

**Cultural Heterologies and Democracy II.
Transitions and Transformations
in Post-Socialist Cultures
in the 1980s and 1990s**

**Tallinn
June 26–28, 2024**

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Program

June 26, Wednesday

8:00

Registration, welcoming coffee

A-101

9:00-9:30

Opening

Anu Allas, Vice Rector for Research,

Estonian Academy of Arts

Uku Lember, Director of the School of

Humanities, Tallinn University

A-101

9:30-11:00

KEYNOTE 1

Dorota Kołodziejczyk,

“The Relentless Law of Recurrence:

Right Populism Against Postcommu-

nist Anarchic Heterotopias”

Chair: Epp Annus

A-101

11:00-11:30

Coffee break

A-500

11:30-13:00

SESSION 1: Spaces in Transition

Chair: Jaak Tomberg

A-501

Ingrid Ruudi, “Spaces for Spirituality
and Healing in Post-Socialist Estonia”

Jan Nissen, “Between Velocity and
Perplexity. From State Representation
to Public Space: On the Urban Changes
in East German City Centers”

Kamilė Steponavičiūtė, “Contours of
Ecclesiastical Revival: (Post)Soviet
Catholic Churches in Lithuania (1988–
2001) and Their Architecture”

13:00-14:00

Lunch

A-500

14:00-15:30

PARALLEL SESSION 2

Democracy and the Political

Chair: Neeme Lopp

A-501

Tora Lane, "Freedom From or Through the Political: Mamardashvili and Podoroga on Totalitarianism and the Political"

Radka Kunderová, "Redefining the Political in Emerging Democracy: Czech Theatre after 1989"

Jaak Tomberg, "The End of History at the Beginning of History: On the Peculiarity of Postmodernism in Post-Soviet Estonia"

15:30-16:00

Coffee break

A-500

14:00-15:30

PARALLEL SESSION 3

Decolonial Perspectives / Colonial

Remnants

Chair: Epp Annus

A-403

Maija Burima, "Juggling with the Forbidden in Colonial Hybrid Texts: "What is kolkhoz?" and "Regardless" by Imants Ziedonis"

Irena Peterson, "Identity and Belonging: Decolonial Perspectives on Halyna Pahutiak's "The World's Eye" and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army"

Liina-Ly Roos, "The Kaleidoscope of Colonial Memories in Sulev Keedus's "Georgica""

16:00-17:30

PARALLEL SESSION 4

The Other and its Discontents

Chair: Tora Lane

A-501

Yana Hashamova, "Diaspora (Identity) Politics and its Discontents: Views through Digital and Social Media"

Tiina Ann Kirss, "The Pitch of Change: The Global Estonian Diaspora in the 1990s and 2000s"

Elena Pavlova, "'Kto my zdes?': Discussion About a Future of Estonia in Russian Estonian Mass Media in 1990"

17:30-18:00

Coffee break

A-500

18:00-19:30

Film screening: Eine murul (Luncheon on the Grass, dir. Priit Pärn, 1987) and Hotell E (Hotel E, dir. Priit Pärn, 1992) as metaphorical reflections of the late-Soviet and post-Soviet experience. Commentary by Mari Laaniste and Andreas Trossek.

A-101

16:00-17:30

PARALLEL SESSION 5

Conventions in Transition

Chair: Maija Burima

A-403

Piret Viires, "Expansion of the Canon: Literary Turn of the 1990s in Estonian Literature"

Jurgita Staniškyte, "From Metaphoric Strategies to Postmodern Tactics: Paradoxes of (A)political on Lithuanian Stage"

Zita Kārklā, "Recovering Feminist Sensibilities: Latvian Women's Writing of the 1980s"

June 27, Thursday

10:00-11:30

PARALLEL SESSION 6

History and Memory I

Chair: Jaak Tomberg

A-501

Sofya Khagi, "Lenin in 1991: Alternative History, Demonology, and Hallucinogens"

Tanja Petrović, "Ambiguities of (Self-) historicizing of the 1980s in Slovenia"

Indrek Ojam, "Brecht Estranged. Mati Unt's Last Novel "Brecht at Night" (1997) as an Intervention in the Memory Politics in 90's Estonia"

11:30-12:00

Coffee break

A-500

12:00-13:30

KEYNOTE 2

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova,

"The Post-Soviet Cultural M \acute{e} lange: Looking for the Missing Ingredient in Russia and Beyond"

Chair: Andres Kurg

A-101

13:30-14:30

Lunch

A-500

10:00-11:30

PARALLEL SESSION 7

Performativity and/as Democracy

Chair: Luule Epner

A-403

Lina Michelkevičė, "Fluxist Democracy? Reclaiming Fluxus in Early Independent Lithuanian Art"

Laine Kristberga, "Performance Art as a Form of Dialogue"

Riina Oruaas, "Contemporary Dance as a Manifestation of a Democratic Society: Yes, but..."

14:30-16:00

PARALLEL SESSION 8

The Adventures in Avant-Garde

Chair: Piret Viires

A-501

Aare Pilv, "Past Poetics as Catalyst of Future. Replay of Decadence and Avant-Garde in Estonian Poetry 1985–1995"

Merily Salura, "Temporal Liminality: Boredom and Waiting in Viivi Luik's 'The Beauty of History' and Peeter Sauter's 'Indigo'"

Nicola Foster, "Art and Democracy Post 1989: Szeemann's "Beware of Exiting Your Dreams" (2001) and "Blood & Honey" (2003)"

16:00-16:30

Coffee break

A-500

16:30-18:00

SESSION 10

Round-table: How to Study the Transition Period? Particularities and Generalizations

Chair: Kristo Nurmis

Panel discussants: Virve Sarapik, Epp Annus, Piret Viires, Luule Epner, Eva-Liisa Linder, Neeme Lopp, Jaak Tomberg

A-501

18:45-20:00

A guided tour at KUMU

20:00-22:00

Conference dinner at KUMU

14:30-16:00

PARALLEL SESSION 9

Shifting Identities

Chair: Eva-Liisa Linder

A-403

Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča, "Rock-opera "The Bearslayer" (1988): Socio-Historical Perspective and Research Challenges"

Mari Laaniste, "Hotel E: An Uncomfortable Journey into Post-Soviet Subjectivity"

Ingrida Kelpšienė and Costis Dallas, "Shifting Lithuanian Identity: Contemporary Perceptions of the 1990s on Social Network Sites"

June 28, Friday

10:00-11:30

SESSION 11

Transforming Relations

Chair: Virve Sarapik

A-501

Krista Kodres, "Making it Public: New Contact Zones for the Visual Arts in Transition Period Estonia"

Evita Badina, "Turbulent Transitions: Exploring Anglophone Literature in Latvia's Translation Scene During the Turn of the 1980s and 1990s"

Maarja Merivoo-Parro and Brigitta Davidjants, "Design or Default: Exploring Agency in Estonian Music Lovers' International Relations in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s"

11:30-12:00

Coffee break

A-500

12:00-13:30

KEYNOTE 3

Marju Lauristin, "Analyzing Culture in Transforming Society:

A Morphogenetic View"

Chair: Piret Viires

A-101

13:30-14:30

Lunch

A-500

14:30-16:00

PARALLEL SESSION 12

History and Memory II

Chair: Krista Kodres

A-501

Nataliya Zlydneva, “Forward to the Past: The “Soviet Discourse” in Soviet/Russian Art from Non-Official to the “Actual” (1980–2010) Art”

Stella Pelše, “Dismantling the Wall: Resistance and Change in Latvian Art”

Hanna Maria Aunin, “Transformations of the Memory of Soviet Mass Deportations in Estonia: From “Awakening” (1989) to “In the Crosswind” (2014)”

16:00-16:30

Coffee break

A-500

14:30-16:00

PARALLEL SESSION 13

Institutions in Transition

Chair: Regina-Nino Mion

A-403

Ineta Šuopytė, “The Vanishing Remains of Administrative-Culture Centres and Communities of Former Collective Farms in Lithuania”

Juliusz Huth, “The Transformation of the Institutional System of Fine Arts and Debates Around Salon-Type Exhibitions in Post-Socialist Hungary”

