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Eva Eglāja-Kristsone, Jānis Oga

Introduction II:
Shifting Literary Culture since Stagnation
in the Brezhnev Era: The Baltic Paradigm

Two special issues of *Letonica* have been published under the title *Shifting Literary Culture since Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: The Baltic Paradigm*. Following *Letonica* No. 51 (see Eglāja-Kristsone, Oga 2023), this issue of *Letonica* delves into various aspects of cultural, literary, and artistic developments during the period of Stagnation. This issue continues to navigate the intriguing terrain of Baltic literary and cultural expressions during the Brezhnev Era, a period marked by a unique mix of political rigidity and cultural dynamism. It explores themes ranging from gender roles and socialist ideals to cultural policies, education, and memory discourse, thus unraveling the complex layers of Baltic societies in this era of transformation. Each article provides a distinct perspective, enhancing our understanding of the historical, cultural, and expressive intricacies of this period in the Baltic states.

Recent scholarly work has reimagined the societal landscape during Leonid Brezhnev's lengthy tenure (1964–1982) as a vibrant and "happening place" (Bittner 2017), starkly contrasting with the previous views of this era as only stagnant. For instance, Alexei Yurchak has stressed that the term "Stagnation", denoting the stage between the Thaw and *perestroika* and prominently associated with the Brezhnev Era, only gained recognition in hindsight, emerging during Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms after the conclusion of Brezhnev's rule, as the socialist system underwent rapid transformation. In other words, the conceptualization of the late 1960s and 1970s as a distinct historical period during Brezhnev's tenure as the party's general secretary also arose retrospectively during *perestroika*. The discourse of *perestroika* brought to light previously unknown facts about the Soviet past, critically articulated long-known but unnamed realities, and contributed to the formation of certain myths coloured by the revolutionary ideas and political agendas of the late 1980s. Many binary categories describing the collapsing system gained prominence in this revolutionary context. However, some of the roots of these binary categories extend much further, originating in the broader "regimes of knowledge" established during the Cold War when the entity of "the Soviet bloc" had been articulated in opposition to "the West" and as distinct from "the Third World" (Yurchak 2013: 7). Rather than a

period of Stagnation, it is now seen as a dynamic time characterized by various and often contradictory developments.

The cultural policies under Brezhnev, though more conservative than during Nikita Khrushchev's time, did not revert entirely to a strict enforcement of Socialist Realism. Nevertheless, the spectrum of acceptable artistic expression was narrowed, and the regime was harsh on dissident intellectuals. Yet there was a space for significant nonconformist thought within the established order. As William Tompson observes in his book *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev*, "[a] growing number of writers and scholars found themselves able to operate within a nebulous zone that lingered, albeit precariously, between the confining orthodoxies of official ideology and the overt opposition to the regime that constituted dissent" (Tompson 2014: 98–99). He describes this as an ideological "twilight zone", a space of emerging thought that eventually laid the groundwork for later reforms.

This issue of *Letonica* features diverse contributions. In the realm of drama, Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) scrutinizes the context surrounding the staging of the first two Lithuanian plays of the Theater of the Absurd, particularly exploring the dramatic experiences of the Soviet times, the communication methods employed by playwrights, and the evolution of dramatic expression since that time (Martišiūtė-Linartienė 2023, this issue). Edīte Tišheizere (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia) sheds light on theater as a form of subtle resistance against political and social norms. Visual metaphors used in the productions conveyed messages differing from the explicit text, with scenography playing a crucial role. One can observe certain parallels and common features in Soviet and Western theater during this time, and comparison of different research concepts reveal shared elements in theater theories (Tišheizere 2023, this issue).

Dāvis Eņģelis (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia) examines the musical landscape of Soviet Latvia through the lens of the almanac *Latvian Music*, showing how musicological thought contextualized musical experiences during the Soviet occupation. Spatial metaphors emerge as significant, as they were used to assess newly created compositions, reflecting philosophical, psychological, or emotional depth (Eņģelis 2023, this issue).

Mārtiņš Mintaurs (National Library of Latvia; University of Latvia, Faculty of History and Philosophy) takes a historical approach, exploring the situation in Latvian novels of the late 1960s by analyzing two works by Alberts Bels. These novels are seen as indicators of the cultural and political milieu, especially in regard to the reception of Bels's published novel and the conditions that prevented the publication of the second one (Mintaurs 2023, this issue). Kaspars Zalāns (Universität Greifswald)

investigates the works of Latvian post-modernist Marģeris Zariņš, looking at how Zariņš used postmodern techniques to criticize and deconstruct the framework of the Soviet regime and Socialist Realism (Zalāns 2023, this issue).

Johanna Ross (Tallinn University) explores gender roles in Estonian novellas for girls during the Stagnation period, analyzing the so-called Silja series by Silvia Truu and examining how it reflects and challenges contemporary discussions on gender roles (Ross 2023, this issue). Sigita Kušnere (University of Latvia) investigates the role of literature in shaping the image of an ideal socialist woman during the late Socialism, emphasizing   the contribution of literature to disseminating socialist principles and promoting the "socialist way of life" (Kušnere 2023, this issue).

Solveiga Daugirdaitė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) explores cultural life of the USSR in the 1960s as seen through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs, highlighting the changing cultural policy during that period (Daugirdaitė 2023, this issue). Saulius Vasiliauskas (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) delves into the control and education of new writers in Soviet Lithuania, focusing on the Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter under the Lithuanian Writers' Union and its evolving goals (Vasiliauskas 2023, this issue). Finally, Viktorija Jonkutė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) analyzes the discourse of the past in Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press during the late 1980s and early 1990s, examining its dominant conceptions of history and perceptions of time. Her research identifies ten discursive functions of (re)constructed forms of memory, ranging from communicative/informational to political/ideological (Jonkutė 2023, this issue).

This wide-ranging exploration of cultural, literary, and artistic expressions in the Baltic region during the Brezhnev Era, as presented in these special issues of *Letonica*, offers invaluable insights into this complex and transformative period and shows how art, literature, and culture can both reflect and influence the social and political landscape of their time.

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Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė
Dr. philol., literary scholar
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
E-mail: ausramartisiute@gmail.com

**Lithuanian Drama in the Brezhnev Era:
The Two Cases of the Theater of the Absurd**

**Lietuviešu drāma Brežņeva laikmetā:
divi absurda teātra piemēri**

Summary   This article focuses on the context and time when the first two plays of the Theater of the Absurd were staged in Lithuania. The aim of the article is to answer the following questions: what dramatic experiences existed in the Soviet era, in what ways playwrights were trying to communicate with the reader/viewer, what message was formulated and conveyed in the plays, and how the expression of drama has changed since the Soviet era. By focusing on two cases of the Theater of the Absurd – Kazys Saja's *Mamutų medžioklė* (The Mammoth Hunt) and Arvydas Ambrasas and Regimantas Midvikis's *Duobė* (The Pit) –, this article examines the period in question and the collective consciousness of the playwrights' contemporaries as seen and revealed in the plays and performances.

Kopsavilkums   Šī raksta uzmanības centrā ir konteksts un laikmets, kurā radās divi pirmie absurda teātra lugu iestudējumi Lietuvā. Raksta mērķis ir rast atbildes uz šādiem jautājumiem: kāda bija drāmas tradīcija padomju laikā, kā dramaturgi centās uzrunāt lasītājus/skatītājus, kāds vēstījums tika noformulēts un ietverts lugās, un kā dramatiskā izteiksme kopš padomju laikiem ir mainījusies. Pievēršoties diviem absurda teātra piemēriem – Kaža Sajas lugai *Mamutų medžioklė* (Mamutu medības) un Arvida Ambrasa un Regimanta Midviķa lugai *Duobė* (Bedre) –, šis raksts pēta attiecīgo laikmetu un minēto dramaturgu laikabiedru kolektīvo apziņu, kādu viņi to redzēja un kā tā attēlota šajās lugās un izrādēs.

The article examines the shift in Lithuanian drama from romantic and poetic historical dramas depicting the events of the past to the reflection of the Soviet present in plays created using the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd. In quantitative terms, the Theater of the Absurd constituted a very small part of the theatrical performances of the period under study. However, its impact on the audience, as recorded in eyewitness accounts and documented in many written memoirs, has been especially strong. In this respect, the focus on dramas of new forms and issues is logical. Moreover, the outbreak of the Theater of the Absurd in Lithuania in the form of translations, original works, and stage productions during the Soviet era has been little researched in Lithuania and is almost completely unknown outside the country.

The first part of the article provides an overview of the context, and explains the meanings that the playwrights who wrote historical dramas were trying to reveal to the reader-viewer. It is also described how modern drama was beginning to penetrate Lithuanian culture of the Soviet era, what kind of dialogue was conducted between playwrights in Lithuania and those in the diaspora, and what modern explorations of Western drama were reaching the Lithuanian playwrights and theater people behind the Iron Curtain.

The second part of the article, based on memoirs and examples of texts, explains how the news about the Theater of the Absurd reached Soviet Lithuania and in which plays and theaters the shift to the new way of representing reality by means of modern poetics took place. The third and fourth parts of the article analyze two plays of 1968, showing how Soviet Lithuanian playwrights, Saja in *Mamutų medžioklė* (The Mammoth Hunt) and Ambrasas and Midvikis in *Duobė* (The Pit), transformed the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd to reveal the reality of their time and to avoid the prohibitions of censorship. The plays are analyzed in terms of the location of the action and the identity of the characters.

The fifth part uses memoirs to explore how the message of each play was understood by the audience. The sixth part of the article, based on the analysis of documentary material, explains how the period of the Theater of Absurd in Lithuanian drama was brought to an end, how censorship manifested, and what led to the suppression of this breakthrough in the search for a new drama and theatrical language.

Historical context: from allusions to tragic events of the present in historical dramas to critical diagnosis of society in the Theater of the Absurd

As in the rest of the Soviet Union, in Lithuania a more favorable time for drama arrived after the second All-Union Soviet Writers' Congress, held in 1954. Articles dealing with theoretical issues of drama began to appear in the press (by Juozas Grušas, Jonas Lankutis, Algis Samulionis, etc.). After being subjected to the directives of the "theory of *bezkonfliktnost* (conflictlessness)", now the playwrights were able to explore various conflicts, albeit under the constraints of censorship. Following the Khrushchev's Thaw, Lithuanian theater and drama found a new direction – productions of historical-poetic dramas, which suited and attracted different theater personalities. The season of 1956-1957 became an important turning point in Lithuanian theater. In 1956 at the Vilnius Academic Drama Theater, Romualdas Juknevičius (1906–1963) staged Balys Sruoga's *Apyaušrio dalia* (Fate Before Dawn), which depicted the peasants' uprising against serfdom and the tragic life story of a ballerina descended from serfs. A year later (in 1957) at Kaunas Drama Theater, Henrikas Vancevičius (1924–2014) directed Juozas Grušas's *Herkus Mantas*, which portrayed the Prussian uprising against the Teutonic Knights and the complex conflicts of the uprising leader, Herkus Mantas, with outsiders and his own people.

From then on, for almost three decades historical drama became the most significant dramatic form artistically and socially, performing a defensive function. It still receives the most attention from drama and theater researchers (Jonas Lankutis[1], Reda Pabarčienė (2010: 170−192), Gražina Mareckaitė (2004) and others). Benedikts Kalnačs has noted that when comparing Lithuanian drama with Latvian and Estonian drama, historical drama – in particular the desire to continue the tradition of interwar Lithuanian theater – is a distinctive feature:

> Lithuanian playwrights of the 1960s and 1970s most often turned to the motifs of the past, and the dramatic works of Juozas Grušas and Justinas Marcinkevičius have a strong connection to the dramatic works of independent Lithuania (Kalnačs 2011: 178).

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[1]	Jonas Lankutis's books include *Lietuvių dramaturgijos raida* (The Development of Lithuanian Drama, 1974, supplemented edition in 1979), *Lietuvių tarybinė dramaturgija* (Lithuanian Soviet Drama, 1983), *Justino Marcinkevičiaus draminė trilogija* (Drama Trilogy by Justinas Marcinkevičius, 1977), *Etiudai apie Juozą Grušą* (Etudes about Juozas Grušas, 1981), and *Lietuvių dramaturgijos tyrinėjimai* (Studies of Lithuanian Drama, 1988). The latter work consists of revised, corrected and supplemented monographs *The Development of Lithuanian Drama* and *Lithuanian Soviet Drama*. After the restoration of independence, Lithuanian readers were introduced to the works of playwrights in exile in the book *Lietuvių egzodo dramaturgija 1940–1990* (Drama of the Lithuanian Exodus: 1940–1990, 1995). However, Lankutis did not attempt to link the works of playwrights who worked in Lithuania and in the United States into a single trajectory of drama development.

Modern quests of playwrights and theater directors have received much less attention. However, the younger researchers of theater and literature have started researching modern Lithuanian drama in various aspects – see, for instance, Andrius Jevsejevas's article *Absurdo poetika Vidurio ir Rytų Europos dramaturgijoje* (Poetics of the Absurd in Central and Eastern European Drama, 2009); Rimantas Kmita's publications *1965–1972: pakilimas* (The Years of 1965–1972: The Rise) and *1973–1980: pilkieji metai* (1973–1980: Gray Years) as part of the MO Museum project *The History of Culture* (from 2011); and a couple of doctoral theses: Goda Dapšytė's *The Impact of the Soviet Censorship on the Development of Lithuanian Theater Discourse* (2015), Ginta Čingaitė's *Communication Strategies in Kazys Saja's Plays: The Aspect of Genre* (2015), and others.

While Lithuania was still suffering from Stalinist repressions and censorship, writers Antanas Škėma, Kostas Ostrauskas, and Algirdas Landsbergis who had fled to the West and settled in the USA began to create their own works of modern drama, focusing on the artistic tendencies of the time. In 1954, Saja made his debut in the Lithuanian theater with a traditional comedy *Lažybos* (Betting). At the same time, Ostrauskas published his play *Pypkė* (The Pipe) in the USA – an example of the Theater of the Absurd (cf. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, published in 1952 and staged in Paris in 1953, which later became a classic of the Theater of the Absurd).

In the plays written in Lithuania and in the USA, one can see parallels between the issues raised in the text and in the subtext as early as the mid1950s, although in terms of dramatic expression the divide was so pronounced that the plays could hardly be compared. In 1956, Škėma published his drama *Pabudimas* (The Awakening) written during 1949–1950 in the USA, and in 1957 Grušas's *Herkus Mantas* appeared in Lithuania[2] – "the first tragedy of the post-Stalin Thaw which, by the very fact of its appearance, refuted "the theory of *bezkonfliktnost*" that had been stiffening the post-war theater" (Pabarčienė 2010: 126). Lankutis notes that in Lithuania at that time *Herkus Mantas*[3] "paved the way for historiosophical generalizations of national experience, later [a decade later – AML] heightened by Justinas Marcinkevičius" (Lankutis 1988: 452).

The works "resemble" one another through the theme of resistance. The drama of the encounter with the repressive NKVD system during the first year of Soviet occupation in the 1940s revealed in Škėma's play has a universal subtext. Rimvydas Šilbajoris observes that the characters of *The Awakening* find themselves in a critical situation not only as human beings but also as Humanity, standing "before the black

2   In 1957, Grušas was awarded the LSSR State Prize for the tragedy *Herkus Mantas.*

3   Grušas received the LSSR State Prize twice for his historical dramas *Herkus Mantas* (1957), *Švitrigaila* (1957) and *Barbora Radvilaitė* (1976).

face of Nothingness"; "they become like actors playing the roles of enemies in some human tragicomedy directed by Fate" (Šilbajoris 1992: 265, 266).

Grušas's *Herkus Mantas* is a work with a double meaning. The Prussian uprising depicted in the play triggers associations with the resistance that had just been suppressed in Lithuania three years earlier (General Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, the Lithuanian partisan commander and de facto 4th President of the Republic of Lithuania, was shot in Moscow's Butyrka prison on November 26, 1954). Dovilė Zelčiūtė confirmed that people understood that the tragedy written by Grušas depicted not only the Prussian uprising and its leader Herkus Mantas. She noted that the stories about this play that she had heard from her parents who were actors "imprinted on my consciousness as something dangerous, unauthorized, and turbulent that had united all those present on the stage (and, I now realize, also those in the audience)" (Zelčiūtė 2020: 4). In the play and in a film of the same title based on a screenplay by Saulius Šaltenis, directed by Marijonas Giedrys and produced by Lithuanian Film Studio in 1972, theater and cinema audience was able to "read between the lines about the tragic fate of small nations, so relevant to Lithuania" (Macaitis 2021).

Sruoga's historical drama *Fate Before Dawn*, written in 1941 and depicting the tragic outcome of the 1769 peasant uprising, also evoked such associations. Vytautas Kubilius points out that unlike Škėma's *The Awakening*, which dealt with universal issues in the recent history, the playwrights living in Lithuania established "a silent dialogue" when through the ancient heroes, their exploits and their tragic fates, readers of historical drama and viewers of historical plays learnt to recognize the connections between the history of Lithuania and the tragic realities of their own time and the recent past, i.e. the strong-willed guerrilla resistance that was suppressed by the Soviet Union (Kubilius 1998: 7).

Only a couple of performances based on modern drama were staged in 1940–1956 (Vengris et al. 1987), whereas the period of 1957–1970 stood out for the performances based on foreign and Lithuanian works of modern drama in all Lithuanian theaters. Theater directors Juozas Miltinis (1907–1994) and Vytautas Čibiras (1936–2009) introduced plays by foreign playwrights (Luigi Pirandello, Arthur Miller, Wolfgang Borchert, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and others) and Lithuanian authors (Kazys Saja, Juozas Grušas, and others). During the season of 1966–1967, performances directed by Miltinis based on Grušas's *Adomo Brunzos paslaptis* (The Secret of Adomas Brunza, 1966) and *Pražūtingas apsvaigimas* (Fatal Intoxication, 1967), in which the playwright revealed the complex inner conflicts of contemporary people, and Jonas Jurašas's productions of Slawomir Mrożek's *Tango* and Leonid Zorin's *A Warsaw Melody* in 1967, as well as dramas of the Eastern Theater of the Absurd that strongly condemned the totalitarian policies of the Soviet Union which restricted all freedom of expression, became a turning point for many theatergoers.

Miltinis, who worked at Panevėžys Theater, fully incorporated Lithuanian plays into his "laboratory of modern consciousness" (Trinkūnaitė 2021). Its main instrument was "an extraordinary quality of acting – a way of life on stage that demonstrates exceptional truthfulness, naturalness, simplicity and, at the same time, an almost impossible inner tension and meticulous precision" (Trinkūnaitė 2021). Jurašas's performances signaled a transition to a new theater language, rejection of the traditional realistic rendition of a play and creation of a conditional theater of metaphors. The young generation of theater directors (Dalia Tamulevičūtė (1940-2006), Jonas Vaitkus (b. 1944), Eimuntas Nekrošius (1952–2018), and Gytis Padegimas (b. 1952)) who made their debut during the 1972–1980 also developed the metaphorical theater.

The breakthrough of the Theater of the Absurd poetics in Lithuania: the creative conditions and creative forces

The playwrights and theaters of the Eastern Bloc countries, namely Czechoslovakia (the Czech author Vaclav Havel and the Slovak author Viliam Klimáček) and Poland (Slawomir Mrożek), which enjoyed slightly more freedom than those in the republics of the Soviet Union, were the first to reveal a critical attitude towards the existence of the Soviet person and the inherent political nature of the Eastern absurd by using the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd.

The Theater of the Absurd reached Lithuania through Polish magazines. Writer Saja made a special trip to Poland to see the performances: "We saw very interesting things that were taking place in Poland, and we were tempted to create something like this for Lithuanian theaters."[4] He also had the opportunity to see American theater productions and to talk to Lithuanian diaspora writers: "In Khrushchev's time, you could even go to America if you were invited by some close relative: your father, mother, brother, sister [..]. After nine years of petitioning, in 1967 I received permission to visit my brother" (Saja 2019: 321).

Ramunė Reimerienė, sister of theater director Ambrasas, recalled: "The turning point in society was maybe 1966. The news about the hippie movement reached us; we could already listen to rock music and vinyl records, get a glimpse of contemporary art in magazines, have long hair and wear jeans. At that time, avant-garde was very

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4   Lithuanian National Broadcaster's radio program *Pirmas sakinys* (The First Sentence). *Teatro mamutas Kazys Saja* (Kazys Saja, The Theater Mammoth), November 25, 2021; hosted by Mindaugas Nastaravičius and Tomas Vaiseta. https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000187829/pirmas-sakinys-teatro-mamutas-kazys-saja

rare in Lithuania; if anything happened it happened only in underground" (Reimerienė 2009: 283).[5] The State Art Institute of Lithuania was famous for being liberal, and it was in this place that the Theater of the Absurd, hardly imaginable on the stage of state-funded theater, first appeared.

Poet Tomas Venclova notes that "a new generation had emerged, not quite like the old Lithuanian intellectuals, but not at all like the Sovietizers and the *stribai* [derived from Russian *istrebiteli*] [..]. The ideological overseers did not weed the seedlings as diligently, and thus the soil was no longer so infertile [..]. [In 1967] the young writers, such as Marcelijus Martinaitis or Juozas Aputis who were not inclined to follow worn-out patterns in literature, published their first books; Vincas Kisarauskas, Petras Repšys, and the 'silent modernists', who by the way were not so silent at times, started participating in exhibitions" (Venclova 2009: 239).[6]

In the 1970s, modern drama began to appear in Lithuania. Translations of plays were published by newly established cultural magazines, and a few performances based on modern plays by Western playwrights were staged. From 1969 onwards, the first translations of the Theater of the Absurd into Lithuanian appeared. However, theater productions, with the few exceptions discussed in this article, took more than two decades – until the Reform Movement of Lithuania in 1988 and the restoration of independence in 1990 – to materialize. Samuel Beckett's *La Dernière bande* (Krapp's Last Tape, 1958) was translated into Lithuanian in 1969 (Beckett 1969: 26–29) and staged in Lithuania only in 1988. The first translation of the Theater of the Absurd appeared in *Nemunas*, a monthly magazine for young people, founded in 1967 by the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Leninist Communist Youth Union and the Lithuanian SSR Writers' Union. The translator Dovydas Judelevičius briefly introduced the context and poetics of the Theater of the Absurd. Even though he failed to mention Martin Esslin's *The Theater of the Absurd* (1961), he listed the main authors of the genre: Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, and Jean Genet; introduced the concepts of antitheater and anti-drama.

A year later in 1970, a Lithuanian translation of Beckett's solo pantomime *Act Without Words* (Beckett 1970: 50–52) was published in the monthly magazine *Kultūros barai*, founded in 1965 by the Ministry of Culture of the LSSR. The issue dedicated to the centenary of Vladimir Lenin contained a play of the Theater of the Absurd, translations of Arthur Rimbaud's poetry, and a conversation about a new

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5   Reminiscences of Ramunė Reimerienė, sister of Arvydas Ambrasas, recorded in 2006.

6   Reminiscences of Tomas Venclova, recorded in 2008.

theatrical phenomenon – poetry miniatures, or one-person theater. The introductory article by Judelevičius pointed out that the Theater of the Absurd "shocked the audience" a dozen years ago and has now become "more or less classic", and that Beckett won the Nobel Prize in 1969 (Beckett 1970: 50). In the same year, the book *XX amžiaus dramaturgija* (20th Century Drama), compiled by Judelevičius, was published (Judelevičius 1970). It included Beckett's play *Happy Days* (1961, staged in Lithuania in 1993), Eugène Ionesco's *La Leçon* (The Lesson) (staged in 1951 and published in 1954; a chamber opera based on the play by Vytautas Bartulis was produced in 1993 in Lithuania), and Max Frisch's *Biografie. Ein Spiel* (Biographie: A Game, 1967). Readers could also get acquainted with the work of the Angry Young Men generation – John Osborne's play *Inadmissible Evidence* (staged in 1964 and published in 1965). Osborne's most famous play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) was one of the first modern drama works in Lithuanian theater staged in 1967 (directed by Vytautas Čibiras) in the new Lithuanian SSR State Youth Theater, established in 1965. Readers were also introduced to Harold Pinter's play *The Caretaker* (1960). The plays by Osborn and Pinter were translated by Tomas Venclova, who in 1975 expressed his anti-communist views in an open letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania asking for permission to emigrate to the West; he left the country in 1977.

In the spring of 1968, *Duobė* (The Pit) was performed at the Corridor Theater by the students of the State Art Institute of Lithuania (written by Ambrasas and Midvikis, directed by Ambrasas). In the play, some characters live in a pit while others live above it – they are gravediggers who are constantly at work, digging and filling up the pits. Once the characters get into the pit, they cannot or do not want to get out. A stranger climbs out straight away. In the pit, the characters buy train tickets to the White City by phone, but they never leave. The gravediggers who work above the ground, fill up the pits and immediately dig new ones:

> FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: [..] Aren't we digging the pits ourselves?
> SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: [..] Who cares! Fill it up and be over with it!
> FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: But still, look, we're shoveling the other one!
> SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: No matter, let's fill up that last one, there will be no more of them.

The play depicts gravediggers in whose consciousness a reasonable picture of reality enters (we are not only filling pits, but at the same time digging new ones which we will have to fill again by shoveling new pits). However, even the "awakened" character does not try to change anything; on the contrary, he succumbs to the influence of an indifferent, mechanically task-oriented character, and continues the same existence. The shoveling and filling up of the pits repeats monotonously during the play.

At the end of the same year, the premiere of Saja's (b. 1932) play *Mamutų medžioklė* (The Mammoth Hunt) directed by Jurašas (b. 1936) took place in Kaunas Drama Theater. Modris Tenisons's (1945–2020) pantomime troupe, which had just been transferred to Kaunas Drama Theater, also performed in the play.

The playwright Juozas Glinskis says that his first play, *Pasivaikščiojimas mėnesienoje* (A Stroll in the Moonlight, or In the Moonlight), which in a grotesque way depicts the absurdity of the existence of a decrepit Soviet elite, was written in 1968–1969 during the Prague Spring. Glinskis remembered: "The Writers' Union was quite democratic and did not interfere with work. All you had to do was not to stick your head out too far, not to be too loud, to show respect for the more powerful, and you could write what you wanted, how you wanted, and as much as you wanted. Not for publishing, of course [..]. And that is how *A Stroll...* was born. In 1968–1969, while toiling away in the Pravieniškės Penitentiary. During the Prague Spring. Amid the rumbling of the Brezhnev cannonade" (Glinskis 2008). The play was secretly smuggled out of Lithuania and staged at the Theater for the New City in New York under the pseudonym of Anonymous only in 1978. The play was directed by Jurašas, who emigrated from Lithuania.

For the first time, the poetics in dramas written in Lithuania and the USA fully overlapped in the 1960s. The affinity of themes and images and the orientation towards the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd was obvious. In 1961, Škėma wrote *Ataraxia* and in 1964–1965, Ostrauskas published his *Duobkasiai* (The Gravediggers). *The Pit* by Ambrasas and Midvikis, created in Lithuania in 1968, relates to Ostrauskas's drama through William Shakespeare and the gravediggers in *Hamlet*. In 1969, Ostrauskas wrote the second part of the Theater of the Absurd trilogy, *Gyveno kartą senelis ir senelė* (Once Upon a Time There Was an Old Man and an Old Woman). The poetics of the Theater of the Absurd is the basis of Saja's triptych of one-act tragicomedies *Oratorius* (The Orator), *Maniakas* (The Maniac), and *Pranašas Jona* (Prophet Jonah) (all three staged in 1967 and published in 1966–1967), and the play *The Mammoth Hunt* (staged in 1968 and published in 1969).

Algirdas Landsbergis's drama *Penki stulpai turgaus aikštėje* (Five Posts in a Market Square, 1966) stands out among the works by American Lithuanian playwrights. He published his work on the theme of post-war resistance in the USA in 1966.[7] Translated into English, it was widely acclaimed in the American press and theater. In the same year in Soviet Lithuania, Saja also published an ambiguous drama about the post-war resistance, entitled *'Vežimo' kompanija (Baimė)* (The Carriage Company (Fear))

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7   The play was translated into English and other languages and was staged in a few American theaters. For more information see: Sruoginis (2022).

(Saja 1966). Saja's historical drama, which escaped the eyes of the censors, was written for the amateur theater. The playwright was also protected by the fact that theater critics made no notice of the play (Čingaitė 2015: 136-145).

In Soviet Lithuania, bold avant-garde experimental performances were created only in student theater. Arvydas Stasiulevičius's *Pjesė* (*10875 BK*) (A Play (10875 BK)) written in 1971, stood out among the performances staged by the Vilnius University's Underground Theater. The audience looks at four actors and into the darkness:

> Night. No sound. Deadly silence, etc.
> Before the performance, four actors put make-up on stage for 15 minutes. Later, the stage goes dark for 53 minutes. After the performance, four actors remove their make-up on stage for 15 minutes. (Stasiulevičius 1998: 7)

Recalling the experimental work *4:33* (four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence) created by the American composer John Cage in 1952, Stasiulevičius's play, written in the Soviet era, replaced Cage's pianist by four actors, the "sounding" silence in the light concert hall by silence in the dark, and extended the time of the performance to 53 minutes.

Texts written for student theater productions were published after the restoration of independence and thus escaped censorship. The plays by Stasiulevičius created for the Underground Theater were first published in 1998 in a literary newspaper *Literatūra ir menas* (Stasiulevičius 1998: 7) and the plays of Ambrasas and Midvikis performed at the Corridor Theater were first published in 2009 (Ambrasas 2009). The inclusion of the above-mentioned works in the cultural field has been determined by their publications. The plays staged at the Corridor Theater and published in the book have already been described and analyzed in many articles and have been functioning in the cultural studies of the Soviet era, whereas Stasiulevičius's dramatic experiments published in the weekly press have been left on the margins of dramaturgical research.

The Pit and *The Mammoth Hunt*: the spatial coordinates in the Theater of the Absurd

The Mammoth Hunt and *The Pit* are set in different locations. In *The Mammoth Hunt*, the characters travel through the streets of an ordinary city, only the characters they meet are somewhat unusual. However, the goal pursued – a festival, a carnival – seems to explain the strange appearance of the characters and the passers-by they meet, and prevents the characters from

critically evaluating their belief in the illusion of celebration. In *The Pit*, on the contrary, the action takes place in a strange anti-utopian space. As if after some disaster, people have gathered to live together in a place that resembles a grave or a trench. Nevertheless, they believe that there is a train station from which the trains run to the White City where beautiful houses are erected and people walk along nice streets.

Despite the different depictions of the setting, the playwrights employ the same principle: they juxtapose the setting of here and now with the characters' dream, with the fictional place that expresses their goal. In *The Mammoth Hunt*, it is a place where a festival is taking place and to which the characters dressed in carnival costumes travel. In *The Pit*, it is the White City where the characters have been in the past and where they dream to go by train in the near future.

The characters believe that their dream is very close to coming true. In *The Mammoth Hunt*, the characters think they hear the noise of a celebration and that very little is left to reach their goal. All they need is to meet someone who can tell them exactly where the party is happening. The characters in *The Pit* are convinced that there is a railway station above them, a belief reinforced by the ticket seller who shows up occasionally and the announcements of arriving and departing trains.

Only the intensity of the characters' pursuit of their goal differs. The characters in *The Mammoth Hunt* act relentlessly, they walk on and on and on, without thinking that their journey might be pointless. It is only when the usual city streets are replaced by a strange trap – all of them get stuck in tar and are unable to move – that the characters finally seem to realize their true situation: that they are stuck and are not free. They are no longer thinking about the festival, they are now concerned with how to free themselves. It seems that they should help each other to reach a new goal; however, Saja's straightforward portrayal of the characters caught in the swamp of Soviet life does not offer an optimistic ending. He does not show the characters acting in unison to liberate themselves together; on the contrary, when sensing the danger, they think only of themselves and remain "trapped" in the tar. Their journey is over.

The political subtext was obvious. The characters in the play long for a celebration that they do not get to anyway. Eventually they are stuck in the tar and are unable to move. Like the characters in *The Pit*, they could break free if they were conscientious and not, as the Guard notes, reminded him of mammoths:

> GUARD. Not so much a guard as a mammoth hunter. I hope you were introduced to my principle: Everything for a man and zilch for a mammoth? [..]
> GYPSY WOMAN. We aren't mammoths. We've found a way out.
> GUARD. Is that so?! So what are you waiting for? Prove it, get out! Make me happy. How much time do you need?
> GYPSY WOMAN. Leave us alone for another short hour. (Saja 1969: 65)

However, the characters cannot agree with each other; they do not have the will to act and regain freedom: "CHIMNEY SWEEPER. You won't convince everybody, and we need everybody. There will be no result." (Saja 1969: 66). Thus, everybody remains trapped in the tar, doomed to death and extinction. The play says that this is the picture of us; we naively search for a carnival but when trapped, we act not as people seeking freedom but as the long-extinct mammoths, unable to overcome the herd instinct. Using the setting of the play, Saja reveals the illusions of a human being incited by Soviet ideology and the meaninglessness of the Soviet people's existence. He offers to imagine the possibility of liberation, and warns about the dangers of the lack of unity within the community.

The characters in *The Pit* are much more passive. They talk, eat, read — that is, they live and spend their time, believing that they can leave the pit and go to the White City at any time. However, they do not climb out of the pit. It seems very difficult, even impossible to leave. Moreover, even after the Stranger gets in and out of the pit with ease, the four characters do not even try to break free.

In *The Pit*, the characters are intellectual; they quote *Hamlet*. The fragment of Hamlet's conversation with Horatio is inserted in Ophelius's observation: "They want to bury us alive", which is continued by Hamlet's quote: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all" (Ambrasas 2009: 171; Shakespeare 1994: 302). Once the characters climb out of one pit, they immediately find themselves in another pit. As in many plays of the Theater of the Absurd, a never-ending repetition of the same situation is implied. It is expected that an "arrival of Godot" would solve all problems. As one Beckett's character notes: "We keep coming up with things to delude ourselves and convince us that we are still alive."

Like Saja's play, *The Pit* depicts a situation of danger. The characters realize that when the gravediggers come they will be buried alive. Upon realizing it, everyone quickly climbs out of the pit. It seems that they should finally start to act in order to achieve their goal, to reach the White City. However, the authors of *The Pit* do not provide an optimistic ending either. It turns out that there is no railway station, no trains, perhaps no White City. After realizing that they have been living in a world of illusions, the characters experience the disappointment of "there is nothing out there". However, the shocking feeling of emptiness does not change their normal way of existence. They notice another pit and, seemingly relieved that they have nowhere to go, they climb inside quickly to continue their meaningless existence.

The playwrights show that even after forgetting the festival or the White City — the belief in the bright future of communism —, the characters no longer have the will to break free. Saja is more positive: he uses his play to convey the message to readers

and viewers that unity within community is crucial for liberation. The message conveyed by the play performed in the student theater is much more somber. They aim to shock the audience by exposing the deformity of Soviet man: the characters remain in the pit, content with their miserable and meaningless existence.

The issue of character identity: self-consciousness and the loss of the true self

In the final act of *The Mammoth Hunt* the characters, stuck in tar, encounter the Guard whom the critics call the playwright's alter ego: "The author introduces a kind of alter ego (the character of the Guard) into the play" (Jevsejevas 2009). The Guard tests the characters for their ability to liberate themselves. This naming of the character – "the one who protects" – is a clear reference to the value of freedom that the play affirms.

In *The Pit*, the Stranger becomes an example of liberation; however, he does not represent the value of freedom as strongly as Saja's Guard does. The Stranger, given the name of Ostap (an allusion to the protagonist of Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov's novel *Dvenadtsat stulyev* (The Twelve Chairs)), gets into the pit at the end of the play and is turned into a character who has come to terms with his circumstances. However, the play ends with his words that raise anxiety and the question of what the characters will do next: "THE STRANGER. He's not here! There's no one there! A bare field!!! A bare field! A field. A bare field [..]" (Ambrasas 2009: 173). The subtext in both plays hides hope that the characters can begin to live differently – more consciously and more freely.

In both plays, the characters are portrayed as playing certain roles. In *The Mammoth Hunt*, the people who have disguised themselves as a gypsy, a chimney sweeper, and a hunchbacked nun travel to a carnival. They are led by a blind organ grinder. In *The Pit*, the characters are named after characters in Shakespeare's plays. However, they are turned into the opposites of Shakespeare's characters: Caesar, the heroic personality of the Ancient Rome, is made into a clown; Ophelia from *Hamlet* is transformed into Ophelius the tragedian; the witty and cheerful Benedick from *Much Ado About Nothing* becomes an obscure character who does not speak and always eats. Kornelijus, the name of the protagonist of *The Pit*, is a reference to the French playwright Pierre Corneille. He often reads a book or rummages through his suitcase. The characters Caesar, Ophelius, and Benedick are present in all three of Ambrasas and Midvikis's plays: *The Pit*, *Marathon*, and *Monday Afternoon*. The gravediggers also come from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but they have lost their sharpness of thought and wit. The Stranger, called Ostap by the ticket seller, may be a reference to Ilf and Petrov's crafty crook Ostap Bender, as already mentioned.

In both plays, the playwrights provide fragmentary memories of what the characters did in the past – i.e. who they are, or rather who they really were. The characters in *The Mammoth Hunt* were engaged in everyday rural household chores, while the characters in *The Pit* were acting in a theater. The Stranger, who has fallen into the pit, boasts that he has played a gravedigger in *Hamlet*, and Ophelius takes over the dialogue from the tragedy that the Stranger begins to recite. However, we do not find out who the characters in the play really are. Their identity is not only "hidden" from us, the readers and the audience, but from other characters in the play as well. They do not reveal their true identity to one another either. The playwrights portray the characters as if they have conformed to their false self, to their role, having lost their identity.

