

International Conference

Artistic Practices between
Aesthetics and Power:
Propaganda, Mobilization
and Resistance

29 June - 01 July 2026
Estonian Literary Museum
Tartu, Estonia

Programme and abstracts

International Conference

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and Power: Propaganda, Mobilization,
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Abstracts and Programme

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International Conference

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When ideologies clash, the instrumentalization of artistic works and cultural practices allows propaganda to reach new target groups and influence them more effectively. Works of art function in different spheres simultaneously: as objects of aesthetics, economics, ethics, memory and politics, they fulfill various goals, transmit different meanings, and are interpreted in differing ways. The content of the work depends on the context in which it is interpreted, but other meanings are also present and become relevant in the process of comprehending a work. This polysemanticism creates many opportunities for propaganda to work. However, if the linguistic manipulations of propaganda have been well studied and easily deconstructed (Kris & Leites 1947; Malinova 2013; and others), the instrumentalization of visual and performative works in propaganda requires closer scholarly attention. Propaganda reassembles the semantics of a work by re-contextualizing and/or collaging elements of a well-known work. Modern technologies allow this to be done quickly and efficiently. At the same time, a wide range of technical means and the democratization of cultural practices make it possible not only to overcome the modern exclusivity of the creator, to increase public access to creative work as much as possible, but also to blur the boundaries between art and non-art (Benjamin 1935). Popular culture and Internet folklore play an essential role in the inclusion of works of art in the propaganda arsenal. The history of crisis events demonstrates the rapid transformation of popular culture into a “propaganda mouthpiece”. Research on Internet folklore shows how internet users create their works using a wide range of artistic tools, how works of art and their elements function as reassembled messages (Laineste et al. 2024). Various genres of Internet folklore (Laineste & Shilikhina 2024) are also becoming tools for propaganda (Wiggins 2019).

We invite you to participate in an interdisciplinary conference on the complex relationship between art, propaganda, collective memory, and forms of social activism. We aim to explore how artistic practices shape public consciousness, rewrite history, activate protest, or, conversely, strengthen the ideological narratives of power. In recent decades, we have witnessed the increasing role of visual art, theater, digital media, and

International Conference

cultural products in the process of political mobilization, traumatization, and collective reflection on the past. In the context of growing conflicts, identity crises, mass migration, and repressive policies, art becomes an active tool of influence: it is used to perpetuate and erase, to resist and to manipulate. This duality of artistic expression, which is realized in aesthetics, criticism and ideology, requires careful analysis and rethinking.

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Programme

Monday, 29.06.2026

09.00 – 09.30 Welcome speeches

 Main Hall

09.30 – 10.30 Plenary lecture

 Main Hall

Beata Valigorska-Olejnicka (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). *Between Witnessing and Visual Experimentation. New East European Cinema of War*

Moderator: Liisi Laineste (Estonian Literary Museum)



10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00 Sections A

Section A-1 Culture, language and education policy	Section A-2 Literature of memory and resistance
Chair: Nikolay Kuznetsov (Estonian Literary Museum)	Chair: Maria Borovikova (University of Tartu)
 Main Hall	 Library Hall
https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6QI4vCZHtuJi6e	
Andrey Makarychev (University of Tartu)	Nina Laby (University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland)
Visual Biopower at War: Russian and Pro-Russian ‘Biopolitical Media’ in Occupied Territories of Ukraine	Guzel’ Yakhina’s novel <i>Children of the Volga</i> as an Attempt at Reconciliation with the Uncomfortable Past
Anastasia Arefieva (Brussels, Belgium)	Borys Begun (Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany)
Citizen Theatre as a Rite of Passage: The Method of “Theatre and Reconciliation”	“Carnavalesque Laughter Against the Horror of History”: Vladimir Zvinyatskovsky on the Historical Memory of the Russian Reader
Maria Żukowska (University of Białystok, Poland)	Anna Humeniuk (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)
The Visual and Narrative Strategies of School History Textbooks (1985–2023)	The Naturalization of the Soviet Myth as Cultural “Heritage”: A Reading of Dmitry Bykov’s Novel <i>Justification</i> through Barthes
Elena Solonina (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium)	Natalia Pazniak (Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany)
The Continuity Myth: Putin’s Cultural Policy as Soviet Legacy	Contemporary Literature in Trasianka: Aesthetic Practices and Political Contexts
Discussion	Discussion

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.00 Sections B

Section B-1 Trauma and violence in culture Chair: Oksana Kuts (University of Tartu)  Main Hall	Section B-2 Russian “official” culture during the war Chair: Elena Pavlova (University of Tartu)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6QI4vCZHtuJi6e
Beata Pawletko (University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland) The Phenomenon of Terezín (against the backdrop of the collection <i>Fortress over the Abyss</i>)	Karolina Marek (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland) The Politicization and Militarization of Viktor Tsoi and Songs by Kino
Tomas Čenys (Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania) Monsters in Contemporary Russian Culture: Witnesses of Trauma and Servants of the System	Viktor Levchenko (Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University, Odesa, Ukraine) Kostiantyn Raikher (Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University, Odesa, Ukraine) The Symbolic A-Bomb of Shaman
Sergey Troitskiy (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia) Born in the Wrong Time and Place: the Case of Nadezhda Voitinskaya	Anna Boginskaya (University of Wrocław, Poland) Russophone Literature in the Era of Military-Patriotic Education
	Justyna Tymieniecka-Suchanek (University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland) The Status of the Bear in Politics and Propaganda
Discussion	Discussion

16.00 – 16.30 Coffee break

16.30 – 18.30 Book presentation (C-1, C-2, C-3)

 Main Hall

18.30 – 19.30 Meeting with Estonian artist (Priit Koppel)

 Main Hall

Tuesday, 30.06.2026

09.30 – 10.30 Plenary lecture

 Main Hall

Natalia Artemenko (TU Dortmund, Germany). *Propaganda of Memory vs. Politics of Oblivion: On the Possibility of Bearing Witness*
Moderator: Andreas Ventsel (University of Tartu)

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00 Sections D

Section D-1 Postcolonial approaches to literature and culture	Section D-2 Visual culture
Chair: Olga Ivaškevičš (Estonian Literary Museum)  Main Hall	Chair: Anastasiya Fiadotava (Estonian Literary Museum)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6Ql4vCZHtuJl6e
Eeva Kuikka (University of Turku, Finland) Illustrating Russian Imperialism in Seseg Jigjitova's Graphic Essay "Deep Freeze"	Elena Kurant (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) The Politics of Text: Ideology and Artistic Expression in Contemporary Russian-Language Drama
Alla Saltikova (Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia) The Human Being through a Postcolonial Lens in Aleksei Ivanov's Novels <i>Heart of Parma</i> and <i>The Gold of the Rebellion</i>	Marta Lechowska (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Compulsory Positivity: On Artistic Strategies in Totalitarian Times
Alexander Chertenko (Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany) A Polish Berserk in the Ukrainian Steppe: Solidarity as Colonialism in Szczepan Twardoch's <i>Null</i>	Olga Caspers (Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany) Contemporary Russian Emigré Cinema as a New Space of Alternative Memorial Culture
Elżbieta Żak (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Polish Lemkos' "Forms of Silence" and Narratives of Presence	Krzysztof Tyczko (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland) Two Forms of Patriotism in Pavel Talankin and David Borenstein's Film <i>Mr. Nobody vs. Putin</i> (2025) in the Context of the Conflict Between the Protagonists and the Status Quo in the Novels <i>Steppe</i> by Oksana Vasyakina (2022) and <i>The Idiot</i> by F. Dostoevsky
Discussion	Discussion


13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.30 Sections E

<p>Sektsioon E-1 Workshop: “The Medium is the Power: Imaginary Milieus of Control” Chair - Andrey Logutov (Goethe University, Frankfurt)  Main Hall</p>	<p>Section E-2 Modern literature during the war Chair: Lea Pild (University of Tartu)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6Ql4vCZHtuJi6e</p>
<p>Andrey Logutov (Goethe University, Frankfurt). Cultivating Data: The Russian Internet as a Political Milieu.</p>	<p>Urszula Trojanowska (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Young Adult Literature in Times of War: Mikita Franko’s Queer Project</p>
<p>Boris Podoroga (University of Lille, Lille). The Nooscape, or the Ideology of the Cybernetic Katechon.</p>	<p>Ksenia Dubiel (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Wartime Poetry: An Ecocritical Approach</p>
<p>Ondřej Váša (Charles University, Prague). “Nothing Wonderful Before Us”: The Open Worlds of Failed Ideologies.</p>	<p>Ievgeniia Voloshchuk (Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany) Practices of Dehumanization in German-Language Literature on Contemporary Wars: A (Post-)Migrant Perspective</p>
<p>Oxana Timofeeva (Universität der Künste, Berlin) World Soul and Environment: An Immanent Medium</p>	<p>Martyna Kowalska (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Visual and Affective Mechanisms of Propaganda in Linor Goralik’s Novel <i>Bobo</i></p>
<p>Tomáš Dvořák (Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague) The Statistical Zoom: Imaginary Media and the Ideology of Scalar Governability</p>	<p>Jeļena Tomaševiča (Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia) Science Fiction as a Form of Social Critique: Andrei Levkin’s Collection <i>Ancient Arithmetic</i></p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion</p>