Viktorija Jonkutė, “The Years 1918 and 1990 in the Lithuanian and Latvian Cultural Press: Comparative Perspectives”

16:30-18:00

SESSION 14

New Imaginaries

Chair: Mari Laaniste

A-501

Alexandra Yatsyk, “The Body of the Nation: Polish Bionationalism in Art and Films After 1989”

Sándor Földvári, “Democratic and Autocratic Regimes as Reflected in the Interpretation of the Ukrainian Culture by Hungarians, as Reactions to “The Other”, in Different Times and Different Socio-Political Structures”

Katherina Yermieieva, ““Statues could not imagine that turning points would come”: Monuments and Temporality in Soviet Caricatures of the Late 1980s and Early 1990s”

June 29, Saturday

**10:00 A tour in Tallinn: Ingrid Ruudi
“From kiosks to high-rises: a tour of built and imagined architecture of the 1990s” (approx. 2 hours)**

Abstracts

KEYNOTE 1

The Relentless Law of Recurrence: Right Populism Against Postcommunist Anarchic Heterotopias

Dorota Kołodziejczyk

The literary reflection on postcommunist transformation across the Eastern and Central European space is grounded in the anarchism of the self-conscious Europe's periphery. Literature of that period, still faithful to the spirit of dissent from the 80s (in Poland spanning hieratic and carnivalesque forms), but also looking for the new energies of its critical impetus, invested in the language of ironical deflection and imageries of the retrieved locality. In my presentation I will give a brief survey of the anarchistic tendencies in the literary representations of the transformation period, the chief being:

- decentring (collective) identity by writing the new local
- returning the gaze from the peripheries
- queering hetero- and homonormative regimes
- recycling: mimicry with a subversive twist
- postsocialism (postcommunism) as cultural debris
- neoliberalism as self-willed and resigned dependence

These trajectories of literary representation of the transformation period created their unique heterotopic critique of postcommunist realities that contributed to a specific form of identification with the postcommunist Europe's difference, especially its self-ironically performed inferiority and peripherality. However, with the rise of the populist right in the last decade, the transformation period with its aesthetics and rhetoric of carnivalesque anarchy and performative (exoticized, Orientalized, hyperbolized) difference became an object of the political onslaught in the name of recovering national dignity against the apparent "politics of shame" of the transformation period.

I want to reflect on the cultural/political mechanisms of turning a powerful cultural heritage of the transformation period into an object (and abject) of a new national(ist) pedagogy and cultural politics. However, the

nationalist pedagogy is not so new – the right populism took from a rich resource of nationalism at use in socialist regimes, and thus, symbolically and discursively, grounded the politics of the right in the nostalgia for the safety and clarity of state-controlled system.

SESSION 1: Spaces in Transition

Spaces for Spirituality and Healing in Post-Socialist Estonia

Ingrid Ruudi

This paper will look at the proliferation of spiritual and esoteric practices in transitional and post-Soviet Estonia from the perspective of architecture and spatial environment. Estonia is allegedly the most atheist country in Europe yet the post-Soviet transition witnessed a surge of interest in spirituality. The scope and diversity of New Age practices has prompted the leading scholar of new religious movements Paul Heelas to describe Estonia as the model case for researching contemporary spirituality.

Healing is one of the central concepts of New Age, and to a large extent, this presupposes transformation of material – including spatial – environment. The paper architectural projects that aim at some kind of healing transformation, from the 1990s projects of urban acupuncture and Feng Shui of Tallinn by avant-garde artist Tõnis Vint to cure not only Estonian society but to bring the whole humankind to an advanced spiritual level; to contemporary New Age informed spaces aspiring at personal therapeutic effects.

While in the late-Soviet period spiritually informed architecture was somewhat elitist, seen as a counterforce for the banal building industry and a means for establishing an alternative and resistant artistic self, the post-Soviet projects reflect the massive popular appropriation, hybridization, domestication and also commercialisation of New Age spirituality. What kind of lack or void in the society is thus being indicated, and what kinds of (socialist) trauma are being addressed?

Between Velocity and Perplexity. From State Representation to Public Space: On the Urban Changes in East German City Centers

Jan Nissen

Beyond Berlin city centers of medium-sized cities of former GDR have been altered differently. Berlin's role as capital of the new, reunified Germany was relatively predetermined, but the development prospects for the second and third tier cities had yet to be negotiated. For example, the self-discovery process of the former district towns appears to be diffuse: the demographic, administrative and economic framework conditions differed significantly (also among themselves). If we take a comparative look at these city's centers, today's urban landscape can be understood as different stages of this social and political process since the transformation phase. The city's "central square", which is to be understood as the stage of the socialist state, became the urban hub and thus a projection surface for a democratic society: the public space. The urban layout in cities such as Neubrandenburg, Dresden or Gera reflect those very different approaches that make up an alleged leeway.

The shift in planning sovereignty from the national level to the municipalities themselves has contributed to the development of different approaches, which have also found different structural expressions in the urban form. How the build environment from the GDR era was dealt with has to do with the quantity, quality and age of the buildings from this period that characterize the urban image, as well as with the dynamics and requirements of the transformation in the 1990s. The requested speed in which urban transformation took place, particularly by destroying socialist architecture, may be perceived as overhaste in (temporal) distance.

Contours of Ecclesiastical Revival: (Post-)Soviet Catholic Churches in Lithuania (1988–2001) and Their Architecture

Kamilė Steponavičiūtė

The Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1945–1988 halted the development of modern church architecture. During this period, the construction of Catholic churches was prohibited, but in the transition period – 1988, the Soviet regime began to issue permits. Since then, more than 100 churches have been built in Lithuania during the three decades of independence.

Architects encountered the challenge of designing these churches without specific guidelines, resulting in diverse approaches ranging from traditional to modern design. Yet, this experimentation often failed to meet the expectations of the faithful, revealing a disconnect between architects, clients, and religious communities.

In the initial decade of independence, challenges arose in achieving satisfactory results, as evidenced by the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Martyrs in Elektrėnai (1990–1996). Post-construction, suggestions emerged for constructing three smaller churches instead of one large one on the city outskirts, accessible by foot. The gigantic church was compared to a “Lord’s bus station” and “Wehrmacht atomic testing laboratory”, facing criticism for its grandeur and perceived deviation from community preferences.

Successful collaboration between architects and religious communities emerged in churches designed since 2000. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians in Nida (2000–2003) stands as an example, praised for its humanistic scale, contextual integration, and synthesis of Lithuanian architectural traditions. Its modest size resonates with the local community, aligning with their financial means and needs.

This study aims to elucidate the emergence of religious communities during Lithuania’s transition to independence and examine the developmental trajectory of new church architecture. Key questions include the origins of new approaches to sacred architecture, architectural inspiration, and language (traditional or modernist). Utilizing archival sources, empirical data, and oral histories, it seeks to illustrate the impact of religious freedom in (post-)Soviet Lithuania through prominent case studies of religious communities and their churches, alongside an exploration of their reception.

PARALLEL SESSION 2: Democracy and the Political

Freedom From or Through the Political: Mamardashvili and Podoroga on Totalitarianism and the Political

Tora Lane

With the growing protest movements in former Soviet republics and especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russian oppositional thinkers abroad and in Russia have discussed whether the political situation today calls for a revision of an apolitical attitude that was current among the Russian intelligentsia during the Soviet times and after. Political issues have not been as absent as this discourse makes us believe, and yet the discourse indicates a legacy of a certain resistance to politicization amongst Russian thinkers and writers. As the Russian philosopher Valery Podoroga writes in *Apologiia politichnosti* (2010), the right to be apolitical was experienced as a privilege of the free world, and even a condition for the freedom of thought towards the end of the Soviet times. In this paper, I will follow the development of a philosophical thought on the freedom of thought from the political in the works of Mamardashvili to Podoroga's discussion of this relationship to the political and revision of his own stance in *Apologiia politichnosti*. I will also relate this discussion to a Western Marxist critical debate about the lessons to be drawn from the demise of the Soviet Union in the works of Buck-Morss, Derrida and Žižek. The purpose is thus to ask about the possibility of a political critique today that takes the totalitarian experience into account.