Audience reaction: the impact
of recognizing the condition of the Soviet man
The Pit and *The Mammoth Hunt*, both based on the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd and staged in 1968, became special events in the history of Lithuanian theater and Lithuanian culture.[8] The theater began to speak to the audience in a new language, inspired by the works of Beckett and other representatives of the Theater of the Absurd. The new plays attracted audiences with their bold ideas and striking expression, combining words with image, sound, and movement.

The performances were quite popular. As poet Marcelijus Martinaitis remembered:

> The corridor was so crowded that you could barely find a place to put your foot. That close contact with almost unfamiliar audience alone reminded me of standing in a queue to buy herring, a 'doctor's' sausage, or blue chicken called 'broiler' on the eve of various propaganda holidays. No performance today can give the impression of such collective participation. I'm afraid to say that this was such a one-time and maybe the last theater performance in Lithuania in which I also participated, standing on one leg, as it is fitting the Theater of the Absurd; and [even] after a few decades, I remember it vividly (Martinaitis 2009: 237).

The image of the pit was associated with the reality of that time. According to another member of the audience, Venclova: "It was obvious – although one should not have voiced it out – that *The Pit* speaks about the situation of all of us at that time: a historical and cultural pit of occupation in which we live not because of our fault and to which everyone reacts differently, and not everyone has hope of overcoming it [..].

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8   Writer Kazys Saja was awarded the 2022 Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts for his lifetime achievements and for "mammoth" hunting in theater and prose.

But beyond political allegory, something even more interesting was hiding – a universal metaphor about human existence, about their entanglement in a temporary existence, about their hopes that will never be fulfilled and without which it is nevertheless impossible to live" (Venclova 2009: 240–241).

In another play, *Marathon*, the actors of the Corridor Theater expressed the absurdity of Soviet existence by running continuously on the spot throughout the entire performance (for about one hour), still not losing hope of reaching the finish line. Such plays were considered dangerous because they forced the audience to think. Ambrasas's sister eloquently describes the reaction of the audience after the performance: "At the end of the performance, everybody sat in silence for a long time, no one got up or applauded, [they just] sat and pondered in silence" (Reimerienė 2009: 285).

Venclova later recalled how the performances brought young people together in a secret community of intellectuals. After the discussion of *Marathon*, where "no one talked about the essence of the performance – it was obvious anyway [..] – the four of us went to my apartment: Arvydas Ambrasas, Algis Nasvytis, Virgilijus Čepaitis and I [..]. We did not talk much about the performance [..]. In any case, we talked about a lot of things that were on our minds at that time, including the situation in Ukraine. At that time, the news had reached us that an active dissident movement had been developing there which the government feared much more than in Lithuania, and therefore oppressed it more. I told a three-year-old story, which had reached me just now, about Sergei Parajanov's film *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*" (Venclova 2009: 244).

In the *The Mammoth Hunt*, playwright Saja openly mocked the Soviet system. The audience could easily read the symbols and allegories offered by the theater. They understood that the quartet dressed in carnival costumes, who search and never find the promised celebration and finally get stuck in the tar, are actually looking for the bright future of communism. The "Soviet people" were portrayed as carrying balloons and umbrellas and moving in unison during the performance, like two herds of sheep. The director portrayed a dismally meaningless unity. The impression of mass was reinforced by Modris Tenisons's pantomime troupe that played the shadows of the actors.

The main idea of the performance was expressed in the poster by the artist Jūratė Malinauskaitė: a crowd of tiny faceless people in the shape of a huge ram obediently following a shepherd playing a reedpipe. The meadow in their background looks suspiciously like a map of the USSR. The director saw the reasons for the success of this performance in the text itself: "In the text and in the subtexts, such big explosives were hidden that people saw and enjoyed them very much" (Jurašas 2005: 29). The playwright admitted that the stage made the grotesque he created even more penetrating: "Many people, when they think of *The Mammoth Hunt*, have

said that it has been my best performance [..]. The fact that you liked *The Mammoth Hunt* is not my fault; the responsibility of the theater and, above all, of Jurašas" (Saja 2005: 108–109).

The Mammoth Hunt was an exceptionally successful performance. Today we would call it a cult performance. New aesthetic expression and critical political allusions to the existing system caused an explosion in Lithuania's cultural life. People may have watched it without realizing it, but according to the writer Aldona Liobytė, "it was a matter of honor. The audience flooded into the theater to see the performance not only from all over Lithuania but also from Latvia" (Liobytė 1995: 98).

According to Shakespeare, quoted in *The Pit*, a play is the mirror of society. The audience of both performances saw in that mirror an abnormal and inverted world: a "pit". The characters in *The Mammoth Hunt* (the Gypsy woman, the Nun, and others) travel to the celebration, hiding their self and denying their true identity. The audience saw how twisted the existence of the characters who hide their true identity or have lost their identity is; how naive and unworthy of freedom Caesar, Ophelius, Benedick and the gravediggers from *The Pit*, and the characters of *The Mammoth Hunt* disguised as a gypsy, a nun, and a chimney sweeper are.

The problem of the identity of the characters was further strengthened by Jurašas's use of performers from Modris Tenisons's pantomime troupe in *The Mammoth Hunt*, who "duplicated" the protagonists, following them like shadows. It was adventurously bold to show such a potrayal of Soviet-era reality. However, the courage paid off. Many audience members were able to see the performances which became legendary. This kind of drama and staging provoked the reader and the viewer to realize: this is not the way it should be, not the way to live; we need to change ourselves and the world we live in. Many people who saw these performances had changed the way they think, the way they look at art and reality.

The backlash of censorship: the dramatic finale of the history of the Theater of the Absurd

Saja's *The Mammoth Hunt*, written in Aesopian language, initially successfully "overcame" the censors – it was included in the theater's repertoire (premiering on December 31, 1968). Lionginas Šepetys, the Minister of Culture, accepted the play as an inevitable necessity and gave permission to stage it; Saja's play was also published. However, the subsequent history of the activities of the censorship is worthy of a special attention. Saja explains the mechanisms of the censorship power at that time in his memoirs.

According to the playwright, "complaints began pouring in, maybe to the security service, maybe to Moscow. And Moscow specially sent someone from the Ministry of Culture. He saw the play and said: "This is an anti-Soviet play, shut it down immediately." And Zhukov, with his authority as a representative of the all-Union Ministry of Culture, removed the play [from the repertoire]."[9] This decision had to be formalized by the theater management.

Less than a year after the premiere[10], Romualdas Trumpa, Kaunas State Theater director, announced that the performance *The Mammoth Hunt* directed by Jurašas "will not be included in the repertoire of the following months of this season, as it has a negative effect on a certain group of spectators". In addition to the communist theater staff, "comrade" Pupienis, a representative of the Lithuanian Communist Party City Committee, also attended the meeting. He openly declared that *The Mammoth Hunt* "points the finger at and knocks down the trust in our party and government. Some strata of society, hostile to Soviet society, enjoy it and use it for bad purposes. Today when the ideological struggle is especially acute, this performance is untimely" (Dapšytė 2007: 69–78). However, the official also admitted that he could not say a single critical word about the "artistic level" of the performance.

The events unfolded further. Saja remembers: "What happened next was that Šepetys, who was friends and got along very well with [Yekaterina] Furtseva, the Minister of Culture of the entire Soviet Union, complained to Zhukov. And Zhukov was removed from the Ministry of Culture, but *The Mammoth Hunt* was not resumed [..]. Some time later, Zhukov accompanied the Polish delegation; Jerzy Sokolowski, the chairman of the Polish Repertory Commission, asked what Saja could offer to the Polish theater from the current Lithuanian dramaturgy. While Saja was thinking for a long time, Zhukov broke the silence: 'What about *The Mammoth Hunt*?' It turns out that paradoxes are useful not only in plays, they also exist in life."[11]

The student theater of the State Art Institute of Lithuania staged two more performances: *Marathon* and *Monday Afternoon* written by Ambrasas and Midvikis.

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9   Lithuanian National Broadcaster's radio program *Pirmas sakinys* (The First Sentence). *Teatro mamutas Kazys Saja* (Kazys Saja, the Theater Mammoth), November 25, 2021; hosted by Mindaugas Nastaravičius and Tomas Vaiseta. https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000187829/pirmas-sakinys-teatro-mamutas-kazys-saja.

10   The premiere took place on December 31, 1968; the performance was banned from November 1969. (Putinaitė 2019: 255–261).

11   Lithuanian National Broadcaster's radio program *Pirmas sakinys* (The First Sentence). *Teatro mamutas Kazys Saja* (Kazys Saja, the Theater Mammoth), November 25, 2021; hosted by Mindaugas Nastaravičius and Tomas Vaiseta. https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000187829/pirmas-sakinys-teatro-mamutas-kazys-saja.

The theater was closed at the end of 1970, right after the death of Ambrasas. In February 1970, Beckett's play *Act Without Words I*, which had just been translated into Lithuanian, was performed at the theater directed by Ambrasas, with Mečislovas Ščepavičius playing the protagonist. On April 17, 1971, "the three plays appeared on stage for the last time: nevertheless, a few gatekeepers of ideology [..] saw in them a political attack and banned further performances, and therefore their publishing" (Venclova 2009: 245). At the end of 1972, Rimgaudas Karvelis, actor and amateur filmmaker at the Youth Theater, made a 10-minute film based on the play *Act Without Words I*, referring to the deceased Ambrasas as director in the credits and instead calling himself "director-cameraman". Ščepavičius once again played the protagonist. The film was screened at amateur festivals in Estonia and Poland, but not without a thunderbolt – at the beginning of the film, Karvelis added images from the life of the "rotting capitalist world" (Gasiliūnas 2011).

The lives of the young playwrights Arvydas Ambrasas (1947–1970) and Arvydas Stasiulevičius (1947–1971) had been tragically cut short. The self-immolation of Romas Kalanta, who died protesting against the Soviet government of Lithuania on May 14, 1972 in Kaunas, caused an enormous public outcry. Violent repressions and the hunt for enemies of the system intensified in all spheres of social life, including culture.

On August 8, 1972, theater director Jurašas wrote an open letter to the Minister of Culture of the LSSR pointing out that his performances were being mutilated by the censors (later, the letter appeared in the London publication *Index on Censorship*). This was the first public letter of protest during the Soviet regime in Lithuania. The next day, Jurašas was removed from his position as principal director of Kaunas Drama Theater and barred from working in the theater. In 1974, after a year and a half of persecution by the KGB, the director and his wife were expelled from the USSR without the right to return. The period of modernism and avant-gardism in Lithuanian drama and theater, which began brightly and promisingly, was over.

Conclusions   The shift of Lithuanian drama from romantic and poetic historical plays to the depiction of the Soviet present using the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd is linked to the imperatives of resistance. The historical dramas reminded of the struggles for freedom, whereas the new plays encouraged viewers to perceive the absurdity of their present and to critically evaluate Soviet reality. Modern Western drama had encouraged attention to the inner world of the individual and to the value of the personality. The works by Lithuanian diaspora play-wrights that secretly reached Lithuania, acquaintance with the works of Polish and other Eastern Bloc playwrights, and translations of Western plays became a source

of ideas on how to talk about the absurdity of the Soviet reality through new dramatic forms.

The shift to the new way of representing Soviet reality, based on modern dramatic poetics, took place in both state and student theater. The two cases of the 1968 plays of the Theater of the Absurd show that a leap forward took place, that playwrights and theater directors were able to prepare it and that the audience understood the new language of theater.

Lithuanian playwrights began creating their own variations on Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Esslin's observations on how accurately *Waiting for Godot* was understood by the prisoners of San Quentin Prison were echoed by the human experience of the Soviet era – both in the Warsaw theater, where the Polish audience did not hesitate to perceive Godot as a metaphor for the ever-coming independence from Russia, and in the original plays by Lithuanian playwrights. These plays used elements of the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd: absurd and paradoxical situations, depictions of the environment, types of characters, and a specific and incoherent language.

Saja in *The Mammoth Hunt* and Ambrasas and Midvikis in *The Pit* depicted the "Soviet people's" rush towards the "bright tomorrow" – a celebration, the White City – that had remained an unattainable dream. The discrepancy between reality and the "higher" goal that unites everyone is also taken from Godot.

The absurdity of the Soviet reality was also revealed in the characters' discomfort with the alien setting. The characters in the play try to adapt, however unsuccessfully. In *The Mammoth Hunt*, the characters from the countryside wander the streets of an unfamiliar city, trying to be in a joyful mood. In *The Pit*, the characters who once lived in the White City now spend their days in a pit, trying to engage in some kind of activity.

The portrayal of the characters shows the self-control typical of the Soviet era and the fear of showing one's true identity. The characters who hide their identities in *The Mammoth Hunt* identify themselves with the carnival roles of Gypsy, Nun, Organ Grinder, and others. Even though they are hiding under carnival clothes, occasionally a message about their true identity breaks through. The true selves of the characters are also hidden under their language of primitive puns. In *The Pit*, the characters also conceal themselves behind the roles they play (alluding to the characters in Shakespeare's works), and they quote *Hamlet*.

In *The Mammoth Hunt*, features of the Theater of the Absurd intertwine with the intonations of folk humor and political and social satire, while in *The Pit* the playwrights employ quotations testifying to intellect and education. In both plays, the characters demonstrate their initiative and activity, which unfortunately does not help them to achieve their desired goal (especially in the case of Ambrasas and Midvikis's

play *Marathon*). All of this allows us to talk about the differences between the plays created in the Soviet era and the Western Theater of the Absurd described by Esslin, as well as about the specific model of the Lithuanian (or Soviet-era authors') Theater of the Absurd.

Conditional drama confused the censors and allowed the works to pass through the eyes of the censors onto the stage. Only a year later they realized the message that those performances were conveying to the audience. The boom of the Theater of the Absurd, which had been going on for several years, was suppressed. *The Mammoth Hunt*, with over 70 performances according to official figures, was banned after its first season run. The Corridor Theater was closed down. However, Saja's reminiscences about the ban of *The Mammoth Hunt* show that censorship was at that time influenced by power games and contained double standards.

The breakthrough in the search for a new drama and theatrical language in Lithuania in the late 1960s and early 1970s did happen, although it was gradually suppressed. However, after Kalanta's world-famous protest against the Soviet government in 1972, for more than a decade modern dramatic and theatrical explorations and translations were banned (a collection of 20th-century Western drama was published only in 1984), as had been the case in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after earlier attempts to resist the Soviet regime.

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Edīte Tišheizere

Dr. art., theater scholar

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia

E-mail: edite.tisheizere@lulfmi.lv

Visual Metaphors in Latvian Theater in the 1970s–1980s and their Contemporary Context

Vizuālās metaforas Latvijas teātrī 20. gadsimta 70. un 80. gados un to mūsdienu konteksts

Keywords:
Stagnation,
dynamic scenography,
performative turn,
postdramatic theater

Atslēgvārdi:
stagnācija,
darbības scenogrāfija,
performatīvais pagrieziens,
postdramatiskais teātris

Summary	The period of the so-called Stagnation (1970s–1980s) in the history of the USSR was a productive time for art in some ways: the momentum of the Khrushchev's Thaw continued, resulting in a shaky ideological framework containing artists that had learned to either violate, ignore, or only verbally support the canons of socialist realism. In the socialist areas of Eastern and Central Europe, art had become a kind of "resistance movement", with subtle subtext used to express rebellion against the political and social setting. One of the key fields of this "resistance" was theater, where visual metaphors became an especially important means of expression. In many cases, the audience was able to perceive a narrative containing a vastly different message than the one in the literary text of the production. Scenography gained a special significance as the main provider of such visual metaphors. Looking back, certain parallels can be drawn between theater phenomena of that era in Soviet states and in the West. These parallels are further drawn by comparing Soviet era research concepts with Western theories in theater.

Kopsavilkums	Politiskās stagnācijas periods (20. gs. 70. un 80. gadi) bija savā ziņā labvēlīgs laiks mākslai: turpinājās Hruščova "atkušņa" inerce, sociālistiskā reālisma kanonus mākslinieki bija iemācījušies pārkāpt vai ignorēt. Sociālisma areālā – Austrumeiropā un Centrāleiropā – māksla kļuva par savdabīgu "pretošanās kustību", zemtekstu valodā izsakot protestu pret politisko un sociālo situāciju. Viens no svarīgākajiem šīs "pretošanās kustības" virzieniem bija teātris, kurā par īpaši nozīmīgu izteiksmes līdzekli kļuva vizuālas metaforas. Tajās skatītāji prata nolasīt naratīvu, kas saturēja atšķirīgu vēstījumu, nekā iestudējuma literārais teksts. Īpašu nozīmi ieguva scenogrāfija kā galvenā vizuālo metaforu nesēja. Analizējot šīs metaforas, saskatāmas noteiktas paralēles starp padomju, vai plašāk, sociālistiskā areāla valstu un Rietumu teātra parādībām šajā laika posmā. Šīs paralēles redzamas, arī salīdzinot padomju laika scenogrāfijas teorētiķa Viktora Berezkina secinājumus par darbības scenogrāfiju ar Hansa Tīsa Lēmana un Ērikas Fišeres-Lihtes 20. un 21. gs. mijā izstrādātajām postdramatiskā teātra un performativitātes teorijām.

In the mid-1970s, while the Soviet Union was throught the so-called Stagnation period, in the Western European theater a paradign shift took place in its relationship with the spectator. In theoretical literature, this would come to be known as the "performative turn". On the one hand, actors turned from impersonators of roles into performers, their form of existence changed to "become more presence than representation" (Lehmann 2006: 85); on the other hand, the audience transformed from observers to active participants.

Even though Soviet theater was separated from the West by the Iron Curtain and a lack of information, many commonalities can be seen from today's perspective. Among them, a growing importance of the actor's presence and much more active participation from the audience could be observed in Soviet Latvia at the time. Processes in the West and in the Socialist area cannot be called identical; however, it is important to highlight and evaluate the **different expressions of shared trends**.

One of the most important and influential theoretical studies of the 21st century, Erika Fischer-Lichte's *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, begins with the following sentences: "On October 24, 1975, a curious and memorable event took place at the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck. The Yugoslavian artist Marina Abramović presented her performance *Lips of Thomas*. The artist began her performance by shedding all her clothes" (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 11). Fischer-Lichte goes on to write about the performance – Abramović cutting a five-pointed star into the skin on her stomach with a razor blade and laying down on a cross made of ice blocks, which melted away while the artist was bleeding. The performance was interrupted by members of audience who could not bear the sight (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 13). It reveals key characteristics brought into Western European theater by the so-called "performative turn". Each of the spectators not only physically perceived Abramović's pain, but also, each in their own way, grasped the visual metaphors – the bleeding red star, the ice cross that she has been "nailed" to – and combined them into a **personally comprehensible narrative**. *Lips of Thomas* became an emblematic event in Western European performative arts.

One month prior, on September 25, 1975, the Dailes Theater in Rīga held the premiere of Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem *Brand* and, at the culmination of the performance, a crowd "nailed" the half-nude protagonist to the corner of the only element of scenography, an inverted pyramid. *Brand* went on to become an emblematic performance not only for Latvian theater, but also all over the USSR. Moreover, it marked a new stage in the development of interaction between theater and spectator: its expression in movement and music, its visual metaphors formed a new narrative

beyond the plot. In a manner different from (and sometimes even opposite to) the Western approach, the audience became active participants in the performance. Their presence did not mean passive observation anymore but rather an active deciphering of subtexts expressed through metaphor, and combining them into a **collectively comprehensible narrative**. It became a common "language of subtexts" shared by actors and spectators.

This chronology is not coincidental. It is one example among plentiful evidence proving that, despite a separation and a lack of exchange of information, many processes in art developed simultaneously and similarly on both sides of the Iron Curtain even during the era of Stagnation. However, there were many principal dissimilarities.

Dynamic scenography as the socialist version of the performative turn and its similarities with postdramatic theater

Another piece of evidence is the development of new theories in theater studies both in the West and in the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, Hans-Thies Lehmann formed his concept of postdramatic theater, based on his experience of Western theater after the 1960s. The key postulates in Lehmann's theory, as summarized by Zane Radzobe, is that postdramatic theater (1) has no hierarchy where the spoken text would be the most important part. (2) Rather, "space, visual and musical treatment, movement, etc., are as important (oftentimes even more so)", and (3) the narrative structure is "formed by signs simultaneously communicated through various channels" (Radzobe 2015: 138).

In order to name the various informational channels through which the audience are simultaneously receiving information in the postdramatic theater and to mark the increase in the importance of scenography and visuality in Western theater in the 1970s, Lehmann wrote:

> [P]ostdramatic theater establishes the possibility of dissolving the logocentric hierarchy and assigning the dominant role to elements other than dramatic logos and language. This applies even more to the visual than to the auditory dimension. In place of a dramaturgy regulated by the text one often finds a visual dramaturgy, which seemed to have attained absolute dominance especially in the theater of the late 1970s and 1980s [..]. Visual dramaturgy here does not mean an exclusively visually organized dramaturgy but rather one that is not subordinated to the text and can therefore freely develop its own logic (Lehmann 2006: 93).

In the early 1970s, Russian theorist Viktor Berezkin developed the much narrower concept of "dynamic scenography" based on the processes observed in theaters across the Soviet Union, especially in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Moscow, and Saint

Petersburg (then called Leningrad). According to his concept, at the beginning of the 1970s visuality, mainly through scenography, often dominated the structure of the performance, with directors aiming to "reveal global problems of human existence, create a generalized metaphorical environments [..] that are materialized and apparent embodiments of forces or circumstances opposing the protagonists and expressing the essence of the dramatic conflict of the play" (Berezkin 1981: 146).

Thus, dynamic scenography "is a general expression of the emotional and spiritual content of the performance through movement" (Berezkin 1977: 203). According to Berezkin, the leading scenographers in Soviet theater, whose works were the basis for his concept of dynamic theater, included Latvian artists Ilmārs Blumbergs, Andris Freibergs, and Marts Kitajevs.

In retrospect, we can say that Berezkin's concept of scenography shows certain similarities to Lehmann's concept of postdramatic theater. Berezkin developed his concept at a time when scenography and space in general, including the choreography, was the most unrestricted part of theater which could not be subordinated to the laws and censorship of Socialist Realism. It could therefore be examined with an emphasis on issues of form creation and with hardly any regard to the content. Lehmann developed his concept later, and it is much broader and includes all aspects of theater and other performative arts.

Nevertheless, the presumptions that (1) dramaturgical text is not the only provider of meaning and (2) the visual layer forms a parallel semantic field are the most important but not the only similarities between the two concepts. Berezkin defined the sovereign nature of the scenographer's work, and sometimes its dominance, as "plastic directing". In Ilmārs Blumbergs's works of the 1970s, Berezkin saw plastic directing in "search for a clear, abstracted, maximally generalized and concentrated plastic formula" (Berezkin 1983). This definition of plastic directing shows certain parallels with Lehmann's idea of visual dramaturgy which "can [..] freely develop its own logic" (Lehmann 2006: 93).

Lehmann analyzed this type of independent visual dramaturgy, for example, in the works of visual theater representatives Tadeusz Kantor and Robert Wilson, but it was just as prominent in the works of Blumbergs and Freibergs. Even though Blumbergs and Freibergs developed their visual dramaturgy in close interaction with directors, Blumbergs claimed total authorship only in selected works never implemented on stage. It must be noted that Viktor Berezkin also wrote about Kantor and Wilson in the early 2000s; however, he narrowed his field of research even more and viewed them as representatives of a specific "scenographer's theater" (Berezkin 2004; 2003).

This article will explore three groups of metaphors and their metamorphoses in the theater of the era of Stagnation. They are: the Temple; Time and Power; the

Faceless Chorus and Immobilized Hero. This division is, of course, relative, since metaphors can be interpreted in many ways even within the context of one artist's work depending on the research focus; moreover, they often overlap even within the same work. The examples used in the article are drawn mainly from the works of influential Latvian artists, supplemented with similarities in the theaters of other Soviet republics for context.

The Temple as a Metaphor for Lost/Possible Spirituality

Religion and Christian values were among unwritten taboos in Soviet society. However, they snuck into theater at the early stages of dynamic scenography through visual metaphors and sometimes through movement or sound.

In 1969 Pēteris Pētersons, the head director of the Dailes Theater in Riga, staged Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* in collaboration with painter and graphic artist Kurts Fridrihsons. Together, they created one of the first abstract stage spaces in Latvia, fitting various interpretations. For the performance, which was presented as an allusion to the path of suffering of Jesus Christ also taken by Prince Myshkin, Fridrihsons had created screens resembling punched cards which, under stage lighting, formed direct associations with a church, further intensified by music – hymns sung by a choir, written by composer Imants Kalniņš in an Orthodox-church-inspired manner. Ieva Zole, a researcher of the directing by Pētersons, has written:

> The lightweight wire frames are covered by a white perforated material, like punched cards with information coded by some unknown hand, a cosmic energy that helps the light effects create a sense of infinity. The rays illuminating the perforated surface seem to be coming from the sun and create the same play of light that enters a cathedral when rays of the sun break through the stained glass of its windows. A space that is closed and inhibits the public, yet seems infinite because the ascetic definitiveness leaves an impression of spiritual expanse (Zole 2000: 242).

Myshkin entered this space arriving from the outside world, a Swiss clinic. However, both Switzerland and the clinic were mere allegories; what was important was that the closed space welcomed someone who had previously been on the outside, which could provide some comfort to those who were not able to escape the closed frame. As Zole notes:

> [Their] hopelessness reaches an inner apotheosis and transforms into a physical sense of heaviness bringing everyone down onto their knees. With the sound of a prayer growing in intensity until it turns into a shaky psalm, people dressed in grey and black are mingling in their powerlessness, yet their prayer is heard, and Prince Myshkin enters from the back of the stage among the kneeling people. Just like

Christ walked among a tortured humankind. This is how church paintings depict Jesus Christ's descent from heaven. (Zole 2000: 240)

The combination of scenography, lighting, music, and choreography created the metaphor of a temple, which the audience were able to decipher and evolve in their imagination by reflecting upon spiritual values, which were the sole providers of internal freedom in the reality of a Soviet country.

It is significant that the metaphor of a temple, though indirect and oftentimes transformed, appeared in theaters of other Soviet republic as well in the early 1970s. Similarly, the image of a temple – specifically, the Kyiv Saint Sophia Cathedral – was used by Ukrainian scenographer Daniil Lider in 1970 in the staging of *Yaroslav the Wise* at the Ivan Franko Theater in Kyiv. For this production about Yaroslav, medieval Grand Prince of Kyiv, who had attempted not only to unite his lands and find possibilities for harmonious power but also to establish contact with Europe, Lider created a space delimited by frescoes copied from the Saint Sophia Cathedral and "torn" off the walls. According to one researcher, "D. Lider deliberately strip[ped] the fresco of its support, its basic architectural foundation. Released, it succumb[ed] to chaos purposefully created by the artist. Not completely, though. As if it has learned the solid rules of harmony, as if it has once felt the security of domes and walls, it carrie[d] their memories and a longing for them" (Kovalenko 1980: 10). The frescoes partly covered restorers' scaffolding, which provided a superficial hint at modern construction without burying the narrative of the key visual metaphor of faith as a path towards a lost harmony that can be found again.

Both *The Idiot* and *Yaroslav the Wise* were created on the threshold between the Khrushchev's Thaw and Brezhnev's era of Stagnation. In both of these productions, the metaphor of the temple was a declaration of inner freedom and a person's spiritual life as its expression. Later, this metaphor gained another meaning.

In 1975, Māra Ķimele staged Jean Anouilh's *Médée* at Valmiera Theater. This can be considered the first site-specific theater production in Latvia, performed at the St. Simon's Church in Valmiera and the Anglican Church in Rīga. Admittedly, both churches were secular spaces at the time – a branch of a museum and a youth club respectively. However, the very architecture and aura of the churches became a metaphor in itself. Ilmārs Blumbergs's laconic scenography, a frame made of crude logs with a torn sailcloth hung onto it and reaching across the floor as a sliver of seashore, was arranged under the high arches like an immense, infinite universe, its atmosphere enhanced by the specific acoustics of the church as well. This universe, symbolized by a temple, provided the opportunity for a mixing of eras, innovative for Soviet theater in the 1970s. Māra Ķimele admitted: "It was a densification of time and space. There is no wedding in Anouilh's play, but I made one, people in modern

clothes suddenly rose and started celebrating a wedding [..]. Médée is right next to Créon's bride and feels her youth, beauty and grace .. and Médée falls to the ground and gives birth to evil. We staged Médée's monologue as labour" (Zole 2007: 140). In this instance, the temple was a metaphor for the universe and the absolute order of things that people had defied and perverted.

The metamorphosis of the image of church was significant in the final stage of the era of Stagnation, on the verge of the Third National Awakening and the following renewal of state.

In 1987, director Edmunds Freibergs staged the comedy *Ar būdu uz baznīcu* (With a Shack to the Church), written by Pauls Putniņš about *perestroika* in the life of a *kolkhoz*, at the Andrejs Upīts Academic Drama Theater which would soon regain its historical name of the National Theater. No church was shown on stage – at the center of the space, created by scenographer Artis Bute, was a wooden shack with a tractor inside and a long table intended for Party Committee meetings. This time, the church as a metaphor for rebirth and national ideas appeared in the text – the monologue of the protagonist Marianna, ending in: "We want church, church!"

In 1988, this same metaphor was deeply questioned at the Latvian Youth Theater in the production of *Dzīvais ūdens* (Living Water) by Māra Zālīte, adapted by director Ādolfs Šapiro together with scenographer Andris Freibergs. The play was a poetic parable on the legitimacy of lies for the sake of a greater good, the freeing of a nation. A Preacher has kept people's faith with the help of "living water" for decades. This water is said to miraculously appear in a vessel at midnight, but in reality, the Preacher has been getting it from a well. The truth about the origins of the "living water" makes the Preacher's Apprentice commit suicide. Margarita Zieda, researcher of Andris Freibergs, points out: "How does one strengthen the national spirit when the truth can kill? – The production of Māra Zālīte and Ādolfs Šapiro asked questions that cannot be answered" (Zieda 2015: 175). A temple carved into a cliff, as devised by the playwright, was implemented by Andris Freibergs as a mirage – a beautiful and impossible structure whose upper level looked like a cathedral and the foundation was formed by a stripped-down theater scaffolding. The scenographer explained his conception: "A path. Two poles – where we come from and where we are heading. The decoration has two levels. Visual dramaturgy is created by leading the actors across these two levels" (Zieda 2015: 175). In the finale of the performance, under special lighting, the windows of the cathedral seemed nailed shut, but two of them featured silhouettes of young people. "This scene was reminiscent of [..] legends about building churches with virgins walled up inside to keep the buildings from collapsing" (Geikina 2011: 242). This intensified the dramatic effect of the metaphor. The production of Ādolfs Šapiro and Andris Freibergs posed questions "that will have

to be resolved in freedom" (Zieda 2018: 175), and they are still not resolved: even thirty four years later, lustration has not taken place, and Soviet-era culture and arts have not been comprehensively reevaluated. Freibergs's mirage temple turned out to be a foreshadowing metaphor.

Metaphors of a Destructive Time –
Fate, Power, War

As illusions of democracy and the creative momentum of the 1960s Thaw faded, Destructive Time, which degrades both a personality and a nation, emerged as a key metaphor. Many synonyms were used to denote it in Aesopian language.

Destructive Time and destructive power that obliterate not only personalities but also nations is one of the key themes in Andris Freibergs's works in the 1970s and 1980s, prominent in his collaborations with various directors and forming the key visual metaphors for each production.

In Arnolds Liniņš's *Richard III* at the Dailes Theater in 1972, the protagonist was history and time, embodied by Freibergs's scenography. War was the chronotope of the performance where time and space met. Guna Zeltiņa, a Latvian researcher of Shakespeare, writes: "The performance started with a sharp, harsh sign: the stage lit up for a few moments, and one could see spearmen with raised spears: it seemed like they were about to charge at the audience [..]. In A. Liniņš's conception, Richard's God was War – not just as a means to save the state and its nation in a particular historical situation but, in his understanding, also as an ideal and an escape from the mundane dimension of a restricted life" (Zeltiņa 2015: 420). The battle of Bosworth was depicted through a stage-design solution. Valentīna Freimane, who has documented this production, claims that the conception for the scene was born at the very beginning of rehearsals when the technical possibilities of the stage and actors' swordsmanship were determined. The sword fight, which could have been rather fake if performed by a crowd, was shown in a radically different way, symbolically: "A violent spear fight takes place in the background of an empty stage. From both wings of the stage, they strike the floor with immense force, they crash and bang as they cross, clash and hit the ground. It is a precise image, free of any naturalism, a hieroglyphic that the viewer can read in an instant" (Freimane 1973: 58).

Time as a universal metaphor for power and destruction was widely used in Soviet theater. *Hamlet* at the Moscow Taganka Theater became one of the most significant manifestations of this. In 1971, scenographer David Borovsky created an outstanding visual image for this staging of Shakespeare by Yuri Lyubimov. Thanks to tours in socialist states and in France, this image became emblematic beyond the

scope of Soviet territory. It was a coarsely woven wool curtain, hung on a special bracket in the center of the stage, able to move parallel or perpendicular to the ramp line and to turn. It embodied a complex, fluid metaphor with meanings that could change in each scene, but it could be generalized as Time or Fate (Lyubimov called it the "wing of fate") – a power dominating people's lives. Sometimes, this curtain directly symbolized power as violence – for example, when four swords pierced the curtain, placed parallel to the ramp line in the "throne room", and Claudius and Gertrude "sat" on them like on thrones. In other episodes, it became Time – for instance, when Gertrude wiped her face on the curtain while talking to her son during the bedroom scene. With her bright make-up rubbed off, the audience saw a woman with a suddenly aged face. It pushed Laertes towards a "grave" dug in real soil. For Hamlet, the curtain was a wall which he was not able to move despite hitting his head against it. In the finale, it literally swept the remaining survivors off the stage and then ceremoniously crossed the space of the stage, like a page being turned by someone's hand.

A powerful "hieroglyphic" of power and violence that the viewer could instantly comprehend was used by Freibergs in the production of Aleksandr Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (1974) by Zinovy Korogodsky at the Leningrad Youth Theater. The violent era of dividing Russia was symbolized by cast iron cannonballs which seemed to move across the stage and group in various combinations, and stage lights as bells "rung" by the actors; however, in a land tormented by brutality and war, the "bells" had been stripped of their voices.

At the very end of the era of Stagnation, when the first signs of the *perestroika* were already visible, Šapiro and Freibergs created one of the most powerful metaphors for time and power not only in Latvian theater, but in theater of the entire Soviet Union, in a staging of Bertolt Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (1985). It was the graduating production of the actors' class of the Youth Theater, and it must be stressed that the visual metaphors in this performance stemmed from the expressivity of young people's bodies in combination with scenography. After such a combination, Freibergs would always say that "in essence, our stage environment is not only inanimate matter but the actors themselves" (Nodieva 1978: 89).

While with the help of the mythologists of Soviet socialism/communism, its creators sought to form not only the collective image of the new man, *homo sovieticus*, but also his "picture of the world" (Artymyshyn, Holyk 2021: 92), in this production "Šapiro continues to examine the impact left on people by totalitarian regimes and the machineries for such degradation and destruction of the person" (Zieda 2018: 157).

Freibergs had literally created a metaphor for the machinery of degradation – the stage featured bicycles placed on several levels, and Hitler Youth rode them into their bright future, zealously cycling and enthusiastically singing. However, the

bicycles were bolted to the floor and did not move, and the youngsters' energy was poured out in vain. Aside from riding bicycles they also exercised, climbed onto each other's shoulders and formed human pyramids, which instantly echoed the aesthetics of mass celebrations in Hitler's Germany and in the communist Soviet Union. It was extremely bold, even in 1985 when *glasnost* and *perestroika* had already started, to clearly show a similarity between the totalitarian regimes of the Third Reich and of the Soviet Union, as well as between the Hitler Youth and Soviet Pioneers and Komsomol as organizations created for indoctrinating future generations.

Remembering his collaboration with Freibergs, Šapiro wrote:

> Many of the works that we produced together with Andris were about the theme of "life and subjugation over life". Most of our lives we worked in the Soviet Union. And life in this state brought into sharp relief the problem of oppression and life. We were confronted with it every day. And that shaped – even though it may sound lofty – internal resistance to subjugation [..]. For Andris and me this theme appeared in literally all of our works (Zieda 2018: 441).

Šapiro and Freibergs' collaborations during the era of Stagnation were the socially and politically boldest highlight of Latvian theater, accomplished through production structure and composition but especially through visual metaphors used to defy the myths of Socialist Realism about the harmonious path of the Soviet society towards communism.

Faceless Chorus, Immobilized Hero

In the early 1970s, director and playwright Pēteris Pētersons became a leading figure in Latvian theater, despite being vetoed and persecuted by the state. After Pētersons was relieved of his duties as the head of the Dailes Theater after staging *The Idiot*, head director of the Youth Theater Ādolfs Šapiro invited him to join his staff. There, in collaboration with Ilmārs Blumbergs (who was not only a scenographer but also a costume designer), Pētersons created the central event of his directing career – a poetic theater trilogy: *Spēlē, Spēlmani!* (Play, Player!, 1972, based on poetry by Aleksandrs Čaks), *Mistērija par Cilvēku* (Mystery of Man, 1974, based on Vladimir Mayakovsky's plays and poetry) and *Bastards* (Bastard, 1978, a play written by Pētersons himself). These plays can be defined as contemporary interpretations of the medieval mystery (Zole 2000: 287), where abstract, generalized content was expressed not only through acting, but also through visual metaphors created by stage design, costumes, and the actors' interaction with them.