16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break

17.00 – 18.30 Sections F

<p>Section F-1 The Soviet experience – 1 Chair: Ljubov Kisseljova (University of Tartu)  Main Hall</p>	<p>Section F-2 The Visual vs The Political Chair: Natalia Gramatchikova (Independent Researcher, Serbia)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6QI4vCZHtuJi6e</p>
<p>Girts Vikmanis (Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia) Censorship and its Liberalization in the Latvian Literary Magazine “Avots” during Soviet Glasnost and Perestroika</p>	<p>Nona Shahnazarian (Institute of Archeology and Ethnography Academy of Sciences and Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, NGO, Yerevan, Armenia) Amalya Dilanyan (Institute of Archeology and Ethnography Academy of Sciences and Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, NGO, Yerevan, Armenia) Mariam Petrosyan (Historical Museum of Armenia, Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia) Graffiti of Fallen Soldiers in Armenia: Counter-Memory and the Struggle for Symbolic Space</p>
<p>Ekaterina Konakova (University of Tartu, Estonia) Family Memory between Fact and Fiction: 21st-Century Russian Autobiographical Prose as a Form of Historical Reconstruction</p>	<p>Vladimir Vaingort (Kardis, Tallinn, Estonia) The Demolition of Monuments as Performative Propaganda and the Influence of Urban Phenomenology on This Process: The Fate of Amandus Adamson’s Sculptures</p>
<p>Anna Troitskaya (University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia) Tallinn: The City that Will Never Be Completed</p>	<p>Bożena Zoja Zilborowicz (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland) The Artist Against State Violence: Artem Loskutov’s “Dubinopis”</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion</p>

18.30 – 19.30 Meeting with Estonian artist (Mark Soosaar)

 Main Hall

Wednesday, 01.07.2026

09.30 – 10.30 Plenary lecture



 Main Hall

Jan Levchenko (University of Jyväskylä, Finland; Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Budva, Montenegro). *Imagery of Visual Resistance: Photos by Dmitry Vyshemirsky and the issue of time and moment*

Moderator: Tõnno Jonuks (Estonian Literary Museum)

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00 Sections G

Section G-1 Culture of resistance Chair: Sevda Polat (Istanbul Gelisim University, Istanbul, Turkey)  Main Hall	Section G-2 Modern Russian culture from propaganda to protest Chair: Olga Caspers (Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6Ql4vCZHtuJi6e
Justyna Pisarska (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Feminist Anti-War Resistance and Its Objects of Protest	Bartłomiej Brażkiewicz (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Visualizing Victory: Narratives of May 9 in Vesolye Kartinki (2000-2025): Between Memory, Propaganda, and Playful Aesthetics
Bartosz Gołąbek (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) Resistance Is Useful: Ethics and Political Agency in Ilya Yashin's Resistance	Orest Semotiuk (Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany) The Aesthetics of Aggression and Resistance: How the Grim Reaper Meme Reframes Military Intervention
Katarzyna Syska (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland) "Only Death and Decay Improve One's Mood": The Critical Potential of Necroactivism	Anna Krasnikova (University eCampus, Novedrate, Italia) "Withdraw Your Troops from Yourself": A Digest of Anti-War Protests in Russia — History and Textual Analysis
Katarzyna Roman-Rawska (Institute of Slavic Studies PAS, Warsaw, Poland) Unlearning Empire: Rethinking Subjectivity and Belonging in Russian Anti-War Culture	Dmitrii Kozmin (University of Bologna, Forli, Italy) The Image of a SMO Veteran in Russian Films and TV Series
Discussion	Discussion

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.00 Sections H

<p>Section H-1 Theorizing artistic, academic and political strategies Chair: Elena Kurant (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland)  Main Hall</p>	<p>Section H-2 The Soviet experience - 2 Chair: Roman Leibov (University of Tartu)  Library Hall https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/377849705048455?p=iJmL6Ql4vGZHtuJi6e</p>
<p>Ivan Fomin (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic) Putin's Thin Statism in Russian Strategic-Cultural Meaning-Making: A Semiotic Analysis of Escalation and Mobilization Habits Across Modes and Genres</p>	<p>Aleksandr Dmitriev (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic) Viktor Shklovsky vs. Adrian Piotrovsky: The Avant-Garde and Propaganda after 1917</p>
<p>Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia) Experiments and Borders: Estonian Folklorists in the Field</p>	<p>Aleksey Kamenskikh (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany) Writing as Resistance and as Witnessing: The Camp Diaries of Kirill Kostinsky (Uspensky), 1960-64</p>
<p>Arkadiusz Bednarczuk (Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz, Poland) Artistic Strategies and the Tactics of Resistance and Propaganda in Late Modernity</p>	<p>Iaroslav Bigun (Kiel University, Kiel, Germany) The Controversiality of Reinterpreting the History of Anti-Jewish Violence during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921 in Contemporary Polish and Ukrainian Literature and Film</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion</p>

16.00 – 16.30 Coffee break

16.30 – 18.00 Estonian Literary Museum excursion and conference closing ceremony

Plenary Lecture

June 29, 2026, 9:30 – 10:30

Estonian Literary Museum
Vanemuise 42, Tartu, Estonia

Moderator: Liisi Laineste
(Estonian Literary Museum)

Beata Waligórska-Olejniczak

Adam Mickiewicz University,
Poznań, Poland

Between Witnessing and Visual Experimentation. The New East European Cinema of War



This talk focuses on the latest films made by the young generation of female Ukrainian directors, visual artists and activists. It will analyse films made between 2014–2024, both feature and documentary, including Anna Buryachkova’s *Forever Forever* (2023), Kateryna Gornostai’s *Stop-Earth* (2021), Alina Maksimenko’s *Ptitsa* (2022) and *In Limbo* (2024), Tonia Noyabrova’s *Do You Love Me?* (2023), Alisa Kovalenko’s *Alice in Warland* (2016), *Home Games* (2018), *Will Not Fade away* (2023), Iryna Tsilyk’s *The Earth is Blue as an Orange* (2020), Angelika Ustymenko’s *Queer Fighters of Ukraine* (2023, in cooperation with Alex King) and Maryna Vroda’s *Stepne* (2023), among others. All of these films either direct attention to the ways women or children/teenagers approach the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian War in Donbas or build a connection between present times and Ukrainian history immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They show how the war and political changes challenge the established gender order, redefine social roles and relationships, and motivate people to search for a new identity. I argue that the selected

films share certain common features such as a subjective female gaze, mapping the political onto the personal, focus on everyday life, interest in children's and teenagers' personal dilemmas, sexual violence, the significance of female corporeality and the importance of visual materiality, among others. I analyse how presenting history through the details of private lives deconstructs the traditional narration of male and female heroism in a time of war. Ukrainian female directors build up intimate portrayals of their film characters, very often including the world of animals. They expose individual fears, creating a more complex view of reality and inviting the recipient to examine collective questions and struggles. In the selected movies, women and children are not only victims in need of protection, but are also perceived as creators, active fighters for the future, able to turn their traumas into driving forces in life. This approach to history through intimate details – the personal story or loss, images of the fragmented body, individual fears – situates the language of the new female filmmakers in the context of important literary antecedents about women and war, such as Svetlana Alexievich's *The Unwomanly Face of War* (1985), with which I engage in the discussion, along with scholarly works on counter-history, haptic cinema and somaesthetics.

Dr. Beata Waligórska-Olejniczak, PhD is a Full Professor in the Institute of East Slavic Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland). She is also deputy director and the head of the Department of Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture (since 2014) and the editor-in-chief of "Studia Rossica Posnaniensia" (since 2018). She was also a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Comparative Literature. Her latest book, *Literary Constellations of Andrey Zvyagintsev's Oeuvre*, was published in 2022. She is also the (co)author of four other monographs in Polish, i.e. *Contemporary Russian Cinema in the Light of War Traumas: Literary and Cultural Context* (2020); *New Russian Cinema in the Literary and Film Tradition* (2017); *Sacrum on the Way: Venedict Erofeev's Moscow-Petushki and Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction through the Lens of Montage* (2013); *Theatrical Gesture in A. P. Chekhov's Drama The Seagull and Free Dance as the Aesthetic Context of the Great Theatre Reform* (2009). Her articles have been published in China, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and the USA.

Plenary Lecture

June 30, 2026, 9:30 – 10:30

Estonian Literary Museum
Vanemuise 42, Tartu, Estonia

Moderator: *Andreas Ventsel*
(*University of Tartu*)

Natalia Artemenko

TU Dortmund, Germany



Propaganda of Memory vs. Politics of Oblivion: On the Possibility of Bearing Witness

Contemporary wars are accompanied not only by struggles over territory but also by struggles over regimes of memory. In the Russian context, one can observe a paradoxical combination of an intensified propaganda of memory and a systematic politics of oblivion. On the one hand, the state actively mobilizes the memory of the Great Patriotic War, transforming it into a central element of national identity and a symbolic resource for legitimizing the present war (“special military operation”). On the other hand, this same memorial politics is accompanied by the suppression and linguistic transformation of present violence through ideological “necrospeak” – a language that normalizes death, masks war through euphemisms, and blurs responsibility. As a result, a peculiar configuration of public discourse emerges in which the hypertrophy of memory about the past begins to function as a mechanism of collective forgetting of the present.