Redefining the Political in Emerging Democracy: Czech Theatre after 1989

Radka Kunderová

The prevailing historiographical narrative argues that the situation of Czech theatre changed dramatically in the early 1990s: faced with financial difficulties and declining audience numbers, theatre abandoned its interest in social and political issues. Czech theatre is therefore said to have suffered a crisis and to have largely lost its political edge. Historians claim that the early 1990s theatre shifted its focus towards a more lucrative entertaining repertory and dramaturgy of private issues, often staged within the framework of the so-called “postmodernist” aesthetic. According to this narrative, post-1989 Czech theatre alienated itself from public affairs and forfeited its former capacity for shaping broader social discourses.

In my presentation, I will draw on Christopher Balme’s concept of the theatrical public sphere to argue that the relation of the early 1990s Czech theatre to the public sphere was less distant and insignificant than commonly assumed. I will also argue that rather than completely disappearing from Czech stages, the political was struggling to redefine its nature in the new, post-communist social situation when top of the agenda was construction of a democratic capitalist state. Inspired by Chantal Mouffe’s reflections on antagonism and agonism, I will examine how performing the political was redefined in the early 1990s Czech “postmodernist” theatre and how social issues performed on stage resonated (or failed to do so) with theatre audiences and the wider public sphere.

The End of History at the Beginning of History: On the Peculiarity of Postmodernism in Post-Soviet Estonia

Jaak Tomberg

This presentation is an attempt to delineate the particular character of postmodernism in the years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. My hypothesis is that the multiplicity and possibilities offered by (the promise of) postmodernism converged with the fundamental historical openness and freedom that characterized the Estonian transition period. This convergence generated a powerful synergy that lent postmodernism, in its perception, a distinctly utopian quality which was, to such an extent, uncharacteristic to its Western counterpart.

To make my hypothesis as plausible as possible, I will first look at how Phillip E. Wegner, Brian McHale and Fredric Jameson characterized the post-1989 period and the status of postmodernism at the time in the West. I will then measure the extent to which their description can and cannot be applied to the same period in Estonia and delineate the differences with help from a host of Estonian theorists, including Epp Annus, Tiit Hennoste, Piret Viires, Virve Sarapik, Janek Kraavi, and Aare Pilv.

PARALLEL SESSION 3: Decolonial Perspectives / Colonial Remnants

Juggling with the Forbidden in Colonial Hybrid Texts: “What is kolkhoz?” and “Regardless” by Imants Ziedonis

Maija Burima

In the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev’s initiation of perestroika in 1985, processes of liberalization began to unfold in the society. Initially, these processes marked a shift in attitudes toward Soviet totalitarian governance and also influenced political decision-making. The genre of creative nonfiction has become a herald announcing significant transformation in literature during this time, employing a wide range of themes that resonated with society at large.

A prominent representative of this trend in Latvia was Imants Ziedonis, whose nonfiction texts from the mid-1980s focused on depictions of rural environment. Ziedonis’ messages demonstrate a hybridity in genre meanings. He employs creative nonfiction as a method of writing which brings together empirical material and fiction with “crisis reporters” strategy. Alongside narratives loyal to Soviet ideology in socially tuned portrayals of kolkhoz and sovkhos life, Ziedonis integrates cultural symbols and ethnographic evidence significant to Latvian national history. In his texts, Ziedonis expresses colonial hybridity as a search for authenticity, deconstructing the imaginary of kolkhoz and sovkhos, as well as Soviet everyday materialities, through subtle yet perceptible irony. In the mundane and simple life situations, Ziedonis employs subtexts or allusions regarding Latvian national values that are evident to Latvian readers. The text intended for a children’s audience about kolkhoz demonstrates a naturalistic representation of kolkhoz that borders on its utopian impression.

This paper will examine the juggling with hegemonic forbidden themes in colonial hybrid texts: Imants Ziedonis’ children’s book “What is kolkhoz?” (1983) and the creative nonfiction book “Regardless” (1985).

Defining Ukrainian National Identity: Amidst Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges

Irena Peterson

Amidst the enduring historical legacies of imperial domination and the persistent challenges of ongoing war, the endeavor to define Ukrainian national identity appears with renewed urgency. For centuries, empires imposed dominant narratives on Ukrainians that aimed to undermine their sovereignty and perpetuated ideas of homogenization. This imposition amounted to belittling, ridiculing Ukrainian culture, or went as far as brutal suppression.

In the wake of the USSR's dissolution in the end of 80s, Ukraine grappled with reasserting its identity and reigniting cultural debates about its regional differences. However, it had to first face the consequences of the imperial machine's work after re-independence, which it still continues to face. The information warfare from the Russian Federation looms large, exploiting divisions to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty. The USSR ceased to exist, but the propaganda directives about "one nation" that mostly communicates in Russian, watches the same movies, reads the same books and has "one and the same culture" have not disappeared. Since 1991, Ukraine has embarked on a journey to promote a new discourse. This discourse celebrates heroes like the forest brothers, and Halyna Pahu-tiak's young adult novel "The World's Eye" exemplifies Ukraine's readiness to embrace these figures on a societal level.

Novels like "The World's Eye" that celebrate Ukrainian national identity are not merely a patriotic gesture of publishers but a strategic imperative in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and the survival of its cultural heritage. Embracing Ukraine's diversities as a strength rather than a weakness is paramount. Central to fostering unity amidst diversity is an open dialogue, rooted in a willingness to listen. Products of contemporary Ukrainian culture seek to promote the value, crucial to all Ukrainians: of freedom, and inspiration to draw strength from centuries of resilience against imperial forces.

The Kaleidoscope of Colonial Memories in Sulev Keedus's "Georgica"

Liina-Ly Roos

Sulev Keedus's film "Georgica" (1998) is a poetic meditation on Estonian history. Taking place on an unidentified island in the 1950s Soviet-occupied Estonia and following a boy who has become mute and who is sent to stay with the former colonial missionary Jakub, the film has provided rich ground for semiotic analyses and it has often been described as Tarkovskian.

In this presentation, I will focus on the film's engagement with the different understandings and entanglements of colonial history in Estonia. While made in 1998 when academic scholarship at the intersection of post-Soviet and postcolonial studies had not received much attention yet, in light of the increasing archive of such work, I am curious about how "Georgica" draws parallels between the white Estonian child in occupied Soviet Estonia and the Black Kamba children that Jakub, whose character is based on Estonians who followed German missionaries to their colonies in Africa, remembers.

Through the recurring object, Jakub's kaleidoscope, this presentation will argue, the film imagines a synchronicity of the children from different geographical locations and temporalities, as it both foregrounds the shared traumatic memories of colonized peoples and the complicated privilege of white colonized Estonians in the twentieth century.

PARALLEL SESSION 4: The Other and its Discontents

Diaspora (Identity) Politics and its Discontents: Views through Digital and Social Media

Yana Hashamova

The presentation explores digital news outlets created in the US and Spain by Bulgarian immigrants as well as social media (FB) groups such as “Bulgarians in Chicago” and “Българи в Испания” (Bulgarians in Spain) and especially their engagement with politics.

The 1990s brought changes of social and economic mobility to Bulgarians living in the country as well as to those moving abroad. With the integration of Bulgaria in the European Union (2007) this immobility intensified and began to impact domestic politics in major ways. While digital and social media appear to provide a structure to the seemingly unstructured space of the internet information by serving as the master signifier, users attempt to interpret and misinterpret the signifier as everyone has an opinion on its meaning. Employing a qualitative analysis of topics dealing with political issues concerning the home countries as well as a Žižekian approach to media, I seek to uncover how Bulgarian diaspora subjects engage with politics and the contradictions of that engagement.

The Pitch of Change: The Global Estonian Diaspora in the 1990s and 2000s

Tiina Ann Kirss

This presentation provides an overview of the changing dynamics of the Estonian diaspora during the 1990s and 2000s with particular emphasis on shifts in cultural imaginaries of the homeland.

