New excerpt by award-winning Lithuanian writer

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Relating to the real

Special section: Perspectives and narratives on socialist realism

Adorno's **concept** of realism

Nabokov and cinematic **realism**

Gaidar and the fostering of **socialists**

The **truth** and the real

Translations of reality in **Soviet** literature

Lapin on **history** writing

Swedish painters' **interpretations** of realism

Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

also in this issue

WAR ON DRUGS IN RUSSIA / **FEMINISM ON NEOLIBERALISM** / **ANTI-SEMITISM IN POLAND** / **EXILE COMMUNITIES**

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Social reality & socialist realism

When in daily life we speak of "reality", we often use the word to refer to harsh circumstances and the darker side of society. It seems to be something raw and confined to hidden corners that we who are in a position to be outside those corners call "reality".

In this issue of Baltic Worlds we could argue that we are visiting reality. The first peer-reviewed article is about the war on drugs in Russia. St. Petersburg has one of the highest rates of drug-related crime in the country (5.4 per 1,000 inhabitants), which makes the issue a top priority for policy makers and the public, the authors Alexandra Dmitrieva and Zhanna Kravchenko: "The overall public policy approach is based on the perception of drug use as a dysfunction that requires harsh suppression and elimination, with a nondifferentiated approach to all consumers."

GENERALIZATIONS THAT lump groups of people together are also common among populist parties. Here we present three commentaries with different views on the latest developments in our present global reality: the abortion ban in Poland, growing racism in Poland, and a comparison between two world leaders, Putin and Trump – both, the author argues, an outcome of the new hyper-masculinity among populist leaders who claim they do not avoid seeing reality as it is!

But the aim of realism is not to deal with the truth, rather it is to create what is allowed to be called the "real". The truth is in the eye of the beholder is a well-known phrase; what is real for one can be a vision for another, or merely appear differently from another angle. In this issue we devote a substantial section to the dogmas and ambiguities of the real, and our guest editor Tora Lane has gathered six peer-reviewed articles that give us different perspectives and narratives of socialist realism, including art, architecture, philosophy, literature, and even cinema.

IN HER OWN introduction, Tora Lane states that it was as representatives of knowledge and through engagement that "Soviet writers were subordinated to the politics of repression, and at the same time it was in that quality that they were authorized to masters of the historical narrative."

A commentary by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback also shed lights on the construction of the real: "The real means both what is and that it is – both the *quid* and the *quod* of reality. Yet the real, what it is and that it is, can be presented in realistic and unrealistic ways, just as the contrary of the real, the unreal, can be presented in very realistic ways." ▣

Ninna Mörner

in this issue

Review. Gendered voices

"The studies from this book also give us some ideas for successful feminist action against 'neoliberal neopatriarchy' on the one hand, and 'illiberal patriarchy' on the other."

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Searching for Baltic dimensions

"Each sticker introduced a thought, a term, an idea, or a question connected to the four main points of discussion: water, propaganda, city, and identity."

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"Good literature is like lightning: it has to shock, to pierce the heart"

In this interview, Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė shares her experience of becoming a writer in the post-Soviet conditions of 1990s Lithuania. Her development as a writer coincided with a drastic change in what it meant to be a writer: from being a political spokesperson to being an economic entity.   by **Stephan Collishaw**

F or Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė, writing has always been a central part of how she has identified herself. "I think I have always been a writer," she commented, "I don't remember deciding to become a writer at any particular moment; I simply discovered I had the potential to be one. I started writing when I was young because I enjoyed it."

By the late 1980s, when Černiauskaitė came of age, and began to experiment as a writer, the Communist ideological grip on Lithuanian writing was coming to an end. The celebrated Lithuanian novelist Ricardas Gavelis wrote, "If the arts voluntarily submit to politics, the arts are good for nothing. I would like to die in a country where art is art and politics is politics."

Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė was born in Vilnius in 1976. She studied at the Senvagės school in Vilnius and then read Lithuanian Language Studies at Vilnius University. Černiauskaitė was 15, in 1991, when the country declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

It was two years later, in 1993, that she was to have her first taste of literary success. "I was 17 when I first stepped into the Writer's Union, in the wonderful palace of Duke Oginskis, carrying the first copy of my book to the publishers. Those four short stories were written in school during math and science lessons; I wasn't a particularly zealous student."

She remembered that as she put her hand of the banister rail of the stairs, "Such a strong feeling washed over me that I would be a part of that building for rest of my life. That moment, I felt, was a defining moment in my life."

And this turned out to be true. Černiauskaitė's book won the Writers' Union's First Book Award and was published that year.

"That was how I became a writer," she commented.

The Lithuanian Writer's Union, which played an important part in the launch of Černiauskaitė's career as a writer, has had a complex political history. In 1940, Lithuanian writers and intellectuals were among the early vocal supporters of the Soviet annexation of the independent Lithuanian Republic. Throughout the Soviet period, the

The Lithuanian writer Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė won the EU Prize for Literature for *Breathing into Marble*, which is being published in English in December 2016 by Noir Press.

Lithuanian Writers' Union, while supporting the social status of writers, exerted a political control over them too. The Lithuanian writer was then inevitably, a political writer.

And this was still the case in the late 1980's, when writers were at the forefront of the revolt *against* the Soviet Union. Vytautas Martinkas, the writer and critic, commented during this period that "pens filled with political ink".

However, as the 1980s came to an end, and in the chaos and euphoria of independence in the early 1990s, there was a growing sense in the literary world that it was not the writer's job to act as a politician. Gavelis was certainly a key voice in this movement to assert the independence of the writer.

At the extraordinary 9th annual congress of the Writers' Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania, members declared their independence from the Writers' Union of the USSR, rejecting censorship of their worldview. The union then began the complicated process of redefining its relationship with the state. The members of the union began to move towards seeing the writer as an economic entity, rather than a political one, modelling their view of the writing process on the Western model.

IT DID NOT TAKE LONG for the harsh realities of the market economy to hit in the cash-strapped post-Soviet landscape.

"During first few years of independence," Černiauskaitė commented, "there was a great deal of confusion, a lack of trust and a sense of nihilism. Writers influenced by this were R. Gavelis, J. Ivanauskaitė, S. Parulskis, and R. Šerelytė. It seemed that all the moral handicaps and dirt were poured out, all the pain and fear that we had been hiding during the Soviet years. Not many books were published during that period; we were able to read them all."

The poet and children's author Jonas Liniauskas wrote, "We writers are doomed, doomed to write as this is our lifestyle. And, in most cases, it is not important whether the works will be published – this is the concern and the shame of the state."

Though Černiauskaitė's first book came out in 1993, she subsequently went to university and it wasn't until 2004 that her next work was published, so that she was not part of the generation that was most affected by the changing dynamic of being a writer in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"The situation is different now," Černiauskaitė commented speaking this year, "anybody who has enough energy writes books; bookshops are full of books of varying literary quality. There is a lot of commercial literature emerging and the publishing houses are encouraging that. What's important to them is not the literary value of the book, but how much publicity it gets. In my opinion, the situation [in Lithuania] is not that different to the rest of Europe. To some extent I tend to think that the books that were published during the first years of independence were stronger emotionally, even if they were dark. They made an impact. Writers today lack that kind of energy and that rebellious nature."

That said, Černiauskaitė's novel, *Breathing into Marble*, which won her the European Union Prize for Literature in 2009, is a dark novel, and that is, in part, reflective of the continued difficult social circumstances of life in the post-Soviet Baltic states. "It is the tragic, poetic story of a family, and there's everything in it: love, betrayal, childhood illness, unsuccessful attempts at adoption, alcoholism, abuse, murder, the inner conflict of a female artist. While writing it I was driven by the desire to raise these terrible problems to the level of poetry, to look at them with a purity of vision, as if through clean glass."

Central to the novel is the complex emotional relationship between Isabel and her adopted son Ilya and also the legacy of the troubled family life that Isabel herself experienced as a child. "Isabel is not ready to break through the obstacles to love – her lack of success with Ilya only emphazises her own problems, the most important of which is that she has been crippled by her parents and doesn't know how to love. She needs to be loved. I tried to write a story of a woman growing into maturity when one tragic loss after another devastates her and breaks her down. From the ruins of her soul emerges a new, more mature person."

WHILE ČERNIAUSKAITĖ DOESN'T THINK that the social problems in the novel are specific to Lithuania, she recognizes that some of the issues are particularly pertinent to post-Soviet Lithuania. "In recent years a lot of attention has been given to the issue of adoption; people have been encouraged to adopt or foster the children left in orphanages. Only the positive experiences get media coverage, but I know that there are sad experiences, when parents change their minds and return children. When I was writing an article about this topic, I happened to talk to a social worker who dealt with preparing parents for adoption. I was shocked by her stories of the irresponsibility of some people. The specialists now prepare parents for the "shock" of adoption in order to reduce the number of cases of children being returned.

"FROM THE RUINS OF HER SOUL EMERGES A NEW, MORE MATURE PERSON"

Breathing into Marble
by Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė

Excerpt of the EU Literature Prize winner

May was stuffy. The air blossomed and the clouds were like translucent petals scorched by the sun which was as ruthlessly hot as a stone hissing in hell. Isabel would get up in the morning already heavy and slide towards evening like a shadow cast by her own swollen body.

Having taken Gailius to school, she stopped by the side of the road above which the dust swirls kicked up by Liudas' car still hung. And the stones inside her grew red with the heat.

Liudas would leave and she would stay, searching the whole day long for somewhere to hide from the monstrous heat.

She would be alone with the drowsy boy sipping milk in the kitchen. He wouldn't wipe the white drips from the oilcloth patterned with pears, nor would he put his cup back into its place when he had rinsed it in the bowl. Later he would slip into the yard or would disappear into the pine woods near the river across the bridge. And moments later she would hear the splash of the stones being thrown into the water.

Isabel preferred to go to the river bank that was at the bottom of the garden, closer to the house. She would descend the slope through the lilac bushes and stop in the shade. In the sun over on the other bank the air would roil slowly and heavily like hot oil. The blossom of the lilac gave off a strong fragrance under the blistering sun. Isabel would pull her old cotton dress off over her head and, keeping to the shade of the bushes, slide into the water. The river would hug her waist tightly at first, then push and pull at her with its mischievous current. The stones within Isabel would hiss and blacken.

The river lashed her skin like a cold wind; it washed away the ashes and rinsed away the names. Isabel would stretch in the water like she was in bed, while the current washed her clean.

On the 22nd of May a fresh wind blew; the grass whispered and the pine forest hummed like a bee hive. Isabel, having gone to put the washing out, shuddered and folded her arms across her chest – as if to protect herself from the raging of the trees. But the wind was quicker – it sliced open the old wound and the ache of her heart poured out from her like blood.

She took the boys into the woods.

But with each step her despair grew, sending out branches, an increasingly intricate polyphony of emotions. She would have wept were it not for the boys who pushed each other and ran around. In the clearing Isabel said she needed a rest; she sat on a tree stump and closed her eyes.

ILLUSTRATION: MOA THELANDER

Through her closed eye lids she watched the winddriven shadows that scuttled around like ghosts. She thought that she would burst into tears but the tough bark around her heart resisted. She dug her nails into her heart as if trying to scratch it out.

She felt no pain – she listened to the crackle of the thawing ice and to the bubble of the coming storm.

It was then that she heard Gailius greet someone. Opening her eyes, it took some moments for her to notice a tall, shapely woman – from a distance she looked lighter and softer than the pine trunks. The woman's face was thin and suntanned and her gaze was sharp and pierced Isabel. As Gailius greeted her, she plunged the birch stick she was leaning on into the moss, tossed her knotted grey hair and suddenly a smile lit the dense, quivering network of wrinkles on her face.

"It's my birthday today," Gailius boasted.

"Oh, I can't ignore such an occasion… Give me your palm, I'll tell you your fortune."

The woman stepped towards Gailius, knelt down and stretched out her hand. Gailius instinctively mirrored her movement. They knelt opposite each other, forehead to forehead, intuitively shielding the fate which rose like steam from the lines on the palms of his hands.

Isabel rose from the tree stump and approached them.

"Gailius, don't do it." Her whisper was addressed to the woman. The grey-haired crone lifted her eyes, scorching Isabel with a dark gaze.

"Your mother doesn't want us to," she relented. "How old are you?"

"Eight."

The woman was silent. Standing up she smiled at Isabel with the same penetrating smile and strolled across the moss to collect her stick – there was no need for it though; her steps were as firm as her smile.

"I gather herbs,' she explained, turn-

"The closest issue to contemporary Lithuania is the problem of suicide; here, as a country, we have, unfortunately, the highest rates in Europe. Also, in terms of statistics, it's evident that half of marriages end in divorce."

INTERESTINGLY, CONSIDERING that Černiauskaitė grew up in a Soviet state, she recognizes the powerful influence of Catholicism on Lithuanian writers. Lithuania is a predominantly Catholic nation, and its sense of nationalism is often deeply entwined with its Catholicism. The Catholic church played a major part in encouraging the dissident anti-Soviet independence movement during the period of subjugation to Russian rule. "Whether we think we are believers or not, we grew up in a Christian culture and received its moral values in our mother's milk. Speaking about a more conscious relationship with religion – at 30, after long wanderings through Buddhism and Hinduism, I experienced a powerful conversion to Catholicism."

"Are [Lithuanian] writers comfortable writing about spirituality? Who is comfortable writing about intimate things? It's similar to writing about sex. But literature shouldn't be 'comfortable'. Comfortableness is what 'pop' is and it doesn't interest me. Good literature is like lightning; it has to shock, to pierce the heart to its depths. That is not very comfortable. But that is exactly what I would like my Englishspeaking readers to experience." ☒

ing back suddenly, tapping her canvas bag. She headed back into the depths of the woods and disappeared among the tree trunks as if she had turned into one of them.

"Mama, who was she?" Gailius asked.

"We're going home," Isabel whispered. Her tone stopped any argument from the boys.

In the evening Liudas brought a cake from town and they all gathered in the garden for a cup of coffee. Gailius had made a card on which he had written his wishes for everybody on the occasion of his birthday. "Father – I wish that you never run out of petrol half way", or "Mama – I wish for lots of silk ribbons for your hair". For Ilya, having drawn a watercolour black bird, he wished, "Don't be afraid of the light, it only bites at first".

"What do you mean by that?" Liudas asked.

Gailius shrugged.

They laughed a lot that night; it even seemed to Isabel that she could put up with almost anything – that she could live each day without any expectations and laugh each night without disrupting the daily rhythms of their life, listening to the stories Liudas brought home from town. And she could even believe them. She could stay away from it all, keeping a careless distance.

The moon arose above the woods, a narrow, elegant comma, an eye lash, a

tiara. Liudas followed Isabel's look and flashed her a bored smile. And that was it. Immediately everything returned to the way it had been. An owl called in the woods, its dark, velvet sound spread a mournful cape across the heavy, damp soil and the grass which was wet with dew.

On the kitchen table there was a box wrapped with orange paper awaiting Gailius – Isabel stopped short, not knowing what Liudas had chosen and having forgotten, herself, that you were supposed to give presents on birthdays. Gailius blinked and paused. Only once he had run his finger over its shiny surface and it had not turned into anything else did Gailius finally believe that the box was real and belonged to him. He wrapped both arms around it and lifted it carefully from the table – the present wasn't heavy and that disappointed him slightly.

"I want to be on my own when I open it," Gailius whispered. "Ilyusha, only you can come with me."

Ilya loped after him. He opened their bedroom door and let his stepbrother in; Gailius could barely control his excitement. The door slammed and from behind it, moments later, came the sound of paper being ripped. Liudas smiled absentmindedly. Isabel turned her eyes away.

At that moment there was a scream.

The door opened with a crash and Ilya shot like a bullet into the kitchen. For a

moment he hung in the air, his feet barely touching the floor, as if thrown out by an angry gust of wind, then he dashed into the porch and out into the yard, so that only the black back of his head was visible through the kitchen window. The opened box lay on the floor, its glittery glamour gone and though the present was still in it, Gailius seemed to have lost all interest in it. He turned towards the door and hid something behind his back.

"What happened?" Liudas asked.

"Nothing, father..."

"What have you got there?"

"Nothing..."

Liudas jumped over to Gailius and prised open his fist.

"Something happened to him," Gailius whispered, holding back the tears.

A wound swelled on his wrist and blood seeped through the bitten skin.

"Ilya!" Liudas howled. "Ilya!"

Feverishly he turned to Isabel who was frozen in the doorway. She was so pale it looked as if it were her blood that had gathered in the wound on Gailius' wrist.

"Please forgive me," Isabel whispered and stuffed her fist into her mouth in an attempt to staunch her tears.

"He doesn't get enough attention," she said, switching off the light.

"I don't give a damn what he doesn't get enough of," Liudas snapped. "The child is dangerous." ☒

The workshop on infrastructure underscored links between the dimension of water links to borders, memories, networks, and social pressures.

SEARCHING FOR BALTIC DIMENSIONS

Färgfabriken, a cultural institute and exhibition space in Stockholm, is an experimental platform, where culture, politics, academic research, and urban practices are allowed to merge. It launches projects yielding interventions, and producing new agendas through which urgent matters related to life in the Baltic region can be introduced, researched, and analyzed in different ways and through various activities. It is a modern public space, where people work side by side at the forefront of the norm-challenging projects that characterize the space. Färgfabriken thrives on personal connections and enthusiasm among the people working there, and on its close cooperation with funding bodies in the Baltic Sea region.

On October 13, Färgfabriken organized the symposium "In Search for the Baltic Dimensions", where researchers, artists,

media practitioners, designers, urban planners, and art students outlined some of the burning social and cultural issues related to the Baltic Sea region. One-day sessions were attended by people who work with issues of integration, urban cultures, and architecture. They came from places such as Uppsala University, Södertörn University, the Royal Institute of Art, Aalto University, the Baltic Art Center (BAC), the Goethe Institute, Nordkonst, the VAL project, and RISEBA University. The main goal of the workshop was to gather ideas for an ongoing research project on the new imagining of the Baltic region in a culturally and artistically stimulating environment. Its major outcomes will be displayed in the format of an art exhibition on the Baltic Sea regional identity. The explicit goal of the workshop, the search for the Baltic themes, or dimensions, that could define the area's im-

age, determined the format of the event. Inspiring presentations during morning sessions were followed by an afternoon brainstorming workshop targeting the four major dimensions: *water*, *propaganda*, *city*, and *identity*. Such a focus characterizes Färgfabriken as a cultural art center with a significant focus on problems of social integration and civic engagement. Its projects speak to the importance of the production of modern urban spaces as well as to communication as a primary tool for sustainable social, cultural, economic, and political development.

The project presentations addressed key dimensions, introducing cases of three Baltic cities. The VAL exhibition and research project (Sonya Guimon, curator, www.val.today) that was launched in Kaliningrad, Russia, in cooperation with Färgfabriken, proposed to city dwellers to look differently at their cultural heritage. In the past, Kaliningrad was a well-connected and rapidly developing German Hanseatic city of Königsberg. After the Second World War it became a part of the Soviet Union and later of the Russian Federation. As a result of the war and reckless urban planning, it lost most of its architectural heritage and cultural artifacts. The participants in the VAL research team noted that fragments of a vanished cultural heritage still existed in people's memories, as well as in urban toponymies and legends. Fascinated by this "ghost" heritage, participants of the project noticed that, despite the destructions, the town has managed to preserve one of its main heritage sites: its water arteries. The members of the VAL project organised an exhibition in which they made water a dimension linking memories of the inhabitants of Kaliningrad to the remains of the city's cultural heritage. They created a new map which traced neglected heritage and told a new story about the city that allowed the memories to be preserved.

OTHER DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY and propaganda were addressed through the case of the Swedish city of Malmö by Johanna Bratel, a landscape architect and one of the leaders of the New Urban Topologies project at Färgfabriken. In recent years, the media has produced an entrenched image of a dying industrial area that suffers from social problems and criminal gangs. Through a presentation of her team's project, Johanna illustrated how Malmö was being architecturally and culturally rebranded and transformed into an IT city with a positive social climate. The new story that Johanna's team narrated had the potential to define the city's identity in a different way and
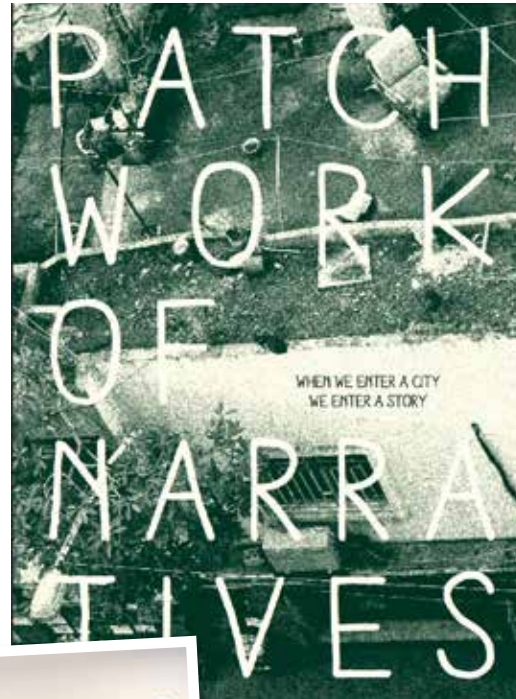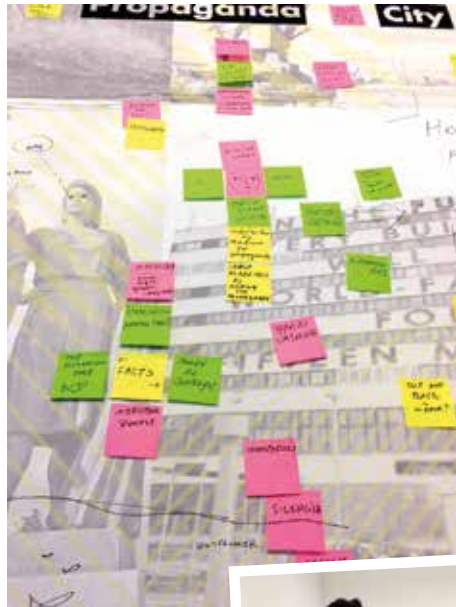
to change attitudes to segregated areas with immigrant populations.

Oskars Redbergs, Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration (RISEBA University), also reflected on the identity dimension. In his presentation he demonstrated and analyzed various urban layers of Riga that were formed, altered, or destroyed through different historical and political epochs, whether by renaming, reshaping, demolition, or neglect. He pointed out that in many modern cities, the public sphere remains under constant threat of privatization, being turned into spaces with limited public access to the advantage of exclusive groups of urban dwellers.

It was reassuring to see that the topics presented concentrated on urban areas that, in the West, are often seen as having a culturally and politically peripheral location: Riga, Kaliningrad, and Malmö. This focus of the presentations, de-Westernizing and de-colonizing by their very nature, reveals the high intensity of the cultural and political life of the Baltic region.

The inspiring ideas that were introduced during morning sessions fed the afternoon brainstorming. Four tables covered with posters were arranged in the main hall at Färgfabriken. They provided intellectual islands that drew in the attendees of the symposium to a workshop session. The islands were designed by students of R-Lab KKH (Royal Institute of Technology) in Stockholm, led by Peter Lang, professor of architectural theory and

Student participants from R-Lab KKH Stockholm listen to Daniel Urey, and developed notes and diagrams across four tables with graphic spreads arranged within the Färgfabriken hall.

architectural history, and students of the School of Architecture at Aalto University, supervised by Frances Hsu, researcher and lecture at the Department of Architecture.

THE WORKSHOP'S ORGANIZER and the mastermind behind the coming exhibition, Daniel Urey, made sure the participants in the workshop mixed in a nonhierarchical way regardless of their professional backgrounds. He invited us to express our ideas in a creative game of mapping the poster islands with colored stickers. Each sticker introduced a thought, a term, an idea, or a question connected to the four main points of discussion: water, propaganda, city, and identity. Those stickers became links among the key themes as well as steps towards the definition of the dimensions that would lay the groundwork for the future exhibition. As a result, each poster received an encrypted pattern line, which recorded the very process of the search for the newly discovered Baltic dimensions. Thus, the associations born during the brainstorming acquired the artistic form of four graphic installations that we might propose for display at the exhibition, since they trace the production of its very origins and represent material records of the search for the new Baltic identity.

It was a challenge to talk about the central theme of Baltic water in different dimensions. Water as essential to life itself, as a transportation route, and as a metaphor for change, segregation, and unification gives rise to rich speculation on how it is bound to and links together those various facets of Baltic regional identity. The workshop participants reflected on whether it is possible to regard water as a cultural heritage, and thus as a source of identity, as well as how to connect it to urban development and political propaganda. All these suggested themes introduced a discussion about mental borders between Nordic and Baltic countries and raised the question about whether it might be possible to overcome them.

We left the workshop enriched with new possibilities and new contacts that may lead some of us to collaborate in the future. At the same time, the crowdsourcing nature of the event made us wonder about our role in the process of cultural production, and about the whole rationale and modus operandi of work in academia in general. Those employees of the governmental academic institutions who are working through the very early stages of their careers are allowed to share ideas in various forms of academic events, such as workshops, roundtables, and conferences, often contributing to the projects of their senior colleagues or enhancing the profile of their home institution, with no reimbursement or advantage accruing to themselves.

ON THE ONE HAND, the use of brainstorming sessions, crowdsourcing techniques, and the sharing of ideas is essential to the successful development of cultural and artistic projects with a social orientation; on the other hand, the organizers and host institutions inevitably, even if unintentionally, exploit the intellectual labor of the participants. Engagement in additional academic, social, and cultural activities that are perceived as an unquestionable part of junior researchers' employment may be educative, stimulating, and inspiring, yet at the same time, it

normalizes and nourishes the underpaid or unpaid exploitation of their intellectual labor, especially in these times of government cutbacks on culture and education spending.

Daniel Urey is well aware of the uncertainty and unpredictability inherent in the very form of this kind of event, where intellectuals from various fields gather to spend a day sharing their ideas and contributing to a project with non-concrete goals and unforeseen outcomes. Urey may not be able to overcome the existing conditions operating in academic and cultural production, yet he has been able to question openly the formats that prevail in contemporary academia, inviting everyone, regardless of position on the academic ladder, to search for the new forms, methods, and means of cultural production with the goal of inventing and practicing activities that may challenge the reigning system.

IN THE SESSIONS there were people from a variety of institutions whose projects addressed the same issues related to the Baltic Sea region. In spite of similar approaches and the huge amount of data collected, they were often unaware of one another's existence. What could the cause be if not the lack of interinstitutional public spaces and isolation within academic and art communities?

There is also a pressing demand for urban regeneration with a focus on the reconstruction and production of new public spaces that can allow new forms of civic engagement as well as new forms of storytelling. We need inspiring examples and new stories that will reform both welfare states and states that practice aggressive forms of capitalism. Basically, we need to establish urban interventions and accessible spaces where people can publicly express their ideas in different forms, from art exhibitions to protests.

When it comes to such experimental projects as In Search for the Baltic Dimensions, it is hard to stay on the protective side of one's own ideas and to avoid interesting debates that have potential to develop into projects, which might change the current dynamics of urban and social development.

We hope that the coming exhibition highlighting the outcomes of the project may also become an international academic and artistic platform where different voices can be heard. We also believe that this could be a good start for new cooperation between Färgfabriken, BEEGS/CBEES, and Södertörn. And even though the outcomes are still unpredictable, it is surely worthwhile to share our ideas and to contribute to our future. ▣

irina seits
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DRUG CONTROL POLICIES IN RUSSIA.
UNHEALTHY, DEVIANT, AND CRIMINAL

by **Alexandra Dmitrieva** and **Zhanna Kravchenko**

Russian Federal Drug Control Service officers burns bags of methadone during an operation in Simferopol in 2014. PHOTO: YURI LASHOV/AFP

In early 2015, Russian news reports announced the possibility of disbanding the Federal Drug Control Service (*Federal'naia sluzhba po kontroliu za oborotom narkotikov*, FSKN). Various speculations were raised about the reasons for the reform, which may have included, the austerity measures in response to the earlier global crisis and international sanctions imposed in 2014. In April 2016, the FSKN, along with the Federal Migration Service, was placed under the Ministry of the Interior (MVD). The consolidation of law enforcement draws attention to the fact that the consequences of dwindling national wealth extend beyond the falling living standards of private individuals, the struggles of business corporations, and the state's diminishing capacity to deliver services. In vew of alarming mortality and morbidity reports, curtailments of human rights, and tightening links between the financial system and illegal profits,[1] it is important to consider how state's controlling and coercive capacities are being shaped and how they influence conditions for socially marginalized groups of the population. The aim of this article is to examine Russian policies on drug control and regulation, and to demonstrate how they are woven into practices of drug use and the overarching relationship between the society and law enforcement.

Earlier studies have addressed in detail various aspects of drug use in Russia, focusing on specific patterns of distribution of illicit drugs,[2] their long-term effects on health and wellbeing,[3] and developments in treatment.[4] They have often linked drug use to the HIV epidemic,[5] various chronic diseases,[6] risky behavior, and other forms of exclusion.[7] Much of the research has been carried out from the public health, sociological, and criminological perspectives, treating the phenomenon as a social disease, a form of deviant behavior, and a subject of law enforcement intervention. Many studies have taken a strongly normative perspective, contributing to the reproduction of the discourse of moral decline that characterizes the general public perception of the phenomenon in Russia today.[8] A critical analysis has described this discourse as "political" and "unhelpful",[9] generating interventions that are based on coercion and criminalization;[10] hindering preventive and harm-reducing methods; reproducing broader social inequalities; exposing drug users to fear, extortion, unjustified arrests, and physical violence;[11] and obstructing their access to treatment services.[12] Drawing on the critical approach, this article contributes to the existing research by conceptualizing drug use as a space of consumption and the sphere of drug control as an institutionalization of socially differentiated consumption practices. Considering drug use as a form of social consumption allows us to examine it as a way of communicating social positions and distances between those positions, and repro-

abstract
This article examines the policies on drug control and regulation in Russia. We demonstrate that, although agencies involved in drug control and regulation are important for the reproduction of differentiated practices of drug use, they formulate a rather homogeneous image of a drug user as an unhealthy deviant and criminal, and an unequivocal threat to society. At the same time, in the process of policy realization, the most vulnerable groups of users become the main target of public intervention. As a result, stigmatization and violence against these groups becomes institutionalized and legitimized. Moreover, drug control and regulation resonate with a broader range of public policies and spill over into parts of society not associated with illicit drug use.
KEYWORDS: Drug control, drug consumption.

ducing principles of separation in a multidimensional space of power and exclusion.[13]

The analysis examines three fields of expertise that are central to drug control in Russia, namely, law enforcement, medical treatment and rehabilitation, and criminal justice. In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of how those fields interact, our study is focused on a specific geographical area, St. Petersburg, the second largest city in Russia. The city has one of the highest rates of drug-related crimes in the country (5.4 per 1000 inhabitants),[14] which makes the issue a top priority for policy makers and the public. Statistics on seizures of drugs by law enforcement indicate that the drug market is dominated by amphetamines (41%), heroin (26%), and cannabis (22%), which make up the majority of drug-related crimes registered by the FSKN.[15] This pattern largely resembles the national distribution, and therefore we start by examining official state documents and statistics on drug-related treatments, arrests, and convictions, including but not limited to criminal sentences. However, because practices of treatment and application of legal control vary across the country,[16] we use an understanding of the national drug control policies as a backdrop for exploring the actual implementation of drug policies in St Petersburg. We therefore draw on interviews with city's leading experts in all three fields, including a deputy chief of a state narcological hospital, two psychotherapists working at a rehabilitation program in a private treatment clinic, two lawyers specializing in drug-related cases. Sources also include four informal (unrecorded) conversations with law enforcement officers, one in-depth biographical interview with a drug dealer with more than twenty years of experience of use and distribution, and fifteen in-depth interviews with long-term users of various illegal substances, all of whom had successful careers and stable family relationships at the moment of the interview.[17] Understanding the national context gives us an opportunity to extend the analysis beyond the local specific and focus on the regularities between the three fields of expertise at the national level.

IN THIS STUDY, we first demonstrate how the public space of drug control and regulation is structured and what categorizations of users are created in the process of policy implementation. We then conceptualize the patterns of social space of drug consumption and demonstrate how the two spaces are interlinked. The analysis suggests that the patterns of drug distribution and the specifics of their administering and effects, on the one hand, and the identification, diagnosis, and prosecution of users, on the other, create specific niches in the social space of drug consumption and distinctive patterns of exclusion and inclusion in Russia. State policies play an important role as they operate with a standardized object of intervention and are unable to accommodate the existing diversity. We argue that bureaucratic technologies process individuals into categories, designating groups and behaviors to be excluded and assigning punitive measures to those groups and behaviors, which can go as far as prescribing medical intervention where none is required or executing punishment where no crime has been committed. At the same time, individuals adjust and realign their consumption patterns not only conforming to what is permitted but also finding areas that are not prohibited.[18]

The war on drugs, Russian style
The first attempts to formulate the problem of drug distribution and consumption appeared in the second Criminal Code of 1926,

The City Narcological Hospital in St. Petersburg. The patients, sitting behind bars, can only see a windowless wall.

which prohibited the illegal distribution of a rather short list of the most common drugs at the time: cocaine, opium, morphine, and ether. Later, in the wording of the 1934 Criminal Code, Article 179 included punishment for the manufacturing, acquisition, storage, and sale of strong and poisonous substances, that is, pharmaceutical products that could enter the black market. Article 179A of the same document expanded the criminal activities to include production of opium poppy and Indian hemp without permission. The start of the processes of drug use criminalization can be dated to 1960, when a new Criminal Code took effect and outlawed illegal production, purchase, storage, transportation, or shipping *without the purpose of sale* (Article 224). In 1974, a few more offenses were added to the Code: theft of drug substances (Article 224.1); inducement to use drug substances (Article 224.2); organization and operation of a prostitution business for the use of drug substances (Article 226); illegal manufacturing, acquisition, storage, shipping, or sale of strong and poisonous substances (Article 226.2); and illegal cultivation of plants containing drug substances, such as opium poppy and Southern Manchurian, and Indian hemp (Article 231).

WITH THE LEGISLATION in place to reduce the drug supply and suppress consumption, the Soviet drug market was highly localized in the absence of imports and because of low geographical mobility of the population.[19] The production process was unsophisticated and closely linked to consumption, leading to some distinct differences between regions.[20] Earlier research highlighted that drug addiction was primarily acknowledged as a juvenile drug addiction problem in the post-World War I period, and the approach to addressing the issue was highly medicalized.[21] During the 1920s, the discussion about illegal drug use and possible public response flourished, and the debates were informed by systematic research on drug use patterns and various treatments, and showed familiarity with international

medical research.[22] With centralization of medical care in the 1930s, nationwide statistics seem to suggest a decline in drug consumption, which could be a result of underreporting as well as a result of the implementation of government controls, penalties, and treatments.[23] It is also during this period that the issue came to be considered in ideological terms, as a relic of the past, which inevitably influenced the scientific perspective on factors associated with it. During the early post-war period, the medical literature gradually abandoned the topic, focusing more on alcoholism, and later, even during the years of glasnost, did not respond to new opportunities for a more open public debate about the issue. By the end of the Soviet regime, the independently estimated size of the drug market was somewhere between 5.5 and 18.1 billion rubles, and the number of people who used drugs was between 600,000 and 1.65 million.[24]

THE FIRST POST-SOVIET Criminal Code was introduced in 1996, and the sequence of amendments indicated further tightening of the punitive efforts. One of the differences from the previous versions was consolidation of drug-related sanctions previously scattered among different articles of the Code. Although storage without the purpose of sale was still considered a crime, a significant innovation was introduced in Article 228, namely the so-called "large amount" of substances as a ground for harsher punishments. For instance, in 1996 the "large amount" was 20 or more grams of marijuana, five or more grams of hashish, one or more grams of heroin, and 1.5 or more grams of cocaine. For a short period, these regulations created a legal and protected space of drug use: storage (i.e., use) of substances in small amounts and without the purpose of sale were not punishable. Since 2001, however, the Code of Administrative Offenses (the Code itself was adopted first time at the end of 2001) has prescribed a fine and up to 15 days of detention for the consumption of drugs without a medical prescription, and numerous amend-

ments to the Criminal Code have expanded the scope of circumstances under which the consumption or distribution of drugs are considered crimes rather than administrative offenses.[25]

In 2003, in addition to existing sanctions against consumption in the Code of Administrative Offenses, Article 228.1 introduced punishment for the illegal production, sale, and shipping of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their analogs, while Article 228.2 further expanded the obscure vocabulary of the law's application by outlawing "*violation of rules of production, manufacture, processing, storage, realization, sale, distribution, possession,* shipping, acquisition, use, import, export, or destruction of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances, instruments, or equipment used for the manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances under special control, and the cultivation of plants used in the production of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances, entailing their loss, if such act is committed by a person whose duties include the observance of the rules". In an attempt to provide equally detailed definitions of aggravating circumstances, a government resolution took effect in 2004 that defined sizes of average single doses of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for the purposes of applying Articles 228, 228.1, and 229. For instance, the average single dose of dried marijuana was defined to be 2 grams; hashish, 0.5 grams; heroin, 0.1 grams; and cocaine, 0.15 grams. These norms were used for calculating "large" amounts of 10 average doses and "especially large" amounts of 50 average doses, as grounds for even harsher punishment. However, in 2006, the resolution was overturned and the definitions of "large" and "especially large" amounts were decreased by one-third to one-fifth, effectively diminishing the legally protected space of drug use.

ALTHOUGH THE CRIMINALIZATION of drug use exists in other countries, some of the practices that it generates may be considered specifically Russian. Any critical public debate about narcotics is virtually impossible and the punitive measures influence social practices far beyond the space of illicit drug consumption. In recent years, the FSKN has become one of the agencies that interfered with the work of publishing houses, bookstores, and libraries in attempts to combat not only practices of drug use but also subcultures associated with such practices. In 2004, for instance, regional branches of the FSKN across the country requested that libraries report readers who borrowed books by Carlos Castaneda.[26] The same year, veterinarians were banned from using ketamine during surgery, leading to animals suffering and dying from pain shocks. Growing poppy on private garden plots and, in some regions, farming it for the purpose of selling poppy seed to bakeries was banned in 2005. Since 2007, manganese crystals – commonly used as an antiseptic – have not been sold in pharmacies in Russia. Since 2009, a whole range of bath salts have no longer been available, and since 2010, cumin and parsley seeds have been impossible to buy.[27] These seemingly miniscule regulations expanded the space of

illegal drug use and potentially criminal behavior into areas of everyday life that would never have been so designated before. A steady increase in convictions under Article 228 of the Criminal Code has been noted over the period of 2005–2010 (from 33,243 to 75,325 convictions respectively), while convictions based on Article 228.1 have remained constant (33,466 to 34,589 convictions),[28] so that it appears that the number of illegal consumers has grown while the scale of distribution has not changed.

IN THIS CONTEXT, it is important to note that statistics on drug users (not offenders) are provided by medical authorities, who either record extreme forms of addiction when individuals are admitted to treatment facilities, or provide expertise as part of police inquiries or part of the standard obligatory employee screenings adopted by many organizations. When the fact of drug consumption is confirmed, the individual is registered as a drug user by a medical institution, and this information may be forwarded to a law enforcement agency, even if the agency did not order the medical examination. In practice, medical institutions register all individuals "who are using or have at least once used illegal psychoactive substances,"[29] not only people who can be qualified as drug addicts requiring medical help. This practice emerges not from legal regulations but rather in spite of them, as it ignores the fact that registration (and examination) by the medical institution is by law voluntary. The spheres of law enforcement and medical expertise overlap where they are required to be separate. In 2010, the number of newly registered substance-dependence disorders was 3154, with drug illegal addicts representing around 17.3% of such disorders, 86.7% of whom were reported as opioid addicts.[30] We explore this phenomenon in greater detail in the following section.

The overall public policy approach is based on the perception of drug use as a dysfunction that requires harsh suppression and elimination by a non-differentiated approach to all consumers, even though there are detailed guidelines about the punishable amounts of each substance. As in other contexts where a "war on drugs" has been launched, it is likely to lead to expansion of the illegal drug market, increasing potencies of illicit drugs, overcrowding of prisons, reproduction of corruption, and further increases in repressive measures.[31] Russia appears to be moving in the opposite direction from the global discussions about "tackling a disturbing consequence of drug control"[32] and measures of harm reduction and efforts against organized drug crime. Harm reduction efforts deserve special consideration. Such methods as distribution of sterile injection tools and condoms, medication against injection-related complications, provision of information about transmission of diseases and safer consumption practices have not been recognized by and received no support from the state. Instead, they have been provided by NGOs with help from international organizations, such as Doctors without Borders (in the 1990s), the Global Fund (in the 2000s), The Open Society Foundation, etc. Substitution

"THE AVERAGE SINGLE DOSE OF DRIED MARIJUANA WAS DEFINED AS 2 GRAMS."

therapy for opioid-dependent users, commonly used around the world,[33] is prohibited in Russia due to ideological principles and due to the prohibition of substances used for this purpose, methadone and buprenorphine.[34]

In 2010, a group of experts from various national research institutions and government agencies[35] attempted to introduce a discussion about the success of international and national practices of harm reduction. The Ministry of Health, however, responded by rejecting scientific evidence, taking a negative stance toward substitution therapy and harm reduction[36]. Furthermore, obtaining alternative resources to support harm reducing efforts was made more difficult. In 2012, the infamous law "on foreign agents", No. 121-FZ, required NGOs that receive support from foreign donors and engage in political activities to register at the Ministry of Justice and undergo additional auditing. By 2016, five organizations that work with harm reduction (specifically HIV prevention) had received the status of foreign agents.[37] This label not only brings with it additional financial and organizational constraints, but also serves as an instrument to reduce the credibility of and public support for such organizations. Donor organizations that provided funding over the years came under attack in 2015 when the law on "undesirable organizations", No. 129-FZ, was introduced. It almost immediately outlawed the Open Society Foundation with its Public Health Program and initiatives to prevent various medical and social harms to users of illicit drugs and other key population groups at the highest risk of HIV acquisition and transmission.

The public space of regulation of drug consumption

The oppressive character of Russian drug policies is often mentioned in passing as a commonly recognized result of restrictive legislation and public discourse.[38] Examining the process of the actual implementation of such laws in police and criminal justice practice,[39] as well as the medical approach to addiction, provides a more complex and detailed understanding of how the public system of drug control, the police, courts, and medical experts, reproduces the exclusion of drug users through the undifferentiated conception of consumption as deviant, criminal, and unhealthy. Although the overall public definition of a drug user is homogeneous in its stigmatizing character, in practice, encounters with law enforcement agencies, the FSKN or police, result in very different outcomes for users of different substances.

The issue of corruption in Russian law enforcement has been widely discussed as a result of unclear boundaries between political and private business interests.[40] The material interest is tied to the need to fulfill plan objectives as much as to direct extortion: "If small dealers did not get such long sentences, police would have to focus on really large distributors [to achieve monthly quotas on arrests]" . In turn, the users prefer to settle

A client is pictured speaking with a healthcare professional at a needle exchange program at the Humanitarian Action Fund's mobile clinic in St. Petersburg, Russia.

PHOTO: LORENA ROS FOR THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

drug-related encounters with the police "on the spot" because once it goes to trial, the case is more likely to fall under the jurisdiction of criminal rather than administrative law. Those unable to bribe their way out of trouble with the police on the spot are usually heroin users or young occasional marijuana smokers. This is considered by practicing lawyers the reason why criminal drug-related statistics mainly comprise petty sellers or occasional marijuana users (mainly youth), who are more numerous but present a smaller social danger.

WHAT IS LESS OFTEN DISCUSSED, however, is that the practice of policing relies on intra-professional routines and standards that can be institutionalized although they are initially unlawful. Today, the police tend to treat criminally unpunishable drug use as synonymous with storage, acquisition, and transportation. Formally, this is against the law, but as it is sanctioned in practice it can be expected to be institutionalized in legal procedures in the future. Such a development is also indicated by regular initiatives to introduce criminal punishments for drug use. Such transformations of legal practice have happened before. For instance, one of the most intensely discussed subjects for a long time was police searches in public places, masked police raids at nightclubs, and other unauthorized actions and provocations allegedly aimed at finding prohibited substances. During such examinations, the surreptitious planting of drug, psychological intimidation, and physical violence occurred. All these actions became virtually sanctioned as "preventive efforts" under the Federal law "On Police" No. 3-FZ of 7 February 2011, which empowered police officers to expose a "person's criminal intent" (Article 12, paragraph 4). With the purpose of exposing intentions and without a pretext, police officers were authorized to carry out personal searches of citizens and their belongings as they enter public events and mass gatherings including meetings, rallies, football matches, party congresses, weddings, popular festivals, academic symposiums, theater plays, and worship services.[41]

In regard to judicial examination, four trends can be observed in court proceedings on drugs: first, most of the cases result in conviction, which is the outcome that prosecutors and judges alike strive to achieve;[42] second, the principle that all doubts should favor the defendant is ignored; third, very often the courts rule by "special procedure" (*osobyi poriadok*), without considering evidence, if defendants acknowledge their guilt in exchange for a reduced sentence; and finally, the decision of the Supreme Court that dealing on a small scale is not a criminal offense is often ignored, and people who "assist in dealing" are usually incarcerated for distribution. A drug user, when faced with the criminal justice system, is classified purposefully and without differentiation as a criminal even when there are formal opportunities for discharge. At the same time, there is some tacit differentiation that in the end influences the severity of conviction: whether the drug can be considered to have been stored for the purpose of distribution or not (this is mostly determined based on the amount of the substance), whether the drug is considered especially socially dangerous or not, and whether the substance is of organic or synthetic origin. Probation sentences are possible for those who appear to have stored drugs for consumption and not distribution and/or who did not deal in opioids, certain hallucinogens, or the most popular cannabinoids.

In medical practice, there is a distinction between legal and illegal substances; however, alcohol, tobacco, and volatile solvents are considered psychoactive substances on a par with drug substances. Based on the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), there are three diagnoses that call for medical treatment for narcological disorders in Russia: syndromes of dependency on psychoactive substances, disorders from the abuse of psychoactive substances, and use with *harmful effects*. While the first category classifies drug use as a disease and the second category is applied when physical and mental consequences of drug use are treated, it is the third category that we would like to consider more closely: "Substance use is often criticized by the public and is linked to various negative social effects. The fact that substance use is met with disapproval by others or the society in general or can lead to socially negative effects, such as arrest or divorce, is not evidence of use with harmful effects."[43] Neither is the addiction syndrome a harmful effect of substance use, according to the ICD cited above. Thus, normative discourse used in medical practice is not universally stigmatizing, and it is mainly medical conditions that develop as a result of injective drug use that are supposed to be considered harmful effects. However, as mentioned above, medical practice interacts with law enforcement and criminal justice practice, and by registering addicts the medical approach becomes punitive too.