In this context, the question of the possibility of bearing witness acquires particular significance. What is at stake is not a claim to a final or “truthful” description of reality, but rather the possibility of a non-prejudiced and critically distanced view of what is taking place. In this regard, the strategy

proposed by Marc Richir as a “skeptical epoche” proves particularly productive: witnessing appears as a practice of “highlighting” the unnaturalness of what has become familiar. Such testimonies carry the trace of defamiliarization (ostranenie) – a gesture in which a world familiar to everyone is at once recognized and called into question. They appeal to our own experience while at the same time exposing the unnaturalness of what has come to be perceived as self-evident (for instance, the normalization of corruption or the assumption that “politics is a dirty business”). However, such a practice of witnessing also demands a certain effort on the part of the observer: a kind of conversion that suspends habitual and clichéd perceptions of the world and shifts us into a state of suspension of ready-made meanings – stable concepts continuously reproduced by propaganda. In this gap – in this suspension of ready-made meanings – a genuinely political space may emerge, distinct from the ideological. In this sense, the capacity to “bear one’s century,” as Grigory Pomerants once formulated it and as Alexei Navalny embodied in his own way, is linked to the possibility of remaining a witness to one’s time without accepting the self-evidences imposed by it.

Dr. Natalia Artemenko, PhD, is a philosopher and Visiting Professor at TU Dortmund (Germany). She has been a Visiting Professor at HEPI since 2018 and served as Editor-in-Chief of the international journal *HORIZON. Studies in Phenomenology*. She has held research fellowships at universities in Bochum (2002–2003, 2007, 2010, 2011), Heidelberg (2013), Wrocław (2014), and Jena (2014), and has taught as a Visiting Professor in Lithuania (2017), Bulgaria (2016), and the Czech Republic (2021). She is a member of the Central and East European Society for Phenomenology and the Nordic Society for Phenomenology. She has also worked as a translator and academic editor of major phenomenological texts from German and English, including works by Husserl and Heidegger. Her work focuses on nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophy and the phenomenological tradition, with particular emphasis on subjectivity, trauma and memory studies, phenomenological psychotherapy, and the political dimensions of intersubjectivity. She is the author of more than 150 academic publications and over twenty collective monographs, including *The Phenomenological Concept of the World* (2024), *What Is Phenomenology* (2024), *Topology of Trauma* (2020), and the monograph *Haideggerovskaja “poterjannaja” rukopis’ / Zu Martin Heideggers Interpretation von Aristoteles* (2012), devoted to Heidegger’s early thought.

Plenary Lecture

July 1, 2026, 9:30 – 10:30

Estonian Literary Museum
Vanemuise 42, Tartu, Estonia

Moderator: Tõnno Jonuks
(Estonian Literary Museum)

Jan Levchenko

University of Jyväskylä, Finland;
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences,
Budva, Montenegro

Imagery of Visual Resistance: Photos by Dmitry Vyshemirsky and the issue of time and moment



Photo: Irina Senkina

Visual resistance is an effect frequently found in Soviet-era photography. Compared to a forbidden word, a visual image is more ambiguous and therefore liberated. Even early icons of Soviet propaganda, such as Alexander Rodchenko and Arkady Shaikhet, allowed themselves the aesthetic ambiguity that is associated with the very nature of photographic expression. Controlled reality remained reality, which the intermediary photographer did not prevent from manifesting itself. Therefore, the best photographers of the late USSR emerged from modified reportage, that is, a special optics of the moment, dating back to the fundamental principles of Henri Cartier-Bresson. This is true both for the outstanding traditions in the Baltics (Antanas Sutkus in Lithuania or Juris Poišs in Latvia) and for the so-called club or uncensored photography of Leningrad/St. Petersburg (Boris Smelov, Alexander Kitaev). An example of the combination of different schools and reflections on approaches to nature and models is the work of photographer Dmitry Vyshemirsky

(Königsberg-Berlin). He is best known for his work on the traumatic memory of the East Prussian region. Its reoccupation by Russia in the form of the USSR in 1945 led to the emergence of a multi-layered ruin, the signs of which are inherent not only in specific buildings, but also in the overall living environment of this formally Russian, but in reality more mixed and complex exclave. Since the end of the 20th century, Vyshemirsky's mission has been to allow this spatial ruin to express its pain and melancholy. Back in the Soviet era, the young photographer created a seemingly purely reportage and existentially acute series entitled 'Beyond the Outskirts,' which will soon be published separately in Germany. The photographer kindly gave the author of this lecture permission to present the archival photos to the wider public and to interpret the dissident narrative that emerges from the combination of these images.

Dr. Jan Levchenko, PhD in semiotics and theory of culture (Tartu University, Estonia, 2004). Studied (2000-2002) and taught (2002-2008) art history at the European University at St. Petersburg. Former professor of cultural studies at the Higher School of Economics, Moscow (2009-2021). Left Russia in 2022 and returned to Estonia. Journalist, critic, and teacher at online liberal arts educational projects such as Smolny Beyond Borders, Berlin, and FLAS Montenegro. His books include *The Other Science. Russian Formalists in Search of Biography* (Moscow, 2012), *The Age of Defamiliarization: Russian Formalism and Humanities* (editor, with prof. Igor Pilshchikov, Moscow, 2016), *The Man with the Diamond Arm. Towards the Centenary of Leonid Gaidai* (ed., Moscow, 2023). Since 2026, Dr. Levchenko has been a senior lecturer in the Department of Russian Language and Culture at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Anastasia Arefieva

Brussels, Belgium

Citizen Theatre as a Rite of Passage: The Method of “Theatre and Reconciliation”

Citizen theatre, founded by Frédérique Lecomte over 30 years ago in Brussels, deconstructs stereotypes about marginalized groups (migrants, disabled people, LGBT persons, etc.), transforming their personal stories into universal narratives on stage. Meanwhile, the rehearsal process and performances mirror the structure of the rite of passage as articulated by Arnold van Gennep: from social separation through the entrance into stage reality as liminality to group acceptance and public visibility as aggregation, reviving participants' identities.

Arkadiusz Bednarczuk

Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz, Poland

Artistic Strategies and the Tactics of Resistance and Propaganda in Late Modernity

This paper focuses on the artistic strategies and tactics of social resistance, and those of propaganda used by the authorities. Both protesters and those in power quite often use similar artistic tactics. To some extent, this stems from the fact that a significant portion of artistic practices in late modernity draws on patterns of communication used in media, which affects the form and character of those practices. Considering that a hallmark of the artistic practices of resistance groups is the tactic of “semiotic partisan warfare,” while the strategy of those in power is most often to safeguard their message against reinterpretation, there are thus areas in which the actions of these two groups with opposing interests are tactically similar.

Boris Begun

Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany

“Carnavalesque Laughter Against the Horror of History”: Vladimir Zvinyatskovsky on the Historical Memory of the Russian Reader

This paper will examine how Volodymyr Zvynyatskovsky, in his book *The Historical Memory of the Russian Reader* (2025), conceptualizes the relationship between memory and forgetting, the specificity of national historical memory, and the fraught points of intersection between Ukrainian history and Russian literature (in particular Pushkin, Gogol, and Bulgakov). Special attention will be paid to the phenomenon of “carnavalesque laughter” as a form of resistance to the tragic and traumatic experience of history.

Iaroslav Bigun

(Kiel University, Kiel, Germany)

The Controversiality of Reinterpreting the History of Anti-Jewish Violence during the Polish–Soviet War of 1919–1921 in Contemporary Polish and Ukrainian Literature and Film

Drawing on representative works of Polish and Ukrainian literature and film, this presentation will examine the contradictory aspects of this issue (including strategies of silencing anti-Jewish violence during the Polish–Soviet War).

Anna Boginskaya

(University of Wroclaw, Poland)

Russophone Literature in the Era of Military-Patriotic Education

This paper analyzes patriotic education in Russia, which has been increasingly integrated into the school curriculum. Initially confined to extracurricular activities, it has evolved into a form of deliberate indoctrination. Today, military-patriotic education occupies a central position: teachers and students are expected to demonstrate unconditional support for the political regime. The curriculum fosters the internalization of “patriotic” values from an early age by ritualizing practices associated with patriotism and war.

Bartłomiej Brązkiewicz

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Visualizing Victory: Narratives of May 9 in *Vesyolye Kartinki* (2000–2025): Between Memory, Propaganda, and Playful Aesthetics

The commemoration of Victory Day (9 May) occupies a central place in Russian collective memory and national identity. The paper examines its representation in the children's magazine *Vesëlye kartinki* (2000–2025), highlighting the interplay between official memory politics and popular culture. It demonstrates how narratives of war are adapted for younger audiences through visual and textual forms, shaping historical consciousness within shifting political and cultural contexts.