Play, Player! already showed a sharp turn regarding the protagonist and their opposite. The Hero of *The Idiot* is the Messiah who comes to save humanity that is standing on theirknees, but now the Hero comes from amongst the people, and the

people as a whole, the Chorus as a nation, are his opponent. The Hero tries to accomplish the impossible, to ascend into heaven, or to climb up a pole at the marketplace, yet he falls to his death as the observing Chorus sings cheerfully. The key element to Ilmārs Blumbergs's scenography was this pole, placed in the middle of the interior and serving both as a dominant vertical feature and an obstacle. The Chorus, portrayed by actors of the Youth Theater, were still rather personalized in this performance, as the Four Meters of Poetry or Girls. However, together they created an anonymized opposition to the Hero.

The confrontation between the Chorus and the Hero is even more profound in *Mystery of Man*. This performance was based on Vladimir Mayakovsky's poetry and life. The Hero, or the Man, was surrounded by a completely anonymous, faceless Chorus in an almost-empty white space, or universe, created by Ilmārs Blumbergs. "The Chorus is not only the opposite of the Man. Dressed in white capes and tall white face masks, the Chorus was initially a single being. It is a crowd that is aggressively silent and refuses the Man's invitation to converse. The Chorus is an environment from which individual characters emerge and sink back into. However, the masks in Pētersons's performance have a clear philosophical function as a sign of equality put on humans by the Coryphaeus, or Time" (Zole 2000: 307). A face lost, a person with no individuality demonstrated the artists' disappointment in their contemporaries.

The metaphor of transformation or losing one's face was fully applied in the final part of the trilogy, *Bastard*. In this play, Pētersons explored the theme of the transformation of a personality in order to apply a new "face" depending on the circumstances. Each Hero, emerging into the performance from an identically grey-clothed Chorus, could become a "centaur" or "werewolf" of sorts by combining the characteristics of Methodius (meaning Mephistopheles) and their own.

It must be noted that the 1970s was the period when Latvia was starting to develop pantomime, the plastic performative art form, at the center of which was the ensemble *Rīgas Pantomīma*. It was led by Roberts Ligers, an actor of Dailes Theater, and one of the protagonists was director and visual artist Modris Tenisons. *Rīgas Pantomīma* retained their amateur status – not because they would not have reached sufficient professional heights, but rather because this was a way for them to be free of censorship and interference from the Ministry of Culture and the Communist Party. The development of pantomime played an important part in the fact that visual metaphors now required from the actors an expression of movement and their interaction with the material environment or the scenography.

This interaction reached its peak in 1975 with the staging of Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem *Brand* at the Dailes Theater. The performance was created as a fruitful collaboration among many artists – directors Arnolds Liniņš and Kārlis Auškāps,

scenographer Ilmārs Blumbergs, movement director Modris Tenisons, composer Raimonds Pauls. Modris Tenisons's choreography united the main actors with the crowd, which could rather be defined as a plastic chorus, and with Ilmārs Blumbergs's stage design. A low, inverted pyramid of wooden planks symbolized the protagonist's alter ego. Much like Brand's motto "All or nothing", it only had one supporting point and was unsteady and easily destabilized. It not only embodied the character, but directly affected the type, rhythm, and range of movement of the actors and the chorus. The simple construction had immense possibilities of expression.

Brand was more than a personality or a stage character – he concentrated the essence of the Stagnation period into a symbol. Brand was a hero in an age where personality was denied any opportunity for action: the balance could only be kept if no movement took place, and thought was the only weapon. The soundscape of the performance, as Lehmann would define it, was created by a recording of chamber choir *Ave Sol* performing music by Raimonds Pauls. Almost constant choir recitatives occasionally took over the characters' text as well, interrupting and questioning them. The singing chorus embodied the spiritual component of personality, which was in constant conflict with the pragmatic component, the plastic chorus. In the pitch-black darkness of the beginning of the performance, the murmur of chorus voices started rising, a flash of light appeared and struck the low swinging plane and a half-nude human figure resting on top of it. With a slow, barely perceivable move-ment, the person rose, stood up straight and collapsed again when the pyramid made a turn. Such was the appearance of Brand. The pyramid was only balanced twice – at the beginning when the protagonist lay still, and again when Agnes first stepped onto it. The rest of the time, it swung as Brand and Agnes stepped outside the center, and the united movement of the crowd, the anonymous plastic chorus dressed in brown hooded capes, made it spin and jerk, sometimes leaving an im-pression that the pyramid moved against the laws of gravity. It was so during Agnes's death scene, as the actress was climbing up from the bottom corner of the plane which was lowered to the ground, and yet her steps did not move the pyramid, since the person stepping was not a human anymore but rather a spirit that had reached absolution. The highly raised corner of the pyramid became a cross for the deceased Agnes's body. Then it was taken over by the plastic chorus, and a mourning procession began with rays of stage lights "igniting" torches – painfully twisted palms in the black mass of the chorus. In the finale, Brand was also crucified – his death was decided upon by the crowd rather than caused by an avalanche.

The complex structure of Ibsen's play and its philosophical layers were each given a different means of expression that came together to touch the audience's emotions, conscience, subconscious, and imagination. This collaboration of Liniņš,

Auškāps, Blumbergs, Tenisons, and Pauls would be a great source for an analysis by Lehmann in the context of the panorama of postdramatic theater. It could easily be a match to the opuses of Robert Wilson, Jan Lauwers, Heiner Goebbels, Tadeusz Kantor, and other masters of the contemporary directing.

Conclusion

The period of political stagnation, or the so-called era of Stagnation of the 1970s–1980s in the USSR was a productive time for various art forms, especially for those actively using and exploring the language of subtexts – theater among them. Visual metaphors were the main provider of subtextual language. The necessity of deciphering this language turned spectators into co-creators of sorts. It is significant that in Western theater this was the period of the so-called "performative turn", one of the main features of which was a principally different level of involving the audience, turning spectators into actors.

Many processes and phenomena – visuality, dominance of scenography, active interaction with spectators, involvement of their experiences and beliefs – were similar on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The similarity of these processes is also evidenced by certain parallels in theoretical works – for instance, Viktor Berezkin's concept of dynamic scenography had conclusions that were similar to Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theater.

It must nevertheless be stressed that the visuality of performative arts as a crucial provider of meaning had a different significance in the West and in the Soviet area. In case of the latter, it used codes or subtext that spectators were able to decipher in order to create a parallel narrative through a collective understanding, which could not be tamed by ideological censorship and was able to diverge from the official myths of Socialist Realism. Meanwhile, in Western Europe the audience grasped the visual metaphors shown in the emblematic performances of the 1970s and combined them into a personally comprehensible narrative.

Visual metaphors as certain codes recognized and deciphered by the audience played a special part in this process of creating subtext narratives. Moreover, they were created not only through means of stage design but also oftentimes through a direct union of scenography and actors' body language. Such metaphorical codes, varied in the works of many artists, can be tracked through many historically significant theater productions.

An analysis of the groups of visual metaphors – Temple, Time/Power, the Immobile Hero – shows how these metaphors change their meaning from the Khruschev's Thaw to the beginning of the *perestroika*. The metaphor of Temple

transformed from nostalgia for lost spiritual values into the questioning of true and false values and their price; the metaphor of Time, or Power, transformed from a politically neutral recognition of the destructive, violent nature of power into an explicit reference to the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state, comparable to the Third Reich.

Even during years of the deep Stagnation, despite the Iron Curtain, lack of information, and the existence within a provinciality dictated by the political power, Latvian theater created productions which rose to the global level of avant-garde art of the time. Looking back, it is possible to analyze these productions in the context of the performative turn and the postdramatic theater.

Translated by Kristīna Guste

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Dāvis Eņģelis

Mg. art., music scholar, doctoral student

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia

E-mail: engelis.davis@gmail.com

Music Metaphors in the Issues of the Almanac *Latvian Music* Published in the 1970s

Mūzikas metaforas almanaha *Latviešu Mūzika* 20. gadsimta 70. gadu laidienos

Summary   The most significant periodical of musicological thought in Soviet Latvia was the yearbook *Latviešu Mūzika* (Latvian Music), of which 19 issues were published from 1958 to 1990. The yearbook consisted mainly of analytical essays, biographical studies, summaries of musical life, and chronicles. Meanwhile, a part of the Latvian musical thought was continued in another yearbook, published by the diaspora Latvians. Although many papers published in *Latvian Music* have become obsolete in terms of scholarly relevance, they still give a notion of how the musicological thought was contextualizing the musical experience through the years of the Soviet occupation. In this paper, I focus on the contextualization and representation of musical experience from the viewpoint of metaphor discourse, drawing from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and cognitive semantics in a wider sense. Using content analysis, I have systematized a music metaphor corpus from the issues of the Soviet yearbook printed in the 1970s (6 issues, around 290,000 words). The first partial results show a quantitative prevalence of space metaphors in the source domains of music contextualization. These metaphors served for the Soviet era musicologists as a tool for evaluating new musical pieces and the presence or absence of philosophical, psychological, or emotional depth in them. Thus, they fulfilled one of the most important functions of a Soviet musicologist: explaining the musical meaning to the listeners. The meaning which – in the yearbook by the Soviet Latvian musicologists – is unraveled or revealed by the composer or music itself.

Kopsavilkums   Padomju Latvijā nozīmīgākais muzikoloģiskās domas periodiskais izdevums bija almanahs *Latviešu Mūzika*, kas ar nelieliem pārtraukumiem nāca klajā no 1958. līdz 1990. gadam kopskaitā 19 laidienos. Almanaha saturu no teksta žanra aspekta lielumties veidoja analītiskas esejas, biogrāfiskas studijas, mūzikas notikumu kopsavilkumi un hronikas. Vienlaikus daļa no latviešu rakstītās domapmaiņas par mūziku norita citā almanahā, ko izdeva diasporas latvieši. Lai arī pētniecības pienesuma vērtība *Latvju Mūzikas* rakstiem daudzviet novecojusi, tie sniedz priekštatu, kā muzikoloģiskā doma kontekstualizēja muzikālās pieredzes padomju okupācijas laikā. Šajā pētījumā es pievēršos mūzikas kontekstualizācijai metaforu diskursā, teorētisko pamatu ņemot no konceptuālās metaforas teorijas (CMT) un kognitīvās semantikas plašākā izpratnē. Izmantojot kontentanalīzi, esmu sistematizējis korpusu ar mūzikas metaforām no padomju almanaha 70. gadu laidieniem (kopskaitā seši, ap 290 000 vārdu). Pašreizējie daļējie rezultāti rāda, ka daudzskaitlīgāko avotjomu vidū ir telpas metaforas. Ar tām padomju laika muzikologi novērtēja jaunradītus skaņdarbus, vētījot filozofiska, psiholoģiska vai emocionāla dziļuma klātesmi vai iztrūkumu un tādējādi izpildot vienu no svarīgākajām padomju muzikologa funkcijām – izskaidrot mūzikas vēstījumu klausītājiem. Tieši mūzika vai komponists padomju Latvijas muzikoloģijas almanahā ir vēstījuma nesējs, atsedzējs, atklāsmes veidotājs.

The year is 1978. If you are a member of the Latvian diaspora and you take at least moderate interest in the musical events of your community, and you have settled anywhere from the United States of America to Australia[1], there is a fair chance that you subscribe to the almanac called *Latvju Mūzika* (the English title given by the editorial staff reads *Latvian Music Magazine,* henceforth: LMM), and your mailbox will receive the 10th edition soon. It contains around 100 pages of essays and reviews focusing on the legacy of Latvian composers, as well as musical events, personalities, and anniversaries in the Latvian refugee community that emigrated from the homeland in the aftermath of WWII.

When the first issue of the LMM was released in 1968, another, similar almanac had already been produced for 10 years on the other side of the Iron Curtain in the capital of the occupied Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic. It had almost the same title: *Latviešu Mūzika* (Latvian Music, henceforth: LM). The thematic outline and structure of both was almost identical.

By 1990, when Latvia regained independence from the Soviet occupation, LM – the total number of printed issues had reached 19 – ceased publication. LMM saw new releases for another 15 years until 2005 (total 30 issues).

From today's perspective, it is clear that for both the diaspora and Soviet Latvians (more precisely, for anyone who belonged to the relatively small readership[2]) these almanacs were the most essential representation of current musical thought, a concise summary of events, personalities, and publications on musical topics. The relevance of LM and LMM was acknowledged by the almanac editors themselves, using contrasting metaphors to describe the cultural context of each almanac. The first issue of LMM began with a foreword by the editorial staff. They wrote:

> Just as other spheres of our spiritual life, the Latvian musical art has steadily bushed out so much that episodical accounts in the common periodicals is not enough (Latvju Mūzika 1968: 3).

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1   The almanac was sent to readers in USA, Canada, Australia, England, Germany, and Sweden, and printed in total 1300 issues.

2   The Soviet almanac *Latvian Music* was available for sale. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the total number of issues varied from 2000 to 3000. The price of the first issue in 1958 was 13 rubles and 65 kopecks, while in later decades an issue was sold for around 1 ruble. Regarding the diminished price, one must take into account the monetary reform which took place in 1961. In 1973, Nilss Grīnfelds, one of the editors of LM, wrote: "[We must] make sure that this sole and to a certain extent periodical publication about music reaches wider masses and engages new friends in the musical art" (Grīnfelds 1973: 18).

In 1973, the Soviet Latvian musicologist Nilss Grīnfelds wrote in the 10th issue of LM that the almanac is rightly regarded as "rostrum of the republic's musicological thought" (Grīnfelds 1973: 18).

The purpose of this preface is two-fold: 1) to briefly introduce the historical context of the data used for this paper, and 2) to remind that an inquiry into Latvian musical thought during the Cold War requires consideration of the disintegrated state of the Latvian communities. That is why I am referring here to both almanacs. Some comparative remarks will be made throughout the text, although this paper will mainly be focused on the metaphorical descriptors of music found in the almanac of the Soviet musicologists (LM).

Thus the **goal** of this study is: to examine metaphors that appear in the musical thought[3] by the music professionals of the Soviet-time Latvia. The discourse of music metaphors comprises a broad field of interdisciplinary studies in different languages, but previously no one in Latvian musicology – nor in any other academic discipline – has studied music metaphors in written Latvian texts.

Here I return to the aforementioned 1978 edition of LMM, where a diaspora author by the pseudonym G. R. describes a particularity of the Soviet musicologists:

> The called-up writers P. Pečerskis and L. Krasinska adjusted a "general line" to everything and everywhere, at the same time recruiting new writing personnel, because the Soviet system needs more ideological explainers of music than composers themselves. (G. R. 1978: 900)

I will argue that this specific feature of Soviet musicologists is represented explicitly by the music metaphors in the LM almanac.

Music and metaphor

Raymond Gibbs (2008: 12) urges that metaphor scholars should strive, as much as it is possible, for explicitness and verifiability in the process of gathering the data and of determining what is or is not a lexical metaphor.

When it comes to music metaphors – by that I mean the metaphors we use to conceptualize musical experience – sometimes it is fairly straightforward to acknowledge that a particular figurative utterance is not a part of the musical domain, but rather indicates a source domain, a non-musical domain that is mapped on the

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3 'Musical thought' is a term I have borrowed from Holly Watkins (Watkins 2011). It denotes a discourse of musical writing.

musical experience. An example is given by Lawrence Zbikowski (Zbikowski 2008: 502–503) who proposes two types of musical thought. The first type is metaphorical: to describe music, one relies on figurative speech. Zbikowski also calls this type "more colorful and more accessible" (Zbikowski 2008: 502). The other type is literal, where a musical description is created with (almost exclusive) use of musical terminology. By describing the first (metaphorical) type, Zbikowski demonstrates why musical descriptions such as "sour, biting dissonances", "sweet, dark consonances", or "murky sounds of pizzicato" are metaphorical: you cannot taste the notes; the notes are not biting anyone; and musical notes cannot reflect light.

To grasp the notion of metaphors in musical thought in broader contexts of music criticism, philosophy, and musicology, Zbikowski (2008) and Beard & Gloag (2016) are good reference points.

Method

CMT (Conceptual metaphor theory) states that metaphors in language and thought are not just literary tropes – rather, metaphorical concepts have "a basis in our physical and cultural experience" (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 14). CMT proposes to view metaphor as a mapping between two experiential domains. Zbikowski's example referenced above provides a good example to clarify the concept. The "dissonances", "consonances", and "sounds of pizzicato" constitute the target domain – properties of a musical work – on which concepts from a number of source domains are mapped in order to convey to the reader a musical thought, in other words, a verbal musical impression. "Sour" and "sweet" are clearly descriptors of taste. In a musical description, one can interpret these as sensory (in particular, taste) metaphors (the source domain) mapped onto the consonant and dissonant harmonies of the music (the target domain). The property of "biting" mapped onto same musical harmonies could be identified as a bodily or physical metaphor. "Dark" and "murky" (meaning "gloomy", "muddy") refer to visual experience; thus, I would interpret them as visual metaphors in Zbikowski's example. Consequently, according to CMT, I can derive from these musical descriptions three conceptual metaphors: MUSICAL EXPERIENCE IS GUSTATORY EXPERIENCE; MUSICAL EXPERIENCE IS BODILY EXPERIENCE; MUSICAL EXPERIENCE IS VISUAL EXPERIENCE. One way to advance this argument would be to collect more lexical evidence in order to test the strength or weakness of these mappings (whether they are just idiosyncrasies made up by Zbikowski or frequently used concepts in the musical thought in a certain language). To clarify the notion of conceptual metaphors, I provide below an oft-quoted example in the metaphor literature – the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR (ibid.: 4). A few of the examples provided by authors are:

Your claims are *indefensible.*
He *attacked every weak point* in my argument. (ibid.: 4)

In the examples above, concepts of defense and attack from the source domain of war are mapped on the concept of exchanging claims in an argument. Thus the conceptual metaphor is ARGUMENT IS WAR. Gerard Steen provides an elaboration on the process of mapping between the conceptual domains:

> conceptual metaphors [..] consist of conceptual correspondences between elements, relations, and attributes in one domain and their projected counterparts in another domain (Steen 2007: 50).

Lakoff and Johnson posit that the typical appearance of military vocabulary in linguistic expressions about arguments represent how we as humans comprehend and act on the concept of argument:

> Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently (ibid.: 5).

CMT and the concept of metaphor in a wider perspective of cognitive linguistics is discussed in detail by Croft & Cruse (2004: 193–222).

My approach of acquiring the data goes in the direction from language data to conceptual structures (for a more detailed account of different possible approaches to metaphor analysis see Steen 2007). Thus the goal of my analysis is to search for conceptual metaphors in the collected data of figurative speech[4]. Drawing from corpus linguistics, collocations of music metaphors are analyzed with AntConc software (Anthony 2014). (For metaphors and collocations, see Deignan 2005: 193–213.)

Data

The two almanacs are represented in the study by two sub-corpora. A corpus is understood as "a collection of linguistic data [..] which can be used as a starting point of linguistic description or as a means of verifying hypotheses about a language" (Crystal 2008: 117). Here it must be noted that both almanacs (occasionally LM, mostly LMM) provided a piece of sheet music at the end of an issue. As Wallmark points out (2018: 3), musical data in the context of corpus analysis might refer to notated music as well. The sheet music (usually of a choir song) is characteristic to LMM, but it is not part of the corpora. For the purpose of this paper, LM will be

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4   Here and henceforth used in the sense of "the most appropriate general term for the specific phenomena [..] namely: metaphor (including expressions, similes, analogies, etc.) and metonymy" (Deignan et al. 2013: 10).

regarded as the main corpus, while LMM will serve as a reference corpus. Each corpus is compiled manually from the digital archive of Latvian National Library[5].

The data in this paper represent the 1970s, when LMM and LM were issued eight and six times respectively. The word count varies slightly: ~240,000 for LMM and ~290,000 for LM (for a general overview of both corpora, see Table 1). The reason for the chosen timespan is practical: it corresponds with where I am currently in my dissertation. Additionally, 1970 is a shared chronological point of reference for the two corpora, with a distance of 10 years between their first issues.

Table 1. Two corpora of almanacs LMM and LM. Issues from the 1970s

	Latvju Mūzika (Latvian Music Magazine) (LMM) | diaspora Latvian corpus	*Latviešu Mūzika* (Latvian Music) (LM) | Soviet Latvian corpus
Authors	35	34
Issues	8	6
Publications	79	96
Word count	~240,000	~290,000

Text genre   Nearly all publications were included in both corpora with some exceptions. A poem, excerpts from a novel, and a few epigraphs were omitted from LMM corpus, while texts of epistolary genre were removed from LM corpus. The remaining text genres were categorized inductively (see Table 2). Some of them are titled in the almanac (**Chronicle**[6], **Review**, **Essay**[7]). A portrait essay (about a person) is one of the most frequent types of text genre in both corpora, and one of the most varied by the criteria of text register (see paragraphs *Text register* and

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5   The digitized issues of LMM can be found at: periodika.lndb.lv. The issues of LM are in the same archive, but in different collection: gramatas.lndb.lv.

6   A typical chronicle would include obituaries, anniversaries, music events and recent recordings. The literary style of a chronicle may differ from issue to issue – from a dry listing of persons/ events to whole sentences containing metaphors. The latter fact is why the genre of chronicle was included in both corpora.

7   The text genre 'essay' contains most of technical problems in regard to terminology, especially for the LM almanac. While some authors have called their publications 'essays', their scholarly scope requires a more adequate designation – a 'study' (an example would be the texts by Arnolds Klotiņš in LM). A larger problem is caused by those writers who do not provide any details about

Authors). The rest of the genres were sorted, striving for the most rigid model of genre types that could be applied to both corpora, taking into consideration the specifics of the musical almanacs. Partially, the typology is described by one of the Soviet musicologists in the LM issue of 1973:

> Since 1958, 10 issues of *Latvian Music* have been released, which should, by the intention, reflect the development of the Republic's musical life. Around seventy larger texts have been published – theoretical and historical essays, as well as portrayals of individual musicians (Grīnfelds 1973: 18).

Each of the following genre types requires a short comment.

Essays of music history is an umbrella-term that describes the majority of publications in LM and the third largest text genre of LMM. These essays cover topics of historical musicology in the widest sense of the term (including music aesthetics and criticism). Typical topics include analysis of a specific genre or of a piece of music by a composer, descriptions of musical institutions or of musical life in particular locations, and summaries. One might argue that portrait essays fit under the type of music history, and that is a fair point. However, I will argue that differences in text register justify such distinction.

Essays on music theory is a genre that one will find mostly in the LM almanac. It refers to texts that are concerned with problems of harmony, polyphony, musical form, etc.

Columns are short introductions, commentary paragraphs usually written by the editorial staff.

The quantitative differences between the text genres in Table 2 allow to notice the dissimilar historical contexts of the two almanacs. A reunion of diaspora choirs in a Song Festival was the most important musical event for the exiled Latvian communities. Extensive reviews were written for each concert of the Festival program, and it is of no surprise that these texts of music criticism take up the largest volume of the LMM. In contrast, the LM almanac is largely compiled of musicological essays – as it should be, given that LM was published by academic community united by an institutionalized musicological department (see paragraph *Authors*).

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their papers (most of LM authors). In LM, Grīnfelds briefly treats this topic and mentions "dissertation materials" as one type of text found in the almanac (Grīnfelds 1973: 18). Exactly which articles he means could possibly be deduced and guessed, but that does not alter the fact that a more elaborated account of text genres has not been communicated by the almanac's editorial board. To resolve this problem substantially, a separate study focused solely on the text genres should be done. However, the main function of this typology is to introduce reader to the musical almanacs in a clear, systematic way, and for this purpose I hold to the term 'essay' and withdraw from more intricate divisions.

Table 2. Text genre in corpora of almanacs LMM and LM. Issues from the 1970s

Text genre	LMM			LM		
	Number	% of publ.	% of volume	Number	% of publ.	% of volume
Concert review	48	44	28	–	0	0
Book review or sheet music review	4	4	3	–	0	0
Portrait essay	17	16	25	20	24	16
Essay of music theory	1	1	4	10	12	15
Essay of music history	13	12	20	39	48	66
Column	13	12	2	7	9	1
Chronicle	12	11	18	6	7	1
TOTAL	110	100	100	82	100	100

Note: *% of publications* shows how much of the total number of publications each genre represents. Basically, it sums up the tables of contents of all the issues enumerated. One must keep in mind that sometimes not all articles are displayed in the table of contents (in one issue of LM, a grouping of a few sub-articles into one whole article and their respective authors are missing from the table of contents. Also, columns of LMM are not always explicitly noticeable). This data column, however, will be misleading in an attempt to establish how much text space each genre covers. For instance, the 12 columns of LMM are mostly short paragraphs compared to the bulk of 13 music history essays. *% of volume* resolves such discrepancies by showing how much of the total volume of the corpus each genre represents. Thus, historical essays cover 20% of the corpus, while columns do only 2%.

Text register   Alice Deignan, Jeannette Littlemore and Elena Semino (Deignan et al. 2013) argue that:

> [..] there is increasing evidence that the frequency, form and function of metaphor use vary depending, broadly speaking, on the context of communication, and particularly on genre and register (ibid.: 9).

This means that genre and register of the medium (e.g., spoken or written text) can shape the understanding and conceptualization of figurative speech in a particular study. The LM almanac is a clear example of this due to the variety of the professional background of the authors, which can influence a number of variables: the conceptual domains (and the variety of such domains) employed to talk about music; the rate or the amount of figurative speech per article; whether a lexical unit counts or does not count as metaphorical. As Steen puts it: "[M]eaning is always relative to a group of language users" (Steen 2007: 94). Regarding the theory of text register, three features

are usually taken into account – field ("what is happening"), tenor ("who is taking part"), and mode ("what part language is playing") (see Deignan et al. 2013: 47–48).

Authors   As previously noted, both almanacs represent the musical thought and metaphors used by music professionals. But who are they? According to Deignan, Littlemore and Semino (Deignan et al. 2013), they can be described as two separate "discourse communities"[8], each reflecting on music on different cultural grounds, though having many common aspects[9], including text genre (ibid.: 42).

Are there different types of professionals, and does that influence text topics and the metaphors applied? The short answer to these two questions is yes. Any generalization about the authors, however, should be approached with caution because of the relatively small size of both corpora. Besides, to give a proper answer to the last question, more extensive analysis should be done, which does not fit the volume of this paper. But the question on the variety of authors deserves an elaboration.

None of the almanacs represents 100% what one may call "musicologist thought". While most of the authors contributing to the almanacs were trained in the disciplines of composition or music theory (or both), a variety of professional background is characteristic of the participants of almost every issue. For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that most of the diaspora writers – this generalization could be attributed to the first generation of post-war refugees – were educated primarily as composers, with music theory included in their curriculum. Most of them were capable choir conductors, some were practicing musicians, and performed the tasks of a musicologist and music critic. Similarly, some of the most prolific authors of the Soviet Latvian almanac were both professional musicologists and composers. This is a simplified account, but I believe that it serves for this paper to justify the label of the

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8   "A discourse community is a group of people who have texts and practices in common…a discourse community can refer to several overlapping groups of people: it can refer to the people a text is aimed at; it can be the people who read a text; or it can refer to the people who participate in a set of discourse practices by both reading and writing" (Barton 2007: 75–76, cited in Deignan et al. 2013: 41–42).

9   It should be noted that in a few instances the overlap of groups of people of the two communities did actually happen over the Iron Curtain from one almanac to another, but only in one direction. This includes an excerpt from choir conductor Klements Mediņš's book that was originally published in Soviet Latvia and given to the readers of LMM, as well as an essay by musicologist Joahims Brauns that was censored from one of the LM issues and later printed in LMM.

most significant type of almanac authors – **composer/musicologist**[10]. There were, of course, exceptions: e.g., practicing musicologists who were also professional musicians, or academically educated composers whose main profession was in an entirely different field. However, such differences are omitted here. The argumentation for the typology of almanac authors as summarized in Table 3 is that it reflects differences of (either or both) 1) text genre and register and 2) the use of figurative speech. An example: in the Soviet corpus, almost all of the texts written by a **choreographer/dance critic, actor/actress, or teacher** fall under the genre of "portrait essay", which is also often covered by composers/musicologists. The differences can be attributed to the text registers. The mode (a written text within a musical almanac) remains the same in all cases, while the tenor (author of the text is either a professional of the field or a colleague/friend/student of the person described) and the field (a portrayal/obituary of a composer/dancer/actor/teacher) are variables changing from text to text. And the figurative speech indeed takes a different course in the few texts of practicing **musicians** and **poets**, however quantitatively insignificant may be their contribution. Such generalizations are not so easy to make in the diaspora corpus for the single reason that its distribution of authors – by the standard of the typology – is more even.

Table 3. Types of authors in the corpora of almanacs LMM and LM. Issues from the 1970s

Types of authors	LMM Number	%	LM Number	%
Composer/musicologist	19	44	25	69
Choreographer / dance critic, actor / actress, teacher, journalist	11	26	8	22
Musician	10	23	2	6
Poet, writer	3	7	1	3
TOTAL	42	100	36	100

I will summarize both corpora by highlighting their shared strengths and weaknesses. Both almanacs could be described in whole as a fundamental dataset,

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10   A merged category of composers and musicologists has its historical motivation – as Boiko (2004) has noted, musicology as scholarly discipline had not been institutionalized in Latvian academia until the middle of the 20th century. During the 1920s and 1930s, the theoretical disciplines of music at the Conservatory were taught largely by composers in the department of Composition and Music Theory (Boiko 2004: 5). It was only in 1946, under the Soviet regime, that the Latvian Conservatory of Music established a Music History department, and only in 1963 a department of Music Theory detached itself from the department of Composition (ibid.: 9).

a basic groundwork of data to start exploring the Latvian musical thought of the post-WWII era. In a long term, this dataset could be expanded by mining music-related publications from the daily press and other sources. It could also function as a diachronic bridge of the Latvian musical thought before Soviet occupation and of the present. The weaknesses – by the standards of corpus linguistics these are quite small corpora. Any generalizations about the language use concern a very small community of authors in a specific discourse, and could not be attributed to the language as a whole. Keeping that in mind, both corpora are still rich sources of musical metaphors, and the different historical backgrounds provide valuable space for scholarly inquiry of various disciplines.

Categorization The metaphor categories were sorted out intuitively, identifying instances of metaphor (henceforth – units of analysis) in the corpus and attributing each of them to a specific metaphor category (or multiple categories). In the process of gathering more data, the number of metaphor categories was gradually reduced. As work with the data coding progressed, some of the metaphor categories withered away in the sense that only single or few lexical metaphors substantiated them. Because at this point data-gathering and coding is still in process, it is expected that the number of metaphor categories will reduce further or that some categories will split in two separate categories. In future studies, the categorization of metaphors may be strengthened in credibility with an inter-rater agreement procedure.

The data are categorized by means of content analysis. From each corpus, sentences with figurative speech are extracted in a column of Excel spreadsheet. Each cell of the column represents one unit of analysis, which is then coded with values of 0 or 1 that correspond to one of 51 metaphor categories[11]. In this paper, I will analyze only a few of the most frequent categories. 0 or 1 can also correspond to language and actor/subject categories – 9 of each[12], and 4 categories of emotional valence (positive, negative, hard to tell, and not applicable). To illustrate the coding process, I suggest to consider a sample sentence from the LM corpus:

(2) This [opera] monologue resembles a *calm and deep lower reach of a river.*

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11   A full list of metaphor categories can be found at: https://github.com/davisengelis/metaphor_pilot_project

12   The language categories are: 'Idiom', 'Phraseologism', 'Personification', 'Reference', 'Dysphemism', 'Euphemism', 'Foreign language', 'Irony', 'Metonymy'. The actor/subject categories are: 'Conductor', 'Song Festival', 'Ensemble', 'Choir', 'Listener', 'Musician', 'Critic', 'Composer', 'Music'.

The nature scenery of the lower part of a river acts as a source domain employed to capture in words the musical character of an opera monologue – the target domain. If the actual music could be heard, it might even be more fitting to conceptualize this metaphor not with the two-domain model of CMT, but the four domains or mental spaces of the Blending theory (for application of blending to metaphor in musical thought, see Zbikowski 2008). Going with the CMT model, I put a value of 1 under the metaphor category of Nature. Because *river* is used metaphorically, I will argue that all the characteristics inherent to the river are also used as metaphors of musical experience. Besides, there is no literal depth in music, and the calmness relates more to the emotional state of the listener. Thus, a value of 1 is also applied to the metaphor category of Space (depth metaphors being just one part of the broader Space category), and the emotional valence, as it is often with evaluative sentences, is either positive or negative. Here, one more value of 1 is added to the former.

Metadata of each unit informs of the respective year, source, publication, and author.

A few words on the unit of analysis. Mostly, a unit of analysis is a sentence containing one or more examples of figurative speech. For instance, this sentence where a depth metaphor is extended in a longer sentence with a semicolon:

> (3) The use of doppelgangers emphasizes composer's inclination to *deepen* the conflict, thus stressing the ideological direction; in result, the fantasy characters have gained a *deeper* sense.

If a sentence holds two or more metaphors without a semantic connection, I will split the sentence into separate units of analysis (usually these are sentences containing longer enumerations or multi-part sentences that are separated by semicolons or conjunctions such as *but, however,* etc. An example:

> (4) In both cases with the help of harmonic *language* – parallel fourths and fifths, bitonal chord formations, flashes of seconds, chromatic passages, tremolo, and other uses of illustrative, pictorial instrumentation – the music *conjures* up a spectacular scene of a fantasy fairytale,
>
> but here composer *goes too far* from the *borders* of genre of musical drama and prevalent style.

The author describes composer's harmonic language that conjures up a fairytale scene with flashes of seconds and other musical means (with a positive emotional valence), but in the second half of the sentence turns to an evaluation of the composer's stylistic choices (with a negative emotional valence). Of course, one could argue that both parts of the sentence are in a way semantically related. Another exception is a metaphor that stretches over two or more sentences and sometimes is mapped with different overlaying source-domains.

(5) This [opera] monologue resembles a *calm and deep lower reach of a river*.

   With *water gathered from brooks and streams*, it *approaches* slowly and inevitably *the end of its course to flow together with waters of the sea*.

(6) But with its *roots* [..] the genre [of choir song] is *still standing* stubborn and firm *in its soil* – the life of people, their course of work and education.

   Like *Antaeus from the Ancient Greek legend*.

   This *source of power must be taken care of and tended* as the most precious quality of the singing tradition [..].

The data collection and categorization process can be summarized in three steps: (1) fetching the corpus; (2) extracting the units of analysis; (3) coding the metaphor categories. A fourth step may be added in future: (4) identifying metaphors with XML attributes to facilitate the computational methods of corpus analysis.

Results

Thus far, I have described my approach to the process of acquiring the data from the two music almanacs. The metaphorical language in the musical descriptions is arranged by assigning each case of figurative language found in the corpus to a metaphor category in order to gain a perspective on two enquiries: how music specialists use language to write about music as a non-verbal experience, and how historical or social contexts of their respective communities affect their language use in contextualizing music. The work is in progress, and not all the units of analysis have been coded to specific metaphor categories; that is why the results at this point are partial. Still, the categories that appear most frequently in both corpora begin to emerge, allowing for an early interpretation of the data. Preliminary results in the LM corpus are presented below. Firstly, I discuss the two most frequent metaphor categories used in LM as the source domain in musical descriptions – the PROCESS and SPACE metaphors – in the light of music aesthetics and evaluation, as well as socio-political context, namely, Marxist-Leninist ideology. Lastly, I focus on two conceptual metaphors that are characteristic specifically to the musical thought of Soviet musicologists. These results will be extended in future by more comprehensive and in-depth corpus analysis in the form of dissertation.

PROCESS metaphors

Reading through the texts of the Soviet corpus, it becomes clear even before any further analysis that the word *evolution* appears with a striking regularity in musical descriptions. Two questions arise: is it justifiable to

treat these utterances as metaphorical – as a reference to Darwin in musical context? And is the seeming regularity of the word well-founded from a quantitative standpoint?

I suggest that in the context of the Soviet musicologist writings in the 1970s it is with a good reason to interpret the domain of evolution as an important source domain which is mapped by musicologists on the target domain of music. Over a period of time the compositions of the Soviet composers have evolved into Soviet music or Soviet symphonism, depending on the context. In evolution the evolving life forms keep the best traits of their predecessors. Similarly, Soviet composers keep the best traits of the classical masters – the traits that are, and this comes as a surprise, inherently socialistic, typical of music that is "close to the people". Here are a few examples:

(7) In these pieces we can observe the *evolution* of the Soviet symphonism.

(8) The genre of Latvian choir ballad *reaches one of the glowing culminations* of its evolution.

Thus, the conceptual metaphor: SOVIET MUSIC IS PART OF EVOLUTION.

A comparison of the lemma *evolūcija* (evolution) shows a quantitatively significant difference between the corpora (here by "quantitative significance" I mean quantitative results of LM in relation to the reference corpus of LMM). Both diaspora and Soviet Latvians speak extensively about *attīstība* (development) in musical and non-musical contexts (the word appears 400 times in the diaspora corpus and 500 times in the Soviet corpus). However, the word *evolution* appears 34 times in the Soviet corpus – as regards the corpus of the diaspora Latvians, they speak of *evolution* only twice (respectively, 11.7 and 0.8 times per 100,000 words). Out of 34 occurrences in the Soviet corpus, 30 (88%) are found in contexts of music, musical pieces, and composers.

Table 4. Evolution metaphors in music descriptions

Lemma	LMM			LM		
	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music
evolūcija (evolution)	2	0.8	2	34	11.7	30

Note: Raw *f* shows the total count of lemma in a corpus. Normalized *f* here (and in the examples below) shows frequency of the lemma per 100,000 words and thus helps to compare the frequencies of a given word in relation to the total amount of words in corpora of different sizes. Normalized *f* is calculated by multiplying the percentage of the total corpus represented by a lemma with the number of words by which the result of raw *f* is normalized. *Descriptions of music* show how many raw *f* examples are found in contexts of music.