If part of the self-justifying strategy for the postwar Estonian diaspora was the political struggle to restore Estonian independence, that mission was accomplished by the beginning of the 1990s. Many diaspora members personally participated in organisations and processes struggling for reindependence and stressed the indispensability of the western diaspora. Reindependence was cause for rejoicing but there was also an uncomfortable vacuum. What would be next? Had the diaspora lost its political relevance? The proximate future saw a continuation of the patterns of political engagement based on the perception that Russia remained a global threat, calling for vigilance and continued clarification of the historical fate of the Baltic republics.

In the 1990s and 2000s there were also profound changes in the intergenerational dynamics of the postwar Estonian diaspora. First, the oldest generation, consisting of those born in the 1910s and 1920s in the prewar Estonian republic was steadily disappearing, second-generation members became memory-bearers. The third exile generation could now engage an accessible homeland instead of the fairy-tale place seen through their grandparents' nostalgia. In the homeland identity could be refreshed and deepened, as in summer language immersion camps for diaspora youth. However, the diaspora reasserted itself as a legitimate other cultural place where one could be Estonian, and to what extent this entailed redefinition rather than inertia remains a question. Only insignificant numbers of Estonians moved to Estonia to pursue their lives and careers there.

Last but not least, during the 2000s and 2010s dynamics of increasing commuter work abroad and outmigration to places in Europe and beyond saw a deep transformation in the demographics and meaning of the Estonian diaspora which affected the main centres of the postwar Estonian diaspora, rendering it truly global.

Autoethnography and life stories' interviews with Toronto Estonians of the first to the third generations will be used to approach and illustrate these dynamic diasporic changes.

“Kto my zdes`?”:

Discussion about a Future of Estonia in Russian Estonian Mass Media in 1990

Elena Pavlova

The change in social status was perceived ambiguously by the Russian-speaking population of Estonia. In the framework of Soviet discourse, Estonia had a dual position – on the one hand, as the periphery of Soviet empire, and on the other, as the Soviet West. However by the “West” it meant only the territory; the inhabitants of the Republic of Estonia were perceived as provincials, regardless of nationality.

Estonia’s independence, according to Russian-speaking residents of the country, gave the whole population a chance to become part of the European world. That is why, although it was clear that the Russian-speaking population was losing many rights and privileges, many of them supported Estonia’s independence in the hope of gaining minority rights in a liberal democratic European country. Moreover, representatives of the Russian intelligentsia, understanding that this is a nation state construction, also hoped to take an active part in the process. Radical movements, both Estonian and Russian, were perceived as transitional elements.

This misunderstanding was based on the extremely poor exchange of opinions and information between the Russian-speaking and Estonian populations of the country. Many issues, such as the responsibility of the entire Russian people for the crimes of the Soviet regime or the transition to education in the Estonian language, were interpreted differently in the Russian language and Estonian media. The paper is based on databases elaborated by the “Make identity count” method (Hopf, Allan). Sources: “Soviet Estonia,” “Molodez` Estonii,” “Raduga,” “Tallinn” (1990).

PARALLEL SESSION 5: Conventions in Transition

Expansion of the Canon: Literary Turn of the 1990s in Estonian Literature

Piret Viires

The transition period of the 1980s – the beginning of 1990s was also the period of major changes in Estonian literature. The background of these changes was connected to the developments in society, politics and economy – the collapse of Soviet Union, reestablishment of independent Estonian Republic, the liquidation of censorship, the transformation from centrally planned economy to market economy, reorganization of publishing industry. The other factor that influenced literature of this period was the rapid development of computer technology and the spread of Internet. These general developments in society and technology had also a significant impact on the processes that happened in Estonian literature.

The paper is going to discuss the changes in Estonian literary canon in the 1990s, focusing on some key works and phenomena (punk poetry, ethnofuturism, poetry innovation, postmodernism, cosmopolitanism, historical novels etc.) and mapping the characteristics of literary turn of the 1990s that occurred on the levels of: a) literary language; 4) author's role and position; 2) form; 3) content; 5) world view.

As a conclusion I would argue that Estonian literary canon expanded thanks to this „literary turn“ of the 1990s and the new authors and trends were smoothly absorbed into the existing canon.

From Metaphoric Strategies to Postmodern Tactics: Paradoxes of (A)political on Lithuanian Stage

Jurgita Staniškytė

Under Soviet occupation, Lithuanian theatre had developed a metaphorical poetics of Aesopian language, which allowed criticism ‘between the lines’ and the creation of an invisible community between performers and spectators. However, Lithuanian theatre artists have discovered that it is extremely difficult to find a new critical model of relations with reality in the conditions of freedom offered by the Independence. The paradox, which seems to be particularly visible in post-totalitarian societies, demonstrates that it is quite easy to describe the function of political art in totalitarian societies, while it proves much more difficult to do so in the conditions offered by democracy.

This confusion surrounding Lithuanian theatre stage in the last decade of the twentieth century has led to an increase in escapism, nostalgia and self-reflexive strategies. One of the main reasons for this was the changing notion of what it means to be political in postindustrial and postmodern societies. Postmodern political art acted as both collaborator and critic, using and deconstructing the language of power – it aimed to both subvert and establish ideology, resulting in an ambivalent and contradictory approach. Undoubtedly, postmodern ambiguity was more acceptable to Lithuanian theatre artists, who tended towards tactical ways of thinking (in the sense of strategies vs. tactics by Michel de Certeau). With the help of two case studies – performances “Hamlet” (E. Nekrošius, 1997) and “P.S. File O.K.” (O. Koršunovas, 1997), the paper will analyse the transforming understanding of political theatre and the emerging forms of tactical directing on the post-Soviet Lithuanian stage.

Recovering Feminist Sensibilities: Latvian Women's Writing of the 1980s

Zita Kārkla

During the 1980s, Soviet Latvia witnessed a flourishing of women's writing. Identified as 'angry young women' they pursued new cultural trends by introducing new themes, including intimate experiences of femininity, motherhood and sexuality, and new poetic features in their prose narratives. Their work was often characterized by anger, frustration, disappointment and uncertainty, articulating a fundamentally different view of Soviet reality and resonating with the desire of the readers for new language and new poetics.

Using the term 'feminist sensibilities', I will focus on how feminist perspectives, often revealed in ambiguous, intuitive and affective ways, are present in short stories by Valda Melgalve, Eva Rubene and Andra Neiburga. By tracing parallels and interactions, as well as differences in authors' texts, analyzing how they interrogate and challenge cultural norms and prejudices, the paper aims to highlight the presence of feminist thought and emotions in Latvian literature and culture in the 1980s and 1990s, also outlining its transformative potential.

PARALLEL SESSION 6: History and Memory I

Lenin in 1991: Alternative History, Demonology, and Hallucinogens

Sofya Khagi

In the words of Lotman's "Culture and Explosion" (1991), perestroika and its aftermath were a period when history moved away from entropic points of equilibrium and multiple future scenarios became feasible. Put in the terms of alternative history, this was a point of divergence, a crucial historical juncture with more than one potential outcome. From the volatile vantage point of the late 1980s / early 1990s, the revolution of 1917 and the actions of its leader were perceived as a symmetric earlier point of divergence where historical process could be imagined as parting course with the real timeline.

In this talk I examine cultural artifacts drawn from literature, television, and art performances, all released in the year of 1991 – when the Soviet Union collapsed – and featuring stark changes in the representations of the founder of the socialist state, Vladimir Lenin. I analyze pioneering alternative history narratives by Vladimir Sharov, Tatyana Tolstaya, and Victor Pelevin that spin "what would have happened if..." scenarios and put these literary works in dialogue with other media forms (music, television). I am interested in the kinds of shared imaginative space these diverse artifacts inhabit such as their recurrent emphasis on the hallucinatory or nightmarish aspects of history. Leniniana of 1991, in a distinct disjuncture from Marxist teleology, re-envisioned historical process as violent, ruptured, and catastrophic – more specifically, as a hallucination from which one should, though hardly can, awaken. The analysis of these works contributes to grasping the Zeitgeist and arguably causes of that radical transformative point of global history.