Olga Caspers

Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

Contemporary Russian Emigré Cinema as a New Space of Alternative Memorial Culture

This presentation will examine the artistic practices of young Russian female directors who, in their formally unconventional films, rethink techniques for visualizing a traumatizing past, oppose the state's monopoly on memorial culture, and set against official narratives their own aesthetics of a "minor" or "second" memory.

Tomas Čenys

Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Monsters in Contemporary Russian Culture: Witnesses of Trauma and Servants of the System

Monsters appear in Russian culture as early as at the moment of the Soviet collapse. In texts of the 1990s, they function as a symbol of cultural instability and as an expression of post-Soviet trauma. In the 2000s and 2010s, the role of monsters begins to change: vampires and werewolves enter the pro-government discourse, becoming part of society's fascination with the security services. In this paper, we will analyze the dual role of monsters as agents of the state and, at the same time, as elements that destabilize the system.

Alexander Chertenko

Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

A Polish Berserk in the Ukrainian Steppe: Solidarity as Colonialism in Szczepan Twardoch's *Null*

Based on the latest novel by the Polish author Szczepan Twardoch, *Null*, this presentation will show how an Orientalist gaze and “restorative nostalgia” (S. Boym) – in particular, the discourse on the so called “Kresy Wschodnie” – infiltrate Polish narratives of “solidarity with Ukraine,” turning them, at least partially, into tools of discursive geopolitical appropriation.

Aleksandr Dmitriev

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Viktor Shklovsky vs. Adrian Piotrovsky: The Avant-Garde and Propaganda after 1917

This presentation provides an analysis of the opposing approaches of the formalist Viktor Shklovsky and of the classics scholar, translator and film organizer Adrian Piotrovsky (1898–1937). While Piotrovsky was a proponent of using the language of the avant-garde for Bolshevik propaganda, Shklovsky, who was close to the Socialist Revolutionaries, insisted on maintaining a critical distance from political and mobilizational objectives.

Ksenia Dubiel

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Wartime Poetry: An Ecocritical Approach

This presentation provides an analysis of selected Ukrainian war lyrics within the framework of ecocriticism and concerns the ways in which the experience of war shapes the image of nature and human relations with the environment. The analysis will encompass linguistic strategies and aesthetic means of expression that make it possible to show the tensions between humans and nature under conditions of conflict.

Ivan Fomin

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Putin's Thin Statism in Russian Strategic-Cultural Meaning-Making: A Semiotic Analysis of Escalation and Mobilization Habits Across Modes and Genres

The paper suggests that the strategic-cultural constructs that inform decisions behind Russia's military interventions are based either on a nationalist-statist configuration of ideas or a patriotic-statist one, each suggesting distinct foreign and security policy actions. Moreover, when mobilizing the population for war, Russia's strategic culture is also configured differently, in this case, combining nationalist-statist and patriotic-statist habits with welfare-statist ones.

Bartosz Gołębek

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Resistance Is Useful: Ethics and Political Agency in Ilya Yashin's *Resistance*

This paper examines Ilya Yashin's *Resistance* as political writing under repression. It argues that resistance is framed not as a tool for change but as an ethical and linguistic practice preserving agency, responsibility, and moral clarity. Focusing on testimony, language, and post-Soviet dissent, it presents resistance as non-heroic and future-oriented – redefining usefulness as ethical endurance rather than effectiveness.

Anna Humeniuk

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

The Naturalization of the Soviet Myth as Cultural “Heritage”: A Reading of Dmitry Bykov’s Novel *Justification* through Barthes

This presentation examines the mechanisms of myth naturalization in *Justification* through the lens of Barthesian theory. The incorporation of the language of propaganda and the repression of facts cause propagandistic narratives to become internalized and unconsciously reproduced by subsequent generations as cultural “heritage”.

Aleksey Kamenskikh

Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany

Writing as Resistance and as Witnessing: The Camp Diaries of Kirill Kostsinsky (Uspensky), 1960–1964

Using the example of the prison and camp diaries (1960–1964) of writer Kirill Kostsinsky, this presentation will examine diary writing in the post-Stalinist GULAG as a form of resistance and testimony, combining documentary description with allegory, literary metaphor and other forms of cryptic writing and “Aesopian speech”.

Ekaterina Konakova

University of Tartu, Estonia

Family Memory between Fact and Fiction: 21st-Century Russian Autobiographical Prose as a Form of Historical Reconstruction

This presentation examines contemporary Russian autobiographical prose through the lens of memory studies. It asks who tends to turn to their family past and which narrative strategies they use in doing so, and how an image of Russian history – from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1990s and 2000s – can be constructed through personal archives, postmemory, and autobiographical testimony.

Dmitrii Kozmin

University of Bologna, Forli, Italy

The Image of a SMO veteran in Russian Films and TV Series

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, Russian propaganda has been actively exploiting the image of the “SMO” veteran in popular culture for propaganda purposes. But what are its goals? This presentation will attempt to trace the changing image of the veteran, using Russian TV series as an example, and explain how Russian propaganda seeks to portray them.

Martyna Kowalska

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Visual and Affective Mechanisms of Propaganda in Linor Goralik's Novel *Bobo*

This presentation seeks to present Linor Goralik's novel *Bobo* as an epistemological space of visual and affective mechanisms of propaganda, through which the crossroads of social positions and ideological strategies in contemporary Russia are depicted, including the dynamics of mobilization and resistance.

Anna Krasnikova

(University eCampus, Novedrate, Italia)

“Withdraw Your Troops from Yourself”: A Digest of Anti-War Protests in Russia – History and Textual Analysis

This presentation discusses a digest of anti-war protests in Russia compiled by volunteers of the human rights organization Memorial since March 2022. The weekly digest is produced in Russian and published in Ukrainian translation; at various periods, it has also appeared in English, Italian, French, and other languages. Although the Russian-language versions of the digest are not publicly available, the author of this presentation has access to the complete corpus of these materials. Drawing on this corpus, as well as on interviews with the compilers of the digest, the paper reconstructs the history of the project and offers an analysis of the forms and discursive strategies of Russian anti-war protests.

Natalia Królikiewicz

(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)

Mechanisms of Persecution in Sasha Filipenko's Novel *Persecution*

The paper attempts to identify the mechanisms of persecution in the fictional world of the novel. Power is presented as a closed system that not only suppresses the individual, but also shapes public opinion in order to eliminate those it deems undesirable.

Eeva Kuikka

(University of Turku, Finland)

Illustrating Russian Imperialism in Seseg Jigjitova's Graphic Essay "Deep Freeze"

This presentation analyzes Buryat illustrator Seseg Jigjitova's graphic essay "Deep Freeze" (*Glubokaia zamorozka*) as a visual narrative linking Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine to its imperial history in Siberia – themes that are central to current decolonial activism among Russia's ethnic minorities.

Elena Kurant

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

The Politics of Text: Ideology and Artistic Expression in Contemporary Russian-Language Drama

This presentation examines how contemporary Russian-language drama engages with ideology: from forms of propaganda and language policy to artistic resistance and critical testimony. Based on an analysis of texts by contemporary playwrights in Russia and in emigration, the presentation considers language policy, the rewriting of history, and the construction of enemy and hero figures, as well as various practices of artistic activism in drama.

Mare Kõiva

(Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia)

Experiments and Borders: Estonian Folklorists in the Field

In the 1930s and 1940s, folklorists often relied on experimental – and at times dangerous – methods in their fieldwork. Beyond improvisational strategies used in difficult political conditions, real academic experimentation formed an essential part of their work. Some researchers pushed the boundaries of acceptable practice to gain access to communities or information: for example, wearing the uniform or insignia of a foreign military unit to move through restricted zones or to establish rapport with informants. Such actions, which now appear ethically troubling or perilous, highlight how critical periods intensify both the risks and the inventive strategies associated with knowledge-gathering.

Nina Laby

University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

Guzel' Yakhina's novel *Children of the Volga* as an Attempt at Reconciliation with the Uncomfortable Past

The Russian authorities are making every effort to ensure that Soviet crimes are consigned to oblivion. The writer Guzel' Yakhina has many family members who personally experienced the cruelty of the purges. In the novel *Children of the Volga*, she describes their experiences, attempting to draw attention to the crimes committed against minorities and to help preserve them in collective memory.

Marta Lechowska

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Difference and identity. On Artistic Strategies in Totalitarian Times

This presentation will offer an analysis of the latest works of performative and theatrical art from the Russophone space. The starting point for the analyses will be Emmanuel Levinas' concept of totality and Byung-Chul Han's theory of art and society, as presented in his book *The Burnout Society*. The core axis of the problematization will be the dichotomy: identity vs. difference and the principle of positivity vs. the principle of negativity.