We should not forget that there is a distinction between medical and non-medical drug use, as some narcotics today – morphine, codeine and ketamine – do not have alternatives and need to be used for pain relief. For patients in need of pain-

reducing medication, having a record of illegal drug use may create difficulties in access to prescription drugs due to suspicion generated by the stigma, a suspicion which spills over to patients without a history of addiction, usually cancer patients with acute need for pain relief, and even to medical personnel. Legal access to strictly controlled drugs is obstructed by several measures, including, but not limited to the facts that only highly specialized physicians can issue prescriptions, procedures and documentation for prescriptions are highly demanding, and punishment for violation is severe. In addition, the number of pharmacies that are allowed to sell such substances is limited and the time for which prescriptions are valid is extremely short (in 2014 it was increased from five to 15 days).[44] The amount of medicine per one prescription is small and patients are required to obtain special permission to be able to receive opioid-based pain relief medication.[45] According to the Federal Service for the Supervision of Public Health and Social Development (*Roszdravnadzor*), in 2015 patients could receive a prescription on the same day they saw a physician in 16 regions, and in 39 regions they could not receive a prescription during a physician's house call.[46]

ANOTHER CHALLENGE comes with the process of medical stigmatization related to an official record of a narcological diagnosis that is open to the public in the same way that a criminal record is. Addiction to alcohol or an illegal drug is often registered when relatives – not drug users themselves – contact medical institutions. More often, however, a medical record is obtained during the routine document checks and personal searches described above, or road traffic accidents, if the individuals involved cannot settle the matter on the spot. The medical record is imposed on drug users in either case and leads to exclusion from various social arenas (often employment opportunities, but also health care provision, housing, etc.). Unlike many other medical conditions that are also recorded and available to the public but are socially accepted, the effect of the exclusion is not compensated by the social support and services usually available to people with disabilities. Moreover, the number of institutions that provide treatment, psychotherapy, and rehabilitation to drug addicts is decreasing. According to the report by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, in 2010 the average ratios of patients per specialist in narcological services were one psychotherapist to 13,000 registered patients, one psychologist to 2,000 patients, and one social worker to 4,000 patients.[47] In the overall public approach to the problem of drug distribution and consumption, medical instruments are peripheral in comparison to police surveillance and criminal sanctions. The category of "unhealthy" associated with drug consumption by medical institutions, as legitimate representatives of the state,[48] operates in the same way as the categories of "deviant" and "criminal" applied by police and courts.

> **"THE USERS PREFER TO SETTLE DRUG-RELATED ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POLICE 'ON THE SPOT'."**

The social space of drug consumption

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that the majority of Russians consider that drug users have to be forcibly treated for addiction[49] and so legitimize the state and medical experts in their control efforts. When public discussions about the coercive treatment of offenders are initiated, they largely rely on the lack of information about the variety of substances and their immediate effects and long-term consequences. However, those who in one capacity or another encounter drug users daily provide a more differentiated account of how various fields of drug consumption overlap and separate from each other as specific categories of consumers are included or excluded in a broader context of social consumption. In this section, we distinguish between four groups generated by the consumption of illicit drugs based on the experts' descriptions of the consumption practices and their perceived medical and legal effects: consumers of opioids of organic and synthetic origin, consumers of psychostimulants of mostly synthetic origin, consumers of hallucinogens of organic and synthetic origin, and consumers of organic cannabinoids.

Mary Conroy, in her historical overview of drug addiction in Russia, points out that, traditionally, the abuse of opioids was low partly due to the fact that alcohol was usually the drug of choice.[50] Today, when discussing the scope of the problem, experts often lump together alcohol and opioid use as two equally common problems. "90% of all patients of narcological clinics are opioid and alcohol addicts", one expert narcologist summarizes, suggesting that users of other substances are rarely admitted to treatment, whether on their own will or forcibly. Opioid use in particular, is often considered an affliction of poor marginalized mostly urban groups generated by their living conditions: migrant workers, prostitutes, petty thieves, "people with poor mental health, creative people who cannot withstand [the addiction]", in the words of a dealer. At the same time, physical and psychological addiction is formed very quickly and the dose needs to be increased continuously. The ensuing marginalization is therefore perceived to be rapid and irreversible, although it is sometimes also expected to be contingent on prior socialization processes, norms, and access to legal means of income before the onset of addiction. Moreover, harmful health effects of opioid use are linked to the fact that these substances are rarely consumed in pure form. Additives, sometimes as dangerous as detergent powder, increase the risk of overdose, while injection, especially intravenous injection, in contexts where public support of harm reduction is virtually non-existent, leads to HIV, viral hepatitis, myocarditis, etc. Many of these conditions are considered a social danger, and opioid use is therefore qualified as a social disease, contributing to the stereotype of drug users as dangerously sick criminals capable of resorting to any means possible to obtain enough money for a single dose.

> "COCAINE CONSUMPTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGHER-INCOME POPULATION GROUPS AND RARELY APPEARS IN ARREST REPORTS."

In stark contrast, cocaine consumption is associated with higher income and rarely appears in arrest reports, and courts examine cocaine-related cases mainly when large quantities are intercepted, usually by, and this is also noteworthy, the Federal Security Service (FSB) and not the police or the FSKN. It is also impossible to estimate the true extent of cocaine consumption as this category of users is rarely admitted to public treatment facilities, and private clinics can keep this information confidential. As medical experts indicate, cocaine is almost as addictive as opioids as it affects the opioid system producing neuropeptides, which is very sensitive to all derivative alkaloids, both sedative and stimulating. However, the resources that allow access to such an expensive substance also allow individuals to hide their consumption and thereby avoid being labeled as drug users or being subjected to legal action. Criminal charges of possession of cocaine without the purpose of sale (i.e. for use) are rare; moreover, cocaine use in itself can be converted to symbolic capital as a practice associated with wealth.

ANOTHER GROUP OF PSYCHOSTIMULANTS, amphetamines, unlike heroin and cocaine, is perceived to have fewer effects on health; those that exist are mainly due to impurities as these drugs are usually produced in home conditions.[51] The biggest danger is associated with intravenous injection, which is less common than nasal ingestion. At the street level, the risks associated with these drugs are recognized in the expression "the cooker shoots up first" (*varshchik vmazyvaetsia pervym*), common among the "vint" subculture, the groups who specifically use the methamphetamine *pervitin*, which was popular in the 1990s. In general, the long-term effect of amphetamines is described by medical experts as "irritable weakness", not aggression but an inclination to affect, which is not strong and fades away quickly. Unlike the sedative effect of opioids, amphetamines satisfy a somewhat "hedonistic" goal of increasing energy levels and sexual desire. The stimulation achieved by amphetamines has been described as similar to that of cocaine, although without the euphoric effect and without cocaine's symbolic value. The typical portrait of the amphetamine user does not have any specific socioeconomic characteristics: "it is someone who makes a lot of unnecessary movements"[medical expert]; "cannot concentrate on one thing", in the words of a dealer and "can be found in any social group"[lawyer]. It is in high demand, and possession of less than one gram usually qualifies as a "large amount" by police standards. Such cases are more common than cocaine, and prosecuted severely in court. The drug is labeled "cocaine for the poor", of lesser symbolic and market value, and its users are subject to higher medical stigmatization and stricter judicial prosecution.

Ecstasy, like cocaine, is not associated with socially marginalized population groups. Its effect is summed up by alternative titles such as "Adam" or "love drug", describing its ability to "return the individual to a state of innocence […] without guilt, shame or low self-esteem",[52] and generates a special type of relationships in the process of collective consumption, called "chemical love".[53] Using ecstasy becomes an instrument of recreation and socialization for young people, integration into youth subculture. A narcologist described the effect as a state of excitement, resistance to fatigue, "so one can dance at a club like a bunny", leading to dehydration and exhaustion in the immediate aftermath of consumption, and attention deficit and depression in the long run. The legal practice assumes a "low danger" of ecstasy, and in the absence of statistics on arrests or criminal persecution related to this drug, experts only hypothetically suggested that it is broadly popular and available. Police measures are usually limited to raids in nightclubs, "scaring off" the users and extorting small amounts of money from young people who may be more scared of their parents than of law enforcement. The lack of cases against ecstasy users is explained by the sporadic character of consumption, tied to a specific age and localities, rather than socioeconomic circumstances. After a threshold of 25–30 years of age, many of the consumers give up drugs completely, while others move on to use either cocaine or amphetamines.

HALLUCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES, numerous in their organic and synthetic forms, are quite similar in effect and are used among a social group whose characteristics are much harder to identify than those of opioid and psychostimulant. The field of hallucinogen users is more separated from other consumer groups as their consumption does not serve a clear, sedative or stimulating function, and is not related to a specific social status (like cocaine and heroin) or a lifestyle (like ecstasy). The character of the addiction to hallucinogens is described by a medical expert as not physical but specifically psychological: "the effect [of the drug] fades away but the memory remains, and these memories mean more than the moment when they actually experienced [the drug]. Like cinema, you want to go there again" . When describing the effect, medical experts and users emphasized that it does not bring any new elements into consciousness but rather complements or transforms the perception of reality, an effect which narcogologists call "pathological" yet which is hard to distinguish from other forms of "deviation" such as creative or scientific talent. At the same time, the risk of prompting or aggravating a predisposition to psychiatric disorders leads experts to consider users psychiatric rather than narcological patients. The risks are recognized by users and there is a long-established tradition of almost religious adherence to the practice of preparation for and guidance through the experience. Organic hallucinogenic

Patients who are HIV-positive and suffering from drug dependence receive detoxification treatment at Botkin Hospital in St. Petersburg.

PHOTO: LORENA ROS/THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

substances are relatively easily accessed and at the same time are more difficult to detect in the user's system. Usually, law enforcement officers carry out arrests in the fall and near places where wild mushrooms are harvested. An insignificant number of court cases does not in any way indicate the actual levels of consumption; the effect itself is so specific that repeated use is not so desirable.

Finally, the use of cannabinoids has been growing around the world in recent decades,[54] but in contrast to other countries where the increase has been interpreted as a signal of a potential decrease in opioid use, in Russia it has been a cause of exponentially growing concern. The field of consumption is the most diverse of all drug fields and varies from "youthful experimentation" to a means of relaxation or concentration, as well as a more complex pattern of consumption that includes other substances. The effects are not easily observable and the usual symptoms that experts look for – red eyes, unrestrained laughter – are common and can be attributed to a very broad population group. The difficulty in identifying users of these drugs provokes police officers to illegal action: cannabinoids are often planted. Unlike all other groups of drug substances, however, all experts recognize that cannabinoids do not lead to addiction, and moreover, they have a therapeutic effect and are even preferable to anti-depressants. The negative effect is therefore not constructed as physical or psychological, but as a social detachment in that the person becomes uncontrolled by social norms and is no longer a part of the crowd.

When the public and social spaces of drug consumption collide

By examining how differentiated practices of drug consumption are constructed through experts' understandings of physiological, symbolic, and socioeconomic elements of those practices, we gain insight into the public response to the problem of drug control and regulation in Russia. Users' practices of consumption and interaction with public agencies are determined by their access to economic, social, and symbolic resources. In analyzing this field, we discovered that experts acknowledge significant distances between different groups of consumers, opioid and cannabinoid users being especially targeted for drug control and regulation, and cocaine consumption being almost invisible to public scrutiny. Heroin users are vulnerable not only because of health effects but also as a result of the socioeconomic marginalization that often precedes addiction and the devastating stigmatization that accompanies it. Cannabinoids are often recognized as the least dangerous substances in terms of social and health consequences, which makes their consumption attractive to individuals of different backgrounds and much

more accessible. At the same time, the large scale of consumption is what makes this substance the second priority for public intervention. Meanwhile, privileged social status makes cocaine users the most protected from the symbolic violence of all expert fields. The financial resources used to purchase cocaine also ensure the cooperation of law enforcement agencies, a need that arises much more frequently among heroin or cannabinoid users; these resources also provide access to private treatment facilities and remove the danger of stigmatization through registration by medical institutions. Consumption of amphetamines and hallucinogens creates distinct, if somewhat more socially heterogeneous, patterns. While amphetamine users, specifically ecstasy users, come under law enforcement scrutiny when they are found consuming in public spaces – nightclubs, concerts – during unexpected police or FSKN raids, hallucinogens are harder to detect by tests or searches.

FROM DIFFERENTIATED CATEGORIZATIONS of drug users by state agencies emerges a contradictory practice of drug control and regulation that is based both on selective targeting of the most vulnerable groups and on a highly homogeneous approach to all drug users as *unhealthy criminals who present an inevitable danger to others*. The image of the drug user is generated by legal norms and expert knowledge translated to the public. Medical statistics reflect the number of people who are (often forcibly) registered as drug addicts; legal statistics show the numbers of initiated criminal cases and convictions. It is usually heroin users – the most vulnerable and easily identifiable group – that are found in official databases. Neither medical nor legal official reports encompass the complexity of consumption practices because not all categories of users are subject to medical intervention, and not all interactions with the law enforcement lead to criminal charges. From the official perspective, drug use is a danger that can and must be treated and/or punished. As the accessibility of treatment and rehabilitation facilities is low and is not a priority for Russian policymakers, the law enforcement and criminal justice systems are expanding their regulative authority. Possession of even small amounts of drug substances is subject to criminal punishment, and all users are automatically treated as criminals due to detailed and obscure legal regulations (Articles 228, 228.1, 228.2 and 229 of the Criminal Code) in most of their interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Controlling measures – searches, raids, obligatory medical checks – have been extended into various mundane social practices. Not all encounters between law enforcement agencies and drug users lead to criminal cases, as the punitive character of measures not only generates severe stigmatization, but also opens opportunities for illegal activities against drug users.

The public approach to drug control resonates with a broader range of policies that have been building over a period that extends beyond the recent economic crisis. The fact that the Federal Migration Service was brought under the MVD together with the FSKN is symbolic as the most marginalized groups associated with drug consumption and distribution in the public debate and the practice of law enforcement are migrants. The lists of the

"most wanted drug dealers" and the "most dangerous convicted drug dealers" are dominated by non-Slavic names, and the citizenship of offenders, when mentioned, indicates that most of them come from the Central Asian countries.[55] This contributes to the perception that *all* migrants are potential drug traffickers, and the consolidation of the agencies reinforces this approach. The trend towards extending the power of drug control into areas of life not associated with illegal drug consumption has taken a new turn in recent years, as criminal prosecution on drug-related grounds has been aimed at political opposition. For instance, in 2012, during the height of the protest mobilization in Russia, Taisiia Osipova, the wife of the leader of the unregistered radical opposition party "Drugaia Rossiia", was sentenced to eight years in prison for drug dealing. More recently, in 2016, the left-wing activist Elena Bezrukova received a three-year suspended sentence for possession of drugs. Such cases are numerous, and while human rights activists indicate violations of investigation and trial procedures, their voices are hardly heard as the civil society itself is under severe pressure and censorship. On taking up her appointment as the new Human Rights Commissioner, the former major general of the MVD Tatiana Moskalkova stated that her task will be to stand up to the efforts of the western agencies to "blackmail, exploit, threaten, destabilize and pressure Russia."[56] The agents of state violence are mobilizing in response to a broad spectrum of phenomena and, as a result of overlapping techniques of violence and intimidation, the definition of the potential deviant, unhealthy, and criminal individual is broadening. ⊠

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BALTIC WORLDS

Theme: Perspectives and narratives of socialist realism

Introduction.
Ambiguities and dogmas of the real

by **Tora Lane**

The workshop "Ambiguities and Dogmas of the Real" was aimed at discussing issues of socialist realism with respect to the question of necessity for and function of realism in modern and contemporary cultural spheres. For some reason, scholarship on socialist realism has predominantly focused on the totalizing myths of the avant-garde or the socialist utopia as the basis for the way in which this "realism" became a tool for manipulation and political repression. A central concern of this scholarship has been to analyze the doctrine's claim to the real–to realism and reality–and the question of its distortion, or what Evgeny Dobrenko calls the "de-realization of the real."[1] As Petre Petrov has shown, there is a line of reasoning in this scholarship, emanating from Boris Groys, that continues to insist that socialist realism can be defined as a distortion of reality according to certain ideological or mytho-poetic principles. This argument, however, operates with a pre-critical idea of reality.[2] The question that we wanted to ask instead was how realism as an aesthetic doctrine came

to serve as a foundation for the specific role that the socialist utopia played in the engagement with reality in socialist realism. The proposal was not to see socialist realism as the necessary development of realism, but to understand the power of the socialist realist myth by considering it in its quality of being a *myth of reality*, that is, as writing that was able to deliver "revolutionary *reality*" to the reader in a narrative form.

THIS SPECIAL THEME focuses on the relation between realism and social or socialist realism from different angles and with examples from different countries. It consists of contributions from eight scholars who took part in the workshop: Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Karin Grelz, Aleksei Semenenko, Susanna Witt, Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, Epp Lankots, and Charlotte Bydler and Dan Karlholm. The first article, by Sven-Olov Wallenstein, analyzes "Adorno's realism" against the background of the quarrel over Expressionism in the 1930s, which engaged several writers, most notably Ernst Bloch and George Lukács, in the Moscow exile

literary review *Das Wort*. With Adorno, Wallenstein invites us to grasp realism in its historical attempt to understand "what it once meant, and how it attempted to mediate between subjectivity and the world at a historical conjuncture that is no longer ours". Fundamental to the aesthetic ideology of modern realism as it was formed in the early 19th century is the idea that literature can narrate reality. Reality is understood in its quality as social and historical reality, and literature is predominantly understood as narrative representation. Modern realism was driven by the aspiration to find a narrative representation of social and historical reality, and at the outset, at least, it nurtured an ideal of objectivity in the writer's representation of reality.[3] In other words, there is a question to what extent there is an idealism of the real in realism, as Charlotte Bydler and Dan Karlholm ask with Walter Benjamin in their article on the functions of realism in Swedish art, which is placed last in this special topic section. The flaws in the aesthetic ideology of modern realism became the subject of a debate among writers at an early stage in
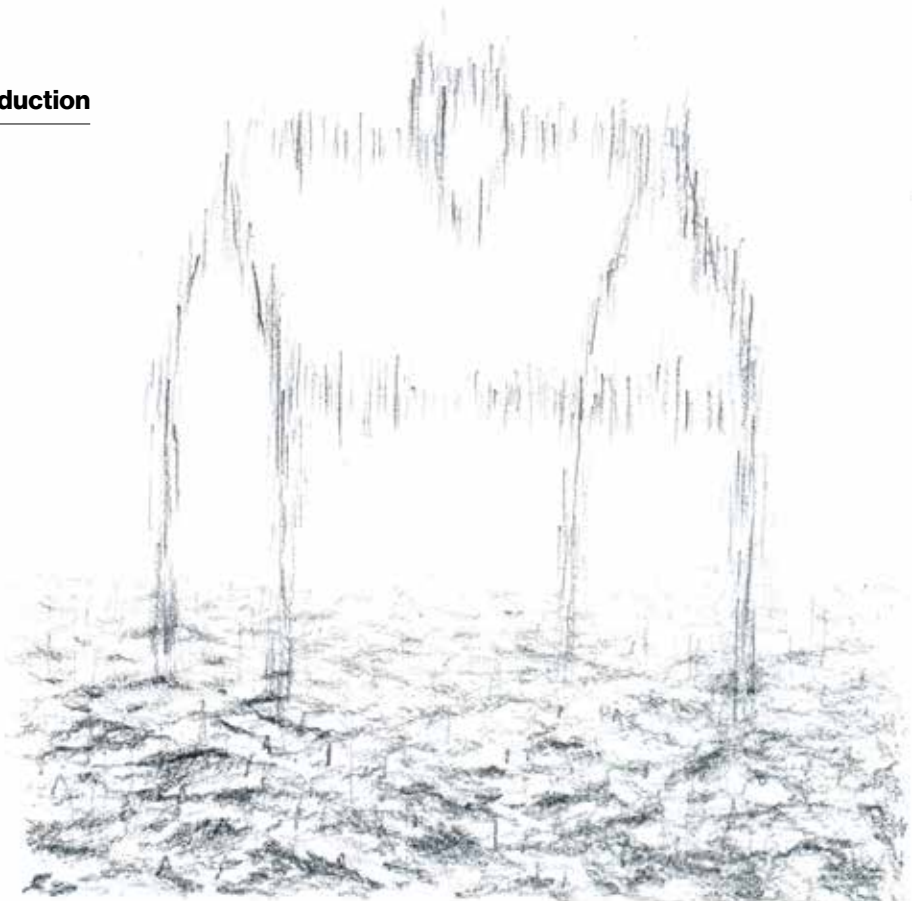
ILLUSTRATION: MOA THELANDER

the development of modern realism,[4] and I will bring up just one central problem of realism on which Barthes focuses in *Writing Degree Zero*,[5] namely the inherent and often suppressed opposition between the literariness or formal features of literature and how this literature is measured against its extra literary role in history.[6] The extra literary role is both the very aspiration to depict social and historical reality and the education of the modern reader.

IN HER COMMENTARY on the special theme, Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback asks how realism invites us to think about the problem of mimetic representation in relation to the socialist realist doctrine of "the reality of the real". She shows how the socialist realist text is already interpreted and therefore a read and ready text, which also tells us about the way that *realism creates the reality of the real*. The question how literature can avoid falling into the traps of realism by having recourse to cinematic effects, and how real-life reality appears as bad cinema, is the theme of the second article in the cluster, writ-

ten by Karin Grelz. She presents us with a reading of Nabokov's understanding of the relation between cinema and the doctrines of realism and socialist realism. As Grelz shows, Nabokov displaces the notion of realism in relation to the cinema so that we come to understand not only socialist realist works, but also the reality of the exile community, as bad, insipid, and sentimental movies. He opposes a simple common-sense understanding to an experience of reality in all its unreality, to be best captured by cinematic special effects transferred into literature.

In asking what realism meant in the doctrine of socialist realism, we can see that in an extreme and unprecedented manner, Soviet literature came to fuse literature and reality on the model of realist literature, measuring literature against its extra literary role in history, that is, against its role in the formation of Soviet "revolutionary" society and Soviet "revolutionary consciousness". As Barthes[7] asserts, the writer first became important in conjunction with modern realism's claim to positivism and universalism. It was in realism that the author-person acquired

such a high status, but it was also in realism that this status was undercut by "the castrating objectivity of the realist novel." In other words, the high esteem accorded the writer in modern realism is related to his or her ability to describe the world objectively. The "castrating" objectivity or universalism of the great nineteenth-century realist is guaranteed by the writer's very ability to write or narrate. Indeed, in realism, writers' artistic skills are closely related to their knowledge or awareness of the world as social and historical reality. It was in fact as representatives of knowledge and through engagement that Soviet writers were subordinated to the politics of repression and at the same time it was in that capacity that they were authorized to be masters of the historical narrative.

THE REALIST NOVEL was supposed not only to reflect social and historical reality, but also to enter it as a tool for aesthetic and democratic education. The formation of the educated subject is one of the roles that the realist novel plays in modern democratic society, because if the writer

is the representative of knowledge, the reader, by and large, is its recipient. This formative role of the novel was arguably what made realism so attractive for official doctrine in the massive Soviet project of modernization. At an early stage, Lenin made education the main task of the new proletarian culture, which he initially argued must learn from the literature of nineteenth-century realism.[8] Andrei Zhdanov[9] insisted that the task of Soviet literature was the "education of the working people in the spirit of socialism." However, it was not only the people, that is, the readers, who were to be educated, but also the writer himself. The Soviet writer was arguably not an erudite bourgeois by birth, but a proletarian or a man of the people who followed Gorky's educative "road to awareness" by appropriating the knowledge and status of the bourgeois. As the realist tradition was appropriated in the name of revolutionary, proletarian, or Soviet literature, the writer and reader were paradoxically not only supposed to be representatives of "spontaneous revolutionary" awareness, but were also to be taught how to understand the Revolution, how to engage in it and live it – in other words, they were supposed to learn how to experience and form or construct the narrative of the revolutionary world. Thus as a school, socialist realism continues the already existing realist school of *Bildung* and of *éducation sentimentale*, but in transposing *Bildung* to Soviet education in socialist reality, socialist realism becomes an *éducation sentimentale politique* – that is, an education in political sentiments associated with the Revolution and Soviet society.

WITH NABOKOV, we can also make certain distinctions between art and reality, because both Groys and Dobrenko maintain that socialist realism was detrimental to reality as such or to reality in art – that is, socialist realism was detrimental both to the perception of the world and to the depiction of "reality" in art – and that the

reason for this is that the avant-garde held that it was bringing about the event of art as reality. However, there are good arguments that what socialist realism undid in its forms of instruction was instead the reality of art, or, really, the reality of the aesthetic experience of writing as well as of reading.[10] We cannot go to the socialist realist work of art and simply ask if it is a form or expression of an aesthetic experience of the world, because we will always first meet it in its "literary" or narrated ideological relation to history, to society, to the Revolution, as well as in its concrete relationship to the entire apparatus of institutions, representations and instructions.[11] Realist literature is always dependent on its relation to historical and social reality.[12] The quest for realist art is based on the fact that we read literature as social and historical reality. Irina Paperno[13] shows how this fusion of literature and reality leads to a merging of writer and hero. The coalescence of literature and reality in critical realism is arguably the origin of its fusion in the socialist realist novel. Literature and its intermingling with reality, however, became a theme of the modern novel as early as Cervantes's proto-modern *Don Quixote*, but it also occurs in Goethe's *Werther* and Flaubert's meticulous descriptions in *Madame Bovary*, to name a few. Nabokov, of course, made it one of his main devices. In realism the writer is the educated reader of literature, the hero is his or her often educated or at least highly reflected alter ego, and in reading the novel, the reader also becomes reflected, taking the place of the writer in the name of that alter ego. Thus the reality of realism becomes a gray zone between reality and imagination where the two seem to be potentially interchangeable, not only on the level of imagination, but also as realities, or rather as myths or narrations of reality.

The fusion between art and reality in socialist realism becomes very evident in the third article, "The mystery of *The Blue Cup*", in which Aleksei Semenenko analy-

> "In realism, writers' artistic skills are closely related to their knowledge or awareness of the world as social and historical reality."

contents

guest editor

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> " Realism is an interpretation of the reality of the real, but as the reality of the real it is already an interpretation; socialist realism is rather an interpretation of interpretation."
> *Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback*
> **Page 59**

ses the story *The Blue Cup* by Arkadii Gaidar. *The Blue Cup* was a classic of Soviet children's literature that served to "mold young Soviet citizens", and it deals with the typical fusion between life and reality according to the idea of "revolutionary romanticism" that was established as a feature of socialist realism at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress. Because of its insistence on literature as the narrative of reality, realist literature also became the exemplary guide in modern society's quest for a teacher of cultural taste and knowledge. From the very beginning, the representation of reality in realism was coupled with another task: the education of the modern subject. Realism, in other words, was not only to represent but also to shape social reality. Integral to the notion of realism was the idea of aesthetic formation, that is, *Bildung*, or *éducation sentimentale*, the term Flaubert coined in his novel. As Roman Jakobson notes in *"On Realism"*,[14] realist writing is dependent on its reader. It is a kind of visual education, a training of the reading subject in how to see, perceive, or experience the common reality of the social world in its actuality. The goal of the novel was to tell about the "new." Its theme *par excellence* was instruction in modern historical and social "reality,"

> "The quest for realist art is based on the fact that we read literature as social and historical reality."

and – it should be added – the writer and the reader were to learn in a mutual process of reading and writing. This seems to confirm Hannah Arendt's idea that "the novel is the only entirely social art form".[15] The two tasks of representation and instruction in combination were supposed to guarantee the role of literature in society and the public sphere, and it was this assumption that allowed literature to become such an integral part of journals, periodicals, and education both in the media and in schools.

As we write the lesson of the Soviet Union's history and of the flaws of Soviet culture in terms of cultural memory, the view is currently more widely accepted that the Soviet project should be considered not only as a totalitarian regime, but

also as a gigantic modernization project. In order to understand the nature of the modernization of the countries in the Soviet sphere, it is crucial to understand not simply how the Socialist myth was formed, but also the role that was ascribed to literature as an *éducation sentimentale politique* under the aegis of realist literature. The task realism took upon itself involved the aesthetic education of humankind in history and the historical moment. If modern realism was based on the idea of the lonely *author* as an earnest pioneer of a form of writing and a vision of reality, however, socialist realism made the work of the writer an object of public concern, because insight into the historical moment was to come not from the aesthetic experience but from the acquisition of knowledge and awareness as dictated by party-mindedness. The Soviet writer is the reader of the realist novel who enrolls in a school in order to learn how to appropriate his own revolutionary experience.

THE MAIN FOCUS of this introduction has been on literature, reflecting the author's sphere of knowledge. However, the workshop was multidisciplinary and a collaboration between researchers in literature, art, philosophy and cultural studies. Leaving the time of the formation of socialist realism, that is, the 1930s, it is also important to emphasize the fact that, during Soviet times, socialist realism came to be applied to other areas of cultural practice besides literature. In her article, "Socialist realism in translation: The theory of a practice", Susanna Witt poses the question how the doctrine formed not only a school for writing, but also for the Soviet school of translation. She shows how the notion of a "realist translation" came to acquire a particular meaning in post-war translation practice as "literal translation" excluding foreignness, and how it came to be defining for the art of Soviet translation. With the development of socialist realism in the 1960s and 1970s, the doctrine persisted in a stale form and

as a model of instruction, yet diminished in its importance as the singular doctrine for culture in the Soviet sphere.

IN THE FIELD OF ART, Epp Lankots returns us to the question posed by Wallenstein of what realism means at a particular historical moment. In her article, she explores the relation between history and reality by examining what realism meant to the Estonian artist and art historian Leonhard Lapin in the 1970s and 1980s from a historiographic viewpoint, and by studying his works. She shows that we must understand how this particular historical moment cannot be understood simply in the "narrow context of fluctuating ideological prescriptions", but in relation to "the wider field of late-socialist cultural changes" and the development of new technologies. Last but not least, the contribution by Charlotte Bydler and Dan Karlholm allows us to move on from socialist realism to the question of the nature and importance of socially engaged realist art in Sweden in the 1970s, returning to several crucial questions posed in some of the first articles. Bydler and Karlholm distinguish socialist realism from the realism that formed the development towards "new realism" – a notion coined in the early 1970s – a realism which also was based on new media. They show how this "new realism" , as a realism after modernism, and hence truly as a realism, at the same time offers a way of reading, thinking, and seeing realism in its functions beyond those ascribed to it according to the divisions between critical and affirmative realism or between modern and socialist realism. Instead of seeing politics or the socialist myth as the reason for the distortion of reality, they ask with Walter Benjamin whether the new realism cannot instead avoid the idealist universalism of modern realism by being a "dialectical flashpoint" in history. Thus they also show how the idealism of realism still remains an issue to be discussed. ⊠
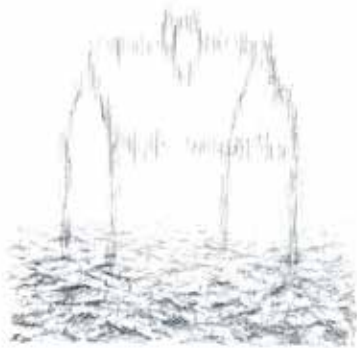
references

1 Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (New Haven: Yale University Press: London, 2007), 14. The assumption that socialist realism is a construction of reality has been discussed in a variety of ways. Regine Robin, (*Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press: 1992, 84) writes that realism is "calling for an art of mimesis and verisimilitude, of typical and truthful representation." As presented in Petrov ("The Industry of Truing: Socialist Realism, Reality and Realization" in *Slavic Review* 70, no 4, 873-892), Dobrenko largely repeats the fundamental arguments of Boris Groys in *The Total Art of Stalinism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

2 Petrov ("The Industry of Truing") has forcibly argued that we cannot separate political from historical reality because, although the Soviet state lied about socialist reality, people were still living it as a historical reality. He therefore turns our attention to the way that reality, the real, and authenticity were at work in Soviet culture. However, when he suggests that we should understand Socialist realism as a Heideggerian *realization* of reality, a *truing* and a *happening* of Socialist reality, he not only simplifies Heidegger; he also seems to offer another tool for investigating the ideological means of implying and making true a certain vision and perspective of the real in the Soviet Union. Heidegger's concept of truth as a deconstruction of the idea of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the adequation between the thing and its mental representation, is an idea that supposes that reality is a matter-of-fact, given thing, and Stalinist reality was directed precisely at the fabrication of the empirical reality of the actual socialist present. For Heidegger, truth is not evidence but concealment, the appearance of its own withdrawal. For Stalinist reality, truth is evidence issued by society.

3 This crisis resulted in what Roland Barthes (*Writing Degree Zero*, New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1977, 84 ff.) calls "the utopia of language," namely the idea that writing will resolve the problem of objectivity through artistic universalism.

4 As scholars on realism have shown beyond any shadow of a doubt, realism is not an art devoted simply to depicting the real, but is directed towards a certain form of representation or discourse of the real in which the real is equal to the modern world of social fluidity, and the theme *par excellence* of the novel is the problematic way of relating to this new world. Erich Auerbach (*Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953, 491) distinguishes what he calls "modern realism" as a literature that understands itself as realism, that is, as an artistic practice that was preoccupied with depicting "reality.". The "reality" it rendered was the following: "The serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation, on the one hand; on the other, the embedding of random persons and events in the general course of contemporary history, the fluid historical background – these, we believe, are the foundations of modern realism, and it is natural that the broad and elastic form of the novel should increasingly impose itself for a rendering comprising so many elements."Hayden White (*The Fiction of Narrative*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010, 170) emphasizes the discursive aspects even further: "The 'truth' of the realistic novel, then, was measurable by the extent to which it permitted one to see the 'historical truth' of which it was a representation. Certain characters and events in the realistic novel were manifestly 'invented,' rather than 'found' in the historical record, to be sure, but these figures moved against and realized their destinies in a world that was 'real' because it was 'historical,' which was to say, given to perception in the way that nature was."

5 Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*.

6 Barthes maintains that in modernity, literature becomes dependent on a "beyond language, an 'au-delà du langage'." Realism in particular has embarked upon a mode of writing whose function is "the imposition of something beyond language, which is both History and the stand we take in it." (Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 1).

7 Barthes, "The Death of the Author, " in *Image, Music* (London: Text, Fontana Press, 1977), 143.

8 In "his "Draft Resolution on Proletarian Culture" ("Nabrosok rezoliutsii o proletarskoi kul'ture"), Lenin wrote that proletarian culture should be not the "invention" of a new culture, but "the development of the best models, traditions and results of the existing culture" (Lenin, *O Literature i ob iskusstve*, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969, 455). See also, for instance, "Zadachi soiuzov molodezhi" (ibid., 440–54) and "O proletarskoi kul'ture" (ibid., 454–5), both from 1920.

9 Andrei Zhdanov, *On Literature, Music and Philosophy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1950), 15.

10 It is beyond the scope of this essay to expand on the notion of an aesthetic experience, which stems from hermeneutics. However, an important impulse for thinking of this experience is provided by Maurice Blanchot He writes about it in terms of the original experience ("l'expérience originelle"), in which truth is in exile –that is, truth is at stake or at risk – because the writer experiences how social, outer reality distances itself: "This experience is the experience of art. Art – as images, as words, and as rhythm – indicates the menacing proximity of a vague and vacant outside, a neutral existence, nil and limitless; art points into a sordid absence, a suffocating condensation where being ceaselessly perpetuates itself as nothingness." Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 241–2.

11 For a fascinating account of the real behind a socialist realist story, see Tomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

12 Vladimir Nabokov (*Lectures on Russian Literature*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002, 77) asserted contemptuously that "[by] 'realism,' of course, I merely indicate what an average reader in an average state of civilization feels as conforming to an average reality of life." Nabokov always insisted on the subjectivity of the writer and on the aesthetic qualities of the realist writer, because it was the writer's relation to that "average real" which arguably made the reality of realism prone to social and political manipulation.

13 Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behaviour*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1988).

14 Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in Art", in *Language in Literature* (Balknap, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

15 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 39.

Adorno's realism

by **Sven-Olov Wallenstein**

A dorno's understanding of realism in the present is often taken to have been simply negative: once a progressive artistic form, it had degenerated under the pressure of the culture industry in the West, and of the party apparatus in the East, into a set form that merely duplicated the world and played a key role in upholding an affirmative culture. This view largely informs his postwar critique of Lukács, which draws on the earlier quarrel over expressionism in the 1930s. In the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, too, the negative view is predominant; there are, however, traces of another conception of realism that Adorno deems to be not only adequate but also indispensable for art at present, one that would be attuned to the reality of the administered world, not simply as a mirror reflection, but as a way to gain a critical purchase on the contemporary world.

The first quarrel over expressionism
The wider context in which Adorno's understanding of realism must be seen takes us back to the 1930s and the attack on modernism launched by Lukács in his essay "Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus" (1934), which occasioned an extensive debate in the Moscow exile literary review *Das Wort*, with contributions by, among others, Herwarth Walden, Béla Bálasz, Hanns Eisler, and most notably Lukács's former philosophical ally Ernst Bloch, as well as further interventions by Bertolt Brecht and, indirectly, Walter Benjamin.[1] While Adorno himself never took part in this first discussion, it forms the matrix for his postwar quarrels with Lukács, which extend all the way to his final position in *Aesthetic Theory*. These final reflections can be taken as an ultimate attempt to sort out the terms and precon-

ditions of the earlier debate, on the levels of artistic practices and of the underlying philosophical assumption, whose result, however, as we will see, is far from unambiguous.

THE TERM "EXPRESSIONISM" might seem to indicate that the terrain of the initial debate was a rather limited one, but what was at stake was nothing less than the meaning of modern art in the widest sense of the term, for which expressionism was only a shorthand. The immediate political thrust of the debate was Lukács's initial allegation that modernism, unwittingly or not, paved the way for fascism in presenting us with an incoherent and fragmented world as well as an equally incoherent and fragmented subject, the effect of which was not only political impotence, but also a call for the return of an authoritarian and fascist politics that promised the resurrection of a stable order. Initially, therefore, the charge was largely phrased in terms of political issues, and less based on general philosophical and theoretical claims, although the latter were made explicit as the debate progressed.

In Bloch's answer, "Diskussionen über Expressionismus" (1938),[2] he mounts a defense that has since been repeated in many versions, and in some respects still resonates in Adorno's final claims in *Aesthetic Theory*. Apart from chastising Lukács for his rudimentary awareness of current artistic production, notably painting and music, Bloch advances an argument based more on principles: if capitalism leads to a fragmentation of subject and object alike, this renders an equally fragmented art necessary, i.e. an art that, if it is to be true, must stay close to experience in its immediacy, whereas the nineteenth-century forms advocated by Lukács have become obsolete, not just

abstract
Adorno's understanding of realism in the present is often taken to have been simply negative. In the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, too, the negative view is predominant; there are, however, traces of another conception of realism. Adorno proposes, although with some caveats, that what he calls an adequate conception of realism is not only possible, but also something that art in the present cannot and must not avoid.
KEY WORDS: socialist realism, Adorno, negative dialectics, Hegel.

ILLUSTRATION MOA THELANDER

Theodor Adorno (at right) with Max Horkheimer. In the background, at right Jürgen Habermas.

PHOTO: JEREMY J. SHAPIRO / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

because of progress in artistic techniques, but more importantly because they cannot express the experience of the contemporary word. Realism for Bloch, we might say, means giving us reality as it appears to us, in all its alienation and laceration.

For Lukács, this is an inadequate conception of art and reality that falls short of the necessity of thinking of totality as a dialectical whole, as he intimates in his response the same year, "Es geht um den Realismus."[3] While the surface of society remains unbroken as long as its underlying parts continue to function in separation from each other, when they are drawn into a unity, i.e. when the fundamental contradiction emerges, it begins to crack and break up. Fragmentation is thus an integral part of semblance – it belongs to the structure of *Schein* – but as such it is located at the immediate and external side of consciousness and of society, whereas essence is a contradictory unity that conditions what appears as an immediate, given content of consciousness. Any art that is to have a cognitive and dialectical function must thus seek to establish a connection between depth and surface that shows fragmentation to be merely a result and not an ultimate fact, and for that, the inherited forms of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism are best suited, while the forms of "expressionism" stubbornly remain at the phenomenal surface and render any interpretation of depth impossible. For Lukács, expressionism is fundamentally anti-dialectical in its refusal to acknowledge that all immediacy is mediated, and that all experiences of laceration need to be understood and comprehended within a larger framework.

OF THE MANY TANGLED threads that can be found in this debate, the philosophically most pertinent one leads us back to Hegel, and particularly to the *Logic*. The question is how we are to un-

derstand totality as contradictory whole and its mediation in the singularity of the work, and the relation between semblance (*Schein*) and appearance (*Erscheinung*) as the domain of the particular in relation to essence (*Wesen*), if the latter is grasped as something whose movement is necessarily to come apart *as* this very relation, and not to constitute a domain that exists as a Platonic behind the real. These are the problems that will come to the fore again after the war, in a different context that Adorno will attempt to conceive in terms of a *negative* dialectic. Rather than subscribing to Hegel or simply rejecting him, Adorno wants to continue the dialectic precisely by *immanently* breaking away from Hegel, which means that the mediation between the singular and the universal as demanded by Lukács is revealed to be an enforced reconciliation. Instead, mediation appears as necessarily broken, as that which is lacking in experience, precisely because the reconciliation offered by society is a coercive one, and the task will be to think it differently, as a placeholder for that which does not yet exist. In a sense, we might say that Adorno once more plays Bloch against Lukács, but also Lukács against Bloch: his claim is neither to cherish fragmentation nor to demand totality, but to suggest the possibility of a free and non-coercive being-together of that which remains different without becoming a set of fragments. It is here, caught up in the precarious balance between that which *is*, the present of an administered world that everywhere offers images of reconciliation and imperatives of enjoyment, and that which is *not yet*, a world seen from the vantage point of a redemption that presents us with utopia in the subjunctive mood,[4] that Adorno will suggest that a certain idea of realism can be forged.

Adorno versus Lukács: reconciliation under duress
The immediate context of the postwar debate is Lukács's book on realism, *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus* (1958),[5] to which Adorno two years later dedicates a review essay, "Erpresste Versöhnung,"[6] which develops into a highly polemical settling of accounts. The review is in fact so acerbic that Adorno often seems to fall short of his own standards of immanent cri-

tique, i.e. a reading that turns the inner strength of the other work against the work itself and pries it open by extending those inner lines of force that are suspended within it, instead of subjecting it to external criteria that in fact leave the work as it is.

The vehemence of Adorno's critique could arguably give the impression that he rejects realism altogether as a dead end. Furthermore, much could indeed be said about the political context of this discussion, and about Adorno's apparent blindness to the asymmetry in the protagonists' social position and the respective powers that they wield at this moment in the intellectual community. More simply: while Adorno was a cherished figure in the West, enjoying all kinds of institutional authority, in Hungary Lukács was condemned to silence after the 1956 revolt and led an almost wholly marginalized life, which makes the allegation that Lukács speaks in voice of an authoritarian cultural police somewhat one-sided, to say the least.[7] A reason for the violence of the attack is no doubt the diatribe launched by Lukács a few years earlier in *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1954), whose subtitle, added later, "Der Weg des Irrationalismus von Schelling zu Hitler," delineates a trajectory that also includes the Frankfurt School and Adorno. Here, however, I will bypass the personal aggressions that were undoubtedly implicated and instead focus on the underlying philosophical claims which would be developed in *Aesthetic Theory*.

ADORNO SINGLES OUT those aspects of Lukács's critique that bear on terms like ontologism, subjectivity, and formalism, and while we can note that some parts of the latter's vocabulary have changed, as well as his examples – Musil and Beckett now assume their place among the accused in lieu of the expressionists of the 1910s – the underlying scheme of the analysis of expressionism from the 1930s remains the same (the other arts have here wholly receded into the background, as if to unwittingly verify the allegations already made by Bloch in the first debate). Just as before the war, however, Thomas Mann remains Lukács's true paradigm of what an author could and should be: he is the true heir of the classical realist novel, and while Lukács does not refrain from criticism of socialist realism, which he chastises for a certain directness, voluntarism, and romanticism, his solution is that a "critical realism" is the way ahead through a present conceived of as a time of transition. Realism, as it has been bequeathed to us by the nineteenth century and continued by a select lineage of authors in the twentieth, remains an unsurpassed mode that no subsequent literary form can displace, if we are to understand literature as an instrument for attaining critical knowledge of the world.

Many of Adorno's remarks bear on what he sees as Lukács's philistine conformism and the particular strain of Darwinism that underlies his repeated talk of modernism as "decadence" – that is on the very tone which suffuses the book, and which leads Adorno to some of his more scathing remarks, which often seem to turn Lukács's rhetoric back on himself. But more fundamentally, what Adorno emphatically opposes is the idea of art as reflection, in which the objective content of the work would be central. This, Adorno objects, leads Lukács to misread the moment of form in art: he overlooks the autonomy of the development of formal features, which in the end also entails a neglect of the structural aspects of those realist works that he praises, whose language and composition are treated as if they were somehow given, outside of history, and constituted natural schemata for the mediation of the social totality. In short, to use a term from Roland Barthes that was not yet available to Adorno in 1960, Lukács can be understood as mistaking the "reality effect" produced by a historically mediated form for the only true mediation of reality itself.[8] Adorno claims that we must rather analyze the way in which art sets up another world, dependent on and yet poised against this one; its moment of reflection is not that it introduces objective content that would depict or mirror the social in its empirical aspects – obviously art can do this too, but it is not essential to its function as art: no given moment of reality can ever enter as such into the configuration of a work – but that it embodies social contradictions as inner contradictions in its own form, an idea he would later develop in *Aesthetic Theory*.

