinent internal colonization in the name of sovereignty (163). This paradox makes the substance of Morozov’s book, and examining and interpreting it is a fascinating *tour-de-force* through theories and their often riddling contextualizations. Morozov’s study is at the same time an effort to develop a comprehensive and accountable methodology of reading Russia as the community/society, state and regime of power internally and externally determined by the forces of global capitalism (exchangeable with the West and Eurocentrism) which it both has fully internalised, and which, at the same time, it seeks to contest and deride on the premise of the already effectively disavowed autonomy (sovereignty). The author’s contention that no matter how anti-Western and thus sovereign the subaltern empire of Russia strives to be, it will nevertheless be precisely subaltern, thus subordinate to the powers that be, that is, Eurocentrism/global capitalism, from which there is no outside. This reactive and reactionary political performance based

on pure negativity of “paleoconservatism” (6) whose effect is reinforcing the West as the only subject of and in Russian politics is discussed, and, indeed, evidenced in Morozov’s study very convincingly and conclusively. However, and this would not be against the author’s intentions, I suppose, it opens up a vast space of questions for discussion and polemic.

First, how subaltern is the subaltern who seems to be very conveniently established in the position of the subaltern? Meaning, although the economic data provided by Morozov prove that Russia’s functioning in the world-system of global capitalism meets the indices of dependency (exports of oil/gas, imports of technologies), it does not negate the fact the Russia is a superpower and global player on its own terms. The question arises, then, what does the “subaltern” as the qualifier of the Russian empire purport? Morozov anticipates difficulties in this paradoxical combination of power (the empire) and inferiority (the subaltern) right at the outset of his study (1). His power of proof lies in the analytical process of reading Russia’s contemporaneity through fields so far either separate or barely contiguous, like post-colonial studies in the field of international relations and Russian studies in what the author terms “constructivist Russian foreign policy studies” (3), accompanied by a range of approaches like poststructuralist political science (prominently Laclau, Mouffe) or world-systems theory. It seems that Russia’s subaltern position as the empire may be considered as much a success of paleoconservatism as the dominant mode of Putinism (paleoconservatists know that they are mimicking the West, but have turned it into the postcolonial case of the hostile takeover of the “colonial” discourse and making it the tool of their own agency), as a failure of any gestures towards autonomy (inflected as authenticity, sovereignty, but, most of all, subjectivity).

Second, although the author clearly draws the line of relationship between power (the Kremlin, Putin, etc.) and the people (the political community) as based on the regime logic that deprives the people of the voice and thus blocks the emergence of the popular subject as political agent (Ch. 5), the “subaltern empire” remains the only wielder of power over its own subaltern nation subjected to the ongoing process of “internal colonization”. Putinism represented as, essentially, the process of the denial of agency through the pertinent politics of the disavowal of politics does produce the nation/the people/the community as the subaltern of the Russian state. It does rather craftily so, disguising the truly subaltern figure of the peasant, “the bearer of genuine Russianness in opposition to Eurocentric modernity” (132) and himself product of colonial modernisation (132) as the transhistorical sovereign that is, in fact, an excuse for the “tautology of sovereignty” that, in anti-democratic conservative politics, is its own foundation (144). However, convincingly pinning down Putinism as an embodiment of the Schmittian instance of post-foundationalism in politics, Morozov cannot avoid making the “subaltern” qualifier of the “Russian empire” vulnerable to criticism. While the people “as the “subaltern” does not need much theoretical elaboration — disenfranchised effectively by the politics of paleoconservatism disavowing politics as such — it seems that the “subaltern” in the

“empire” remains a powerful source of agency both on domestic and international arena. In very simple terms, Russia fighting off Western hegemony, especially its modernising discourse like e.g. transitology, or democratisation as Westernization, seems to be operating very successfully as political agent. What, then, remains of subalternity whose essence is lack of agency, if it is performed as the source of agency and power? Is there a difference between a position imposed from outside and the role undertaken on the basis of what this position entails? Concomitantly, if the Russian subaltern empire produces the nation as the subaltern, is this situation a consequence of the imperial subalternity (which Morozov seems to confirm by showing the defensive and resentment factors in Putinism in chapter 4), and, if the West is the “subject” in Russian politics, shouldn’t it also be made accountable? Does not such a slightly mechanistic semiotics help exonerate a regime of power, that is, the Russian political decision-makers, from historical and political responsibility? These may seem naïve questions. still, in the light of the powerful constructivist foundation put together in this book, teasing out, as the author wants, an array of approaches in international relations with empirical developments that are always more than or askance theoretical models, they emerge as pretty necessary and urgent.