Viktor Levchenko

Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Odesa, Ukraine

Kostiantyn Raikhert

Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Odesa, Ukraine

The Symbolic A-Bomb of Shaman

In November 2023, a video of Russian singer Shaman's concert spread online, sparking debate about Russia's militarization. Performing "I am Russian," Shaman pressed a red "nuclear briefcase" button, triggering fireworks that symbolize missile launches. Echoing official nuclear threats, the act glorified power and unity, especially for youth. Aired on National Unity Day, it was meant to invoke, in Russia, patriotism and, abroad, fear. More interestingly, the show evoked the audience's pleasure through imagining destruction, functioning as a mediated social affect.

Andrey Makarychev

University of Tartu, Estonia

Visual Biopower at War: Russian and Pro-Russian 'Biopolitical Media' in Occupied Territories of Ukraine

This presentation proposes the concept of biopolitics as a tool for understanding the following questions: how does the attacking party treat the residents of the occupied territories? How does the aggressor narrate the war to gain support from its own citizens? The presentation focuses on information flows in “biopolitical spaces,” including various narratives produced by media influencers that circulate among local populations.

Karolina Marek

Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

The Politicization and Militarization of Viktor Tsoi and Songs by Kino

The militarization of the public sphere and attempts to increase social participation in the war have resulted in the radical recontextualization of the work of Soviet rock legend Viktor Tsoi. In this presentation, I will analyze how Tsoi's legacy is currently undergoing a displacement of meaning through its systematic use in military contexts. His songs "Gruppa krovi" and "Kukushka" appear at parades, drills, politically themed events, etc., and attempts are made to present Tsoi as a contemporary "patriot".

Natallia Pazniak

Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

Contemporary Literature in Trasianka: Aesthetic Practices and Political Contexts

The paper analyzes contemporary literature in Trasianka, an unequal mixture of Belarusian and Russian, and its role in aesthetic strategies and sociopolitical practices. Authors use Trasianka to convey a sense of local identity, breaking language norms and reflecting a non-normative cultural reality. The paper argues that authors writing in Trasianka primarily aim to distance themselves from the politicization of language choice in contemporary Belarus.

Beata Pawletko

University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

**Fenomen Terezina (ze zbiorem
Крепость над бездной w tle) / The
Phenomenon of Terezín (against the
backdrop of the collection *Fortress
over the Abyss*)**

The focus of this presentation is a unique testimony created on the initiative of Elena Makarova. Terezín is a symbol of the liberating power of art and science, of resistance to Nazi propaganda, which exploited the semblance of creative independence in connection with the inspection of the camp in 1944 by the International Red Cross.

Justyna Pisarska

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Feminist Anti-War Resistance and Its Objects of Protest

The text will focus on the activities of Feminist Anti-War Resistance (FAR) and the objects it uses to articulate political protest. Implementing “the politics of the street” (Judith Butler) requires material and visual elements that attract attention and allow the voice of the protesters to be heard.

Sevda Polat

Istanbul Gelisim University, Istanbul, Turkey

Language Policy as a Means of Ideological Control

Language, as a means of communication in society, is not only a tool for spoken speech and interaction, but also a medium for preserving shared culture, history, and so on. The existence of a nation depends on the existence of its language. Everything around us is named with words that exist within a given language and shape its structure. How is language policy implemented in multiethnic and multilingual countries? What accounts for the dominance of one language over others? In this presentation, we examine the causes of the emergence and development of language policy as an instrument of social structuring, as well as the scope and outcomes of such policies.

Katarzyna Roman-Rawska

Institute of Slavic Studies PAS, Warsaw, Poland

Unlearning Empire: Rethinking Subjectivity and Belonging in Russian Anti-War Culture

This paper examines ROAR as a site of Russian-speaking resistance following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Using interpretive sociology and affective turn theories, it frames the platform as a “mosaic of weak resistance”. The study highlights the expression of collective trauma and the decolonial “unlearning” of imperial subjectivity. Ultimately, ROAR serves as an affective anti-war archive and a space for renegotiating identity under conditions of political repression.

Alla Saltikova

Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia

The Human Being through a Postcolonial Lens in Aleksei Ivanov's Novels *Heart of Parma* and *The Gold of the Rebellion*

The paper examines the image of the human being in Aleksei Ivanov's novels *Heart of Parma* and *The Gold of the Rebellion* through a post-colonial lens. It analyzes center-periphery relations, cultural hybridity, colonial trauma, and forms of personal self-identification under conditions of historical conflict, drawing on the theories of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Antonio Gramsci.

Orest Semotiuk

Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany

The Aesthetics of Aggression and Resistance: How the Grim Reaper Meme Reframes Military Intervention

This paper traces the origin, migration, and political transformation of the Grim Reaper meme as a recurring visual formula in the political commentary of armed conflicts. Drawing on Denisova's (2019) framework of meme travel, the paper examines how this visual template migrated across cultural, linguistic, and ideological boundaries while preserving its core semiotic structure. Special attention is given to the meme's adaptation in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas (2014), the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (2022), and parallel geopolitical crises in the Middle East and the Taiwan Strait.

Nona Shahnazarian

Institute of Archeology and Ethnography Academy of Sciences and Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, NGO, Yerevan, Armenia

Amalya Dilanyan

Institute of Archeology and Ethnography Academy of Sciences and Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, NGO, Yerevan, Armenia

Mariam Petrosyan

Historical Museum of Armenia, Centre for Independent Social Reserach Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia

Graffiti of Fallen Soldiers in Armenia: Counter-Memory and the Struggle for Symbolic Space

This paper explores post-war murals and graffiti of fallen soldiers in Armenia as forms of counter-memory and vernacular commemoration. Based on ethnographic fieldwork (2022–2025), it shows how these grassroots visual practices transform urban space into sites of mourning, contesting official memory regimes and dominant narratives of heroism. The study argues that graffiti operate as affective and political interventions, reshaping public memory and negotiating the boundaries between private grief and collective representation.

Elena Solonina

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

The Continuity Myth: Putin's Cultural Policy as Soviet Legacy

Since 2022, Russian authorities have intensified efforts to mobilize culture in support of the war against Ukraine, actively co-opting writers, filmmakers, and artists. This presentation examines these attempts and their effectiveness in shaping pro-war imagery. Drawing comparisons with Soviet-era cultural policy, we explore similarities and key differences in mechanisms, context, and outcomes, focusing on how contemporary “soft militarization” influences cultural production and reception.

Katarzyna Syska

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

“Only Death and Decay Improve One’s Mood”: The Critical Potential of Necroactivism

A number of theorists define the current stage of Russia’s political development as necroimperialism. In this situation, necroactivism becomes a relevant form of protest that exposes the necrophilic foundations of state ideology. This presentation will focus on the activities of the “Party of the Dead” and other art projects that play on the theme of death.

Jeļena Tomaševiča

Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia

Science Fiction as a Form of Social Critique: Andrei Levkin's Collection *Ancient Arithmetic*

The paper examines the debut collection of prose writer Andrei Levkin, *Old-Fashioned Arithmetic* (Riga, 1986), in which elements of science fiction function as a form of social critique. It considers the specificity of Levkin's literary language in the context of late Soviet culture and indirect strategies of aesthetic resistance.

Anna Troitskaya

Tartu University, Tartu, Estonia

Tallinn: The City that Will Never Be Completed

Using Tallinn guidebooks as an example, this presentation will show how the myths of the old man from Lake Ülemiste and of a city that will never be completed were translated into the Soviet narrative of grandiose socialist construction, especially in connection with the 1980 Olympic Games. It will analyze how, in Soviet guidebooks, the image of Old Tallinn became an object of the ideologization of memory.

Sergey Troitskiy

(Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia)

Born in the Wrong Time and Place: the Case of Nadezhda Voitinskaya

This presentation proposes to reflect on how specific historical conditions determine an artist's fate and how social markers put up insurmountable barriers in their lives. The events of Nadezhda Voitinskaya's personal biography turn out to be markers of the gradual narrowing of the range of life possibilities due to the progressive expansion of constraints brought about by stratification and the establishment of new limits.

Urszula Trojanowska

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

Young Adult Literature in Times of War: Mikita Franko's Queer Project

In this presentation, I will show how the war and the practical elimination of queer literature in Russia have influenced the work of a young writer, Mikita Franko. I will pay particular attention to the universe created by Franko in the novel *Days of Our Lives*, whose protagonists also deal with the consequences of the so-called "Special Military Operation".

Krzysztof Tyczko

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Two Forms of Patriotism in Pavel Talankin and David Borenstein's Film *Mr. Nobody vs. Putin* (2025) in the Context of the Conflict Between the Protagonists and the Status Quo in the Novels *Steppe* by Oksana Vasyakina (2022) and *The Idiot* by F. Dostoevsky

Pavel Talankin and David Borenstein's film *Mr. Nobody vs. Putin* (2025) depicts the all-encompassing militarization of children, a sealed-off, crude propaganda of superiority over geopolitical neighbors, and blind obedience to authority. However, the narrator does not reproduce the popular narrative of renouncing Russian experience and culture: his artistic world is closely aligned with Oksana Vasyakina's *Steppe*, and the character himself embodies the idea of the protagonist of Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot*.

Justyna Tymieniecka-Suchanek

(University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland)

The Status of the Bear in Politics and Propaganda

This paper will focus on the status of the Russian bear, which symbolizes Russia. It will examine the portrayal of the bear in caricature as a form of political propaganda.