Now, this formula may seem to place Adorno squarely in the formalist camp, since it is indeed *form* that bears out the contradiction. But rather than pitting form against content, or fusing them into an organic whole, Adorno's claim is that form is always a content that is historically mediated (and thus in turn replete with vestiges of earlier forms), just as no content, even the most minute sensuous detail, can enter into an artwork without being transfigured through the law of form that commands it. Neither separable nor moments in an organic whole, form and content are dimensions that exist as tensions on each level of the work – which is why both the act of interpreting existing works and the production of new ones, each in their respective way, can be taken to release conflictual forces that are locked up in past works that have become classical and canonized, and thus made to appear as self-enclosed totalities: it is Schönberg that lets us understand what was repressed in Beethoven, and hear the subterranean murmurings beneath the seemingly unbroken surfaces.[9]

The reconciliation between form and content that Lukács claims was achieved in the nineteenth-century novel, and which he then sets up as model for contemporary literary production, was in its original version already an enforced or extorted reconciliation, under duress, and consequently even more so today.[10] For Adorno, this fundamentally betrays the possible reconciliation – which to be sure does not yet exist and may never come about – of the singular and the universal, a theme that would become crucial both in *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory*. It would thus be mistaken to read Adorno as simply rejecting the project of realism because of its general orientation towards harmony and reconciliation; what he rejects is only its enforced version, and in fact, as we will see, his own brand of utopianism hinges upon the possibility of a different sense of realism that would be attuned to the problem of the real itself as it appears in late capitalism.[11] Here we must turn to his final work, *Aesthetic Theory*, where we can find scattered proposals for such a realism, which, ultimately, also have a bearing on what realism might mean today.

Varieties of realism

Adorno's later work addresses the problem of realism in several places, both as a general theoretical issue and in terms of its historical specificity, but here I will focus mainly on *Aesthetic Theory*, where the threads are drawn together in what is arguably Adorno's final position – less so, however, with respect to realism, which still remains an elusive concept subjected to many divergent interpretations. But rather than attempting to even out the differences in the name of some underlying coherent conception, it is perhaps more productive to begin by tracing these divergent lines, since they display the tension between different senses of the term that remains to the end.

First, as a historical category implicated in the emergence of modern art, realism for Adorno occupies a fairly conventional place in the nineteenth century, when it was still a progressive force. This is the case of the nineteenth-century novel, which allowed new experiences to enter into art (334/295),[12] prefiguring reportage and social science (17/8; see also 426/367). Because of this, which constitutes "aesthetic elements under the façade," realist works were also in some respects more substantial than those that opted for an ideal of purity which, for Adorno, always involves a moment of self-deception in attempting to seal off the work from its social conditions: "The mistake of aestheticism was aesthetic: it confused its own guiding concept with the work accomplished" (60/45).

IN THE PRESENT, the tables have turned, and what was once a breakthrough towards new avenues in sensibility as well as in science has congealed into a feeble-minded doctrine, and especially so in the case of a social realism which, in its "thoughtless and–in the detestable sense–realistic confirmation and reproduction of what is" (145/123), accommodates itself to the demands of the culture industry, and in the end is no more than a "petty bourgeois fixation" (377/330). Against the claims made by Lukács that art needs to address the general as it is reflected in types, Adorno stresses that no art is typical, and that radical art has always refused to obey such imperatives, which in fact signal the surrender of art to the administered world (147/124). Socialist realism not only willingly subjects itself to the power of administration, but also forecloses any critical purchase that art might have on the world, and blocks its utopian potential, all of which leads Adorno to his emphatic and often cited rebuttal: "rather no art than socialist realism" (85/69).

HOWEVER, THIS DOES not seal the fate of realism in the present once and for all, and there are highly significant instances located at the line that separates the repressive dimension of socialist realism from a possible different version: above all in Brecht. While he can in no way be made into a part of the social realism that Adorno decries – "Jesuitical machinations were needed sufficiently to camouflage what he wrote as socialist realism to escape the inquisition" (336/297) – he is often the target of sharp criticism, above all in relation to the uncompromisingly didactic aspect of his plays, which puts a definite limit to his claims about art as a process of estrangement. The problem of realism remains tangential to Adorno's debate with Brecht, however, and in order to unearth a positive sense of the term we have to look elsewhere.

At first it may seem that, even apart from socialist realism, the negative view of realism's role in the present as a general aesthetic project seems to prevail. Cast as "sane realism" (350/308), it tends to advocate an art that belongs to leisure and aspires to provide us with the facile pleasures of recognition, even though in the end it is nothing but "unrealistic" (373/327) in the face of the state of the world. It is – and Adorno here returns to the vocabulary of the earlier essay on Lukács – subject and object so "falsely reconciled" by a "trumped-up realism" (385/337). Thus Adorno seems to conclude that not only social realism, but even realism itself would simply be an impossible option today as far as advanced art goes: "By appearing as art, that which insists that it is realistic injects meaning into reality, which such art is pledged to copy without illusions. In the face of reality this is a priori ideological. Today the impossibility of realism is not to be concluded on inner-aesthetic grounds but equally on the basis of the historical constellation of art and reality." (477/406)

And yet there is another sense of realism, attuned to the depletion of sense in the administered world, and its main protagonists are, not surprisingly, Beckett and Kafka, and to some extent Picasso. As a negative version of such a world, Beckett can be called realist (53/40), in fact more realistic than the socialist realists (477/406), since the grimaces he provides us with are the truth of the subject, whereas socialist realism is simply childish (370/325). What is essential here is not the depicted content, which is the "most childish and deceptive" aspect, whereas "[r]eal denunciation is probably only a capacity of form," as is the
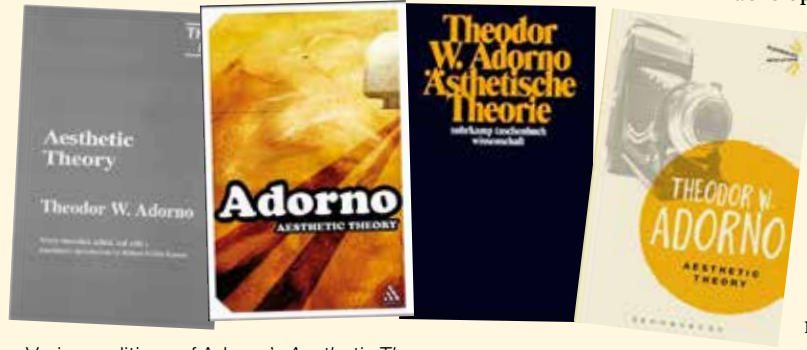
Various editions of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*.

> **"ADORNO'S CLAIM IS THAT FORM IS ALWAYS A CONTENT THAT IS HISTORICALLY MEDIATED."**

The monument to Adorno on the Westend campus in Frankfurt am Main, 2016. PHOTO: SIMSALABIMBAM/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

case in Kafka: while the structures of monopoly capitalism appear only distantly in texts, his work "codifies in the dregs of the administered world what becomes of people under the total social spell more faithfully and powerfully than do any novels of corrupt industrial trusts" (341–342/300– 301).[13] Finally, as a third case, there is Picasso, whose *Guernica* breaks with a "prescribed realism" (353/310) of painterly representation, and in this gains a power of expression that turns his work into a social protest.

Together, these three cases are like steps toward a different theory of what realism might be: instead of emphasizing the empirical things that are depicted (*das Stoffliche*, which is not yet content in a qualified sense), realism should be taken as a process of realization of form: "thoroughly formed artworks that are criticized as formalistic are the most realistic insofar as they are realized in themselves." This gives them a "truth content" beyond the content that they directly "signify" (*bedeuten*), i.e. a truth that surpasses empirical states as well as subjective intentions, and allows false consciousness to be overcome (171/196). In this way, Adorno proposes, formalism and social realism, together with politically charged terms like "progress" and "reaction" (381/333), are in the end abstract and aesthetically useless oppositions, since they remain at the surface of works and never reach the level of art itself, which is why there is no necessary link between philosophical materialism and aesthetic realism. Art is indeed knowledge, although not of sensible particulars in their outward appearance, but of their inward existence: "Through its own figuration, art brings the essence into appearing in opposition to its own appearance" (384/335, mod).[14] But because of this inner opposition that pits essence against itself, the essence cannot be presented as such, but only through a specific transformation and constellation of particulars, which will be Adorno's ultimate take on realism.

Adorno's other realism

Only in one passage, in the section of fragments called "Paralipomena,"[15] does Adorno propose something like a straightforwardly positive interpretation of the term "realism" on a more theo-

retical level. This section contains material that the editors Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann did not know where to place in the text, and while, obviously, this may be simply coincidental, perhaps it would still be possible to say that the placing of this fragment is itself significant, since it seems to open a rather different avenue than the other remarks. Here Adorno proposes, although with some caveats, not only the possibility of what he calls an *adequate* conception of realism, but also that this is something that art in the present cannot and must not *avoid*:

> The mediation between the content of artworks and their composition is subjective mediation. It consists not only in the labor and struggle of objectification. What goes beyond subjective intention and its arbitrariness (*in deren Willkür gegebenen*, what is given in it as free choice) has a correlative objectivity in the subject: in the form of that subject's experiences, insofar as their locus is situated beyond the conscious will. As their sedimentation, artworks are imageless images, and these experiences mock representational depiction (*vergegenständlichenden Abbildung*). Their innervation (*innervieren*) and registration is the subjective path to truth content. The only adequate concept of realism, which no art today dare shun, would be an unflinching fidelity to these experiences. Provided they go deeply enough, they touch in historical constellations back of the façades of reality and psychology. Just as the interpretation of traditional philosophy must excavate the experiences that motivated the categorical apparatus and deductive sequence in the first place, the interpenetration of artworks penetrates to this subjectively experienced kernel of experience, which goes beyond the subject; interpretation thereby obeys the convergence of philosophy and art in truth content. Whereas it is this truth content that artworks speak in themselves, beyond their meaning, it takes shape in that artworks sediment historical experiences in their configuration, and this is not possible except by way of the subject: The truth content is no abstract in-itself. The truth of important works of false consciousness is situated in the gesture with which they indicate the strength (*Stand*) of this false consciousness as inescapable, not in immediately possessing as their content the theoretical truth, although indeed the unalloyed portrayal (*reine Darstellung*) of false consciousness irresistibly makes the transition to true consciousness. (421/364)

This long and dense quotation contains many themes that are developed in detail in other parts of the book, with the difference that they here are bound up with a positive conception of realism, and unpacking it with this connection in view might

give us a sense of what an immanent critique of Lukács, so sorely missing in the 1960 review, might look like.

First of all, Adorno stresses that realism cannot be understood outside of a subjective mediation; it is only through its effects on the subject that the real can be apprehended,[16] not as an objective given. This order of the real is beyond the subject, beyond its intentions, choices, and acts of volition, but it is also given as the insistence of an objectivity *in* the subject, an experience of the social order and the structure of reification, which however does not simply make the subject into an object, but rather *subjectivizes* it in its relation to a core that it cannot grasp. A free and autonomous subject, Adorno often suggests, would be one that does not domesticate or expel the other within it, but experiences it as openness and fluidity.

AS A "SEDIMENTATION" (*Niederschlag*) of such experiences, artworks are images, yet not in the sense that they pose something before us as an object in an act of *Vergegenständlichung*: they are *imageless images*, located at the limit between inside and the outside, or rather, at the junction where the outside violently passes into the subject just as the subject holds this violence at bay in the form of an image. These experiences can first only be approached in the form of a nervous, visceral sensing, as something that touches us at a level that lies beneath the layers of perception and cognition (the term *Innervation*, which recurs throughout *Aesthetic Theory* in various contexts, seems to suggest quasi-physiological quality) that we must "register" (*verzeichnen*), and to which we must uphold an "unflinching fidelity" (*unbeirrte Treue*); we must not shun them by escaping into an already formatted world of epistemic or aesthetic objects if we are to be realists, and thus they are just as much what "no art today dare shun."

If we sound the depths of these experiences, they prove to be not just subjective, but open onto a dimension that runs deeper than both reality (in the sense of a merely given objective reality) and psychology (which Adorno generally understands as techniques of adaptation geared toward the individual subject), which is that of "historical constellations," i.e. the dimension in which experience is always mediated by history and the social. This is also what connects art to philosophy, in terms of their "convergence" in "truth content" (*Wahrheitsgehalt*): for Adorno, the texts handed down by the history of philosophy must be brought back to life, de-sedimented, so that they reveal experiences – which themselves are not merely individual, but form part of historical constellations – that have been congealed into systems and categories, just as the artworks have deposited in themselves experiences that are not simply those of individuals, and thus can be pried open by present works. Convergence does not however imply that art and philosophy would mimic or borrow forms from each other, but remains a regulative idea of sorts: the truth is not to be had fully in either of them, it is

not an "in-itself" that would simply exist out there, but only exists as a horizon for subjectivity, or the idea of an experience that would no longer be subjected to the strictures that make experience possible – which is Adorno's strict obedience to the Kantian imperative that finitude must be respected, just as the imperative that no finite form can be accepted as it is, but must be understood as congealed history, is his fidelity to the Hegelian demand.

FROM ANOTHER ANGLE, the finitude of truth also means that it is always bound up with false consciousness, from which there is no escape in the form of science or objectivity, which is why the truth of works that endure their falseness, as it were, also lets us see through this very falseness. They show the strength, or better, the standpoint or stance (*Stand*) of falsity as inescapable, to the extent that we would simply oppose it to truth; but, and this is another of Adorno's profoundly Hegelian moves, a pure presentation of false consciousness, of ideology, will always begin to take us towards truth. On my reading here, the translation of *reine Darstellung* as "unalloyed portrayal" seems misleading: *Darstellung* does not mean portrayal as merely a faithful rendering (although the art of portraiture can no doubt be understood in many ways, and faithfulness could imply a kind of "unflinching fidelity" to the invisible truth of a character), but should be taken in the heavy sense that it has in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the "presentation of appearing knowledge" (*Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens*). It is a setting forth, laying bare, ex-plication, etc. of knowledge in its constitutive and consecutive moment, so that we see its inner genesis as it unfolds step by step, at each level pushed ahead by its own inner contradiction and negativity, which means that the phenomenologist who observes this movement need not apply any external criteria. Consciousness *criticizes itself*, and what Hegelian phenomenology adds is precisely the *Darstellung*, the "pure" presentation of this movement that nonetheless lets it be seen as not mere despair, but as a progressive movement towards a fuller comprehension.

In one respect, this is in itself the idea of Adorno's immanent critique: to turn the power of the work against itself by unleashing it from the strictures imposed on it by its own self-understanding, by turning form as tension against form as closure. On the other hand, Adorno is, as we have seen, also a loyal Kantian, and the idea of absolute knowledge that secretly guides Hegel's *Darstellung* – or, in terms closer to the quarrel over realism, a discourse that would know the reality of society as it is, and be able to judge whether a particular artistic form approximates this or not – is suspended, which is why Adorno's dialectic remains negative. The pure presentation of falsity leads in the direction of truth, and yet truth as the discourse of a totality that would bring subject and object together remains barred; the artwork's task is, as we have seen, to oppose appearing to

> **"ART IS INDEED KNOWLEDGE, ALTHOUGH NOT OF SENSIBLE PARTICULARS IN THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT OF THEIR INWARD EXISTENCE."**

appearance as the negative dialectic of essence, which suspends the movement toward the concept while not simply rejecting it.

A consequence of this is the fundamental chiasmus that in *Negative Dialectics* appears as the transition from the "preponderance" (*Vorrang*, sometimes *Präponderanz*) of the object, which flies in the face of subjective idealism, to the possibility of breaking open the subject, of dispelling the mirage of constituting subjectivity, but doing so through the power of the subject, or the power of that which is lodged inside the subject. Object and subject are equally reified entities, and to reach a different dimension of their togetherness they must be allowed to correct each other, but not through any enforced reconciliation.

Realism thus means to enter into this structure of experience as it is given in a historical moment; it cannot be sealed within history as a particular style or technique to be discarded or emulated, and thus it is a striking illustration of why aesthetic categories must be historical, although not in the sense that they can be comfortably placed before us as objects of historical studies. They must be thought of as challenges: in order to understand what realism means, we must indeed ask what it once meant, and how it attempted to mediate between subjectivity and world at a historical conjuncture that is no longer ours; this would be a precondition for posing the question of what this elusive real means for us today, which also, finally, opens toward the question of what it might mean in the future. ⊠

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references

1   Several of the key texts in this debate have been edited and translated in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977). For the Swedish-language reader, there is an even more detailed source book available, *Det gäller realismen*, ed. and trans. Lars Bjurman (Staffanstorp: Cavefors, 1972). The best German collection of sources for this debate is still Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (ed.), *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), which contains all the texts published in the review *Das Wort*. For an overview of the debate, see Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

2   In *Das Wort*, 1938, reprinted in Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962). English trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Aesthetics and Politics*.

3   In *Das Wort*, 1938, reprinted in Lukács, *Probleme des Realismus* (Neuwied: Luchterhand 1971). English trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Aesthetics and Politics*.

4   For the persistence of utopia in Adorno, and the image of philosophy as a subjunctive mood, see Anders Bartonek, *Philosophie im Konjunktiv: Nichtidentität als Ort der Möglichkeit des Utopischen in der negativen Dialektik Theodor W. Adornos* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).

5   Lukács, *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1958).

6   Adorno, "Erpresste Versöhnung," first published in *Der Monat* (1958), reprinted in *Noten zur Literatur II* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961). English trans. Rodney Livingstone in *Aesthetics a Politics*.

7   As is noted in the anonymous introduction to the translation of Adorno's essay in *Aesthetics and Politics*, 143.

8   See Roland Barthes, "L'Effet de réel", *Communications* 11 (1968), reprinted in Barthes, *Le bruissement de la langue: Essais critiques IV* (Paris: Seuil, 1984). See also the detailed discussion of Balzac and the code system of realism in *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

9   This does not mean that such moments of breaking forth can be present in the past itself, as Adorno suggests in his concept of "late style," and particularly so in the case of Beethoven. This lateness is the opposite of a subjectivity that would eventually break free from external historical constraints; it is the irruption of history and objectivity in the subject, which turns the work into a series of fragments that may become the starting point for later works; see Adorno, "Spätstil Beethovens" (1934), in *Moments Musicaux* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), and my discussion of this in "Adorno and the Problem of Late Style," in *Site* 31–21 (2012): 95–110.

10   Adorno's essay was subsequently translated under the title "Extorted Realism", in Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991–92).

11   For this reason it is equally mistaken, I believe, to want to free his aesthetic theory from the idea of reconciliation in order to attain a more fluid, open, and pluralist aesthetics. When, for instance, Albrecht Weller writes that "all the elements of postmetaphysical aesthetics of modernity are gathered together in Adorno, but in an optic that has been distorted by his philosophy of reconciliation," and that this requires a "stereoscopic reading" that separates the useful from the obsolete in his thought, I think this in fact deprives Adorno's aesthetics of its philosophical thrust, so that what would remain is a series of brilliant yet disjointed aperçus on the formal problems in modern art. See Wellmer, "Adorno, die Moderne und das Erhabene," in Franz Koppe (ed.), *Perspektiven der Kunstphilosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 190.

12   Page references given directly in the text are henceforth to Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), followed by *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 1997): German/English.

13   As Adorno ironically – but not only ironically – quips, Lukács himself, after his days of imprisonment in Romania, is "reported to have said that he had finally realized that Kafka was a realistic writer." (477/406)

14   "Sie [die Kunst] verhält es [das Wesen] durch ihre eigene Komplexion zum Erscheinen wider die Erscheinung." Hullot-Kentors translation renders this as an opposition between *appearance* and *semblance*, which I think too much reduces the paradoxical proximity and distance between the terms, around which the tension of art revolves: it is an *appearing* that opposes the *appearance*, that *turns against itself*, and not a truth that would simply rid us of semblance (*Schein*).

15   In the German edition these fragments are presented with two levels of separation: page breaks between sections and blank lines between fragments. In the 1997 Continuum edition of Hullot-Kentor's excellent translation, the sections have inexplicably been run together into a continuous text, which gives the distorted impression that they form one sustained argument.

16   The use of a term like "the real" instead of "reality" may seem to give an unwarranted Lacanian twist to Adorno's claims, but while it is true that his use of Freud rarely strays from a rather conventional one, I think that linking him to the developments already well underway in the French milieu would be productive; in this sense, realism would be, not about accurately capturing a reality that simply precedes us, but about allowing the effects of the real to unfold within the subject.

ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

Nabokov on socialist and cinematic realism

by **Karin Grelz**

Vladimir Nabokov's negative judgment of socialist realism was unequivocal and consistent over the years. His relation to cinematic art, on the other hand, was ambivalent and charged with a highly potent dynamic.[1] The aim of this article is to show to what extent Nabokov's relations to these two phenomena – Soviet art and cinematic art – were interrelated and subtly intertwined. Focusing on a cinematic scene in Nabokov's first novel, *Mary* (1926), the analysis traces how the themes of cinematic deception techniques and mimetic violence are developed further by Nabokov in some of his texts from the 1930s and '40s: *The Eye, Kamera Obskura/Laughter in the Dark, Nikolai Gogol*, and "The Assistant Producer". Summing up, references will be made also to *Conclusive Evidence*, or *Speak, Memory*, as it was renamed when published in the United States.

In an interview with Alfred Appel Jr., Nabokov boasted of his "uncontested use of cinema themes, cinema lore, and cinematophors".[2] This statement has subsequently been taken at face value by several researchers, and the role of popular culture as well as cinematic narrative technique in his novels has been analyzed from different perspectives.[3] Early on, Appel diagnosed Nabokov's relations to film "as at once those of a clas-sicist (after Plato – and Arnheim, whom he has never read) and, loosely speaking, a Marxist", and he also drew attention to the special relation between émigré Russian culture and the growing cinema industry in the European 1920s and '30s.[4]

In the USSR, on the other hand, film was celebrated as the most important medium for political agitation and for manipulating the masses.[5] Lev Kuleshov experimented on how to make the audience project emotional content onto neutral images through a montage technique, called the "Kuleshov effect". At the same time young Dziga Vertov, producer of a Soviet newsreel called "Kino-Pravda" in the 1920s, stated that the camera eye was better equipped than the human eye for recording the world without superfluous aesthetic biases. Accordingly, film was declared in the USSR to be the most democratic of all the arts.

VERTOV'S PROJECT HAD explicitly downplayed the artistic element in favor of the technical and industrial aspects of cinematic craft as enlightening entertainment and political propaganda. The message was that, with Soviet film, the bourgeois arts of theater and literature had become obsolete, while journal films presented montages of clips from Soviet life and developed a

abstract

The aim of this article is to show to what extent Nabokov's relations to the two phenomena Soviet art and cinematic art were interrelated and subtly intertwined. Focusing on a cinematic scene in Nabokov's first novel, *Mary* (1926), the analysis traces how the themes of cinematic deception techniques and mimetic violence are developed by Nabokov. It is shown how cinematic effects in Nabokov addresses the violence inherent in socialist realist aesthetics: political censorship and manipulation on the one hand, and the programmatic extinction of artists labeled as "bourgeois" on the other.
KEY WORDS: Nabokov, socialist realism, Soviet art, cinematic realism.

narrative that claimed life itself was the author. In his Soviet classic *Man with a Movie Camera,* Vertov also declared on the title cards that this was a film free from artistic lies, made without the help of notes, without script, scenery or actors, and aimed at establishing a truly international, absolute language of film "on the basis of its total dissociation from the language of theater and literature".

NABOKOV'S COMPLEX RELATION to cinema can be explained from this perspective as the result of a double task: to discredit socialist realism ("advertisements of a firm of slave-traders")[6] and at the same time to take literature's revenge on film through a kind of symbolic annexation or domestication. Through references to film in his early novels, he established an analogy between cinematic technique and naïve realism, including the socialist variety. At the same time, Nabokov demonstratively called attention to his own literary technique in cinematic terms, but as a more advanced and sophisticated form of deception.

From mute to motion pictures and crime scenes
A coeval of moving pictures, Nabokov was a cinemagoer throughout his life and followed its technical development. As a young boy he watched magic-lantern pictures and silent movies, while as a middle-aged man he witnessed the birth of sound pictures, wrote filmscenarios together with Ivan Lukash, and even claimed to have worked as a film extra in Berlin in the 1920s.[7] In the 1960s his novels were brought to the screen and he was invited to collaborate with Alfred Hitchcock on a film about a woman married to a defector – a collaboration which never took place, but which would have been the perfect match from the point of view of deception and manipulation techniques. In 1964 he wrote in one of his letters to Hitchcock that he had a great deal of material on the subject:

> "While ignorant of the workings of the American intelligence, I have gathered considerable information regarding those of the Soviets. For some time now I have been thinking of writing the story of a defector from behind the Iron Curtain to the United States. The constant danger he is in, the constant necessity to hide and be on the lookout for agents from his native land bent on kidnapping or killing him."[8]

During his first years of emigration in Berlin, Nabokov already seems to have had the opportunity to gather information about Soviet activities abroad. *The Rudder (Rul')*, the émigré daily newspaper where he was published extensively, printed reports smuggled out of Russia. As a result, one of its employees was approached by an agent of the Soviet OGPU (successor of the

Cheka), which almost managed to infiltrate the editorial staff.[9] After the Civil War the Bolsheviks had also launched a special campaign to encourage emigrated artists and directors to return and reanimate the declining Soviet cinema. Among the returnees were established directors as Iakov Protazanov, whose decision to go back still remains an enigma to his biographers.[10]

These and similar examples fed into Nabokov's early work and were explicitly touched upon for the first time in his play *The Man from the USSR*, written in 1925–26.[11] The short play featured a group of destitute refugees in Berlin, among them an informer from the USSR, supposed in the end to be a double agent. Coming back from a visit to Moscow, he sets up an appointment in a film studio with a countryman who is desperate to return and in need of a passport. Nabokov did not choose the setting by chance. Working in a film studio was a way of earning one's bread and hence a place where émigré Russians met and "sold their shadows" in more than one sense.

The primary scene in *Mary*
Nabokov's first longer novel *Mary* (*Mashenka*, 1926) is especially interesting from the point of view of his cinematic technique. It presents a kind of cinematic-mimetic primary scene that addresses in metafictional terms the question of realism in art, and also the situation of émigré Russians.

The protagonist Ganin is an émigré in Berlin in 1924 who has been working as a film extra to earn his living. When he goes to the movies with his girlfriend, he recognizes himself among a theatrical audience on the screen. He recalls how humiliating the situation at the shooting was and also reflects on the insidious realism of the medium. The transformation of ragged extras and poor scenery into a glamorous theater auditorium, as well as the thought of how cheaply he sold himself and how his shadow will continue to wander all over the world after his demise, disgusts Ganin. A feeling of lost authenticity and shame for what he has taken part in overwhelms him: "We know not what we do."[12]

The cinema scene in *Mary* dramatizes the theme of art as a distorting mirror and false representation of reality. This thought, however, is brought into play by what Ganin sees on the screen: a prima donna fainting on the opera stage after being reminded by her role of a murder she once committed in real life. The scene turns in multiple ways on the mirror-relationship between art and life, memory and experience, and complicates Ganin's role as a spectator. What he once saw as an extra, acting as part of a staged audience on the screen, he now reexperiences from his position in the auditorium at a movie theater, as part of a "real" audience. In his preface to the English translation, Nabokov stated that *Mary* was an "extract of personal reality" and Ganin a "vicar" for himself, but at a closer look the scene rather points in playful terms to the mirror games of his fiction.

> "NABOKOV CRITICIZED THE WAY ART UNDER SOVIET RULE HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A PRIMITIVE INSTRUMENT FOR IMPOSING GOODNESS."

Nabokov, in 1969, shows his own original butterfly illustrations. When he arrived in the US in 1940, his first job was to make drawings of butterfly anatomy at the Museum of Natural History.

PHOTO: GIUSEPPE PINO / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Nevertheless, Ganin's situation bears concrete witness to the historical circumstances of the interwar period in Europe: many of the first wave of Russian émigrés made their living by working for the growing European and American film industry. With their property expropriated by the Bolsheviks and without valid passports, they were undesirable and unacknowledged existences from both a European and a Soviet perspective. Their past was at the same time subject to a fictionalization process. In films about the First World War, such as Edward Sloman's *Surrender* (1927), Russian émigrés appeared as extras in roles of the White Guardists they had once been. In Josef von Sternberg's *The Last Command* (1928), Emil Jannings played a tsarist ex-general applying for work as an extra, while actual Russian émigrés were acting as extras in the same film.[13] Ganin's experience in *Mary* is clearly a reference to such a situation and Appel specifically notices Nabokov's sensitivity to this kind of figurative violence and historical irony. He even suggests that Ganin's strong reaction to what he sees on the screen is prompted by his recognition of the scene as a parody of a charity concert at his former family estate.[14]

Next to his double, Ganin also observes a bearded man whom he remembers from the shooting. He is wearing evening dress with a starched white shirt and a sash across his breast:

> "Ganin's doppelganger also stood and clapped, over there, alongside the very striking-looking man with the black beard and the ribbon across his chest. Because of

that beard and his starched shirt he had always landed in the front row; in the intervals he munched a sandwich and then, after the take, would put on a wretched old coat over his evening dress and return home to a distant part of Berlin, where he worked as a compositor in a printing plant."[15]

In an interview with Andrew Field, Nabokov later hinted at the bearded man in this scene as being a cameo appearance of sorts. He recalled how, in Berlin, he had been the only extra wearing evening dress during a shoot, and also how he had stood clapping before an imaginary stage. When Nabokov explained to Field that there actually was a real murder going on which the audience took to be part of the performance, he most likely had the symbolic kind of violence in mind that disgusts Ganin so much in the novel.[16]

The *mise en abyme*
According to Wyllie, the cinema scene in *Mary* expresses the impact of the cinematic medium on Nabokov's imagination and demonstrates the complexity of his response to it.[17] At the same time it may also be read as an allusion to the metafictional experiments of contemporary literature. In the discussions of the 1920s about how to develop and renew the 19th-century naturalist novel, the artistic devices of visual mimesis were brought into play, with André Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (1925) as one of the most renowned examples. By writing a story about the writing of a story – and thus using the literary device of *mise en abyme* – Gide criticized naïve realism and the notion of literary sincerity prevailing in current literary discussions. The term is derived from heraldry, where it denotes the technique of inserting into the shield a miniature copy of its design, repeating the motif *ad infinitum*. With a text mirrored in a text, and an author-protagonist who is deeply concerned with the idea of a new novel, a book would describe the process of its own becoming and create a kind of narrative infinity.

AS CONVINCINGLY ARGUED by Leonid Livak, it was Gide's attempt to develop the realist novel that inspired Nabokov to write his first more elaborate metafictional novel, *The Gift* (1937–1938).[18] Like *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, Nabokov's *The Gift* is a novel about the writing of a novel, and to that extent it capitalized on Gide's praxis. At the heart of his book, however, Nabokov placed a critical biography of Nikolay Chernyshevsky – the author of the treatise "On the Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality", and of Lenin's favorite book *What Is To Be Done*. This he apparently did both as a comment on Chernyshevsky's materialist aesthetics and as an ironic allusion to the socialist Gide's ideological convictions, but also as a literary experiment. The protagonist's text is rejected by his editor, just as Nabokov foresaw that his own novel would be. The socialist revolutionary editors of the literary magazine where it was serialized found Nabokov's disrespect for the legend Chernyshevsky offensive (he had actually focused more on the private person), and the fourth chapter of *The Gift* was consequently left out in the first publication. Later, in his 1962 fore-

word to the full version, Nabokov triumphantly noted that, this time, life had imitated art rather than the other way around.

A similar device of a text or image placed within another was applied already in *Mary,* which was published within a year after Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*.[19] This time it is the protagonist's memories of his first love, set among pre-revolutionary Russian gentry, that serves as the text within the text, as if Nabokov thus intended to preserve both the 19th-century tradition of the Russian novel and the memory of the Russian gentry.

LIKE GIDE'S NOVEL, *Mary* describes a mirror situation and the complex relation between original and copy.[20] This theme is captured in its essence in the cinema scene. Interpreted in the literary context outlined above, Ganin's doppelganger experience can be read as referring to Gide's favorite trope: the émigré Russian appearing as a representation *en abyme* in a film about his own past. The experience is accompanied, moreover, by a visual manifestation that recalls the escutcheon – the coat of arms, from which the name of the trope is borrowed. The ribbon across the starched white shirt of the actor next to Ganin creates a visual impression reminiscent of a heraldic shield with a characteristic bend (which may be a "bend dexter" or "bend sinister" – cf. Nabokov's novel of the same name).

Nabokov's point seems to be that if, for Gide, the metafictional presented an artistic opportunity or challenge, for the émigré Russian appearing as an extra in films about his own past it was a quite real, existential experience. In the surreal life of the émigré Russian, where images collapsed and imploded into one another, the *abyme* gradually became a metaphor of imprisonment, disappearance, and death.

The last snapshots of the European intelligentsia

The counterfeiter-writer's heraldic trope in Nabokov appears as a "cinematophor" that symbolizes the programmatic extinction of bourgeois art and the social class to which Nabokov belonged. This extinction was built into the normative postulates of socialist realism and efficiently propagated through the techniques of mass culture. Trotsky, in his *Literature and Revolution* (1924), discussed how to make use of the remnants of bourgeois culture – the fellow-travelers (*poputchiki*), as these writers were called – once they had agreed to accompany the proletariat on its way to socialism. After Lenin's death, and with the development of the first five-year plan in 1927, this joint journey was coming to an end. The cultural sphere was subjugated to programmatic proletarization, and one of the most central questions was the role of the bourgeois artist in the new society.

Walter Benjamin, who visited Moscow in the winter of 1926–1927, gave a discerning interpretation of these discussions in

"Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia". In this essay, he pointed to the need to proceed from contemplation to political action, in order to finally overthrow the intellectual predominance of the bourgeoisie. Summing up, he suggested, with a touch of irony, that the new function of the bourgeois artist could consist in having his "artistic career" interrupted:

> "If it is the double task of the intelligentsia to overthrow the intellectual predominance of the bourgeoisie and to make contact with the proletarian masses, the intelligentsia has failed almost entirely in the second part of this task because it can no longer be performed contemplatively. And yet this has hindered hardly anybody from approaching it again and again as if it could, and calling for proletarian poets, thinkers, and artists. To counter this, Trotsky had to point out – as early as *Literature and Revolution* – that such artists would only emerge from a victorious revolution. In reality it is far less a matter of making the artist of bourgeois origin into a master of "proletarian art" than of *deploying him, even at the expense of his artistic activity*, at important points in this sphere of imagery. Indeed, *might not perhaps the interruption of his "artistic career" be an essential part of his new function*?"[21]

The interruption of the artistic careers of bourgeois artists, however, became more violent in the Soviet Union than Benjamin might have expected. A campaign was launched against the fellow-travelers, texts from abroad were censored and the control of Soviet authors increased, while returning writers ritually denounced their émigré peers. Trotsky was exiled in February 1929, and the same year Stalin started retouching his enemies out of photos. The surrealist implosion of imagery that Nabokov explored in *Mary* now also affected the proponents of socialism. In April 1930, Vladimir Mayakovsky – a revolutionary poet who successfully hid his bourgeois background more or less in plain view[22] – ended his artistic career in a symbolic and cinematic way: by a shot from a weapon used as a prop in the film *Not For Money Born*.

Totalitarianism, mass culture, and deception techniques

Nabokov seems to have noticed early on how the Bolshevik plea for realism, together with the techniques of the new medium – which was bolstered by the introduction of sound pictures in 1929 – was accompanied by the development of censorship. In the essay "Goodness Triumphant" ("*Torzhestvo dobrodetelei*", 5 March 1930), he formulated his principal objection to Bolshevik cultural policy. As the title indicates – an allusion to Rossini's popular opera *La Cenerentola* ("Cinderella") – Nabokov criti-

Left: The face of Mosjoukine, from a later reconstruction of Kuleshov's experiment. Right: From Cocteau's film *The Blood of a Poet* (*Le Sang d'un Poète*, 1930).

cized the way art under Soviet rule had been reduced to a primitive instrument for imposing goodness.

Bolshevist cultural policy had brought the complex question of how to artistically handle the shortcomings of man and the base facets of human existence back to the level of ancient mysteries and moralistic fables – this is Nabokov's main point of critique. Ages of artistic development were wiped out as art was reduced to a primitive reproduction of the morally acceptable aspects of mankind. He concluded with an appeal in which he referred to the Soviet censor as a film director, silencing any voice that would appear subversive to the optimistic narrative:

> "If you really believe that this is for the best – why not bring the Soviet censor up from the basement and give him almighty powers? Let him lead us all along the Path of Goodness, like a film director. And to all you talented sinners – Silence!"[23]

The appeal could also have been a reference to the American Hays Code, which was introduced the same year, although not put into actual practice until in 1934. But the article was written in Russian and printed in *The Rudder*, in a cultural context where literary discussion among émigré writers was affected by the harshening climate in the Soviet Union.[24]

In his novels, however, Nabokov deliberately avoided big, burning questions, and focused instead on deception technique itself. In *The Eye* (*Sogliadatai*, 1930) he looked further into cinematic forms of deception through a protagonist who is determined to master his fictions to perfection. After being tortured and humiliated by the husband (named *Kasimarin* – from *kashmar*, nightmare, from the French *cauchemar*) of one of his mistresses, the protagonist Smurov stages his own suicide and starts playing a narcissist game with his neighbors. The idea that guides him through all his manipulations is that of his private self as a fiction, reflected only in the eyes of his "neighbor".

In her analysis of the cinematic dimensions of the text, Wyllie notes how Smurov (phonetically evoking associations to "paddy'"or "ill humored") "submits himself utterly to the camera perspective to wield an unchallenged authority over his narrative", while at the same time his own existence remains as unreal as a film.[25] Still, it is Smurov's eye, in the form of the narrator's point of view, which dominates the whole narrative

– even to the point of self-deception. When Smurov finally runs into the violent husband again and is offered a job by him, he willingly accepts. In the end, the narrator assures the reader that happiness is to observe, to spy, and that he (Smurov) is very satisfied with his new and invulnerable position.

By connecting Smurov's narcissistic game to an experience of physical violence, the novel describes the devastating effect of violence on a fragile ego, just as Dostoevsky did in *The Double*.[26] From this point of view, Nabokov makes a general statement in this text on mimetic forms of violence as well. The Russian title of the novel, *Sogliadatai* (eavesdropper, peeper), evokes both the narrator's godlike peeping eye and the all-seeing, stalking eye of a totalitarian state. The novel also includes several references to the aesthetics of Dziga Vertov's experiments in *Kinoglaz*, which Nabokov evidently watched in Berlin.[27]

Dark laughter

Nabokov's most cinematic novel, *Laughter in the Dark* (*Kamera Obskura*, 1932), is also a novel on the art of deception, written like a screenplay with filmic cuts and car chases.[28] The protagonist Krechmar (Albinus in the English translation) is an art historian who dreams of turning classical artworks into moving pictures. He falls blindly in love with an adolescent girl who is working as a hostess at the local cinema. Not talented enough to become a film star, she decides to get as much as possible out of her older admirer. Unable to see through her manipulations, Krechmar leaves his wife and even sponsors a film for his vampire protégée to perform in. During a trip to the French Riviera, he is literally blinded in a cinematically narrated car crash, and his mistress is now free to socialize with her new lover and accomplice Gorn (Rex) – a caricaturist and counterfeiter of old paintings – right before Krechmar's eyes.

The English title, *Laughter in the Dark*, can be interpreted as a reference to all kinds of primitive and blinding mimetic practices, and to the spectator's amusement by them in the cinema ("Friends described how he would 'single out intentionally an inept American film' and 'literally shake with laughter, to the point where . . . he would have to leave the hall'"[29]). But it can also be read as a reference to the surrealist dark laughter suggested in the title of Appel's book. Through the protagonist's gradually dimmed cognition and numbed senses, the novel seems to describe a journey backwards in cinematic history, into

"WHEN NABOKOV SETS OUT TO REVEAL HOW GOGOL INVENTED FACTS AND CREATED HIS READER, ALL THE DEVICES OF CINEMATIC TECHNIQUE ARE PRESENT."

the most primitive and brutal forms of deception. The bottom line is reached in a scene where Gorn sits shamelessly naked right in front of the blind Krechmar, tickling his forehead with a straw without revealing his presence. The secret lover's silent movements in the apartment makes him appear like an actor in a silent movie – an association which is even spelled out in the English translation, where Gorn is said to be "munching like a silent film diner". Finally, the narrator's "stage directions for the last silent scene", with Krechmar's dead body lying on the floor, appear as a return to the still life of a camera obscura picture.

Both these novels can be read as allegories of Soviet blinding manipulations: the rewriting of history and the retouching that is wiping out bourgeois culture. To ensure that this would be intelligible to an English-speaking audience, Nabokov casually reminded his readers in his foreword to the English translation (1965) of *The Eye* of how a "social group casually swept into artistic focus acquires a falsely permanent air". He also noted how "bunches of pages have been torn out of the past by destroyers of freedom ever since Soviet propaganda, almost a half century ago, misled foreign opinion into ignoring or denigrating the importance of Russian emigration (which still awaits its chronicler)".[30]

Gogolizing the eyes of the reader

Nabokov repudiated Soviet literature and refused to lecture on it. His relation to it is indirectly explained, however, in his *Nikolai Gogol* (1941–1943). Without mentioning socialist realism, which he apparently found too primitive even to serve as his polemical target, he exclaims: "Gogol – a 'realist'! There are textbooks that say so".[31] Gogol used his imagination for the purpose of complex and unnecessary deception, says Nabokov, and notes the amusing potential of his deception techniques to make the world secondary to it: "The vulgar imitation of artistic fiction on the part of life is somehow more pleasing than the opposite thing".[32]

When Nabokov sets out to reveal how Gogol invented facts and created his reader, all the devices of cinematic technique are present. Gogol's symbolism "took on a physiological aspect, in this case optical"[33], and, by his use of odd hybrid names, Gogol conveys "a sense of remoteness and optical distortion due to the haze."[34] As a young letter writer, Gogol deceives his mother with appeals to Providence, honesty and truth, and even reveals a literary Kuleshov effect of sorts: that a combination of two emotionally engaging images could make the recipient jump to hasty conclusions.[35] Nabokov's statements that in Gogol "allusions become delusions",[36] that logical links are "mimicked", and that Gogol applies a "life-generating syntax"[37] also seem to allude to constructivist cinematic montage techniques. The apotheosis of Gogol's manipulative technique, moreover, is found in his short story "The Overcoat" – a favorite among Soviet literary scholars, read as a forerunner of socialist realism.

Gogol in Nabokov's version behaves like Vertov's man with the movie camera. When he travels around Europe his stories are generated by "rolling wheels [....] physical gyration [...] the intoxicating quality of smooth steady motion."[38] Even a reference to *Roget's Thesaurus*[39] can be read as a cinematic allusion. Peter Marc Roget was also the author of a scientific work on film as optical illusion: *Explanation of an Optical Deception in the Appearance of the Spokes of a Wheel When Seen Through Vertical Apertures* (1825). In this connection, Nabokov's statement that Gogol's "torrent of irrelevant details"[40] produces a hypnotic effect also sounds like a reference to cinematic technique, as does the final warning to the reader that "after reading Gogol one's eyes may become gogolized"[41] – a warning that could be extended to interpreters of all kinds of manipulative fictions, including Nabokov's own.

"The Assistant Producer"

In the short story "The Assistant Producer" (1943), Nabokov returned to the historical situation in which he set *Mary*. The cinematic experience of the émigré Russians in Europe is now referred to explicitly in terms of a prison of mirrors:

> "German film companies, which kept sprouting like poisonous mushrooms in those days (just before the child of light learned to talk), found cheap labor in hiring those among the Russian émigrés whose only hope and profession was their past – that is, a set of totally unreal people – to represent "real" audiences in pictures. The dovetailing of one phantasm into another produced upon a sensitive person the impression of living in a Hall of Mirrors, or rather a prison of mirrors, and not even knowing which was the glass and which was yourself."[42]

This is the only text that Nabokov claimed to have based directly on a true story. The narrator he chose for this exclusive mission of telling the truth is consequently a priest. But what he recalls is an occurrence or case that is just as cinematic as a *film noir* of the 1930's: the story of the disappearance of General Miller (named "General Fedchenko" in Nabokov's text), the head of the exile Russian All-Military Union in Paris. In September 1939, Miller was deluded by the intelligence chief Nikolai Skoblin ("General Golubkov") into going to a secret meeting with an informer from the other side, after which he disappeared without a trace. With two former presidents kidnapped and killed by the Soviet secret service, Miller had had reason to suspect that a trap was set for him and had left a message behind. Skoblin was subsequently disclosed as a triple agent and his wife as his accomplice, but what actually happened to Miller was not revealed in Nabokov's lifetime.[43]

"The Assistant Producer" describes a surrealist implosion of images taking place in real life, with Parisian NKVD collaborators

> ## "IN HIS NOVELS, HOWEVER, NABOKOV DELIBERATELY AVOIDED BIG, BURNING QUESTIONS, AND FOCUSED INSTEAD ON DECEPTION TECHNIQUE AS SUCH."

dressed up as German Abwehr in a fiction staged by the Soviet secret service. When the narrator visualizes how the trap was set, he imagines a little green door in a dead-end street, and at the same time the name Nabokov chose for the street invokes his prison-trope – the Gidean hall of mirrors *abyme*:

> "In that particular quarter of Paris the streets are called after various philosophers, and the lane they were following had been named by some well-read city father rue Pierre Labime. [...] and in the wall there was at one spot a little green door. [...] The old man was never seen again. [...] There is no green door, but only a gray one, which no human strength can burst open. I have vainly searched through admirable encyclopedias: there is no philosopher called Pierre Labime."[44]

Ganin's cinematic experience in *Mary* can also be interpreted in the Russian *film noir* context described in "The Assistant Producer". In the 1930s, émigré Russians of bourgeois origin were silenced and disappeared in the abyss of time and politics, sometimes with apt help from both émigré and Soviet agents in different guises, while their life stories were exploited and fictionalized with themselves appearing as extras on the screen.

Speak, Memory!

The culmination of Nabokov's responsive strategies to this kind of "filmic" performance – historical ironies as well as deliberate mimetic violence, censorship, and repression – is to be found in *Conclusive Evidence* (1951), the semi-autobiographical novel that was supposed to bear witness of Nabokov's existence to posterity.