Ambiguities of (self-)historicizing of the 1980s in Slovenia

Tanja Petrović

In this paper I use “Painter’s Diary” (1986–1990) by Dušan Mandić, a member of the Slovenian art collectives IRWIN and Neue Slowenische Kunst and an important actor of the Slovenian alternative scene in the 1980s, as a starting point to discuss the regimes of historicization of the period in which social, cultural and political alternatives were imagined and practiced in socialist Slovenia.

I am particularly interested in the production of ambiguity and its effects. Ambiguity is inherent in the practices of self-documentation, of which the Painter’s Diary is an example, since its actors have no control over how their texts and deeds are read at different points in time. Furthermore, practices that generated ambiguity and were based on the techniques of imitation, (over)identification, repetition, citation and collage were widespread in the 1980s and had a significant impact on the interpretation and perception of Slovenian alternative scene.

I also focus on the way the actors of this scene deal with their own ambiguous position today, where the Slovenian 1980s are largely subordinated to the founding myth of Slovenian independence and understood either as a contribution to the end of the socialist project or within the paradigm of “pure art.”

Brecht Estranged. Mati Unt's Last Novel "Brecht at Night" (1997) as an Intervention in the Memory Politics in 1990s Estonia.

Indrek Ojam

Mati Unt (1944–2005) was a prominent Estonian writer, theatre director and intellectual, whose literary works from late '80s and early '90s were mostly considered as postmodernist intertextual experiments. To the surprise of many readers, in 1997 he published a novel about a short time period (year 1940) in the life of the famous German playwright and leftist intellectual Bertolt Brecht.

However, in addition to anecdotes from Brecht's personal life, the novel also featured documents and memories of the occupation of Estonia by Soviet Russia; and about Russia's winter war against Finland (1939–1940). Various aspects of Brecht's life, including his deterministic worldview (a version of dialectical materialism) are revealed to be colonialist from the point of view of aspiration for freedom of Finns and Estonians in 1940. The paper aims to show how Unt's novel interacts with and displaces Brecht's legacy as it struggles to break out of imperialist narratives at a time when new, post-socialist world order was forming.

PARALLEL SESSION 7: Performativity and/as Democracy

Fluxist Democracy? Reclaiming Fluxus in Early Independent Lithuanian Art

Lina Michelkevičė

In the presentation I will discuss how the idea of Fluxus became a discursive model for democratization of visual and to smaller extent performative arts in early independent Lithuania. Despite in the West Fluxus had lost its impetus in the late 1970s, in the 1990s' Lithuania it shortly but manifestly became a term for all kinds of newly emerged forms of art, particularly those based on live action.

Among the reasons for this resurrection was the Lithuanian origin of George Maciunas, the leader of Fluxus, and particularly the links between him and musician Vytautas Landsbergis, the key political figure at the time. Despite Maciunas' overtly communist views and admiration of the USSR, Fluxus became paradoxically associated to Lithuania's liberation from the Soviet Union, led by nationalist aspirations and right-wing politics. The art field took pride in the "fluxist foundations of the state", with some even claiming that the name Sąjūdis of the Lithuanian independence movement was the Lithuanian counterpart to Fluxus.

Due to these national links and the overall drive for the democratization of art, Fluxus was seen not as a bygone art movement, but rather as a natural next step in the development of the "liberated" Lithuanian art. It was a means to consolidate the connection between the imaginary West and Lithuania and a channel to reintegrate the Lithuanian art into the Western history.

Performance Art as a Form of Dialogue

Laine Kristberga

Performance art emerged in Latvia in the mid-1960s, consequently in the 1980s it was not a new medium to explore. However, in comparison to the previous decades, the 1980s brought new qualities to this discipline. First of all, performance art became more public and reached wider audiences. Second, performance art turned into an instrument of sociopolitical critique. These transformations must be viewed in parallel to changes in the civic society: establishment of NGOs, protest demonstrations, campaigns against environmental pollution, and, of course, the Baltic Way.

This conference presentation will be dedicated to the analysis of three cases, where the use of performative instruments can be noticed: Mild Fluctuations, LPSR-Z, and the National League of Latvian Women. The author will examine the group dynamics, means of communication, interdisciplinary nature, as well as political narratives in the artistic projects implemented by these groups.

Taking into account the relational aesthetics and the dialogical qualities of performance art, it becomes evident that it offered a platform, which not only facilitated mutual interaction and communication among the group members, but also offered opportunities to reach general society through various channels. Moreover, all cases highlight an awareness of alternative forms of art production, exposure and perception.

Contemporary Dance as a Manifestation of a Democratic Society: Yes, but...

Riina Oruaas

Contemporary dance is in complex and entangled relations with the political and cultural situations in the whole liberal world since the emergence of it after World War II. As generally known, in Soviet Union the only acceptable stage dance form was classical ballet, and contemporary dance could be established only since late 1980s, and formed itself as an independent performing arts field in 1990s and early 2000s, following American, Nordic and Western European influences. The leading contemporary dance manager in Estonia, Priit Raud, stated in 1998: In Europe, contemporary and modern dance are symbols of democracy. On the other hand, typically, classical ballet has been considered as symbol of Soviet Empire.

In Estonia, in 1990s transition society, contemporary dance tested and neglected several boundaries of art, taking an ambivalent position between the classical and avant-garde dance, as the first modern and contemporary dance event were initiated by ballet master Mai Murdmaa. In Western art, the oppositional and avant-garde positioning of the contemporary dance leads to the discussion on modernity and ontology of movement in contemporary dance in general: by ceasing to move, dance creates a cultural rupture or discontinuity. On the other hand, performing arts in transition era Estonia, including contemporary dance theatre, can be described through the metaphor of acceleration, as the new art forms emerged within few years. The crux of modern and contemporary dance in post-Soviet Estonia lays in the point where art and politics entangle.

KEYNOTE 2

The Post-Soviet Cultural Mélange: Looking for the Missing Ingredient in Russia and Beyond **Gulnaz Sharafutdinova**

This talk will entertain new answers to the puzzle of Russia's lost post-Soviet transformation by inquiring into the dominant ideas, beliefs, and values shared by the reformers and the public in the 1990s. These intangible structures resulted from overlapping cultural predispositions characterizing late Soviet society and the new ideology associated with market-driven capitalism. This analytical frame will enable envisioning the economic and cultural elites in their ordinariness (as opposed to exceptionalism) and explain the political trajectory that resulted in the defeat of the liberal and reformist agenda under the current Russian government.

The presentation will rely on the recent debate about the nineties initiated by the Anti-Corruption Foundation and their documentary "Traitors" to demonstrate some of the main observations. It will consider how these issues played out in countries other than Russia that have also gone through a painful transition period. It will conclude by discussing the need to examine the values and norms needed to transform society if the agenda of a new transition ever comes to the table again in Russia.

PARALLEL SESSION 8: The Adventures in Avant-Garde

Past Poetics as Catalyst of Future. Replay of Decadence and Avant-Garde in Estonian Poetry 1985–1995

Aare Pilv

Estonian poetry had developed until the middle of 1980s in a mainstream tradition that began in the beginning of the 20th century and that has been afterwards coined as “ethnosymbolism” (Kajar Pruul). The diffusion of this tradition was most visible in 1990s, and in the 2000s the transition was accomplished, but it began in the middle of 1980s (with undercurrents already in the end of 1970s) with the rediscovering of poetics of the first decades of the century: decadence/aestheticism on one hand and avant-garde poetics on the other. It was in some sense a nostalgic retro-poetry, but it contributed to introduce novatory ideas into Estonian poetry.

My main point is that this phenomenon is interpretable as a continuation and completion of a project that had remained unfinished half a century earlier – Estonian Decadence had not reached its self-consciousness and avant-garde was merely an interesting episode beside the main current. It had to be made through afterwards and in a heightened tempo for Estonian poetry to be able move forward. We might say that it was a sort of psychoanalysis of the unconsciousness of the mainstream tradition, in order to move forward from old complexes. And of course the events in poetic tradition have its correspondence with patterns of thought on wider social level. In my paper I will try to elaborate on that.