Vladimir Vaingort

Kardis, Tallinn, Estonia

The Demolition of Monuments as Performative Propaganda and the Influence of Urban Phenomenology on This Process: The Fate of Amandus Adamson's Sculptures

This presentation examines why performative practices of monument demolition do not work in all urban contexts. Using the contrasting fates of Amandus Adamson's monuments as an example, it shows that monuments embedded in the city's collective phenomenology – its visual axes, routes, temporalities, and symbolic structure – turn out to be effectively irremovable, whereas peripheral monuments can be dismantled without resistance. The study draws on the concepts of performativity, the phenomenology of space, aura, and duration (Austin, Butler, Benjamin, Bergson). It concludes that it is precisely the city's phenomenological framework, rather than political will, that determines the limits of possible demolition.

Girts Vikmanis

(Daugavpils University, Daugavpils, Latvia)

Censorship and its Liberalization in the Latvian Literary Magazine “Avots” during Soviet Glasnost and Perestroika

The Latvian literary magazine “Avots” during the era of Soviet glasnost and perestroika was a decolonial powerhouse. The magazine evaded censorship and pushed forward its own agenda by publishing forbidden literature and critical articles about Soviet rule.

Ievgeniia Voloshchuk

(Viadrina Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany)

Practices of Dehumanization in German-Language Literature on Contemporary Wars: A (Post-) Migrant Perspective

Drawing on representative examples from German-language literature of the 2020s, the paper analyzes practices of dehumanization in narratives of contemporary wars, with reference to Judith Butler's concept of precarious life. It focuses on aesthetic forms of constructing the enemy, linguistic and media rituals of exclusion, the depersonalization of victims, and the normalization of violence, highlighting literary reflections on dehumanization and strategies of resistance.

Elżbieta Żak

(Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland)

Polish Lemkos' "Forms of Silence" and Narratives of Presence

The Lemkos, an ethnic minority living in Poland until their forced resettlement in 1945–1947, provide an example of the various political and cultural narratives that have shaped the collective consciousness of Poles at particular moments in time. Depending on specific historical circumstances, one can trace such phenomena as repression and oblivion (in People's Poland), the mythologization of Lemko history and culture (in the tourist and cultural sphere at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries), and, finally, the emergence of contemporary narratives and art projects that point to this “non-presence” of the Lemkos' cultural past in the consciousness of Poland's inhabitants (the books of Maria Strzelecka, the collages of Michał Szymko and Dominika Chmielewska, the exhibition “Forms of Presence”).

Bożena Zoja Zilborowicz

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

The Artist Against State Violence: Artem Loskutov's "Dubinopis"

"Dubinopis" ("Baton Painting") is an artistic technique developed by Novosibirsk-based artist and opposition activist Artem Loskutov, in which police rubber batons are used instead of brushes. This method has become a form of civic expression and protest against repression, violence, and military actions. The artist reinterprets an instrument of violence, transforming it into an instrument of art.

Maria Żukowska

University of Białystok, Poland

The Visual and Narrative Strategies of School History Textbooks (1985–2023)

This paper analyzes the school history textbook as a multimodal mediator of collective memory. It examines the visual and textual strategies used in Russian textbooks published between 1985 and 2023, drawing on methods of visual semiotics and narratology. The analysis demonstrates that visual elements operate as autonomous carriers of meaning and shape interpretations of the historical past.

The Medium is the Power: Imaginary Milieus of Control

A round table within the conference *Artistic Practices between Aesthetics and Power: Propaganda, Mobilization, and Resistance*

29 June – 01 July 2026, Tartu, Estonia

Full description of the conference:

https://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/2026/artistic_practices/

Organizers

Andrey Logutov, Goethe University Frankfurt andrew.logutov@gmail.com

Boris Podoroga, University of Lille boris.podoroga@gmail.com

Short Description

This round table explores how political formations imagine and attempt to shape the milieus in which perception, information, and material processes circulate. Participants will discuss how regimes project ideals of transparency, traceability, prediction, or governability onto media infrastructures, data systems, environments, and even natural substrates. Placing different perspectives into conversation, the round table highlights the persistent tension between these political imaginaries and the actual dynamics of technological, informational, and material systems, whose affordances often complicate, disrupt, or redirect such ideological ambitions.

Long Description

This round table brings together participants from different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds – including media theory, philosophy, cultural analysis, and aesthetic studies – to discuss a shared question: how political formations do not simply use media/milieus but cultivate implicit fantasies about the milieus in which perception, information, and

matter circulate. By placing several distinct perspectives into conversation rather than advancing a single unified framework, the round table aims to generate a productive discussion across different conceptual and empirical approaches to the relation between ideology and media.

A possible way for media theory to address power regimes could be to question how they imagine and attempt to shape the environments within which perception and circulation take place. These ideals are not limited to particular devices or channels of communication. They extend to broader milieus – technical, informational, atmospheric, or material – that promise certain distributions of visibility, traceability, or control. Such ideals do not rely on naive expectations of perfect transparency or total obedience. Authoritarian regimes, in particular, often recognize that opacity, ambiguity, and selective visibility can serve their purposes even more effectively. Media forms, infrastructures, environments, and even conceptual models of mediation can thus function as ideological messages in themselves, projecting preferred distributions of attention, agency, and meaning independently of any overt content.

What is oftentimes sought, in practice, are milieus whose affordances stabilize preferred distributions of the perceptible: arrangements that maintain asymmetries between what can be seen and what can be known, between what circulates and what can be traced, between what remains ambient and what becomes measurable. Regimes tend to gravitate toward environments that promise governability, whether in the form of predictable rhythms, controllable points of entry, restricted possibilities of recombination, calculable data flows, or epistemic frameworks that promise scalar legibility across complex systems. These milieus may involve communication technologies, algorithmic infrastructures, atmospheric representations, ecological substrates, aesthetic environments, or speculative devices that promise enhanced perceptual reach. As Friedrich Kittler reminds us, media systems “run on their own” and produce effects that exceed cultural fantasies and political intentions [1]. Yet the imaginary of ideal environments continues to shape how states and institutions attempt to configure infrastructures, regulate circulation, modulate noise, discipline environments, and domesticate the inherent

polysemy of cultural artifacts. Drawing on *The Book of Imaginary Media* [2], we likewise examine the dream of an ideal milieu not by locating it solely in the past but by tracing how this dream is actively pursued in the present.

The contributions to the round table approach these issues from several directions. They address contemporary infrastructures of governance, examining how digital platforms, service portals, and data systems transform communication spaces into environments structured by traceability and behavioral capture. They also engage with ideological constructs that imagine new media capable of anticipating and stabilizing complex social processes. At the same time, the discussion turns to aesthetic and experiential environments – including simulated worlds, landscapes of ruin, and philosophical concepts of environment – in order to make perceptible the atmospheres and temporalities through which political orders imagine themselves.

Taken together, these perspectives highlight a recurring tension between political fantasies of governable environments and the messy realities of technological, informational, and material systems. The round table is not meant to produce a single answer to how ideology operates through media. Instead, it aims to explore the different ways regimes imagine, cultivate, and contest the milieus through which perception, circulation, and political agency take shape. Bringing these approaches into conversation may help clarify what is at stake in today's struggles over environments of perception and data: not only the control of communication, but the shaping of the conditions under which reality becomes legible, traceable, and open to intervention.

References

- [1] Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*, trans. Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).
- [2] Eric Kluitenberg, Siegfried Zielinski, and Bruce Sterling, *The Book of Imaginary Media: Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007).

Format

The round table will combine short presentations with time for discussion. Each participant will give a 15-minute talk outlining the main idea of their contribution followed by about 5 minutes of immediate questions and comments. The remaining time will be used for a general discussion involving both participants and the audience, reflecting on the connections between the contributions and the broader issues addressed by the round table.

Line-Up

Andrey Logutov (Goethe University, Frankfurt). *Cultivating Data: The Russian Internet as a Political Milieu*. andrew.logutov@gmail.com

Boris Podoroga (University of Lille, Lille). *The Nooscope, or the Ideology of the Cybernetic Katechon*. boris.podoroga@gmail.com

Ondřej Váša (Charles University, Prague). *“Nothing Wonderful Before Us”: The Open Worlds of Failed Ideologies*. ondrej.vasa@fhs.cuni.cz

Oxana Timofeeva (Universität der Künste, Berlin) *World Soul and Environment: An Immanent Medium* oxana_san@yahoo.com

Tomáš Dvořák (Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague) *The Statistical Zoom: Imaginary Media and the Ideology of Scalar Governability* tomdvorak@famu.cz

Abstracts

Andrey Logutov (Goethe University, Frankfurt)

Cultivating Data: The Russian Internet as a Political Milieu

This paper examines how Russian authorities increasingly seek to transform the Internet from a space of communication into a governable milieu of data. In its early post-Soviet phase, Runet emerged as a relatively open arena for discussion, anonymity, experimentation, and transnational exchange among Russian-speaking users. Over time, however, this communicative environment has been reimagined by the state less as a public forum than as an infrastructure to be segmented, administered, and mined.