The narrator now openly takes on the position of a film director in relation to his past, looking into memory as through the lens or prism of a camera. This is a very visual novel, moving beyond the parody of family albums and silent movies into the new techniques of color and sound.[45] In the twelfth chapter, Nabokov returns to the love story recalled in *Mary*, although this time the girl's name is Tamara. In the middle of this chapter there is again a revealing cinematic appearance. Ivan Mosjoukine, a Russian silent film actor whom the narrator says he and Tamara liked to watch on the screen, suddenly comes riding out of the thickets of the Crimean forest in spring 1918. It is suggested that Mosjoukine was there to star in a film based on Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*.[46] This film, *The White Devil* by Alexandre Volkoff, was not made until 1930, however. He would have been more likely to run into the set of one Protazanov's films that Mosjoukine starred in during his Crimean exile, some of which were later erased from the director's Soviet list of works.

But Nabokov instead inserted a filmic reference that adds a symbolical dimension to the encounter. Mosjoukine was the actor that Kuleshov had used in his famous psychological montage experiment (the face of the "Kuleshov effect"), and that Sloman had cast in his film *Surrender*. Moreover, Volkoff's *The White Devil* had become famous as the film that ended both the silent film era and Mosjoukine's career as a silent film actor. In one take Nabokov thus achieved a reference to Soviet manipulative techniques, to the

mimetic violence exerted on émigré actors, and to the interruption of artistic careers. Nabokov, for his part, seems to have been eager to put an end to silence by giving the actor a line to speak in the text: "Stop that brute [*Derzhite proklyatoe zhivotnoe*]".

In chapter eight, which apparently was written directly after chapter twelve, the sound film references are even more explicit. The narrator begins by recalling the different tutors he had as a child, as well as their technically primitive educational magic-lantern projections. When he finally zooms in, at a family gathering, on the place of his "current tutor", he approaches the scene from a camera perspective, with fade-ins and fade-outs and triple projections. In the culmination of this take, all the techniques of the new medium are present:

> "Through a tremulous prism, I distinguish the features of relatives and familiars, mute lips serenely moving in forgotten speech. [...] And then, suddenly, just when the colors and outlines settle at last to their various duties – smiling, frivolous duties – some knob is touched and a torrent of sounds comes to life: voices speaking all together, a walnut cracked, the click of a nutcracker carelessly passed, thirty human hearts drowning mine with their regular beats; the sough and sigh of a thousand trees, the local concord of loud summer birds, and, beyond the river, behind the rhythmic trees, the confused and enthusiastic hullabaloo of bathing young villagers, like a background of wild applause."[47]

To interpret this simply as Nabokov's concession to sound film as his latest inspiration would be a mistake, however. Through the title of the American version of Nabokov's *Conclusive Evidence*, the scene also reads as Nabokov's declared determination to make the silent and silenced movie of his bourgeois art of memory "talk", against all kinds of restrictions and censors: *Speak, Memory*!

ACCORDING TO WILL NORMAN, it was only after his transatlantic migration, i.e. in the 1940s, that Nabokov found the common ground between totalitarianism and mass culture.[48] But, as indicated above, it is likely that he had already discovered parallels in the 1920s, maybe even during his time in Berlin. The silencing of a medium that just had learned to talk seems to have been one of the reasons for Nabokov to elaborate on primitive deception technique long before *Lolita*. In dialogue with Gide's idea of a narrative infinity, Nabokov in the 1920–1930's developed the metafictional device into a "prison trope", equally apt for symbolizing the situation of Russian émigrés in Europe and the fictions developed by totalitarian regimes.

Without appeals to engaging themes or burning issues, the cinematic in Nabokov addresses the violence inherent in socialist realist aesthetics: political censorship and manipulation on the one hand, and the programmatic extinction of artists labeled as "bourgeois" on the other. ◼

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8   http://theamericanreader.com/28-november-1964-vladimir-nabokov-to-alfred-hitchcock/ (accessed 2016-06-09).

9   Field, *Nabokov: His Life*, 165.

10   Like many other so-called "bourgeois specialists" who returned, due to homesickness, political convictions, or threats of harm to remaining relatives, Protazanov was exposed upon his arrival to a severe campaign intended to discredit him. Denise J. Youngblood, "The Return of the Native: Yakov Protazanov and Soviet Cinema", *Soviet Cinema: Inside the Film Factory* (London and New York, 2005), 103–123.

11   Staged by Die Gruppe in Berlin 1926, printed in *The Rudder* in 1927 (Vladimir Nabokov, *The Man from the USSR and Other Plays* (London, 1985), 31–122).

12   Vladimir Nabokov, *Mary*, First Vintage International Edition (1989), 22.

13   Appel, *Dark Cinema*, 275.

14   Appel, *Dark Cinema*, 271.

15   Nabokov, *Mary*, 21.

16   "I remember I was standing in a simulated theater in a box and clapping, and something was going on on an imaginary stage (a real murder which the audience took to be part of the performance)... I don't think that film will ever be found." (Field, *Nabokov: His Life*, 159)

17   Wyllie, *Nabokov at the Movies*, 7.

18   Leonid Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris* (London, 2003), 164–203.

19   Gide's novel was serialized in *NRF* from March through August 1925. Dieter E. Zimmer suggests that *Mary* was planned in spring of 1925 but composed in fall (*The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 347).

20   By accident Ganin reveals that his first love is married to his neighbor at the Berlin guesthouse and that she is soon expected in Berlin. He recalls the female image of his boyish premonitions to which Mary appeared as the perfect answer, and for four days he resurrects in detail their first summer together in pre-revolutionary Russia. After creating an ideal image of Mary, Ganin decides that no other image of her could exist and he leaves Berlin without seeing her again.

21   Emphasis added. "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia", *Literarische Welt* 5 (1929); Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, London, 1979, 238.

22   Cf. "My father was related/ to hereditary gentry"; "About This", *Mayakovsky*, trans. and ed. Herbert Marshall, New York, 1965, 208.

23   Rul'[*The Rudder*] 5 March 1930, 2–3 translated by the author.

24   Livak, *How It Was Done*, 28–38.

25   Wyllie, "Nabokov and Cinema", 225.

26   Julian W. Conolly, *Nabokov and His Fiction: New Perspectives* (New York 1999), 145.

27   Wyllie, *Nabokov at the Movies*, 23.

28   Moses, *The Nickel*, 62–98.

29   Wyllie, "Nabokov and Cinema", 217.

30   Nabokov, *The Eye*, trans. from the Russian by Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with Vladimir Nabokov (London, 1965).

31   Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (New York, 1961), 120.

32   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 41.

33   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 10.

34   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 85.

35   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 23.

36   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 49.

37   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 78.

38   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 114.

39   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 64.

40   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 148.

41   Nabokov, *Gogol*, 144.

42   *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, First Vintage International Edition (1997), 551.

43   NKVD files published in 1995 revealed that Miller had been drugged and smuggled back to Moscow, where he ended up in a prison camp, only to be executed two years later (Gennady Barabtalo, "Life's Sequel", *Nabokov Studies*, 8 (2004) 1–21).

44   *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, 555.

45   Moses, *The Nickel*, 39–61; Rashit Jangirov, "Chustvo fil'ma", *Imperiia I: Nabokov i nasledniki* (Moscow, 2006), 422–23.

46   Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, First Vintage International Edition (New York, 1989), 247.

47   Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 171.

48   Will Norman, *Nabokov, History and the Texture of Time* (New York, 2012), 91.

The mystery of *The Blue Cup*

by **Aleksei Semenenko**

Arkadii Gaidar and socialist realism

From Golikov to Gaidar

Arkadii Petrovich Gaidar (whose real name was Golikov) was born in the town of L'gov in 1904 to a family of teachers, Petr Golikov (1879–1927) and Natalia Sal'kova (1884–1924). Arkadii had three younger sisters. The family moved to Arzamas in 1912 and two years later Petr Golikov was conscripted into the army. After the First World War he joined the Red Army and was a commissar during the Civil War. Arkadii's parents sympathized with the revolutionary movement from the very beginning, and it is no wonder that Arkadii got involved in revolutionary groups in Arzamas quite early. In 1918, when he was just 14 years old, he was a member of the Bolshevik Party and an adjutant in the Red Army. In 1919 he finished the officers' courses in Moscow and became a company commander, and by 1921, a regimental commander. Golikov was wounded twice, which was one reason for the development of a disorder that effectively ended his military career. In 1922 he was assigned to Siberia as the commander of a special forces regiment (*CHON, chast' osobogo naznacheniia*) to fight bandits in the Khakassia region. At that time the local Soviets accused Golikov of abuse of power in dealing with the local population, and the GPU (the precursor of the NKVD and KGB) opened a case against Golikov, which, however, was closed with no results.[1] In April 1924, Golikov was discharged from the army when he was just 20 years old, diagnosed with traumatic psychosis and arrhythmia. He never recovered from the illness and was treated in psychiatric clinics several times. Golikov was married three times: he met his first wife Mariia Plaksina in the hospital in 1921, but their marriage soon fell apart. In 1925, he married Liia Solomianskaia; their son Timur was born in 1926, but the marriage ended in 1931. In 1938 Golikov married his third wife, Dora Chernysheva, adopting her daughter Zhenia.

IN 1924, with the career to which he had devoted all his life completely shattered, Golikov started his second life with a clean slate. Dedicat-

abstract

Arkadii Gaidar (1904–1941) is one of the most popular Soviet children's writers and an undisputed part of the Soviet literary canon. The Pioneer organization used him as a symbol to mold young Soviet citizens, the characters from his books entered Soviet folklore, and generations of Soviet children have been brought up on his books. Nonetheless, his path from military commander to a classic of Soviet literature was far from ordinary. This paper reviews Gaidar's work, focusing especially on the analysis of his short story *The Blue Cup* as the most representative of his oeuvre and of the political and literary context of the 1930s.

KEYWORDS: Arkadii Gaidar, Blue Cup, socialist realism, myth.

ing himself fully to writing, he went to Leningrad and became acquainted with the writers Konstantin Fedin and Mikhail Slonimskii (the Serapion Brothers) and Sergei Semenov, becoming their "protégé." Here Golikov published his short novel *The Days of Defeats and Victories* (*V dni porazhenii i pobed*) in the almanac *Kovsh* in 1925. Fedin symbolically blessed Gaidar, as he himself had been blessed by Maxim Gorky some years before, saying, "You have no skill, but you can write and you will write. And we will help you."[2] It was then that Golikov changed his name to Gaidar and started working as a journalist for various newspapers in Perm, Sverdlovsk, Arkhangelsk, Khabarovsk, and Moscow, the typical hack work of an amateur author. He settled in Moscow only in 1932 and became a close friend of the writers Ruvim Fraerman and Konstantin Paustovskii. Gaidar worked there until war became a reality again in 1941. When his application to be reinstated in the Army was declined, Gaidar became a war correspondent in Kiev. In September 1941, Kiev was surrounded by German troops, and Gaidar joined a partisan squad. On October 26, 1941, he was killed in a skirmish near the village Lepliavo, some hundred kilometers south of Kiev.

GAIDAR'S WORKS FROM the 1920s were mainly semi-autobiographical short novels (*povesti*) about the revolution and the Civil War, culminating in the highly popular short novel *The School* (1930, originally titled *The Ordinary Biography*), which depicts his revolutionary youth in Arzamas and his participation in the Civil War. In this respect, Gaidar's work was no different from the mainstream literature of that period, which was oversaturated with novels and stories, both for adults and for children, mythologizing and romanticizing the Civil War and revolution.[3] Furthermore, like Gaidar, quite a few Soviet writers had an army background, including Alexander Fadeev and Nikolai Ostrovskii and Gaidar's close friends Ruvim Fraerman and Sergei Semenov. It is no coincidence that Gaidar's early works did not stand out among other similar stories and were often criticized for the abundance of romantic clichés and the triviality of their plots.

Moreover, it may be argued that Gaidar tried, consciously or subconsciously, to rewrite his biography by literary means and cultivated "romantic" behavior in his everyday life: he wore his military uniform and led an ascetic, even miserable life, occasionally interrupted by lavish spending sprees.[4] The pen name Gaidar has itself a definite romantic aura. Unlike his real name, it sounds decisive, sharp, and also exotic. Gaidar himself never explained its origin, apparently not even to his own family. There were several explanations of the origin of the pseudonym; according to one of them, it comes from the word "haidar", meaning "where" in the Khakas language, which Gaidar must have heard numerous times when chasing bandits in Khakassia. The officially accepted version that was reproduced in many books on Gaidar during the Soviet era interpreted the word as Mongolian for "the front horseman, watchman," which is simply not true, but best suits the mythology of Gaidar's life and work.[5] There were other interpretations, but Gaidar's son Timur supports a version that explains the pseudonym by his father's affection for the French language and secret codes.[6] Gaidar thus

The cover of Boris Kamov, *Obyknovennaia biografiia: Arkadii Gaidar*. (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1971.)

appears to be an anagram: **G**olikov **A**rkad**i**i **d'Ar**zamas.[7] It is now impossible to definitely establish the correct interpretation, but most importantly, we see a clear romanticizing tendency in Gaidar's image. By the same token, almost all memoirs about Gaidar mention different facets of his romantic behavior, such as, for example, the ideals that he once listed in a company of friends:

> To travel à deux (*vdvoem*).
> To be accepted as a commander.
> To travel fast.
> To joke around with people, not offending anyone.
> Secret love of a woman (so that the object would not know about it).
> Dislike of being alone (not loneliness).[8]

In the 1930s, the romanticism of the Civil War remained central to Gaidar's work and, as I will show, later crystallized into the myth of the Red Army. The change in his literary strategy was also apparent: he consciously chose the niche of a children's writer and focused almost exclusively on adventure stories for children. Later, Soviet literary criticism described Gaidar's literary evolution as the author's maturation over the years, but there was another factor that was much more crucial: the romanticism of the 1920s came to be at odds with the new ideology after the adoption of socialist realism.

As is known, socialist realism was introduced as *the* method of Soviet literature in 1934 at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. The officially proclaimed criteria of the doctrine

– Party-mindedness (*partiinost'*), people-orientedness (*narodnost'*), class-mindedness (*klassovost'*), and ideological conscientiousness (*ideinost'*) – together with the demand of constant "critique and self-critique" of one's own and others' work were elusive enough to serve as a convenient instrument of control. The "uncertainty principle" of socialist realism meant in reality that any writer, musician, painter or even architect[9] could be accused of "formalism" or non conformance with the ideals of a "truthful, historically concrete representation of reality." As Shaitanov put it, socialist realism was a dogma "flexible only in implementation which could stiffen at any moment in response to ideological command."[10] One consequence of adopting the doctrine was that one of the most common motifs in the novels of this period became the constant, exhausting, and never-ending struggle, full of suffering, destitution, and violence, exemplified in Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1936).[11] It excluded happy endings but paradoxically brought socialist realism closer to romantic discourse, which was always the problem for the Soviet ideologists.[12] In 1933, Anatolii Lunacharsky placed dynamic socialist realism in clear opposition to bourgeois romanticism, which falsifies the truth and draws people away from reality, replacing it with illusions. Nevertheless, he argued, a certain degree of romanticism can be allowed to depict the "grandeur of synthetic images" because it "shows the inner essence of development."[13] In the same vein, Maxim Gorky mentioned both romanticism and myth as components of the socialist realist aesthetic in his speech on Soviet literature at the First Writers' Congress, because "[romanticism] provokes a revolutionary attitude to reality, an attitude that changes the world in a practical way."[14] Here we can identify what will become the dominant feature of postwar socialist realist novels that focused almost exclusively on the "grandeur" of images of the utopian present and future.[15]

In this situation, more and more criticism was directed towards "bourgeois" and "ideologically faulty" adventure literature, and the only segment of literature that was not judged as severely was children's fiction. Gaidar's most popular stories of that period were all oriented towards children: *The Military Secret* (1935), the short story *The Blue Cup* (1936), *The Fate of the Drummer Boy* (1939), the short story *Chuk and Ghek* (1939), and *Timur and His Squad* (1940). Let us take a closer look at some of them.

THE SHORT NOVEL *The Military Secret*, which Gaidar started writing in a psychiatric clinic in Khabarovsk, is set in the prestigious pioneer camp Artek in Crimea. In this story, the protagonist, the little boy Al'ka, dies at the hands of anti-Soviet elements. His death is symbolic, reminding the reader that socialism cannot be built without sacrifices. The story provoked a response from many children who could not accept Al'ka's death, and Gaidar responded that it would be much better if Al'ka or Chapaev, the

legendary Red Army commander, had lived, but it would be against the truth of life.[16]

The readiness to fight and, if needed, to sacrifice your own life for the sake of your country is the idea that appears in almost every work by Gaidar. To emphasize it, *The Military Secret* features an inset tale called "The Tale of the Military Secret, Malchish Kibalchish, and his Solemn Word", which was published separately in 1933 by the publishing houses Molodaia gvardiia and Detizdat. It was written in a pseudo-folktale style overloaded with inversions and simplistic metaphors in an attempt to create the elevated style of an epic saga. It should be mentioned that this "folklore-orientedness" was characteristic not only of the tale of Malchish but of Gaidar's style in general.[17] In the story, the evil *bourgeouins* attack the Soviet country, but a little boy named Malchish calls on other children to stand up and fight. They fight valiantly until one boy, Malchish Plokhish (roughly, "Baddie Boy"), betrays them to *bourgeouins*. Malchish is tortured to make him reveal the secret of invincibility of the Red Army. He tells the enemy nothing and is executed, but his memory lives on. The tale finishes with a ritual-like passage that later became one of the sacred texts of Soviet mythology:

> The ships float by and greet Malchish!
> The pilots fly and greet Malchish!
> The trains pass by and greet Malchish!
> And the Pioneers march by and salute Malchish![18]

Apparently, the greatest secret of the Red Army was that it did not have any secret; it was the Soviet people's strength and relentlessness that the enemies could not comprehend. The tale reflected on the plot of the main story and made Al'ka's accidental death – from a stone thrown by a drunken man – heroic.

Both the inset tale and the story provoked a wave of criticism. The prominent children's writer Kornei Chukovskii argued that the style of the tale was false and in bad taste because the revolution required strict language, not "ladies' affected talk" (*damskoe siusiukanie*).[19] Another distinguished children's writer, Samuil Marshak, even called the tale "disgusting."[20] There was a special dispute about *The Military Secret* in the children's section of the Union of Writers in Moscow, followed by a discussion in the newspapers lasting about six months. Gaidar was accused of being a hack writer, and his works were branded sentimental, unclear, and unfinished. Their popularity was explained by the fact that they were nothing but ideologically neutral (*nadklassovye*) detective stories.[21] Gaidar took these accusations seriously and even went to Moscow to personally defend the story at the Writers' Union. This episode was just one in his constant struggle with the critics and literary functionaries, and if it were not for some positive reviews from the big names of Soviet literature, such as Alexander Fadeev,[22] his fate as a writer could

"GAIDAR WAS ACCUSED OF BEING A HACK WRITER, AND HIS WORKS WERE BRANDED SENTIMENTAL, UNCLEAR, AND UNFINISHED."

have turned out differently. In a 1939 letter to his wife, Gaidar wrote, "If you only knew how much torment my work gives me! You would then understand a lot, you'd understand why I can at times become wild and unstable. Yet I love my work and even if I curse it, I would not exchange it for any other in the world."[23]

GAIDAR'S LAST ATTEMPT at writing adult fiction was in 1937 when he started a short novel provisionally titled *The Lucky Charm (Talisman)* about a man nicknamed Bumbarash who came home from the First World War only to find his beloved had been taken away and his land split between the Whites, the Reds, and different warlords. Interestingly enough, Gaidar left it unfinished because he felt that Valentin Kataev's *I, Son of the Working People*, published in 1937, dealt with the same topic. Gaidar never returned to this text and even his close friends could not make him change his mind.[24]

In 1938, he wrote another short novel for children, *The Fate of the Drummer Boy*. The protagonist of the story is the 12-year old boy Serezha, whose father gets arrested for an embezzlement.[25] The boy is left to himself and gets mixed up with petty thieves and criminals. One day, his "uncle" appears, who is actually a spy. When the boy finds out about the evil plans of his fake uncle and his accomplice, he courageously attempts to stop them, but gets shot. Suddenly, the Red Army appears in the story as deus ex machina: "The thunder roared in the sky, and the clouds, like birds, flew against the wind. Forty lines of soldiers rose and protected with their bayonets the body of the drummer who shook and fell to the ground." It turns out that the spies were under surveillance the entire time, and the boy's sacrifice was not really necessary, but most importantly, he did not know that and stood up against them anyway. The happy ending is emphasized by the fact that Serezha survives and his father comes home. Remarkably, this story represents a kind of a distorted (or corrected) reflection of *The Military Secret*, with a more thrilling plot and a happy ending, which Gaidar would previously have considered to be against "the truth of life." Another important feature of the story was the mythologizing of the Red Army, and the image of the

drummer boy became one of the most popular symbols of Soviet youth ready to sacrifice their lives for their country. The story, after some positive prepublication reviews, was to be published both in the journal *Pioner* and in the newspaper *Pionerskaia Pravda* and later as a book in Detizdat, when suddenly, in November 1938, all preparations froze without any explanation. Moreover, Gaidar found out that his books had disappeared from the libraries.[26] In addition to his literary troubles, his former wife Liia Solomianskaia, Timur's mother, was arrested in 1938 as "a family member of a traitor to the Motherland." Gaidar made several attempts to obtain her release but she was freed in January 1940 with the few who were rehabilitated at that time

> **"THE WAR ENDED GAIDAR'S RISING CAREER BUT HIS DEATH ONLY ACCELERATED HIS CANONIZATION AS A CLASSIC OF SOVIET LITERATURE."**

due to an anti-Yezhov campaign. Gaidar prepared for the worst, but in February 1939 he was unexpectedly awarded the Badge of Honor, a minor award but nonetheless a token of official recognition of his work. The publishers again started contacting him, and *The Fate of the Drummer Boy* was published the same year. These worries triggered Gaidar's neurosis and he again had to be treated in a hospital. "The damned *Fate of the Drummer Boy* hit me hard," he wrote in his diary.[27]

We now come to the short novel *Timur and His Squad* (1940), which many consider to be the pinnacle of Gaidar's work, his most significant creation. It was written as a screenplay for the film by Aleksandr Razumnyi (released in 1940). The novel was first published in *Pioner* and *Pionerskaia Pravda* and then as a book. The sequels, the screenplays *Timur's Oath* (for the film released in 1942) and *The Commander of the Snow Fort,* were published after Gaidar's death. The story is about the teenager Timur Garaev who creates an underground organization with the goal of secretly helping the elderly and the families of war veterans, at the same time fighting local hooligans. The very fact that Timur's squad has to do good deeds in secret is an illustrative manifestation of the discourse of underground struggle that was already prevalent in the official canon of Soviet culture at that time.[28] The main message of the story, as in Gaidar's other works, is the tempering of the spirit and the children's readiness before the coming hardships (read: war),[29] but it also connotes

the idea of justification of illegal activities. No wonder that Gaidar was accused of attempting to substitute the Pioneer organization with some underground activities, and the book was put on hold for some time. However, once the film was released, Gaidar felt that fame had finally arrived. *Timur and His Squad* was a hit and even spawned a whole submovement of spontaneous groups of *timurovtsy* all over the country, which was the greatest possible compliment to Gaidar. Although the protagonist bore the name of the author's son, Timur Garaev was undoubtedly the author's alter ego, the idealized portrait of Gaidar himself.[30]

THE WAR ENDED GAIDAR'S rising career but his death only accelerated his canonization as a classic of Soviet literature. After Gaidar had struggled to publish his works during the 1930s, the post-war period saw a complete reversal of the writer's previously contentious image. Gaidar was conveniently transformed into a political and cultural icon not only for the Pioneer Organization but for youth education in general. Gaidar's work was used as a symbol of Soviet patriotism and his mythologizing and romanticizing of the war determined the direction of children's literature and film for several generations that followed.

The most telling example of the recognition of Gaidar's work was the 1951 book composed as an homage to Gaidar, which rehabilitated him from all previous concerns. Significantly, Gaidar's method was called "the true method of socialistic realism,"[31] and Ruvim Fraerman described Gaidar's legacy almost verbatim according to the socialist realist dogma:

> [Gaidar] believed that Soviet art is the new art not because this or that novel features planes instead of lacquered carriages pulled by six horses but because it shows new communal relationships, and new personal relationships, and new feelings of people, – in a word, because this is the art of the new socialist society, which means that this society must have new methods, and most important, high ideological conscientiousness [*ideinost'*], life-likeness [*zhiznennost'*], and truth.[32]

In Soviet children's literature Gaidar was compared to Mayakovsky and designated "the writer-pioneer leader" (*pisatel'-vozhatyi*) by Marshak.[33] Almost everything he had been previously criticized for was presented as a virtue of his talent. For example, Gaidar's experience as a newspaper journalist was portrayed as the source of his ability to "show the movement of social (*obshchestvennoi*) life in the trivia of everyday life."[34] The most common reproach, that his prose was excessively sentimental and romantic, was also explained by "the Soviet child's urge for lofty feelings and the elevated style", which the critics falsely took for sentimentalism.[35] The writer Lev Kassil' went further, explaining even the romanticism of Gaidar's work as being in conformity with "the Soviet dream of communism." Kassil' argued that Gaidar was teaching the young people the most important things in their lives:

> For the first time in the history of the mankind, the simple, elementary rules of personal behavior that

we teach to children fully conformed with the law of revolutionary discipline, with the requirements of public life, the life of the Soviet man, perfused with the revolutionary idea and the real dream of communism, the features of which can be felt already today. Thus the *everyday* becomes the *romantic*.[36]

Finally, *Timur and His Squad* was called "a pedagogical poem" that became an embodiment of ideal qualities "for millions of children and teenagers."[37] In the 1960s, Gaidar's status as a classic of Soviet literature was reaffirmed; he was posthumously awarded honorable titles and also several medals for his participation in the Great Patriotic War, and his life and work were continuously mythologized.[38]

The Blue Cup

In 1935 Gaidar wrote his most controversial short story, *The Blue Cup*, which produced – and still produces – the most varied opinions and interpretations. For example, Krevsky calls it "the most cheerful and the kindest tale in Soviet children's literature,"[39] and Dobrenko calls it "mysterious-romantic."[40] Gaidar himself valued the story very highly but, against the background of the constant criticism of his works, and especially *The Military Secret*, he had some doubts about his future as a writer. Before publication, he decided to visit Samuil Marshak as the ultimate judge of his talent. Marshak met him amicably and they worked on the story together, effectively rewriting it. Gaidar was at first relieved but then felt that the redacted version was not his text after all and once again rewrote the whole story, also changing the title from *The Good Life* to a less direct *The Blue Cup*.[41] It was first published in the journal *Pioner* in January 1936 and later that year as a separate book by Detizdat.

The plot of the story unfolds in a dacha near Moscow that the narrator's family – himself, his wife Marusia and their daughter Svetlana – rent during "the last warm month." The narrator pictures to himself a family idyll:

> Or maybe tomorrow morning we'll take a boat, – I will row, Marusia will steer, and Svetlana will be the passenger, – and we'll go down the river where they say there is a large forest, where two big birch trees stand on the shore. The neighbor girl found three good ceps under these birches yesterday. What a pity they were wormeaten.

However, a conflict between Marusia and the narrator creeps into the story. It begins with some petty things: first, Marusia spends some time with her old friend, a pilot (there is a hint of jealousy in the protagonist's tone); second, father and daughter get reprimanded by Marusia for staying up late when they try to install a pinwheel on the roof. Finally, the following morning, Marusia accuses father and daughter of breaking her favorite blue cup in the cellar. Father, deeply offended, decides that life is very bad: "There goes the boat trip!" He and Svetlana decide to run away from home. "Farewell, Marusia! And yet, we never broke your cup."

During their trip, father and daughter meet different people. These meetings constitute miniature inset stories; the first deals with the conflict between San'ka and Berta, the daughter of a Jewish refugee from Germany who escaped the Nazis. When playing, San'ka gets angry and calls Berta *zhidovka*, "yid." Another boy, Pashka, calls San'ka a fascist and threatens to beat him. Svetlana interferes, but they suddenly hear shots somewhere in the forest. Svetlana anxiously asks her father, "Who is fighting whom? Is it war already?" The "war" turns out to be military maneuvers. They meet an old man, the kolkhoz guard. "The fascists are in trouble," Pashka and the old man remark, watching the Red Army soldiers. The episode ends with Pashka and San'ka making peace and the old man showing the path through the forest to his daughter's house.

On their way there they pass a black pit where people are mining white stones. They stop in the forest to have a snack. While waiting for her father to bring some water, Svetlana sings an improvised song about all that has happened to them so far. In this song, she is a drummer in the Red Army, "the reddest army in the world." They start walking again and get stuck in the marsh. Father finds the way out of "that little foul swamp," recalling his fight against the Whites during the Civil War. They swim in the river and wash their clothes, and then head to the house of the kolkhoz guard's daughter, Valentina. They meet Valentina and her four-year-old son Fedor. They rest under the tree and Svetlana asks her father to tell her something about the time before she was born. Father tells her how he and Marusia met during the Civil War: when he was a Red Army soldier, he freed Marusia's town from the Whites, but got wounded in the battle, and Marusia took care of him in the hospital. Since then they had never parted.

Right after that Svetlana worries that they have left their home for good and wants to return to her mother: "She really loves us. We'll just walk around a bit and go home again." Father also no longer has any hard feelings towards her. He gives Fedor their gingerbreads and Fedor reciprocates by giving Svetlana a little kitten as a gift. Svetlana and her father head home and Svetlana sings about the bad grey mice who must have broken the cup, but now she is bringing home something that "will tear the mice into a hundred million hairy pieces." When they come home, they see that Marusia has been waiting for them a long time and has even put their pinwheel on the roof. The father looks at Marusia's eyes and thinks that it is indeed the bad grey mice who broke the cup. The three of them sit under the tree and tell each other what has happened during the day. The story ends with "the sly Svetlana" asking her father, "Is our life bad now?" He answers that life is very good.

ONE MAY WONDER why this light, rather lyrical story depicting seemingly insignificant events received such an extraordinary degree of attention. Boris Kamov argues that it is a poetic reminisce of Gaidar's first marriage to Mariia Plaksina that did not last very long. The story is about two people who are on the brink of losing each other but manage to overcome their problems. The blue cup thus represents the life of a couple that can easily be shattered.[42] However, there is much more to it than just a sentimental recollection of the author's first love.

First, let us identify the protagonist of the story. At the first glance, we are dealing with a typical first-person narrative. However, it soon becomes apparent that the point of view of the narrator combines the adult "zoomed out" picture (that of father) and the child's more detailed and "zoomed in" view (that of Svetlana). The reader experiences swift transitions from vast landscapes to the smallest details, from realistic depictions to the fantasy world. That is why the story is full of "insignificant" details, as in the following passages:
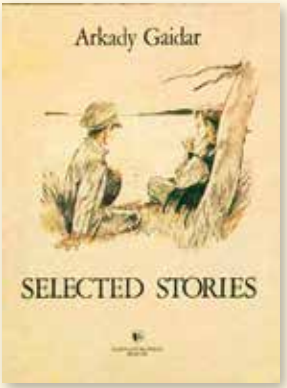
> We see: here is the mill. A cart stands by the mill. A hairy dog, all covered in burrs, lies under the cart. It looks with one eye open at the swift sparrows who peck seeds on the sand. And the shirtless Pashka Bukamashkin sits on a sand pile and eats a fresh cucumber.

> [...]suddenly, the mill shook and began to make noise. The rested wheel started rotating on the water. A startled cat, covered in flour, sprang out from the mill window. Half-awake, it missed and fell on Sharik's back, who was half-asleep. Sharik squealed and jumped up. The cat flung itself to the tree; the sparrows fled from the tree to the roof. The horse raised its muzzle and pulled the cart. Some shaggy fellow, grey from the flour, showed his face from the barn, and, making the wrong call, shook his whip at San'ka who had jumped away from the cart.

It also becomes apparent that it is Svetlana who is at the center of the story. The name Svetlana derived from the word *svet*, light, is an invented literary name from the end of the eighteenth century, which was popularized by Vasilii Zhukovskii in his poem of 1812. After 1917, the name became quite common, and in 1926, Stalin's third child was named Svetlana. On February 28, 1935, Svetlana's ninth birthday, the children's writer and poet Sergei Mikhalkov, the future classic of Soviet children's literature, published a poem-lullaby titled "Svetlana" in the newspaper *Izvestiia*.[43] This sycophantic gesture only reinforced the connection between the name and the Leader's daughter in the collective memory. Even if Gaidar did not have Stalin's daughter in mind (which is unlikely), his readers would undoubtedly make this connection. Remarkably, Svetlana is always called by her full name, and not by the usual diminutive Sveta, although almost all other children

"THE FOLKTALE MOTIFS HELP INTRODUCE ANOTHER THEME, THE RED ARMY MYTH THAT IS CRUCIAL FOR GAIDAR'S WORK."

and even some adults (Marusia, for example, is a diminutive of Maria) go by pet names.

Svetlana is not just the narrator's daughter, but also represents an ideal female protagonist of Gaidar's stories: honest, direct, compassionate and wise. Interestingly enough, in the first draft of the story, the narrator had a son, Dimka, instead of Svetlana, but Gaidar obviously realized that Svetlana (as an ideal reflection of Marusia) would be more suitable for the plot. Svetlana is the real protagonist of the story; she makes important decisions and sorts out problems. For example, she succeeds in bringing the children to make peace and saves San'ka from a beating: "Dad... Maybe he is not a fascist after all? Maybe he is just stupid? San'ka, isn't it true that you're just stupid? – asked Svetlana and tenderly looked at his face." Svetlana also resolves the main conflict of the story by asking her father to recount how he and Marusia met, after which they decide to come home. Everyone, even animals, acknowledge Svetlana's "authority": the kolkhoz guard "grandly bowed first to Svetlana and then to all of us"; a Red Army soldier who was hiding in a tree patted her on the head and gave her three shiny acorns; even the guard's huge dog Polkan wags its tail and smiles at Svetlana. Svetlana seems to be in full harmony with nature: when she sang her first song about the Red Army, the flowers "silently and solemnly listened to the song and started nodding to Svetlana with their gorgeous buds." Yet when father attempted to sing the same song "in a sad bass," "not a single flower in a million nodded its head," and Svetlana reproached him for the unnaturalness of his voice.

Finally, it is through Svetlana's perspective that the two layers of the story – the myth and the lyrical pseudo-documentary narrative – are merged together. For example, when they come to the black pit, from which people were extracting "stone, white as sugar," Svetlana looks into the hole and sees "a shark with two tails" and "the Scary Thing with 325 legs and one golden eye." In general, the story fits the traditional folktale structure[44] in which the protagonists have to overcome several hardships on their way to happiness. A misfortune makes them leave home and go *kuda glaza gliadiat*, "wherever chance leads them." They meet a "curious old man," the nameless kolkhoz guard, who looks like a magical hero and gives them instructions like a traditional Helper: he tells them about two paths, the left one, leading through "the bad far away," the cemetery, or the right one, leading through "the best far away" to the guard's daughter's house. They choose the right path and receive a magical agent (a kitten) who will eliminate the initial evil (the mice) from the Donor, the

guard's daughter. In the end the hero gets the Princess, his wife, and the balance is restored. The following passage symbolically sums up the whole journey:

> Then we got worried when the sky had gone dark. The clouds came from all directions. They surrounded, captured, and covered the sun. But it would burst through this or that opening and finally broke free and shone even warmer and brighter all over the vast earth.

The folktale motifs help introduce another theme, the Red Army myth which is crucial for Gaidar's work as a whole and is manifested most explicitly in the tale about Malchish. In *The Blue Cup* it is mentioned when the narrator recounts the moment he and Marusia met:

> The silly Marusia did not know then that the Red Army never waits until someone calls for it. It rushes to defend those whom the Whites attacked. Our Red platoons are approaching, they are now near Marusia, and every soldier has a rifle loaded with five bullets, and every machine gun is loaded with 250.

Furthermore, the protagonists witness the power of the Red Army during the maneuvers in the forest; Svetlana pictures herself as a drummer girl in "the reddest army in the world," and the whole narrative is perfused with the spirit of the coming war (the Jewish refugees; "the fascists are in trouble"), together with recollections of the Civil War (the fight against "the foul swamp"). The parallels with the tale of Malchish are evident, but Gaidar takes a different approach here. Where *Malchish* tells the Red Army myth in a direct and cumbersome style, *The Blue Cup* introduces it in a very subtle manner as one of the themes of the narrative. Whereas *Malchish* exhibits all the usual traits of "revolutionary romanticism"– the excessive violence, the everlasting struggle, and the glorification of human sacrifice –*The Blue Cup* turns to the "trivial" details of life and introduces a lyrical, sometimes ironic intonation. Children are at the center of both stories; however, in *Malchish* they are characters of an impersonal tale, whereas in *The Blue Cup* the child's perspective is incorporated in the narrative. Finally, *Malchish* is constructed as an epic from the past, whereas the focus on children in *The Blue Cup* projects hope for the future of the Soviet state.

The folktale motifs and recurrent symbolism make it possible to

read the story as a symbolic depiction of the whole country in miniature. Dialectically depicting the general through the particular, the narrative also demonstrates the unity of all Soviet people:

> I threw a bouquet of flowers into an old woman's cart. She was startled at first, and shook her fist at us. But when she saw that it was the flowers, she smiled and tossed three big cucumbers on the road. [...]
>
> We saw a priest in a long black robe. We followed him with our eyes and marveled that there are still such strange people in the world. [...]
>
> We were riding on a broad smooth road. It was getting dark. We were meeting people coming from work; they were tired but merry. A kolkhoz truck rattled to the garage. A military trumpet sang in the field. A signal bell sounded in the village. A heavy-heavy steam engine roared beyond the forest. Chooo... Choo! Let the wheels roll, let the wagons hurry; the iron road, the long road, the far road!

In the last example we see the rapid transition between perspectives: the protagonists' view "zooms out" to a wide landscape, and the village road extends to the far corners of the country. In the end, the preserved happiness of an individual family is again shown from the global perspective and thus translates to a bigger picture of the whole country:

> The golden moon was shining above our garden.
> A far train rumbled by on its way to the North.
> The midnight pilot buzzed by and disappeared behind the clouds.
> —And life, comrades... was really good!

Here again we see direct parallels to the tale of Malchish-Kibalchish: the ending almost identically reproduces the metaphors of grandeur and unity (ships, pilots, and trains / train, pilot) that connects an individual fate with the country's history.

TO SUM UP, *The Blue Cup* appears to be Gaidar's most complex and multilayered work, defying a one-sided explanation and reflecting all the main themes of his oeuvre. It is simultaneously an autobiographical recollection, a lyrical sketch bordering on a fairytale, and yet another version of the Red Army myth as the foundation of the young Soviet state. It is important to note that this myth was of personal importance to Gaidar, who devoted practically all his youth to building this state by force of arms. The promise of the bright future in *The Blue Cup* serves as a justification of the past, an assurance that he did not fight in vain.

After the publication of the story in *Pioner*, a discussion started in the pages of the journal *Detskaia literatura*.[45] The story was criticized by writers, literary critics, and teachers as unsuitable for children because it touched upon the taboo topic of family discord; many were also bothered by its "plotlessness"

and unclear conclusions. The discussion of the story continued for three more years and subsided only after 1939. Such a strong reaction is not really surprising if we consider the literary and social context of 1936, and it perfectly illustrates the dual nature of socialist realism as a dogma and a tool of control. *The Blue Cup* produced such bewilderment because it could simultaneously be read as a socialist realist tour de force and an almost subversive text. On the one hand, we spot almost all the components of the "master plot"[46] of the socialist realist canon: the conflict in which the protagonist overcomes not only himself, but also the forces of nature; the scenes of communist internationalism and the socialist progress and development; the demonstration of the strength of the Red Army in a historical perspective (the connection of the Civil War with the coming war), and, in the end, the ritualistic affirmation that life is very good. On the other hand, the lyrical, subtly ironic account of a trivial family argument allows us to read the story almost as a parody of the socialist realist dogma, which caused a feeling of disorientation among many critics. However, once Gaidar had been canonized, *The Blue Cup* was lauded as "a great contribution to the development of the method of socialist realism," "the lyrical portrayal of Soviet patriotism," and "a hymn to Soviet man, Soviet Fatherland."[47] Now, exactly eighty years since its publication, it seems that the real "mystery" of *The Blue Cup* is that it remains the most lighthearted and humane depiction of the socialist utopia in the history of Soviet literature. ⊠

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26 Kamov, *Biografiia*, 311.

27 Ibid., 312.

28 As Elena Markasova persuasively shows, this discourse was only reinforced in subsequent years and was dominant in the Soviet school for several decades; see Elena Markasova, "A vot praktiku my znaem po geroiam Krasnodona...'," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 58 (2008) no. 2: 207–19. Apart from Gaidar's *Timur*, it was central in such canonical works as Valentin Kataev's *A White Sail Gleams* (1936), Pavel Bliakhin's *The Little Red Devils* (1923) and Alexander Fadeev's novel *The Young Guard* (1946).

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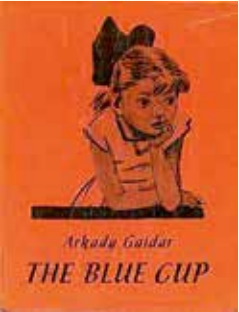
Socialist realism in translation

The theory of a practice

by **Susanna Witt**

Soviet culture is not what it used to be. Once regarded as monolithic and stable, it now emerges – thanks to a boom in studies over recent decades – as a complex, multilayered and dynamic phenomenon, not least with reference to socialist realism as a central concept of this culture.[1] This paper focuses on the repercussions of socialist realism in literary translation – a field of culture not reflected in any of the many studies devoted to the topic to date. It starts from the assumption that, in order to pinpoint socialist realism, it is necessary to analyze the discourses which were operative in forming it, or rather, which to a large extent *made up* this elusive phenomenon.

Because socialist realism was first invoked in relation to the field of original literature and was codified in literary terms, the concept itself had to be *translated* for application to other fields of art. How was socialist realism to be understood and expressed in music? In architecture? Or in ballet? Such translation, or transposition, of the discourse relating to the topic could pose considerable problems, especially where non-verbal arts were concerned. Although translation is a quintessentially verbal activity, it differs from original literature in ways that resist any simple application of analogies, not least due to considerations related to authorship.

Furthermore, in the field of translation, the issue of socialist realism became intertwined with other, more existential concerns: it was actualized at a time of intense self-reflection and self-assessment of translators as cultural workers within Soviet culture, often articulated from a point of perceived inferiority in relation to original writers. Drawing on archival mate-

abstract

Following the 1934 establishment of socialist realism as the main "method" to be applied in all spheres of Soviet artistic production, more particular discourses evolved addressing the issue of how the concept was to be interpreted and defined in the various fields of culture. Literary translation was no exception. At the First All-Union Conference of Translators in Moscow in 1936, some attempts were made to articulate what was required of translators in order to adhere to the new standards. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, that the discourse took more concrete forms, notably in the efforts to establish "realist translation" as a guiding principle for Soviet translation in general. Drawing on archival and printed material from the period, this paper explores the significance of the discourse on socialist realism for Soviet translation practices and translation theory during late Stalinism.

KEYWORDS: Soviet culture, socialist realism, literary translation, realist translation, translation theory, translation practice, literalism, Soviet translators, Ivan Kashkin.

rial pertaining to the Soviet Writers' Union as well as published material in newspapers and journals, I will explore the significance of the discourse on socialist realism for issues relating to Soviet translation practices as well as translation theory during late Stalinism.

Translators in the Soviet Writers' Union

The Translators' Section of the Writers' Union was officially formed on October 16, 1934, that is, after the First Congress of Soviet Writers, which had been held in August that same year. The Writers' Congress had not featured any speech specifically devoted to translation and nothing was said about the applicability of the newly adopted socialist realist doctrine to this field. In January 1936, the translators finally had their own "First All-Union Conference of Translators." By this point, problems of translation had already been discussed for a long time, both within the translators' organization and publicly in the press.[2] Major issues here were the urgent need for translations from and into the different languages of the many peoples of the USSR (following Maxim Gorky's call for such translations in the process of "organizing all-union literature as a whole"),[3] the lack of language competence among translators to perform this task and, as a consequence, the ubiquitous use of intermediate interlinears (*podstrochniki*); the ideological aspects of translation, which demanded ideological training of translators; the low level of translation critique. An important point were the predominantly negative attitudes towards translators as an "untrustworthy" category of people on the one hand and as an inferior type of literary worker on the other. Attempts to transpose Stalinist discourse on original literature into the

field of translation had already been made by translators, such as the claim, "If writers are the 'engineers of human souls', then we are the 'engineers of communication', and must work hastily."[4]

The keynote speech at the 1936 conference, which was explicitly to focus on translation from "the languages of the peoples of the USSR," was assigned to the theatre critic Iogann Al'tman. The speech may be considered an accommodation of the theme of translation to several discourses of immediate actuality: the recently established discourse of the "friendship of the peoples" pertaining to Stalinist nationalities policy, the "Stakhanov discourse" of heroic shockworking (actualized by *Pravda*'s editorial of January 1, 1936, titled "The Stakhanov Year"), and, most importantly, the "wreckers' discourse" known from innumerable campaigns in the newspapers since the late 1920s: this served to highlight the ideologically harmful potential of faulty translations.[5] The speech also included a prescriptive section in which socialist realism was invoked as a guiding principle for Soviet translation and as a means to "cure" the main problems (*bedy, opasnosti*) affecting Soviet translation, such as "naturalism" and "formalism." The notion of socialist realism, Al'tman declared,

> "is of no less relevance with reference to translation than to the whole of Soviet literature. Socialist realism as applied to artistic translation is opposed to natural-

istic copying, but opposes gross tendentiousness in translation as well, that is the kind of tendentiousness that hinders a correct conceptualization of the work. We require creative tendencies, creative perspectives from the translator."[6]

The translation doctrine outlined by Al'tman was as loosely defined as socialist realism in general, merely comprising positively charged terms like "creative" (*tvorcheskii*) and "adequate" (*adekvatnyi*), both of which had been variously used before and were to live long in Soviet translation theory. Furthermore, as was the case with socialist realism in general, some degree of definition was supplied by model examples. What socialist realism demands of translation, Al'tman summarizes, is "a fight against naturalism, against formalist, impressionist, exoticizing and stylizing translation."[7] Here, the speaker adheres to practices already at work in establishing socialist realism. Although the formalist label was to acquire its full repressive potential only with the launch of the antiformalist campaign some weeks later, in *Pravda* on January 28, 1936, it had already been used quite broadly since spring of 1933 as the antithesis of the ideal socialist realism now to be promoted.[8] In the resolution of the 1936 conference, however, socialist realism was not mentioned, and the term was actually not brought up again in relation to translation until the early 1950s.