Typical musical contexts include evolution of the musical genre, style, systems, form, culture, texture, and composer's writing.

SPACE metaphors   Holly Watkins reminds us that we praise musical works for deep emotional impact and we search for deep meanings and deep structures in music (Watkins 2011: 1). The data from LM and LMM corpora affirm Watkins's argument:

> [D]epth metaphors in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century music criticism and analysis are not so much isolated poetic achievements as discursive events that link music to a wide range of other phenomena (Watkins 2011: 14).

This indicates that Watkins's argument can be applied to and verified in a broader chronological and cross-cultural spectrum of musical thought. The differences of musical depth between the two Latvian almanacs are displayed by the quantitative data and collocations. In LM, musical depth is contextualized with a variety of lexical metaphors:

(9) In the works by Béla Bartók, the Hungarian motive is so *deeply interwoven* in the essence, in the texture of the expression itself [..]

(10) The most solid and *deep* symphonization

(11) serious and *deeply* dramatic art, the today's symphonism of J. Ivanovs

(12) the Latvian Song Festival tradition, which *excavates the ground ever deeper and wider like a torrent of the spring floods*

(13) The chorale did not have any *national roots* in the Latvian folk, contrary to Germany, where the reformers *drew deeply from the springs* of creation of the German people.

(14) Motives, which could be described as the *thematic nucleus* of the oratorio, have *deep roots* in the melodies of the folk.

(15) It is particularly in the souls of these wretched poor creatures where the sensitive folklorist discovers the *deepest sources of the folk's spiritual light*.

(9), (10) and (11) describe a composer's artistic depth; (2), (12) and (13) musical concepts are represented by depths of water; (14) and (15) are examples of national/people's depth. An overlap with the metaphor category of NATURE is typical. Equally true for both corpora: when the authors look for depth in the music with the help of Latvian word *dzīles* (a depth synonym where one of the connotations is that of deep waters), it is always used to conceptualize music. Here is a semantically layered example:

(16) here music firstly expresses the ancient sense of unity of all simple folk and of primordial solidarity that has grown *from the depths* of every nation and which inherits a specific nationally objective character, and which became one of the reigning currents of content in the Latvian (as well as other nations') classical choir – especially male choir – song.

The opposite can be said of another depth synonym with similar connotations of deep waters – the Latvian word *dzelme* – a rare idiosyncrasy in the musical descriptions.

Table 5. Depth metaphors in music descriptions

Lemma	LMM			LM		
	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music
dziļums (depth)	96	40	67	222	76.5	168
dzīle (depth)	3	1.2	3	2	0.6	2
dzelme (depth, deep water)	8	3.3	2	6	2.06	1

Within the tragic context of the disintegrated post-war Latvian communities, Table 5 carries a positive message: one can see what unites the Latvians of both sides of the Iron Curtain. It is music. With a lesser quantitative relevance (40 times per 100,000 words against 76.5 in the LM corpus) the diaspora Latvians show interest in deep music, deep sound, deep musicianship, musical depth; they search for deep musical logic and deep musical roots; they also register deep musical excitement, which sometimes has explicit religious collocations.

Similarly, *deep roots* is a distinctive collocation in the musical descriptions by Soviet Latvians as well – as already illustrated by (13) and (14):

(17) Latvian choir culture has *deep roots*

(18) Pointing to the *deepest roots* of an oratorio's motives of begging and sorrow in Latvian song melodies

(19) Development of Latvian professional music has *deep roots* in folk art.

But by and large, the collocations of musical depth in the Soviet Latvian corpus are different. The most frequent ones include *dziļas jūtas* (deep feelings):

(20) a peculiar depiction of today's reality, *interwoven with deep feelings*

(21) We are heirs to his songs *filled with deep feelings*

And psychological depth:

(22) The composer *has reached a psychological depth.*

(23) Emīls Dārziņš has pursued the search initiated by Jurjāns in the sphere of micro-poliphony, canonic imitation, stretto, and drone by means of *psychological deepening.*

(24) In Symphony's first movement – Lento – we hear a *deeply psychological message.*

Psychological depth turns out to be one of the main criteria to judge the value of a musical piece. And interestingly, diaspora Latvians speak of no psychological depth whatsoever. There is 0 data from the dataset of the 1970s.

A historical context that makes this search for psychological depth somewhat contradictory in the context of the self-proclaimed atheistic Soviet regime, is illuminated by Friedrich Geiger. He notes that depth and sincerity are among the top values used to evaluate musical works, and in their original connotations – going back at least to Johann Gottfried Herder – depth and sincerity are religious concepts[13] (Geiger 2003).

The variety of collocations containing depth metaphors in the LM corpus also include *dziļas pārdomas / dziļi pārdomāts* (deep contemplation / deeply thought-out), tragic, philosophical depth, deep symbols, and deep thoughts.

The results here reflect the generally well-known fact underlined in the beginning of this paper: that the main function of the Soviet musicologist was to explain the meaning of a piece of music to the general public. The musical metaphors of depth provides an insight of how they did that.

Musicologist is decipherer, music is speaker/actor   The title of this section refers to a few conceptual metaphors that have thus far been confirmed by the gathered data in both corpora. The following comparison table shows the remarkable differences in the comprehension of such notions as musicologist and music between the two almanacs and the musician/scholar communities represented by them. The two conceptual metaphors – MUSICOLOGIST IS DECIPHERER, and MUSIC IS SPEAKER/ACTOR – are characteristic to the Soviet corpus, while the diaspora corpus lacks such metaphorical mappings.

Only one diaspora writer uses the word 'decipher' to conceptualize music – at an insignificant rate. Along with that, in another example one of his colleagues describes him as a composer "who is hard to decipher". These are the only examples of deciphering found in the diaspora corpus.

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13   Holly Watkins approves Geiger's point and includes Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and E. T. A. Hoffmann as critical figures besides Herder who contributed to the momentum of depth metaphors in German musical writings (see Watkins 2011: 24).

Table 6. Lemmas for metaphors *musicologist is decipherer* and *music is speaker/actor*

Lemma	LMM			LM		
	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music	Raw *f*	Normalized *f*	Description of music
atsedz (uncover(s)/ unveil(s))	1	0.4	0	23	7.9	19
atsegt (to uncover/ unveil)	0	0	0	14	4.8	13
atšifrēt (to decipher)	6	2.5	3	22	7.5	15
atslēga/atslēgt (key / to unlock)	6	2.5	1	14	4.8	8
atklāsme (revelation)	7	2.9	7	53	18.2	50
slēpt/slēpts (to hide / hidden)	22	9.1	7	40	13.7	26
pauž (expresses/ utters)	5	2.08	1	67	23.1	51
paust (to express/ utter)	5	2.08	0	20	6.8	11

Table 6 shows that the quantitative difference between the diaspora corpus and Soviet corpus is quite striking when the musical thought must be unveiled or deciphered. There are no examples of musical unveiling in LMM corpus, but altogether 32 samples were found in LM corpus:

(25) the folk's intonation serves as a characterization of Russian society's strata and types, as *unveiling of* the social truth

In Table 6, the fifth row indicates that the LM corpus, compared to that of LMM, is filled with musical revelations (18.2 times per 100,000 words, total 50 examples).

(26) *to decipher* different approaches by three authors to the *revelation* of the same theme

This is hardly ever so in the diaspora corpus.

The last two rows of the table also attract attention. *Pauž/paust* (expresses / to express) is the same verb in different inflectional forms: *pauž* is the 3rd-person present tense form, while *paust* is the infinitive form. As previously noted, the Soviet musicologist translates, unveils, and deciphers musical meanings. But in the texts of LM, it is not the musicologist but the music itself (or the composer) that uncovers the hidden meanings of the music.

(27) symphony's dramaturgy is based on arrangement of philosophically lyrical, energetic, genre-based, majestic characters *expressing* deep contemplation

(28) In the 1st Symphony, the slow movement *expresses* the programmatic idea

The hidden and decipherable character of the music – in the interpretation of music aesthetics in the Soviet era – is a given, objective quality.

Conclusion

In the larger scale of metaphor scholarship, it seems that musical thought and metaphors within it has become a somewhat neglected field, albeit a recent contribution by Nina Julich-Warpakowski has given the music metaphor discourse a new lease of life (Julich-Warpakowski 2022). I do hope that this CMT-informed perspective on metaphors in the Latvian musical thought of the 1970s will contribute to the vitality of the discourse. As already noted, a more detailed analysis comparing the both corpora will follow in my dissertation. This paper presents partial results of the collected data by demonstrating how metaphorical mappings contribute to the contextualizing of musical experience in the written discourse of Latvian music professionals, and how ideological differences between the two separated communities of diaspora Latvians and Soviet Latvians affected the ways music was understood and thought about. The obvious further steps are: 1) to gather and code the data from all the issues before 1970 and from the 1980s, and 2) to repeat and extend the analysis on a larger scale, including diachronic analysis of metaphor categories and concordance plots. With a larger dataset it is possible that the typology of text genre may change slightly.

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Mārtiņš Mintaurs

Dr. hist., historian

National Library of Latvia; University of Latvia, Faculty of History and Philosophy

E-mail: Martins.Mintaurs@lnb.lv

At the Threshold of Stagnation: Reflections on Soviet Reality of the Late 1960s in the Novels of Alberts Bels

Pie stagnācijas sliekšņa: refleksijas par padomju realitāti Alberta Bela romānos 20. gadsimta 60. gadu beigās

Summary   The aim of this paper is to provide a contextual insight in the story of two novels written by Alberts Bels in the late 1960s: *Izmeklētājs* (The Investigator) published in 1966, and *Bezmiegs* (Insomnia), which was written in 1967 but denied publication by Latvian SSR officials. Analysis of the situation in the Latvian SSR at the time in question allows us to understand the reception of Bels's published novel by the literary critics of that time, as well as the conditions that prevented the publication of his second novel. Instead of providing a textual analysis of the novels' poetic and stylistic qualities, my intention is to look at these literary texts as indicators of the cultural and political situation of that period.

Kopsavilkums   Raksta mērķis ir sniegt kontekstuālu ieskatu notikumos, kas saistīti ar latviešu rakstnieka Alberta Bela 20. gadsimta 60. gadu beigās radītajiem romāniem *Izmeklētājs* (publicēts 1966. gadā) un *Bezmiegs* (uzrakstīts 1967. gadā, padomju cenzūra aizliedza romāna publikāciju). Izpētot tālaika padomju kultūrpolitiku Latvijas PSR, varam gūt priekšstatu par Bela romāna *Izmeklētājs* vērtējumu literatūras kritikā un apstākļiem, kas kavēja *Bezmiega* izdošanu līdz pat 1986. gadam. Atstājot ārpus raksta ietvariem minēto literāro tekstu poētisko un stilistisko analīzi, pievērsta uzmanība to lomai apskatāmā laikmeta kultūras un politiskās situācijas izpratnei.

Latvian literature during the period of Soviet occupation (1945–1991) has been the object of studies for about the last thirty years in Latvia and even longer in the West, by literary scholars in the Latvian exile community (Ekmanis 1978). The historiography of Latvian literature, as explored recently by Māra Grudule and Benedikts Kalnačs (Grudule, Kalnačs 2019; 2023), focuses on the reception of literary texts and the methodology used in writing literary history. Regarding the period of Soviet occupation in Latvia, the ideological aspects affecting the literary process are of particular interest because of the totalitarian and post-totalitarian conditions shaping the cultural milieu in the Latvian SSR.

1968 in the Soviet Union initiated the so-called Stagnation era. The concept of Stagnation – which denotes the period of slow decay and weakening of the USSR in social, economic and political terms – was coined much later (after 1985) for the sake of the current political agenda, and is widely used by historians, political scientists, and other scholars working on various topics of Soviet history from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s (Lane 1992: 35–37; Rutland 2009: 218–225; Bacon, Sandle 2002: 165–187). However, when using the term 'stagnation' to refer to this period of more than twenty years in Soviet history – from October 1964 (the removing of Nikita Khrushchev from the office) to March 1985 (the approval of Mikhail Gorbachev in the office) – one should be aware of the ambiguity of the term. In fact, the term has been criticized as being too simple when it comes to explaining social and cultural practices in the Soviet Union during the period in question. The complicated interplay between state officials and the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union was represented in the field of literary production both supported and controlled by these state officials, where the authors tried to overcome the ideological and aesthetic limitations set for the Soviet literary culture.

Apart from the Prague Spring and its suppression in 1968–1969, the situation within the USSR in the late 1960s, when the 50th anniversary of the 'Great October Revolution of 1917' was celebrated, also displayed a number of inner strains and tensions. The Brezhnev Era had just begun, and officials still held aloft the banner of 'collective government'. Yet new challenges for the Soviet regime emerged on both the international and domestic levels. The years from 1965 to 1969 were marked by attempts to reshape the previously closed Soviet society according to some standards of modernization while leaving the political system unscathed (Zubok 2009: 76–86), belated as it was when viewed from the contemporary Western perspective. Testing the borders of the allowable 'inner opposition' in the USSR was also typical for this period.

In this context, the two novels written by the then-young Latvian author Alberts Bels – *Izmeklētājs* (The Investigator), published in 1966–1967, and *Bezmiegs* (Insomnia), completed in 1967 and 'put on hold' by Soviet censorship for ideological reasons until 1986 – reflect the threshold between two periods in Soviet history. These texts mark the line between the recent past of Stalinism (formally condemned by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) back in 1956 and especially in 1961), and the upcoming Stagnation era. Yet the process that created the conditions leading to the Stagnation era was gradual. During the 1960s, there were ideological clashes between the 'neo-Stalinists' and the 'liberal wing' of the CPSU which took place in Moscow; these events were also echoed in the Latvian SSR. In the vague space between the formally closed past and the everlasting 'present continuous' waiting for the once promised Communism utopia to become a reality, the two novels depict social processes taking place in Soviet society in general, as well as the particularities of the Latvian SSR in the late 1960s. Both *The Investigator* and *Insomnia* were written in a period of time when hopes for a 'socialism with a human face' were still present in Soviet society, though those hopes would fade in the following few years. Therefore, it is worth looking at the two novels as 'diagnostic' texts for that period.

The first cut is the deepest

Alberts Bels (formerly known as Jānis Cīrulis, born 1938) started his literary career in 1964 as a popular author of short stories. That period in the Soviet Union was the end of the so-called Thaw in the Soviet Union.[1] His first novel, *The Investigator*, was written between November 1965 and May 1966 (Beinerte 2013). The plot proceeds as an autobiography of a young sculptor who has decided to destroy his own works because they do not fit the moral conclusions he has come to about his life and the society he lives in. The novel includes the protagonist's reflections on the experiences of his generation and the moral dilemmas of the 1940s related to surviving during the Stalinist regime. *The Investigator* provides a portrayal of the author's contemporaries and some reflections on the society that was becoming more approving of the consumerism formally rejected by Soviet propaganda. For this reason, *The Investigator* was praised by Soviet literature propaganda agents in a biographic manual published for distribution in the West: "The novel clearly shows the ability of Bels to analyze the mutual relations of persons and present the readers with views and reflections on one's sense of duty, fight against stagnation [sic!], monotony, and lack of principles" (Anerauds 1973: 55).

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1   For the biography of Alberts Bels see: Rožkalne 2009.

There is an aphorism dating back to the 19th century, saying that a poet in Russia is more than just a poet – meaning that professional literary activities provide a substitute for a lack of political participation. One might rephrase it to apply it to the situation in the Soviet Union. Literary criticism from the late 1950s onwards served as a kind of metaphoric agora where it was possible to discuss social and political issues otherwise excluded from the debate and intellectual communication allowed in the public sphere. On the other hand, since the early days of Socialist Realism in the 1930s literary criticism was a significant part of the ideological arsenal of the CPSU, used against ideological enemies and/or heretics (Dobrenko, Tihanov 2011: 145–248). This double-edged sword could cut well and reach the heart of one's personal life and career. As with many other public rituals created during the totalitarian stage of the Soviet Union, the practice of literary or aesthetic criticism with a political lining also survived the death of Joseph Stalin and the subsequent changes in Soviet cultural policy. It was based on a certain hierarchical structure and followed distinct principles of agency, prescribing who ought to criticize whom or what, and defining in what way criticism is to be displayed. This is actually why it is worth looking more closely at what literary critics said about Alberts Bels's novel *The Investigator*, as these reflections had certain political insights and even consequences.

"The beauty of *Izmeklētājs*, a rather strange combination of socio-psychological novel and detective fiction, lies both in *what* he narrates and in *how* he does it" (Ekmanis 1978: 321–322). This conclusion was reached by Rolfs Ekmanis (1929–2017), a notable Latvian literary scholar in exile, about ten years after publication of *The Investigator*. It points to those qualities of Bels's novel that were discussed among critics both in Soviet Latvia and in the West. Created in a form related to the modernist stream of consciousness, with a disrupted chronology of events and the inner monologues of the protagonist and other characters, the novel was perceived as a new and astonishing piece of art in the contemporary Latvian literature. While the novel is short, the text is filled with metaphors, paradoxes, and associations linked to the rather realistic threads that frame the story. Nevertheless, the contents of the plot caused similar discussions on whether the novel should be classified as psychological, intellectual, or philosophical prose.

In Latvia the first review of *The Investigator* appeared in March 1967, just a few months after its publication in the periodical *Zvaigzne* (The Star). As noted by reviewer Arvīds Grigulis (1906–1989), an author and literary critic representing the 'orthodox' conception of Socialist Realism, it was not a common practice to publish a review article on a literary work before that work was issued in book form. Publications in periodicals were considered a kind of raw material from the aesthetic point of view; presuming that there might be some difference between the text published in a

literary magazine or other periodical and the later, hard-cover edition. A bigger surprise was the discovery that Grigulis praised *The Investigator* for being a brave and well-grounded literary experiment or a 'search' (*meklējums*) that the young and obviously gifted author had performed with some serious intentions for the future. Grigulis was also the first critic to call this novel 'intellectual', highlighting the rarity of works of this kind in our literature (Grigulis 1967: 3). Thus Grigulis initiated a discussion that lasted for two years and was somewhat halted due to Alberts Bels's clash with the political censorship of the Latvian SSR.

There is no need to provide detailed insight into every review of *The Investigator* published in the late 1960s and early 1970s, yet the number of these reviews is unusually large indeed. Until the publication of his next novel *Būris* (The Cage) in book form (Bels 1972), there were twelve reviews published in Soviet Latvia and six in Latvian and English periodicals in the West, as well as one in Moscow. These texts shared some common traits regarding style, structure, and poetics. As for the literary critics in Latvian SSR, Arvīds Grigulis was soon followed by his colleagues who also debated about the possible classification of Bels's novel: whether it is an example of psychological (Ezera 1967; Krauliņš 1967: 145; Plēsuma 1968: 121), intellectual (Sokolova 1968; Eisule 1972), or philosophical prose (Broks 1967: 117; Tabūns 1968). While most of the critics tended to acknowledge the positive contribution of Alberts Bels's first novel to Latvian literature, there were also reproaches. Some considered the structure of the narrative too complicated, and claimed that the novelist's self-sufficient intentions demonstrate a style inappropriate for good Soviet literature (Bauģis 1967: 114; Vilsons 1967: 132). Some critics, like *Dr. philol.* Kārlis Krauliņš (1904–1981), also believed that Bels was trying too hard to follow the influence of James Joyce, causing a lot of unnecessary indents in the text. These voices were opposed by Harijs Hiršs (1937–2007), who argued that the composition of a novel should be left to the author alone (Hiršs 1967: 142). We will come back to the issue of aesthetic criticism in the Soviet Union later, after a few words on the reception of Alberts Bels's novel in the West.

Many young Latvian authors in exile read the literary magazine *Jaunā Gaita* (The New Course), published in the USA since 1955, and were genuinely interested in the development of national literature in the Latvian SSR. Therefore *The Investigator* was approached in good faith and without any of the preconceptions typically held by some exile political organizations towards cultural activities in the occupied homeland. The first one to write about Bels's novel in 1968 was Latvian painter and essayist Tālivaldis Ķiķauka (1929–2000) who lived in Canada. He seemed to be impressed with "the fresh, globalist style of the novel, as if the author himself came from the Western world" (T. Ķ. 1968). A somewhat similar but deeper analysis was

undertaken by literary critic and academic Ojārs Krātiņš (born 1934) from Berkeley, California: first in a short review (Krātiņš 1969), then in an article in the academic quarterly *Books Abroad* (Kratins 1973: 679–680). The reviewer's attitude was a critical one, though he nevertheless praised the author for his originality and capability to reflect on the social and historical contingencies opposed to the ethical imperatives Bels's protagonists coped with in their daily lives in the Soviet Latvia.

The Investigator was reviewed positively by Juris Silenieks (1925–2016), another Latvian literary theorist and critic in exile, in his review *Alberts Bels: In Search of Man*:

> Although there are interesting allusions to political events, the focal point of this *Bildungsroman* is the investigation of artistic sensibility and the artist's interaction with his fellow men [..]. With rhapsodic misanthropy, he recognizes the importance of human interdependence which defines man, including the superior individual [..]. A shameful stamp of sameness and lack of self-consciousness obliterates modern man. And although the sculptor, being a privileged man graced with special gifts, is only a spectator in the face of the befooling of the modern man, his aloofness likewise lacks merit and authenticity (Silenieks 1974: 37).

This statement can be supplemented by the conclusion drawn by Zanda Gūtmane on the particularity of the situation that the 'modern man' has experienced in the Soviet Union:

> Of course, complexity is the essential feature of the 20th century person in general; however, the complexity of the Soviet person is a special topic. Since the Soviet individual has been in the double moral situation for a long time, forgetting and even denying his own historical past, ignoring his conscience and complying with ideological pressure, he has clearly been formed into a split individual (Gūtmane 2008: 100).

Needless to say, this was no secret to the Soviet officials either; this is why qualities like 'complexity', ascribed to the composition of the novel or to its plot, were far more than mere statements about the aesthetic characteristics of the text in question. In Soviet tradition, these qualifications always indicated a political subtext evaluating the ideological reliability of a particular work of art.

However, not every literary critic representing Latvian literature scholars in exile accepted *The Investigator* as stunning art – for reasons involving both its formal qualities and, so to say, the ideological background that the reviewer decided to find in the text. For example, literary scholar, critic, and editor Jānis Rudzītis (1909–1970) in one of his final essays warned against overestimating the quality of Bels's first novel, noting that it was only path-breaking according to the conditions of the Soviet-occupied Latvia but not in the context of existentialist prose produced by Latvian authors in exile (Rudzītis 1969). In a few years, this thesis was revisited by Ojārs Krātiņš who deliberately compared Bels's work to the novels of Ilze Šķipsna (1928–1981), the most influential representative of modernist literature among Latvian authors in exile (Kratins 1973), noting both stylistic and structural parallels in texts created by the authors in question.

There was also a particular ideological discontent expressed by famous Latvian author and essayist Anšlavs Eglītis (1906–1993), who frequently wrote reviews on various subjects related to Latvian literature. In 1981 Eglītis published an essay devoted to novels of two contemporary Soviet Estonian authors, Enn Vetemaa and Paul Kuusberg, that were translated into Latvian and published in Riga. The reviewer praised the two Estonian colleagues for being far more brave and self-confident in their attitude towards the Soviet occupation regime than any of their Latvian counterparts had ever been (Eglītis 1981). The essay was distributed with different titles but nearly the same content in several Latvian periodicals published in the US, Western Europe, and Australia. However, the same period in Latvian literature was perceived differently by Rolfs Ekmanis:

> The atmosphere since the mid-1960s has been relatively lively and rebellious. Although the official Party restrictions continued virtually to define the subject or manner of writing [..] one part of the creative output, mainly dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, reveals that at least some writers in Latvia found it possible to deal in one way or another, with subjects and themes that had been forbidden during the first ten or fifteen postwar years (Ekmanis 1978: 308).

Alberts Bels certainly was among these authors mentioned by Rolfs Ekmanis. Strange enough that Eglītis, usually so careful in catching every small hint about anti-Soviet sentiment in texts printed in Latvia, paid no attention to novels by Alberts Bels which dealt with the same subjects as those in Vetemaa's and Kuusberg's works. Considering that in Soviet Latvia the boundary between collaboration and opposition was often quite diffuse (Bleiere 2018: 629), one could understand the dislike Eglītis expressed about what he labeled the willingness of Latvian authors to co-operate with the Soviet system. However, one should remember that during the Thaw Baltic literature was still strictly controlled and subject to multi-stage censorship. This, in turn, led to a literary practice where "any phenomenon is depicted in the light of half-truth according to the spirit of the particular age" (Gūtmane 2008: 96–97). As for the role that the Soviet censorship played in the development of Estonian literature, Eglītis presumed that it was not as harsh as in Latvia (Eglītis 1981: 147). Yet a study by George Kurman, conducted in the late 1970s (Kurman 1977: 10–12), shows no particular differences between the situation in these neighboring countries at the time.

The Estonian interlude   The comparison between some Latvian and Estonian novels of the 1960s and 1970s, as suggested by Anšlavs Eglītis, still makes sense considering the similar but not identical conditions of their provenance. As stated by George Kurman, in Estonia:

> The 1960s witnessed the debut of a younger generation of prose writers who were equipped – and were permitted – to depart significantly from the somewhat orthodox and dreary style, themes, and attitudes of their elders (Kurman 2018: 260).

The Investigator was written similarly to the short novel *The Monument* (1964) by Estonian author Enn Vetemaa (1936–2017)[2], published in 1965. This author was the first to introduce this kind of prose to Baltic literature (Gūtmane 2008: 98–99). Both short novels shared some similar traits *pro forma* and in terms of philosophic reflection on the moral issues that artists in the Soviet Union had to cope with. In both novels the plot is built through the inner monologue of a sculptor finding himself in a situation where he must choose between his artistic freedom and the possibility to make a compromise and come to a "politically correct" decision to create a monument according to the standards of Socialist Realism art. Yet there is a difference: Vetemaa's work shows an experienced artist who is ready to build his career at any cost, using political demagogy typical for the Soviet period as a tool in making his way to fortune. Meanwhile Bels focuses on a young man coming to terms with moral dilemmas set for him in the course of his recent life events. Thus *The Investigator* was in a way more suited for publication, although Bels managed to put into the text some episodes related to the ethnic-based Stalinist terror of the 1930s and the deportations of civilians from Latvia in the course of the collectivization campaign of 1949.

In contrast to Alberts Bels's experience with his first novel, *The Monument* was denied publication at first due to its being too critical towards Soviet ideology. Upon its publication, the novel won a prize. It is worth mentioning here that Russian translations of Vetemaa's novel appeared in the Soviet literary magazine *Druzhba narodov* (The Friendship of Nations) in the summer of 1966 (Vetemaa 1966), before Bels finished the manuscript of his first novel. *The Investigator* was published in the biweekly magazine *Zvaigzne* from September to December in issues No. 18–23. The Latvian translation of Vetemaa's novel[3] first appeared in early 1967 in the Latvian Communist Youth Association's (Komsomol) newspaper *Padomju Jaunatne* (Soviet Youth), No. 21–39. Thus the readers could get acquainted with both novels almost simultaneously. Since *The Monument* was still under fire for political reasons, its publication in the Latvian magazine was in a way supported by a short introduction written by the most respectable Soviet Estonian author of that time, Juhan Smuul (1922–1971)

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2   For the biography of Enn Vetemaa see: Org 2009.

3   Translation seems to be made from the publication in Russian since it follows particular stylistic trends recognizable in the text printed in *Druzhba narodov* and different from the second Latvian publication of *The Monument* translated from Estonian by Tamāra Vilsone (Vetemā 1979: 5–80). Moreover, the illustrations added to the text printed in *Padomju Jaunatne* were taken from the publication in *Druzhba narodov*.

who described it as "a brave, gifted, and ideologically correct masterpiece" (Vetemā 1967), to avoid any accusations that the text might harm the reader's perception of the surrounding Soviet reality.

This kind of political precaution certainly made sense because "since the mid-sixties, the advocates of de-Stalinization have encountered strong opposition" (Clarke 1981: 246). This trend against the de-Stalinization process was clearly demonstrated in the field of literature by Soviet officials in 1965 and 1966, as they launched a propaganda campaign ending with the trial of two authors, Yuli Daniel (1925–1988) and Andrei Synavsky (1925–1997), for publishing their literary works outside the Soviet Union (Zubok 2009: 88–89). This context shaped an atmosphere with a mixture of hopes for further de-Stalinization of the political system and fears that the current minor attempts to 'humanize Soviet socialism' would soon end. Although there is validity in the opinion that Estonia had experienced ongoing political liberalization since the 1960s (Bennich-Björkman 2022: 226), the situation was different for people living at the end of this decade amidst the turmoil caused by the split between the 'reformist' and 'orthodox' wings of the CPSU and their subsequent infighting. Estonians were forced to wait and see what the next turn in Soviet policy would bring.

The main ideological message shared by Soviet internal propaganda in the 1960s focused on the construction of the new socialist/communist society and on how the new Soviet person ought to overcome capitalism and the West in the future. However, the need to attain the living standards of the latter was more and more obvious. The contrast between work for the construction of socialism and one's right to enjoy leisure as a somewhat-tolerated individual practice was notable. By the late 1960s, this contrast gradually started causing reflections uncomfortable for the Soviet regime about the very nature of the socialist society that the citizens were being called to build. Yet the situation in general was far from any kind of mass resistance or even mass discontent about the Communist regime. On the contrary, a specific tactic of survival was chosen by the majority of Soviet society: "In the 1960s, when the middle class of Soviet society had already emerged, a "double conscious-ness" developed: inward cynicism / outward hypocrisy, private freedom / official loyalty" (Eglāja-Kristsone 2021: 224).

Thus both Vetemaa and Bels wrote about society already from a position of stagnation; a society different from the image created in Soviet media of that time. It was a society of conformism, with one's self-interest put above the socialist ideals that everyone seemed to be accepting only externally. The somewhat exaggerated pathos of anti-consumerism present in *The Investigator* as well as in *Insomnia* reflects the spirit of the age quite precisely, and echoes the intonations of the short novel *Things: A Story of the Sixties* by French contemporary author Georges Perec

(1936–1982), published by *Editions Julliard* in 1965. A Russian translation of Perec's novel, edited in Moscow, was available to the Soviet audience in 1967; a Latvian translation from the French[4] followed some years later (Pereks 1970) and probably influenced Bels's third novel, *The Cage*, which addressed similar issues of Soviet-style consumerism that imitated the Western example of welfare society and covered up the conformist everyday practices of Soviet citizens within the existing political regime.[5]

The trouble with *Insomnia*

The existentialist motifs already present in *The Investigator* and noted by some critics were made even stronger in Alberts Bels's second novel, *Insomnia* (Bels 2019). Although the story was combined with a kind of 'historical fiction' about the age of the Baltic Crusade in the 13th century, the focus was set on sharp criticism of the contemporary Soviet Latvian society. Bels finished the manuscript of the novel in 1967, the same year when *The Investigator* was published in book edition, and tried to publish the manuscript at various Latvian publishing houses for two years without success. After a provocative interlude in 1970 with quite strange attempts by some occasional Latvian emigrés to smuggle the manuscript to the West, a criminal case against the author was initiated in 1971. The case relied on conclusions made by an expert commission which checked the text from an ideological point of view. Conclusions drawn by the experts were extensive in form yet clear in contents: the novel allegedly lacked any kind of artistic value while the author was shamelessly expressing his deliberate anti-Soviet political intentions here (Bels 2003: 11–18). It is worth noting that one of the experts in this commission was Kārlis Krauliņš who previously wrote about *The Investigator* in the context of contemporary Latvian literature.

This was a turning point in Alberts Bels's professional career and living conditions. Considering that Article No. 65 in the Criminal Code of the Latvian SSR, dealing with the so-called 'Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda activities', prescribed detention from six months up to seven years (Latvijas PSR Tieslietu ministrija

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4   The usual practice for translations of Western authors in the Soviet Union was to follow a specific hierarchy: publication of these translations in non-Russian languages was allowed only after the text was published in Russian at first. Thus in many cases Russian edition was used as an intermediary tool when creating the Latvian translation, although it was mostly labeled as translated from the original edition. In fact, this could be the case of Perec's novel as well, since there is no subtitle in the French edition of 1965 in contrast to the Russian edition.

5   On consumerism emerging in the Soviet Union since the second half of the 1960s see: Chernyshova 2013: 17–42 especially.

1971: 65), there was no doubt about the serious consequences that might arise. Activities described in Article No. 65 belonged to the category of especially dangerous crimes against the state. These activities included, among others, "distribution of false statements disparaging the Soviet state" as well as the distribution, creation or storing of literary texts with such content. Although the investigation against Bels was halted in summer 1971 and the novel *Insomnia* was never prohibited from publication officially, given the fact that its manuscript was already rejected by all the possible editors, the author was soon visited by two persons incognito who explained in detail what 'might actually happen' to him and his family members in case he nevertheless decided to distribute the text in samizdat or some other illegal format (Bels 2003: 8–9).

One of practices typical for the Soviet cultural policy at that time, inherited from the period of Thaw, was linked to the understanding that Soviet literature needed new authors to enter the field (Lygo 2006). Some particular circumstances in Latvia were supporting a sense of cautious optimism around 1966 – due to the takeover or the so-called 'palace revolution' that took place during the 5th Congress of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union (LSWU) in December 14th–16th, 1965. The youngest generation of writers then rejected the candidates approved by the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party and elected a new board of the Writers' Union. This "provided a second chance for a Thaw atmosphere in Latvian literature, expressing a more free and even revolutionary spirit, first of all, among the literati themselves" (Eversone 2017a). Among these revolutionary expressions were also objections against the power of ideological censorship. The borders were set at social and political criticism of the so-called actually existing socialism (Swain, Swain 1998: 94–125) – freedom of speech was not unlimited. This was clearly confirmed in the case of *Insomnia*. Alberts Bels post-factum explained his perspective of the situation in a newspaper interview:

> The novel was not written so foolishly that it would be destroyed at once, but it was written frankly enough to be denied publication. Nobody spoke about censorship openly, but I was advised in a personal conversation to put the manuscript on a quiet shelf and not to dare spread it in public, otherwise there would be serious consequences for me and my family [..]. Actually, for me it was an impulse to write the novel *The Cage*, dealing with the issue of individual freedom in our Soviet situation (Beinerte 2013).

Insomnia was first published in its censored version in the Writers' Union magazine *Karogs* in 1986, the cuts in the text being agreed upon with the author (Bels 1986). What was the explanation for these cuts and how Bels accepted them? It seems that Bels decided to take the chance, as censorship had been somewhat reduced due to the *glasnost* policy declared in the USSR around that time, to publish the previously forbidden text. A part of a work is more than nothing, even when a

high cost is paid for it. In 1985, when Bels reshaped *Insomnia* for legal publication, it was still hard to imagine that serious changes would take place and the Soviet regime was going to collapse in few years. As Bels has stated, summing up a writer's aspirations: "You have to be visible, so that the words you say can be heard" (Beinerte 2013). Staying in the grey zone of samizdat was a hard choice to make, and even harder when it was clear that there would be no publication at all.

The uncut Latvian text of *Insomnia* with the author's comments was published in 2003, and later an English translation by Jayde Will (Bels 2019). The novel became very popular among the Latvian literary scholars of the middle generation, presuming that *Insomnia* already exposed all the evil of the Soviet colonial policies carried out in Latvia (Lūse 2008: 341–342). Since it turned out that there were few texts representing Latvian literature in the Soviet period that were either prohibited or appeared in samizdat (Bleiere 2022: 60), the question of collaboration emerged once again, pointing to distinguished members of Soviet Latvian intelligentsia. The discourse of Soviet colonialism in the Baltics and colonial relationships among nations in the USSR has been a subject of investigation for decades (Annus 2020), with researchers discovering various perspectives applicable to this issue. According to Bels's opinion, writing about the Nazi occupation of Latvia (1941–1944/45) was an instrument to speak about the actual Soviet dominance instead, and this was the real cause of *Insomnia's* denied publication (Bels 2003: 7).

Dealing with censorship   The first troubles with the manuscript of *Insomnia* did not prevent Bels from speaking about the abolishment of censorship in Soviet Latvia on December 9, 1968, at the meeting of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union board in Riga. There were several conditions due to which his performance had political consequences. Firstly, the political atmosphere in the Latvian SSR, as well as in the Soviet Union in general, was rather tense in 1968, as the Soviet regime and the CPSU tried to cope with the challenge of the Prague Spring events. Thus, following Moscow's hard line towards stronger ideological control over intellectuals and legal opponents, corresponding activities were undertaken in Riga as well (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs 2009). This was also the reason for organizing such a meeting at the LSWU with Jurijs Rubenis (1925–2005), a secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party since 1966, who gave a speech about the development of the contemporary Soviet Latvian literature. Indoctrination of the literati about the terms and conditions set by Communist Party ideologists included praises and criticism to particular authors for their publications, as well as blaming

others for the political situation in general – for instance, accusing Western imperialism for trying to blow up the socialist bloc from within (Rubenis 1968: 2). As noted by Rolfs Ekmanis, this speech, delivered by a high-ranking Party official, "reflected the official desire to impose more control over all sectors of the country's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual life" (Ekmanis 1978: 297).

Considering this, the fact that Bels explicitly mentioned the recent Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia (which was only vaguely addressed by Rubenis) was a heresy, and not the only one. Bels also shared his view that writers in Soviet Latvia were hindered by professional limitations arousing from two preconditions. The first was false and biased information about actual events: the only information available to Soviet citizens came from the press and other public media. There was only one institution that held correct data about the society and its mood in Soviet Latvia – that institution, the State Security Committee (KGB), shared its data with the Central Committee but not with writers, said Bels. The second precondition was "the one we avoid talking about, even among ourselves" – namely, censorship. Bels compared the censorship to the institution of serfdom that existed in the Russian Empire up to 1861. In the Baltics, then a part of that empire, this "harmful and detrimental institution" was abolished some forty years earlier than in Russia itself. Bels concluded that "the state [i.e. the Soviet Union] would not be endangered if this time the abolishment of censorship [also] started with the Baltic Republics" (Niedre 1996; Latvijas Valsts arhīvs 2009).