To describe this shift, I distinguish between knowledge, information, and data. By knowledge, I mean human-generated communicative content such as posts, comments, blogs, and videos. Information refers to structured services and automated resources accessible to users, including portals, maps, and platforms. Data, by contrast, consists of machine-readable traces generated, stored, and processed largely for other machines. My argument is that contemporary Russian Internet governance increasingly privileges data over knowledge. Communicative spaces are restricted, filtered, and rendered legally risky, while service infrastructures and data systems are actively expanded.

This transformation is visible in the growing role of platforms such as *Gosuslugi*, the state services portal, and in its integration with social and commercial ecosystems such as *VK*. It is also evident in traffic-retention requirements, deep packet inspection, expanding registries, and attempts to consolidate digital identities across platforms. In this model, citizens are encouraged to enter efficient digital service environments whose convenience is inseparable from surveillance and traceability. What is being cultivated is not simply a controlled Internet, but a milieu in which data extraction becomes the dominant logic of digital life.

I argue that this development reflects a broader ideological shift. The state increasingly treats communication as disorderly, excessive, and politically dangerous, while valuing data as a strategic resource promising governability, prediction, and control. The Russian case thus illustrates a tension between two competing imaginaries of the Internet: as a public space of exchange and as a substrate for managed visibility, behavioral capture, and algorithmic oversight.

Boris Podoroga (University of Lille, Lille)

The Nooscope, or the Ideology of the Cybernetic Katechon

This paper addresses the political concept of the *Nooscope*, proposed in 2016–2017 by Anton Vaino, head of the Russian Presidential Administration. Drawing on Vaino's articles *The Capitalization of the Future* and *The Image of Victory*, the paper argues that the *Nooscope* functions less as

a technical device than as an ideological construct designed to legitimize the authority of the president. Rather than grounding political legitimacy in democratic representation or elite consensus, the Nooscope frames power as a technologically mediated and quasi-mystical capacity to anticipate and manage complex social processes.

The article situates this concept within the broader Russian discourse of the katechon – a theological figure of “restraining” chaos and delaying catastrophe – widely mobilized in contemporary conservative ideology. I argue that the Nooscope translates this katechontic logic into a cybernetic register, presenting digital governance and predictive technologies as tools for preserving social order and resisting perceived entropic forces associated with the so-called “collective West”. In this framework, the president appears as a hybrid figure who combines technological management with a unique sensitivity to the emotional and spiritual state of the nation. The paper therefore interprets the Nooscope as a model of a cybernetic katechon, in which sovereignty, technology, and ideology converge in a new form of political legitimacy.

Ondřej Váša (Charles University, Prague)

“Nothing Wonderful Before Us”: The Open Worlds of Failed Ideologies

The paper analyzes the logic and aesthetics of open worlds in dystopian computer games, interpreting them as critical “sensory arrangements” and “anti-ideal infrastructures” of totalitarian ideologies. It argues that such games do not merely represent a resistant cultural form that implicitly exposes (or “betrays”) the aesthetic “message” of totalitarian systems, but also constitute a unique experiential ecosystem through which totalitarian temporality becomes perceptible. The analysis focuses in particular on the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. series, which reveals the temporal “truth” of the Soviet – and more broadly Eastern European – space: its pervasive and hopeless fatalism.

S.T.A.L.K.E.R. offers a distinctive representation of Central and Eastern Europe’s ongoing struggle with the legacy of Soviet domination. This

legacy manifests itself, among other things, in the characteristic aesthetics of decay and abandonment – environments that appear to be in systematic conflict with any notion of a hopeful or progressive future. Entire zones of “monumental” ruination emerge as peculiar “lagoons of despair”, transmitting a subliminal affective message to those who inhabit them: failure is inevitable; one must simply accept one’s “lame fate”.

Methodologically, the paper draws on several theoretical frameworks. First, it engages with forensic aesthetics, according to which “aesthetics is that which defines the environment, the atmosphere, the unspoken consensus of sensation”, which in turn “urges those who perceive [material objects] to take action” (or to remain passive) (Franke 2014). Second, it draws on the late Bruno Latour’s analyses of territorial narratives and the political implications of the reordering of affect and emotion through spatial and aesthetic configurations (Latour 2018). Third, it considers selected novels by the Strugatsky brothers, whose analyses of the persistent dystopian qualities of (post-)Soviet space remain strikingly relevant. Finally, the paper is informed by contemporary philosophies of ruin and decay (e.g., Edensor 2005; Žižek 2000).

Oxana Timofeeva (Universität der Künste, Berlin)

World Soul and Environment: An Immanent Medium

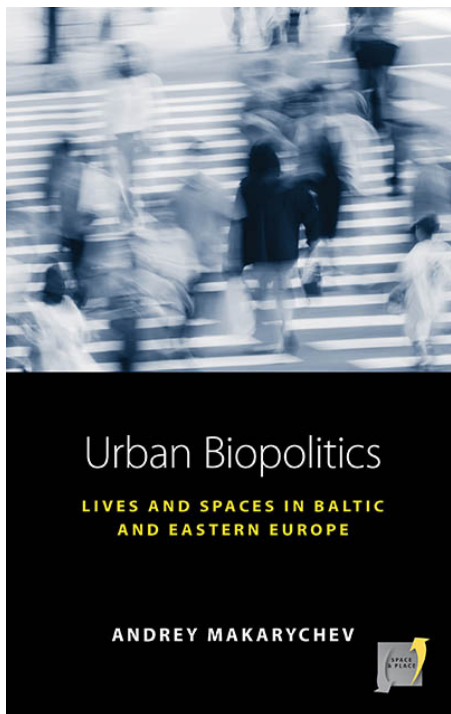
This paper re-examines Plato’s concept of the World Soul as presented in the *Timaeus* to consider its potential relevance for contemporary environmental philosophy. While the World Soul is typically interpreted within cosmological or theological frameworks, I argue that it can be understood as an immanent medium that fundamentally conditions the possibility of environmental relation. To develop this interpretation, the paper brings Plato’s account into dialogue with Jakob von Uexküll’s biosemiotic concept of *Umwelt* and Max Scheler’s phenomenological distinction between environment (*Umwelt*) and world (*Welt*).

Tomáš Dvořák (Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague)

The Statistical Zoom: Imaginary Media and the Ideology of Scalar Governability

This paper proposes the concept of the “statistical zoom” to describe a recurrent fantasy in modern media culture: the fantasy of a medium that would permit seamless movement between different levels of generality, linking the individual and the collective, the visible and the inferable, the concrete image and the abstract pattern. The genealogy of this imaginary medium begins in the late nineteenth century with the convergence of photography and statistics in authors such as Francis Galton and Gabriel Tarde, and continues through twentieth-century calls for forms of scalar mediation adequate to complex social reality, from C. Wright Mills’s “sociological imagination” to Fredric Jameson’s “cognitive mapping”. Across these moments, what recurs is not simply a desire for better representation, but for an environment in which social complexity could be made legible through controlled transitions between scales.

I argue that the statistical zoom should be understood as an ideological image of the ideal epistemic milieu. It projects a world in which dispersed phenomena can be gathered into calculable distributions while remaining tethered to concrete experience, and in which the passage from data to orientation appears governable. This imaginary also informs a range of aesthetic practices that hybridize realist images with diagrams, infographics and statistical visualizations. Today, artificial intelligence offers a particularly powerful contemporary instantiation of the statistical zoom, insofar as it operationalizes statistical induction as both a technical infrastructure and a cultural model of perception. Seen in this light, AI does not simply extend older representational ambitions; it renews the dream of a milieu in which patterns, futures and interventions can be extracted from noisy reality. The paper thus contributes to the panel by showing how ideology inheres in media forms that promise scalar legibility and by examining the persistent gap between this fantasy of epistemic continuity and the opacity of the systems that sustain it.



Speaker: Andrey Makarychev
**Urban Biopolitics. Lives
and Spaces in Baltic and
Eastern Europe**

Series "Space and Place".

Volume 23

Oxford, New York: Berghahn
Books, 2026

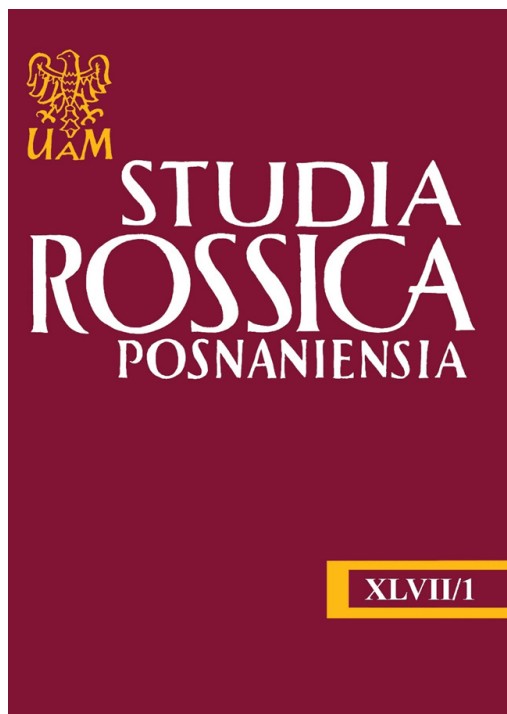
ISBN: 978-1-83695-676-1

Drawing on the concept of biopower and projecting it into the realm of the city, this book explores a multidisciplinary comparative analysis of two countries – Estonia and Ukraine – from the viewpoint of urban biopolitics, a concept that allows us to see how various groups of urban populations come into life and why their lifestyles matter for political calculations. It dissects the interconnections between the geopolitical conditions of military conflict with Russia in Ukraine and European institutional membership in Estonia, and forms of urban biopolitical governance. In doing so, the book highlights how cities become sites where global pressures and local political management converge.