The theory of a practice

Having been "frozen" during the war, the Translators' Section of the Writers' Union was reanimated in 1947, in a climate informed by the general shift in Soviet cultural politics toward the end of the 1940s known as the *zhdanovshchina*. This austere turn, named after Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov (the author of the programmatic articles about socialist realism in *Pravda* in 1934), entailed a tightening of Party control over cultural production involving xenophobic and antimodernist ("antiformalist") campaigns. A break had occurred with the 1930s and that decade's relative openness towards Western impulses, its "cosmopolitanism" in the words of Katerina Clark.[9] The 1930s had seen the publication, in Russian translation, of authors such as James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Marcel Proust. A main outlet for translated foreign literature, the journal *Internatsional'naia literatura* ["International literature"] had provided a "window to the west"[10] until it was closed down in 1943/1944.

The resumed activities of the Translators' Section prompted professional self-scrutiny against the background of the new, nationalist orientation of the late 1940s. Part of this general line was an emphasis on the Soviet or Russian origin of major achievements in science and technology as well as in culture
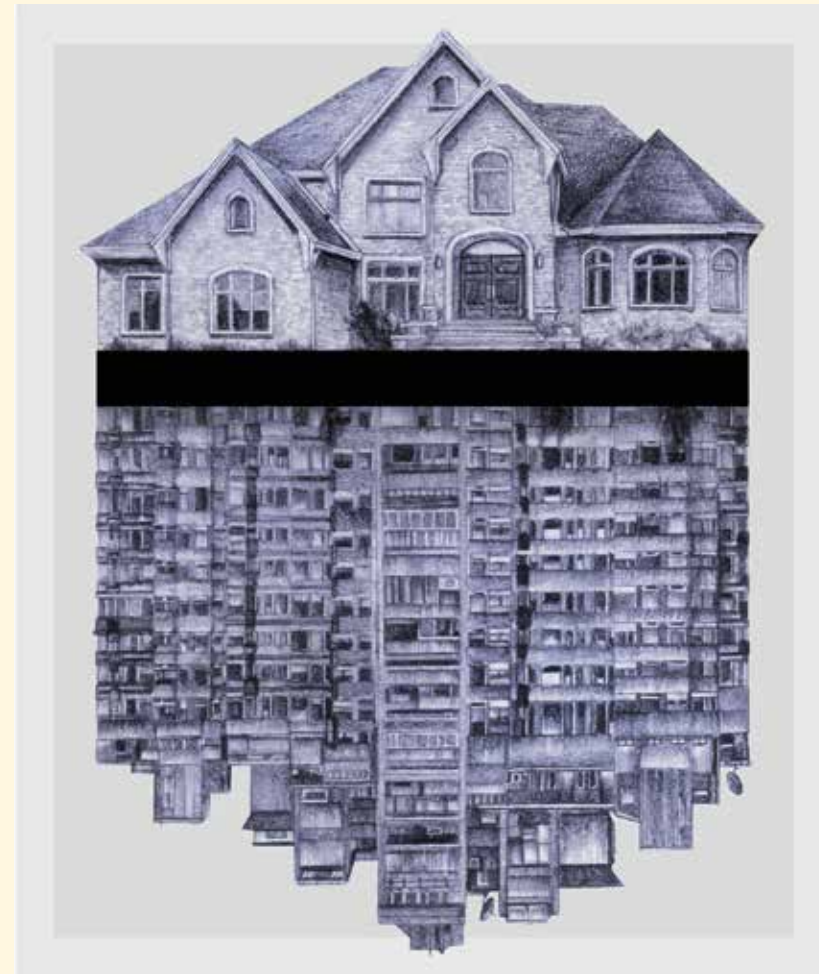
– a tendency jocularly referred to in popular parlance of the later Soviet period as "The USSR is the homeland of elephants" (*SSSR – rodina slonov*).[11] Such priorities informed translational discourse as well, as evidenced in translation scholar Andrei Fedorov's report to the Translators' Section at one of its first meetings on February 2, 1948.[12] Pinpointing the "Russian, Soviet theory of translation" as a "completely new phenomenon in the philological discipline worldwide," a "completely original and unprecedented phenomenon,"[13] Fedorov also called upon translation critics to denounce "every kind of kowtowing (*nizkopoklonstvo*) before foreign scholarship and literature" and excessive "reverence for other languages" (*blagogovenie pered inoiazychnym*). Part of the ideological decorum, this verbal gesture tells us eloquently of the potential threat perceived in translation from foreign languages and the significance accorded the practice itself.[14] What the distinguished scholar Fedorov actually reported, within this rhetorical frame, as achievements of the Soviet theory of translation was, indeed, truly remarkable and ahead of its time, and it had little to do with official clichés. Typical of this theory were, according to Fedorov, "a recognition of the principle of translatability"; evaluation of a translation from the point of view of its "functional and semantic correspondence (*sootvetstvie*) with the original, and not only from the point of view of their formal coincidence (*sovpadenie*)"; "a systematic use of facts from the history of literature and language and other humanistic scholarship."[15] In addition to these features, Fedorov remarked, "it is essential to notice the absence of any narrowly axiological dogmatism and the breadth of evaluative judgments which are characteristic of our theory of translation."[16] As examples of such a pluralism Fedorov mentions translations by Mikhail Lozinskii, Sergei Shervinskii and Samuil Marshak. These were translators who represented different positions on a scale whose two end poles would be what Lawrence Venuti[17] refers to as "foreignization" and "domestication," that is, an ideal striving to move the reader in the direction toward the author as opposed to one that strives to bring the author closer to the reader, privileging smoothness and readability. "It is an undisputable fact," Fedorov declares, "that our critics and our theory of translation recognize both possibilities as equally valid in practice, and it is one of our as yet unresolved tasks to provide a theoretical substantiation of this."[18]

Such a sanguine stance was not typical of Soviet translation theory, which had always tended to be normative in essence (perhaps with the exception of Mikhail Alekseev's booklet *Problems of Literary Translation* from 1931). Neither was it shared by all participants at the meeting. The chairman Ivan Kashkin, translator

"Muddle instead of Music," the *Pravda* article published on Januari 28, 1936 that initiated the campaign against "formalism" and "naturalism" in the arts.

Ivan Kashkin.

of Anglo-American literature and a renowned specialist on Hemingway, commented that Fedorov "should have pointed out that there are cases of inadmissible distortions of the Russian language in order to please some imaginary similarity."[19] Samuil Marshak himself picked up the cue, arguing that "when one language comes into contact with another there is a kind of a battle going on; like a swamp the foreign language sucks the translator into its turns of speech, into its circle of images."[20] Kashkin imparted, referring to the contemporary context that, "when you say that one shouldn't introduce the category of 'have to', this may have relevance in relation to yesterday, but today it is necessary to talk about what we have to do. To think about what we have to do is of course our obligation today."[21] According to Kashkin,

"Translation has to acquaint us with the [literary] legacy. But now, having read Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, who all touched on this problem (Lenin in particular, who was himself a translator), we understand that to inherit doesn't mean to worship the legacy and that the assimilation of the classical legacy has to serve the construction of a new socialist aesthetics."[22]

In this construction process Kashkin himself was to take a lead, making the value and function of "foreignness" in translation a central issue. The descriptive and analytic approach advocated by Fedorov at this point was dismissed in favor of a prescriptive discourse effectively merging translation theory and translation criticism. In a programmatic statement at the same meeting Kashkin announced:

"At the basis of our translation activities there is an old, simple truth which sounds like a truism: a translation has to be precise (*tochen*), it has to acquaint us with the achievements of our cultural heritage and it has to be carried out masterfully. This is all true, but today all these requirements are being reconceptualized. A translation has to be precise (*tochen*), but we understand this precision (*tochnost'*) in a different way. You see, this is not about mechanical photography, it is not about technological precision (*tekhologicheskaia tochnost'*), this translation should show us with precision (*s tochnost'iu*) the excited face of our friend, [it should] fix the malicious grimace of our enemy."[23]

By using the expression "technological precision" Kashkin clearly defined the translation principles in contrast to which the new aesthetics was to be developed. The reference here was unmistakably to Evgenii Lann, a translator of English literature and Dickens in particular. In an article published in 1939 in *Liter-*

aturnyi kritik, the leading literary journal of the time, Lann had outlined his translation philosophy as applied to the translation of Dickens's novel *The Pickwick Papers* that he had produced together with his wife Aleksandra Krivtsova in 1933.[24] In a scientistically informed idiom more typical of the 1920s, Lann had put forward his source-oriented views as a "formal principle of precision of translation" (*formal'nyi printsip tochnosti perevoda*) which was to guarantee a "technologically precise translation" (*tekhnologicheski tochnyi perevod*).[25] For Lann, the overarching goal of a translation was to give the reader an idea of the author's "style", and in this endeavor *tochnost'* was to play a leading role: "the devices of *tochnost'* in translation are to be the key with which the translator opens up the author's style."[26] He warned specifically against the modernization of language and Russianisms. The article was originally intended as a foreword to the *Pickwick* translation, but had not been included in the edition. It had, however, been delivered as a paper by Lann, introducing a discussion of the translation among colleagues at the Translation Bureau in 1934.[27] On this occasion, Kashkin had already emerged as a critic of the translation and his criticism was likewise published as an article in *Literaturnyi kritik*, actually predating Lann's text by three years.[28]

Now, in 1948, Lann was not the only exponent of *tochnost'* in translation to be projected by Kashkin as an enemy of the burgeoning socialist aesthetics. Another was Georgii Shengeli, whose new translation of Byron's *Don Juan* was the next topic of discussion at the Translators' Section, held a month after Fedorov's report. Shengeli, who was also a prolific poet of classical orientation (whose original writing had not been published after 1935) and a literary scholar, had outlined his translation philosophy in an afterword to his *Don Juan*. Here, an orientation toward *tochnost'* in translation was motivated by Byron's own concern for accuracy in description. Shengeli's main concern, however, was the effect a translation produces in the target culture, put forward here as a "theory of functional similarity" (*teoriia funktsional'nogo podobiia*). The choice of meter in the target language was to be guided by a concern that it be functionally approximate to the original meter in terms of genre and character, being at the same time perceived as "our own meter, easy and natural."[29] In order to preserve the rich lexical content of Byron's verse (a matter of *tochnost'*) and at the same time its light, ironic, conversational tone (a matter of functionality), Shengeli proposes to substitute iambic hexameter for Byron's iambic pentameter, arguing that in this case it is a Russian functional equivalent.

THE DISCUSSION ABOUT the new *Don Juan* translation was introduced by a highly appreciative talk given by a fellow translator, who hailed it as a major achievement on the part of the "Soviet school of translation."[30] Both the talk and Shengeli's translation were criticized, however, by Kashkin, who pointed out ideologi-

cal shortcomings in the edition and blamed the general orientation toward *tochnost'*. Most objectionable in the talk was, according to Kashkin, the application of the term "the Soviet school of translation" to Shengeli's *Don Juan* – the attempt to "canonize" Shengeli's translation principles as "the principles of the Soviet school of translation."[31] Here it becomes clear that, for Kashkin, this notion – the "Soviet school of translation" – was the name for "the socialist aesthetics" invoked at the previous meeting.

Two years later, at the annual meeting of the Translators' Section in March 1950, Kashkin sharpened his criticism against Lann and Shengeli, recasting it in the terms of "formalism." Kashkin, then head of the Section, expressed his discontent with the earlier discussion and with Fedorov's report, declaring that,

"True, at the same time it became apparent what the opposition to the main creative kernel of the Section is like. What we have to oppose. In our field there haven't been any straightforward sorties, but some camouflaged harmful tendencies have been noticed all the same. Some echoes have been preserved of a formalism that has not entirely been disarmed in various aspects:
– Expressions of an alien orientation – in the creative method.
– Unprincipled practicism and empiricism, which is concealed under the false and imaginary principle of feckless calque.
It is not so much a matter of the convinced bearers of these tendencies as of the fact that these tendencies are still in the air, poisoning it."[32]

A renewed attack on the perceived enemies of the "Soviet school of translation" was launched by Kashkin at a conference held in October–November 1950 to discuss "the tasks of the Soviet translation of world classics." Shengeli's *Don Juan* thus emerged as one of its central issues – much to the surprise of the translator himself, as the topic had not been brought up since the first discussion almost three years earlier. Now Kashkin virulently denounced the method by which "factographical exactness" blurred the "ideological and artistic significance" of Byron's work, resulting in "verse translation without poetry, prose translation without emotional coloring, without sincere and deep feeling, in short: without artistic charm."[33] Furthermore, he targeted the shortcomings of contemporary criticism, exemplified by the "excessive praise" in the introductory speech of 1948 which allowed translations such as Shengeli's to appear in the first place. Therefore, Kashkin declared, even if at this point "the principles of the Soviet school had been consolidated in hard struggle against alien and hostile positions inherited from decadence and formalism and the hack attitudes of the NEP period," and the enemy had been defeated, the fight for "the concept of the Soviet school" had to be continued:

"BY USING THE EXPRESSION 'TECHNOLOGICAL PRECISION', KASHKIN CLEARLY DEFINED THE TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES."

"It is necessary to resist all attempts to vulgarize, banalize, and falsify the very concept of the 'principles of Soviet translation,' and the 'school of Soviet translation', attempts at passing off as its own achievements works which are alien to the very essence of this concept."[34]

Somewhat paradoxically, it was a case of alleged imprecision of translation that was the most compromising and far-reaching of Kashkin's accusations against Shengeli at this conference. In the "Russian episode" of Byron's work (occupying Cantos VII–X) which features the Russian take-over of the fortress of Izmail from the Turks in 1790, Shengeli had, Kashkin claimed, *distorted* and denigrated the picture of Field Marshal Suvorov and the Russian soldiers. Despite the translator's efforts to demonstrate that he had rendered the disputed loci with utter exactness (in accordance with his overall principles of *tochnost'*) and that the ambiguity and irony were vital constituents of the source work itself, the fate of the translation was decided: from now on it was discursively constructed as "unpatriotic" and "unpoetic" in all public contexts. As a rule, this was a translation critique in which no original texts were ever provided, not even in detailed discussions of particular examples such as Kashkin's lengthy criticism of the translation published in *Novyi mir*.[35]

The precepts for the new "socialist aesthetics" in translation began to be articulated in the early 1950s, invariably in contrast to the projected enemy of "literalism." In an article published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* on December 1, 1951 ("On the language of translation"), Kashkin[36] accused both Shengeli and Lann of representing a "stronghold of literalism and linguistic foreignness" (*zasil'e bukvalizma i chuzheiazychiia*). Their translations reflected "bourgeois-decadent disintegration (*raspad*), manifested in the corruption of the national language in favor of foreign languages and linguistic acrobatics." Such a criticism, targeting an alleged "pollution" of language, in fact echoed Gorky's position in the "discussion on language" in 1934, which was effectively a step toward the normative aesthetics of socialist realism.[37] Offering his own precepts for Soviet translators, Kashkin invokes the notion of "realism" in translation for the first time since Al'tman's speech in 1936. Kashkin urged Soviet translators to convey the original "in a realist way, that is without naturalist hair-splitting and without impressionist embellishment, truthfully and creatively." Some months later, the term was developed further in an article by Kashkin's colleague Pavel Toper in *Novyi mir*, who also opposed it to "formalist translation" and Lann's Dickens in particular. Arguing for "realism" in translation, he paralleled the construction of socialist realism in literature by identifying the forerunners of such a realist translation in Belinskii, Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov, who were translators as well.[38] Moreover, alluding to the traditional metaphor of the translator as an actor, Toper's description of "realist translation" echoes

the principles of Stanislavskii, the socialist realist model for the Soviet theatre: "Every image created by the author he [the translator] is obliged to see, every thought he is obliged to make his own, every nuance of mode he is obliged to experience."[39]

Finally, almost mimicking the original formulation of socialist realism, Kashkin declares in his 1954 article "On the Method and School of Soviet Translation":

> "In the realist method, in its *truthfulness* (*pravdivost'*) and *historical concreteness* (*istoricheskaia konkretnost'*) [my emphasis, S.W.], is the best guarantee for a faithful transference (*vernaia peredacha*) of the original with all its chiaroscuro; a guarantee for a faithful transference, albeit refracted through our perception, because our Soviet literary translation is far from 'a photographer's trade', it is a creative appropriation (*osvoenie*), a branch of the art of socialist realism ."[40]

What was to be the "one and only" (*edinyi*) method was already practiced by the "best Soviet translators," Kashkin argued, and the task of Soviet translation theory was now to study these translations carefully and to "generalize their experience."[41] Expounding on the realist method, he declared that these translators are convinced "that a literary translation takes its point of departure not in the traces which constitutes a work [of art] but in the work as a whole, which includes not only linguistic elements, and strives in the first place to transfer its general intention, its spirit, its ideological meaning."[42] In order to do so, "they strive to put themselves in the position of the author and to see what he saw when he created his work, but to see it with their own eyes, and then they try to render, in their own language in accordance with its internal laws, not only the conventional verbal sign but all that stands behind the word: thoughts, facts, conditions, actions."[43] Simultaneously, "the best Soviet translators," according to Kashkin, apply a metaperspective:

> "They strive to determine for themselves the most fundamental and important elements that made the author and his work significant and topical for its time, and try first and foremost to convey to our reader all that is progressive, that is live and topical in it for our time as well."[44]

What emerges here (and elsewhere in Kashkin's writings of the time) is a fully developed transposition of the socialist realist doctrine: the translator had to convey not the text of the original literary work, but the *reality* which, according to Leninist aesthetics, was mirrored in this work – the typical traits of reality as they *should have been seen* by the original author *had he possessed the necessary ideological awareness* and rendered in forms accessible to the Soviet reader; the last requirement arguably corresponded to the *narodnost'* of the original doctrine.[45]

Kashkin's ideal, allegedly being achieved by the "best Soviet translators," implied an ontological paradox. Without losing his "stylistic and individual characteristics" or his "historical and national specificity," the foreign author ("be it Shakespeare, Navoi, Dickens, Hafiz, Burns, Omar Khayyam or Nizami") should sound in Russian translation "as if he had himself written the work in Russian, in his own way and with his typical mastery, in full command of all the means of expression".[46] The act of translation thus presupposed an imaginary abolishment of the need for translation. The practice of such a theory was inevitably to be marked by a tendency towards eradication of difference.

Even if Kashkin's position was later criticized and modified by other theorists, for example Gachechiladze,[47] the significance of Kashkin's promotion of the "realist method" in the early 1950s as *a discursive event* is hard to overestimate. It contributed effectively to the thwarting of pluralist views on translation such as the one advocated by Fedorov in 1948. It also helped to shape the "Soviet school of translation" as a prescriptive concept implying a multilayered domestication which entailed elisions and rewritings in order to adapt the foreign material to an "ideal" Soviet reader.

The development of the "Soviet school of translation" as a concept was in fact so intertwined with Kashkin and his circle (his own "school") that they became nearly synonymous. The wave of translations of American literature during the Thaw period, many of them carried out by talented former members of the Kashkin group,[48] and particularly the canonization of Hemingway, brought new status to Kashkin's name, due to his reputation as an eminent Hemingway scholar and promotor of his works (Kashkin prefaced the famous Soviet two-volume Hemingway edition of 1959). The Belgian scholar Christian Balliu recounts[49] that, at a translation conference at the Moscow State Linguistic University in 2002, Professor Marina Litvinova (well-known today as one of the translators of *Harry Potter*) told him, "Nous sommes tous des Kachkiniens."

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how the "practice of a theory" – the socialist realist *discourse* – worked to shape the "theory of a practice" – Ivan Kashkin's method of "realist translation" launched as "the one and only" for Soviet translators in the 1950s. It has also shown how, in the field of literary translation, the socialist realist discourse became operative in the process of excluding "foreignness," that is, approaches that brought to light and creatively addressed issues of difference, often from a functional point of view. This is a legacy still being perceived in Russia today: perhaps not so much in reference to Kashkin's theory of "realist translation," which is merely regarded as a chapter in Russian translation history, as in the still prevailing negative attitudes towards what he, Kashkin, defined as "literalist translation" and in the lasting difficulties of discussing the value and function of "foreignness" in translation in a non-normative way.

What remains to be explored more broadly is the relationship between the declared "realism" of the method and the many concrete translations of, above all, American fiction carried out

by "the Kashkinki" which, conjuring up an "imaginary West,"[50] would paradoxically contribute to the ethos of the Thaw period. ▣

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references

1 For a concise overview of the development of research since the 1980s, see Khans Giunter [Hans Günther], "Puti i tupiki izucheniia iskusstva i literatury stalinskoi epokhi" [Paths and impasses in the study of the literature of the Stalin epoch] *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 95 (2009); 287–299; for an updated account of the emergence of socialist realism as a concept, see Hans Günther, "Soviet Literary Criticism and the Formulation of the Aesthetics of Socialist Realism, 1932–1940" in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2011), 90–108.

2 See: Susanna Witt, "Arts of Accommodation: The First All-Union Conference of Translators, Moscow, 1936, and the Ideologization of Norms," in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, eds. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013a), 141–184; Elena Zemskova, "Georgian Poets' Translations by Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Culture of the 1930s," in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, ed. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 185–212.

3 L. K. Luppol, M. M. Rozental' and S. M. Tretiakov (eds.), *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934, stenograficheskii otchet* [The first all-union congress of Soviet writers 1934, stenographic report] (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990 [reprint of the 1934 edition]), 680.

4 Russian State Archive for Literature and Art, henceforth RGALI, fond 631 (Union of Soviet Writers): opis' 21 (Translators' Section) ed. khr. 8, l. 18. (Ezra Levontin, October 29, 1935). See also Witt, "Arts of Accommodation", 173–177. All translations in this article are mine except where indicated.

5 Witt, "Arts of Accommodation", 165–166.

6 RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, ed. khr. 124, ll. 36–37.

7 RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, ed. khr. 124, l. 66.

8 Lazar Fleishman, *Boris Pasternak i literaturnoe dvizhenie 1930-kh godov* [Boris Pasternak and the literary process of the 1930s] (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2005), 402 ff.

9 Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917–1953* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

10 Nailya Safiullina, "Window to the West: From the Collection of Readers' Letters to the Journal I*nternatsional'naia literatura*," *Slavonica* 15, no. 2 (2009): 128–161; See also Nailya Safiullina and Rachel Platonov , "Literary Translation and Soviet Cultural Politics in the 1930s: The Role of the Journal I*nternacional'naja Literatura*," *Russian Literature* 72 no. 2 (2012); 239–269; Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Era Soviet Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

11 Among numerous phenomena claimed as Russian inventions were the bicycle and the air balloon, as well as major geographical discoveries. See

"KASHKIN'S IDEAL, ALLEGEDLY BEING ACHIEVED BY THE 'BEST SOVIET TRANSLATORS,' IMPLIED AN ONTOLOGICAL PARADOX."

V. S. Virginskii, S. A. Klat, T. V. Komishilova, and, G. N. List, "Kak tvoriatsia mify v istorii tekhniki: K istorii voprosa o 'velosipede Artamonova,'"[How myths are created in the history of technology: On the question of Artamonov's bicycle], *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki*, no. 1 (1989); 150–157.

12   Andrei Fedorov (1906–1997), Leningrad philologist and translation scholar, had co-authored the book *The Art of Translation (Iskusstvo perevoda)* with Kornei Chukovskii in 1930 and published his own book *On literary translation (O khudozhestvennom perevode)* in 1941, parts of which the audience recognized in his report at the 1948 meeting.

13   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 32.

14   This issue is the focus of my current research project, "The Interface with the Foreign: The 'Soviet School of Translation,' the Cold War and World Literature, 1945–1985" (supported by the Swedish Research Council, 2015–2018).

15   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, ll. 26–28.

16   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 28.

17   Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

18   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 29.

19   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 38.

20   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 40.

21   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 68.

22   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 71.

23   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 71.

24   The collaboration between Lann and Krivtsova was often close and their respective roles as "agents of translation", i.e. translator and editor, in particular cases were apparently not always reflected in paratexts and bibliographies. On the term "agent of translation," see John Milton and Paul F. Bandia, "Introduction: Agents of Translation and Translation Studies", in *Agents of Translation*, ed. John Milton and Paul F. Bandia (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), 1–17.

25   During the 1920s, an important issue had been the new society's need for know-how in various spheres of production and for specialists, whose competence had to be utilized despite their often non-proletarian backgrounds. In the 1930s, translators (whose social record was in many cases dubious in the eyes of the new authorities) adopted a strategy of promoting themselves as such specialists, urgently needed in the production of Soviet literature (cf. Zemskova, "Georgian Poets' Translations by Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Culture of the 1930s", 2013).

26   Lann, "Stil' rannego Dikkensa i perevod 'Posmertnykh zapisok Pikvikskogo kluba," [The style of the early Dickens and the translation of *The Pickwick Papers*] ,*Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 1 (1939): 157.

27   This body was part of the Organizational Bureau set up in 1932 to prepare for the Writers' Congress 1934 and the founding of the Soviet Writers' Union.

28   Ivan Kashkin, "Mister Pikvik i drugie," [Mr Pickwick and others], *Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 5 (1936).

29   Georgii Shengeli, "Posleslovie," [Afterword], in Dzh. G. Bairon, *Don Zhuan*, trans. G. Shengeli (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1947), 532.

30   For a detailed account of the discussion, see Susanna Witt, "Byron's *Don Juan* in Russian and the 'Soviet School of Translation,'" *Contexts of Russian Literary Translation II, no. 1 (2016)*, special issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies: The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, eds. Julie Hansen and Susanna Witt: 23–43.

31   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed khr. 115, l. 12.

32   RGALI, f. 631, op. 14, ed. khr. 88, ll. 20, 20ob.

33   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 116, l. 9.

34   Ibid. l. 10.

35   Ivan Kashkin, "Traditsia i epigonstvo: ob odnom perevode baironovskogo 'Don-Zhuana')" [Tradition and epigonism: On one translation of Byron's *Don Juan*)] *Novyi Mir*, no. 12 (1952): 229–240.

36   Ivan Kashkin, "O iazyke perevoda," [On the language of translation] *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 1, 1951.

37   Günther 2011, 93f.

38   Pavel Toper, "O nekotorykh printsipakh khudozhestvennogo perevoda," [On some principles of literary translation] *Novyi Mir*, no. 1 (1952); 240.

39   Ibid, 244.

40   Ivan Kashkin, "O metode i shkole sovetskogo khudozhestvennogo perevoda" [On the method and school of Soviet literary translation], *Znamia*, no. 3 (1954): 145. In the canonical formulation found in the statutes of the Soviet Writers' Union, socialist realism "requires of the artist a *truthful, historically concrete* representation of reality in its revolutionary development" [my emphasis], see *Pervyi s"ezd*, 712.

41   Kashkin, 1954, 148.

42   Ibid, 151.

43   Ibid.

44   Ibid.

45   Sometimes translated as "official nationality," *narodnost'* was a "broad term which signified that works should be accessible to the masses, imbued with the national (and sometimes folk) tradition, and patriotic (or even statist)." See Clark and Dobrenko 2007, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents*, 1917–1953, 147.

46   Kashkin, 1954, 152. This position was explicitly warned against in the article on translation in the Soviet *Literary Encyclopedia* of 1934: "However, it would be dangerous to advocate the thesis that the translator should strive to find such a verbal expression for the author's thoughts that the author himself would have chosen, had he been writing in the language of the translator, in his epoch and societal situation. This would open the way for the unrestrained subjectivism of free translation, not to mention the fact that nuances pertaining to time and place would get lost"; see Aleksandr Smirnov and Mikhail Alekseev, "Perevod" [Translation], *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 8 (Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1934): 528. In this connection, the author cites Goethe: "There are two principles of translation. One requires that the foreign author be brought to us so that we can look at him as if he were one of our own. The other, in contrast, invites us to go to the foreigner and get acquainted with his life, his ways of expressing himself and his peculiarities. Of these two principles the second is undoubtedly the true one, because choosing the first, we would deprive the translated work of a significant part of its epistemological value," Smirnov, 528–529.

47   Andrei Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty: Iz istorii khudozhestvennogo perevoda v SSSR v 1920–1960-e gody* [The defeated literalists: From the history of literary translation in the USSR 1920–1960s] (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola ekonomiki, 2012), 112 ff.

48   See, e.g., Alexander Burak, *The Other in Translation: A Case for Comparative Translation Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2013).

49   Christian Balliu, "Clefs pour une histoire de la traductologie soviétique" *Meta* 3, no. 50 (2005): 939.

50   Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006).
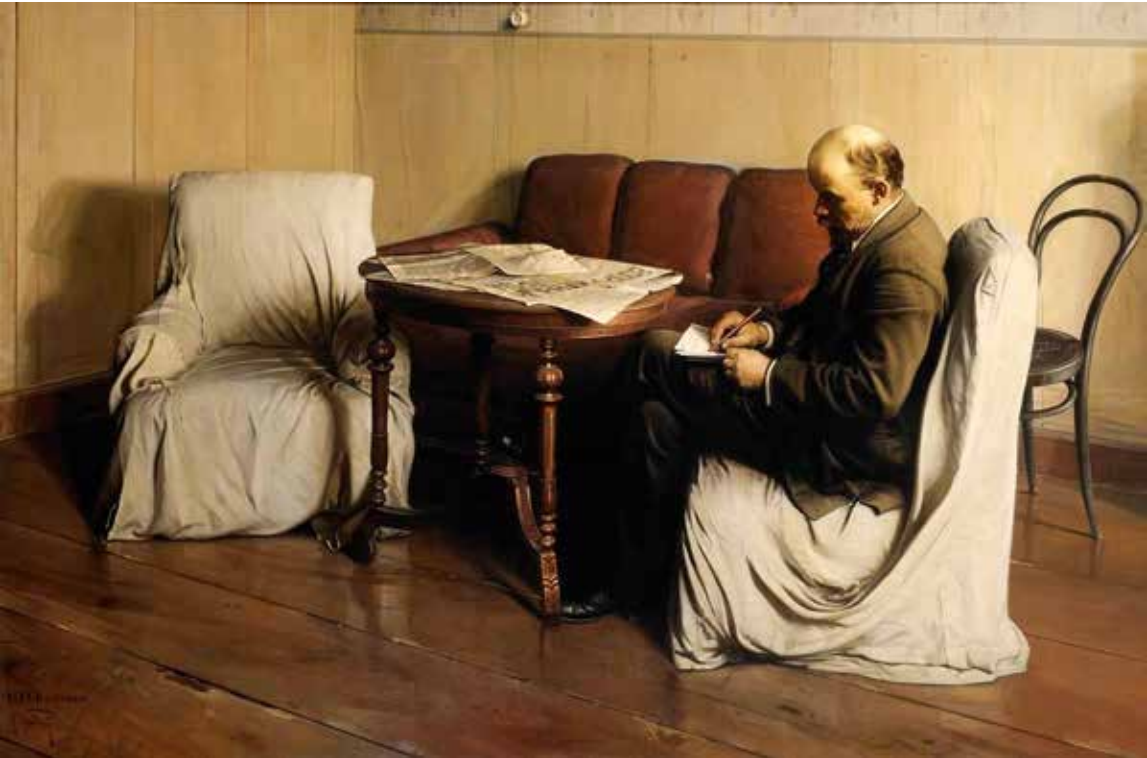
Isaak Brodsky *Lenin in Smolny* (1930).

The reality of the real

Commentaries on questions of socialist realism

by **Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback**

What does it mean to grasp "reality as it truly is"? The main question in realism is its claim to expose, present, write, truthfully insert, and talk with the problem of mimesis and mimetic representation. There are several realisms: realism, philosophical realism, speculative realism, political realism, democratic realism, capitalistic realism, aesthetic realism, lyric realism, magic and fantastic realism, surrealism, hyperrealism, subrealism, and also their uncanny ghost – the question of unrealism, idealism, and the possible. The question as to the real, the philosophical question behind the aesthetic idea, is linked to concepts such as the real, reality, and realism. The real means both what is and that it is – both the quid and the quod of reality. Yet the real, what it is and that it is, can be presented in realistic and unrealistic ways, just as the contrary of the real, the unreal, can be presented in very realistic ways. As Walter Benjamin reminded us, giving emphasis to the problem of the real-ness of reality, the occurrence of a delirium is real.

The motto pronounced at the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers by

Zhdanov, that socialist realism is the "method of presenting reality in its revolutionary development truthfully in a concrete historical way", adds a new dimension to the question of realism. George Lukács took up this development in his discussion of the great masters of realism when he maintained that the question is to truthfully present, represent and expose not only reality, but reality as it truly is. The question remains as to the relation between reality and truth. Reality as it truly is is the content of meaning of the reality of the real. Like every realism, socialist realism is a doctrine about the reality of the real, about reality as it truly is. As it truly is, however, reality is already an interpretation and as such, a presentation. Hence socialist realism transforms the question of realism, as the question as to the correspondence or mimesis between a mental representation and the essence of things, into a question about the presentation of a presentation, about a mimesis of mimesis itself. Even if Adorno criticizes and to a large extent rejects Lukcás – and even if for Adorno, as Sven-Olov Wallenstein asserted in his paper pre-

sented at the workshop, mimesis is defined as an *Innervierung* [in-nervation] of the real – for Adorno the question of art still remains the one about a treue *Darstellung*, a faithful presentation.

DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM of socialist realism in relation to realism, we are also engaging in a form of realism, because we want to represent this doctrine as truthfully as possible (we are, unfortunately not liberated from this hard demand). In a certain sense, what we are doing here is the academic realism of socialist realism. As we read it in this issue, socialist realism made visible how realism does not merely impose an ideological doctrine and a theory of reality, but creates the reality of the real. Realism is an interpretation of the reality of the real, but as the reality of the real it is already an interpretation; socialist realism is rather an interpretation of interpretation. It is an interpretation of interpretation that aims to be so total and conclusive that no further interpretation is needed. It imposes an interpretation that has its own interpretation, a self-interpretation with no need for any external commentary, an interpretation without comments. It is and has to be systematic, in the sense

of an interpretation that controls the very control of any interpretation.

Socialist realism does not ask how texts are to depict and reproduce the reality of the real, but dictates that the real has to become a text that is an already interpreted and therefore read and ready text. That is why socialist realism actualizes the question of textuality, assuming that everything has to become a text in the sense that everything has to be seen as we see texts, not as we read them. Texts are to be read as images are to be seen. Because texts are seen, the pictorial has to be the fundamental element of socialist realism, for the intent is to see reality as it is truly visible.

BUT HERE AGAIN, no one needs to see it, for it appears as what has already been seen, and what is presented is the image of that already-seen. Seeing becomes the meaning of reading, for what is to be "seen" (that is "read") is merely the traits of this already-seen, the censured vision. This is why socialist realism prefers painting rather than photography, namely because the trait is the trait of literacy – the trait of the textualization of the real. What this textualization of the real tells us is how socialist realism engenders and engineers meanings in a form of *Bildung* or construction of its readers, by presenting itself as self-interpretation, as a thought that already has thought and has been thought, a gaze that already has seen and has been seen. It is an already – ready – reading, where common sense must equal the sense of the common. ▣

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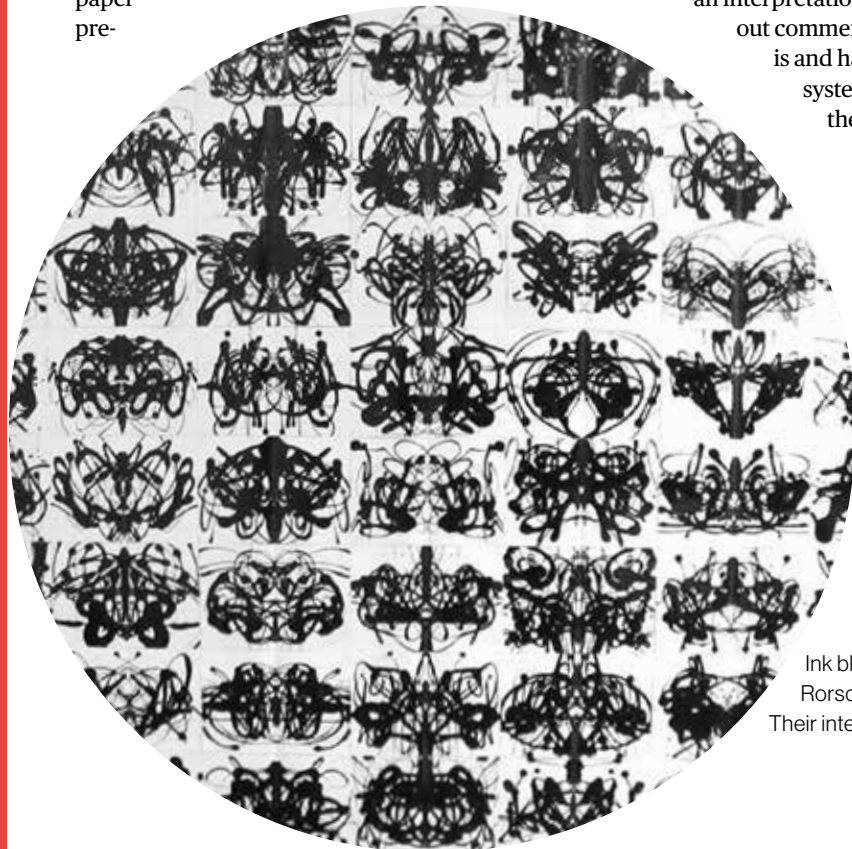
Ink blots for the Rorschach test. Their interpretation is free.

Architectural history and new reality

Leonhard Lapin's textual practice

by **Epp Lankots**

The notions of "history" and "reality" have made a thought-provoking pair in historiographic debates for several decades. Today it would be rather difficult to disagree with the view that historiography is a field intensified by wide-ranging political claims to reality – from personal agendas to ideological doctrines – and that the Rankean claim to symmetry between past reality and mediated, written reality, or history, is a matter of the degree of dislocation of "reality" rather than an objective condition of history writing (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).[1] The questionsof "reality" and "history" in the humanities and cultural studies of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have also marked growing interest in how disciplines, including art and architectural history, create knowledge about culture and the past. Besides the means of knowledge production, there is also an increasing interest in disciplinary histories: in the case of former socialist countries, this has meant looking introspectively at the period and at texts in which cultural and historical analysis was strictly subordinated to very specific claims to representation of reality. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine prevailing in Soviet art and architectural history undoubtedly exerted an extremely formalizing influence on history writing. Yet self-reflexive historical probing enables today's reader not only to go beyond the strict disciplinary dogmas and to consider those historical texts as an exciting and multilayered fabric, but also to open up unexplored territories for historiographical consideration. These could include other textual genres or cultural practices like visual or performative arts, aestheticiz-

ing or otherwise making use of history, etc.[2] This sort of "inventive" introspection means elucidating those cultural "biases" and their modes and conditions of operation that might not be revealed by the relationship between Marxist-Leninist doctrine and the endeavors of an academic discipline (e.g., how the understanding of a certain historical style or period was created

and its explanation changed over the period in the academic discourse of art history). For a historian, however, the aim of this kind of "inventive" reading is not to dismantle a discipline, but to relocate certain disciplinary developments. In this article on Soviet Estonian architectural historiography, this relocation means shifting the focus from the narrow context of fluctuating ideological prescriptions to the wider field of late socialist cultural changes that form the context of the "alternative"

abstract

The article discusses the writing of architectural history in Soviet Estonia in the late socialist period as a particular form of historiographic practice in which the contact between "history" and "reality" is pursued through avant-gardist practices of merging art and life rather than the methodologies of academic art historical research, or Marxist-Leninist dogmas of history writing. The case is built on the "historical depictions" or the short texts on the history of Estonian modern architecture written by Leonhard Lapin, a member of a critical group of architects and artists in Estonia in the 1970s and early 1980s. The paper argues that Lapin's concept of reality as defined by the relationship between man and the "machine" was aimed at remodeling the whole understanding of modern Estonian culture from a logocentric to a spatial type.
KEYWORDS: Historiography of modern architecture, Estonian architecture, late socialism, Leonhard Lapin.

or "critical" historiography practiced by the architect and artist Leonhard Lapin in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Historiography of modern architecture in Estonia

Estonian art history turned its attention to modern architecture only in the first decades following World War II when the art historian Leo Gens was essentially the only pioneering historian and critic in the 1950s and 1960s to systematically research late 19th and 20th century architecture. It is understandable that the historians of the prewar Republic of Estonia did not get a chance to assess the architectural production of a period that was so proximate in time (especially considering the fact that changes in the built environment emerged in Estonia somewhat later), or to offer an independent perspective on modernism. In contrast, in Western Europe, Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* appeared in 1936 and Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*" in 1941. Furthermore, in mid-20th century Estonia, the main objects of academic art history had been shaped by the political positions of the preceding decades: research into the rich material preserved in Estonian medieval towns was initiated in the late 19th century by Baltic German writers and clearly served the interests of self-determination by building up a geography of art history that derived from their motherland. The art historians of the interwar republican period were also mostly engaged in studying medieval art and architecture, but due to the changing political dynamics and the initiative of Swedish-born art history professors at the University of Tartu (Helge Kjellin, Sten Karling), the local geography of art and the question of artistic origins were refocused on the Nordic-Baltic cultural sphere and regional influences.[3]

THE HISTORICAL REALITY and political conditions after WWII spawned unique histories of modernism both in Estonia and in other former Eastern-bloc countries – the authors had to find a way to narrate the overarching story of modern architecture from its period of inception at the turn of the century and write the developments in the interwar period as part of progressive Soviet architecture, following the ideological line all the while. The study of 19th and 20th-century architecture can therefore be regarded principally as a natural part of the Soviet teleological view of history: the history of architecture had to be extended right up to the "flowering" present day; thus the inclusion of modern architecture in this narrative was not coincidental but rather stemmed from the need to fill in all historical periods with consistent content based on the ideology of class struggle. By the late 1970s, the history of modern architecture in Estonia had developed its canonic form, marked by the chapters written by Gens for *History of Estonian Architecture* (1965) and two volumes of *History of Estonian Art* (1971 and 1977). Gens, who had dominated the discourse of the history of modern architecture in the post-war years, was accompanied in 1970s by the young architect Leonhard Lapin (b. 1947). At the same time, Lapin's role as an historian is a subject of debate, since, besides being an outsider in the academic discipline, his "historiographical"

Leonhard Lapin in the early 1980s and in 2014.

practice was not limited solely to textual formats but was part of cross-disciplinary strategies that involved, among other things, deliberately projecting his time on to the backdrop of history and tradition. His goal was to change contemporary architecture, the surrounding environment, and people's relationship to it, thereby exploring the modern world and how its forms and ideas became manifested. The activities of Lapin and his friends Vilen Künnapu, Ando Keskküla, Andres Tolts, Tiit Kaljundi, Sirje Lapin (Runge), and other late 1960s and early 1970s graduates of the Estonian State Art Institute – many of whom later became members of an architects' group popularly called the Tallinn School – were not limited by a stringent institutional framework such as a job at a state design institute. With happenings and performances, environmental art, print art and painting, architectural designs, writings, exhibitions, and seminars, they ventured out on a broader and more diffusely defined field, merging various media and venues and fusing different disciplines (architecture, design, art, criticism, historiography, theater etc.), and so have become rooted in Estonian art history as Soviet unofficial art.

WRITING TEXTS ON 20TH CENTURY art and architectural history was one of the tools in the group's diverse toolbox – the vast majority of the texts being written by Lapin, who was an active writer, both of art and architectural history and of criticism and commentary in weekly cultural newspapers. Most of his art and architectural history texts were published during the Soviet period in the magazines *Kunst* [Art], *Kunst ja Kodu* [Art and home], *Ehituskunst* [Construction art], and the cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* [Hammer and sickle] from 1971 to the late 1980s. Some of them were written as conference papers or were published in samizdat collections, or remained in manuscript form and were

published only in 1997 in a book of his collected texts *Kaks kunsti* [Two kinds of art]. As a writer, Lapin typifies the rift between "studio" and "academia," which became widespread in Western architectural scholarship in the second half of the 20th century, but which never really was an issue in Estonia, where architectural history has traditionally been written by art historians. This is one of the reasons why Estonian art and architectural historians have never truly embraced Lapin's texts as belonging to the same disciplinary tradition, although they did not directly ignored: the two discourses – academic architectural historiography practiced by art historians and by architects – were kept strictly separated during the Soviet era. Lapin's history texts were considered too subjective for the academic tradition and thus have been mentioned above all as a part of his art;[4] nevertheless he has received some credit from architectural historians as one of the writers on art nouveau and functionalism in Estonia during the Soviet period.[5] Despite the fact that Lapin has never considered himself as an historian, the debates about his role are illustrative of both the changing position of the reader and disciplinary re-locations of architectural historiography. Mark Jarzombek has emphasized the complex interwoven relationship between history, avant-garde and historiography, thus pointing to an opportunity to expand the definition of the "historiographic act" to include activities that go beyond traditional academic historiography, such as architectural and art practices in which history is used to contextualize oneself.[6] Aside from that possibility, the keywords specific to art and architectural history, which include questions of style and terminology, modern and national, and primeval and mythical elements in the Estonian tradition of form, also enable us, I believe, to consider Lapin as part of the disciplinary development of art and architectural history in Estonia.

The new artificial reality

It has been noted in many instances that by the 1970s the socialist realist canon had only retained a rhetorical echo in Estonia while its content was in a state of flux, especially in literature and the arts.[7] Although the realist rule of explaining art held its position in art history writing, as the topic selection still had to be justified by showing its relation to reality,[8] in the seventies the ideological framework of representing artistic production could also be seen to be loosening up with the appearance of romantic elements of artistic individuality seeking a connection with the timeless and primeval in culture.[9] With this general loosening in mind, it becomes noteworthy that the young generation, including Lapin, entering the art scene in Estonia in the late 1960s, did not withdraw from the enforced notion of reality, choosing instead to readdress it and rework it into a critical concept that became the center of gravity of their activities.