These statements had an explosive effect on the audience of about 500 people (Gorjaeva 1995: 50), who were also triggered by the tense atmosphere caused by the Soviet policy towards the Prague Spring and by the restrictions that Jurijs Rubenis had himself communicated in his regulative instructions for intellectuals. Rubenis used rhetorical questions in his speech, imploring LSWU board members not to get involved too deeply with criticism of the Soviet state:

> It is no secret that sometimes the publishers, editorial boards and the Press Committee conflict with the writer about particular texts. These conflicts are usually associated with the identification of the various problems in these texts. Some writers raise a question at times: but can't one write about it? This is a false statement. It is clear, however, that literature cannot avoid the contradictions that arise in our life [..], everything that prevents moving along the path set by the party. Criticism of shortcomings is valid and necessary. But we are against the cases when [..], one sinks into barren criticism and denigration of life and of the socialist political system. Will such criticism give us anything? I doubt it. What is important is that criticism always represents certain positions. And it is already [..] a political issue. A malicious, vile criticism which distorts the truth of life and creates a mis-conception of our reality usually goes hand in hand with a criticism under which our enemy would be willing to sign (Rubenis 1968: 3).

While considering that Soviet ideological censorship of the culture in Latvia was more pronounced than in Estonia and in Lithuania (Bleiere 2018: 629), any hint about the existence of censorship was regarded as a threat by state officials. However, Alberts Bels was not alone in his attitude towards censorship in the Soviet Union – in 1967, Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) asked in his letter to the Writers' Union of Moscow to stop censorship (Gūtmane 2008: 97). The scent of freedom was still in the air, although the political climate in the Soviet Union was changing in front of one's eyes. Yet the momentum of de-Stalinization process started by Nikita Khrushchev had survived his deposition in 1964 for at least some years, until the end of the Prague Spring, given that the abolition of censorship was among the tasks set by some Czechoslovak reform communists (Williams 1997: 14–28). Since in the annexed Baltic States the lasting influence of the Thaw was to be observed also in the prose of the late 1960s (Gūtmane 2008: 95), and "until 1968 the possibilities offered by a reformed communism tailored to national peculiarities seemed real" (Swain 2021: 154), the case of Alberts Bels's speaking in late 1968 about the necessity of canceling political censorship in the Latvian SSR for the sake of Soviet socialism itself may not seem as naïve as it does from the distance of the present day.

In fact, it was the second time when Bels had expressed in public his negative opinion about Soviet censorship. The first occasion was in May 1965, when he was invited to speak on a Latvian Television live broadcast program devoted to literary issues. Bels revealed that among other obstacles hindering the development of young authors in Soviet Latvia there was a problem caused by censorship, namely the institution called *Glavlit*[6], constantly intervening into literary activities. Of course, this sort of 'occasion' was to be noted and remembered by *Glavlit* officials of the Latvian SSR, and the second time Bels crossed the red line was even more astonishing for them, so to say, from the moral point of view. Thus Valentin Agafonov (1926–1981), head of the *Glavlit* in Riga, made particular complaints about this in his report to Moscow on December 25, 1968: "[T]he cynical and defamatory statements Bels has made about censorship are particularly unacceptable because censorship has never interfered in any of his literary compositions" (Bljum, Volovnikov 2004: 432–433). The predictable events unfolded in the following months, according to the logic of the bureaucratic mechanism of the Party. Information provided in Agafonov's report was almost precisely repeated in the next report of January 16, 1969, sent to officials at the Central Committee of CPSU by Pavel Romanov, head of the *Glavlit* of the USSR

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6   Acronym of the term denoting the censorship institution in Russian: *Glavnoe upravlenie po ohrane gosudratvennykh i voennykh tajn v pechati* (General Directorate for the Protection of State and Military Secrets in the Press), subjected to the Council of Ministers of the USSR in general and to the corresponding institutions on the level of particular Soviet Socialist Republics.

(Gorjaeva 1995: 50–52), and from there certain activities took place for the so-called organizing conclusions to be made at the local level in Riga again. The case ended with a decision made at the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party on March 4, 1969, demanding to "(1) consider A. Bels's speech as politically damaging, directed against the party's leadership in literature and art; (2) consider it impossible to allow A. Bels to continue his education at the Higher Courses of screen-writers and film directors of the Cinematography Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR due to his political immaturity; (3) to issue a reprimand to be entered in the personal card of Alberts Jansons, First Secretary of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union and a member of the CPSU since 1943, who spoke in an unprincipled manner at the meeting of the writers of the republic, in which he did not give any counter-weight to the politically harmful speech of A. Bels [..]" (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs 2009).

Although the summary of the meeting at the LSWU, published in the Latvian Communist Party's official periodical *Cīņa* (The Struggle), did not mention Alberts Bels's presence at the meeting (LTA 1968), there is no particular surprise that after these activities the quality of his writing was criticized more sharply than before. But in this case more sophisticated tactics were used – given the altogether positive attitude towards Bels's publications shared by the most prominent literary critics prior to December 1968, it was perhaps difficult to find a convincing way for them to change their collective opinion so sharply. A solution was found in using a somewhat-indirect form of criticism expressed by a quasi-reference to sociological research materials. Academic philosopher and theorist of aesthetics Pēteris Zeile (1928–2020) quoted some "young person who referred to himself as journalist R." allegedly explaining his opinion to Zeile in a conversation as follows: "Everybody is praising the novel *The Investigator* by A. Bels now. But I am not so excited about this novel at all. To me it seems overly constructed, a bit stilted, you know. There isn't much space for imagination in the text, because you have to concentrate on following the storyline all the time [..]. Personally, I am more fond of those modern authors who write their sentences clearly, like [Jack] London, [Theodore] Dreiser, [Ernest] Hemingway, [Konstantin] Paustovsky" (Zeile 1969: 122).

Disregarding the strange classification of the so-called 'modern' authors in the sentence quoted above, this opinion illustrates how things were arranged to express a certain discontent about somebody's work by seemingly using a kind of aesthetic argumentation only. However, the political subtext of such a criticism was clear to the contemporaries, because blaming any writer for being a 'formalist' – i.e. writing in a way too complicated to understand even for a reader with some intellectual background, as was the case with the anonymous "young journalist R." here – in the Soviet tradition was just the first step towards saying that this writer lacks an

understanding of the ideological issues that every Soviet citizen should both observe and cherish. In fact, Zeile only repeated the same complaints about Bels's novel already expressed by Jurijs Rubenis in his speech six months ago: "Sometimes the writer, carried away by sophisticated techniques, forgetting the mass interests of readers, makes his work difficult to perceive and understand. For example, A. Bels's novel *The Investigator* is too complicated in some places, and it does not always help to discover writer's intentions" (Rubenis 1968: 3).

This kind of political criticism of Bels was also clear to Zeile's colleagues. Likely for this reason did Voldemārs Melnis (also Meļinovskis, 1910–1997), who had authority as a literary critic and CPSU veteran with a particular political influence among Party members, decide to fire back in late 1969. He argued that *The Investigator* comprised bold, intellectual substance and attempted to provide philosophical analysis of the contemporary situation (Melnis 1969: 5). The consequences of events that took place from December 1968 to March 1969 were decisive enough to cancel any chance for Bels's second novel *Insomnia* to appear in print. The Soviet administration was particularly suspicious and cautious towards any possible influence that the Prague Spring events might have upon society in the USSR (Wojnowski 2018). This fear of rising political opposition was present among the officials in Latvian SSR as well – in 1968, nearly every case recorded by the *Glavlit* regarding expressions of discontent with the Soviet regime and its Russification policy in everyday life was immediately attributed to Western influence allegedly coming through the impact of the so-called "Czechoslovak events" (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs 2009; Eversone 2017b). It was a situation when even the support *Insomnia* gained from Aleksandrs Drīzulis (1920–2006), secretary for ideological issues at the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party in 1971 (Bels 2003: 8), was not enough to change the course set by the bodies responsible for political censorship in the Latvian SSR.

Conclusion

The first novels written by Alberts Bels expressed the essence of the early Stagnation period in Soviet Latvia. *The Investigator* toyed with the boundaries of allowable content, while *Insomnia* took one step further and was banned from publication. The latter only appeared in print twenty years later and in a censored version. All the problems and complexities surrounding the creation and publication of these literary works reflect the situation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, having traits characteristic of the Soviet Union as well as some elements specific to the Latvian SSR. Description of the atrocities experienced in Latvia during the Soviet and Nazi occupation in both novels, approximate as it was, turned out to be more than a

rhetorical gesture in the late 1960s. In Latvia, the additional factor shaping citizens' attitudes towards the Stalin period and the Soviet regime in general was the sense of the lost independence of the country and the colonial situation of Latvia since 1945, and it was discussed indirectly through literature. A closer look at these episodes of literary history provides a possibility to understand the mutual, three-edged relationship between political power, ideological censorship, and individual creativity in a historical context. To understand the interplay of the three elements mentioned above means to understand the mechanism of power controlling the circulation of information, ideas, and concepts in the society ruled by the Communist regime of the Soviet Union. The first two novels written by Alberts Bels in the second half of the 1960s represent an attempt to overcome both the political and aesthetic limitations set by the Soviet occupation regime. However, since *Insomnia* was denied of publication, Bels continued to courageously go in the same direction with his novels during the early 1970s, notably *Būris* (The Cage, published in 1972) and *Saucēja balss* (The Voice of One Calling, 1973). This was also noticed by Latvian literary critics in the exile (Nollendorfs 1975) who regarded Bels's literary activities as a rare example of intellectual resistance combined with some existentialist trend so important for the Latvian cultural milieu in the period of Soviet dominance.

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Kaspars Zalāns
Mg. philol., literary scholar, PhD student
Universität Greifswald
E-mail: k.zalans@gmail.com

The Relationship Between Postmodernism and Socialist Realism in the Works of Marģeris Zariņš

Postmodernisma un sociālistiskā reālisma attiecības Marģera Zariņa darbos

Summary   This article examines two works of one of the first Latvian post-modernists, Marǵeris Zariņš (1910–1993): *Viltotais Fausts jeb Pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata* (Counterfeit Faust or Corrected and Supplemented Cookbook, 1973) and *Trauksmainie Trīsdesmit Trīs* (The Turbulent Thirty Three, 1988). The author of the article analyzes the postmodern techniques used in these books with a purpose of criticizing and deconstructing the ideological framework of Soviet regime and the Socialist Realism art that was prevalent during that era. Three additional research questions are asked to explore this thesis. First: how is the language used to go against the Socialist Realism grain? What are its peculiarities? Second: what "decadent" and modernistic cultural references and tropes are used? How do they contradict the Socialist Realism standards? Third: what Socialist Realism tropes and archetypes are reinterpreted or confirmed? With what aim? What is their relation with more modernistic elements in the both books? In this research, the methods of close reading and comparative analysis were used. It is concluded that Socialist Realism and socialism is criticized and challenged in both of the aforementioned works: in *Counterfeit Faust* predominantly through the use of language and intertextual connections with Western modernism and postmodernism, and in *The Turbulent Thirty Three* by combining fourth-wall-breaking and surreal episodes with a harsh satire of Soviet life.

Kopsavilkums   Pētījumā apskatīti romāni *Viltotais Fausts jeb Pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata* (1973) un *Trauksmainie Trīsdesmit Trīs* (1988), kuru autors ir Marǵeris Zariņš, viens no pirmajiem latviešu postmodernistiem. Raksta autors aplūko, kā šajās grāmatās pielietoti postmodernie paņēmieni ar mērķi kritizēt un dekonstruēt padomju režīmu un tajā laikā valdošo sociālistiskā reālisma mākslas ietvaru. Lai izpētītu šo tēzi, tiek uzdoti trīs papildus pētījuma jautājumi. Pirmkārt: kā tieši valoda tiek izmantota, lai vērstos pret sociālistiskā reālisma iedabu? Kādas ir valodas īpatnības? Otrkārt: kādas "dekadentās" un modernisma kultūras atsauces un tropi tiek izmantoti? Kā tie tiek pretnostatīti sociālistiskā reālisma standartiem? Trešais un pēdējais: kādi sociālistiskā reālisma tropi un arhetipi tiek pārinterpretēti vai apstiprināti? Ar kādu mērķi? Kāda ir to saistība ar modernisma elementiem abos romānos? Pētījumā tiek izmanotas tuvlasījuma un komparatīvisma metodes. Rakstā secināts, ka abos iepriekšminētajos darbos sociālistiskais reālisms un sociālisms tiek kritizēti un apstrīdēti. *Viltotajā Faustā* tas tiek pārsvarā panākts ar valodas lieto-jumu un intertekstuālu sazobi ar Rietumu modernisma un postmodernisma tradīciju, savukārt romāns *Trauksmainie Trīsdesmit Trīs* liek lietā ceturtās sienas nojaukšanu, kā arī sirreālu epizožu apvienošanu ar skarbu padomju dzīves satīru.

Introduction   The word "dissident" tends to carry with it an association of self-sacrifice for a greater good: a partisan leaving his family for a lonely life in the woods or, perhaps, a cynical pamphleteer who risks his own skin every time he uses the printing press. Marģeris Zariņš (1910–1993) – the author of the novels *Viltotais Fausts jeb Pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata* (Counterfeit Faust or Corrected and Supplemented Cookbook, 1973)[1] and *Trauksmainie Trīsdesmit Trīs* (The Turbulent Thirty Three, 1988) – can be seen as a living contradiction to this: a composer who, despite never joining the Communist party (Grāvītis 2005), was well-liked by the leading regime due to writing a series of pro-Soviet compositions during the 1950s, chief among which was the opera *Uz jauno krastu* (To The New Shore, 1955), for which he received a Latvian SSR award (*LPSR Nopelniem bagātais kultūras darbinieks*). Furthermore, from 1940 until 1950 Zariņš served as the musical director of the Dailes Theater in Riga ([Anon] 2023) – a role that only helped his social and political position. He was also the People's Artist of LSSR (1965), USSR People's Stage Artist (1970), and the Chairman of the LSSR Union of Composers for many years (1951–1968). Creatively, Marģeris Zariņš was an influential Latvian composer and writer who is seen as one of the pioneers of the postmodern genre in Latvia. As a composer, he was known for the great variety of his musical work which ranged from opera scores and music for the church organ to compositions for the theater and soundtracks for eighteen Latvian films ([Anon] 2023).

The characteristics of his writing were innovative idioms, uncommon linguistic style and unorthodox word choice, and the mixing of fantastical, realistic, comical and theatrical elements. His prose was also oftentimes grotesque and/or humorous, interwoven with subtle critiques of the both the Soviet regime and the human nature.

The focus of this paper are two Marģeris Zariņš's novels, namely *Counterfeit Faust* (title will thus be shortened for the sake of convenience) and *The Turbulent Thirty Three*, as case studies of how the postmodernistic tendencies of that era can be read as an ideological and literary contrast, as well as how the relationship with the occupation regime was deconstructed through the author's irony and reinterpretation

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1   His most translated work, rendered in eight languages – Czech (1979), Russian (1981), Estonian (1981), Bulgarian (1983), Slovakian (1984), Polish (1985), English (1987) and Romanian (1988) (Marģeris Zariņš, literature.lv).

of cultural tropes, genres and references (for example, the archetypes of Faust and Mephistopheles in *Counterfeit Faust*), and use of language.

Socialist Realism has been rather widely researched in Latvian literary studies.[2] Likewise postmodernism in Latvian literature has also been studied in detail.[3] The works of Marģeris Zariņš have already been analyzed by the Latvian literary scholars Mārtiņš Laizāns (Laizāns 2021), Lita Silova who has dedicated both her doctoral dissertation (Silova 1998) and a monography (Silova 2004) to the research of his work, and Evija Veide in her thesis (Veide 2005).

The present research paper posits that postmodernism, as a genre and literary form, during the Brezhnev Era could function as a criticism and deconstruction of the Soviet regime and the Socialist Realism art framework that was prevalent during that era.

For this hypothesis three additional research questions will be asked. First: how is the language used to go against the Socialist Realism grain? What are its peculiarities? What is the aim of it? Second: what "decadent" and modernistic cultural references and tropes are used? How do they contradict the Socialist Realism standards? Third: what Socialist Realism tropes and archetypes are reinterpreted or confirmed? With what aim? What is their relation with more modernistic elements in the both books?

In order to successfully prove or disprove the hypothesis posed by this study, it is important to give a brief introduction to the contents of both novels and the theoretical framework of this paper. All citations are translated by the author of the article, unless indicated otherwise.

Counterfeit Faust can be seen as a retelling of Christopher Marlowe's version of *Faust*. In the book by Zariņš, the role of Mephistopheles is played by the aptly named Kristofers Mārlovs (Latvianized version of "Christopher Marlowe") – a young composer and writer (and possibly suffering from delusions about his own identity). Mārlovs visits the alchemist, pharmacist, and gourmand Jānis Vridriķis Trampedahs – the equivalent of Faust in Marģeris Zariņš's novel – who lives in a small riverside town (which is supposed to be Kuldīga, a town in Western Latvia). Mārlovs offers Trampedahs the chance to regain youth in exchange for the rights to rework and republish his verbose, yet gastronomically excellent cookbook – hence the name of

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2 Some of the research where I looked for inspiration: Klotiņš 2016, Spalvēna, Kušnere 2022, Zelče 2004.

3 From Guntis Berelis's collection of essays (Berelis 2001) to the recent Zanda Gūtmane's research about the works by the Lithuanian writer Antanas Šķēma and the Latvian writer Ēvalds Vilks (Gūtmane 2022).

the novel. What follows is an exuberant and vivid, albeit short-lived adventure, in which a beautiful and alluring poetess Margarēta (Latvianized version of "Margarete") also is involved – she is the novel's equivalent of Gretchen from Goethe's play. Eventually, it also turns out that the cookbook has been reworked by Trampedahs from the text by its previous author, continuing an endless line of reinterpretations. As mentioned, equally ambiguous is Mārlovs's role – throughout the book he references the realities and details of the real Christopher Marlowe's life, while also oftentimes emphasizing his hardships and experiences as a poor traveling musician and composer in Latvia in the early 20th century. Furthermore, the means whereby Mārlovs helps Trampedahs regain his youth are pseudoscientific and cosmetic rather than supernatural, and he even contradicts himself within two subsequent pages by first describing how "he [Jānis Vridriķis] believed I was sent by a demon and would take him through all twelve circles of hell. Belief does wonders, just as the pages of a novel can endure anything a writer thinks of, from which the reader holds illusions for pure truth" (Zariņš 2015: 113). A page later, Mārlovs ironically quips to himself in response to a *maître d'hôtel's* offer of a shabby room: "This goatbeard obviously thinks I am the new master's private tutor or valet. Not suspecting I'm the Devil himself" (Zariņš 2015: 114).

Meanwhile *The Turbulent Thirty Three* was intended as a sequel (and a second part of a trilogy) to a previous book, *Kapelmeistara Kociņa kalendārs* (The Calendar of Chapelmaster Kociņš, 1982); the two books share the latter's titular character. While its predecessor, as the title suggests, was indeed structured as daily entries in a calendar or a day planner, *The Turbulent Thirty Three* follows a more convenient novel structure. It depicts the lives of artists and writers during the 33 years of Soviet occupation from 1945 until 1978. It is the story of strong personalities trying to come to terms with the new social and political realities: the political and career repercussions for not toeing the political line, and the necessary buttering-up to authority in order to advance one's career and creative ideas. It describes living in a constant balancing act between appeasing the paradigms and expectations of the political power while trying to maintain some semblance of artistic integrity; of trying to live large and enjoy a certain version of bohemia, while the constant boundaries of Soviet life can be felt all around. Yet behind the irony and satire, it is an ode to the author's belief in humanism, as well as a warning for future generations not to make the same mistakes.

As mentioned, in order to properly display both the ingenuity of Zariņš and the genre frameworks he was playing with, a short theoretical description of Socialist Realism and postmodernism is necessary. When it comes to literary movements, Socialist Realism was an officially sanctioned theory and method of literary composition prevalent in the Soviet Union from 1932 to the mid-1980s. Socialist Realism

followed the great tradition of 19th-century Russian realism in that it purported to be a faithful and objective mirror of life. It differs from the earlier realism, however, in several important respects. The primary theme of Socialist Realism was the building of socialism and a classless society. In portraying this struggle, the writer could admit imperfections but was expected to take a positive and optimistic view of socialist society and to keep in mind its larger historical relevance. Furthermore, criticism and satire of preceding religious institutions and capitalist or monarchist regimes were commonplace (Dobrenko, Balina 2011: 100, 103–104).

A requisite of Socialist Realism was a positive hero who persevered against all odds. Socialist Realism was thus looking back to Romanticism in that it encouraged a certain elevation and idealizing of heroes and events in order to mold the consciousness of the masses (Leighton 1983). Socialist Realism was required to present a highly optimistic image of life in the Soviet state (Reid 2001: 157). This, however, was greatly subverted and satirized in Marģeris Zariņš's works, as will be illustrated later. Other necessities of the genre were highly formulaic plotting (including characters overcoming all odds through willpower) and ultra-positive depiction of Soviet life and the regime. Such modernistic techniques as stream-of-consciousness or mixing of genres or literary techniques were virtually absent. In poetry, strict forms and rhyme patterns dominated. However, it is worth noting that the beginning of the 1970s also brought a variety of authors who exhibited irony and phantasmagoria (Vladimirs Kaijaks) and social criticism (Alberts Bels), or broke the fourth wall (like Regīna Ezera in her novel *Zemdegas* (Smouldering Fires, 1977). Thus, while Marģeris Zariņš can be seen as an innovator in many aspects, it would be unfair to say that he was the only one challenging the Socialist Realism paradigm at the time.

In contrast, we have postmodernism, a movement characterized by broad skepticism, relativism, a general suspicion of reason (see again the unreliable narrator Marlowe), renunciation of objective reality, and playfulness with language, since language does not refer to a reality outside itself. When it comes to literature, this is often expressed through play, fragmentation, metafiction, and intertextuality, as well as the mix between high and low cultural forms. Furthermore, postmodernism contrasts Socialist Realism and even modernist belief in order, stability, and unity metanarratives by questioning and deconstructing them, even suggesting that every interpretation of reality is an assertion of power (Bertens 2021). Thus, postmodernism sees history, politics, and culture as grand narratives of the power-wielders, which comprise falsehoods and incomplete truths. Representation, because of its attempt to fixate reality, is thus inherently totalitarian; it necessitates a new confrontation with the unpresentable (Bertens 2021).

Living in the USSR:
the dance between Socialist Realism,
modernism and postmodernism
in the novels of Marģeris Zariņš

Certain elements in Marģeris Zariņš's *Counterfeit Faust* also locates it within the magical realism genre, which is also often grouped underneath the postmodernism umbrella due to showcasing the literateness of a given work with non-realistic metanarratives and elements, in such a way jarringly challenging and subverting the rational and logical (Stephen 2015: 4).

Thus the aforementioned novel, while set in a specific time and place (Latvia in 1930 and onwards), contains certain pseudo-magical or almost-but-not-fully magical elements (Reeds 2006) – such as, for example, the properties and effect of Mārlovs's rejuvenating serum given to Trampedahs, as well as the issue of Mārlovs's identity and his almost encyclopedic knowledge and understanding of 16th-century English life. This has the added value of juxtaposing the power structures and cultural hierarchies of the preceding Late Middle Ages and the modern era, with the end result being an implication that these social categories have remained by and large unchanged until the Soviet regime. Certain other mentions and discussions of "decadent" or modernistic cultural movements and works within the two analyzed Marģeris Zariņš's novels also tie them into the thread of cultural continuity, while juxtaposing the aims of Socialist Realism and the limits of its expression.

For example, one of the subtler examples of an allusion to non-conformist art takes place at the beginning of *Counterfeit Faust* where, amongst various paintings that decorate Jānis Vridriķis Trampedahs's abode to stimulate and inspire his appetite, there are also cubist works depicting guitars and flasks, as well as expressionist paintings that express, to quote, "only hangovers" (Zariņš 2015: 30). The aforementioned postmodern playfulness is also conveyed throughout the rest of the novel, including the cookbook's recipes that include such colorful passages as "the partridge pâté in cheese should only be served in seashells, gathered in the Balearic islands shortly before a typhoon" (ibid.: 27). Again, while seemingly innocuous, such passages inherently go against the accepted Socialist Realism grain of the narrative and style that serves predominantly to depict (and glorify) Soviet life.

However, the passages that subvert Socialist Realism and life in general in the Soviet Union the most are sprinkled throughout the book in a seemingly innocuous manner, such as a discussion between Mārlovs and Trampedahs about contemporary literature (or, to be more precise, the literature of their time), where the latter defends more classical works in the style of Shakespeare while criticizing modern writers for "getting bogged down in phantasmagoria and symbols upon symbols [..] with not a single realistic character [..]. For them the most important

thing – subtext, annoying subtext; thinking that rulers would not understand them and that they would be able to feel so proud and brave, brandishing their fists – which were hidden in their trouser pockets" (Zariņš 2015: 43). He is countered by Mārlovs, who defends modern expressionism and futurism by saying that its essence is "not to reflect life, this deceiving farce, but the elusive movements and feeling streams of the soul". He further explains that this is the era of "chopped-up souls, and writers nowadays collect these shards and create mosaics" (Zariņš 2015: 44). Mārlovs argues that this will eventually give place to some glorious "neorealism", which will again be followed by "phantasmagorias", but that this should not be seen "as an order of things", but rather a "play of contrasts [..]. Light-darkness, black-white, just not grey, then there's nothing to breathe" (Zariņš 2015: 45).

A similar, yet much more tongue-in-cheek and subtle satire of communistic culture can be read, for example, in the off-hand mention of Mārlovs's best friend's father's sawmill being nationalized (Zariņš 2015: 101) or the audience at a classical music concert requesting the orchestra to perform *Katyusha* (Zariņš 2015: 112), despite the classical compositions that preceded it in the performance.

But, besides all the previous examples, perhaps the most biting jeer at Soviet pathos and hero worship comes at the end of the novel in the image of young, cheerful, masculine, simple Soviet soldiers feeding Mārlovs with kharcho soup that has been cooked atop a camp-fire: a homely, simplistic, and ignorant contrast to the preceding events of betrayal, drama, and death; an almost atavistic carelessness and joyful roughness opposite all the extravagant, intellectually saturated winding narratives that preceded it.

While the relationship between an artist and the leading political power is one of the central motives throughout most of Marģeris Zariņš's work, it is still a considerable wonder how this novel got published in the respective time period and political system. An obvious explanation is his aforementioned cultural status and the fact that he had paid the necessary "tribute" to the Soviet regime years prior with certain compositions that allowed him certain liberties in his work. The aforementioned tributes and his work as a composer led Zariņš to receive The State Stalin Prize (1951), The Order of Lenin (1956), and the People's Artist of the USSR award (1970), among others ([Anon] 2023).

However, the overall literary climate of the time should not be overlooked: the 1960s and 1970s in Latvia were a period when the literary scene received an influx of an entire generation of writers who, while not outright challenging the Socialist Realism paradigm, instead rather followed the criterion of literary quality and its natural development: Regīna Ezera, Vizma Belševica, Imants Ziedonis and Ojārs Vācietis were a few of these new authors (Veide 2005: 26). It is also possible that the

Soviet regime believed that Marģeris Zariņš's work was so peculiar as to never truly break away from the limits of marginalism, and that any reader who came upon it would be limited by a lack of understanding of the subtexts and irony that three decades of censorship had achieved (ibid.: 27). Thus, the true satirical and mocking nature of the work would go unnoticed by the general Soviet reader of the time (and, quite possibly, by the average censor of the time as well). Another possibility is that censorship left untouched many of the novel's modernistic elements, including the language (more on that later) due to a number of positive pro-Soviet characters in the novel – Somersetu Jānis or the partisan Vasily –, as well as a few symbolizing the hated bourgeoisie – Frošs and Bandera.

Whatever the case may be, in the novel *The Turbulent Thirty Three*, despite its stylistically being a much more "mundane" work that fits more easily within the Socialist Realism framework, the satire and display of the regime, artistic syco-phantism, and the political and cultural double standards and absurdities of the time are much more biting and direct than in *Counterfeit Faust*. This was only amplified by the lack of characters that would align with the Socialist Realism criteria for a posi-tive protagonist.

Similarly to *Counterfeit Faust*, the novel *The Turbulent Thirty Three* has a very illustrative satirical episode at its beginning. In what the author calls an "areophagia" – a ceremonious ritual where wise advice is intermixed with foolishness and dema-gogy – a theatrical performance, staged by Līna Taube, is being evaluated by a committee. The head of the establishment where the play is set, Konstantīns Šponbergs, criticizes the performance, firstly, for having its main characters illu-minated during what is intended to be an air-raid scene. Therefore, he insists that the scene proceed in darkness ("What is more important for you: dialogue or the lives of two Soviet citizens?" he quips). The second criticism is aimed towards a part of the scenery – a gunboat with a searchlight and a pennant placed in reverse from the front to the back (Zariņš 1988: 54–57). This criticism, while utterly absurd from a dramaturgical perspective, showcases the concerns of an official of the state ideology who was willing to ignore the enjoyment of the audience and basic logic for the fulfillment of party positions.

Despite *The Turbulent Thirty Three* being overall considerably less stylistically "extravagant" than *Counterfeit Faust*, it does include episodes where the satirical and surreal are interwoven for both dramatic and humorous effect. Thus, an illustrat-ive episode where the (arguably) main character Kaspars Kociņš goes to the Orgburo to become a full-fledged member of the composer association but gets reprimanded for his work "lacking current [Soviet] themes and actuality", and where he also be-comes acquainted with the realities of commissioned work and its different fees

(Zariņš 1988: 133), is followed by a surreal episode with the Director of Domestic Services, Saruhanov. In a scene that is somewhat reminiscent of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, the Director – who, half-asleep, ponders about the pianos he stole from houses during the war and is selling back to their owners, and other self-serving deeds ("That lodge in the dunes I built myself with the state's saved-up renovation money") – is visited by a white-dressed and fiery female "spirit of satire" who threatens to destroy Saruhanov and "people like him with satire, nail them to a pillory", to which the accused responds by threatening to denounce the spirit "for haunting the premises and for mythical propaganda" (Zariņš 1988: 136–139).

Similarly, Zariņš breaks the fourth wall between the novel and its reader by inserting himself into an episode where Kaspars Kociņš and his acquaintances visit Moscow (Zariņš 1988: 154). By presenting himself as the author and by drawing attention towards the – by definition – fictional nature of the novel, he breaks one of the accepted standards of Socialist Realism: to depict the everyday USSR reality as directly and literally as possible. Simultaneously, Marģeris Zariņš also showcases the novel's closer alignment with the postmodernistic viewpoint that objective reality does not exist and that any and all depictions are subject to skepticism, relativism, and subjective interpretation.

It is also important to note that it is not only the creative and artistic scene that Marģeris Zariņš unsparingly and bluntly caricatures and criticizes: throughout the whole work are sprinkled various scathing depictions of, for example, the Soviet drinking problem (a gigantic vodka store in Moscow, attended by millions (Zariņš 1988: 144)) or the culture of denunciation, mistrust, and lies that permeated most of Soviet culture (due to which the father of Kaspars Kociņš, an ardent communist himself, was falsely accused as being an agent of the bourgeoise Latvian government and shot (Zariņš 1988: 377)). One explanation for such boldness from Marģeris Zariņš, again offered by Evija Veide, is that only as a writer did Marģeris Zariņš see himself – self-admittedly – as an artist who was not compromising his conscience (Veide 2005: 36).

Thus, it is only consequential that throughout *The Turbulent Thirty Three*, the Russian and Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky is mentioned and discussed as an artistic and poetic ideal, and his work is used as a source of inspiration by Kaspars Kociņš. Mayakovsky serves as a two-fold symbol: firstly, as a personification of an artist trying to function within the stifling artistic limits of the Soviet regime even if, in Mayakovsky's case, ideologically he was to some degree a supporter of Lenin and Bolshevism (in other words, of trying to manage the tightrope act of being acceptable to the communist ideology without completely sacrificing artistic integrity). Consequentially, the second meaning of Mayakovsky as a symbol in *The Turbulent Thirty*

Three can be seen in the way his work after his death was constantly utilized and abused in the Soviet Union: partly censored, partly shredded, with lines taken out of context, such as the almost hymn-like "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin shall live forever!" from the 1924 poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*. This poem was partly reinterpreted and redone to downplay Mayakovsky's rebellious nature and to emphasize him as a symbol of communism. Thus, the late Stalin era saw an "edited version" of Mayakovsky being used as a state icon to create superficial links with the state's past (Sundaram 2000: 144—145), while during the time when Zariņš wrote his novel (that is, during the late Stagnation period of the 1970s), Mayakovsky (amongst others, including Kazimir Malevich) experienced a sort of revival. There was a surge of films dedicated to him and his work (such as *Majakovskij smeetsja* (Mayakovsky Laughs, directed by Sergei Yutkevich, 1976), and his writings were exported abroad — albeit his more avant-garde aspects were still-downplayed, if not outright ignored (Sundaram 2000: 254—260). Therefore, the role of Mayakovsky in Marģeris Zariņš's novel, just like that of its artistic protagonists, including Kaspars Kociņš and the playwright Gvido Galejs, is essentially a tragic one: his persona and work are doomed to be subject to the regime's ever-changing and oftentimes hypocritical and contradictory whims, censorship, and exploitation until the end of the regime itself. In other words, personal initiative and idealism almost always ends up subservient or deformed by the regime's respective needs and also the demands of the specific time period.

Therefore, it is both inspiring and inspired how Marģeris Zariņš uses language as a way to challenge and test the literary frame of Socialist Realism. During the so-called era of Stagnation (1966—1985), which partly overlapped with Brezhnev's rule, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued an order (on January 7th, 1969) that the editor of a given work would bear more responsibility than before for its ideological content. Thus, during that time the ideological battle between the censor and the author that was going on the subtext of a book was magnified (Briedis 2010: 154—155).

"Language is the dress of thought": linguistic peculiarities of Marģeris Zariņš's writing and its relationship with censorship

This, of course, led to some authors employing the so-called Aesopian language as a means to circumvent Soviet censorship. As Russian literary critic Lew Loseff has defined its characteristics, the underlying structure of any Aesopian text consists of the following two basic elements: "screens" which are designed to conceal the real message

from the censorship, and "markers" which signal to initiated readers about the presence of a hidden message in the text. Therefore, one of the purposes of "Aesopian writing" and "Aesopian reading" is to perform a sort of ritual that celebrates the deception of authority (Loseff 1981). Therefore, it is only axiomatic that the author of the literary work does not create the Aesopian meaning alone, nor do the textual structures which we can interpret as only one of the conditions for creating this meaning. Instead, it happens through a conspiracy between the sender (writer) and the addressee (reader) against the censor, who also becomes an indirect co-author of this meaning (Satkauskytė 2019: 22).

Subsequently, throughout the Soviet regime editors and censors worked to eliminate overly noticeable individual stylistics: nonce words almost always were exchanged for literary ones, archaisms were practically allowed in the speech of individual literary characters only. Furthermore, various literary designators were oftentimes made more generic or specific, i.e., "a baron" was sometimes changed to "the masters, the overlords" in plural, or the "the people" to the "the working people". The same applied to various social and political concepts – for example, in an anthology of Ernests Birznieks-Upītis's works such phrase as "Old Russia" was replaced by "Capitalist Russia" and the term "democracy" was exchanged for "working people" – semantically a much narrower term, but considerably more agreeable for the regime (Briedis 2010: 61–64). Moreover, the onset of communism in Latvia replaced the until-then relatively neutral term *žīds* (Jew) with the word *ebrejs* (Hebrew), deeming the former a slur, especially after its use by the Nazi occupation regime (Briedis 2010: 65).

Therefore, it is especially surprising and even baffling to what grade Marģeris Zariņš was able to extend his language experiments within the novels analyzed here. *Counterfeit Faust* especially showcases the following examples of language elements that were, indeed, not only unorthodox for that time, but stand out to this day. There is a plethora of various dialect words: for example, *ģiltenis* (skeleton; Zariņš 2015: 104); *rastaga* (hardship; ibid.: 98); *tvāpt* (to be sleepy; ibid.: 130); *abuks* (fool; ibid.: 2002). Nonce words i.e. words coined by the author include: *sadubis* (slumped; ibid.: 97); *comblāt* (to skin; ibid.: 169); *īgrs* (grumpy; ibid.: 97). Archaisms such as *spānīzeri* (Spanish people; ibid.: 104), and barbarisms and calques are also used, e.g. *tāfelmūzika* (from German *Tafelmusik* – music played at feasts and banquets). *The Turbulent Thirty Three* has comparatively less instances of unusual linguistic choices, albeit still containing some uncommon wordings, such as the conjunction *aizto* (therefore). The latter, however, is utilized so often in both books that can be seen more as a stylistic peculiarity of Marģeris Zariņš than a deliberately meaningful word choice.