Temporal Liminality: Boredom and Waiting in Viivi Luik's 'The Beauty of History' and Peeter Sauter's 'Indigo'

Merily Salura

This paper compares the temporalities in works by two Estonian writers, Viivi Luik and Peeter Sauter. The aim is to interpret the different experiences of time in the novels "The Beauty of History" ("Ajaloo ilu", 1991) and "Indigo" (1990). Both of these works brought to light significant changes that were taking place on the Estonian literary scene. The theoretical framework stems from 20th century philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophy of time. He distinguished experiences of autonomous fulfilled time from experiences of pragmatic empty time. Neither novel's approach to time falls neatly into this distinction, creating contexts informed by Gadamer's concepts of empty and fulfilled time, but also extending beyond them.

I combine Gadamer's philosophy of time with the concept of liminality. Following Bjorn Thomassen, I approach liminality as a concept that focuses on human reactions to change. Thomassen claimed that our experiences of freedom and anxiety are condensed in liminal moments. I propose that in "Indigo", boredom is an example of a temporal liminality that enables the protagonist to experience the autonomy of time; it is a form of empty time that is distinct from pragmatic time. The temporality of "The Beauty of History" is centered on liminality as well, although this novel has a different focus, tone, and writing style. This liminality has nothing to do with boredom. This novel illustrates how the process of waiting can create a space for experiences of autonomous fulfilled time to emerge.

Art and Democracy Post 1989: Szeemann's "Beware of Exiting Your Dreams" (2001), and "Blood & Honey" (2003)

Nicola Foster

Following the fall of communism in eastern Europe and the move to integrate former communist countries into the European folds, alongside the desire by the new democracies to engage in International art, a number of exhibitions and events took place. Many proved controversial. The paper will explore how the cultural sphere itself became a sphere through which democracy was questioned, challenged, and fought, not just in the recently formed democracies.

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama famously published his ironical argument that following the fall of the Soviet Union and the triumph of liberal democracy, free market and capitalism will become the new international as the final stage in the evolution of mankind. Yet, in the very same year the curator Harald Szeemann staged what might be seen as nationalist exhibition in "Visionary Schweiz" (1992). Szeemann was surprised that this exhibition motivated 'our Eastern neighbour' to commission a 'spiritual-visionary portrait' of their country'. His 1992 exhibition was followed by "Austria im Rosenetz" (1996), "Epicenter Ljubliana" (1997), "Beware of Exiting Your Dreams: You May Find Yourself in Somebody Else's" (2001), and "Blood and Honey: The Future lies in the Balkans".

The paper explores two exhibitions which capture 'the spirit' of Poland and 'the spirit' of the Balkans. Both exhibitions were highly controversial. However, the paper will seek to argue that the controversy the exhibitions raised also became a platform in which art became a democratic platform, at time supporting the politics of power and at times critiquing the legacies of communism.

PARALLEL SESSION 9: Shifting Identities

Rock-opera “The Bearslayer” (1988): Socio-Historical Perspective and Research Challenges

Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča

Rock-opera “The Bearslayer” (“Lāčplēsis”, 1986/87) premiered in 1988 is one of the socio-cultural milestones of the Awakening movement in Latvia. It is considered to be a manifestation of emerging democracy and embodiment of the collective aspirations to restore national independence in late 1980s. Written by composer Zigmars Liepiņš and librettist Māra Zālīte, a well-known poet and activist, this rock-opera surpasses the limits of piece of the performing arts.

At the time, every performance out of 43 attended by around 4000 people, became a clear anti-Soviet manifestation and part of the non-violent political activity. During more than 30 years of independence, this rock-opera has been repeatedly staged and recorded several times. This paper is an attempt to analyse the path of this particular piece of musical theatre through the recent history of Latvia through the socio-cultural perspective and reception in mass media, uncovering the research challenges and interrelations to the current political contexts. “A little child plays in the crossroads – it’s our freedom, our life...” – the symbolic meaning of this line from rock-opera “The Bearslayer” still seems relevant today.

Hotel E: An Uncomfortable Journey into Post-Soviet Subjectivity

Mari Laaniste

The paper analyses a remarkable contemporary artistic reflection of the Soviet-to-post-Soviet transition: the 30-minute, near-wordless animated film “Hotel E” (dir. Priit Pärn, Tallinnfilm 1992). It offers a poignant metaphorical record of the transformative experience of travelling between the East and West during the crumbling and eventual fall of the Iron Curtain, and the contentious process of coming to terms with one’s new identity as a post-Soviet Eastern European.

The titular “hotel”, with E referring to Europe, consists of two contrasting “rooms”, separated by a near-impenetrable wall. The narrative observes a reluctant late-Soviet subject in the throes of a profound identity crisis, brought on by the rare opportunity of travelling outside of his oppressive, dysfunctional environment. On the other side of the dividing wall, the protagonist encounters the object of their longing: the dazzling West, an alien space that appears materially and culturally superior, leisurely and beautiful, yet soon also reveals itself as largely indifferent and self-concerned, plagued by its own dysfunctions.

The initially bewildered protagonist’s continued movement between the rooms turns into an uneasy journey of self-discovery: with each visit to the other room, he becomes more out of place in his increasingly chaotic place of origin, yet in the other, remains hopelessly, fundamentally too different to ever truly belong. The film still carries some marks of the initial naive excitement over the presumed reintegration with the West, yet there is a melancholy, disillusioned undertone, recognizing the uncertainty of such a prospect due to the apparent immensity of the divide.

Shifting Lithuanian Identity: Contemporary Perceptions of the 1990s on Social Network Sites

Ingrida Kelpšienė, Costis Dallas

The presentation explores the dynamic interplay between historical and cultural transformation in the digital memory of post-Soviet Lithuania in the 1990s. The narrative of this period is rife with social tension, political unrest, economic difficulties, but also a wave of hope, creativity, and openness to global cultural and social trends and values.

The presentation examines how Lithuanian everyday life and culture during the 1990s are remembered and represented on social network sites, with a specific focus on Facebook and Instagram, to capture the diverse ways in which users engage with and memorialize this transformative period. Central to this exploration are three overarching research questions: How is the Lithuanian 1990s transformation portrayed and perceived within the realm of social network sites? What identities, whether cultural or national, emerge as a result of this practice of social remembering? How does the resonance of the 1990s period intersect with present-day realities in Lithuania, and affect contemporary identities and attitudes?

Building on the Connective Digital Memory in the Borderlands research project, this study adopted a methodological approach based on systematic, query- and context-based data collection from Facebook and Instagram, and semi-open interviews with platform users engaging with the 1990s in their online activity, followed by computer-assisted qualitative content analysis. Employing practice theory and cultural semiotics, it aims to unveil not only discourses of trouble and hope, and sentiments of nostalgia but also evolving facets of identity and attitudes emerging at the bridge that connects communicative memory with the contemporary socio-cultural landscape.

SESSION 11: Transforming Relations

Making it Public: New Contact Zones for the Visual Arts in Transition Period Estonia

Krista Kodres

In the late 1980s the democratization process in Estonia and other Baltic Soviet republics gained speed and volume. In my paper I define “democratization” as a process of emerging new cultural “contact zones” (Pratt), where professionals meet the wider public. These zones made it possible to share knowledge on issues that couldn’t be discussed in public in a controlled and self-censored Soviet environment.

My focus is on the visual artistic culture of the transition time in Estonia and how it was transmitted to the wider public in one of these “contact zones”: in the “hot media” (McLuhan), i. e. on TV programs. On each broadcast of such programs as “Ars et Vita”, “Estonian Contemporary Art” and “Fabrique d’Histoire”, a special issue (e. g. how art is socially meaningful, can art be political, how meaning is transmitted in art etc.) was addressed and discussed in the studio among the few professionals with academic degrees.

These issues, of course, were all connected with information: in Estonia the knowledge of art theory and the experience of contemporary (Western) art was very limited because of restrictions on free travel, but there were many other aspects. I will examine the broadcasts and ask how aesthetic, national and democratic agendas were intertwined and mediated in the discussions of contemporary art and art history.