**Speaker: Krzysztof Duda
Władysław
Popławski, Mikołaj
Kortt and Tertuljan
Modrzejewski's diary
of their 'wanderings
around the country'
(Białystok and
Nowogródek) in 1935**
[Władysława
Popławskiego, Mikołaja
Kortta, Tertuljana
Modrzejewskiego
dziennik „z włości po
kraju” (białostockie
i nowogródzkie) – 1935 rok]
Wydawnictwo Naukowe
UKEN, Kraków 2025
ISBN: 978-83-68731-24-8

The book *Władysław Popławski, Mikołaj Kortt and Tertuljan Modrzejewski's diary of their 'wanderings around the country' (Białystok and Nowogródek) in 1935* constitutes a return to a bygone era, which has been, to an extent, retained for posterity. This record of the past comes in the form of a diary left behind by three teenage residents of Białystok who embarked on a youthful hiking trip in the summer of 1935. During their trip, which was largely centered around the figure of the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, they visited both small towns and larger cities, of which Grodno and Nowogródek – now located outside Poland's borders – are especially important for Polish culture.



Speaker: Beata
Waligórska-Olejniczak
Journal
Studia Rossica
Posnaniensia
Editor-in-Chief
prof. Beata Waligórska-
Olejniczak
ISSN: 0081-6884
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Studia Rossica Posnaniensia is published by Adam Mickiewicz University Press. The journal was established in 1970, and, over the years, it has published papers by authors affiliated with renowned schools and centres of Slavonic studies around the world. The journal, which was born in the Institute of East Slavic Philology of Adam Mickiewicz University, is widely recognized among specialists of East European Studies. So far, 50 volumes of the journal have been published. Until 2018, the journal was published annually. Since 2019, two issues appear every year.

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Speaker: Ljubov
Kisseljova
Roman Voitekhovich
Marina Tsvetaeva:
“Song and Formula”

Tartu: University of Tartu,
2025

ISBN: 978-9916-27-897-0

Roman Voitekhovich (1974–2026), Ph.D. in Russian Literature, was a Lecturer in Russian Literature in the Department of Slavic Studies at the University of Tartu. He was an internationally recognized expert on the work of Marina Tsvetaeva. His book *Marina Tsvetaeva: “Song and Formula”* (2025) is devoted to largely unexplored aspects of Tsvetaeva’s poetics: the combination of fundamentally different languages in her poetic thinking, namely verbal language and the language of mathematics, that is, the formula as a statement in the language of numbers and counting. The book contains 16 articles published by the author at various times and in various editions. Brought together under a single cover, they constitute a monograph on instances of “mathematical rhetoric” in Tsvetaeva’s poetry, as well as on the theme of counting in the composition of her poetry collections. A talented and promising researcher, Roman Voitekhovich died young, and this book unexpectedly became his final academic testament.



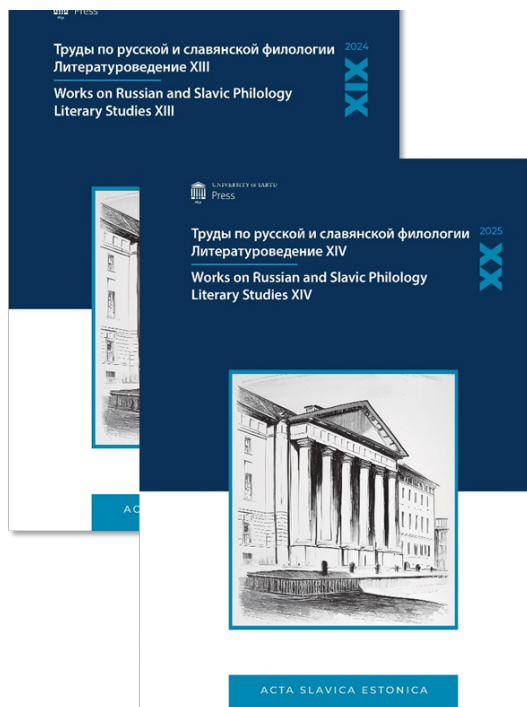
Speaker: Maria Žukowska
The Twists and Turns of Forgiveness and Reconciliation
[Meandry przebaczenia i pojednania]

Edited by Dr. Alicja Bartuś.

Oświęcim: Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Ł. Górnickiego
Galeria Książki, 2025

ISBN: 978-83-940090-4-5

The book is a collective volume resulting from the 7th National Conference on comparative genocide studies and explores various dimensions of forgiveness, reconciliation, and memory in different historical and cultural contexts. My own contribution focuses on Stalinist repressions in Russian and Belarusian history textbooks.



Speaker: Ljubov
Kisseljova
**Works on Russian
and Slavic
Philology. Literary
Studies**

Vol. 19, Vol. 20

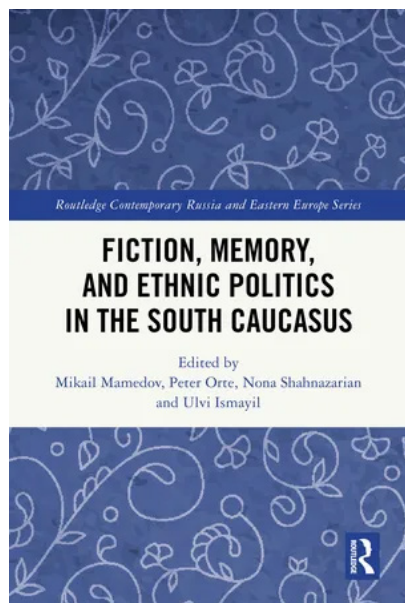
Editor-in-Chief
prof. Ljubov Kisseljova
Tartu: University of Tartu
ISSN: 2228-2335 (print)
ISSN: 2228-3404 (pdf)

The thirteenth and fourteenth issues[1] of *Works on Russian and Slavic Philology. Literary Studies* belong to the series of university proceedings. *Works on Russian and Slavic Philology* was founded in 1958 by Yuri Lotman. The series is now entitled *Acta Slavica Estonica* and has several subseries: *Literary Studies*, *Linguistics*, *Slavic Studies*; *Studia Russica Helsingiensia et Tartuensia*, *Pushkin Readings in Tartu*, and *Alexander Blok Collection*. *Literary Studies* and other publications from the Department of Russian Literature at the University of Tartu can be accessed online on the department's website: <https://ruslit.ut.ee/pub.php>.

These issues are based on papers presented at the International Lotman Seminar, held annually in Tartu on Yuri Lotman's birthday. The article sections of these issues contain research on various aspects of Russian cultural history from the early 18th to the second half of the 20th centuries,

International Conference

written by scholars from the United States, Canada, Israel, Germany, Finland, and Estonia. The extensive publication sections include materials from Yuri Lotman's legacy (unauthorized lecture notes on the history of Russian literature of the first third of the 19th century, correspondence with E. Etkind and V. Admoni, memoirs about proofreading Lotman's book, and his drawings), as well as materials on the history of Russian emigration in Estonia.



Speaker: Nona Shahnazarian
Fiction, Memory, and
Ethnic Politics in the
South Caucasus

Eds. Mikail Mamedov,
Peter Orte, Nona Shahnazarian,
Ulvi Ismayil

Published by Routledge, 2026

ISBN: 9781032980157

222 pages

The book explores the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the effects of war and nationalism in the South Caucasus. While the Soviet Union's dissolution seemed to promise democracy and liberalization, the rise of nationalist movements in Armenia and Azerbaijan led to those countries becoming undemocratic monoethnic states, which ethnically cleansed their largest minorities. During the violence of the first Karabakh War (1992–1994), Armenians were expelled from Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijanis were expelled from Armenia. The persistence of this violent conflict through the Second (2020) and Third (2023) Karabakh Wars has led to competing, incompatible national narratives and an entrenched imagination of the other as the enemy. Explaining these events' historical context by tracing them back to specific Soviet and Tsarist policies, the contributors of this volume examine the impact of the Karabakh conflict on ordinary people's lives in Armenia and Azerbaijan by analyzing fiction, film, and other forms of public memory. Ultimately, they show how "eternal enmity" is a myth and point to potential solutions to the conflict. This study will be useful to students and scholars of Soviet and Post-Soviet History, Nationalism, Empire, and Conflict Studies.

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