Zariņš has frequently admitted that among the sources of inspiration for his literary gastrosymphony, both linguistically and in the use of gastronomy as a

narrative vehicle, were old dictionaries – *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca* (Dictionary of the Latvian Language) by Kārlis Mīlenbahs (which, ironically enough, was complemented later by Jānis Endzelīns and Edīte Hauzenberga-Šturma), Jacob Lange's *Vollständiges Deutsch-Lettisches und Lettisch-Deutsches Lexikon* (The Complete German-Latvian and Latvian-German Lexicon, 1777) and Georg Mancelius's *Lettus, das ist Wortbuch sampt angehengtem täglichem Gebrauch der Lettischen Sprache* (Lettus (Latvian), or a Dictionary Including an Attached [Guide of] Daily Usage of the Latvian Language, 1638), as well as sources of Livonian and Prussian languages (Silova 2004: 31), along with old cookbooks in the early Latvian written language, such as Christoph Harder's *Ta pirma Pawaru Grahmata no Wahzes Grahmatahm pahr-tulkota* (The First [Latvian] Cookbook, Translated from German Books, 1795). To the lattermost book Zariņš owes the gastrolinguistic style of his book. In many parts of *Counterfeit Faust*, he recreates how a Baltic German from the 18th or 19th century would have written in Latvian to the best of his knowledge – Zariņš himself being Latvian, he adopts the style in which Baltic Germans wrote in Latvian not for the purpose of comicality or derision, which would usually be the case, but as a means of defamiliarizing the Latvian language (Laizāns 2021: 128).

Conclusion

Overall, this overabundance of "unofficial" literary devices and words has been presented as a game by Marģeris Zariņš. However, his use of language could also be seen as a means of resistance against the stiff "literary language" of that time and also as a self-referential, tastefully irrelevant, and astoundingly erudite dialogue between Western and Latvian cultures and literary traditions: a dialogue to which the socialist literature framework is all but a silent onlooker with barely an occasional note of acknowledgement.

One may conclude that even though *Counterfeit Faust* contains a considerably more indirect satire of Soviet life and Socialist Realism than *The Turbulent Thirty Three*, it is the language and style used in the novel that carry the heaviest critical weight. Through their richness and variety, they reaffirm the power of an uninhibited Latvian literary language. It also places the novel within the realm of pre-war Latvian literary tradition and also the wider Western literary tradition, while essentially completely ignoring the preceding – and even the contemporary – Soviet literary frame. This irreverence for Socialist Realism, further emphasized by the mention of various modernistic artworks and techniques, as well as the use of such postmodernistic techniques as an unreliable narrator and intertextuality, essentially draws attention to both the limitations of the Socialist Realism movement and also to the illegitimacy

of Socialist Realism narratives themselves (if the protagonists and themes of this book are ambiguous, could the same not be supposed about many other books of that time?).

The Turbulent Thirty Three, on the other hand, is considerably more straightforward in its depiction of the absurdity of Soviet life and its art scene, not relying so much on language for these purposes. The postmodern elements or magic realism–esque elements – such as the author inserting himself in the text or the employment of supernatural characters – serve to emphasize the sheer absurdity of the Soviet system and lifestyle, as well as the limitations encountered when attempting to illustrate it within the Socialist Realism method. By mixing the more straightforward and mundane narrative of Socialist Realism with occasional surreal elements and episodes, as well as by depicting the bacchanalia of the art scene as occurring parallelly to the characters' veiled public life and their attempts to ingratiate within the regime, and also by using Mayakovsky simultaneously as an example and reference point for many of the characters, Marģeris Zariņš showcases the inherent absurdity, hypocrisy, and superficiality of the regime and its flimsy demands from art. Through these stylistic and thematic methods, Marģeris Zariņš demonstrates the following: when Socialist Realism meets Western modernism, especially within a single work of art, Socialist Realism and socialism almost always get outplayed, because their essential thematic, social, and aesthetic ideals are shallow and hypocritical by nature.

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Johanna Ross

PhD, literary scholar
Tallinn University
E-mail: johanna@keeljakirjandus.ee

**Gender Conventionalism in Estonian Girls' Novellas
during the Era of Stagnation: the Silja Series by Silvia Truu**

**Konvencionālās dzimšu lomas igauņu meiteņu literatūrā
stagnācijas laikmetā: Silvijas Trū Siljas sērija**

Summary   The article explores gender roles in four Stagnation era Estonian novellas for girls – the so-called Silja series by Silvia Truu, which focuses on educational work experience gained in a candy factory. The stories are analyzed against the background of public discussions of that time which were characterized by a strong opposition between genders and fueled by buzzwords such as "women's emancipation" and "crisis of masculinity". The aim of this article is to find out whether and how this opposition was reflected in youth fiction, both on the level of its young protagonists and on the level of supporting adult characters. The books are also compared with advice literature for girls of that time. It is concluded that whereas the author of the Silja series takes care to use some of the constant motifs of Soviet youth education and to lay out a seemingly gender-neutral setting, the final result points in another direction: the fundamental difference between genders, even their incompatibility, is given more emphasis. The arising contradictions are reconciled through individual narrative solutions, often characterized by gender conventionalism – a conscious favoring of gender roles perceived as "natural" and "traditional". The tensions familiar from media and adult literature of the same period are most evident in the background descriptions of families and their problem areas (divorce, alcoholism, and single motherhood); the desirable solutions seem to rely heavily on gender conventionalism here as well.

Kopsavilkums   Rakstā tiek pētītas dzimšu lomas četros stagnācijas laikmeta igauņu rakstnieces Silvijas Trū (*Silvia Truu*) garstāstos, kas rakstīti meiteņu auditorijai – tā sauktajā Siljas sērijā, kur uzmanības centrā ir darbaudzināšanas pieredze konfekšu fabrikā. Stāsti tiek analizēti kontekstā ar tālaika publiskajām diskusijām par dzimumu atšķirībām, kurās bieži tika izmantoti aktuālie jēdzieni "sieviešu emancipācija" un "vīrišķības krīze". Šī raksta mērķis ir noskaidrot, vai šīs atšķirības tolaik atspoguļojās arī jauniešu literatūrā – gan tās galvenajos varoņos jauniešos, gan pieaugušajos otrā plāna tēlos. Siljas sērijas grāmatas tiek salīdzinātas arī ar tā paša laika meitenēm adresētajām praktisko padomu grāmatām. Var secināt, ka, lai gan Siljas sērijas autore cenšas likt lietā tālaika padomju izglītības pamatmotīvus un radīt šķietami dzimumneitrālu vidi, galarezultāts ir citāds – tiek uzsvērta vīriešu un sieviešu atšķirīgā, pat diametrāli pretējā būtība. Starp stāstu varoņiem radušās nesaskaņas tiek risinātas caur individuāliem naratīviem, bieži vien balstoties konvencionālajās dzimšu lomās, kuras tiek uzskatītas par "dabiskām" un "tradicionālām". Tā paša laikmeta presē un pieaugušo literatūrā aplūkotie konflikti parādās arī jauniešu literatūrā, attēlojot galveno varoņu ģimenes locekļus un to problēmas (laulības šķiršana, alkoholisms, vientuļās mātes). Arī šai gadījumā vēlamie problēmu risinājumi tiek balstīti tradicionālajās dzimšu lomās.

The Soviet gender discourse carried the ideal of gender equality as a rhetorical ballast until the end of the USSR, but by the period of Stagnation it had reverted to rather separate gender roles, emphasizing the difference between women and men. Such duality gave rise to a strange, contradictory notion of femininity where gender role nostalgia and the idea of an independent modern woman collided. The concept of women's emancipation became a buzzword, a starting point for numerous press debates where emancipation was acknowledged as inevitable, but simultaneously ridiculed, setting gender convention as the norm. At the same time, confrontation between genders grew more and more vigorous in the public discourse, often discussed under the nominator of the "crisis of masculinity" (see e.g. Zdravomyslova, Temkina 2013; Dumančić 2021). It has been argued that gender role issues became a metaphor for all kinds of social discontent and were a popular topic of conversation (Zdravomyslova, Temkina 2013: 43).

This raises the question: how does literary fiction of the era handle such controversies? In any earlier work, I have looked at the depiction of gender roles in late Soviet Estonian prose with a female protagonist and identified different approaches to "femininity" (Ross 2018). This article examines what kind of gender roles emerge in youth literature for girls. While Soviet children's literature has sometimes been described as a realm of comparative creative freedom, it also bore the ideologically loaded task of raising proper new members of the society. In her foreword to *A Companion to Soviet Children's Literature and Film* (2021), Olga Voronina most vigorously emphasizes the importance of ideologically contextualized interpretations of such material. This holds similarly true for texts aimed at youth – realistic by genre, close to adult literature, but simpler and more clearly didactic-ideological, presumably with a more specific message.

Regarding gender roles, a Stagnation era advisory book for girls informs with the classic but-construction:

> "It is true that we have equality. Our women have proved it. However, a woman's function as a continuer of life gives her a special status and imposes special responsibilities on her, and a woman who is able to do her "feminine" work well will later be able to successfully involve her husband in her chores" (Kurm 1977: 10).

The adjective "feminine" is enclosed in quotation marks, but the surrounding argumentation points otherwise – these chores seem to be feminine without any concessions. This can be explained by *gender conventionalism*, a term coined by sociologist Anna Rotkirch to emphasize that such norms in late Soviet society are

not so much a genuine heritage of the past but an invented tradition. Gender conventionalism is characterized by strong support for opposing gender roles that are perceived as natural and normal, and a reluctance to question them in any way. According to Rotkirch, this is society's reaction to the real change in gender system and the resulting unrest (Rotkirch 2000: 132–133). Would a similarly gender-conventionalist message be heard in girls' novellas?

Girls' novellas and the Silja series

I use the term 'girls' novellas' to denote stories where the main character is a girl and the expected audience also consists of girls. While the children's literature of the early Soviet time was overwhelmingly masculine in terms of characters and subjects, with e.g. Timur and his team gaining fame (Bukhina 2019: 141–142), things began to change since the Thaw period.[1] The flagships of girls' literature in Estonia are Silvia Rannamaa's *Kadri* (1959) and *Kasuema* (Stepmother, 1963), which were also translated into other languages.[2] Under the guise of moderate criticism, the local reviewers greeted them warmly, as did the readers, and these books can be seen in school reading lists to this day. About a decade later, during "Stagnation proper", critics were already talking of "girls' books" as an acknowledged phenomenon and assessing their qualities as typical to a perceived body of girls' literature (e.g. Krusten 1970). In 1973, the children's writer Heino Väli noted in his review article, not without discontent, that youth literature seemed to be feminizing. Simultaneously, the warm tone of reception had been replaced by a critical one, namely in connection with the "feminization", echoing the gender confrontation in wider public discourse. Criticizing a story by Heljo Mänd, the reviewer writes: "The circle of issues that interest girls is narrow and insignificant if you believe H. Mänd. There is no reason not to believe her" (Krusten 1970: 293).[3]

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1   Such rhythms are, of course, specific to the cultural space. By comparison, it has been pointed out that in Scandinavia during the 1960s and 1970s rather gender-neutral youth novels were written – it was a certain intermediate stage between the highly gender-differentiated works of the beginning of the century and the rediscovered gendered literature of the turn of the centuries (Reitel Høyer 2011: 110). In Soviet Estonia, on the other hand, the opposite is true: it is in these decades that we can talk about the emergence of girls' literature.

2   Both books were published in Russian (the first in 1963, the second in 1972) and in Latvian (*Kadrija. Audžumāte*, 1966, translated by Džuljeta Plakidis). *Kadri* was also translated into Lithuanian in 1969 (*Kadrė*, translated by Rasa Unt), Slovak (1973), Croatian (1979), Czech (1979), and Armenian (1981). As late as 2014, it was published in Finnish.

3   There is a strong parallel with the scene in Estonian adult literature of the same era: there was also talk of the proliferation of "women's books", and complaints were made about their futility and recreational manner. Researchers of English girls' literature, Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, →

In this article, I will look at the so-called Silja series by Estonian writer Silvia Truu (1922–1990). Truu was best known as a children's and youth writer, although she has also published stories for adult audiences and written radio dramas. Until 1965, she worked as a journalist; from then on, she was a professional writer. (Säärits 2005; see also EWOD: Silvia Truu) The Silja series originally consisted of four books. In two of them, the protagonist is a girl named Silja. In the book *Silja, päikesekiir ja maailm* (Silja, the Ray of Sunshine and the World, 1967; hereinafter SRSW), she is a fourth-grade student, and in the book *Kuu aega täiskasvanu* (Grown-up for a Month, 1968; GFM), she has just finished ninth grade. *Tere! Sind ma otsisin!* (*Hello! It Is You I Was Looking for!*, 1971; HIYLF) shows the events taking place during the tenth grade in the life of Silja's girlfriend Merle; *Peidus pool* (Hidden Half, 1977; HH) alternately presents the views of Silja and her boyfriend Indrek in the tenth grade. In 1981, the latter three stories were published in one book in a slightly modified form.[4] Thus, the entire series fits exactly into the so-called era of Stagnation and should well illustrate the moods of the period.

I will examine what kind of gender norms are reflected in the Silja series and what solutions are offered to the contradictions between gender equality and gender conventionalism. The analysis is structured in thematic blocks: career choice, housework distribution, motherhood and family models, masculinity vs. femininity. I take interest in possible manifestations of gender roles on two levels: firstly, I will look at the paths prescribed for the young protagonists; secondly, at the patterns that can be detected in the background setting of the novellas and in the behavior of surrounding adults – a more subtle message for the young reader.

I will also compare the perceived message with that of contemporary youth counseling books. Such counseling books were a subgenre of advice literature that began to proliferate in the Khrushchev Era (Kelly 2001: 317). Some of those books were translated (often via Russian) and circulated over the USSR, such as *Dospívající dívka: lékařské poučení ženské mládeži* (From a Girl to a Woman, 1956; Estonian translations 1962, 1964) by Czech authors Rudolf Peter, Vaclav Šebek, and Josef Hynie. Others were of Estonian origin, such as Heiti Kadastik's *Vestlusi noorukitele*

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who have studied late-19th- and early-20th-century texts, are of the opinion that girls' literature is worth looking at in the context of women's literature of the same time, and that it tends to reflect the same tensions (Foster, Simons 1995: x–xi). Undoubtedly, the same parallelism should be investigated in this material, but unfortunately it does not fit into this discussion. However, in a few striking cases, I will point to some parallels.

4   In 1982, a reprint of the first book, SSW, was published, to which the author had added a story *Sünnipäevad* (Birthdays) about Indrek's childhood. This is outside the scope of this discussion, as it cannot be considered girls' literature.

(Conversations with Adolescents, 1963, 1966, 1970, 1972), Helgi Kurm's *Sinule, tütarlaps* (To You, Girl, 1970, 1977), and Ene Kook's *Tütarlapsest sirgub naine* (A Girl Becomes a Woman, 1978, 1979, 1986). Several reprints are characteristic to late Soviet advice books in general, which Catriona Kelly attributes to this literature being a successor of the Stalinist "*kulturnost'* campaign" (Kelly 2001: 319). The youth counseling books are largely medically focused but also address other topics (especially Kurm and Kadastik), and their normative gender ideology, which has strong gender conventional elements, has been noted retrospectively (Kalkun 2006; Annuk 2015).

Factory work and career choice

Thematically, the whole series is dedicated to work – the background is the Soviet idea of "work education", as well as the principle of equality and the view that women have both the right and the obligation to do professional work. In the first book, primary school children busy themselves with collecting scrap metal; further on, the choice of their profession in life becomes more and more important. The fact that choosing a job is considered important for girls as well as boys is confirmed by the counseling book *For You, Girl*, which begins with this very topic. The author advises the young reader to "obtain information about different professions, consider all the pros and cons, and only then make a decision" (Kurm 1970: 7). Examples include professions requiring greater specialization: a doctor, a painter, a teacher, a mathematician, an architect, and a pilot, as well as simpler (and as the author emphasizes, just as dignified) jobs: a milkmaid, a herdswoman, a seamstress, a cook, a kindergarten teacher, a saleswoman. Evidently, the more complex professions are open to both sexes, whereas the simple jobs seem more gendered.

Throughout the Silja series, a candy factory serves as an important setting, whether as a location of an internship for high schoolers or a proper first job taken on due to necessity. Working in a factory carries a strong positive ideological charge in the Soviet context; Katerina Clark (1981: 256) has identified the production novel, often with a story unfolding in a factory, as a central type of early Soviet novel. The candy factory in Truu's novella is a softer, sweeter alternative to e.g. a machine factory; a renewed and perhaps more tangible, but also more feminine version of the earlier motif.[5] Nevertheless, the main ethos of Soviet work ideology is present: young people

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5   The factory, the name of which is not mentioned, must be the largest confectionery factory in Estonia, which since 1948 has had the name of the mythological character *Kalev*. This factory is comparable to Latvia's *Laima*, whose name dates back all the way to 1925. Today both brands belong to the same international *Orkla Group*. However, chocolate boxes with ethnic names *Kalur* (A Fisherman) and *Muhutar* (A Girl from Muhu Island) associated with the Khrushchev's Thaw period are passingly mentioned in Truu's text.

experience the joy of working in a factory, learn to work as a team, participate in socialist competition, and rationalize work organization.

This is emphasized by the illustrations in the first edition of GFM in 1968, depicting the girls working on candy packaging, wearing work coats and headscarves (Picture 1, artist Hugo Mitt). A very similar treatment of the same motif can be found in the 1981 reprint, where the divisional titles have been drawn by Asta Vender. Such images of women workers are also familiar, for example, from the magazine *Nõukogude Naine* (Soviet Woman) where the visual imagery underwent several changes during the Soviet decades, whereas the portrayal of a working woman remained fairly unchanged throughout (see Pall 2011: 80).

Truu's youth narratives provide some nuance to the staple motif, largely in line with the gendered division of labor. The main characters are drawn away from the factory, and their lives are given a different direction. They ponder the issue of career choice on their own and in discussions with others. At the heart of GFM is the ambivalent contrast between dull work and true vocation: it is not clear to what extent simple work can be looked down upon. Silja's parents, both positive characters, disagree on this and the mother is allowed to ask with a note of contempt: "Do you want to become a candy maker, Silja?" (GFM: 18). The romantic geologist and cosmonaut

motifs that exploded during the Thaw period are also briefly played with, but they are discarded immediately, perhaps even with a certain irony and bitterness. Practical choices turn out to be much narrower, internships can only be done in a candy factory, a post office, or a shop.[6] Thereby, gender injustice is also emphasized: boys can choose the attractive car repair workshop, but girls are not allowed to go there due to the "distribution plan and pre-determinations" (GFM: 17).

In the factory, Silja is interested in mechanization; it is implied that she has inherited this interest from her father who is an engineer. Just like the dreams of being a geologist or a cosmonaut, this is in line with the idea of a gender-neutral division of labor. Silja also becomes a rationalizer when she proposes to divide the tasks when packing candy in order to fulfill the norm faster. However, factory work does not turn out to be Silja's vocation, although it does help her find her real path, when the artist of the factory notices her talent. The recommendation for Silja to study art becomes the final solution to the course of events and the happy ending.[7] The artist's profession is presented as gender neutral, similarly to its treatment in the advisory book. Silja's main mentor, the artist of the factory, is a woman. The existence (or absence) of a role model of the same sex has been considered an important aspect in the female *Bildungsroman* as a genre of fiction focusing on the girl's development (Labovitz 1986: 24). However, another influential artist in the girl's life is her neighbor Paul Tamm, a male artist confined to a wheelchair.

In contrast to Silja, Merle's course of development in the first edition of the next book, HIYLF, is strikingly gender-conventional. Due to dire circumstances, the girl decides to quit high school and goes to the factory, no longer for an internship but for a real job. She struggles to find her vocation and the problem is resolved in a single significant chapter with a 180-degree turn. At the beginning of the chapter, in the spirit of the early Soviet glorification of mechanization, the girl admires the machine that wraps liqueur-filled chocolates in silvery foil:

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6   Piret Peiker (2020) has analyzed the motif of Gagarin's space flight in Silvia Rannamaa's 1963 girls' story *Kasuema* (Stepmother), where it is still used completely sincerely and romantically as the culmination of the entire story. This ending has been removed from the text of the 1970 revised edition. A similar distancing from Thaw period motifs is reflected in the fact that the space metaphor is well represented in the Silja series, but it is gradually becoming less serious. In the first book, Silja states that she is not a jet rocket that can be launched on the spot (SSW: 7), but later snaps in response to the question of where she is going: "To Mars!", and it is already clearly a joke (AFM: 10).

7   It is noteworthy that Silja's career decision overshadows the fact that the issue with the romantic relationship with Indrek remains open for the time being. By comparison, in the next two books of the series the final scene provides a solution exactly to personal relationships.

> The disc spun, and Merle was proud: a real machine, not a hand-held candy wrapper, the only tinning machine in this workshop and perhaps the entire factory. The disc spun, and Merle was happy: a fine machine that does nicely and fast the job that would otherwise take so much time [..] (HIYLF: 139).

But the joy subsides, and Merle begins to feel lonely behind the machine: the factory noise burdens her, and she misses the human contact. Having promised to care for the children of the factory's female workers during a common outing, she goes to visit a kindergarten after work in order to prepare herself for this task, and befriends the toddlers playing in the yard. A little girl with a freckled nose and warm hands, as well as a little boy with a flat-top, asking to be picked up, win her heart. Only a few pages after admiring the machine, Merle reaches a conclusion. "No way is my place behind machines", she feels. "At least that's what I know now, and it's already a lot" (HIYLF: 142). By the end of the chapter, it can be assumed that her future will be related to children[8].

What kind of information does the reader gain from the novellas' setting and from the supporting adult characters? As for the protagonists' parents, the picture is almost unequivocally exemplary with regard to women's employment: all mothers work, in challenging and responsible positions no less. The parents of the main character, Silja, embody a perfect Soviet family in almost every way, so it is no surprise that they both work in a professional capacity: the mother is a film director (an aspiring one in the first book), and the father is an engineer. Indrek's mother is a doctor. Merle's mother works in a ministry, presumably in a senior position, as her job necessitates long business trips. A secondary character who is a stay-at-home-mom of five children is mentioned briefly, and this is given a damning indictment: due to her lack of employment, the father struggles to make ends meet and the family lives in constant poverty.

Thus the idea of women's professional employment is supported on both levels, that of the young protagonists and that of the adult background characters. Notably, the youngsters are steered away from factory work and towards white-collar jobs requiring more qualification. In the following sections, I will examine whether the series raises any concerns regarding working women at all.

Household chores

The central role of a Soviet woman in a social contract has been defined through the phrase "working mother" (Temkina, Rotkirch 1997). Anna Temkina and Anna Rotkirch describe the role of a Soviet working mother

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8   From the point of view of narrative, such a solution is surprising: in an earlier scene, the attempt to impose babysitting on the factory girls is rejected so forcefully that the main character's later abrupt decision to give it a try does not have a convincing effect.

as a "shadow contract", an agreement between the lines which was not reflected in the slogans but was in force by default. This is another take on the double burden or double shift of the Soviet woman facing duties both at work and at home: although in theory the problem was supposed to be solved by division of labor and, above all, automation, in practice the household chores were left for women to do. This has also been depicted in literary fiction, perhaps most famously in Natalia Baranskaia's *Nedelia kak nedelia* (Just Another Week, 1969).

Given the above, it is worth pointing out that the infamous double burden is not at all addressed in the Silja series and household chores are nary a problem. The only passing reference is the motif in the Merle book about workers who are in danger of being left out of a factory outing because there is no babysitter. While this is initially carefully described to affect both mothers and fathers, it is only women who act to solve the problem (HIYLF: 120).[9] All positive parental figures, too, seem to perform the necessary chores without feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, equipped with re-markable capability and self-discipline, they are also able to manage the household single-handedly when need be, as demonstrated by Indrek's mother and Silja's father. Negative adult characters, on the other hand, are capable neither of breadwinning nor homemaking, such as Merle's drunkard stepfather who steals money from his wife and, in a grueling scene, can be seen yelling at the girl: "Today, you will feed me!" (HIYLF: 72).

This picture can best be explained by the didactic nature of the books. Generally, the goal of Soviet education was a self-sufficient person who can cope with all everyday chores regardless of gender. Especially advice for younger children tended to value the ideal of equality. For example, in the *Pioneeriaabits* (Pioneer's ABC), targeted at children aged 10–15, the audience is taught to clean their rooms, cook, and even do laundry and darn socks. "Potatoes can also be served with a variety of simpler sauces that you, the pioneer, can make yourself," the book urges (PABC 1961: 106). The corresponding chapter is entitled *Help Your Parents* – and not *Help Your Mother*. A similar mood prevails in the first book of the Silja series, targeted at primary school children: starting to take on household chores, e.g. mopping the floor, is a positive sign of independence and growing up. The ability to single-handedly cope with both external and domestic affairs is also central in HH, where the protagonist is Indrek, a high school boy left alone when his mother dies. He makes a point of showing everyone that as a boy he manages to keep his home in order, do his laundry, and cook on his own.

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9   Even there, the entire book does not regard it as a problem because, as described above, this is how Merle finds her vocation of working with children in the first edition.

However, the protagonists often turn to traditional division of labor in courting situations. In Indrek's case, despite his decision, girls keep pestering him with offers to help. Silja's support for Indrek is often expressed through making him hot meals; with a note of criticism, Merle asks Silja why she does not help Indrek on cleaning day. In GFM, older factory girls order handsome young men to help them with more difficult chores during an outing. Merle offers Indrek a pack of homemade sandwiches as a reward for help, but instead, Indrek's friend Vootele snatches the sandwiches for himself. Upon seeing that, Niida, a girl in love with Vootele, despairs: "Anyway, I said that if he should beg Merle once more for a sprat sandwich, I will buy Tallinn sprats with my entire first salary and have a courier deliver them to his home" (AFM: 54). In HIYLF there are even three different young men who offer help with installing a lock in Merle's room, making this suspiciously similar to a courting visit. A mutual understanding finally develops between Merle and Jaak, as they also help each other stack briquettes and put up wallpaper. Especially remarkable is Jaak's confession that he has heard that Merle can make very tasty salad and will therefore become a very good housewife (HIYLF: 146).

It turns out that a person can and should generally handle everything, but in the context of courtship, reversion to traditional gender roles is particularly strong. It is precisely this fact that confirms the theory of gender conformism: gender roles are longed for, and in situations with a high symbolic weight, a corresponding division of labor is sought. A comparison of two editions of the advice book *For You, Girl* highlights how, in the area of domestic labour division, ideals shifted towards greater

gender contrast during the Stagnation period. While the earlier edition (Kurm 1970) is limited mostly to medical topics, the latter edition (Kurm 1977) includes a new chapter on housework. The two pages make it clear that a modern woman must also be able to perform the duties of a housewife in order to please her future husband; girls who neglect such responsibilities are despised. In a similar way, Merle's mother praises her daughter and criticizes "other" girls: "I've taught you how to cook, many girls don't even know how to make tea, and semolina porridge is all Greek to them. Sewing a simple dress is no problem for you, but there are girls who can't even make a knot on a thread" (HIYLF: 31). Gender conformism and the *invention* of tradition are confirmed by the title of the chapter in the counseling book: *Should a Contemporary Girl Know How to Knit a Glove?* Yes, she should, the reader is informed, and with a smile on her face.

The so-called double burden of housework is thus not identified as a concern for working mothers, or anybody else, for that matter – neither directly nor between the lines. Instead, performing gender-specific domestic chores can be used to woo members of the opposite sex. Within the Silja series, as seen in the next section, the problem of professional women is located elsewhere: in their relationship with children.

Motherhood and family models

Motherhood was a heavily loaded concept in the Soviet context: it was considered "the highest form of service", which was thus both generously rewarded and strictly policed (Issoupova 2000). Khrushchev Era advice books, too, treat girls as future mothers: "Most women see motherhood as the meaning of their lives and a solid foundation for personal happiness" (Peter et al. 1964: 11). But the Stagnation era saw a new wave of lauding the so-called "heroine mothers" and propaganda of large families due to falling birth rates in the European part of the USSR (Bridger 2007). In the Brezhnev Era, "[g]ender policies took on a patriarchal, slogan-based nature: the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declared its support for women as 'participants in the labour process, mothers, carers and housekeepers'. Demographers began to support the idea of a 'return to the home' for women" (Vinokurova 2007: 74).

For the young protagonists and, presumably, the young readers of the Silja series, parenthood is something that belongs to the future, as they need to finish their education first. However, the seed is carefully planted. While all the main characters (Silja, Merle, and Indrek) are single children, both Silja and Merle would like to have a brother. Merle promises to have more children: "I myself want to have at least four" (HIYLF: 137). Such remarks by characters are clearly linked to the surrounding discussion of

demographic crisis, have an effect of highlighting the declining birth rate, and function as propaganda to introduce the young readers to the idea of raising this rate.

Regarding parenthood and family models presented in the background, as previously said, the mothers of all protagonists work at good jobs. In addition, Silja's father and mother have a good relationship, as emphasized in all books: they are equal partners who get along well, discuss important issues, support each other, and in every way form a safe home for their child. It is in this spirit that the youth counseling books describe a good family life: there is "equality both at work and in the family" (Peter et al. 1964: 13), and marriage must be based on love "which adorns the lives of lovers and spouses and also ensures the maximum development of the mental and physical faculties of children" (ibid., 14). Even a healthy disagreement between parents is modeled, when Silja's mother and father disagree on the girl's future career.

Notably, in the first book of the series the primary-school-aged Silja is living only with her father, as her mother has left for Moscow to study film directing. It is carefully made clear that this is perfectly normal; the father emphasizes to Silja that the two of them can cope with everything. However, a gender conventionalist doubt about such an arrangement lurks between the lines. When Silja's dress gets torn, it is the neighbor lady who has to repair it, as apparently darning is where the father draws the line. One of Silja's great fears is that if she behaves badly, her mother may be recalled from Moscow, seeing that Silja and her father actually cannot cope on their own. Part of her growing up is getting embarrassed and starting to pitch more and more into household chores – an understandable and potentially completely gender-neutral description of becoming an adult, yet in this case strongly supported by an uneasiness over the unorthodox family situation. Once Silja runs into trouble at school, the following explanation is proposed: "She is alone at home with her father, the homeroom teacher is a man, her desk-mate is a boy. So there – she'll end up being a boy" (SRSW: 25). These words are admittedly uttered by a negative character, but the possibility remains open. Even in the case of Silja's model family, certain problems with woman's pursuing professional career are implied.

More problematic family dynamics are illustrated by the parents of other characters, especially in the Merle book. Merle lives with her mother and her mother's new husband, Albert Vaas, an alcoholic and a war veteran.[10] When the mother is at home, Vaas is mostly able to control himself. Unfortunately, during the mother's business trips the situation at home becomes crazy: the stepfather steals money, drinks and marauds, trying to force Merle to drink, breaking into her room, and rummaging through her belongings. After recovering from the drinking spree, Vaas

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10   The war motif has been removed from the reprint of the book.

tries to pretend that nothing happened and warns the girl that there is no need to tell her mother what happened and to make her worry for no reason. Merle finds herself in a difficult situation, burdened with guilt: she fears that she will ruin the family if she turns her mother and stepfather against each other by her complaining, so she desperately tries to keep peace at home for a long time.

The stepfather is, of course, explicitly guilty of all this, but Merle's mother's constant working is also criticized implicitly: things get worse during her business trips, and it is her commitment to work that leaves her unaware of what is going on at home. Parallels to this emphasis can be seen in contemporary adult fiction – for example, in *Kaetud lauad* (The Set Tables, 1979) by Aino Pervik, a female factory director interviewed as a paragon of a successful woman expresses regret that she has had too little time for her children[11].

When Merle's patience finally runs out and she tells her mother everything, she is bitterly disappointed when her mother sides with the stepfather instead of her. In fact, the mother's lack of loyalty to her daughter becomes one of the main themes of Merle's book. Anna Rotkirch (2000: 78 et seq.) has generalized that along with gender conventionalism, there was a belief in late Soviet society that a heterosexual relationship is not something important or lasting and that the nuclear family is held together by a mother-child relationship. Merle's mother transgresses against this unwritten rule, and the author holds that against her.

As for Indrek, her mother raises him alone and the boy knows nothing of his father. Before her death, the mother leaves a letter to her son, describing his father as a fickle person, unable to complete any venture he has started. He has left the family, having "found his true happiness" (HH: 31); he does not pay child support and does not visit his son. While Indrek's mother is described as a near-perfect character with a tragic fate, it is worth noting that in her farewell letter, she refers to her own guilt in all this as well. For example, she says: "If there had been a woman of a different nature instead of me, a decisive figure who would have taken Aivar away from the influence of his mother, taken him to the other side of the world, and would have been able to help him overcome his moments of weakness, perhaps things would have gone differently" (HH: 29). She also blames herself for the lack of financial support from the boy's father: "Now I am really distressed because of my foolish and selfish pride and the faux discretion that once we don't have you, we don't need your money either" (HS: 32).

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11   Here we are of course reminded of the intrigue of the famous film *Moskva slezam ne verit* (Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears, dir. Vladimir Menshov, 1979), where a single mother who is also a factory director has to even conceal her position from her lover. In the end, the film does not hold the management position against the woman, but indicates that it poses a problem in her family life.

The storylines of Indrek and Merle reflect a prominent topic in media and adult literature of the era: the crisis of masculinity and the breaking up of families due to men's alcoholism and irresponsibility. In this so-called everyday literature, male characters typically down a shot of vodka from time to time, while women resent it and despise drinking men (see e.g. Ross 2018: 229). Zdravomyslova and Temkina (2013: 55) have specifically interpreted drinking by the late Soviet man as a form of protest against family life and the dominant female figure who has received too much power from the state. In adult fiction, it develops into a tug of war between the male and female characters. In contrast, in girls' literature drunken men mostly appear in the role of a father or stepfather, and here the picture is shown more sincerely and tragically.[12] In the farewell letter of Indrek's mother, some familiar tropes of a woman's implied responsibility are represented, although the surrounding narrator's text does not fully support her there, and the reader probably will not blame Indrek's mother.

To sum up the treatment of family life, the young protagonists (together with the young readers) are being prepared for a life of parenthood and big families, in line with the era's newly resurgent propaganda regarding the "heroine mothers". At the same time, the protagonists' families display a more realistic picture: single children, single parents, divorces, step-parents, alcoholism. Similarly to the media and adult literature of the same time, the books here seem to favor gender-conventionalist solutions: if men (such as Indrek's father and Merle's stepfather) were stronger and more responsible, and if women (such as Merle's mother) held the home front, everything would be better. The ideal family of Silja's parents, with its perfect atmosphere and unproblematic gender equality, largely stands apart from the rest, but even there, the little girl fears that if she misbehaves in any way, it will be attributed to her mother's absence.

Masculinity vs. femininity
The concepts of male and female genders are, in any case, constructed through opposition to each other, but gender opposition was particularly acute in the public gender debate in the late Soviet period. As Vladimir Shlapentokh wrote in 1984, "the conflicts between women and men are now among the most salient aspects of everyday life of the Soviet people" (Shlapentokh 1984: 171). During the inconvenient period of shifting gender roles, the question of which sex was to blame for the inconvenience was constantly in the air; this confrontation was

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12   An alcoholic [step]father's motif can also be found in other girls' stories, such as *Õhupall* (Balloon, 1969) by Aino Pervik or *Neitsi Maarja neli päeva* (Four Days of the Virgin Mary, 1980) by Leelo Tungal.

also played out in the contemporary adult literature. However, children's or young-adult stories of an optimistic nature cannot be susceptible to public condemnation of one or the other sex.

In the first book of the series, the main character Silja, a fourth-grader, is sketched out as a tomboyish figure: she is seen ""riding" a birch-tree" like a shepherd, tearing her dress and going to school wearing the neighbor boy's jeans, perceived as only "boys' pants" (SRSW: 13) at the time. While she is reprimanded by teachers and parents, Silja's "boyish" behavior does not become unappealing to the reader. This is common in Soviet children's literature: according to Marina Balina, the model of a boyish girl dates from the 1930s and the 1920s, when the creation of the new Soviet person sought to dismantle the former gender system. Boys and girls either appeared as completely interchangeable characters, or positive girl characters were marked by their boyish appearance and behavior (Balina 2014: 361–362). Irina Savkina (2019: 227–228) describes a similar dynamic in a Thaw era book by Russian-Ukrainian author Vladimir Kiselev, *Devochka i ptitselet* (Girl and the Bird Plane, 1966), noting that it was characteristic of Soviet children's literature to romanticize masculine values and friendship between boys. It has been pointed out that many important Soviet girl books tell the story of a strange, non-girly protagonist who does not fit in (Bukhina 2019: 144). Really, in such cases, there is more talk about where and how this non-girly girl fits – she fits in with the boys in order to perform exciting boyish ventures. In the books both by Truu and Kiselev, the protagonist girl is accepted into a secret circle of boys; in contrast, her relationship with other girls is rather malicious and competitive.

In the process of a girl growing into a woman, the matters become more complicated. Pondering her looks, Silja starts out with the belief that girls admiring themselves in front of a mirror are stupid: "A person has more important stuff to do in the world than just curl and frizzle their hair." But then she comes to a conclusion that she will also have to do it someday: "You must have something left for the time you grow up. That's what Mother said, and Mother is always right." And right after this monologue, Silja actually starts curling her hair and dresses up in her mother's clothes (SPM 1967: 45 et seq.). The early 1960s have been described as a period when "good taste" was trumped by "looking fashionable" in Soviet public discourse, and curly hair was considered the epitome of fashionable look (Gradskova 2007: 28). Silja's developmental logic is here again very similar to Kiselev's *Girl and the Bird Plane*, where Olga refuses to be a girl when she is younger but later discovers the beauty and femininity of her body (cf. Savkina 2019: 228).