Turbulent Transitions: Exploring Anglophone Literature in Latvia's Translation Scene During the Turn of the 1980s and 1990s

Evita Badina

On 4 May 1990, the Restoration of Independence of Latvia was declared. The renewal process (1987–1991) was marked not only by a high interest in exploring blind spots of history on the map of Latvian collective memory. Known as The Latvian Third National Awakening, this period stimulated an acute interest in the Latvian language and culture, simultaneously searching for ways to re-introduce Latvia to Europe and the rest of the world.

Against this backdrop, translation played a crucial role in bridging the gap between a nation striving to break free from the shackles of socialism and the global cultural arena. Referring to the Latvian professor Veisbergs' claim that the "Latvian translation scene has always reflected the country's ever-changing political situation all through history", this study aims to examine the shifts that happened in the translation policy due to the clash between the dying but unyielding Soviet censorship and the winds of freedom, which could not be stopped.

Furthermore, this research will examine the controversies surrounding the translation landscape in the initial years of Restored Independent Latvia, analysing the challenges posed by the transition to a free market within the country's publishing industry.

Design or Default: Exploring Agency in Estonian Music Lovers' International Relations in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s

Maarja Merivoo-Parro, Brigitta Davidjants

Keeping up with Western popular music was a form of passive protest to many young music lovers growing up in Soviet occupied Estonia. Albeit it was not a simple task, some were able to get their hands on music magazines from Finland where Finnish youth advertised for penpals. Soon an informal network of correspondents emerged producing new challenges to Soviet aesthetics. This presentation explores the poetics of inclusion among this loose-knit and chaotic network of *ad hoc* international relations, aimed at creating a commonwealth of imagination.

KEYNOTE 3

Analyzing Culture in Transforming Society: A Morphogenetic View

Marju Lauristin

In our research of Estonian post-communist transformations we had applied the model of social morphogenesis (SAC), proposed by Margaret Archer and her collaborators. SAC model includes three main components of social morphogenesis: social interactions, cultural interactions and social agencies. Cultural interactions, going on between people in their everyday communications, in the media, arts, education, sciences and political discussions, are considered as a part of the morphogenetic cycle, enabling formation and empowerment of different social agencies. They provide knowledge and understanding, define goals and give positive or negative feedback, create common discourses, values and ideas and help people to understand the meaning of changes. In the presentation we offer insight in the cultural interactions during the two first cycles of Estonian transition (1988–91 and 1992–2003).

PARALLEL SESSION 12: History and Memory II

Forward to the Past: The “Soviet Discourse” in Soviet/Russian Art from Non-Official to the “Actual” (1980–2010) Art

Nataliya Zlydneva

The paper deals with the issue of pragmatics of text in regard to socio-cultural memory. It focuses on the transformation of visual semantics in the process of changing the artistic and ideological context of culture in 1980–1990s. The main points to be considered are 1) how the non-conformist artists of the 1980s opposed socialist realism by means of subverting its patterns, 2) how it came to transformation of the “Soviet discourse” in the 1990s in the process of integration of the artists of the former Soviet Union into the Western European artistic context: the visual markers of the Soviet ideology stayed the same, but their function changed due to the renewed aesthetic program.

The aim is to show the shift of the pragmatics in the Soviet discourse in art that reversed the main message due to the transformed social context: the artists that departed from mirroring the official ideology in the 1980s came to valorizing the new aesthetic component of the utterance in order to overcome ideological trauma of the past. The comparative analyze will be based on the so-called Moscow conceptualism of the 1980s (Kabakov, Pivovarov, the group Collective action etc) and the “actual art” of the 1990s, including Sokov, Orlov, paintings by the circle of Vinogradov and Dubosarov, and a number of others.

Dismantling the Wall: Resistance and Change in Latvian Art

Stella Peļše

In February 2023, Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga opened a new exhibition “Dismantling the Wall. Latvian Art 1985–1991”. Scheduled till 12 January 2025, the show represents “recent period of history when art became a form of resistance and promoter of change” (from the annotation of the exhibition). The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine served as a motivational backdrop to reassess the so-called perestroika years, inviting historical parallels that allow seeing present events as a tragic sequel to the incomplete disintegration of the USSR. The exhibition was opened with a live performance “How long can this all last?” by Ukrainian artist Daria Kalashnikova, counting days since the Russian invasion with exhausting exercises.

The exhibition comprises a wide array of approaches and expressive means from neoexpressionist and conceptualist painting, sculptural objects, large silkscreen prints known as “supergraphics”, socially provocative posters and the magazine *Avots* as well as photographs documenting the Soviet reality and some significant actions, performances and exhibitions of the time. The show’s resonance in public space has been mainly positive. However, lack of precise focus and research-oriented curating has also been noticed, resulting in a too eclectic presentation of various oppositional strategies. Nevertheless, the educational task, compensating for the lack of permanent late 20th century Latvian art expositions due to the still non-existing contemporary art museum, justifies a broader approach. The exhibition also demonstrates that the widespread view of Latvian art as apolitical and aesthetically oriented is half-true at best.

Transformations of the Memory of Soviet Mass Deportations in Estonia: From “Awakening” (1989) to “In the Crosswind” (2014)

Hanna Maria Aunin

The discussion of Stalinist repressions, especially the deportations, were instrumental for the formation of collective memory and post-Soviet identity in the Baltic States. Since the end of 1980s, the topic of mass deportations has been consistently explored in literature and life stories (which was a particularly influential medium for the formation of Estonian national memory narratives), but cinematic representations of the mass deportations have not been as numerous. However, two Estonian feature films that focus on the topic of mass deportations have been made 25 years apart: Jüri Sillart’s “Awakening” (“Äratuus”, 1989), made at the brink of re-independence, and more recent Martti Helde’s “In the Crosswind” (“Risttuules”, 2014).

Using the examples of “Awakening” and “In the Crosswind”, this paper explores how the memory of mass deportations and its representations have changed in Estonia over the course of 25 years. Examination of the artistic choices of these films, and their reception, offers distinct depictions of mass deportations, shaped by the memorial frames of their time of production. The presentation shows how “Awakening” contributed to the formation of national narrative, and illumination of historical complexities later sidelined in the nationalized memory culture, while “In the Crosswind” aims to contribute to the transmission of the memory of mass deportations beyond Estonian borders.

PARALLEL SESSION 13: Institutions in Transition

The Vanishing Remains of Administrative-Culture Centres and Communities of Former Collective Farms in Lithuania

Ineta Šuopytė

During the period spanning the 1980s to the early 1990s, approximately 40 administrative cultural centres emerged within the former collective and state-owned farms of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. These centres, characterized by their expansive volumes, incorporated wellness facilities, cinemas, buffets, and theaters with seating capacities ranging from 300 to 500. Notably, a number of projects, documented solely on paper, now reside within the state archives of Lithuania.

The transition towards an independent nation and the adoption of a capitalism resulted in the dismantling of collective farms. In this new socio-economic landscape, individuals had to find ways to build new forms of collectivity. Unfortunately, it was not always possible. Individuals wanted to claim their part of the collective property. Recently erected communal spaces were disassembled brick by brick. Everyone took their designated share.

The consequences of this shift are evident in the contemporary rural landscape of Lithuania. It is marked by vacant spaces once occupied by houses of culture, abandoned structures, and the skeletal remains of unfinished projects. These physical manifestations demonstrate challenges confronted by communities during this transformative period. However, some communities have successfully navigated these challenges, demonstrating resilience in maintaining communal cohesion and preserving the integrity of their built environment.

The purpose of presentation is to unfold the problem-solving mechanisms employed by individuals within collapsing collective farms and to examine the reasons for the lack of success in establishing functioning communal structures. The case studies focusing on the communities of Bridai, Darbėnai, and Alksniupiai will be employed.

The Transformation of the Institutional System of Fine Arts and Debates around Salon-Type Exhibitions in Post-Socialist Hungary

Július Huth

After 1989 the Hungarian artistic field had become divided into camps of winners and losers of the regime change. The protagonists of the former neo-avantgarde, who had become the new elite of the artistic field, were interested in the integration of the art institutions into the Western contemporary art system, while the artists dependent on the redistributive system of the Real Socialism were interested in maintaining the pre-1989 structures. The major debates were triggered around the exhibition policy of the Budapest Kunsthalle [Műcsarnok] and especially around the Salon-type exhibitions, which were mainly supported by the leadership of the Union of Fine and Applied Artists.