In his early texts dating from the early and mid-1970s – "Taie kujundamas keskkonda" [Art designs the environment] (1971) and "Objektiivne kunst" [Objective art] (1975), initially given

as speeches at two different artistic events[10] – the young Lapin manifests the new reality as a cornerstone of his artistic program.[11] The machine becomes a central image of this new reality that Lapin calls "artificial": he declares the urban living environment a central concern in contemporary culture, something that has become an evident part of everyday life through art and architecture and is a result of the scientific-technological revolution. A contemporary artist – an objective artist – is above all an architect and urban planner; Lapin refers here to the critical architect who "works in an exhibition space rather than being employed by the state design office" and who intervenes in or produces the environment rather than representing it.[12]

Both Mari Laanemets and Andres Kurg have considered Lapin's notions of "objective art" and "new artificial reality" not as a belated engagement with technology and art, as they might seem at first glance, but as a reaction to the expansion of the postindustrial environment in late socialist society, including new communication and production means and immaterial networks that had fundamentally changed the concept and moral content of art and the role of the artist.[13] Lapin's critique in the early 1970s was directed at the failed Soviet utopia of industrialization that according to him resulted only in the homogenizing rationalization of society. Yet instead of withdrawing from modernization like many other Soviet artists after the cooling-down of techno-optimism post 1968, Kurg suggests that Lapin, on the contrary, proposed that industrialization had not been extensive enough: he was looking for an architecture that instead of being produced by the machine would itself be the machine providing multiple engagements with it and serving the very complex needs of its users – an approach Kurg links with groups such as Archigram, Coop Himmelb(l)au and others.[14] In the context of art, Laanemets parallels this with Lapin's famous print series – *Machines*, *Man-Machine*, and *Woman-Machine* (1973–79) – she sees a clear conceptual meaning behind Lapin's obsessive serialism (the series consisted of almost 300 print sheets), as if he wishes to become a machine himself.[15]

THE INEXTRICABILITY OF ART and new reality also reveals the revolutionary avant-garde as the wellspring of Lapin's art and ideas. He writes: "Recently however, it has turned out that some art movements from the beginning of the 20th century, such as Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism, and Surrealism, have reappeared in new contexts and on new scales, in a synthesis of new and old methods."[16] Hence building his program also included the systematic study of the transformation utopias of the early 20th century avant-garde, with particular attention to Kazimir Malevich's work. This engagement with avant-garde sources in his early texts, and especially his belief that the avant-garde pursuit of merging art and life had not lost its salience, but merely become modified, remains a persistent element in Lapin's work. It also appears later in his history texts through the notion of

> ## "THE MACHINE BECOMES A CENTRAL IMAGE OF THIS NEW REALITY THAT LAPIN CALLS 'ARTIFICIAL'."

"living history", by which he means that historiography should be in close dialogue with contemporary culture.

IN THE WAVE OF POSTMODERNISM that swelled in the late 1970s bringing with it questions of contextuality and of architecture's relationship to history, focusing not so much on specific architectural problems as on the general human aspect, Lapin's accents on art and architecture shift towards eternal qualities. He is now interested in how art can be transformed by giving up physical material and be led to emptiness, which is the beginning and end form of life: "It is to equate the state of life with space, to which all human speculations can be reduced."[17] This shows how, in spite of the reconfiguration among the central elements that guide contemporary culture (from machine-centered to human-centered culture), Lapin continues the project of defining the reality by reworking the idea of the "machine" into a more universal concept of space as a defining condition of reality. In a presentation delivered at a young architects' seminar in 1978, "Architecture as art," Lapin declared: "The problem of space is intrinsic not only to architecture but to 20th-century art in general. 20th-century culture is architectonic due to the spatial problem contained in it. The spatial problem dominates in the work of the painters K. Malevich and R. Rauschenberg, the writers M. Butor and J. Barbarus, the musicians J. Hendrix, and C. Santana, the dramatist P. Brook and many other great masters of our century; nor are contemporary science, philosophy and religious orientations free of the spatial problem."[18] Lapin now envisions all of 20th-century culture as being spatially determined, and he also anchors the history of Estonian architecture through the various decades of the 20th century to that idea.

"Living history"

Lapin's interest in architectural history stems from his period working in the state restoration office, where he was assigned after graduating from the art institute in 1971, allegedly because his controversial reputation did not allow him to work in state design institutes.[19] His historiographical texts dating from the late 1970s to the early 1980s include the titles "Art nouveau arhitektuur Tallinnas" [Art nouveau architecture in Tallinn] (1978), "Funktsionalismi kriis" [Functionalism's crisis] (1979), "Eesti funktsionalism" [Estonian functionalism] (1981–82), "Poleemiline historitsism" [Polemical historicism] (1983), "Eesti loomus" [The nature of Estonian Art nouveau] (1982), "Art déco Eesti arhitektuuris" [Art déco in Estonian architecture] (1984), and "20. sajandi arhitektuuri terminoloogilisi probleeme" [Terminological problems of 20th-century architecture] (1986).

Lapin's contribution to the historiography of architecture introduces a different approach to reading art historical epochs and their causality that is perhaps the most obvious difference
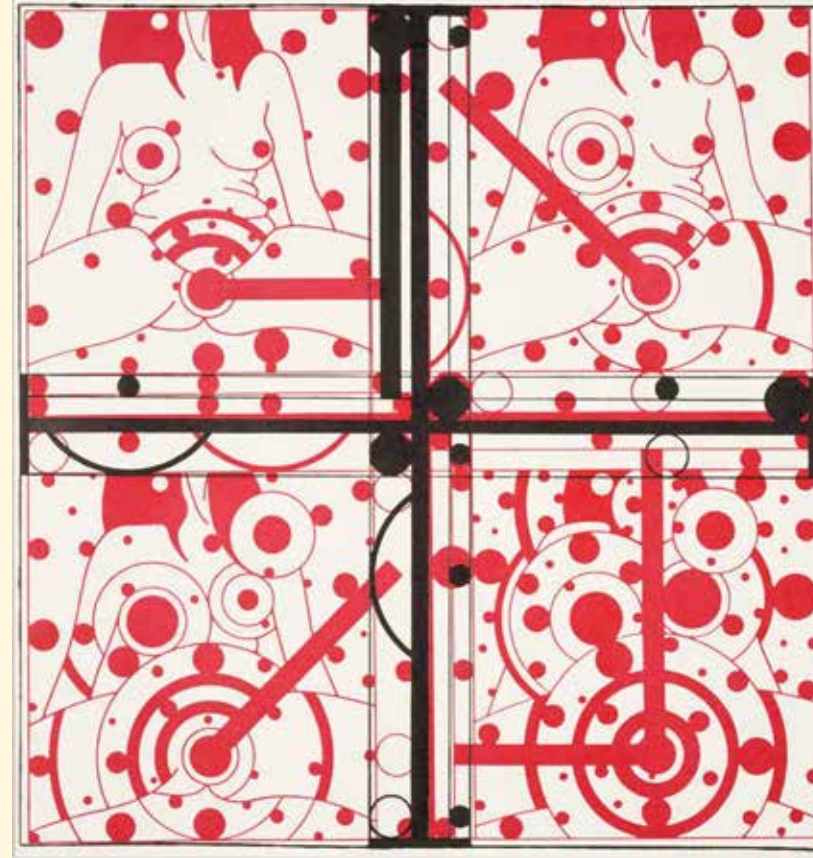
to Soviet academic architectural history. In the 1960s, Leo Gens had connected art nouveau primarily with the rise of national consciousness which, was of course presented as driven principally by class consciousness in Estonia, where the natives have historically formed the peasantry. Although Lapin is not able to go beyond the conventional discourse of the history of style, his writing shifts the causality from political to cultural, and in his accounts of art nouveau and functionalism most of all, he makes evident the new, spatialized reality, i.e. the man-made environment, synthesized into the universality of the natural and the artificial.[20] For example, he sees art nouveau in Estonia as primarily rooted in the geometric ornamentation of Adolf Loos, Henry van de Velde, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and functionalism as evolving out of the same geometric tradition, becoming realized in constructivist architecture. Spatiality for him is, in other words, a spirit that links different periods. This spirit has a clear dual model expressed in the at once rational and romantic, subjective and collective, autonomous and integral nature of art and culture. At times he leans on this foundation with such force that his goal appears to be to re-work the whole concept of Estonian culture from the logocentric to the spatial type.

LAPIN'S MOST IMPORTANT object of research was the "golden era" of the interwar Estonian Republic, which he constructed, unlike Gens in his writing, as essentially avant-garde. So while it might in some senses be debatable, it is not entirely false to accept the hypothesis that Lapin's texts about 20th-century Estonian architecture and the neofunctionalist buildings of the architects of the Tallinn school in the 1970s are one of the reasons why 1930s functionalism looms so large in today in people's minds, as it is one of the most important symbols of the free, pre-Soviet-occupation Estonia. The Estonian art historian Heie Treier has even gone so far as to call Lapin and other architects of the Tallinn School "freedom fighters", claiming that functionalism has turned into a symbol of the triumph and freedom won during the War of Independence in 1918–1920. In this line of thought, Treier argues that pure internationalism was never typical of the 1960s and 1970s avant-garde in Soviet Estonia, but was essentially connected with questions of nationalism at the level of memory and identity.[21] This underpins the common view that modernism and avant-garde art in Estonia and the other Baltic states had, above all, nationalist characteristics.[22] Yet it needs to be asserted that the nationalism of the Soviet avant-garde in Estonia was mainly created in the 1990s, soon after the end of the Soviet occupation (by Lapin himself, among others, who constructed this view in many of his self-mythologizing texts from the nineties[23]) while later contributions readdressing the period and the experimental activities at that time consider the nationalist discourse as being clearly too reductive of the multiplicity of meanings and

> **"LAPIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ARCHITECTURE INTRODUCES A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO READING EPOCHS IN ART HISTORY."**

FOTO: ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA

Leonhard Lapin, *Woman-Machine XIV*. Relief print. 1976.   PHOTO: ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA

contexts that critical art and architecture in Estonia operated in during the 1970s.[24]

However, I believe it is not a complete overstatement to emphasize Lapin's role in the assertion of functionalism as a "paradigmatic" style, the primary marker of cultural modernity in Estonian culture. Lapin has been consistently building this tradition, yet he has done so not by holding onto certain historical values and thus moving backwards, but by constantly renewing and innovating functionalism. However, I agree that the programmatic nature of his writing has a part in creating the tradition of functionalism that has become a fixture in Estonian culture, of which the Estonian writer Mati Unt said: "Functionalism is a subconscious that cannot be got rid of."[25]

LAPIN'S MOTIVES, which were strongly based on his artistic agenda, also became evident in his conviction that historiography should be a "living history," which enmeshes history in a dialogue with contemporary culture. Living history meant that the synthesizing of historical stylistic periods was again grounded in the totality and permanence of the spatial element in culture, something that was demonstrated above all through linking 1930s functionalism into the present day. Vilen Künnapu, an architect who was working closely with Lapin at the time, also demonstrates this as a shared conviction of the group as he writes in 1979: "Functionalism as a style or way of thinking can be viewed in very different ways, but it is impossible to ignore it.

Functionalism is within us. We can like it or not, but it is a reality. It is just as real as the 20th century, radio, the automobile, the airplane, Joyce, Beckett, and Picasso. I think the most important problem of contemporary times is pushing the borders of functionalism, its synthesis with historical experience and styles. Functionalism must arise from us, above all from the subconscious – as something synthetic, multilayered, contextual."[26] The concept of living history also signifies the shift in architectural thought to a more ontological level, as again exemplified by the reading of functionalism, which Lapin sees not only as an architectural style but a way of thinking and being: "Architects' conviction that architecture has a leading role in the culture of the era expressed the situation that had developed throughout 20th-century Western culture: just as in the Gothic period, architecture had become chief among the arts. The spatial problem again came to the fore in functionalism, not as a problem of the space between objects but as a problem of existence in general, which was expressed by the geometric language of functionalism."[27]

It was characteristic of Lapin's writing on history that the synthesis also meant updating terminology and proposing different categories of stylistic periods. He believed that terminology in the history of art and architecture should emphasize symbolic meanings, rather than the functionality of terms as used by historians. In this he followed his broader understanding of architectural history as something to be interpreted through its close relations to contemporary architecture. In other words, the terminology of history and architecture should create a link between past and present architecture. Lapin expressed his agenda in writing architectural history most directly in 1986: "It is possible to compose architectural history as an encyclopedia for the bookshelf, but it is also possible to create a living architectural history that ties in directly with what is happening in current architecture, becoming an inseparable part of it. We, the architects, demand living history from the scholars!"[28]

The idea of living history shapes Lapin's narrative of the Modern Movement in a way that provides a smooth – and many would say uncritical – transition throughout the various historical periods and ideas. Again, this is illustrated by his treatment of art nouveau. First, Lapin describes art nouveau as primarily a tradition that has specific formal qualities and combines romantic and rational, female and male elements. He differentiates art nouveau and functionalism by claiming that the former is concerned with imitating forms of nature, whereas the latter is concerned with the structure and principles of nature ("form follows function"); then again, he finds art nouveau to be a general spiritual state common to all the stylistic periods, including Estonian functionalism and 1970s architecture. For instance, he

links the tradition stemming from Karl Burman – one of the most outstanding art nouveau architects in Estonia – with Tiit Kaljundi, Avo-Himm Looveer, and the work of Toomas Rein, Vilen Künnapu, and other architects of the Tallinn school of the 1970s.[29] Although Lapin classifies, divides, distinguishes, and associates to the maximum degree, he is not a positivist in the sense of a scientific tradition, for no matter what he is writing about, he does so based on subjective artistic truth.

Lapin's textual practice and its cultural sources

Reading Lapin, it becomes clear that his "reality" should not be equated with a kind of realism that construes architecture as a "natural" and direct reflection of its socioeconomic base; rather, it is a combination of the ideal and a real, which is, in fact, a specific feature of mythical thinking. As Krista Kodres has written, the ideal in its suggestiveness became even more real for "the myth-builders" than reality itself.[30] Attachment to universal elements in culture is common in general approaches in the Estonian cultural scene during the late 1970s and early 1980s – architects', artists' , and writers' interest in the cultural ethos and the leading principles behind the changes has often been considered a part of postmodernism on the rise.[31]

Yet the fusion of the ideal and the real is certainly not a specific aspect of postmodernism only: the faith in technology (cf. Lapin's machine) and its ability to bring about social change forms one of the central elements, not only of modern architecture, but of a mythical content of modernity in general. Architecture, in this case, was purely an instrument; its form followed function and its goal was to change the world, not to represent it. At the same time, there was an urge to establish architecture as a pure art that follows its own internal rules (the aesthetic expression of the machine age). In one of his early articles, "Symbolic and Literal Aspects of Technology" from 1962, Alan Colquhoun describes those two opposite qualities – the aesthetic and the empirical – and their symbolism. He claimed that even architecture's technological aspect in the 20th century had above all a conceptual or artistic meaning, not a factual one realized in construction.[32]

SO, WHERE SHOULD WE locate this sort of mythical engagement with the idea of the real in late socialist art and architectural historiography in Estonia in terms of the wider cultural context, and how might its critical potential be explained?

Yuri Lotman has also emphasized the associations between modernity and mythological thought structures, in writing about different waves of interest in myth. Although he focuses primarily on turn-of-the-century neo-mythological trends, he sees a clear shift from the romanticist interest in myth to the realist intellectual movement that was from the start an intellectual trend aspiring to self-explanation, and one in which philosophy,

science, and art sought synthesis.[33] This sets the wider frame for Lapin's myth-oriented historiography, in which we can see the Jungian theory of archetypes resonating and, more visibly, Nietzschean influences, and which conceptualizes past culture and architecture based on tradition, the goal of which, according to Lotman, is to "shape *all* forms of cognition as mythopoeia (as opposed to analytical cognition)."[34] So, using the terms of Claude Lévi-Strauss, we might see Lapin's architectural historiography as a form of bricolage characterizing mythical or savage thinking, which has arisen through integrating colorful and disparate stands of material into one textual whole and which is often based on duality, on binary oppositions such as machine and nature, male and female, romantic and rational, etc. At the same time, Lapin's history came about from the assembly of the material being investigated, contemporary art, the academic discourse of art history, literature read, music listened to, theatre performances seen, and fragments from the art world and daily life. Insofar as it places human beings at the center of history, Lapin's version of history is indeed total; yet the interplay between the urge for integrity and fragmentation forms one of the elements that clearly distinguishes his history of the Modern movement from teleological accounts of modern architecture that see the course of architecture as an inevitable progression towards the present moment.

CERTAINLY THERE were also direct sources that influenced Lapin's thinking: information also moved in the Soviet Union and no one operated in an utter vacuum. In 1971, inspired by the new technicist reality and ideas of the information society, Lapin wrote about contemporary artists having a plenitude of information in their arsenal, including references to his theoretical and philosophical influences (Freud, Nietzsche, etc.) as well as to radio and television.[35] In hindsight, Lapin has recalled the 1970s as a time when information flowed calmly and people tried to suck up much as they could; this is why the influences were so diverse (they learned about psychoanalysis and took an interest in existentialism, the absurd, Buddhism, etc.).[36] Lapin has also mentioned Roger Garaudy's concept of "realism without bounds" which the young art historian Jaak Kangilaski introduced in Estonia as a platform for young artists to open up the concept of realism instead of dismissing it, and going beyond the representative quality of art by taking interest in its structural regularities and delving deeper into its spiritual sources.[37] Yet he never considered the importance of Russian art historiography, although he has admitted his Russian was better than his English at that time.[38] As Lapin identifies himself as an avant-garde artist and architect, his network in Russia at the time consisted of underground artists rather than art historians. Also, Lapin's references in his articles are rather unmethodological, sometimes non-existent, but those he does include refer above all to contemporary Western literature that he received via his friends, mostly from Finland and Germany. Even in the early 1960s, ar-

> "THERE WAS AN URGE TO ESTABLISH ARCHITECTURE AS PURE ART THAT FOLLOWS ITS OWN INTERNAL RULES."

Lapin used visual narrative to write history. A photo page from the magazine *Kunst ja Kodu*.

The covers of magazines (*Kunst, Kunst ja Kodu*) in which Lapin published depicted everyday modernist landscapes and contained references to avant-garde history.

chitects had gained rather good access to foreign architectural magazines via the library of the Academy of Sciences in Tallinn. Lapin's, Künnapu's, and others' texts reflect their familiarity with writings and activities by Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, Robert Stern, and the New York Five, without much delay. The number of foreign books that were translated and published in the Stroizdat publishing house in Moscow show that architects and scholars in the Soviet Union did not live in a vacuum – quite an extensive list of books on Western modern and contemporary architecture was published, including works by Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner and Reyner Banham, and accounts by Soviet authors even on experimental architecture in the Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s.[39] One might say that Estonian artists and architects were familiar with the ideas of Western late modernism, although writing and discussions about them only appeared in the 1980s.

SO WE SHOULD NOT overlook the way in which the objectives and accents in the experimental architecture of that time paralleled radical Western architecture that Estonians were aware of. The agenda of the role and autonomy of art in Estonian avant-garde art (or architecture in this case), which Lapin also allows to resonate in his 1970s writings, was just as salient in the postwar critical architecture of the West, which was concerned with defining the role of the architect and the possibilities, not the bare actualities, of architecture; hence the obsessive search for architecture's fundamental codes and principles.[40] The difference was a matter of accent: instead of "machine" and "space", the West was concerned with "typology" and "form". The question of realism in 1970s architecture that retained a fundamental contradiction between autonomous aesthetic production and representation of reality also added further complications. While realism in painting or cinema, means very broadly, the similarity between the image and what it represents, the forms of architecture represent visibly, most fundamentally, architecture itself. Or, as K. Michael Hays has put it: "The real represented by architectural realism is a real that architecture itself has produced".[41] Yet just as, according to Hays, the commitment to the rigorous

formal analysis of architecture in the 1970s in fact made the material of architecture stand against consumerism,[42] and hence was more a part of the heterogeneous work of the neo-avant-garde, Lapin's new reality based on art and architecture was also above all a comment on or a reaction to his time, a program for intervention. It was a reaction not just to oppressive political reality and ideologized architectural practice, but more broadly, to changes in late socialist culture, such as a socialist consumerist turn and the rise of postindustrial culture, that the bloc underwent in the 1960s to 1980s, resulting from the growing influence of mainly Western mass culture, and from the increasing spread of consumer items and the petit-bourgeois lifestyle.[43]

In this way, expanding the strict academic borders of Soviet art and architectural historiography from the realization of an ideological doctrine governing the representation of past reality to something that could be defined by very diverse engagements with reality and history means acknowledging that instead of being specifically "Soviet", the architectural historiography of the late socialist period was also shaped by cultural changes present in Western late modernity. It was not necessarily out of sync with the Western world but was a cultural practice with more universal, transnational tangents, with common conceptual and formal features, in addition to specificities that stemmed from the conditions of late socialist society. It also shows that the experience of modernity in the Soviet Union as it was conveyed in the practice of historiography could also be perceived as deeply personal, interwoven into artistic and life practices and not undisputably and objectively conditioned.

THE CRITICAL POTENTIAL of Lapin's historiography thus lies in the possibility of reinventing Soviet architectural historiography as well as Estonian architecture. As Ulrike Plath has written, this reinvention is characteristic of histories that try to go beyond national history.[44] According to her, such playful, experimental or provisional approaches and reinvented histories are necessary above all for investigating the object of study from different angles, and they help to interpret the same thing in different contexts and identify intercultural transfers. By calling this collage-

like thinking a kind of intellectual gymnastics, which does not necessarily have to lead immediately to new research results, she sees its value precisely in diversifying nationalist histories.[45] In this particular context, the question is also about a different kind of treatment of Soviet society and reality itself, one that refrains from delineating stark contrasts (censorship vs. "writing between the lines," cooperation vs. dissident movements, the USSR vs. the US, etc.) and sees the unofficial or underground discourse as having clear tie-ins with public discourse; one that also ascribes a range of meanings more diverse than executing official state ideology to cultural practices controlled or presented from positions of political power. This in turn enables us to see Soviet history texts, even in their own time, in a context which at least in some degree supports the plurality of narratives. ❌

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references

1 Leopold von Ranke's elucidation of the task of the historical study as showing "only what actually happened" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) is perhaps the most famous and often quoted statement in historiography, and originally appeared in his preface to one of the first of his substantial works, *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* [History of the Romanic and Germanic Peoples from 1494 to 1514] in 1824.

2 See for example Mark Jarzombek, "The Disciplinary Dislocations of (Architectural) History," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 3 (1999): 203; Kazys Varnelis, "Critical Historiography and the End of Theory," *Journal of Architectural Education* 4 (1999): 95–96.

3 Krista Kodres, "Lünka täites: Katse analüüsida Sten Karlingi kunstiteoreetilisi vaateid" [Filling the Gap: An attempt to analyze Sten Karling's theoretical views on art], *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture*, no. 3 (2008): 44–45; Krista Kodres, "Our Own Estonian Art History", *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture, no.* 3–4 (2010): 22–25; Kersti Markus, "Armin Tuulse ja kirikute uurimine" [Armin Tuulse and the study of churches], *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture, no.* 3 (2008): 25–26.

4 In an introduction to a 1997 collection of Lapin's articles and essays, Sirje Helme wrote: "Lapin is shaping the history of Estonian art. And not only the history of our post-war art, but also the history of Estonian art in the 20s and 30s, which emerges in the whirlwind of ideas, syntheses, and parallels offered in his writings", and a few paragraphs later, she adds the opinion that Lapin cannot be objective as he himself is above all an artist. Sirje Helme, "In the Beginning There Was No Word!" in *Kaks kunsti: valimik ettekandeid ja artikleid kunstist ning ehituskunstist, 1971–1995* [Two kinds of art: a collection of presentations and articles on art and construction art, 1971–1995] by Leonhard Lapin (Tallinn: Kunst, 1997), 194.

5 Mart Kalm, "Kattes välja: Eesti 20. sajandi arhitektuuri uurimisest" [On studying Estonian 20th century architecture] in *Eesti kunstiteadus ja kriitika 20. sajandil* [Estonian art history and criticism], ed. Tiina Abel and Piret Lindpere (Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2002), 104.

6 M. Jarzombek, *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–15.

7 The literary historian Jaan Undusk has argued that socialist realism was an ambiguous and empty term that could essentially be used to encompass everything that was written and created in the Soviet Union, and shown how this ideological umbrella term increasingly had to adapt to spontaneous developments in the state and cultural field. Jaan Undusk, "Sotsialistliku realismi lenduv reaalsus: esteetika kui reaalpoliitika riist" [The volatile reality of socialist realism: Aesthetics as a tool of realpolitik], *Vikerkaar* 6 (2013): 40.

8 Krista Kodres, "Writing the Renaissance: Mai Lumiste and the Soviet Art History Discourse," *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture, no.* 3–4 (2013): 46–47.

9 Epp Lankots, *Moodsa arhitektuuri kriitiline historiograafia. Modernsuse käsitlused Leo Gensi ja Leonhard Lapini arhitektuuriajaloolistes tekstides 1960.–1980. aastail.* [Historiography of modern architecture, critical historiography of modern architecture: Narrating modernity in the architectural histories of Leo Gens and Leonhard Lapin in the 1960s–1980s]. (PhD diss., Estonian Academy of Arts, 2014), 99–103.

10 The former was a speech at the exhibition of independent student works at the State Art Institute in 1971 and the latter a paper he presented in *Harku '75: Objects, Concepts,* – an exhibition and symposium that took place at the Institute of Experimental Biology in Harku, near Tallinn, in 1975.

11 Leonhard Lapin, "Taie kujundamas keskkonda" [Art designs the environment] in *Kaks kunsti*, 16–18; Leonhard Lapin, "Objective art," *ARTMargins* 2 (2013): 172–185.

12 Leonhard Lapin, "Taie kujundamas keskkonda" [Art designs the environment], 16.

13 Mari Laanemets, "Kunst kunsti vastu: Kunstniku rolli ja positsiooni ümbermõtestamise katsest eesti kunstis 1970. aastatel" [Art against art. rethinking the role and position of the artist in Estonian art in the 1970s], *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture* 1–2 (2011): 65–66; Andres Kurg, "Introduction to Leonhard Lapin's 'Objective Art'," ARTMargins 2 (2013): 163–167.

14 Kurg, "Introduction to Leonhard Lapin's 'Objective Art'," 167.

15 Laanemets, "Kunst kunsti vastu" [Art against art], 67. Lapin himself has written about the series as follows: "In the series of pictures *Masinad*, I don't imagine, don't reflect, don't even analyze the natural world of machines; instead I symbolically represent how the world reflects back in my consciousness. [...] My goal is not, analogously to classical Constructivism, to exalt the artificial environment by implementing it in art, or analogously to neoromantics (Surrealists, Dadaists, abstractionists), to expose it, but simply to present the natural world of machinery as a real fact via visual art." (Leonhard Lapin, "Masinad" [Machines], in Lapin, *Kaks kunsti*, 59.)

16 Lapin, "Objective art," 176.

17 Leonhard Lapin, "Kunst kunsti vastu" [Art against art], in Leonhard Lapin, *Valimik artikleid ja ettekandeid kunstist 1967–1977* [Selection of articles and papers on art 1967–1977] (manuscript, Tallinn, 1977), 84.

18 Leonhard Lapin, "Arhitektuur kui kunst" [Architecture as art] in *Arhitektuur: kogumik ettekandeid, artikleid, vastukajasid, dokumente ja tõlkeid uuemast arhitektuurist* [Architecture: collection of papers, articles, reactions, documents, and translations about contemporary architecture], ed. Leonhard Lapin. (Manuscript. Tallinn, 1979), 7.

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20 He writes: "Stylistic analysis of art nouveau showed that, due to the synthetic nature of style and architecture's dominant position in art culture, its buildings embody a more extensive sphere than just art or architecture. In art nouveau, the conflict between natural world and man made nature, instinct and intellect, myth and reality, man and machine become incarnate; here tradition mingles with innovation, decadence with progress, beauty with ugliness, truth with lies." Leonhard Lapin, "Arengujooni Eesti seitsmekümnendate aastate arhitektuuris" [Developments in Estonian architecture in the 1970s], *Ehituskunst* 1 (1981): 11.

21 Heie Treier, *Kohalik modernsus kunstis: Eesti varamodernistliku kunsti teoreetiline ja ajalooline kontseptualiseerimine ning Karl Pärsimägi paradigmaleidmise perioodil* [Local modernity in art: the theoretical and historical conceptualization of early Estonian modernist art and Karl Pärsimägi in the period of finding the paradigm] (PhD diss., Estonian Academy of Arts, 2004), 74–75.

22 See for example Steven Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: from the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

23 For example Leonhard Lapin, *Avangard* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2003); Leonhard Lapin, *Pimeydestä valoon: Viron taiteen avantgarde neuvostomiehityksen aikana* [From the Darkness to the Light: Estonian artistic avant-garde during the Soviet Occupation] (Helsinki: Otava, 1996).

24 Andres Kurg, *Boundary Disruptions: Late-Soviet Transformations in Art, Space and Subjectivity in Tallinn, 1968–1979* (PhD diss., Estonian Academy of Arts, 2014); Andres Kurg and Mari Laanemets , eds., *Keskkonnad, projektid, kontseptsioonid. Tallinna kooli arhitektid 1972–1985 = Environment, Projects, Concepts.: Architects of the Tallinn School, 1972–1985* (Tallinn: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum, 2008); Mari Laanemets, *Zwischen westlicher Moderne und sowjetischer Avantgarde: Inoffizielle Kunst in Estland, 1969–1978* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2011).

25 Mati Unt, "Libahunt karjatänaval" [Werewolf on the street], *Sirp ja Vasar,* July 19, 1983, 9.

26 Vilen Künnapu, "Väljavõtteid märkmikust" [Exceprts from the notebook], in *Arhitektuur: kogumik ettekandeid, artikleid, vastukajasid, dokumente ja tõlkeid uuemast arhitektuurist* [Architecture: collection of papers, articles, reactions, documents, and translations about contemporary architecture], ed. Leonhard Lapin, (manuscript. Tallinn, 1979), 11.

27 Leonhard Lapin, "Eesti funktsionalism" [Estonian functionalism], *Ehituskunst,* no. 2–3, (1982–1983): 84.

28 Leonhard Lapin, "XX sajandi arhitektuuri terminoloogilisi probleeme" [Terminological problems of 20th-century architecture], in Leonhard Lapin, *Kaks kunsti*, 106.

29 Leonhard Lapin "Eesti *art nouveau* loomus" [The Nature of Estonian Art Nouveau], in Leonhard Lapin, *Kaks kunsti*, 21.

30 Kodres has called Lapin, Künnapu, and the Tallinn architects of the 1970s the generation of myth-builders, as the mythic structure of architecture, manifested by way of repetitions and returns of ideas and cultural practices, held a central place in their critical architectural practices of that time. Krista Kodres, "Müüdiloojad ja teised" [Myth-builders and Others], *Ehituskunst*, 5, 1991, 3–14.

31 Krista Kodres, "Müüdiloojad ja teised", 5.

32 Alan Colquhoun, "Modern Architecture and Its Symbolic Dimension," in Alan Colquhoun, *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change*. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1995), 28.

33 Juti Lotman, "Kirjandus ja mütoloogia" [Art and mythology], in Juri Lotman, *Kultuurisemiootika* [Cultural semiotics] (Tallinn: Olion, 1990), 338–339.

34 Ibid.

35 Leonhard Lapin, "Taie kujundamas keskkonda" [Art designs the environment], 23.

36 Leonhard Lapin, "Startinud kuuekümnendatel: Mälestusi ja mõtteid" [Started in the sixties: Memories and thoughts], *Kunst* 1 (1986), 17.

37 Ibid.

38 Author's interview with Leonhard Lapin, October 31, 2014. Notes are in the author's possession.

39 See for example D. K. Bernshtein, A. A. Voronov, V. L. Glazychev et al., *Arkhitektura Zapada*, vol. 3, *Protivorechiia i poiski 60-70-kh godov* [Western Architecture, vol. 3, Contradictions and searches of the 60s and 70s] (Moscow: Strojizdat, 1983).

40 K. Michael Hays, *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 13. In 1983, Udo Kultermann wrote in the German magazine AIT (*Architektur, Innenarchitektur, tehnische Ausbau*) about Vilen Künnapu's work in terms of autonomous architecture with its own laws. Kultermann calls Künnapu's and other Estonian young architects' work based on local tradition "primeval", and sees the same tendency toward autonomous architecture arising in many other countries. He compares Künnapu's architectonic studies with Peter Eisenman's series *Houses I–IX*. Udo Kultermann, "Zeitgenössische estnische Architektur: Die Arbeiten von Vilen Kuennapu" [Contemporary Estonian architecture: the works of Vilen Künnapu], *AIT* 2 (1983): 90–91.

41 K. Michael Hays, *Unprecedented Realism: The Architecture of Machado and Silvetti* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 22.

42 Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, 11–12.

43 Andres Kurg, "Almanahh Kunst ja Kodu 1973–1980" [Art and home 1973–1980], *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture, no.* 2 (2004), 116.

44 Ulrike Plath, "Kadunud kuldne kese: Kuus pilti Eesti ajaloost rahvusüleses kollaažis" [Lost Golden Mean: Six Pictures on Estonian History in Transnational Collage], *Vikerkaar* 7/8 (2009), 93.

45 Ibid.

Functions of realist art in Sweden, circa 1970

Lena Svedberg & Olle Kåks

by **Charlotte Bydler** and **Dan Karlholm**

Lena Svedberg, *Indomitable Aldman – Superhero of the id*, 1969, first picture (ink and gouache washes, pencil drawing, and photo collage on paper. Series of 57 paper sheets, each 50 x 70 cm.) Moderna Museet Collection, purchased 1970.

What is the function of realist expression in the art of the 1970s, that is, after Modernism? A lesson from Modernism was that an actual "real" could never be reached, touched, or attained in art, nor even directly represented. Realist art also relates to material-technological regimes and discourses that make up reality. Following the models of Lacanian psychoanalysis and of Benjaminian materialist analysis of shifting technologies of reproduction, a desire for the "real" could be felt throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, as realist aspirations became central again in many parts of the world, not least from our vantage point of Northern Europe and Sweden. In some respects this realist vogue was similar to that in the nineteenth century in Europe and Russia, but it also differs, we argue, from all historical versions, from bourgeois realism to socialist realism. What was at stake is better captured by the term social realism, but most of all by what was referred to at the time in Sweden as "new realism".

In 1976, the Swedish art critic Bengt Olvång expressed his eagerness for artists to focus on the content or subject matter that needed to be communicated to the public, rather than on form or style. Recalling an old dichotomy, Olvång distinguished between an interest in the actual content and a contrasting mode of representation devoted to ap-
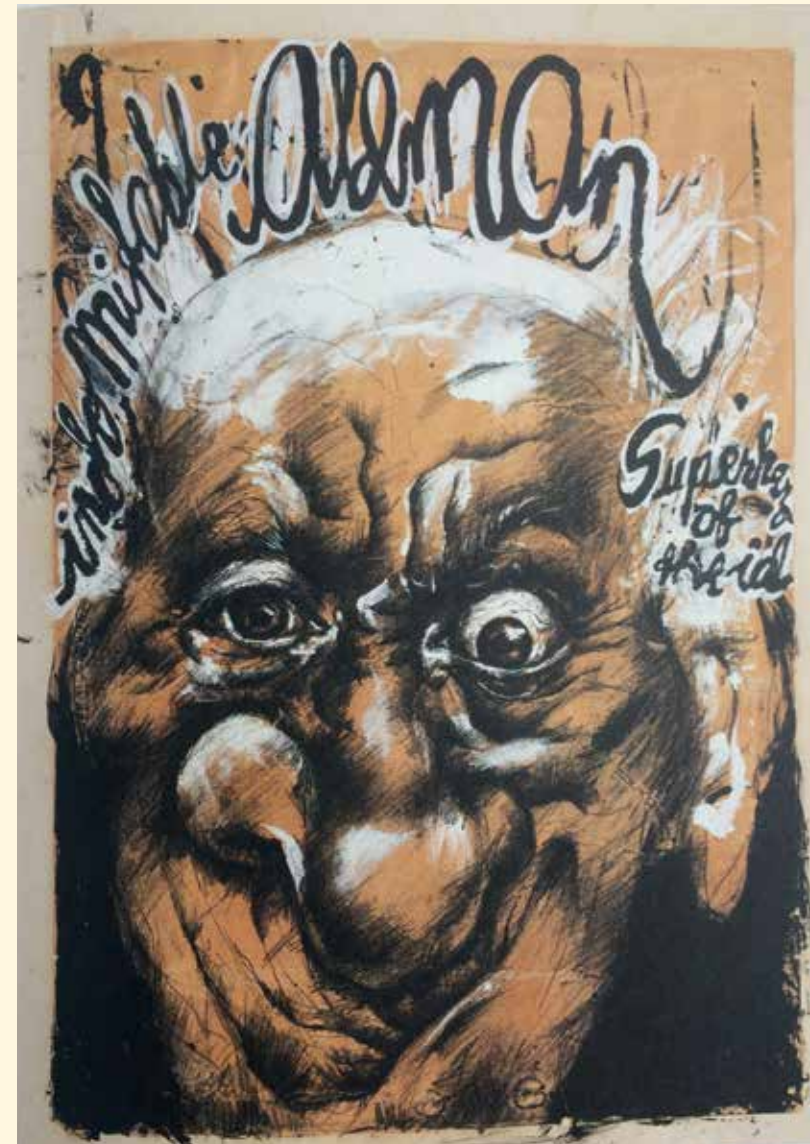
abstract

The concepts of social realism and new realism are developed in relation to the artworks of Lena Svedberg and Olle Kåks. A comparison between the artists' uses of the concepts of social realism and function is presented. How the realist approach during the years around 1970 played out in the force field of society and the psyche, the collective realm and the individual, is exemplified by our two very different case studies. Svedberg's political narratives compose montages in which fictional, metaphorical figures are inserted side by side with political leaders drawn from newspaper clips. Kåks's allegory-like oil painting shows a stone worker working in the face of his imminent disappearance. They both reveal myths as opposed to historically manifested commodity relations.
KEY WORDS: Realism, Lena Svedberg, Olle Kåks, Jacques Lacan.

pearance, aesthetic sensibility, or downright abstraction, which he vehemently disliked.[1] Preferring realist to abstract art begs the question what kind of realism is meant. In order to express what he viewed as the "right" kind of realism in images, ambiguous as they are, a further distinction is needed: the independent left-wing realism that Olvång and his peers championed, as opposed to residues of academic, bourgeois painting habits lumped together (inaccurately) as right-wing. Sometimes, this distinction is described as *critical* versus *affirmative* realism. Before affirming their relevance, however, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether criticality cannot enter from either side, or both, or whether the left's repeated emphasis on the critical as a positive value is not also affirmative in itself.

In Sweden, there has never been any politically imposed aesthetic doctrine on realism (socialist, capitalist, or any other kind). But there was keen interest in realism as an idiom in the visual arts, and it had decidedly political ramifications. The cultural climate during the 1960s and 1970s was "leftist" or socialist. By the 1960s, "reality" was permeated by mass media images and new technology (television and early computing in particular). Popular culture had become overtly sexualized and violent. The "new" realism that saw the light of day around 1970 in Sweden was not uniform.

Keeping in mind, also, that "it would be a mistake to distinguish over-hastily [...] between an affirmative and a critical realism",[2] we try to keep an open mind about this issue for the time being.

Before we look for "functions" of realist art in Sweden, as our title announces, this term needs explaining. A function does not merely indicate how something works; it is tantamount to a foreseeable outcome. There is an element of calculation here, which could be connected with the overall repoliticization of culture in Europe during the long 1960s in particular. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* traces the meaning of this word to the 1530s, when the noun refered to "one's proper work or purpose; power of acting in a specific proper way", drawn from the Latin *functionem* for "a performance, an execution".[3] The performative aspect of function is key; functions are not only foreseeable outcomes, they constitute processes of arriving there. A function is the realization of an aim.

Our first case of functional realism is Lena Svedberg's series

known as *Herr Aldman – Superhero av världssalltet/Mr. Aldman – Superhero of the Universe* (1969). This work originally had the more evocative English title *Indomitable Aldman – Superhero of the id*.[4] Our second case is Olle Kåks' s oil painting *Stenarbetaren/The Stoneworker* (1970). While the former could be described as a paradigmatic example of critical social realism, with its explicit political content and strong satirical edge, the latter is typically referred to as affirmative – poetic, individualist, or bourgeois. The two artists, who had not much in common, were actually compared in a questionnaire on realism by the influential art journal *Konstrevy* in 1970.

Lena Svedberg's work, which was strongly associated with the underground journal *Puss* is described by the editor Leif Nylén as not only contrary to, but indeed "contradicting", the work of Olle Kåks.[5] Nylén's opinion seems to have been that Svedberg was very clear about her political position while Kåks was not.

BESIDES THE FACT that both artists appear as examples of realism in this 1970 issue of *Konstrevy*, is it still justified to discuss both of them in terms of social realism? Furthermore, are the terminological camps of criticality and affirmation still apt to characterize their respective artwork? In the decades that have passed since these images were conceived, Svedberg's reputation has arguably outstripped Kåks's, despite the fact that her career was prematurely interrupted, while Kåks had a long productive life and was featured during the 1980s and 1990s as a key Swedish painter, during which time Svedberg was marginalized together with others in the genre of political satire.[6]

Lena Svedberg, *Indomitable Aldman* amid "the information"; with all the lost UN declarations for the safe return of Palestinian refugees; and with J.F. Kennedy uttering his famous phrase.

Pictures of an unidentified person, Norman Mailer, and Fidel Castro.

After this brief introduction to Lena Svedberg's and Olle Kåks' s work, followed by a section on realism and the trajectory from social to new realism, an interpretation follows, including background information. The concepts of social realism and new realism are developed in relation to the artworks. Then a comparison between the artists' uses of the concepts of social realism and its function is presented with a conclusion. How the realist approach during the years around 1970 played out in the force field of society and the psyche, the collective realm and the individual, is exemplified by our two very different case studies.

A note on realism

The "real" in realism does not refer to reality pure and simple, i.e. to some unmarked condition of being in the world. Realism is not a descriptive reference to the real or reality, but a critical term. Realism is indistinguishable from desire.[7] It could be the desire, for example, of Caravaggio in the mid-1600s to break with the prevailing decorum of religious iconography, or the desire of Gustave Courbet in the mid-1800s to reveal the true nature of social existence as concealed by bourgeois ideology and the conventions of academic painting. Realism can also imply the aesthetic desire to make the world visible, as in Gustave Flaubert's novels or in Édouard Manet's paintings of mundane objects.[8]

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, photography had

"REALISM IS NOT A DESCRIPTIVE REFERENCE TO THE REAL OR REALITY, BUT A CRITICAL TERM."

been embraced by painters to enhance their realist ambitions. During the 1960s, photorealism was openly deployed in order to challenge the historical institution of more or less realist painting and representation – indeed even the institution of art as such – and to embrace new technologies and popular mass culture. The photorealist artists sought to undermine facile references to a realist code, by pointing to the constructed and artificial character of any realist picture.

In all the above examples of realism, there are distinct and known enemies: the Church, academic painting, abstract formalism, and the established capitalist art world, respectively. We can collect these clearly delineated discursive references and call them "antithetical realism". These are used to set up a dialectical game in which representations of thesis or antithesis are sometimes located only in the mind. Had the term *realism* been merely an open reference to the real and reality, which is precisely what the rhetoric of realism still maintains, the opposite or counterpart would simply have been the unreal, nonreal, fictional or imaginary. But the paradox of realism – in all its forms and political tonalities – is that the non-realist case is never just an empty negative term, the nonreal or fictional in place of the factual. Instead, we argue, it is *another ideal*, hence a function. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, realism in the arts refers to "the accurate, detailed, unembellished depiction of

nature or of contemporary life. Realism rejects imaginative idealization in favor of a close observation of outward appearances."[9] Such commonplace polarization fails to register the dialectic tensions which any strong desire for "unembellished depiction" reveals. For Courbet, whose Realist manifesto of 1855 famously opened the field of realism in the arts, the new style was "the negation of the Ideal",[10] and by ideal, he referred to the classical academic tradition. It can be argued that this active negation, which has been connected with the onset of Modernism, lays bare the strong desire of the movement. In the case of Socialist realism, however, the outcome was that the real emerged as a new ideal. In socialist realism, the element of idealization is part of the scholarly definition of the movement:

> Following the example of Courbet, they [the Socialist realists] declared that art should lay bare the ills of society. It was argued, however, that after the Revolution these ills has been removed and the function of art now lay in an idealization of the benefits of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[11]

Realist art's "function" is thus to bring about an "idealization" that works as a motivation for the new terms of political existence and compensates for the lack of economic incentive and market fame. This form of realism is hard to dissociate from idealism (but for the fact that the latter also includes bourgeois culture, academic values, and imagination). Idealism is said to be the intellectual opposite of materialism, thus we need

an algorithm designed to calculate relations between historical materialism and collective imaginary response, if we are to believe Benjamin. Why? Because otherwise we miss something important: the interpretation as part of the phantasmagoria, the dialectical dream image.

From social realism to new realism

In Sweden in the 1960s and 70s, a powerful wave of social realism made itself felt. The term is typically said to represent "a democratic tradition of independent socially motivated artists, usually of left-wing or liberal persuasion." Furthermore, it "almost always utilizes a form of descriptive or critical realism".[12] With the preceding distinction in mind, between "affirmative" and "critical" realism, we may wonder whether here is yet another way of addressing a conflict of sorts within the concept of social realism: "descriptive or critical" – as if the critical version did not proceed by describing, and the descriptive version was neither "left-wing or liberal", that is politically oriented, and merely bent on describing outward appearances. The truth of most examples of social realism in art is rather that they embrace elements of both. On the other hand, the statement connects to contemporary news reports, television, documentaries, and popular culture, which belong to a world of global interaction deeply entangled in capitalism. In relation to composition and narration, social realism was often built on semiotic structures of inversion or grotesque turns.

In art history, realism is typically conceived of as a style based on the artist's attitude vis-à-vis reality or the world. The style of

Lena Svedberg.

The periodical Puss [Kiss].

realism in nineteenth-century Russia or France is fairly recognizable, with its peasants, workers, and shaggy members of the proletariat, in a palette of ochre and dark greens.[13] Socialist realism was never one style, but rather "a method of creation".[14] Neither was it merely an attitude, which would falsely suggest the presence of a choice or alternative for the artists, as in France or Russia of the mid-nineteenth century. Instead it was a program invented to prevent the bad and promote the good in equal measures, and ultimately to create a new socialist human being.