Whereas tomboyish younger girls are simultaneously reprimanded and lauded for their boyish behavior, older girls discovering their femininity instantly become subjected to moral surveillance. This is exemplified by the traditional contrast between

virtuous girls and wicked boys in later stories in the series: girls need to be warned of the inappropriate behavior that boys may coax them into. A very similar picture appears in the youth counseling books: Helgi Kurm (1970) approaches this topic in several chapters entitled *What if It Is Love?*; *A Girl's Self-Esteem and Self-Respect*; *But Just One Glass!*; etc.[13] Both GFM and HIYLF feature a character nicknamed Rinaldo, a ballroom dancer working in the factory, sporting a stripe of a mustache and having an alcohol problem. He is about to drop out of school and his speech is ridden with colloquialisms such as "pardon" and "I can't stomach". Rinaldo is a descendant of the rockers (*stilyagi*) from a decade before, a representative of an allegedly harmful and dangerous youth culture – a warning figure who acts as a measure of the virtue of the girl protagonists.

Silja, again the model character, interrupts Rinaldo already when the latter starts telling a spicy joke (GFM: 91), exactly as the guidance book states: "If you happen to be in a company where obscene jokes are told, you should show your disapproval of them" (Kurm 1970: 42).[14] The behavior of Merle is left more open for interpretation. Due to her vulnerable position at home, she initially befriends Rinaldo and ends up in a vaguely unsafe situation with him. Despite fleeing virtuously, the girl later gets stalked by the drunken boy on the street.[15] When she asks her male friend Jaak for help, he responds with victim-blaming:

> "Holy simplicity! [..] You girls are real idiots. You put yourselves into a situation where others can think god knows what. And later, you are offended and wonder how people can think that way, that you didn't think it the slightest, and nothing really happened, right? I've seen a couple of movies about it. Of course, the blame fell entirely on those who think badly of the girl, but not on the girl who can't tell the difference between what's right and what's not" (HIYLF: 111).

The remark is obviously conveyed with a touch of irony by the narrator, and Merle gets a chance for a counter-attack ("But when you came to my home late at night, you didn't lecture me about morals, even though I was all alone then as well"), after which Jaak is left at a loss for words. Similarly, spying on the virtues of girls is shown to be the domain of old hags in various scenes (GFM: 110–111, also HH). Again, it is

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13   Admittedly, boys are also briefly warned about the so-called "loose women, or rather morally ruined women" (Kadastik 1963: 44).

14   Jokes are also mentioned in the boys' guidance book, but the difference is that the boys are told not to tell such jokes (see Kadastik 1963: 25), whereas girls are forbidden to even listen to them. In general, boys are taught gentlemanly behavior; for example, in the Silja series, a "short lecture on polite behavior of boys towards girls" is played on a tape recorder (HS: 9).

15   The central girl characters do not touch alcohol themselves; apartment parties where some girls allegedly also tasted some wine are mentioned in HH only in passing.

Merle's mother who comes under criticism when she, worried about rumors, accuses her daughter of living with a boy in her absence, without realizing that the girl was running away from her mother's husband (HIYLF: 34–35). Characters who tend to express the heightened moral expectations for girls' behavior too didactically and accusingly are shown as unpleasant or at least wrong in the respective situations.

Marina Balina has explained the "double optics" regarding femininity in Soviet culture, drawing on Judith Butler's notions of gender insubordination and gender regulation. She describes how femininity came under criticism in the early Soviet cultural situation, and a violation of pre-revolutionary femininity norms became a new norm, embodied by boyish, brave, and active girls. At the same time, it did not mean absolute freedom; gender regulation still worked, and the new femininity was also strongly regulated. She notes that these regulations especially concerned girls' bodies and "such conceptions of decency and indecency as directly pertain to gender difference," which explains the moral surveillance. Balina's own case in point is the (female) character of Vitka in Iurii Nagibin's 1955 short story *Eho* (The Echo), "an attempt to combine boyishness and femininity" (Balina, unpublished manuscript).

Notably, such criticism of pre-revolutionary femininity norms is expressed visually in the GFM illustration of Silja being scolded for her boyishness in the teachers' room (artist Asta Vender). The most unpleasant scolder is a female drawing teacher, whereas the girl is protected by a pleasant and business-like male homeroom teacher. The illustration shows a caricature of a disagreeable bunch of female teachers with pursed lips and judgmental looks, donning fancy hairdos and pretty dresses, as opposed to the straightforward, good-humored, positive male figure looking attentively at the little girl clad in boys' clothes. This visual also relates to the tendency of petty bourgeoisie being often represented by women characters, as was noticed in a discussion of adult literature of that time (Krusten 1966: 10).

The direct gender confrontation characteristic of the Stagnation era is represented by an interesting pattern in the Silja series. Throughout the series, it is echoed in phrases comparing boys and girls or commenting on gender relations. In most cases, they are just single remarks or an internal monologue that is not supported by the narrator's text, e.g. Silja pondering: "After all, it is terribly unfair that equality has not yet been established on the dance floor" (AFM: 6), or Merle snapping: "Well, you guys are really [..] you are all the same" (HIYLF: 112). The jocular tone of voice must make the young reader believe that such declarations are not to be taken seriously: after all, children can squabble like this, while adults can reach a reasonable agreement in their relationships. However, as the series progresses, it turns out that this reasonable agreement often seems to be based on gender conventionalism. In the last book, HH, the difference between boys and girls is finally

introduced as the main theme through similar children's squabble, someone yelling in the street: "You are a real mystery! [..] Like all boys", and the other answering: "And you are a [..] sphinx, like all girls" (HS: 7). This time, it is not brushed off lightly, and it remains the central intrigue of the book.

As previously mentioned, in HH the orphaned Indrek has decided to cope with everything by himself and not to burden others with his worries. Therefore he hides from his girlfriend Silja everything that happens in his life: initially even the death of his mother, then the fact that he has begun working alongside school. At the same time, he plans to marry Silja and even designs the exact schedule in his head. Puzzled Silja is squirming with confusion: has the entire relationship been the fruit of her fantasy, or is she overreacting? Among other things, she seeks clarity from the so-called biorhythm tables – maybe it is just about her and Indrek's different rhythms?[16] The problem situation thus outlined reflects the common trope of men as silent and women as speakers.[17] In such an explicit form, it may seem unexpected in a Soviet youth novel, but it corresponds very well to the discursive space of the Stagnation period where emphasizing and accentuating the "psycho-physiological" differences between men and women began again (Buckley 1989: 175).

As a full-fledged gender war cannot be declared in a youth novel, it is not made unambiguously clear which of the two positive main characters is "more right". Indrek's silence is treated as an exaggeration by the author, but it is Silja who seeks contact with Indrek in the final scene – as a signal that such gentle indulgence is the woman's responsibility. Trying to pass judgement, reviewers also find that Indrek's behavior is wrong and consider Silja's efforts to understand him outright heroic (Tanner 1978; Krusten 1981), but at the same time, some of them emphasize the so-called natural and inevitable "psychic differences between a girl and a boy, their different demands for communication" (Krusten 1981: 454). As can be seen from the quote in the introduction to this article, the advisory literature of the era considers it one of the tasks of a woman to raise her husband.

Thus, the Silja series exemplifies several contradictions inherent already in the earlier Soviet gender system: modeling of the girl ideal (the main character) through boyish qualities and heightened expectations for her virtue, and at the same time ridiculing those expectations. The discursive confrontation of the sexes, characteristic

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16   The theory of biorhythms claims scientificity but is not verifiable, which brings it closer to esotericism. The Silja series reflects the contemporary overall interest in such borderline phenomena: for example, Indrek is thinking about telepathy, and his mother discusses the possibility of rebirth in her farewell letter.

17   On the fact that this is more of a prejudice, see Cameron 2008.

especially of the Stagnation period, is reflected by the contrast between Silja and Indrek in the last book. Indrek himself is, of course, the opposite of the fun-loving, irresponsible man engaged in the pursuit of pleasure that we are familiar with from journalism or adult literature of that time. However, the entire situation does suggest that the worldviews of the sexes can be so fundamentally different that it causes difficulties in understanding each other, no matter how hard one tries.

Conclusions:
equalist setting, conventionalist solution

Silvia Truu's series of girls' stories is centered around some of the constant motifs of Soviet youth education, although they are treated somewhat more sceptically, compared to the previous decades. For example, factory work is on the foreground, but eventually none of the main characters or their parents end up as workers. Something similar happens with gender equality. Both on the level of protagonists and the level of background characters, women are expected to work outside the home and to be able to choose from a wide palette of careers, so the slogan is held high. In practice, this arrangement is seen to cause some problems but, true to their genre, the books have to offer a generally optimistic outlook. This is achieved mostly by leaning towards gender conventionalist solutions.

In the depiction of the young protagonists, some of the contradictions inherent already in the earlier Soviet gender system are evident. Typically for Soviet children's literature, the central character, Silja, grows from a tomboyish girl into a feminine young lady seemingly without any problems, and her deportment corresponds exactly to the ideal girl described in the late Soviet guidance books: from the decisive contempt for spicy jokes all the way to helping a young man with preparing hot meals. The teen girls are just as active and capable as their male peers, but somehow in greater need of moral surveillance. Interestingly, the different requirements for femininity are visually exemplified by the illustrations to the books: the pictures of girls in headscarves working in the factory seem almost like they could date from decades earlier, but the pictures of courting scenes very much emphasize masculine and feminine silhouettes, embodying a clearly late Soviet aesthetic (see Picture 1 and Picture 2).

Analyzing the book *The Girl and the Bird Plane* by Vladimir Kiselev, Irina Savkina (2019: 230–231) concludes that the text points to a gender role conflict typical of that era, although it does not offer a solution. As for the books by Silvia Truu, I argue that the conflict is rather sought to be actively smoothed out. The plot lines of the Silja series are generally addressed in accordance with traditional gender roles. It is

characteristic that alternatives are offered, but the final solutions favor a gendered division of labor. Contradictions are pointed out, but these are reconciled through narrative solutions. Girls try factory work, but this does not prove to be their vocation; women must not be forced to work with children, but they are often naturally inclined to chose this path; a girl may behave boyishly but still grow up feminine; household chores do not have to be divided by genders, but it is romantic to do so; worrying about the virtues of girls is petty bourgeois, but good girls behave properly anyway. The theme setting is gender-equal, but the solution is conventional.

Looking at the supporting characters, especially the protagonists' parents, a bleaker picture emerges. Silja's parents exemplify a positive role model that young adult literature is obliged to give: a perfect family where there is mutual understanding and housework is distributed equally as if by rules. The rest of the families, on the other hand, feature more problematic situations such as divorce, alcoholism, and single motherhood. The implied solutions are strongly gender-conventional here as well. Indrek's father's flawed character points to a lack of masculinity: his dependence on his mother and his inability to do "men's work", such as repairing a footstool or bed. It comes across as tragic that Merle has to clean after her step-father and cook for him, but it seems that a favorable solution would be if her mother were at home and did it herself.

All this is depicted very much in line with the then-typical media discussions on women's emancipation and the crisis of masculinity. The weak men are not let completely off the hook, but a surprising amount of responsibility falls upon the women, as per contemporary media coverage. Merle's mother – and to an extent, perhaps even Indrek's mother – act as warning about the danger of women being too independent. Their independence becomes damaging to their children. This fits well with the idea that the problem of a working woman's double burden had lost its appeal by the Stagnation era and had been replaced with the call for women to return to the home (Bridger 2007: 74). Moreover, youth literature was apparently a perfect means to make the latter point, showing the situation from the neglected youngsters' perspective.

On the level of the young protagonists, the direct gender confrontation inherent to the public discourse of the Stagnation era could only be addressed in a subdued manner. When characters complain about the other sex, the author rather alleviates this by giving the complaint a funny shade. Nevertheless, the last book reaches a direct juxtaposition and contrast of Silja's and Indrek's perspectives, again in a manner characteristic to the era. The characters, although both positive, turn out to be lacking a common dimension, and the dividing line runs between the sexes.

Finally, a point must be made regarding Merle. The author has made some changes in the 1981 compiled edition, and in the third book several of them concern precisely

the scenes and storylines analyzed in this article. Instead of turning to work with children, here Merle gets an early interest in how the factory's new assorted-chocolate line works and, unlike the first edition, that interest does not go away. The girl decides to enroll in evening high school classes, after which new career options are bound to open for her. The scene in the kindergarten has been omitted; no decision is made to deal with children in the future.[18] Merle's declaration that she wants to have at least four children has also been omitted. The salad scene, too, has been turned the other way round: there is no talk of salad, and Merle watches as Jaak looks for food in the cupboard and sets it on the table. Once again, in the new edition the author has tuned Merle's development beyond the housewife's ideal.

These changes lead the book, at least in some places, away from gender conventionalism and towards more gender-neutral solutions. While the above analysis used the context of the era as the main key to the text, there is no reason to believe that between the first print and the reprint (the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s) social gender conventionalism in the Soviet Union had diminished. On the contrary – Anna Rotkirch, who coined the term, considers it to be characteristic even of the post-Soviet era. Possible explanations vary. Perhaps the author's own beliefs changed, or perhaps editorial corrections are to blame. However, although social context does not explain the *direction* of the change, such rewriting confirms the tensions surrounding this issue in general: it was apparently a loaded decision whether to emphasize the female protagonist's interest in new knowledge or her attraction to young children, and it was worth rewriting. Rather than signal the exhaustion of gender conventionalism in the early 1980s, this emphasizes that these issues were subjects of an ongoing debate. As mentioned in the introduction, the Silja series by Silvia Truu is just one case of the larger corpus of girls' literature that emerged in the Soviet Estonian young adult literature of the 1960s and 1970s. This fact alone confirms the activation of the gender issue, and this corpus should be further explored from a modern perspective.

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18   A brief additional scene with Merle and Jaak has been inserted in the later edition where it turns out that a woman's hand rocks a baby stroller better than a man's hand does, but this does not determine the girl's future.

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Sigita Kušnere

Mg. philol., literary scholar
University of Latvia
E-mail: sigitakus@inbox.lv

Some Aspects of the Image of a Soviet Latvian Woman in Latvian Prose in the 1960s and 1970s

Daži padomju sievietes tēla aspekti latviešu prozā 20. gadsimta 60. un 70. gados

Summary   In the era of late socialism, literary works played an important role in shaping public behavior models, controlling culture, and influencing social interactions. Additionally, literature contributed to the dissemination of the principles of the "socialist way of life". In this context, Latvian literature helped Soviet institutional authorities to construct the ideal image of a socialist woman. This female ideal played a crucial role in popularizing socialist ideas among Latvians and supporting the efforts of the Communist Party to reorient the competition with the West. Unable to compete on the level of material living conditions, the Soviet Union prioritized hard-to-measure concepts – moral, ethics, and personal and emotional values. In their writings of the 1960s and 1970s, Latvian authors portrayed a modern woman's image, encouraging the readers to contemplate a woman's social role, lifestyle, education, career, etc. While the female images created by writers served as a paragon of the ideal Soviet woman, the literary works also provide a rather honest description of the Soviet reality where material values were also important. The literary texts show the complicated socioeconomic conditions of the time, such as poverty, lack of career possibilities, and the constant government surveillance.

Kopsavilkums   Vēlīnā sociālisma laikmetā literārajiem darbiem bija būtiska loma sabiedrības uzvedības modeļa veidošanā, kultūras un sociālās prakses vadīšanā, kā arī sociālās mijiedarbības ietekmēšanā. Literatūra bija arī daļa no "sociālistiskā dzīvesveida" komunicēšanas procesa. Šajā kontekstā latviešu literatūra palīdzēja padomju institucionālajām varas iestādēm izplatīt priekšstatus par sociālistiskās sievietes ideālo tēlu, kas savā ziņā kļuva par sabiedroto sociālisma ideju īstenošanā latviešu ikdienas dzīvē, atbalstot komunistiskās partijas centienus pārorientēt konkurenci ar Rietumiem. Nespējot konkurēt dzīves līmeņa ziņā, Padomju Savienība par prioritāru izvirzīja konkurenci grūti izmērāmu konceptu – morāles, ētikas, personisko un emocionālo vērtību – jomā. Latviešu rakstnieki 20. gadsimta 60. un 70. gadu darbos ataino laikmetīgu sievietes tēlu, mudinot lasītājus domāt par sievietes sociālo lomu, izglītību, profesijas izvēli u. tml. Rakstnieku radītie sieviešu tēli kalpo par ideālas padomju sievietes paraugu, tomēr literārie darbi visnotaļ godīgi ataino padomju realitāti, kurā būtiskas ir arī materiālās vērtības. Literārie teksti liecina par aplūkotā laika perioda sarežģīto sociālekonomisko situāciju – nabadzību, ierobežotām karjeras iespējām, varas iestāžu nerimstošu pārraudzību.

Introduction   Pertinent to this article's focus on late socialism is the fact that its author represents a generation that several researchers refer to as "the last Soviet generation" when speaking about those citizens of the USSR who were born and raised during the so-called Brezhnev Era (Raleigh 2012; Yurchak 2006). It has to be noted that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a certain sentimental longing for the Soviet past has been often expressed in public discourse, ignoring the real problems of the Soviet era. At the same time, contemporary Latvian literature looks back to the past without any sentimental longing for the Soviet time, focusing on the gender roles of women in the Soviet period – Nora Ikstena's *Mātes piens* (Soviet Milk, 2015; in English translation 2018), Dace Rukšāne's *Krieva āda* (Russian Skin, 2020), Andra Manfelde's *Virsnieku sievas* (The Officers' Wives, 2016), etc. All of this has stimulated my interest to study how Latvian prose in the 1960s and 1970s reflects the late socialism era, and to focus on the literary representations of women, including their social roles, employment chances, daily routines, etc. This study examines the literary works of the era of late socialism in order to develop a concept of some aspects of the image of a "Soviet Latvian woman" in real life and literature.

In the 1960s and 1970s most of Latvian novels were published in exile, not in the occupied Latvia. A significant part of the novels in Latvia were published in periodicals, sometimes only fragments. Most of the texts researched in this article were written by female authors. When choosing the corpus of texts for this study, it was essential to select the most popular works of the most recognized authors (Regīna Ezera, Zigmunds Skujiņš) of this period, as well as to compare these texts to the works of lesser-known and less-popular authors (Ints Lubējs, Lija Brīdaka).

1. **Regīna Ezera** (1930–2002); novel *Aka* (The Well) – 1972; other editions (included in a selection of Ezera's works) 1979, 2000, 2007; translated into Russian 1978, German 1986, Italian 2019.

2. **Regīna Ezera**; novel *Varmācība* (Violence) – 1982, 2nd edition 2001; translated into Russian 1986, Lithuanian 1992.

3. **Zigmunds Skujiņš** (1926–2022); novel *Kolumba mazdēli* (The Grandsons of Columbus) – 1961, other editions 1962, 1966; translated into Russian 1961 (three editions), Lithuanian 1963, Ukrainian 1963, Estonian 1964, Georgian 1971, Bulgarian 1979.

4. **Ilze Indrāne** (1927); novel *Lazdu laipa* (The Hazel Footbridge) – 1963, other editions 1964, 1974, 1981; translated into Russian 1963, Lithuanian 1964, Estonian 1965.

5. **Lija Brīdaka** (1932–2022); novella *Dienas prasa atbildi…* (The Days Demand an Answer…) – 1964; translated into Lithuanian 1966.

6. **Vizma Belševica** (1931–2005); short story *Nelaime mājās* (Trouble at Home) – first publication 1979, 2nd edition 2001; translated into Russian 1984.

7. **Dagnija Zigmonte** (1931–1997); novel *Raganas māju remontēs* (The Witch House will Be Repaired) – 1969; has not been translated into other languages.

8. **Ints Lubējs** (1931–2022); collection of short stories *Satikšanās* (Meetings) – 1959; has not been translated into other languages.

At the center of all the selected texts are the choices made in everyday life and life experiences, as well as the question of how exactly (in the context of gender studies) women fit or do not fit into the mold of the behavioral model of the "socialist way of life" etc.

Western society had few chances to learn about what was going on in the Soviet Union during the time period under debate. A collection of works by various Russian researchers, *The Image of Women in Contemporary Soviet Fiction*, was translated and published in English in 1989. Here is an excerpt from the preface:

> In the process, the stories reveal a number of circumstances mostly unfamiliar to people in the West, but important for an understanding of the contemporary Soviet mentality: the material and demographic consequences of the Second World War (poverty, hunger, single-mother families); the closeness of family ties; the material difficulties of daily life. While the literary scholar will be offered a sampling of aesthetically interesting works, the sociologist, political scientist, and historian will find material that illustrates some of the attitudes and values, thought patterns, and expectations of the Soviet people (McLaughlin 1989: xii).

In some ways, readers and literary scholars today are in the same position as Western society in the second half of the 20th century, because so much knowledge about Soviet daily life and "thought patterns and expectations of the Soviet people" comes from literary works. There is much anthropological and social science research being done on Soviet-era women (for example: Denisova 2010; Ilic 2018; Ilic 2020; McKinney 2020). Studies have been conducted on literary texts, visual arts, films, and women's magazines as depictions of Soviet realities, particularly in relation to women's social roles and the socialist way of life (for example: Attwood 1993; Attwood 1999; Baločkaitė 2011; Golubev, Smolyak 2013; Giustino 2015). There are still relatively few such studies in Latvia – more has been done in the field of history and social sciences; however, there still remains much room for study in the area of literary representations of women during the Soviet era.

The principles of socialist way of life   Describing the era of late socialism, it is essential to understand the principles of the worldview and everyday life that were established in the Soviet Union. As Marc Elie and Isabelle Ohaynon note: "Stagnation, Gorbachev's term, has long been rejected; 'developed' or 'real socialism,' the regime's own favored label, can only be used with scare quotes. The idea of applying the period names and concepts used in Western Europe and North America – the Sixties and Seventies – not only fails to reflect the wholeness of the Brezhnev period, but, not least, for all their practical use, these terms rapidly come up against limitations: Brezhnev's Sixties were a continuation of the reforming optimism of the Soviet Fifties, rather than belonging to the triumph of consumer society as paraded by the market-economy countries" (Elie, Ohaynon 2013: 29). And yet, during this period, there was both stagnation of the economy created by the Soviet regime, and the related shortage of goods and services. At the same time, there was a desire for higher material welfare, which often significantly prevailed over the moral posture of the Soviet citizen that was highlighted in official rhetoric, whereby the abandonment of material values was seen as an essential feature of the firmness of one's character.

Since the Soviet Union was not capable to satisfy the welfare expectations of its citizens, while at the same time there was a strong need to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system in its competition with the West, the principle of the so-called "socialist way of life" was established: "Articulated in response to the political disappointments of the late 1960s as well as the economic reversals of the mid-1970s, the concept of the 'socialist way of life' allowed the Soviet Communist Party to refocus competition with the West not on material conditions and standards of living, but on qualities that were far more difficult to measure directly – morals, values, emotional, interpersonal, or ethical" (Evans 2015: 544). Since the 1970s, the subject of how to comprehend the "socialist way of life" has been discussed in Western scientific thought. It may be viewed as a theoretical study of the Cold War environment, but even the Soviet side itself talked about this socialist way of life, its ideals, and how every Soviet citizen must be aware of them. In the 1970s the Latvian SSR also produced several publications dedicated to this topic, most notably a series of small brochures *Palīgmateriāls lektoriem* (Auxiliary Material for Lecturers). The book *Sociālistiskā dzīves veida būtība un struktūra* (The Nature and Structure of the Socialist Lifestyle) by Antons Straustiņš, which is a part of this series, explores the differences between the bourgeois, capitalist lifestyle and the socialist way of life, including everyday well-being, standard of living, and quality of life. The article claims that adopting a socialist lifestyle will actually enable people to enjoy greater levels of financial prosperity (Straustiņš 1975).

The portrayal of female characters
in the late socialism literature

The introduction of morally ethical principles suitable to a Soviet citizen in their everyday domestic practices was also a particular concern for writers. It might seem that didactic guidelines were no longer represented in the literature of the second half of the 20th century; however, the principles set up by the Soviet system had to be taken into account. One of the most important Latvian writers of the analyzed period is, undeniably, Regīna Ezera. One of her most well-known works is the novel *Aka*. The novel's popularity was also greatly influenced by the 1976 premiere of the film *Ezera sonāte* (The Lake Sonata) which was based on this book. Looking at the Latvian literature of this period, one can see a clearly marked transition from the canon of Socialist Realism and the general mood of didactically instructive themes (for example, in Ilze Indrāne's novel *Lazdu laipa* or the novella *Dienas prasa atbildi...* by Lija Brīdaka, as well as in Zigmunds Skujiņš's novel *Kolumba mazdēli*) to a more free expression of thought and a deviation from the accolade of the reality of socialism, particularly in such works as Dagnija Zigmonte's novel *Raganas māju remontēs* and Regīna Ezera's novel *Aka*.

What is remarkable in Indrāne's novel in terms of the images of women, is that most of the described schoolgirls live in a boarding school and their lives are as similar to each other's as the clay vases on their bedside tables: "Once a girl put a white porcelain dish in place of the vase, just like that – for a change, and pushed the brown thing behind the mirror. The teacher noticed this on the next morning. 'What's that?' she asked, very disappointed. 'Did you break it? Then you have to try to buy the same thing.' The girls understood and removed the items in silence. Everybody has the same bed, the same bedspread, the same table and mirrors, the same apron and hat…" (Indrāne 1974: 242). (Here and elsewhere – translations by the author of the article.) The literary texts show an undeniable desire to get rid of the leveling imposed during the first Soviet years; however, the texts still continue to retain the didactics and modeling of the "right choice". The Latvian fiction of the described era is a compelling material for reflection on the reality of Soviet life, social gender issues, lifestyle, education, occupation, and family patterns, specifically highlighting the images of women.

In the 1970s, the respect for the canon of Socialist Realism had already subsided, but even during this period there was still a claim for art as a pillar of the ethics and morality of an austere Soviet citizen: a text of fiction had to become the perfect model of the Soviet ideals. The existence of such a requirement is not just a hypothetical assumption, but it is also confirmed by historical evidence, such as the proposal written by the literary scholar Ilgonis Bērsons to admit Regīna Ezera into the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union: "The first deepest impression – that the member of the Young Communist League R. E. is evolving into a serious writer – has remained

with me to this day. Ezera writes about the fighters of the Great Patriotic War [World War II], about today's heroes, politically and morally strong people, and strives to influence the consciousness of backward people" (Bērsons n. d.). A similar reference was made in the minutes of a meeting at the Writers' Union in 1961, discussing the candidacy of Regīna Ezera. The poet Ojārs Vācietis describes the new writer as follows: "One of the strongest and most sympathetic qualities of her talent – an energetic quest and its fundamentality. The principles of this quest – an effort towards a true and complete representation of our contemporaries, a fight against 'pseudo-modernity' where the era is the background for very anachronic perform-ances. There are failures and exaggerations in this direction, but the direction of the expression of talent is quite right" (Vācietis n. d.). "The right principle" means the attempt to shift the reader's ethical focus from material values to the superiority of the already mentioned moral and ethical principles, highlighted as suitable for the Soviet citizen. This pattern encourages the reading of fictional texts with a focus on focus on the representation of elements of everyday life which both reflect the principle of the socialist way of life and allow for a deeper understanding and more accurate characterization of women's images. The depiction of everyday life in literary texts reveals the issues of social roles, education, professional careers, and material well-being of female characters as the dominant ones.

Education and career choice   Although the Soviet Union officially propagated gender equality, the prose texts often reveal a completely different scene where men are better educated than women, do more intellectual work and hold higher positions. This is the case in Ezera's novel *Aka* (the novel's protagonist Rūdolfs is a doctor, and "[goes] to a conference in Moscow" (Ezera 2000: 121)) and in Dagnija Zigmonte's novel *Raganas māju remontēs* ("'My husband is a journalist,' Guna said. 'I am a mere mortal. I work in a store [..]'" (Zigmonte 1969: 16)). The literary texts discussed here show a number of saleswomen, secretaries, also housewives. The described characters convey a message that higher education is less desirable for young women than for young men who make their own choices and plan to be-come architects, engineers, or aviators. Meanwhile, girls after graduating from high school follow their parents' requirements – working as salespersons, in agriculture, etc. (Brīdaka 1964: 221–222). The female characters who study also choose their field according to their parents' wishes: the professions of a doctor or actress are mentioned as suitable careers for a young Soviet woman (however, talent and certain personality traits are necessary, so not every girl can take these paths), as well as the career of a teacher. The teacher's noble task of raising the "New Soviet Citizens"

is emphasized, for example, in Indrāne's novel *Lazdu laipa*, as well as in Brīdaka's novella *Dienas prasa atbildi...*, in Ezera's novel *Aka*, etc.

Both male and female literary characters typically choose the career of a teacher. A teacher is seen as embodying high moral and ethical standards and as a representative of the ideological foundations of the Soviet authority. Moreover, the teacher acts as a propagandist. However, the image of the teacher frequently exposes the false morality of the ruling elite. In this perspective, the period's marginal texts are fascinating. They may not have received much attention when they were first published, but now they can provide some highly intriguing research material. For example, Ints Lubējs's collection of stories *Satikšanās* was published in 15,000 copies (notably, Lija Brīdaka's novella *Dienas prasa atbildi...* was published in twice as many copies – 30,000). The story *Izbalējušais aizkars* (Faded Curtains) from this collection portrays an elderly female teacher Kalnupe. This teacher is characterized as being straight, honest, and professional: "There was never a smirk on her face – neither nasty, sharp, nor with a sense of superiority; the old teacher either smiled clearly and openly, looking calm and contented, or looked with a cool, offended gaze" (Lubējs 1959: 30). But with this direct attitude, the teacher is not fit for the Soviet system, so the system seeks to re-educate her, supervise her, and look after her. She is accused of misrepresenting history because a politically neutral interpretation of historical facts in the eyes of the Soviet authorities is unacceptable, even harmful: "'But... I'm sorry,' Kalnupe's voice sounded still kind, just a little hoarse. 'I don't understand, the facts of history remain unchanged whether they were taught fifty years ago or will be taught in the future.' 'Of course! But everyone knows that these unchangeable facts might be misrepresented, or, we can say, highlighted in different ways: even incompletely, one-sidedly... wrong'" (Lubējs 1959: 21). The teacher's lack of adherence to the Soviet model of behavior and professional attitude in the narrative is explained by her refusal to embrace the new reality by clinging to the ideas of the past – and through the symbol of faded curtains that hide the new world and turn her living space gray. Towards the end of the story the reader is given a clear indication that teacher Kalnupe will adapt to fit into the socialist way of life.

In the texts dicussed in this paper, one of a woman's duties is to maintain a high moral standard, or, to put it another way, to aspire to the ideal of a socialist woman. A woman must be beautiful and well-groomed, well-educated, an interesting interlocutor, a skilled housewife, and a politically reliable member of the Komsomol or the Communist Party. During the Soviet era, party membership played an important role in career development. The literary works as well as the concept of the socialist way of life also make explicit reference to the Communist Party's demands and standards, including a warning that disobedience might result in punishment, for example:

"The party needs personalities who are honest with each other about their imperfections and are not afraid to admit them. Unfortunately, there are still self-interested individuals in our community who only enjoy their party membership privileges without providing any kind of reciprocity. We will get rid of them" (Brīdaka 1964: 115). The proportion of women in the Communist Party in the 1960s and 1970s was below 40 percent. "There are several reasons why women engage in political activity less than men do. These reasons include a lack of enthusiasm and obligations to their families and children. This problem is significant in the context under discussion since there were fewer chances for women to hold leadership roles within the Communist Party due to their lower representation. This connection is obvious, as seen by the data on women's representation at various levels of government. Of course, this is just one factor among many, as women's lower participation in political parties and state power structures may also be influenced by other factors, such as their deliberate refusal to participate in the occupation power system or their political activity related to other values and priorities" (Bleiere 2015: 111). In Brīdaka's novella, atypically for that time and therefore very noticeably and instructively, the female images have been assigned "leadership roles": a woman chairs the executive committee of a small city (an essential position in Soviet power structure) and a young teacher becomes the school principal. However, the appropriateness of both women's positions is directly questioned, and the husband of the school principal points out: "This is what happens when girls are appointed as principals and they start to get dizzy from their success…" (Brīdaka 1964: 136). In addition, the word "girl" in the Latvian text is used in the diminutive form expressing contempt. "Men still make up the majority of the official Soviet elite, including the Communist Party and the highest state administration. [..] In the reality of Soviet life and its discourse, the woman in the political and public sphere of the state was secondary. At the same time, in both formal and daily discourse, women were delegated full responsibility for the well-being of the family, children, the household, as well as the professional achievements and morals of men" (Zelče 2002: 55). Consequently, in the literary texts it is pointed out that although equality is formally supported, the woman is not suited for a high position and level of responsibility because she is too emotional, too open-minded, or childish.

In Zigmonte's novel *Raganas māju remontēs*, protagonist Guna (a bookshop saleswoman) reprimands her husband, a journalist: "[I]t was so silly of you to marry me. Intellectually, I'm so far behind you" (Zigmonte 1969: 220). Intellectual inequalities between women and men characters are reflected both in their professional choices and careers and in aspects of everyday life issues, including, for example, the selection of reading material – men's desks and shelves are filled with a serious literature and scientific texts, while women read just some "pulp fiction" (Zigmonte

1969: 428). Laura, the main character in Regīna Ezera's novel *Aka*, is a teacher, yet she does not read books. She also subscribes to a number of press publications, but neither reads them nor gives them any special significance. Meanwhile Rūdolfs, the primary male character, brings "John Updike's *Centaur* in the original" (Ezera 2000: 64) with him on the vacation trip to the countryside. It should be noted that Rūdolfs does not begin reading this book either, but this mention is significant in the story as an indication of his intellectual superiority.

Those female characters who have not been educated and hold "ordinary jobs" are sometimes portrayed as rather down-to-earth, sometimes even narrow-minded in their aspirations. For instance, an opportunity to move up from a food kiosk in the outskirts of Riga to a sales position in one of the city center luxury shops is depicted as the highest point in the career desired by a character in Zigmonte's novel *Raganas māju remontēs*:

> "Sarma, why do you work as a salesperson? At the factory, the salary is higher. And when winter comes, oh, you will be freezing in that kiosk!"

The girl hesitates for a moment and then, as if revealing a great secret, says:

> "I like being a salesperson... I would like one day to be at a department store or at *Sakta* [then the most luxurious store in Rīga – S. K.]..."

Sarma has a white work coat and a white headscarf. The *Sakta* girls all have identic beautiful gowns, their hair done and their lips colored in different shades of pink; they swirl around their mirrored kingdom. One can believe that a girl from an outskirts kiosk dreams about this (Zigmonte 1969: 153).

In the same novel, Guna is a saleswoman in a bookshop and admits: "I know, we can't live without sausages and butter, but I wouldn't be able to sell them. Maybe only bread... But books! [..] I was told I might be able to transfer to the science book-store" (Zigmonte 1969: 125). This reflects the internal hierarchy of the profession, which is typical of people working in the same field.

Everyday practices   The rejection of religious affiliation was one of the areas where a Soviet woman had to take care of both her own and her husband's moral standing. It is rare for the literary works from the analyzed period to discuss the place of religion in a Soviet woman's life. Instead, these books frequently carica-ture religious ideas and people who cling to unnecessary remnants of the past, and emphasize how incompatible religious beliefs are with good education and a modern worldview. "But the bride and groom did not come. Only later did they find out that

Nikolai and Regina had done it on another day – quietly and without any company or celebrations. [..] Everybody has their own preferences. May they live happily ever after! And then everyone was shattered as if by a bombshell – the Orehovs had been married at the Ilūkste church. Church! Regina is a member of Komsomol, a young specialist with a secondary education! Nikolai, who had just returned from the war and had seen the world, was no country bumpkin either. [..] How could this happen?" (Bušmane 1965: 15). After the Russian Civil War, Soviet authorities introduced new public holidays as well as "red baptisms", "red weddings" and "red funerals" to replace the religious rites of passage. By the beginning of the 1930s, these new private rituals had fallen into disuse and were restored only in the late 1950s (McDowell 1974: 267). The crackdown on religious practices intensified in the 1960s. "During the war years the Soviet government effected a reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church, and the newly introduced Soviet private ceremonies appeared to be a thing of the past. This "peaceful" period lasted until the late 1950s when a new attack on the churches was launched, and with that attack began the most sophisticated attempt to introduce new Soviet rituals. This attempt originated in the Baltic Republics [..]" (McDowell 1974: 268). Among the new Soviet rituals, only funerals maintained a conservative connection with the time of Latvia's past independence – including religious practices and traditions. "Only after the mourners had begun to pour out through the gate the bell fell silent. [..] Obligations to the departed were met, and customs were followed. The conversation went smoothly, with self-suppressed laughter as the minds were tired from the proximity of death. [..] When the first glasses of liquor washed away the last grief, we all felt hungry like wolves, and every-thing seemed so delicious" (Ezera 2001: 286–287). The portrayals of numerous holidays in fiction emphasizing the role of women in the family – cooking, being creative, upholding traditions – also highlight another significant societal issue of the late socialism era, namely alcoholism.

Everyone drinks – both women and men. They drink heavily and often. The choice of alcoholic beverages shows their socioeconomic status and community belonging. In Ezera's novel *Aka*, one of the factors contributing to the conflict is alcohol. Laura's husband, a drunkard, commits a crime that results in his imprisonment. Alcohol is gradually becoming a problem for Laura's sister-in-law Vija as well, since she sees holidays and partying as the only escape from her depressing everyday existence. When Vija discusses fishing with the doctor Rūdolfs, who is from a higher socio-economic level, she makes it clear that she is interested in this hobby only as a group activity "with bonfires, shashliks, and…" which Rūdolfs continues with "… and wine". But Vija, perceiving the nuance of his comment, says: "With vodka, Doctor!" (Ezera 2000: 120). In this way, Vija positions herself in a lower social status.

Both a woman who drinks alcohol herself and a woman who encourages a man to drink are viewed as questionable or perhaps unworthy. "However, ladies brought another bottle and generously treated the guys who were already barely standing up. [..] Ladies treated…" (Zigmonte 1969: 165). The meaning encoded in the ellipsis contextually indicates a condemnation.