Tomasz Zarycki’s *Ideologies of Eastness* provides an interesting support of Viatcheslav Morozov’s claim of Russia’s subalternity as the empire. Similarly premised on world-systems theory, Zarycki’s study considers constructions of Russia/Russianness as the epitome of “eastness” opposite to the “West” in a diachronic perspective on the Polish discursive developments of identity and self-image in general vis-à-vis the West and against the colonizing east — Russia. Locating Poland and the region of Eastern and Central Europe in the liminal space of semi-periphery, Zarycki sets out to investigate the dynamics of dual “cleavages” based on attitudes towards the West and Russia (the epitome of the “East”) (26). Examining the “ideologies of eastness” against which Poland has been forming its identity, and, subsequently, its cultural discourses, political alliances and so on, Zarycki constructs a model of mapping the region into “zones” 1 (Central Europe), 2 (transitional sector between the EU and Russia), and 3 (the most restricted influence of the West, Russia and Belarus), where influences of the Western core vary in degrees. Of course, since the time the book was written the situation has changed and what the author describes as zone 1 — West-oriented postcommunist countries of Central Europe — Poland and Hungary the most, have become the vocal opponents of the West in an uncanny semblance to the paleoconservative model analysed by Morozov in his book. Still, the zoning is valuable as a way to make the “semi-periphery” location a more productive site of ongoing politics and, in general, discursive operations producing antagonisms between hierarchies, relocating actors and, finally, stoking ideologies.

Within this map of zones Zarycki builds a model of “dependence doxa” that shows how the level of naturalisation of Western hegemony makes any critical reassessment of Central Europe’s relation with the West difficult, because it is already always inscribed within the impossible West/East choice premised on the implied

binary of progress/backwardness (32): “the dependence doxa can thus be defined as naturalization of the region’s structural dependence on the West” (32). This doxa bears all marks of relation to what Alexander Kiossev branded as “self-colonizing cultures” whom Zarycki mentions in chapter 4. The dependence doxa determines the double-bind progress of self-identification and self-image of postcommunist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, which the author evidences most convincingly on examples of ideologies of modernisation in the transitional period, and, even more powerfully, in the section “Inclusion of the region in the global archives of knowledge” in chapter 3 in which Zarycki analyses how attempts at building autonomous peripheral hierarchies of knowledge (of which the appropriation of postcolonial studies for the need of producing knowledge about Central and Eastern Europe is the paramount example) are part of the ongoing competition over the shape of hierarchies of knowledge (57), which comes down to the vital problem of geopolitics of knowledge as one of key agents in effecting and reinforcing the dependence doxa. The political acuteness of such a fight for presence in the global archives of knowledge manifests itself in what seems to link all the zones, namely, in the effervescence of discussions over the content, nature and legacy of the regions’ histories. These in turn produce what Zarycki terms “the intelligentsia doxa” — one the one hand, the historical comprador in transferring Western values and innovations such as, for example, the Enlightenment package of equality, liberty, and self-determination, and, on the other yet concomitantly, the initiator and sometimes sole guardian of national identity and nationalism as anti-colonial politics. Expectedly, the naturalisation of intelligentsia hegemony is parallel to the naturalization of western hegemony. However, this doxa is subject to internal cleavages replicating the constitutive East/West cleavage and operating in conflicts between conservative and liberal divisions within the intelligentsia legacy and discourse (Ch. 5). It is very interesting that in this chapter Zarycki draws in fact on what has become the key driving force of the current political setup in Poland: the unexpected turn at the political effect of the “shame” affect that is allegedly experienced by liberal elites when faced with the experience, fact, accusation or any possibility of encountering the “backwardness” of their region (86). The “shame” has become in Poland a tool of accusation of these very elites, renamed compradors and, more often, traitors in everyday political majority discourse. So, while the current political power in Poland claims the politics of decolonization (from the West) as their chief program, geared towards the recovery of repressed and subalternized national authentic (the common people), it has found a powerful tool of lashing intelligentsia for its alleged “politics of shaming” Poland. Zarycki, however, identifies this new politics of anti-intellectualism and anti-elitism, premised on the assumption that the pro-European elites are slaves to the Western hegemony, with the same intelligentsia doxa, now with the conservative side on the win (*Polityka...*).