HOW COULD REALISM – visualizations of the actual, the genuine, the gory, and the particular – function as a critical idiom for social justice in this situation? In order to follow the systematic nature of functions, realism is expected to have certain effects, as in "press button and watch outcome", or as one would calculate the trajectory of a bullet in order to kill. For this to happen, the interpretation of an image needs to include the beholders' emotional response. Here is how Walter Benjamin explains "the opposition between materialist and universalist modes of representation":

> The universalist mode is always idealistic because undialectical. Dialectic in fact inevitably moves toward representing each thesis or antithesis that it encounters as the fresh synthesis of a triadic structure, and in this way it penetrates ever deeper into the interior of the objects and only via the latter does it represent a universe. Any other concept of a universe is without object, idealist.[15]

Agit-prop socialist realism clearly makes use of this assumption to serve society.[16] So did social realism, in a critical way. How could we argue that one or the other pictorial representation produced the real workers' art – a realist statement on that experience?

Just as there was not one Social realism, the Swedish left was not at all united. In 1967, the artist Carl Johan De Geer was sentenced to prison for an exhibition at Galleri Karlsson[17] that included Swedish flags and antinationalist slogans. In response to this incident, his fellow artist Lars Hillersberg founded the notorious underground magazine *Puss [Kiss]*. In the late 1960s there was violent dissension within the left, with numerous fractions and new organizations.[18] And whereas bourgeois and rightist camps raved against Minister of Culture and Education Olof Palme as a state socialist, the radical left identified the Swedish Social Democratic Party not as an ally, but as an enemy.[19]

The term more widely used than social realism in Sweden at the time was neo-realism [nyrealism].[20] Its French roots in *nouveau réalisme* notwithstanding, it turned out differently in the local Swedish context than in Paris in the early 1960s, and was more associated, perhaps, with the photorealist tendencies of the pop art movement that were introduced at Moderna Museet in 1964.[21] The new realist wave took massive inspiration from the politicization of culture, and balanced uneasily between wanting to speak to the uneducated working class and to left-wing intellectuals. On the whole, however, it took a critical stand against modern capitalism and the art market as part of it, in solidarity with the workers and ordinary people. Some of the art was blatantly political – on a par with quickly-made propaganda material for demonstrations – while other examples of this art were more ambiguous and indirect, even gloomy and despairing.

Lena Svedberg

Lena Svedberg composed the synopsis for her *Indomitable Aldman – Superhero of the id* (1969) for the 1969 Paris Biennale des jeunes artistes (Paris Youth Biennial) together with Peter Wanger. It was customary for the editors of *Puss* to bring in cues and clippings or photos for Svedberg to draw.[22] In this case Peter Wanger provided a story for Lena Svedberg to illustrate. They decided to make a parody of the Superman comic genre. Aldman was given two superpowers: one was the ability to inflate to the size of a highrise building, and the other to roll himself in tar and feathers and fly.[23]

A close-up of Aldman sets the tone of the plot on the very first page: the right side of his face looks normal while the left side stares psychotically. The protagonist with this Yiddish-sounding name looks like an antihero, a ridiculous drunkard with a large nose. However, in the last four images, he ends up as an "acclaimed hero of / Labour (by the central comittée)". His characterization as "indomitable" links to the Id of Freudian psychoanalysis. He cannot be curbed or tamed; he is constantly overtaken by impulses.[24] In 57 scenes, Svedberg and Wanger compose a narrative based on events that were then unfolding, with a focus on Palestine and the Middle East but also including events in the USA and Cuba, as well as in Europe (e.g. "the Democratic Republic of North Ireland").[25] With grim humor, she renders world politico-economic and religious conflicts. Her methods and techniques are ingenious. We propose that this montage or constellation reveals myths while at the same time absolving the artist from the responsibility of making an adequate representation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The faces in the images fall into three categories. Historic, public persons are evidently based on media footage. Aldman and the Lady are drawn freehand but remain recognizable. There are other characters in the plot that are harder to identify. The latter two categories tend to be involved in sexual activities and/or slovenly dressed. Throughout the story, colors remain restricted to an impeccable triad of black, white and beige, with occasional red accents.

SVEDBERG'S METHOD for producing social realist pictures is complex: In the first register of realism identifiable public personalities like politicians, performers, activists, etc.) , the faces are copied from contemporary media. Then there is a second register of reality consisting of the "anti-heroes" of the story: Aldman (the "Jew") and the Lady (she remains nameless, but has all the attributes of a Madonna/prostitute figure) both grotesque stereotypes but also therefore recognizable. Finally, there are more or less abstract characters, caricatures, shrunk or stretched and sometimes based on press portraits, but in a cut-and-paste technique with sexualized overtones that create absurd settings. The narrative cartoon elements in Lena Svedberg's *Aldman*, including speech bubbles, anchor the story in a satirical tradition in which a fleeting and particular image, with comments on political events in the contemporary world, intersects with the historical relations of production. We believe that Svedberg thus produced pictures close to those envisioned by Walter Benjamin in relation to the Western capitalist art world.[26] If it came at the price of heavy dependence on current debates in the media, it would not have made any difference. The longevity of art that

is a quality of Olle Kåks's worker motif would be sacrificed for the benefit of more urgent popular education in the form of Brechtian agit-prop.

In the second picture, Aldman has collapsed on a table with a bottle in his hand. A caption tells us that he "gathers strength through meditation". The Lady throws herself on him. Our interpretation of the *Aldman* suite relies heavily on Fredrik Liew's 2014 catalog, published in connection with the exhibition that he curated at Moderna Museet that year. Thanks to his generous publication of one of the pictures, we have arrived at a slightly different characterization of the Lady, who becomes more of a pushy brothel madam.[27] In picture number four, the Lady cries and urges Aldman to help her find the country she left 22 years ago ("Find it for me, huh").[28] If this promised land has been lost for 22 years and Svedberg made the suite in 1969, her claim leaves us at the year 1947. This was just after World War II; India and Pakistan were separated, and Israel was created from Palestine. The UN had many reservations, as we shall see.

A few pages later, Aldman lands in Beirut helped by one of his superpowers – flight by tar and feathers. In what looks like a newspaper stand, he runs into Noam Chomsky (if we have identified him correctly).[29] The US polymath (linguist, philosopher, and anarchist political activist opposed to the US invasion of Vietnam) is known to support a proposal under which Arabs and Jews would live together in Palestine/Israel. The picture sheet contains several references to historic French rebellions, such as "L'enragé" – "the enraged" – a satirical periodical of the 1968 student revolts, named after a faction in the Revolution of 1789. Aldman, with an issue of *Puss* in his hand, seems dumbstruck by all the media messages and asks, "Could you give me some information?" Like some modern counterpart to Dante Alighieri's guide Virgil in *The Divine Comedy*, Chomsky (?) gives Aldman a tip: "Try at the market place".[30]

THE STORY LINE GOES ON: "On his way to the market Aldman finds a resolution that could have changed the course of history but Aldman has lost his glasses". Poor Aldman desperately searches through his pockets. Nailed to the wall behind him is a poster that reads "Resolution ONU [French: UN Resolution] 194 (III) § 11 [issued in 1948, concerning the right to return for Palestine refugees]; 1456 (XIV) 1959, 1604 (XV) 1961 [...]" – listing all UN resolutions made since 1948. Perhaps we are to understand Aldman's lost glasses as a bad excuse for not seeing these lost opportunities.

Some pictures later, we see Aldman as a small figure behind J.F. Kennedy. In the black picture space, Aldman can be seen as a puppeteer saying "hypocrite lecteur" ("hypocrite reader") to a hand puppet Kennedy speaking his famous words "Ich bin ein Berliner" (written over his mouth in capital letters) while he seems to don an Arab headdress. The next picture is dominated by a face saying: "[I]'m the superjew",

> "WITH GRIM HUMOR, SHE RENDERS WORLD POLITICO-ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS."

while Aldman's head pops up as if behind a screen, confirming: "mon semblable" [my kin]. In the next scene, Aldman is juxtaposed with Norman Mailer against the same theatrical black background. Mailer says, "[I]'m the white negro", and Aldman counters, "mon frère" (my brother). This is a reference to Mailer's article "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster".[31]

So nothing is what it seems to be. Svedberg has included the words "hypocrite lecteur", "mon semblable", and "mon frère" from Charles Baudelaire's introduction to *Les fleurs du mal* (1857), a poem called "Au lecteur".[32] It is an instruction for a reader who is about to learn of the malevolent side of mankind: double *entendres*, false consciousness and depravity. All these pictures seem to mock UN world political negotiations as if the outcomes were already decided behind the scenes. An oil pipeline comes to serve as the mythical Ariadne's red thread that helped her lover Theseus find the way out of the Minotaur's labyrinth. The pipeline helps Aldman to find the place where the leaders of the Vatican, the USA, the Soviet Union, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, France, South Africa, and Ethiopia have gathered to plot. It seems they came to the region not only with the agenda to stabilize it; they also had geopolitical and economic motives connected to oil.

LENA SVEDBERG'S constellations of words and images from different contexts ape appearances, feign sincerity, and suggest that the only possible outcome was insincerity. What if we did a reading of her satirical *Aldman* story based on Walter Benjamin's theory of dialectical images?[33] It could set up connections between the oil economy and political arrangements to secure access to it. It could also use the three registers of reality to spell out the dialectics as a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. But to make any sense of this message of words and pictures is a daunting task 40 years later. According to Peter Wanger, Lena Svedberg worked faster than he did so in the end she came to decide how the story would unfold.[34] There were many loose threads as a result. The images were perhaps not meant to last longer than the Paris Biennale where Svedberg's audience would recognize their own truth, the *Jetztzeit*. Some characters can be recognized from the press such as the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat with his keffiyeh, the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the French President Charles de Gaulle. These become clues that make it just possible to get a basic grip on the story. Those who read French and English may also identify political topics related to names or titles. But it would require an extensive search to identify verbal quotations (and paraphrase) from political leaders, theorists, and social activists. We need to approach Svedberg's imagery through other kinds of contexts to understand the tone and the critical social realism of *Aldman*. What could explain her emotional investment?

There is the obvious biographical context. Lena Svedberg

was born in 1946 in Gothenburg. Two years later her family moved to Stockholm. Her father Nils Svedberg was an economist and lawyer at the Swedish National Audit Office. Through Swedish missionary and foreign aid organisations he got the opportunity to work as one of many foreign advisors to the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie. That was in 1959, and thirteen-year-old Lena Svedberg and her younger sister Lotta went with their parents. Their mother Greta Svedberg coorganised an infrastructure through which Swedish couples could adopt Ethiopian children. Having spent five years in Addis Ababa, Lena Svedberg returned to Stockholm in 1964.[35] She must have been startled by the contrast, having followed her mother to various Ethiopian villages, on returning to a welfare state. Back in Stockholm she pursued her artistic career. At the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, she met Lars Hillersberg and they became friends.

HER TOOLS WERE cheap materials, a visual style based on figuration, and a satirical plot in cartoon format where a snappy formulation could be made graphically expressive. In fact many graphic artists preferred ephemeral and visually effective reproductions on paper to unique oil paintings or sculptures. Indeed, graphic media had proved their worth in the 1968 Paris student revolt.[36]

The May revolt in Paris 1968 had one of its cores in the École des Beaux-Arts, where during some hectic spring weeks an *Atelier populaire* produced no less than 350 posters, most of them made as serigraphs and linoleum cuts, primitive in technique, basic in content. Of course General de Gaulle was primarily caricatured and criticized. The pictures varied in quality, but no one could miss the fierceness of the attacks. In Sweden, a corresponding activity arose.[37]

Just as some media were thought of as more effective than others, the Paris Youth Biennial was considered an interesting venue, particularly since this 1969 edition took place only one year after the Parisian students' revolt. Another Swedish contribution to the Paris biennial, Anders Petersen's photographic series *Café Lehmitz*, can be seen in Liew's 2014 catalogue below Lena Svedberg's *Aldman*. The *Puss* editors also sent an issue.[38] Could it have been the 1969 issue with a cover by Ulf Rahmberg, visible in the scene where Aldman asks Chomsky for "information"? There are many similarities between the graphically effective and poetic slogans associated with the French artists collective Situationist International's *Atelier populaire* and the posters by Svedberg's editor colleagues at *Puss*, Karin Frostenson, Carl Johan De Geer, Lars Hillersberg, and Ulf Rahmberg.

The last four pictures present a clear verbal message, but the figures are more difficult to identify. The first two seem to include representatives of the Black Civil Rights Movement but

> "INDEED, GRAPHIC MEDIA HAD PROVED THEIR WORTH IN THE 1968 PARIS STUDENT REVOLT."

Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*, oil on canvas, 1849 (destroyed)

Olle Kåks, *Stenarbetaren* (*The Stoneworker*), oil on canvas (210x240 cm), 1970. Norrköpings Konstmuseum

there are also others; some are performers known to have spoken up against racial discrimination in the USA. A caption in red runs across the last four sheets: "Aldman is / ACCLAIMED HERO OF / LABOUR (by the central comittée) / Happy End." Written in black on the first of the four is the legend: "But the Lady leaves for where her skills still are needed" – and indeed the Lady cries in the lower left corner of the picture space: "I'll go to Tel Aviv where they still need me."[39] So we are left to guess whether the Lady's last words imply that Tel Aviv is particularly sinful. In the second of the four concluding pictures, there are militant activists from the USA: the philosopher Angela Davis; the author-artist Valerie Solanas (in a hat); Stokely Carmichael, the member of Black Panther Party's armed branch (wearing glasses); Eldridge Cleaver, the founding member of the Black Panther Party (in the middle on lower row); among others.[40] In the last but one picture, Aldman sits on musician Frank Zappa's shoulders, hands raised to the sky, in celebration of the fact that he has been "ACCLAIMED HERO OF LABOUR (by the central comittée)". Besides Frank Zappa, the group includes Malcolm X (?), a leader of the Nation of Islam; the philosopher Susan Sontag (?); and the US comedian Lenny Bruce (and a man whom neither of us can identify). In the final picture, there is a photorealistic portrait image of Fidel Castro with "Happy End" written by hand, and a typed note glued to the lower right corner. It says:

> Presumptive U.S. buyers are notified that the last picture, representing the Cuban minister president Fidel Castro, can be removed on request and the words Happy End repainted in white on the nearest adjacent picture, which depicts no persons connected to countries against which the U.S. maintain trade blockade.
> Love
> Lena [Svedberg] & Peter [Wanger]

Olle Kåks

The Swedish artist Olle Kåks (1941–2003), painter, graphic artist and sculptor, was trained at the Royal Academy (1962–1968) where he later became professor of art (1979–1987) and rector (1987–1999), and remained a board member until his death. In contrast to the short life and ambivalent career of Lena Svedberg, Kåks was an important proponent of the most established field of high art in Sweden from the later 1970s until his death.

His oil painting *Stenarbetaren* (*The Stoneworker*) is fairly large and was finished in 1970. It was one of eight paintings shown in the exhibition *Svenskt alternativ* (*Swedish Alternative*) at Moderna Museet the same year. The show then travelled to the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, to Louisiana in Denmark, and to two venues in Norway in 1971. While the eight paintings of the suite are now dispersed in various locations, this one is an important part of the collection of Norrköpings Konstmuseum in Sweden. The scarce literature on Olle Kåks tends to highlight his personal views and private struggles, as the following quotation may exemplify:

> The metaphors in these paintings are both intricate and provocative. Here the artist shows the fluctuation between vulnerability and the newly achieved confidence in his work as an artist. With their considerable size, 240 x 210 cm, the paintings captured the attention of the spectators and place them right in the center of the narrative.[41]

This line of reading is not what I will pursue in this essay, but the last sentence, on the position of the whether, is important. But what narrative could possibly be alluded to here? In my interpretation, this painting is hardly narrative at all, but more an emblem or allegory. Not even the suite of eight paintings form a legible narrative, as far as I can see. What is indeed "intricate"

Gerhard Nordström, *Ödehuset [The Abandoned House],* 1974.

is how realist elements appear as if mounted on a blank canvas or empty space, seeming precisely to undo any coherent realist content or message.

Narrative or not, let us begin by addressing what is actually seen going on in *The Stoneworker*, alternating from form to content and back again. The painting displays a man working, obviously a stone worker wielding his hammer. He is dressed in a clearly recognizable blue worker's outfit. The cap alone was a clear enough sign of the worker in 1970, which is no longer quite the case. His gloves and shoes are a little clumsy, big and protective. He is all alone, which is emphasized by the empty space that opens up around him. Also, his central position highlights his singularity, if not his individuality. The viewer can make out that the man is not young, but elderly, near retirement. The worker holds a similar pose – although viewed from a different angle – to one of the two workers in Gustave Courbet's famous – now sadly lost – painting *The Stonebreakers* from 1849.

Whether or not this reference to Courbet is intentional, it was clearly in tune with a general interest in the French version of Realism and its socialist underpinnings during this period. For example, *Konstrevy* no. 4 of 1970 featured a theme section on Realism, in which eight contemporary Swedish artists responded to a questionnaire on Realism (continued in the next issue). Also included were an article on Courbet and an article on Realism in the GDR and the USA. But whether Kåks found this connection to be important or just amusing is hard to determine. Regardless of his view, it adds importantly to the historical trajectory struck between new and old realist aspirations, which share a similar sense of social conscience and even revolutionary pathos.

OLLE KÅKS IS NOT a typical exponent of realism, much less of *social* realism, since the qualifier is commonly understood as a leftist political marker connoting Socialism. His work is typically associated with a kind of lyrical relationship to nature, and has always toyed with elements of abstraction, often in productive friction with realist elements. His imagery has been connected with something "quiz-like" and his style with elements that

normally contradict realist aspirations: "enigmatic symbols".[42] The realism displayed in this picture has only some rather vague signs of the social, such as the worker's clothes and tools, and, importantly, the plastic line with dangling flags or cards used at the time to prevent people from interfering with temporary construction work in public spaces, to which I will return.[43] Apart from these signs, however, the composition as a whole seems strikingly empty, dismal and deprived of life and sociality – or should we use the term abstract here? The core definition of abstraction in art has nothing to do with purity or spiritual elevation, although these links have become established, but with subtraction or concrete withdrawal, i.e. that something that previously existed or at least was expected has been taken away. If that applies to this painting, we can only guess what exactly has been removed.

In the standard work on the artist, Olle Granath's monograph *Olle Kåks: Ett konstnärsporträtt* (1980), a biographic clue is provided to the reading of this image: "How he experienced his own entry into the working classes is described in 'The Stoneworker', where a man sits and works his chisel into a thin sheath of granite which separates him from a black abyss."[44] Whether the artist and future academic dignitary himself had the experience of entering the working classes by depicting a worker is not for us to say. But it is telling that the quote concentrates on the abstract element in front of the scene, the "black abyss", without also mentioning the corresponding white "sky". Both these parts of the pictorial construction must be – actually: are – interrelated, which contributes to our experience of it.

LET US TRY to divide this picture further into its parts, in order to come closer to its dramatic construction. Apart from the first pair: the white field above and the corresponding black below, the figure and his granite plateau are another part, we suggest, that is an interconnected pair. Neither of them is actually completely true to nature, as it were, in this respect sharing some affinity with the completely abstract first pair. Is not the worker seen as if in a haze, sketched as a topos or a symbol, rather than in flesh and blood? And is not the stone platform rendered almost organically, reminiscent of the wrinkled cheeks of Jan Håfström's famous monument of his grandmother in a painting from 1972?[45] The stone crust looks as fleshlike as the worker appears dry and bleak, as either an allegorical figure or a dream image of an anticipated future (in which the proletariat has vanished). His reality, so to speak, based on his apparent materiality must be questioned.

Returning to the more obvious plane of content, the centered worker, with a face just as anonymous and partly hidden as that of Courbet's counterpart, appears isolated as an image within the overall picture. The unidentified worker is portrayed as an "unknown soldier" digging his own grave, or the last man left on earth, oblivious to the fact that visually

speaking, the world around him has all but disappeared. Yet the worker works. The worker is identified according to a social typology by his activity. The unknown worker still works, going through the motions regardless of the environment, where the reasons for executing real work and the contextual clues as to what kind of work appear to have vanished. Is this heroic, or the reverse: mindless robotlike activity on the brink of the abyss?

What the worker seems unaware of, as opposed to the viewer, is the huge black nothingness, or "constitutive blank" in Wolfgang Kemp's term opening up beneath the thin skin of the rock. Cracking this open will at least endanger his position, if not cause his fall. Something is about to crack here, and the fate of the worker and his entire class seems unclear. And what about the other blank here, the all-white "sky" or emptiness surrounding the figure? Is this merely an unoccupied space, if also eerily unrealistic, in which the occupation of the worker becomes legible? Or does it signify something more specific?

The whole picture is quiet enough but pervaded by a sense of danger. It prompts us to ask questions, and to figure out how this scene became possible. To conclude so far, the composition is fraught with conflict or internal disruption, in the sense of the worker being isolated twice from both a stabilizing background and foreground (as any conventional realist painting would require). In their stead, a blank white "sky" hovers beyond and a pitch-black abyss opens up in front and below the figure. Also, the worker is in a kind of symbiotic relationship, it could be argued, with the earth or foundation on which he both sits and on which he works (by chipping it away). Let us turn now from these two interconnected pairs to the third and arguably most important part of this picture.

IN HIS ANALYSIS of some French nineteenth-century paintings, in which blanks are conspicuous, Wolfgang Kemp devises three elements: "a blank; a participant in the action [...] and an element helping to create the picture's perspective..."[46] Much the same is applicable here, although the image has two blanks, not one. It has one actor and one "element helping to create the picture's perspective", and that element is, first and foremost (literally as well as figuratively speaking), the plastic line with dangling cards that crosses our visual field. Needless to say, we could easily point out that the depicted figure is himself rendered in perspective, with the help of foreshortening and placement – a little distanced from us, and with some suggested space behind him. The placing of the plastic line is on a different level, however. It suggests, indeed contains, another perspective, by its reference to *trompe l'oeil* – the old trick that fools the eye into believing that it sees something as real that is not. *The Stoneworker* clearly plays, consciously or not, with this Baroque tradition, in its play-

ful use of the plastic demarcation line crossing the scene horizontally, the supports of which are nowhere to be seen, located somewhere outside the picture frame. This plastic element thus almost literally or plastically stretches the image screen horizontally, as if the relatively flat picture continues on both sides. As if the picture, large as it is, is not large enough for the pictorial elements, the drama, it contains.

The compositional element of the plastic line creates the effect of a line appearing to hover both beyond the picture horizontally and in front of the picture itself, at least when we gaze in the direction of the worker. The latter effect suggests that this element is not really painted but indeed real. The plastic line thus heightens the sense of a real of the picture, but decreases, at the same time, our reception of the image in the picture – the worker working – as itself real. The realism of the stoneworker could be attributed iconographically to the fact that the artist has depicted a worker, but formally, the case is less clear-cut.

According to Michael Fried's line of reasoning, this sort of composition toys with devices of absorption, where the figure is uncommunicative, neither willing or able to extend a glance towards us, totally preoccupied as he is with his activity.[47] The

> **"WE THINK THE PICTURE AS IT STANDS OR HANGS HAS AN AGENCY OF ITS OWN, REGARDLESS OF ANY LEVEL OF AUTHORIAL INTENTION."**

effect of such a pictorial rhetoric, in contrast to melodramatic compositions of theatricality where figures reach out in gestures and look towards us, as in Lena Svedberg's *Aldman* series, is to capture the viewer more effectively than would the painter could do in a more active and explicit way. We do not know whether this painter would have entertained such theories. Kåks eventually became a bourgeois painter of naked female flesh and semi-abstract decorations, with no obvious political implications – other than being ostensively

"private" and voluptuously laid back, which is of course a clear political option as well. But, again, that level of interpretation is not what is pursued here. We think the picture as it stands or hangs has an agency of its own, regardless of any level of authorial intention.

In 1974, Kåks's contemporary Gerhard Nordström, one of the most overtly political of the new realist painters of the period, composed an oil painting called *Ödehuset* (*The Abandoned House*). The pictured house is of a kind typical in southern Sweden. It looks empty with a rather overgrown garden. Nothing at all is visible in its windows. The mostly white house seems filled with blank nothingness or pure darkness, similar to the kind we see in Kåks's *Stoneworker*. From where the viewer stands, we are also cautioned visually not to enter, even trespass, into this garden which is temporarily fenced off with a few horizontal planks, painted yellow and red, and a bit of the same kind of plastic line that we see in Kåks's picture, with yellow and red cards moving in the wind. In this composition too, the presence of this utterly mundane contemporary device is played against some kind of imminent

danger – at least against an unknowable void, dark, uncanny, and apparently meaningless. The fact that this slightly later painting uses the same signs is suggestive. Both images make use of these abstract marks to warn us not to enter, either because the house is "abandoned" or because we could fall into the void. That is to say; the plastic line is itself active, as a performative imperative: *do not enter!*

Perhaps we should refrain from asking what this line of plastic *means*, which hinges upon its intentionality or semiotic efficiency, and consider instead what it *does*. What is its pictorial function in *The Stoneworker*? Clearly, it bars us from entering the image, it disallows us phenomenological access to the figure at work. It keeps us at a distance. But does this make us unable to identify and share space with the laborer, and force us into the position of onlooker, locked in compulsory contemplation only?

The really real plastic line – above or in front of the canvas – warns us against stepping into an image: the painted fiction of the worker about to work himself away. The plastic line evokes a warning, not to the worker but to us. It does not belong to the depicted work space, it belongs to our part of the social sphere. It even allots us a space – a socially real realm in which to act and socialize, criticize and discuss pictures like this. Seen in this way, the viewing of the image flips, and the whole direction of the picture is reversed. The picture is not about the worker or work but about us. It warns us, perhaps, not to remain passive in view of this scenario. It *depicts* a scene ingrained in history – the history of the working classes, and of stone masons in particular, as well as of art history (Courbet) – but it *constitutes* a performative: *You are hereby warned!* The worker belongs to history, but the demarcation line is completely contemporary: beware of the abyss, mind the gap between "the social" and its outside, use whatever sociality you can muster instead, on your own conditions, now ... That may not be what the plastic line says, or what the artist intended, but it is part of what it does.

FOLLOWING BRUNO LATOUR'S thorough problematization of "the social", we could perhaps suggest that the plastic line in this picture is defining the social as image, associated with both the Imaginary order in Jacques Lacan's scheme and with the Symbolic order (of discourse, language, and signs), and hence perpetually at a distance from where we are standing, like a projection or, rather more to the point, a rejection. Something is thrown, not forward but back at us. The Real – the third term of Lacan's model – is, despite appearances, on our side.[48] It is therefore unpresentable; indissoluble from us, yet impossible even to image or imagine, to conjure up. It turns the "realistic" image into something merely ideal, a symbolic and thus meaningful representation, ontologically speaking. What the exposi-

tion of the "real" worker working discloses, in the last phase, is the Real of the unfathomable abyss over here.

The stone-worker has, for us, become a thing of the past, to paraphrase G.W.F. Hegel. It speaks of the nineteenth and earlier parts of the twentieth century, and of a recently urbanized and increasingly industrialized form of capitalism. This is not to suggest, however, that no one worked with hammers or chisels on stone any more circa 1970, which would simply be incorrect. But the figure in its splendid isolation, formally and linguistically, has become a memorial, a monument or "image" of another era. Thus the image of the heroic yet realistically unidealized stoneworker is not only an illusion or dream image but an image of the past lingering in the present. The image of the stone worker, in the picture by Kåks with the title, marks a distance, spatially by the plastic line and temporally, where he – in the dark of the abyss – is in the present tense, as yet invisible, unidentifiable, in flux.

The fact, the really real fact, of this picture, is that it is utterly imaginary and a composite image of three "realistic" elements which do not quite add up to a whole. The reality of this picture is not *of* this picture, but outside it. This outside, however, is constructed as such by the picture. The thrust of the canvas is reversed, inside out, towards us, as if an outside gaze penetrated us from within the picture. The real, we realize, is situated before the depicted scene, which is why we can say that the worker works in the mind of the viewer, in a nontangible interior space that is as anonymous as the working worker. This, finally, is another way of saying communal, emphatically non-private. This interiority points out a place of sharing, as social as can be, like politics or death. This is its function. "There, where apparently there is nothing, everything is in fact inscribed..."[49]

> ## "THE REALITY OF THIS PICTURE IS NOT OF THIS PICTURE, BUT OUTSIDE IT. THIS OUTSIDE, HOWEVER, IS CONSTRUCTED AS SUCH BY THE PICTURE."

Comparison and conclusion

In this article, we have touched on different forms of artistic realism, from nineteenth-century versions to social realism, ending up with the Swedish variant of "new realism". Olle Kåks's new realism was a particular idiom of an older social realist paradigm. Lena Svedberg's version of social realism was partly rooted in Benjaminian fascination with French caricatures and partly in the French *Atelier populaire's* and the Situationist International's posters. In the tension between these two historical sources, she creates an experience of capturing a now-moment in which the past returns in flashbacks. This experience could in turn be interpreted as a dialectic at standstill – a historical truth in Walter Benjamin's sense.

We have, furthermore, problematized the customary polarization between affirmative and critical realism, and emphasized that, contrary to established definitions, realism is not in itself contrary to idealism, but an idealist project of a different kind.

Within a sketched context of artistic practices in the twentieth century, we have presented two Swedish artists – Lena Svedberg and Olle Kåks – who were active around 1970. While they both worked with realist depiction, to say that their imagery and artistic personas were very different, as were their careers and posthumous reputations, is something of an understatement. In our attempt to approach them from the point of view of realist *functions*, however, we see their dissimilarities decreasing.

In Sweden, the invisibility of inequality meant that Olle Kåks's *Stenarbetaren/The Stoneworker* (1970) could be understood as fetishizing work beyond material rewards. Similar "compensation" in Lena Svedberg's *Indomitable Aldman* (1969) includes carnal pleasures (sex and food) and power (oil trade and military operations). These two strands are joined in the scene where the Lady is cooking macrobiotic food and discovers that its side effect is militarism.[50]

Svedberg's political narratives compose montages where fictional, metaphorical figures are inserted side by side with political leaders drawn from newspaper clips. Kåks's allegory-like oil painting shows a stone worker working in the face of his imminent disappearance. They both reveal myths as opposed to historically manifested commodity relations. Svedberg does this in montages of words and images, mixing fiction and fact – including the Brechtian cartoon format.[51] Neither of them lets go of the fact that realism has gone through many permutations with each new technology. Svedberg in particular copies from photo and film, but also the productive relations – a "second nature", in Susan Buck-Morss's words, built on the fossil economy. Now, at the end of the combustion-engine epoch, we can also begin to evaluate attitudes to, and modes of, realism and the functions they served in world politics. ◼

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5 Leif Nylén, "Realism med förbehåll...", *Konstrevy*, no. 4 (1970): 122–124.

6 Lena Svedberg committed suicide in 1972.

7 According to the first sentence of a current definition of realism in art,

the term refers to a "[m]ovement in mid- to late 19th-century art, in which an attempt was made to create objective representations of the external world based on the impartial observations of contemporary life". What lurks behind such "attempts" is precisely the desire to effect these representations. J.H. Rubin, "Realism", in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York: Grove, 1996), 52.

8 Sara Danius, *Den blå tvålen: Romanen och konsten att göra saker och ting synliga*, (Stockholm: Bonniers, 2013); Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism: or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

9 http://global.britannica.com/art/realism-art, accessed March 19, 2016)

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11 David Elliott, "Socialist Realism", in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York: Grove, 1996), 919.

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14 Elliott, "Socialist Realism", 919.

15 Walter Benjamin, "Moscow Diary" [1926–1927], *October*, 35 (Winter, 1985) 4, 9–135; here 38.

16 Benjamin, "Moscow Diary".

17 Galleri Karlsson on Odenplan in central Stockholm was managed by Bo A. Karlsson from 1964 to 1971. Among the artists he represented we also find Lena Svedberg and Lars Hillersberg.

18 Only a few years after 1968, rigorous adherence to doctrines was demanded. Crister Skoglund, "Studentrevolten 1968" (15–56), Anders Burman & Lena Lennerhed (eds.), *Tillsammans: Politik, filosofi och estetik på 1960- och 1970-talen* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2014), 22.

19 On Friday, May 25, 1968, Olof Palme was on his way home from the parliament and was tipped off by a colleague that the students were assembling at the Union house. The Swedish students had followed their French counterparts on television as they fought the police and apparently joined forces with the workers. Skoglund, "Studentrevolten", 18–20.

20 "The concept of 'realism' changed in the last few years of the 1960s: from 'neorealism' to 'new realism'. This was to do with a transformed intellectual climate coupled with the political development and the escalating oppositional movements of the time." Thomas Millroth, "Bildkonsten", *Signums svenska konsthistoria*, (Lund: Signum, 2005), 207.

21 Olvång, "Inledning", 56–59; Anna Tellgren (ed.), *Historieboken: Om Moderna museet 1958–2008* (Stockholm and Göttingen: Moderna Museet & Steidl, 2008); cf. Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, Den obäddade sängen: Anna Sjödahl och sjuttiotalet", in Tillsammans: Politik, filosofi och estetik på 1960- och 1970-talen, ed. Anders Burman and Lena Lennerhed, 389–416 (Stockholm: Atlas, 2014), in which Anna Sjödahl's fervently political feminist version of realism is contrasted with Ola Billgren's distanced version.

22 Carl Johan De Geer, interview with the authors, Stockholm, May 9, 2016.

23 Peter Wanger, e-mail to Charlotte Bydler, May 16, 2016.

24 Fredrik Liew, *Lena Svedberg: Herr Aldman – Superhero av världsalltet*, Stockholm: Galago and Moderna Museet, 2014, 8.

25 Lena Svedberg worked with sculpture, collage, ink, oils and gouache. The international exhibitions she participated in during her lifetime included the 1969 Paris Youth Biennial, and the 1972 exhibitions in Tokyo and Helsinki. After her death Eje Högestätt and Mailis Stensman published a brochure for her memorial exhibition at Malmö Konsthall that toured in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Kalmar in 1975–1976. Ulf Linde published a short foreword on her and the *Puss* colleagues

Lars Hillersberg and Ulf Rahmberg. Eje Högestätt et al. (eds.), *Lena Svedberg 1946–1972: Minnesutställning* (Malmö: Malmö Konsthall, 1975). Ulf Linde, Lena Svedberg, Ulf Rahmberg, Lars Hillersberg, (Stockholm: Konstakademien, 1975). Lotta Svedberg wrote a two-page essay on her older sister, "Lena Svedberg", which was published in Håkan Wettre (ed.), *Siri Derkert, Vera Nilsson, Lena Cronqvist, Lena Svedberg*, (Göteborg: Göteborgs Konstmuseum and Konsthallen,1975); reprinted in Högestätt. Besides these, Svedbergs work is found in surveys of the Swedish 1960s (e.g. Per Bjurström, *Tre decennier svensk grafik*, (Stockholm: Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening, 1976), 148; Olvång, *Våga se!*. In the late 1990s, there was renewed interest in satirical realist art of the 1960s. See e.g.: Bo A. Karlsson, Ulf Kihlander and Ola Åstrand, (eds.) *Hjärtat sitter till vänster*, exhibition catalogue, (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1998); Susanne Carbin, *Klass, kön och konsumtion: En analys av Lena Svedbergs bildserie Konsumentkvinnan*, (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2004); Carl Johan De Geer, *Lena Svedberg*, (Stockholm: Orosdi-Back, 2011). When the curator Fredrik Liew showed *Aldman* to the public at Stockholm's Moderna Museet in 2014, it was the first time the *Aldman* suite had been shown since 1976. Liew, *Lena Svedberg*, 5.

26 See Walter Benjamin , "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris" (1935), in: The Arcades Project, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1999), 10, to see how this happens: But precisely modernity is always citing primal history. Here, this occurs through the ambiguity peculiar to the social relations and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, a dream image. Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish. [...] Such an image is the prostitute – seller and sold in one."

27 Liew, Lena Svedberg, 69: "[caption:] Suddenly all their troubles seem to be over / [the woman:] my beloved country there it is I recognize it / [Aldman:] congratulations"; Liew, Lena Svedberg, 70: [as Aldman and the woman hit the ground:] ...splash! / [signpost:] Welcome to Democratic Republic of North Ireland / [caption:] They land happily but there has been some changes made in the Lady's old country. She tries a professional restart"; Liew, Lena Svedberg, 71: "[the Lady, showing her genitals:] Psst! Psst! Psst! Psst! I'll make special price for you, monsieu [sic], OK? / [Frank Zappa:] socialism and the pill has [sic] killed your business, ma'am".

28 Liew, Lena Svedberg, 8.

29 I follow Liew's identification here (Lena Svedberg, 9–10), since Noam Chomsky would make sense in the Swedish leftist political activist context. See also Chomsky's widely disseminated anti-Vietnam-war essay, The Responsibility of Intellectuals, *New York Review of Books*, February 23, 1967.

30 "Journaux: *Puss* [featuring Ulf Rahmberg's cover with Superman as a penis], *L'enragé, Ramparts, Le Monde, tricontinental, I.F. Stone's Weekly*. Liew, Lena Svedberg, 29.

31 Mailer's article was published in *Dissent* (Fall 1957).

32 They also appear in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) as pointed out by Liew (Lena Svedberg, note 9 p. 4 [Swedish] p. 15 [English])

33 Benjamin, "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris", 10–11.

34 Peter Wanger in e-mail to Charlotte Bydler, May 10, 2016.

35 Lena Svedberg graduated in French before entering Idun Lovén's art school in Stockholm (1964–1966). In the autumn of 1967 she was admitted to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. As Lena Svedberg's career started in Stockholm, her father remained in Haile Selassie's service until 1973 , when the Emperor was overthrown. Lotta Svedberg, "Lena Svedberg", Liew, *Lena Svedberg*, 6–7.

36 Cf. the situationist slogans quoted in Christina Zetterlund, "Att göra politik: Om hantverk och konst vid tiden kring 1970", in *Tillsammans:*

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37 Our translation. "Majrevolten i Paris 1968 hade en av sina kärnceller i École des Beaux-Arts och under några hektiska vårveckor producerade där en *Atelier populaire* inte mindre än 350 affischer, oftast tillverkade som serigrafier och linoleumsnitt primitiva i tekniken, elementära i budskapet. De Gaulle var naturligtvis den som i första hand karikerades och kritiserades. Bilderna var av växlande kvalitet men skärpan i angreppen och upprördheten gick inte att ta miste på. I Sverige uppstod en motsvarande aktivitet." Bjurström 1976, 145.

38 Liew, Lena Svedberg, 2; 16–17.

39 The five detailed faces that flank the Lady suggest modelling on historical persons. One may be Nina Simone, another Mick Jagger. But who are the others: more performers?

40 If Angela Davis and Stokely Carmichael are correctly identified, are the others also militant revolutionaries or Black Panther Party members?

41 Olle Granath, *Olle Kåks*, trans. Gillian Sjödahl (Malmö, 2001), 20.

42 Mereth Lindgren et al., *Svensk konsthistoria*, (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1986), 465.

43 We are perfectly aware that this use of "the social" conforms to a myth, which falsely divides reality into a non social realm where social facts are distinguished as operative. Cf. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2005).

44 Our translation. "Hur han upplevde sitt eget inträde i de arbetandes skara beskrivs i 'Stenhuggaren' där en man sitter och hugger in sin mejsel i ett tunt granitskal som skiljer honom från en svart avgrund." Olle Granath, *Olle Kåks: Ett konstnärsporträtt* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1980), 37.

45 The painting is in the Moderna Museet collection, Stockholm.

46 Kemp 1985, 110.

47 Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, (Chicago & London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).

48 E.g. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York & London: Norton, 1981).

49 Kemp, "Death at Work", 115.

50 Liew, Lena Svedberg, 62.

51 Bertolt Brecht went out of his way to entertain his audience while also educating them. In a similar effort, Peter Wanger collaborated with *Puss* artists: not only with Lena Svedberg, but also Lars Hillersberg, e.g. on the cartoon *Storfamiljen* (*Extended family*, Bokomotiv, 1979) – a deconstruction of the nuclear family norm.

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The image has been manipulated.

THE HYPERREALITIES OF PUTIN AND TRUMP

Why it is worth paying attention to the public personas of political leaders

by **Maria Brock**

Barely a month after the news that Donald John Trump had been elected the next president of the United States, some commentators were hailing the end of Western democracy:

> Political scientists who normally study American democracy in splendid isolation are starting to turn their attention to Africa and Latin America. They want to know what happens when authoritarians win elections and democracy morphs into something else.[1]

In some Russian circles, the response to the election result was less the anticipated celebration, and more an exasperated sense of "welcome to our world" as the American electorate seemed to have chosen a candidate that combines Vladimir Putin's powerful authority and authoritarianism with the buffoonery of the long-standing Duma member Vladimir Zhirinovsky. In fact, the way Trump's persona relies on a combination of unbridled masculinity, celebration of authority, populist rhetoric, and mastery of the media spectacle displays many common features with Vladimir Putin, currently in his 3rd presidential term.

THEREFORE, RATHER THAN nominating 2016 as the year democracy succumbed to right-wing authoritarianism, examining why such figures might hold appeal across vastly different political and social landscapes is ultimately a more productive endeavor. This does not imply ignoring the specifics of the US in the 21st century, but complimenting existing accounts with additional factors that are less specific to the American political system, revealing more universal tendencies. Indeed, a number of complex reasons led to Trump's becoming president-elect. These range from fear and racism among those who

Buffy is a caramel and white Bulgarian shepherd Karakachan Dog. Buffy was ten-weeks old when he was given to Putin.

feel threatened by the increasing diversity of the US, to the hopelessness and anger of the white working-class "losers of globalization", to the lack of appeal Hillary Clinton might have held among key demographics – despite having won the popular vote by a significant margin. Not only is an intersectional examination of the causes of Trump's election important to understanding how he managed to appeal to multiple sections of the populace, but the low voter turnout also suggests that analyses should turn to those who merely *enabled* a President Trump through their ambivalence or indifference.[2] However, while it may not necessarily have been a messianic belief in Donald Trump that led to his election, there is much skirting around the issue of what makes him appealing. In fact, paying attention to the forces that prepared the arena for political figures like Trump should not mean a critical turning away from their personalities.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST SUCH discussions insist either that dwelling on character is not productive in furthering a more sociological understanding, or that a psychological, let alone psychoanalytical reading is bound to succumb to cliché or even misinterpretation.[3] Notwithstanding, there was clearly an "irrational'" element in Trump's victory, as the list of factors such as those mentioned above do not invariably add up to Trump-as-president. There is, however, another perspective that translates this "irrational" element into evidence of less conscious forces at work, and which attempts a more "subterranean'" explanation of what made his presidential campaign so successful.[4]

Trump's popularity ratings of 46% in November 2016 are of course no match for those of Putin, whose Russian approval

rates were at 86% that same month – more than 15 years into his time in office. As a matter of fact, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's approval figures are made all the more remarkable by the fact that the country is experiencing a palpable and lengthy economic downturn and increasing isolation from the West. Despite all their differences, the two men have frequently been linked this year,[5] not least because each seems to have hopeful (and divergent) notions of what a closer cooperation with the other will bring. More importantly, both derive some of their power from an age of "post-truth" politics, in which they were able to rely on, and manipulate a public sphere that is characterized by increasing cynicism towards politics and disenchantment with established elites.

IN THIS ESSAY, I argue that while one cannot discount the real inequalities, as well as the real and imagined grievances that opened up the space for less established political figures to gain support, it is nevertheless worthwhile to examine why these particular *kinds* of candidates hold such appeal. Their reliance on spectacle and well-orchestrated exploits which combine the hypermasculine with the hyperreal enabled them to set in motion processes of identification that transcend the need for a coherent, well articulated political agenda. Instead, while seeming unsubtle to the point of being crass, they managed to operate on a more subliminal level, remaining oblique enough to become conduits for the electorate's personal hopes and grievances. While this piece centers on the representational mechanisms employed by Vladimir Putin and his team of PR advisers, it is possible to identify a number of parallels with other contemporary leader figures – chief among them Donald Trump – each of

whom appears to rely on a kind of hypermasculine charisma to unite a political field that is otherwise increasingly polarized.

The president as spectacle

As mentioned above, it is in part Putinism's ability to orchestrate PR events that has secured him so firm a position in the national and international imaginary. From a more technocratic public persona in his early days to the ubiquitous star of numerous "pseudo-events", a typology of events featuring the president would demonstrate that all of them aim to highlight a certain skill or positive facet of his character, often one that falls into the broad category of traditional masculinity. They usually involve the accomplished handling of a prop, or, perhaps more curiously, interaction with animals. Their political or strategic necessity is not always immediately apparent, while their staged nature is either transparently obvious or revealed later. Past "scripted events" – that is, events that did not occur spontaneously and were planned with the media in mind – include the President singing and playing the piano at a charity gala, flying a plane to help extinguish devastating forest fires in the summer of 2010, driving a Russian-made Lada across Siberia, shooting grey whales with a crossbow, finding a pair of ancient amphorae on a diving trip in the Black Sea, and catching a pike weighing 21 kilograms.

In fact, a blurring of boundaries between reality and entertainment in what one could broadly delineate as the arena of political communication, and in many cases a replacement of reality by entertainment, is characteristic of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This has led to the creation of numerous "pseudo-events", some of which the public may no longer discern as such. As is the case with any type of "pseudo-event', its success is "measured by how widely it is reported. The question, 'Is it real?' is less important than 'Is it newsworthy?' Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity."[7] Notably, Richard Waterman's statement quoted here refers to strategies employed by US politicians. The case of Donald Trump is in many ways an even starker illustration of the power of spectacle, as his forays into television and film preceded his entry into politics. Indeed, through his appearances in films and TV shows – always as "himself", until finally cementing his brand in "The Apprentice", Donald Trump the character was already a household name. While the Trump brand's biggest supporter seems to be Donald Trump himself, closely followed by his immediate family, Putin assumes a somewhat more modest public persona, letting his deeds speak for themselves. At the same time, the amount of Putiniana, or cultural output and commodities featuring the Russian president – from toothpicks to songs and calendars – is not too far from the manner in which the Trump name is used as a trademark, lent to products such as steaks and cologne, and turning a profit at the same time.

However, the transformation of politics into entertainment products can also generate a greater cynical distance from politics in general, creating the impression that "in the entertainment industry when there is a sign it seems there isn't one, and when there isn't one we believe that there is", as Umberto Eco observes.[8] Symptomatic of this disorientation is the media speculation that surrounded a walk the president took in 2013 in St. Petersburg after the funeral of his first judo coach. He ostensibly wished to spend time alone – without bodyguards or the press – in his old neighborhood, but pictures of Putin on his solitary walk soon flooded the Internet, often accompanied by the question whether this was actually staged, perhaps to imbue Putin with greater emotional depth, which would link it to several later occasions during which he was seen shedding tears in public. However, it is usually the newsworthiness of an event that trumps any such speculations. The fact that Donald Trump's campaign often seemed to be less reliant on a coherent action plan than on his ability to tap into American voters' ids, also points to the fact that spectacles do not need to rely on terribly intricate strategies, their crudeness instead lending them further appeal.