These conflicts did not stop at the borders of the field of artistic production. The supporters of the Salon-exhibitions often argued that the Salon is the only democratic way of artistic representation and represents the Hungarian artist society in contrast with the new Western-type curatorial exhibitions. Due to this, the concept of the Salon gained the support of the conservative politicians and the Union – once established to create and propagate socialist realist art – gradually drifted towards a national-conservative policy. In this paper after a short presentation of the economic and administrative system of fine arts of the late Kádár era I focus on the 1990s history of the Union, of the successor-organizations of the former Art Fund and especially on the conflicts between the leadership of the Kunsthalle and of the Union around Salon-type exhibitions.

The Years 1918 and 1990 in the Lithuanian and Latvian Cultural Press: Comparative Perspectives

Viktorija Jonkutė

1990 is a symbolic year for the Baltic countries, marking the restoration of independence. By the re-establishment of Baltic statehood, the transition partly materialized as a reconstructive movement of a restitutive nature. With the struggles for independence and the transformations undergone by modernizing society, the 20th century emerges as a very dramatic time full of multifaceted transition processes. Despite the differences in historical contexts, we can find commonalities between the two periods. Theoretically, we can expect some parallels in cultural imaginaries and the experiences of societies undergoing transitions as well. “Timeless cultural images” travel across different cultural epochs and shape collective experiences. In such liminal situations, fundamental cultural and historical shifts are brought to the foreground. The aim of this presentation is to briefly introduce some representative cases of threshold identity, comparing the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press of the period 1989–1991 with the cultural press and literature of the period 1917–1919.

SESSION 14: New Imaginaries

The Body of the Nation: Polish Bionationalism in Art and Films After 1989

Alexandra Yatsyk

The paper seeks to explore Polish nationalist post-communist projects as exemplified by art and films after 1989. I approach nationalism from a wider biopolitical perspective as bionationalism, sharing the idea that “each nation originates in a critical act of transposing a ‘natural’ life-form (or rather a particular conception of how life seems to organise itself ‘naturally’) into a certain cultural and national identity” (Weber 2013, 430). Public and art discourses on the nation identity formulated in terms of bodies (in terms of life, death, health, reproduction, etc.) and biopolitical others became the actual battle ground of nationalism.

Those biopolitical metaphors, which win the “battle”, are disseminated through media and education to the general public, to inform the latter how “it is supposed to live, how it should produce cultural values and form administrative institutions. The biopolitical metaphor now functions as a quasi-natural, national ideology that cultivates the people and represents in essence a particular cultural programme of the nation” (Weber 2013, 428–429). In the paper, I ask whose and what kind of bodies were exemplified in Polish cultural discourse after 1989 to depict new Poland that was moving away from (Soviet) communism towards democratization.

Changes of Regimes as Reflected in the Interpretation of the Ukrainian Culture by Hungarians, as Reactions to “The Other”, in Different Socio-Political Structures

Sándor Földvári

Reception of Ukrainian culture began in Hungary during the break of the 19th–20th century when Ivan Franko published his “History of Ukrainian Literature” in Hungarian. Much later, in the 1950s–60s, translations from Ukrainian literature were provided by the communist regime within the framework of ‘Soviet’ literature, however, it was some heydays of that. For the interpreters of Ukrainian literature were skilled enough to distinguish between Russian and Ukrainian, not only in the languages but also in poetic forms as well. It elaborated the soul of the heyday of the academic Ukrainian philology and history in Hungary, in the 1980–90s.

Because of the change of social regime in the late 1980s and mainly in the 1990s, new departments and divisions of Ukrainian were established at universities, and new fields of research were provided. In Nyíregyháza, the Eastern part of Hungary, next to the Ukrainian border, István Udvari grounded a new Ukrainian department in the early 1990s, which had earlier no prehistory. This prolific scholar published more than 600 papers and edited collective works for university education, too, such as manuals on the history of Ukraine, studies on modern Ukrainian literature e.g. “Ukrainian Futurism”, and grammars of Ukrainian.

In Budapest, the capital of Hungary, Prof Vira Serdjuk-Scher lectured Ukrainian literature and language since 1960s, and due to her efforts, in the 1990s already MA degree was able to graduate, however, the Department of Ukrainian was established only in 2000s, due to the slow and complicated development in the capital, in comparison to the fresh and energetic countryside. In the Southern part of Hungary, at the Szegeed University, Ukrainian studies were integrated into the programs of the Slavic Department, offering the opportunity of gaining MA degree, and also a PhD in Ukrainian, too, without any special Ukrainian department.

At the Debrecen University, East Hungary, no Ukrainian department nor program has been established, however, research on Ukrainian cultural heritage was conducted here on the international level, in the field of the old printed Cyrillic books of Ukrainian origin, by Esther Ojtozi in the 1970s–90s, who was much evaluated also by academician Isaievych,

the famous Ukrainian scholar who was invited to the Harvard as a visitor professor, too. Lately, these academic centers are still working, however, the interpretation of culture and literature declined much, in comparison with the 1960–70s. This must be explained by the impacts of the lately ruling authoritarian regime, which destroyed the records and results of the flourishing “regime-change” epoch of the 80–90s.

“Statues could not imagine that turning points would come”: Monuments and Temporality in Soviet Caricatures of the Late 1980s and Early 1990s

Kateryna Yeremieieva

This study focuses on the image of monuments in Soviet caricatures of the end of perestroika. Until the late 1980s, if satirists risked depicting these objects, it was only as sacred places of memory. But since the late 1980s, monuments have appeared in cartoons more often against the backdrop of intensifying discussions about the history of the past decades, including the first leninopad (dismantling of Lenin’s monuments). In the cartoons of the satirical magazines *Krokodil* and *Perets* (UkSSR), statues are simultaneously destroyed and restored, citizens commit suicide on them, dismantled monument becomes a bridge over the abyss, and citizens spin Lenin’s figure so that he points in different directions.

According to Vladimir Tarasov, Soviet monumental art was a conversation the government had with itself, a dialogue that did not need an interlocutor but engaged citizens. These caricatures prove that other actors joined this conversation, including through visual satire. The monuments were supposed to contradict temporality and perpetuate Soviet symbols. But by the end of perestroika, this was at odds with the dynamically changing social context. The sense and fear of changes pushed satirists to depict monuments no longer as places of canonized memory that defied temporality and were surrounded by established commemorative rituals and narratives. Cartoonists used the grotesque to show the semiotic noise around monuments in times of change and to depict monuments as a place of joint effort to commemorate or receive an emotional experience due to the destruction of the old symbols.

Ignoring the History as a Strategy: The Aesthetic Avant-Garde of Latvian Theatre in the 1990s

Zane Kreicberga

The paper will look at aesthetic innovations in Latvian theatre during the 1990s as an outcome of complex interactions between socio-political and cultural shifts started already in the 1980s. While the transition period of the collapse of the USSR and regaining independence of post-socialist countries mostly is considered as time of new possibilities, the closer analysis of performing arts processes in Latvia reveals also certain disadvantages and paradoxes. The former function of theatre as hidden opposition to the ruling ideology has gone and new functions of theatre in the transformed society and economy are not found immediately. In 1993, after some years of confusion, several signs of a new turn in Latvian theatre appeared. Actor and director Alvis Hermanis staged his first production at the recently established New Riga Theatre. Directors and pedagogues Pēteris Krilovs and Anna Eižvertiņa enrolled a combined cohort of actors and directors at the Latvian Academy of Culture that later formed a strong basis of acting and directing forces of Latvian theatre. The early work of theatre directors Alvis Hermanis, Regnārs Vaivars and those associated with “The Atelier of Unbearable Theatre” (Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, Viesturs Kairišs, Gatis Šmits) will be examined through the lens of Avant-Garde theories, especially as defined by James M. Harding and John Rose in “Not the Other Avant-Garde”. The article will explore in what sense the radical break with history performed by the mentioned theatre makers using postdramatic aesthetic strategies has become historical.

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