Ironically, while the model he created stays put and seems to lay the foundations for many investigations ahead, some ideological affiliations it seems to have implied have changed completely. Zarycki writes: “Identification of the criticism of Western

hegemony with 'communism' may be seen as another manifestation of the strength of the symbolic division between progress and backwardness" (32), continuing further that the region is caught up in the blind alley of "catching up forever" (34). The cleavage has deepened into open political fight over the shape of the state and a new binary emerged which, while keeping the models valid, indeed, reinforcing them, it has completely changed the pragmatic effect of "ideologies of eastness." The new binary shows that the cleavage between conservative and liberal elites has turned out to be the antagonism over the autocratic and democratic system, thus leaving the question of hegemony less important if not at all obsolete at this specific historical moment. The author shows a laudable prescience observing in the model of "dependence doxa" a possibility of the development of radical politics. However, he ascribes it to the very mechanics of dependence: "A constant risk of falling into nationalism and authoritarianism is a common element of such discourses, and a choice between 'emulating Europe or lapsing into ethnic nationalism' is often imposed on the region" (49). Whether the turn against liberal democracy by forcing unconstitutional laws in Poland since 2015, accompanied by the mobilization of nationalist sentiments against external (refugees) and internal (traitors, compradors with the West who are, at the same time, communists of the past, paradox notwithstanding enemies). Is an imposition of the colonial kind, as the author seems to suggest in the quote above, is a topic for a discussion which would include the new political field of forces in Europe (Eastern or Western) today. What seems to be at stake is, however, this or that political camp's idea to grasp and maintain power, using all possible ways, including forceful assaults on the system's guarantees.

A rather ironic effect of ideologies of eastness emerges from Zarycki's study — in the chapter on postcolonial perspective on the region, the author observes that too much energy is spent in these studies on charges against Russia as the arch-transhistorical colonizer, always lurking to activate its imperial dominance over Poland. But of course since 2015 in Poland it has been the EU that took over the role of Russia, and now we can say that Russia has been a rather handy surrogate hegemon, the true one being the EU: Germany-dominated, multi-culti crazed, seeing imaginary splinters in its new members' eye and ignoring logs in its own. Towards the end of chapter 9, Zarycki spells out a utopian vision that is indeed daring in the light of dependence doxa that he draws and its concomitant effect of ideologies of eastness: although the fall of the Russian Empire (and subsequent gaining of independence by Poland in 1918) and the fall of the Soviet empire (effecting in the collapse of socialist state in Poland in 1989) are seen as the greatest moments in the Polish modernity, they nevertheless resulted in a radically diminished position of Poland as cultural centre in the region (254). That this is a loss which, by contrast, meant that there was a value in Poland's position in the situation of colonization by its eastern powerful neighbour would be, as Zarycki succinctly writes: "such an alternative view of Polish history would also contradict the dominant negative image of Russia and Soviet Union as negative points of reference for modern Polish identity" (254). Indeed, the

author does not say that, but let me finish it for him — this utopian vision of a shift in research paradigm, and perhaps in popular view, would be truly postcolonial, capitalising for once on what makes the essence of any dependence, including that of the colonial type — on ambiguity incessantly produced in dependence/domination relations.

Both studies have no other future but to become paragon analytical and interpretive standard of nuancing and contextualising the centre-periphery model of world systems theory and bringing to light new openings for postcolonial perspective that can dialogically link various approaches and disciplines. Both authors offer unprecedented insightfulness into the mechanisms of hegemony and its often surprising, or entirely paradoxical, effects. Interestingly, Morozov disavows any possibility of Russia's developing its discursive autonomy to back up its current paleoconservative politics, identifying, as I wrote above, all such attempts as always already proof of subordination to the Western formats of power/knowledge, while Zarycki sees what he calls zone 3, which is, Russia and its sphere of influence, a strongly autonomous field of power which he brands "neo-Soviet conservative discourse" (257). One would wish for a discussion between the two authors on their fascinatingly overlapping observations yet diverging conclusions.

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