Populist rhetoric and identification

It has also been observed that Putinism lacks a series of coherent signifiers that could enable the production of a more rigorous set of tenets to form or produce its ideology. It relies on the figure of Putin – a figure that is itself "empty" consisting of a series of attributes that are modified to adapt to changing times. Elements of Putinism have ranged from imperial notions of all-Russian greatness which hark back both to pre-revolutionary Russia and to Cold War rhetoric, to authoritarianism as well as to elements of Western-style democracy, linking regret and nostalgia for the Soviet Union to an endorsement of neoliberal forms of capitalism. Similarly, during the election campaign, Trump's eclectic agenda ranged from virulent anti-immigration legislation to drug legalization, and from defunding Planned Parenthood to decreasing taxes for low-income families. In the eyes of some commenters, a strong leader such as Putin is, in his very idiosyncrasy, seen as the only potential figure capable of uniting this incoherent ideological field. Indeed, his larger-than-life public persona resonates strongly with the figure of the "charismatic leader" and his ability to mobilize mechanisms of identification as described by Sigmund Freud in his *Group Psychology*.[9]

HOWEVER, PUTIN HAS also been described as a populist leader – another feature, along with "retrosexual masculinity" he is seen to share with figures like Silvio Berlusconi.[10] Examples of his forays into vulgar language include the promise to "finish (Chechen) terrorists in the crapper" in his days as prime minis-

> **"IT IS IN PART PUTINISM'S ABILITY TO ORCHESTRATE PR-EVENTS THAT HAVE SECURED HIM SO FIRM A POSITION."**

ter, to a more recent instance, again evoking unorthodox ways of punishing Chechen rebel fighters:

> When, a couple of years ago, a Western journalist asked him an awkward question about Chechnya, Putin snapped back that, if the man wasn't yet circumcised, he was cordially invited to Moscow, where they have excellent surgeons who would cut a little more radically than usual.[11]

These outbursts – recruiting the Russian "national other" of the Muslim separatist, and combining it with sadistic and darkly sexual imagery – occur very sporadically, but always attract media attention like incidents of Putin publicly telling risqué jokes.[12] While the presence of such rhetoric may be partially related to past violence that has remained unexorcised from contemporary Russian discourses, it sometimes appears to be employed with strategic intent. But why would the Russian president need this "obscene supplement" to his speech? And again extending the obvious comparison, why have Trump's forays into the crass and the obscene had such positive resonance among many Americans? The president-elect is notoriously thin-skinned, but even his public obsession with the perceived size of his hands and what this might imply has receives less negative attention among his supporters than expected. Similarly, when footage appeared of him boasting how his fame enabled him to "grab them [women] by the pussy,"[13] this proved to be less detrimental than his critics hoped.

ONE EXPLANATION SEES the deployment of populist rhetoric as a way of strengthening bonds with the community, tailored to appeal specifically to society's "ordinary" members. In the case of Putinism, however, and in contrast with Ernesto Laclau's more optimistic take on the phenomenon of populism as serving to create new political identities,[14] the president's tightly choreographed publicity stunts and verbal "mishaps" in fact serve to encourage a move away from politics, as a way of continuing and maintaining the depoliticization which commenced in the late Soviet period.[15] Populism can attach itself to any number of demands – in fact its reliance on "empty signifiers" is one of Laclau's core assumptions, but in Putinism, this demand emanates from the presidential administration itself, and represents an attempt to discourage political participation and potential dissent. Thought of in this vein, the potpourri of values drawn upon by Putin and his administration is not intended to represent a coherent set of tenets, but chiefly aims to create an emotional effect, discouraging further analysis, which is easily achieved in a rhetorical move such as that of enunciating what cannot be said, in a manner that is normally taboo in political discourse. This again has interesting echoes in how the Trump campaign instrumentalized the disappointments of what is often portrayed as the white working-class and middle-class losers of globalization, even though some would argue that "their grievances were more theoretical than actual, more media-induced than experience-related",[16] an argument later proven to be cor-

rect when it turned out that low-income voters tended to favor Hillary Clinton.

According to Slavoj Žižek, "the popular movement *needs* the identificatory figure of a charismatic leader".[17] However, if all of a "popular movement's" coherence and content are provided by its leader figure, then this also proves to be its weakest point. Putin may be the "master signifier" that brings together the disparate, at times haphazard elements of Russianness and fuses them into the (non)ideology of Putinism, but a potential public rejection of Putin then also leads to the disintegration of this vision. Similarly, the distancing by many Republicans from Trump's candidacy show the lack of support "Trumpism" experienced from established political figures even within his own party. Besides the construction of the infamous wall between the US and Mexico and his demand to have Hillary Clinton imprisoned, his populist melange of ideas and slogans was given only a semblance of coherence by Trump's persona. However, the centrality of his supposed integrity and prowess also made his campaign singularly lopsided. With everything intentionally having hinged on the figure of the president, a turn to theories of identification therefore seems apt.

"A composite of King-Kong and the suburban barber"

The leader needs to find ways of appealing to the group that will put him both in charge and in the midst of its members, so as to be both of and above them. How might one understand this dual identity? In Laclau's words "his identity is split: he is the father, but also one of the brothers".[18] One easy manifestation of this is the (usually) red baseball cap Donald Trump wore at his rallies:

> With his red cap on, the glossy billionaire living in a gilt Manhattan apartment appears to have something in common with the rest of the country, who wear caps when they're actually at baseball games, when they're driving tractors through wheat fields, when they're barbecuing in their backyards. And maybe because he looks so ridiculous in it, Trump's hat is something of an equalizer.[19]

In Laclau's view, group membership makes the leader accountable to the community, so that identification in facts suppresses authoritarian impulses and creates "a far more democratic leadership than the one involved in the notion of the narcissistic despot".[20] Theodor W. Adorno, too, argues that the bond underlying group identification center around the figure of the leader, but rather than seeking to exonerate the populist leader from the accusation of despotism, his focus is on the fascist leader. In his analysis, the primary identification with a powerful, authoritarian father figure that takes place in fascist regimes is linked to a kind of regression or return to more archaic or "primitive" state. The paternal leader figure here resembles the primal father for whose murder the "primal horde" is then forever trying to make amends. The group members' similarities with the leader then do not serve to quell the dictatorial tendencies in him – they

are merely evidence of the narcissistic aspects of group identification: "While appearing as a superman, the leader must at the same time work the miracle of appearing as an average person, just as Hitler posed as a composite of King-Kong and the suburban barber".[21] Nevertheless the leader figure, in Adorno's analysis, is not impervious to historical contingency: while the authoritarian element may be more pronounced under fascism, it decreases in importance in a less repressive society. What remains is the need to convey an "impression of greater force and of more freedom of libido"[22] than the rest of the community.

In the case of Russia, it appears that a classical panacea to this dilemma has been found. To achieve this, the government relies less on the President as sole master signifier, and more on ways of turning Russia's inherent tensions outward. Indeed, the surge of patriotism that followed the annexation of Crimea and subsequent armed conflict in Ukraine may have secured Putin's reign for another term. The newly drafted social contract no longer merely agrees to provide relative economic stability to enable consumption for obedient, apolitical subjects. Lev Gudkov, together with colleagues from *Levada-Center*,[23] illustrates how the antagonisms of Russian society have been effectively channelled in a process of 'negative mobilization', whereby dissenters of that vision are branded as traitors, and members of the opposition press designated as belonging to the '5th column'.

THE WAYS IN WHICH the Trump campaign had similarly relied on nationalistic ideas – chiefly through a vilification of immigrants and the prelapsarian idea of "making America great again"– as well as the schizophrenic relationship it maintained with the media, simultaneously accusing it of lying while also relying on it to gain as much publicity as possible, demonstrates that the primer on how to win followers and influence people relies on certain perennial and transnational principles, such as the ones discussed here. These include a presence both above and among one's electorate, by combining superiority – be it physical or psychological – with the right amount of populist rhetoric or folksy demeanor. Internal tensions are best channelled outward, or in the direction of select minority groups. Originality is no strong requirement. In fact, relying on existing symbols and narratives is a plus as they enhance recognizability and serve to produce comfortable and comforting nostalgia. A coherent political agenda is similarly optional – personal charisma will most likely outshine sensible policies. Most importantly, the power of spectacle and especially of the well-managed photo opportunity are to assume a central place in one's political toolbox. Indeed, first steps Trump made as president-elect do not bode well for the future, both nationally and internationally. The real danger ahead, however, lies in the creeping normalization of Trumpism – a normalization towards which all of the mechanisms described in this essay will have contributed. ▣

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POLARIZATION IN POLAND

In September and October 2016, thousands of men and women took to the streets in Poland and across Europe to support Polish women who were outraged by a law proposal introducing a total ban on abortions in the country. Poland already has the most restrictive abortion legislation in Europe, yet the right-wing government decided to make it even more restrictive. Right now, abortion is illegal in Poland in all cases except those involving rape, incest, danger to the pregnant woman's life, or severe fetal abnormalities. The government did not anticipate the scale of the resistance and the nationwide and international demonstrations. The protests were called #Black Protest as people marched in the streets wearing black – color symbolizing mourning for women's reproductive rights. This forced the government to rethink its strategy on how to "protect the life of the unborn". After the first wave of protests on October 3, the initial proposal for a total ban on abortion was rejected, but just a week later, Jarosław Kaczyński, the chairman of the ruling Law and Justice party, announced in the media that the government would "strive to ensure that even in the case of pregnancies in which a child is sure to die or is severely deformed, the woman should give birth so that the child could be baptized, buried, and given a name." This led to a second wave of protests held across Poland and Europe on October 23 and 24. Two weeks later, the government passed a law offering one-time payments of approximately €1000 to women who choose not to abort in the event of a fetal malformation. This move was seen as the fulfillment by the government of the promise given to the Catholic Church and the anti-choice lobby during the election campaign.

The "Stop Abortion" proposal that sparked the initial protests was prepared by the Ordo Iuris Institute, a conservative anti-choice association that is trying to influence European legislation through legal expertise. They are an independent legal organization established as a foundation in Poland, it calls itself an Institute for Legal Culture, and in the official information found on its website, it says: "We gather academics and legal practitioners aiming at the promotion of a legal culture based on respect for human dignity and rights. We pursue our objectives by means of research and other academic activities as well as advocacy and litigation."

ORDO IURIS IS PART of an international network of organizations that pursues the same ultraconservative goals across the globe. Other organizations to which Ordo Iuris indicates links on its website include: C-Fam, European Dignity Watch, Alliance Defending Freedom, the European Center for Law and Justice, and

Zgoda Project, Warsaw, July 2012.

PHOTO: BR1ART / FLICKR

the International Center on Law, Life, Faith and Family. All these organizations work for the same goal: to influence social policy debate at the level of the United Nations and other international institutions. Most of them were established and began collaborating in the late 1990s, around the time when the global feminist movement gained renewed momentum, and when the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action got governments around the world to begin working more strongly for the advancement of women's rights.

WHAT CAME AS A SURPRISE to many people, and in particular feminists in Poland, was that the "Stop Abortion" coalition led by Ordo Iuris managed to collect more than 400,000 signatures in less than nine months in support of the bill calling for a total ban on abortion. This was however no accident. Nor was it the work of a spontaneous, grassroots coalition. It was the result of years of work by several specialized ultraconservative organizations, each targeting a different sphere of social and public life, from media campaigns calculated to shock public opinion to influence on schools and local governments, to providing legal expertise and protection for those with the same agenda. The scope of organizing and professionalism that goes into these misogynistic initiatives in countries such as Poland, Hungary, France, Spain, the UK, and others remains surprisingly and somewhat

dangerously ignored and largely underestimated in the general liberal cultural milieu. Yet abortion rights are only one part of the "legal culture based on the respect for human dignity and rights". What these organizations work for is the rejection of individualistically understood human rights, such as same-sex marriage, minority rights, and, women's rights. The recent mobilizations in Europe against the so called "gender ideology" are aimed at and in many cases succeed in undoing the achievements of various struggles and movements for equality. An enlightening publication worth noting here, *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right parties in the Anti-gender Mobilizations in Europe*, takes these developments seriously, and examines the legislative consequences of the "war on gender ideology" on gender equality across Europe. It comes from the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and looks at cases in France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. One purpose of this publication, according to its authors, is to uncover the commonalities and divergences of this "anti-gender" phenomenon. In my opinion, it should also serve as a wake-up call for those of us who like to call ourselves "progressives". It is high time we start mobilizing to stand up against fundamentalist political activism. ☒

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Poland to clamp down on anti-Semitism:
HOW ABOUT ANTI-OTHERNESS?

In a recent meeting between the Polish prime minister, Beata Szydło, and her Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Polish prime minister promised to clamp down on anti-Semitism in Poland. Promises by governments to fight anti-Semitism are not new, but the issue is more complicated than might appear. Poland is often described as the most homogenous state in the European Union, with a 96.7% white, Polish, Catholic population. While Poles' attitudes towards foreigners are changing, as people are now beginning to integrate more than previously, it is almost impossible to ignore Poles' attitudes towards their neighbors when considering the Jewish question. The "position" of an individual in a social structure seems to be part of the various processes of state formation, which informed the ways non-Poles are perceived in contemporary Poland.

A Polish public opinion survey has shown that people from the Czech Republic and Slovakia are often perceived to be tolerant, hardworking, and rational. While Poles' attitudes towards the Germans are improving due to Poland's integration in the EU family, the same data suggests that many Poles still see German orderliness as archetypal aggression that reminds Poles of the horrors of the Second World War. Poles' relations with people on its eastern border are complex. Opinions about Ukrainians and Byelorussians are often polarized, manifesting feelings of sympathy as well as antipathy. On the one hand, they are seen as people who have been manipulated by Soviet authoritarianism. On the other hand, Sovietization, it is felt, has turned many Ukrainians into ruthlessness, hostile, and unpredictable people. While Ukrainians are also loathed for certain events in the long history of Polish-Ukrainian conflicts, Byelorussians are stereotyped as being uneducated, too simple, and easily manipulated into serving as Russia's Trojan Horse. The most despised and fearful of all Poland's neighbors, however, is Russia itself, simply because of the country's imperialistic propensities and the centuries-long history of Polish-Russian conflicts. Russians are often seen as impolite, self-centered, and possessing a history of intolerance and xenophobia.

IT SEEMS THAT A NUMBER of things exacerbate Poles' perceptions of their neighbors: complex political processes and issues that are related to the polarization of communism, capitalism, socialism; post-industrialization and globalization; and experiences of economic decline.

In the case of people of color, the implication in my research has both economic and extremely racial elements. Having built a collection of labels, grouping, and stereotyping of their neighbors into a social construct, it follows that many non-Europeans,

Racist graffiti in Łódź.

most especially dark-skinned people, would be fixed into a similar representation. In Central and Eastern Europe, a major dimension of the racialization of people of color is the news publication in Russia in the 1990s that showed the use of Communist paternalism as a symbol of exoticness, poverty, and backwardness, which later led to the racialization of Africans in the Soviet Union. Soviet films, documentaries, and cartoons were often used as vehicles to convey the exoticness of non-Europeans, in which "blacks are the objects of infinite white benevolence", and are used as props in the quarrel between communism and capitalism, especially during the Perestroika period. This resonates with the popular white beliefs and polemical Polish classical fiction, such as Julian Tuwim's popular poem *Murzynek Bambo*, which fixed the interpretation of Africa as a dark continent and its inhabitants as an uncivilized population.

Traditional popular stereotypes: (1) the happy-go-lucky Negro, lazy, dirty, and cheerful, naively satisfied with his backwardness, ignorance, and subordinate social position; (2) the Uncle Tom type, an honest and pious Negro, full of moral candor but "knowing his place" and loyal to his master even if ill-treated by him; (3) the savage, cruel and aggressive Negro, a cannibal of the African jungle and an individual with criminal instincts, a potential sexual offender in a modern city.[1]

WHILE JEWS AND MUSLIMS are stigmatized for their unique appearances and non-European religions, the objection to people of color is mainly based on the darkness of their skin, slavery, and colonization. Africa evokes exoticness, poverty, and political instability for many Poles. Knowledge about Africa is gained through Polish and European media broadcasting information about the impoverished circumstances of black people in Africa. This leads to racial descriptions, discrimination, and, subsequently, racial attacks on people of color perpetrated by "Sarmatian" skinheads and members of the Polish National Party who have nationalist and patriotic views. At the center of their argument is the pride felt by Polish skinheads in being white, Catholic, and Polish – they overtly disseminate ethnonationalism and encourage xenophobic rhetoric. This pattern of discrimination is not limited to the racist activities of Polish skinheads and neo-

Nazi groups: mainstream politicians have a similar tendency to discriminate against migrants in Poland.

It seems that the need to define who we are mainly leads to an assertion of who we are not. There is an attempt to uphold a collective social identity through processes of homogenization that act and serve as the authority for the shared collective social identities of a race and a nation. Such processes of collectivism are created through splitting and through discourses and narratives told from the positionality of the Other, which predominantly have functioned as a process of exclusion. A form of racial solidarity is established to eliminate the Other because difference is seen as a component of corruption, and to be mixed as a society constitutes a betrayal; consequently, outsiders are perceived as different, and are feared because of their ability to contaminate the group. This fear is rooted in the assumption that national identity is pure, and exposure to a different identity would risk this purity.

THESE VIEWS AND FEARS imply that race is not essentially a genetic issue; it has a lot to do with more complicated sets of views, characteristics, and cultural representations that are tied to being colored, being different, and being foreign. It is simply a social demarcation between internal and external that is influenced by large political projects, political divides, and conformance to national identity requirements.

To put all this in an interrogative voice, how is the current Polish government going to clamp down on anti-Semitic activities in the aftermath of its endangerment of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights? How is the government going to uphold Jewish rights when the rights of Polish women are not guaranteed and majority parliamentarians are calling for the deportation of non-Catholics? How is the state going to fight racism when it has just abolished the country's only antidiscriminatory commission?

If the Polish government is sincere in its declarations against anti-Semitism, the process should start with anti-Otherness more generally, and actively engage minority groups, endorse antidiscriminatory legislation, and reinstate or replace the recently abolished antidiscriminatory commission with a robust antiracism council. After all, it was a system of heterogeneity that earned the Rzeczpospolita (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) recognition, in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, as the most serene republic, one consisting of, and protecting, Polish and non-Polish residents alike, who were proud to call themselves citizens of the *Rzeczpospolita*. ☒

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New mapping of human trafficking in the Baltic Sea region

THE COUNCIL OF THE Baltic Sea States (CBSS) has recently published a new updated mapping of the development of the anti-trafficking work in their eleven member countries, the *Human Trafficking Baltic Sea Region Round-up 2016*.

The first report was published in 2013. Since then, the phenomenon has not decreased in the region, but rather increased. But there are improvements to report. In many countries steps have been taken to improve the rights of victims of trafficking, although there are still no measures in place to fully implement the basic demands set out in the EU- directives, such as the right to an unconditional period of reflection after identification as potential victim, and before any decision about whether to cooperate with law enforcement.

Most striking is the changed picture resulting

from new migration patterns. Many people are exposed to human trafficking and exploitation along the migration routes, and then at further risk in the destination countries, first as asylum-seekers and later, if not granted refugee-status, as undocumented.

Examples of emerging human trafficking trends in the region would be arranged sham marriages that become exploitive, and identity fraud. In the Baltic states, young women with disabilities are often exposed to sham marriages. In Denmark, there have been numerous cases of Romanians with false work permits who have been forced to commit frauds. In Poland, this also seems to be an emerging form of exploitation. ☒

Download the full report on www.cbss.org.

New research platform with area focus

A NEWLY STARTED research platform, Russia and the Caucasus Regional Research (RUCARR), is being hosted by Malmö University, Sweden. RUCARR has a research focus on political, social, cultural, economic, and other relations of significance within and between Russia and the Caucasus, on the one hand, and with neighboring states, on the other. The areas of expertise of the group include political, social, and cultural dynamics and history, nationalism, ethnic and national identity, security issues, civil society development, authoritarianism and post-authoritarian transition and transformations.

On December 8–9, 2016, Malmö University organized an inaugural conference to launch the platform. The conference included keynote speeches by Vladimir Gelman and Stephen Jones, and a roundtable discussion on the future of authoritarianism. ☒

Read more about the platform at http://wpmu.mah.se/rucarr/

Baltic Worlds' online election coverage

Baltic Worlds has online election coverage. Check the website for the most recent comments on elections and referenda in the 26 countries we hitherto have covered.

"There seems to be an implicit belief in Azerbaijan that to be accepted as Europeans the country needs to do what Europeans do, but in a bit more lavish way."
Mark Brody comments on the referendum in Azerbaijan on proposed amendments to the constitution.

Baku, Azerbaijan.

"His backing comes from the clans and he must strike a balance between the state's and regional power brokers' interests."
Maili Vilson comments on the presidential elections in Uzbekistan.

"Something to watch in the coming years is how power will be distributed within the 'power-triangle', that is, among Prime Minister Kvirikashvili, President Giorgi Margvelashvili, and the informal leader Ivanishvili."
Per Ekman comments on the parliamentary elections in Georgia.

On www.balticworlds.com you may read the full length reports. And also find additional ones.

Gendered voices from East-Central Europe.
Breaking out of the deadlock of neoliberalism vs. rightwing populism

The volume *Solidarity in Struggle: Feminist Perspectives on Neoliberalism in East-Central Europe*[1] is a pioneering effort to bring gendered voices and experiences from East-Central Europe into public debates and research on neoliberalism. Exploring the post-1989 transformation and the current socio-economic order from a feminist standpoint, the papers shed light on the gendered consequences of neoliberal reforms, as well as their long-term consequences for the political scene in the region. This critical reflection on the dark side of the transition is all the more needed in light of the illiberal transformations currently taking place in the region.

As I write these words, Hungary is coming to terms with the results of a populist anti-refugee referendum, in Poland attacks on reproductive rights continue despite the initial success of the "black protests", Britain is experiencing a drastic increase in racist violence after the Brexit vote, the far-right AfD is celebrating its third-place finish in German local elections, and the French National Front leader is luring her voters with a promise of an EU exit referendum. The Chinese have a perverse blessing: "May you live in interesting times." And I think we can all agree that we are indeed living in such times.

Academics and policy experts all across Europe are still trying to identify the set of causes that led to the recent surge of rightwing populism, pointing to the influence of such diverse factors as growing inequalities and economic insecurity,[2] shifts in the labor market that have undermined the electoral base of the left,[3] accelerated globalization and Europeanization that have weakened the nation-state,[4] economic crisis and austerity measures,[5] cultural backlash against the progressive revolution of the New Left,[6] failure and detachment of mainstream political parties,[7] and even the changing media culture.[8] Based on the growing research into this question, it is safe to say that no single-factor explanation will suffice and that these processes are at work to varying degrees in numerous political contexts.

STILL, IT IS CLEAR that all these factors have contributed to a profound change in the relationship between citizen and state, and undermined various basic components – social, economic, political, and cultural – of the security

The slogan was "Women's revolution" on the demonstration in Warsaw the 8th of March 2010 that highlighted the long-term consequences of post-socialist transition in Poland.

PHOTO: EWA DĄBROWSKA-SZULC

of the citizenry, components that have to a large extent been guaranteed by the postwar welfare state. Many people all across Europe, especially in East-Central Europe, feel that they live in a state which is "weak for the strong and strong for the weak" (this sentence is widely attributed to the Polish populist rightwing leader Jarosław Kaczyński), that is, a state that is lenient towards big business, international corporations, and transnational institutions, yet at the same time increasingly unable to guarantee citizens' basic economic and social rights, leading thus to growing social insecurity. This diminution of safety nets and the subsequent change of the social contract between the citizen and the state has had profound consequences for liberal democracy. After all, as Mabel Berezin reminds us in her analysis of the rise of illiberal parties, "secure people are democratic people [...] insecure people are fearful and risk-averse. Insecure people expand the community of potential enemies and threats. Secure people expand the community of friends".[9]

It is against this background that the populist right has emerged across Europe as the most vocal proponent of the idea of strengthening the nation-state and increasing the economic, social, and cultural security of the citizenry – introducing such policies as nationalization of crucial branches of the economy, increased taxation of sectors which are predominantly foreign-owned, and money transfers to families; as well as promising to protect national dignity against foreign threats and grant security and solidarity to a restricted, homogenous community.

But while we are bombarded daily with news about new anti-democratic maneuvers of the right, it is important to remember that illiberal ideas and networks did not appear out of the blue a year ago; in fact, as numerous studies of rightwing mobilizations remind us, these networks have long been present, fighting their often local and unseen battles against European integration, reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, and sexual education. What has changed, however, is that more people are ready to support them today than 20 years ago – and, more importantly, that fewer people are willing to support the liberal (or neoliberal) status quo that has long been presented as the only alternative.

As Andrea Pető observes in her epilogue, after 1989 the globalized neoliberal democracy was presented to us in East-Central Europe as the only alternative, as a system that is not driven by politics or ideology but is simply a rational choice. This conviction that 1989 marked the end of ideologues and opened an era of technocrats has been voiced by, among others, economist Leszek Balcerowicz, the driving force behind the Polish transformation. "Economics", he once said in a lecture, "is like building a bridge. There is no place for rightwing or leftwing political views; one simply needs to make the right decisions. And what is right has been empirically proven. Capitalism has worked. Socialism has not. There is no other way".[10] Up until today, the polarization between neoliberal democracy and rightwing populism, the ostensibly rational and technocratic, on the one hand, and, on the other, the openly ideological, continues to structure the political debate in our countries.

IT IS PRECISELY HERE that *Solidarity in Struggle* makes a meaningful contribution to ongoing discussions in East-Central Europe about the neoliberal democratic model and the rise of anti-democratic rightwing forces. By gathering lesser-known examples of feminist theorizing, interventions, and activism from East-Central Europe, it makes the point that there has indeed always been an alternative, there have always been different visions of what society can be. For example, Zofia Łapniewska shows that approaches critical of both state socialism and the free market model were in place as far back as the system change. Alexandra Ostertagová points out that, in the 1990s, various schools of feminist thought, among them deconstructivism and radical feminism, were present in Slovakia. Elżbieta Korolczuk gives examples of successful intersectional activism in Poland, where feminists managed to build alliances with trade unions, protesting nurses, and women threatened with eviction, and Kata

Ámon draws our attention to the way social movements in Hungary have striven to serve the rights of the poorest women by repoliticizing housing.

The studies from this book also give us some ideas for successful feminist action against "neoliberal neopatriarchy" on the one hand,[11] and "illiberal patriarchy" on the other.

FIRST OF ALL, as the editor Eszter Kováts frames it in the preface, the chapters in this volume encourage us to break out of the deadlock of neoliberal democracy vs. illiberal democracy, to reject blackmailing that forces us into this false dichotomy and instead formulate our own vision of society. They urge us to look to both our own feminist legacies and the experiences of other countries and realize that there is an alternative. Some studies in this book, e.g. those by Angéla Kóóczé and Kata Ámon, make a direct connection between failures of neoliberalism and the rise of the far right, by showing that structural inequalities created by neoliberalism have made such groups as the Roma or the homeless prone to becoming collective scapegoats. Other authors, e.g. Anikó Gregor and myself, point to how the ingraining of individualistic values and the logic of efficiency into the very fabric of our societies made collective resistance and the very functioning of social movements more difficult if not outright impossible. Audre Lorde once famously asserted that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."[12] On a similar note, the authors in this volume remind us that while we have little choice but to use the financial and political instruments available to us, there is at the same time a need to rethink the feminist toolkit, including such instruments as gender mainstreaming, the EU legislature, and a reliance on donors who set the agenda.

Second, the authors in this volume remind us that our feminism must be intersectional lest it be ineffective. The hegemony of so-called cultural feminism, which has in large part been imported to East-Central Europe from the West and implemented by various funding agencies, has rendered feminists helpless and unprepared for the confrontation with structural

Continued.
Gendered voices from East-Central Europe

economic oppression brought about by the free market. Unfortunately, "cultural feminism" or "white middle-class feminism", which only sees one axis of oppression at the expense of others, is alive and well even as the neoliberal order itself is in crisis. This became clear recently in Poland, when the new populist rightwing government introduced universal child benefits for every second child, the first wide-scale redistributive policy in post-1989 Poland. Some progressive commentators and feminists spoke out against it, claiming that the program is a weapon against women's emancipation, as it will force women out of the labor market. One prominent feminist public intellectual even went so far as to suggest that the money would be mostly wasted on alcohol. While both the effectiveness of the program and its familialist underpinnings should be an object of critical evaluation, such claims reveal a much larger problem on the part of some liberal feminists, whose conceptual framework, focused as it is on gender difference, clouds their vision in such a way that they miss other types of inequalities at work, and makes it difficult for them to acknowledge that the sheer economic security granted by money transfers can indeed be empowering to legions of women. Therefore, to break out of the deadlock, we need a complex understanding of social justice – one than includes issues of redistribution, recognition, and political representation all at once.[13]

Third, the chapters in this book address the need to overcome individualism and the "power to women" perspective, and instead rejuvenate the old slogans of "solidarity" and "community" that have been so thoroughly hijacked by the populist right. Unlike the national solidarity offered by the right, which is based on rigid boundaries and hierarchies, and restricted to those who are just like us, the community that emerges from feminist efforts is broad, inclusive, and built upon the ethics of care.

Finally, several authors in this volume agree that, in order to bring about change, we need to strengthen international cooperation both at the level of social movements and at the level of transnational institutions. A single country has limited capabilities to resist the globalized economic system. Therefore, we need to build transnational solidarity and push for reforms at the EU level, if not even more broadly, rather than fall into the trap of national independence proposed by the right and the Euroskeptic left.

THROUGH THE VARIOUS country-specific examples, this volume sheds light on how the globalized, neoliberal, democratic model has profoundly changed the social contract between the state and citizen in East-Central Europe, and has gone so far as to make masses of people feel that their social, economic, and cultural security is threatened. By illuminating this phenomenon, the book issues a stark reminder that there is a need on the part of feminist researchers and activists to address these fears and insecurities and offer a set of progressive reforms and solutions instead of the populist slogans and policies proposed by the

right. As feminists, we have to acknowledge these fears and start treating them seriously, instead of either demonizing people gripped by these fears, and viewing them as insufficiently self-reliant and modern, or behaving as if the conditions leading to these fears don't really exist. Not long ago, I was doing field research in the city of Lublin in eastern Poland, talking to young men who decided to join rightwing paramilitary organizations. After one such conversation, I asked my respondent why he is such a strong proponent of the traditional family. He looked outside the window and pointed to the surroundings telling me that there are no jobs left, and that his father had to emigrate to Germany to support their family. That is why, he explained, when he gets older he wants to have a steady job in the military, and be certain he eats dinner with his family every day. One of the strengths of *Solidarity in Struggle* is that it makes readers more sensitive to complicated connections between neoliberalism and rightwing populism such as this one. ⊠

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12 Beatrix Campbell, *End of Equality* (Seagull, 2013).

13 Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Masters House" in *Sister Outsider* (1984): 112.

14 See e.g. Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation" in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (London: Verso, 2003).

Cross-over contacts in the subarctic peripheries.
Teamwork, description and synthesis

In 1987, the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand[1] wrote, "The all-inclusive study of enclosed areas (regions) has long been at a low-water mark. Geographers and others compile adequate descriptions of regions for educational purposes, for physical planning or for commercial purposes. But this is, in large measure, done by means of an old, well-known layer-by-layer method" [Swedish *plättläggningsmönster*], meaning that different aspects of the region are included without disentangling inherent relations and modal changes.

Since that was written, the discourse on the concept of region has been revived, as evidenced by Vasileios Petrogiannis and Linn Rabe[2] in the 2016 in-house edition of *Baltic Worlds*. But regardless of how the concept is defined, explaining a region means engaging with a number of challenges.

Writing history focused on an area which is part of a territorial state involves a range of problems. Much of traditional history is an account of rulers and their territory, the state. Focusing on one part of the state not defined by administrative areas entails the tedious work of assembling local information and synthesizing it into a story of the area in question. If, however, the area chosen consists of peripheral parts of four territorial states, the challenge seems almost insurmountable. But this was exactly the idea behind the project aiming at producing an encyclopedia and a history of the Barents Region.

THE REGION IS NAMED after the Dutch navigator Willem Barents (c. 1550–1597), indicating an area devoid of a common name before its discovery. But while there was no common designation, the area's history goes back much further. Obviously the knowledge of its early history is both scanty and piecemeal.

The Barents Region is a collaborative project between historians from the four countries covered by the Barents Region, states with widely differing histories, cultures, and political regimes. Writing about part of a territorial state is more difficult than describing the state as a whole: statistical information and sources are often badly adapted to the region chosen; many relations are trans-regional, not least in the semicolonial structures that dominate northernmost Europe. Coordinating four regional stories into one increases the complexity; the challenge is to avoid the "layer-by-layer method" when merging the individual discourses into one, instead detecting the crossborder relations that are too often made invisible by the framing into intra-state ("national") distributions. Many phenomena of the Barents Region – stretching from western Norway via the Bothnian provinces of Sweden and Finland, the Kola Peninsula and the White Sea to the Komi Republic in the Russian Federation – are of a trans-border character. This is true not only as regards nature and climate and their repercussions on human cultivation, but also for cultures, religion, and geopolitical conditions. The different Sámi cultures do not follow contemporary political boundaries, but they have been subjected to the different, varying and often discriminatory policies of four different states. Religion

Continued.
Cross-over contacts in the subarctic peripheries

was often seen as battle between paganism and true faith, or between Catholicism/Protestantism and Orthodoxy, but within the two hegemonic faiths in the area there are particular variations, Laestadianism and Old Order Orthodoxy.

The geopolitical development contains details that may surprise a southern reader. In the Stalin-style mining town of Nikel' that takes its name from environmentally disruptive mineral extraction, there are some narrow slabs of housing typical of 1930s Finnish modernism, a reminder of the short time Finland was given access to the Barents Sea through the Petsamo corridor. In Norwegian Kirkenes, there is a statue of a Soviet solder, one of the liberators of Northern Norway from the Nazi German occupation. During the Cold War, with a direct boundary between NATO and the Soviet Union, the two border states cooperated to build a hydropower plant in the river, and Norway leases a small part of its territory to its neighbor in order to give access to the Orthodox monastery of Boris Gleb which, in an 1826 treaty between the Union of Norway and Sweden and Tsarist Russia, caused the border to make a sharp bend in the territorial division between the two states.

THE HISTORY OF THE BARENTS REGION contains several moments of conflict, war, periods of oppression, and deliberate hiding of facts. The collective of historians, organized by professor Lars Elenius of Umeå University, has been successful in highlighting the darker sides of the region's history, including the most difficult part, the Soviet denial of Gulag camps and ethnic cleansing. The Nordic countries' sometimes assimilatory, sometimes segregative policies towards their minorities are also openly discussed, but without any anachronistic condemnations.

The book is illustrated with photos and pictures, often little known, and by fact boxes covering particular people, events, and phenomena, e.g. the Swedish-Norwegian suffragette Elsa Laula (1877–1931), the ill-fated Finlandic president of Soviet Karelia, Edvard Gylling (1881–1938: missing in the index!), and the organization of the Orthodox Church in 17th century Russian Karelia.

Every chapter has a reference section, but no references are given in the texts. This makes the book easy to read, but it may be difficult to find the sources of specific details. The index of places, names, and concepts is very valuable. The problem of translating local concepts has generally been well solved, but unfortunately the translator has chosen to use the US American concept of "nation" to mean an independent state, instead of the European and original meaning of nation as a people forming or demanding a territorial state, blurring e.g. the meaning of "national minority".

These are minor issues in an impressive piece of work, to be used by students and scholars in, and hopefully beyond, the area, particularly within all the states that colonized the northernmost areas of the European continent. I think Torsten Hägerstrand would have been satisfied with this study of a challenging region. ⊠

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History writing in exile.
Alternative stories arose

It was no mere coincidence that it was Jewish Eastern European immigrants in Paris, who laid the foundation for the first French historical accounts of the Holocaust. The prior experience of exile and, for many of these immigrants, a more traditional Jewish life facilitated the understanding of this European trauma.[1] From a broader perspective, the intellectual flight of the previous century from the Soviet Union had a significant impact on the historical consciousness of the West. Evidence of this is presented clearly in a new, multi-disciplinary anthology that brings together sixteen researchers from universities across Europe, the US, and Canada, an anthology in which the relationship between exile experiences of those from Eastern and Central Europe from 1939 to 1989 and historical research is brought into focus. These experiences of fleeing one's home country (particularly emphasized here are the Baltic states, Belorussia, Poland, and Ukraine), often under dramatic circumstances, made history's relation to values such as orientation, identity, and rootedness stronger, while the political climate of the Cold War had ideological implications for any assessment of one's relation to the past. But these refugees also expanded the research horizon through their knowledge of several languages and awareness of cultural and political traditions outside the West. In this way, alternative stories to the national historiographies and remembrances arose. Much of the literature is written in the exiled groups' home language, while other individuals and groups tried to integrate historical representations into the new nations in which they found themselves.

East and Central European History Writing in Exile 1939–1989 is divided into three parts. In the first part, papers investigate how organizations, networks, and individuals functioned in the countries to which these thinkers emigrated, and how this functioning was related to the exile communities. The papers provide valuable, concrete insights into the conditions under which these historians and activists worked, something that is often lacking in studies of historical research, where the focus more often falls on the image of the past that is conveyed. In Sweden, intellectuals among the growing Estonian population founded The Estonian Learned Society in 1945. The organization played both a social and a scientific role among Estonians in Sweden by combining cultural activities and research initiatives. It is symptomatic that one of the first research initiatives concerned an investigation into the fate of university employees in Tartu during World War II: obviously, history here had a moral and existential function when the stories of particular people were traced in a commemorative volume published at the end of the 1940s. But the academic claims were also important for the members themselves: the political dimension of the group's activities rose to the surface during the unsuccessful Hungarian revolution of 1956, when the Society expressed its support for the fight against Soviet rule. At that point, it became apparent that the exile would be prolonged.

The exiled historians' integration with their new environ-

ments was influenced both by traditions among the immigrant population, and by the political culture of the new country. This integration is a significant focus of the second part of the book, which investigates the influence of historians and the contexts in which their knowledge was conveyed. For Polish cultural institutions of different types in London, Paris, Rome, and New York, this concerned both the spread of knowledge about Poland but also the strengthening of links between various exiled research groups and individuals. There was an element of what can be called a diaspora nationalism, which could be expressed as a newly awakened longing for the glory days of Poland, something nourished by knowledge of the work of past activists. At the same time, the international nature of the network enriched current research with new perspectives and methods. Many academics naturally positioned themselves completely outside these sorts of organizations, however. In Denmark, for example, the Estonian-born historian Vello Helk contributed to Danish, Northern European, and Estonian history. Helk fled to Denmark in 1945 and worked mainly at the Danish National Archives, but gained national and international stature through numerous studies in Danish and German. His distancing himself from the exile community created a more apolitical image: he was simply an academic in Denmark. But his dual social identities still played a meaningful role in his career and were reflected in his research interests.

THE FINAL PART OF THE ANTHOLOGY discusses the extent to which exiled historians contributed to new lines of thinking and thus renewed historical research. As far as the political sphere is concerned, many intellectuals who fled the Soviet Union strove to spread knowledge about the totalitarian system there, but also to highlight underlying cultural and political traditions that communism sought to stifle. Within the field of history, such efforts contributed important alternative perspectives during the first decades of the postwar period at a time when increasing numbers of Western academics were being influenced by Marxism. This, however, also created conflicts in the new homelands. The Polish major general Marian Kukiel, who participated in both world wars, was a promi-

Continued.
History writing in exile

nent historian in London during the postwar period and looked with distaste upon the increased international influence of the historians of the French Annales. For Kukiel, the thinking of the Annales intellectuals marked a crisis in the Western historical research of the 1950s. The strong anti-Marxist tendency among exiled historians undeniably contributed to a certain type of dogmatism and inability to look positively on studies that had points in common with historical materialism. A struggle involving academics in the Polish People's Republic, for example, was: What was the significance of the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic in 1795? What was the relationship between Poland's independence in 1918 and the Russian Revolution? However, the ideological connotations of the works of exiled historians must also be considered against a background of growing leftwing radicalization and blindness to communism's totalitarian inclinations at Western European universities.

OVERALL, THE ANTHOLOGY gives general insights into how the experiences of exiles and the writing of history can interact. The anthology is therefore an important contribution to research regarding the relationship of historical research to national identity in the postwar years. This is the sphere in which we find works such as the German historian Stefan Berger's large international project on national historiographies in Europe.[2] Especially important are the East and Central European experiences. The anthology's structure and content is not, however, unobjectionable. The political context around the Cold War is present throughout, but there is no general attempt to explain how the ideological polarization came to affect and influence the writing of history. It is also regrettable that the Jewish exile from Eastern and Central Europe is discussed far too sparsely. The Jewish historians worked in separate institutions and networks, and contact with the non-Jewish exile environments could be strained by anti-Semitism. Jewish immigrants in the West such as Léon Poliakov (born in St. Petersburg), Philip Friedman (born in Lviv), Michel Borwicz (born in Kraków), and Joseph Wulf (born in Chemnitz in Germany but raised in Kraków) were sometimes affected both by Communism and Nazism. From an interdisciplinary perspective, they laid the foundations of what is today called Holocaust studies, with Paris as an important center in Western Europe, as mentioned above, during a time when contemporary history was not a developed academic field.[3] In this case, one can indeed, in the words of the anthology, speak of "new styles of thought" – in particular with consideration of the status that Holocaust studies has today throughout the Western world.

THE BOOK WOULD HAVE benefited from a more explicitly articulated purpose, with distinct research questions, as well as a common method. The lack thereof creates a certain sprawl in the anthology, and the three parts overlap to some degree. It thus becomes difficult to draw any general comparative conclu-sions from the results. In addition, some of the contributions have an entirely too descriptive character. At the same time, such essays can have a great value for future studies, but the research's critical approach is lost when, for example, one essay has the subtitle "Homage to Vello Helk"; or when the Soviet experts and exile historians Richard Pipes, Leopold Łabędź, and Adam Ulam are repeatedly called heroes. Such things would find perfect placement in a Festschrift from one of the exile organizations that are described in the book, but fit less well in an academic project with ambitions to impart new knowledge within a developing research area. ×

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LIFE & DEATH IN RUSSIA

The Russian welfare state has undergone deep structural transformations during the last twenty-five years. The aim of the 16th Annual Aleksanteri Conference, "Life and Death in Russia", held last October in Helsinki, was to address questions on the character of the changes in social welfare and the extent to which the government's policies have been put into practice in an effective way. In more than forty panels, various aspects of Russian welfare matters were discussed: the effect of the new pension system, the implementing of a new health care reform, care for elderly people, regional dimensions of health and wealth, and new trends in state policies on child welfare – to mention but a few of the topics brought up at this very rich conference. Obviously, the full scope of facts and exchanges of well-informed views was impossible for one person to grasp and digest. But let me share a few impressions.

Two key note speakers, the Swedish sociologist Göran Therborn, currently stationed at Oxford University, and the US political scientist Thomas Remington, addressed broad issues of welfare. The welfare state is the most important existing institution for reducing inequality, Therborn stated. The stronger the welfare state is, the more socially and economically equal is the distribution of wealth.

Göran Therborn.

The "disastrous restoration of capitalism" made Russia stand out with extremely negative rates of life expectancy and mortality. Thus, the concentration of wealth has risen in Russia, as it has, by the way, in the US and China. In these three countries, salaries and other forms of direct income mean almost everything for the welfare of the population, since the social transfers are so low in comparison to many countries, especially in Europe. A growing practice of part time employment and vacation without pay, together with the fact that almost twenty percent of the population works in the so-called informal sector, increases unpredictability and insecurity in people's everyday lives.

REMINGTON CLAIMED THAT RUSSIANS are basically aware of social inequality, viewing it as being excessive and unfair. Still, following global surveys, Russians underestimate the degree of existing inequality, while for example British and French people overestimate it. The explanation could be that wealth in Russia is comparatively secret. Furthermore, the cost of protesting is regarded too risky. Instead, people interact in smaller groups of family, friends, and neighbors to help each other out.

Various panels concluded that, when it came to major state reforms in the social sphere, the implementing of a new pension system had scored best, while health care reform and a renewing of the educational system had been stalled in recent years. Still, one presenter referred to a survey showing that only seven per-cent of the population claims to live well on their pensions, while fifty percentage say they can't live solely on their pension. As in many areas of the social sphere, the family and other close persons are the ones to help in difficult situations. Quite a few panels at the conference were devoted to the care of elderly people. A common conclusion was that the standard of care and access to various kinds of care differs widely among geographical regions.

PANELS ON THE HEALTH CARE REFORM that has been launched by Putin's government analyzed the trend away from a universal health care system towards a neoliberal system. Partnership arrangements are being tried out between the state, commercial actors and nonprofit organizations, i.e. NGOs with a social orientation. One of the main challenges in this process is the uneasy interaction between the NGOs and the state bureaucracy, which has no tradition of such collaboration. Another challenge is the fact that the reform process is stalled partly due to lack of funding. Flat tax is practiced in Russia and only individuals are taxed, while the corporate world contributes on a voluntary basis. Also, the population demonstrates an unwillingness to accept a privatized health

Thomas Remington.

care system since the legacy from previous times is a universal welfare system, financed and realized by the state. "It is difficult to reform a health care system", one US scholar concluded, pointing to the thorny experience of implementing Obamacare in his own country. "Only the US government's striving to get the health care system closer to a universal welfare state model has been regarded with suspicion in a country with deep roots in individualism, while opinion is reversed in Russia, with its people disapproving of a liberal, individualized health care system", the speaker added.

A session that especially caught my interest took up the ongoing shift in official ideology about child welfare that stresses the need to move away from a system of a high percentage of children in state residences with collective care by professionals, and instead proceed to a system where orphanages or foster families should be viewed as strictly provisional arrangements. The stated goal is to have every child placed in its own biological or adoptive family. The new ideas fit well into a strong official family-oriented discourse in today's Russia. Financial support to families is a prioritized state budget item. ▢

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