Alcohol-related episodes in fiction echo the severe alcoholism issues in the Soviet Union. The first anti-alcohol campaign after World War II began in 1958, but it was difficult to lower the drinking levels. The next attempt to cut back on drinking followed in 1972, but it was equally unsuccessful because, in a deficit economy, alcohol was frequently used as a means of payment for services or as a bribe to gain access to various commodities. An expensive, elite, or fashionable drink was often positioned as a good gift for a woman to gain favor – sexual or communicative. "Only once did I have to stand up to go to the next room for glasses when he took a bottle of wine out of his backpack. May we live happily – as he said. [..] Cherry-flavored sweet and light wine. [..] We ate and drank. He drank the wine like water, and when the bottle was empty, he went to his backpack and pulled out the 'Crystal' [vodka]" (Belševica 2001: 116–117). The literary texts show a significant difference in the tradition of alcohol consumption – what is permissible for a man is by no means allowed for a woman (female alcoholism is more severely condemned); moreover, it is often the woman who must take responsibility for her drinking husband.

In the juxtaposition of the center and periphery, there are descriptions of a screaming social inequality. The small town in Brīdaka's novella and the outskirts of Riga in Zigmonte's novel are portrayed as having long-unrepaired houses, backyards full of weeds and poverty, goods purchased at a food kiosk and down-to-earth dreams about prosperity: "[Y]ou have to save, you have to save in every step of the way, you have to eat fried potatoes, and have to redo the same dress three times" (Zigmonte 1969: 192). This limited advantage can be contrasted with the principles of a Riga-center girl – the fashion model Judīte in Zigmunds Skujiņš's novel *Kolumba mazdēli*: "I am used to living an easy life, I need a lot of things, I would not know how to wear cotton dresses and wash the sink in a communal kitchen [..]" (Skujiņš 1966: 348).

Austerity and limited financial means describe a typical Soviet woman's world. (It is opposed to some fellow citizens' opportunity of dressing up or purchasing a car, while an average Soviet citizen looks at it askance and with undisguised envy.) And it is the women who are doing extra work at home and in their garden to make more money: growing vegetables to be sold at the market, doing handcrafts to make their own clothes, and altering old and worn-out dresses several times (Zigmonte 1969). The main character Laura's sister-in-law, Vija, in Regīna Ezera's novel makes this

principle clear in one sentence: "You cannot even tell that this fabric is turned inside out" (Ezera 2000: 52). According to studies on the Soviet realities during the time period under discussion, this portrayal of a woman's professional choice, everyday living restrictions and poverty is quite accurate. "The expansion of the service sector that occurred at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s began to draw them into the world of work, but the inequalities persisted. In spite of a substantial improvement in their level of education, women continued to do the least qualified and least paid jobs. In the 1980s there was a strong female presence in sectors such as health, education, retail sales, and catering, where wages were 20 to 30% below the national average. They were over-represented in the lower levels of all sectors of activity and all branches of industry. More than 90% of the least well-paid workers were women" (Mespoulet 2006: n. p.).

Representation of sexuality issues in the fiction of that period would be worth a separate in-depth study. Several of the texts under discussion describe the lives of divorced or broken families and the choices that must be made to keep the existing family together or build new relationships. Although the moral stance of a Soviet citizen should be to give up any sexual interest outside a legally confirmed partnership, the texts reflect a reality of life that does not fit in the norms of "the correct behavior". In this respect, the novel by Ezera should be noted: the family life of its protagonist Laura has been distorted because her husband is in prison. He is also intellectually and emotionally inappropriate for his wife who is an educated, professional teacher. Whereas Rūdolfs – Laura's passion for one summer – is a highly professional doctor who happens to be vacationing in the neighborhood. Laura, however, is strong in her sense of duty and moral stance, and while she is aware of the hopelessness of her situation, at the end of the novel she merely remarks: "Why are we all unhappy?" (Ezera 2000: 219). It verbalizes the notion that the right and morally ethical choices are not the ones that make someone's life easier or happy. The statements in the book *Audzināšanas un pašaudzināšanas loma personības veidošanā* (The Role of Upbringing and Self-Education in Personality Development, 1975), written by Skaidrīte Lasmane and Augusts Milts within the above-mentioned series *Auxiliary Material for Lecturers*, echoes this: "While in traditional upbringing adults served as role models for children to imitate, the contemporary upbringing demands to raise better, wiser people than the educators themselves. In these circumstances, the role of self-education is becoming particularly important. The educator is mainly a model of self-education. [..] Personality begins with self-education, with a certain amount of self-choice and the opportunity to be responsible for that choice" (Lasmane, Milts 1975: 13). Laura (and it is important that Laura is a teacher) is a striking example of such decisions and self-education, since she maintains a mindset of tolerance,

does not object, accepts and obeys the circumstances, and does not waver in her choices. In the novel, Laura never eats or sleeps to her liking, never speaks openly, practices continuous self-restraint, and never encounters sincere, genuine, whole-hearted love. Everything is and remains within the bounds of tolerance. And she teaches her kids these boundaries by setting an example for them, while verbally expressing her disagreement with the educational system's current inclination to place children at the center of attention.

Mothers of young women and men in fiction are also worried about the choices made by their children. In addition to sexual desire or emotional and intellectual com-patibility, a question is also raised about the material welfare aspect in the potential marriages. Mothers urge their children to reflect on the consequences of the decisions they make: to secure their future or to give in to feelings and to risk leading their future lives into poverty (here, too, there is a contradiction with the opportuni-ties for young families proclaimed in the official Soviet rhetoric). Skujiņš's novel *Kolumba mazdēli* presents the following dilemma: the young and beautiful Judīte has decided to marry the old but wealthy Šumskis (who, by the way, is still a married father of two children, but his desire for the young woman seems to be stronger than the nuptial tie). She rejects Lipsts, the protagonist of the novel who has made the right socialist choices: "If you knew how I didn't want to! But you don't know my mother [..]. On the one hand, she is right: you and I, we are not meant for each other. [..] You're still very young. You still have to learn and to conquer your position in society. We would be fighting poverty and arguing every day about money. I know myself, Lipsts. When counting kopecks, women age prematurely, they get ugly" (Skujiņš 1966: 348). Consequently, the choice of the young woman is also linked to her own desire to continue to live comfortably – to enjoy the opportunities provided by material well-being and various informal contacts which even in the Soviet system allow to overcome the general shortage of goods and services and to obtain a variety of additional benefits and (including the desired clothes or expensive drinks brought from abroad which are so coveted by the Soviet citizen).

Conclusion   During the socialist era, literary works played a vital role in shaping people's behavior, directing cultural and social practices, influencing social interactions, and constructing gender identities. Literature was an important part of building the "socialist way of life". In this context, Latvian literature assisted Soviet institutional authorities in communicating the concept of the ideal socialist woman. This ideal woman became a crucial ally in implementing socialist ideas in the everyday lives of Latvians, as the Soviet Communist Party aimed to refocus the competition

with the West from material conditions and standards of living to qualities that were far more difficult to measure directly – emotional, personal, and ethical morals and values. However, the descriptions of the daily life of a Soviet citizen in the literary works examined here reflect the reality where material values were undeniably essential and, no matter how committed and poetical the depiction of the "right choices of the Soviet citizen" were, it contradicted with the people's desire, at least in their everyday life, to strive for satisfaction and fulfillment.

Female writers – for example, Regīna Ezera and Dagnija Zigmonte – played an important role in Latvian literature of the 1960s and 1970s. They actualized the image of the contemporary woman in their works, encouraging to contemplate a woman's social role, behavior, lifestyle, education, profession choice, and so on. The fictional women became a paragon of the ideal Soviet woman, but nevertheless the literary works in the 1960s and 1970s portrayed Soviet realities quite true to life.

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Solveiga Daugirdaitė

Dr. philol., literary scholar

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

E-mail: solveiga@llti.lt

DOI: 10.35539/LTNC.2023.0052.09

**Cultural Life in the 1960s in the USSR
as Reflected in *Tout compte fait* (1972),
the Autobiography of Simone de Beauvoir**

**Kultūras dzīve PSRS 20. gadsimta 60. gados
un tās atspoguļojums Simonas de Bovuāras
autobiogrāfijā *Tout compte fait* (1972)**

Summary   The article aims to discuss cultural life in the USSR in the context of the changing cultural policy in the 1960s as reflected in Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs. During the period from 1962 to 1966, de Beauvoir was visiting the Soviet Union regularly together with Jean-Paul Sartre, spending several weeks in different parts of the country. Unlike Sartre, she left a written account of the political, economic, and cultural situation in the USSR. De Beauvoir captured the transition from the so-called Thaw to the Stagnation that occurred during that decade. During their first visits, the atmosphere was still rather liberal and a desire to communicate with the West was still present, but soon the persecution of dissidents and the anti-semitic trials began. This article emphasizes the importance of autobiographical books in de Beauvoir's oeuvre, highlighting, on the one hand, the narrator's accuracy and attention to detail and, on the other hand, her efforts to shape the narrative at will, bypassing uncomfortable aspects (such as tensions in her relationship with Sartre and the real role of some people in their life). De Beauvoir's most important sources of information were the liberal writers of the time such as Ilya Ehrenburg and Yefim Doroch, as well as translator Lena Zonina and others. De Beauvoir's sympathy for the Soviet system, like Sartre's, is still a source of controversy, while her description of the changes in cultural life of the Soviet Union in the 1960s can be a valuable resource for researchers of the Soviet era.

Kopsavilkums   Šī raksta mērķis ir aplūkot PSRS kultūras dzīvi 20. gs. 60. gadu kultūrpolitikas pārmaiņu kontekstā un tās atspoguļojumu Simonas de Bovuāras memuāros. Laikposmā no 1962. līdz 1966. gadam de Bovuāra regulāri apmeklēja Padomju Savienību kopā ar Žanu Polu Sartru, uzturoties pa vairākām nedēļām dažādās šīs valsts vietās. Atšķirībā no Sartra, viņa ir atstājusi rakstiskas liecības par PSRS politisko, ekonomisko un kultūras situāciju. De Bovuāra ir fiksējusi attiecīgajā desmitgadē norisinājušos pāreju no t.s. Hruščova atkušņa uz stagnācijas laikmetu. Pirmajās reizēs, kad de Bovuāra un Sartrs ieradās PSRS, atmosfēra tur vēl bija samērā liberāla un pastāvēja arī vēlme uzturēt kontaktu ar Rietumiem, taču drīz vien sākās disidentu vajāšanas un antisemītiskās tiesas prāvas. Šajā rakstā uzsvērta autobiogrāfisko grāmatu nozīmība de Bovuāras literārajā mantojumā. No vienas puses, tiek izcelta viņas kā stāstītājas precizitāte un uzmanība pret detaļām, bet no otras puses – viņas vēlme veidot naratīvu pēc savas gribas, apejot neērtos aspektus (tādus kā saspīlējumi viņas attiecībās ar Sartru un dažu cilvēku patiesā loma viņas dzīvē). De Bovuāras svarīgākie informācijas avoti PSRS bija tālaika liberālie rakstnieki, tādi kā Iļja Ērenburgs un Jefims Dorohs, kā arī tulkotāja Ļena Zoņina un citi. De Bovuāras un arī Sartra simpātijas pret padomju režīmu joprojām tiek vērtētas pretrunīgi, taču viņas vērojumi par 20. gs. 60. gadu pārmaiņām PSRS kultūras dzīvē var būt vērtīgs materiāls pētniekiem.

Introduction   The autobiographical books[1] of Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) – philosopher, writer of fiction and nonfiction works, and a social critic, one of the central figures of the second wave of feminism in the 20th century – are of interest to scholars in several ways.

First of all, these books document de Beauvoir's own life project of becoming a female intellectual in a previously male-dominated world. Secondly, as Jean-Paul Sartre's lifelong companion, de Beauvoir documented their shared experiences, so Sartre's biographers refer to her autobiographical books as sources for his biography alongside their correspondence and her account of Sartre's last years, *La Cérémonie des adieux* (Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre, 1981). Thirdly, de Beauvoir's work, both fiction and nonfiction, sheds light on the lives of French intellectuals and the development of philosophical, political, and literary thought over half a century. One more impetus for reading de Beauvoir's texts may be her legacy as a witness not only to her own French culture, but also as an observer and appreciator of other cultures. It is precisely this area of her work – and more specifically, a part of one of her volumes of autobiography – that is the subject of this article. Although de Beauvoir did not dedicate a separate publication to the Soviet Union, unlike China and the USA, her descriptions of the couple's trips to the USSR attract the attention of scholars. Nicol Dziub distinguishes de Beauvoir's case from other 20th-century French writers' descriptions of their trips to the USSR which mark "a turning point, when the 'honeymoon' turns into the 'age of suspicion': the beautiful dreams of Soviet communism are gone, and travelers 'bump into' the brutal reality of Stalinism" (Dziub 2022: 3). De Beauvoir differs, as Dziub points out, from many other authors by the fact that she visited the USSR decades after them. When in 1955 de Beauvoir first arrived in Moscow, the authority of socialism had been undermined by the irrefutable knowledge of the existence of labor camps. It is worth adding that, unlike many other writers, de Beauvoir's intensive contacts and visits occurred throughout almost the entire 1960s, and thus allowed her to witness the constant changes in cultural life and cultural policy.

De Beauvoir's trips to the USSR and her interactions with Russian cultural figures are also captured in her fiction. Her novella *Malentendu à Moscou*, written between 1966 and 1967, did not appear until 1992. Éric Levéel points out that, in relation to

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1   *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter, 1958), *La force de l'âge* (The Prime of Life, 1960), *La force des choses* (Force of Circumstance, 1963; sometimes published in two volumes in English translation: "After the War" and "Hard Times"); and *Tout compte fait* (All Said and Done, 1972).

the regime, "the story remains quite critical, and one can already feel the ideological and personal crack" (Levéel 2022: 10) and draws parallels between the novella and the final volume of de Beauvoir's autobiography, which was written a few years later. This article will be limited to the nonfiction work *Tout compte fait*.

Temporal distance changes the reader's relationship to the text. It is conceivable that readers in the last century, especially those living in the USSR, would have found inaccuracies. Today, life in the USSR in the 1960s is more often of interest only to a small group of curious readers, such as scholars who were researchers at the time. Modern readers with no first-hand experience of the period have other privileges, in particular more information and analysis about the so-called Thaw period. However, de Beauvoir's overview of the period provides a generalized, compatible, but also detailed panorama of life in the USSR in the 1960s. Thanks to de Beauvoir's talent as a writer, the reader can feel, through the details provided, what is romantically called "the spirit of the times".

Controversial autobiographer Simone de Beauvoir

Although de Beauvoir's autobiographical books primarily reflect the development of her own personality and views, travelogues are only one of the subjects of these books. Nevertheless, travelogues play a special role in the narrative because, as Simone Fullagar points out, "travel has a metonymic relation to the passage of Beauvoir's life, in which the existential extremes of anguish and ecstasy are played out in a (feminine) quest for self-knowledge" (Fullagar 2001: 289). Since de Beauvoir loved to travel, her autobiographical books reveal how the geography of her travels expanded over the years, and she devoted separate books to her visits to China and the USA. Although autobiography, according to Philippe Lejeune's classic definition, tells the story of the writer's existence "where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Lejeune 1989: 4), de Beauvoir's aim in writing her autobiographical books was to be accurate in documenting political and social events. In this fourth and final volume of her autobiography, recording her life from 1962 to 1971, her travels in foreign countries occupy a large part of the text.

Like any autobiographer, de Beauvoir decides which facts are worth mentioning and which, for one reason or another, should be glossed over in the narrative of her life. This is a conscious choice on the part of the author, and the omissions may be worthy of a separate study. Like in the previous autobiographical books, some details of her personal life known from other sources are not mentioned in this book. For example, Sartre's biographers indicate that one of the reasons for his frequent visits

to the USSR in the 1970s was personal, because Lena Zonina was not only his trans-lator but also his lover, to whom Sartre dedicated his autobiographical novel *Les Mots* (1963) "*À madame Z.*", which was later translated in Russian as *Slova* (1966) by Zonina herself. De Beauvoir does not mention this aspect, although she calls her "our closest friend [..] a handsome dark woman of about forty, exceptionally cultivated and intelligent" (De Beauvoir 1993: 284). All the more so as the text does not directly mention the other functions that were routinely performed by USSR officials working with foreigners.[2] Protecting her own privacy and that of others, de Beauvoir does not mention the other circumstances of the trio's relationship: the couple's biographer points out that de Beauvoir's ("ever-obliging chaperone") presence in the USSR was necessary to distract outsiders from the connection between Sartre and Zonina (Rowley 2006: 273). This distinction between reality and text only reaffirms the conventionality of the distinction between fiction and documentary literature.

While this volume offers a glimpse into de Beauvoir's views after her direct encounter with Soviet reality and thus provides valuable material for Soviet studies, in the context of de Beauvoir's own autobiographical books it has been viewed with reservations by some scholars. In Toril Moi's opinion:

> The power of Beauvoir's writing .. is directly dependent on the degree of disavowal she engages in. When she refuses to confront – to name – the sources of her pain, her texts read like laundry lists [..]. In her published memoirs, such 'writing of disavowal' is particularly noticeable in *All Said and Done* [..]. So much disavowal turns the volume into a lifeless ghost of an autobiography, a mere chronicle of official duties, rather than an exploration of lived experience (Moi 2008: 250–251).

Jo-Ann Pilardi also distinguishes this volume from the others, noting:

> The reader senses that this autobiography will raise no questions for the author; she thinks there is only one important question left: how and when she will die. Indeed, she sounds finished (Pillardi 1999: 116).

It is possible that the general mood of disillusionment may have been com-pounded by disillusionment with communism as a project for the betterment of the world, a project that was admired in the mid-20th century by both Sartre and other left-wing French intellectuals. However, her links with Soviet (mainly Russian) culture and its figures were significant for her in the last decade, and naturally left a human and cultural rift.

De Beauvoir's autobiographical books provide insights into Sartre's life and work but raise valid questions about their relationship. Sartre was her lifelong companion (from 1929 until his death in 1980), and de Beauvoir's association

2   Excerpts from six Zonina's reports to the USSR Writers' Union in her capacity as a consultant to the Foreign Literature Commission of the USSR Writers' Union were published in 1991 (see: Zarzycka-Bérard 1991, 161–168).

with him helped her to remain in the epicentre of French intellectual life. Although de Beauvoir's autobiographical books are primarily about her own life experiences, in this volume her first-person narrative is often replaced by the plural "we" and "our". This reflects the reality of the situation: they travelled extensively in that decade precisely because of the socio-political activities of Sartre, who was heavily involved in many international events (especially the pro-Soviet peace movement) and who was a member of the so-called Russell Tribunal, which was investigating the crimes of the US during the Vietnam War. Sartre was one of the vice-presidents of the European Community of Writers (COMES), which "was founded in 1958 at the proposal of the Italian National Union of Writers just to counteract the action of the Pen Club which had adopted a closed-door policy towards the Soviet Bloc writers"[3] (Sicari 2019: 142). However, de Beauvoir's autobiographies give a one-sided view of these relationships. She hid some of her feelings, including tension and resentments, especially in old age, and tolerated Sartre's macho behavior. As Michael Walzer points out:

> Writing about philosophical opinions and political commitments that they shared, she almost always describes herself walking a step or two behind Sartre, sometimes dragging her feet, sometimes hurrying to catch up" (Walzer 1988:153).[4]

She has described her relationship with communist regimes according to this model: "As for our relations with the Communist Party and the socialist countries, there I followed Sartre in his fluctuations" (De Beauvoir 1993: 27). Sartre, whose relationship with Communist regimes was constantly evolving, became active in the pro-Communist International Peace Movement from 1952 onwards. His sympathy for the socialist states and his support for the USSR's foreign policy at international events, as well as his and de Beauvoir's visits to the country in the 1960s, was criticized both during Sartre's lifetime and after his death in 1980, and even more so after the "death of communism" in 1989 (Birchall 2004: 4). According to French Sovietologist Cécile Vaissié who studies Sartre's relations with the USSR:

> Sartre did not want to understand that .. he was arriving at societies that were severely traumatized by decades of extreme political violence. He hardly perceived the traces of this violence and did not fully appreciate the ideological control surrounding him. He probably did not want to undermine his philosophical and political constructs by overly pragmatic realities (Vaissié 2017:11).

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3   The European Community of Writers ceased its activities in 1968, as did the visits of de Beauvoir and Sartre, due to the criticism of Western writers against the USSR for its suppression of the Prague Spring.

4   However, despite the insistence on Sartre's superiority in autobiographical books, in some areas she undeniably surpassed him. In Walzer's opinion, "[a]s as social critic [..], de Beauvoir undoubtedly comes first. [..] And for all his influence, the first of her critical books, *The Second Sex*, has touched more lives and started more arguments than everything he wrote" (Walzer 1988: 154).

Although the KGB archives are closed to researchers, biographer Carole Seymour-Jones is of the opinion that Zonina was used as a decoy by Soviet Security: "Manipulated by the KGB, Sartre was a puppet on a string" (Seymour-Jones 2009: 424). De Beauvoir's books hardly delve into Sartre's complex, contradictory relationship with the communist reality. It is worth pointing out that, while believing in it as an idea in the 1960s, Sartre was an anti-Stalinist. De Beauvoir's assessment of Soviet cultural figures, too, divides them into anti-Stalinists and Stalinists. Among the latter, she included Mikhail Sholokhov for whom she immediately felt antipathy.

Being Sartre's travel companion, de Beauvoir rarely attended public events, except for meetings with local intellectuals. With a more relaxed schedule, she devoted her time to preparing for her travels and learning about the culture of the region, primarily by reading but also by watching films. She seemed to enjoy not only seeing new places, but also recognizing what she knew extramurally. For example, she compares an object in reality with its image in a classic Soviet film from 1925 by Sergei Eisenstein:

> Odessa. For me it meant above all the famous flight of steps of Battleship Potemkin. From above they are not very striking: from below, although a few have been taken away to leave room for the road running along the quays and although it no longer plunges straight into the sea, it is as impressive as it was in the film (De Beauvoir 1993: 322).

De Beauvoir visited many regions of the Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Moldova. She knew Russian and some East-Central European cultures not only from books, but also from her friends' stories. One of them was Stepha Awdykowicz-Gerassi who many years ago told her friend Simone de Beauvoir about her childhood in Lviv, then part of Poland. This is probably why de Beauvoir found herself in Lviv feeling a connection to her past, and why the city made a good impression on her, reinforced by her recognition of European culture in the landscape. She wrote:

> How remote it seemed to me in those days! And how the world has shrunk since then, seeing that I found it so natural to be there! The town is more akin to central Europe than to Russia. Its finest buildings were in the Austrian baroque manner, and they had lovely double-hipped green roofs. We went into a Catholic church; it was full of people all singing beautiful hymns, many of them young (De Beauvoir 1993: 323).

Personal connections seem to have influenced de Beauvoir's assessments. Of the Soviet republics visited, Estonia (and Tallinn in particular) is perhaps the one described with the greatest admiration. De Beauvoir admires the architecture, the culture of service and the understanding, tactful nature of the Francophile Sempers couple who accompany her. As Marek Tamm points out, it was Jean Cathala (1905–1991)

who persuaded Sartre and Beauvoir to visit Estonia.[5] Lacking emotional relation-ships and close sources of information, she often approaches these republics from a more touristic point of view, presenting their history with little or no insight into their literary and cultural situation. For example, she mentions the placenames of both Lithuania and Georgia, but does not mention the names of the people who, alongside Zonina, accompanied her on her travels in these republics. She refers to the presi-dent of the Georgian Writers' Union by his nickname, Prince, "because he came from a princely family" (De Beauvoir 1993: 297). Naturally, de Beauvoir could recall the nickname easier than the Georgian surname. Alexia, whom Beauvoir met in Paris and who was writing a thesis on Sartre, was the only Georgian whom Beauvoir addressed by her first name. Not knowing the local language, Zonina could not trans-late the Georgian table ceremony, which seemed long and boring to the guests. De Beauvoir did not question the relationship between the center and the periphery, although she notes that "[t]he Russians deported many Estonians immediately after the war merely because they were Estonians" (De Beauvoir 1993: 310). When writing about Lithuania, she mentioned that "it was not incorporated into the USSR without difficulty" and that "[a]t present it does not appear that Russians are much loved in Lithuania" (De Beauvoir 1993: 315). We know from the memoirs of disillusioned Lithuanian writers that Sartre, who was sensitive to the damages of colonialism, was expected to give at least symbolic support to their national culture, and that instead they were encouraged to write in the so-called "great languages" (Russian, English, or French).[6] This is just one detail that shows how different the expectations and interests of the two sides were.

Sartre was not an authority for everyone in the USSR either. In 1966, Solzhenitsyn refused to meet him, explaining that Sartre was being published and he was not, and that it would be too painful. According to de Beauvoir, this answer "surprised" them and was not quite clear; what they "did see quite clearly was the fact that for a writer the greatest curse of all was being condemned to silence, to darkness" (De Beauvoir 1993: 321). It is difficult to tell whether de Beauvoir did not see in this answer a diplomatic but categorical subtext that the Russian writer considers Sartre a hench-man of the Soviet government persecuting writers.

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5   Jean Cathala, an acquaintance of Sartre's from the *École normale*, had taught French in Estonia from 1929 to 1941 and was now working in Moscow as a journalist and translator.

6   More on de Beauvoir's and Sartre's visit to Lithuania: Daugirdaitė 2015; Daugirdaitė 2018.

The rise and fall of the Thaw period   By the time she wrote *Tout compte fait*, de Beauvoir and Sartre had already become disenchanted with the Soviet Union, both in terms of its foreign and domestic policies, and therefore felt no longer loyal to the country whose advocates and agents of influence on the global political stage they had been for almost two decades. However, they had never turned away from the people they had met in the USSR. The friends who remained behind the Iron Curtain, both in the USSR and Czechoslovakia, are the subject of de Beauvoir's regret with which she concludes Chapter 6 of *Tout compte fait*:

> I am writing these lines in May 1971 [..]. The Russians have finally disappointed all our hopes. Never has the situation of the intellectuals been so critical. None of our friends can obtain permission to come and see us anymore, and we know that they all feel completely powerless. Amalric[7] , for having told the truth about his country, has once again been sent to Siberia [..]. The Leningrad trial[8] has clearly shown the antisemitism that is so rife at government level in the USSR. Not without regret, I believe I shall never see Moscow again (De Beauvoir 1993, 336–337).

However, it would be too one-sided to suggest that de Beauvoir did not understand the difficult situation of the people living in the USSR. After denouncing the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, Sartre and de Beauvoir were no longer wanted in the USSR. Thus ended a decade of intensive communication not only with the country but also with specific people. It is likely that it was the realization that the friends who stayed in the USSR needed to continue living under the regime's conditions that prevented the writer from openly criticizing the Soviet system.

De Beauvoir's autobiographical narrative focuses on life events, countries, and people, as if accepting reality as it is. As de Beauvoir's concluding words in Chapter 6 of *Tout compte fait* make clear, it is not so much the failure of the hope of "communism with a human face" that is regretted, but the bonds of friendship she had formed with the people over the course of that decade of visits.

She paid the most attention to Moscow somewhat less to Leningrad, where the events that determined the general direction took place and where the guests from France spent the most time. Naturally, she identified with Russian literati and evaluated situations based on their positions. One of the most important sources of information was the writer Ilya Ehrenburg, who "told us all about Russian cultural life and its hidden sides" (De Beauvoir 1993: 282–283). De Beauvoir presents Ehrenburg as an intellectual who had lived in France for a long time between the two world

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7   Andrey Amalric (1938–1980) – Russian dissident. Forced to emigrate from the USSR in 1976.

8   In 1970, a group of 16 people planned to hijack a plane and escape to the West, but were intercepted. Although all were imprisoned, the case received international attention and Jews finally were allowed to emigrate from the USSR.

wars, who knew the Parisian artists of the time, and who had amassed an art collection that included works by Chagall, Léger, and Matisse. De Beauvoir and Sartre visited him both at his home in Moscow and at his dacha, were he "was very proud of having introduced a plant unknown in Russia: the artichoke" (De Beauvoir 1993: 283). In her portrayal of Ehrenburg, de Beauvoir mentions his views that are not close to her own, such as his restrained appreciation of modernist writers such as Kafka, Proust, and Joyce, and even his "no more than partial appreciation of Sartre's work" (De Beauvoir 1993: 283). Observing the material situation and even the health conditions of Russian writers, she draws wider conclusions about life in the USSR. Noting that Ehrenburg has "only one tooth left" and does not have dentures, de Beauvoir wonders why Russian dentists make their patients suffer. It is not clear whether de Beauvoir was aware of Ehrenburg's controversial articles as a Soviet propagandist during the World War II calling for the ruthless killing of Germans, which could have led to the Red Army's violence against civilians on German territory.

Another direct source of information on the situation was Jean Cathala in Moscow. Yefim Doroch, an art critic interested in agriculture who wrote about it in *Novy mir*, was more sympathetic to literary modernism than Ehrenburg, but did not speak French. It is difficult to be more precise about Lena Zonina's role in shaping the French visitor's view of Soviet reality, although it must have been very significant, if not the most significant. She accompanied the guests on their travels, offering her own interpretations of what they saw. De Beauvoir admired her organizational skills in navigating the complex situations that inevitably arose when foreigners travelled as individual tourists in a country full of prohibitions and restrictions. Zonina had a collaborative relationship with Ehrenburg: first she became his secretary, then Ehrenburg found her a job with the Writers' Union (De Beauvoir 1993: 285). Feeling threatened as Jews, Ehrenburg and Zonina made a significant contribution by informing guests about the manifestations of antisemitism in the USSR.

De Beauvoir captured the transition from the Thaw period to the Stagnation that occurred during that decade. During her first visits, the atmosphere in the country was still rather liberal and a desire to communicate with the West was still present: "Khrushchev asserted the necessity of a coexistence based upon peaceful competition" (De Beauvoir 1993: 282). De Beauvoir used to start with a panoramic view of literary events and would then go into the details. Her first visit is described optimistically:

> The liberalization of culture went on during the autumn of 1962. In October, with Khrushchev's consent, *Pravda* published Yevtushenko's poem *Nasledniki Stalina* (The Heirs of Stalin), which denounced the continuing existence of Stalinism – the poet called for the tripling of the guard over Stalin's tomb to prevent him from coming to life again. Khrushchev also allowed *Novy mir* to publish Solzhenitsyn's

book *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich), which described his experiences in the Stalinist camps (De Beauvoir 1993: 286).

Although Khrushchev had already cursed modern artists at the exhibition in the Manege, they still saw the exhibition and enjoyed modernist artists such as Falk, Tishler, and sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, whose works were soon withdrawn. Next year, in 1963, she again presented an overview:

> The cultural situation had deteriorated since the winter. On 8 March 1963, Khrushchev addressed an audience that included party and government leaders, writers and artists; it was a speech twenty thousand words long in which he [..] made a vehement attack on formalism and abstraction in writing and the fine arts, firing several broadsides at Ehrenburg, Nekrassov, Yevtushenko and even Paustovsky (De Beauvoir, 1993: 288).

In the following year, 1964, de Beauvoir presented subsequent events: the "cursed" painters were no longer exhibited, and only a few of them sold their paintings to foreigners "who were allowed to take photographs, ancient or modern, from outside the country for as long as the Tretyakov Gallery confirmed that they had no commercial value" (De Beauvoir 1993: 304). These and similar absurdities of Soviet reality are mentioned by the writer mostly without comment, but the very choice to mention them can be seen as a kind of criticism of the regime. There is also a subtle irony in her remarks on the constant changes in translation policy. She describes the situation of 1964 as follows:

> One of Kafka's stories, *A Report for an Academy*, had been translated, and there was talk of publishing *The Trial* – talk that came to nothing, however. In 1962 Brecht had been suspect: he strayed too far from socialist realism. In 1964 the theaters were opening to him: in Leningrad there was an excellent production of *Arturo Ui*. Lena had translated Sartre's *Words* (De Beauvoir 1993: 304).

The following year's account of a visit to the USSR continues this story: "Kafka was still not translated, although indeed he was now presented as a victim of capitalism and not as a decadent pessimist" (De Beauvoir 1993: 313). Contrary to the current image that life in the Soviet Union was monotonous, planned, and predictable, de Beauvoir presents it as chaotic, unpredictable, and constantly creating new obstacles to artists' work. She mentions the constantly changing situation of people who were important to her, such as Ehrenburg whose writings were being printed and withheld. She focuses on cinema that flourished in the post-war Europe. De Beauvoir noticed that local intellectuals and students, both in Lithuania and in Lviv, were asking questions about French *nouveau roman* and Italian neorealist cinema. During the Thaw period, a new wave of directors came to Soviet cinema, trying to introduce a more modern cinematic language.

The complexities of the filmmaking process were known only to a small circle of people involved, but the knowledge of the tortuous working processes circulated among intellectuals. Interest in the intricacies of film production was seen as an indicator of censorship activity, and de Beauvoir and Sartre were periodically informed of developments. It is worth noting in advance that the films whose production de Beauvoir retells are considered to be groundbreaking in the history of USSR cinema. On a visit in 1963, de Beauvoir recounts:

> Friends had told us of a film about the conflict between the generations called *The Lenin Barrier* that they had seen at a private showing; and they praised it very highly. Khrushchev tore it to pieces (De Beauvoir 1993: 288).

Writing about her visit to the USSR the following year, de Beauvoir notes the complicated history of the film: "*The Lenin Barrier* was still under the censors' ban: The film only came out much later, and then in a deformed and mutilated version" (De Beauvoir 1993: 288). In 1964, another talented young filmmaker comes to the attention of Moscow's intellectuals, including de Beauvoir: "Tarkovsky was making a film about Rublov: They forced him to rewrite his script, and he foresaw that there were going to be great difficulties" (De Beauvoir 1993: 304). Writing about her visit to the USSR in 1965, she returns again to the story of this film: "And Tarkovsky still could not get permission to make his film of Rublov. But it did seem that hope was allowable" (De Beauvoir 1993: 313).

De Beauvoir admired neither Khrushchev's policies nor him personally, so the changes at the top of political hierarchy in the autumn of 1964, when Leonid Brezhnev took over the country, initially even gave hope that culture would be able to develop more freely. She wrote of the perhaps "happy consequences" for culture: Solzhenitsyn, Akhmatova, and Pasternak were released. The improving situation of Joseph Brodsky was probably also encouraging for a while. As early as 1964, Ehrenburg gave a detailed account of Brodsky's case:

> He gave us the inside story of the Brodsky affair: it was one that all our friends found very painful indeed – some went so far as to speak of a 'return of Stalinism' – but they did not know the details. Brodsky was a young red-haired Jew who lived in Leningrad and who wrote poems; he earned his living as a translator, but he was not part of any state organization, and he did not belong to the Writers' Union (De Beauvoir 1993: 304).

De Beauvoir recites Brodsky's speech in court, emphasizing the anti-semitic and anti-intellectual nature of the case. In 1965, Sartre signed a petition to Anastas Mikoyan, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the USSR. The academic Vyacheslav Ivanov recalls that, in an attempt to rescue Brodsky from exile, he asked Zonina to talk to Sartre: "It seems that it was his appeal that played a decisive role" (Ivanov 2009: 33). However, other anti-semitic dissident trials, notably of Andrei Sinyavsky

and Yuli Daniel who were accused of having published anti-Soviet works abroad under pseudonyms, and finally the events in Czechoslovakia brought to an end their period of travels to the USSR once and for all.

Conclusion

From the post-Soviet perspective, de Beauvoir has been and continues to be criticized for being too tolerant of the Soviet reality in *Tout compte fait*. Nevertheless, she managed to capture the contradictions of the 1960s – the constant and unpredictable changes in cultural policy, the optimism mixed with a sense of the absurd, and the efforts of people to create under the most adverse conditions. These qualities of the people made de Beauvoir admire them despite the ambiguity of her relationship with the USSR.

This last volume of her autobiography shows Beauvoir's own aestheticized way of traveling: She seems to follow literary and cinematic texts and the sentiments of close people and friends, having formed a preconceived image. Although critics point to a certain stagnation of her personality during this period, *Tout compte fait* reveals the evolution of her views on the Soviet system. Although the socialist state impressed left-wing intellectuals, a first-hand encounter with it led to a gradual disintegration of the Soviet myth, as they observed the details which, for the philosopher and cultural critic, eloquently testified to the contradictory nature of the Soviet system.

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Saulius Vasiliauskas

PhD, literary scholar
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
E-mail: vasiliauskas@llti.lt

The History of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter and Its Relations with Young Latvian Writers in the Soviet Era

Viļnas jauno literātu sekcijas vēsture un attiecības ar latviešu jaunajiem literātiem padomju laikos

Summary   Since the beginning of the Soviet period, the authorities paid particular attention to the control and "education" of the new generation of writers by organizing conventions for beginning authors, establishing literary circles and young writers' chapters at schools, universities, and editorial departments, and organizing writing competitions and camps for newcomers. One of the most important institutions in Soviet Lithuania for educating the new writing generation formally was Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter (*Vilniaus jaunųjų rašytojų sekcija*), a subdivision of the Writers' Union. It was important in terms of debut and (non)integration into the literary field, as involvement in its activities was almost a necessity if one wished to become a member of the Writers' Union and to start publishing their books. As the conditions of the field started changing in the 1960s, Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter eventually began to renounce its initial goals and started focusing on discussions regarding literary aesthetics, criticism, genres, generations, and other issues unrelated to politicized discourse. One of the significant aspects of the Chapter's activities was its relations with Riga Young Writers' Association (*Rīgas jauno literātu apvienība*). Even though such collective connections among the "brotherly republics" were officially promoted by the Soviet regime, young writers could use them to network, widen their perspectives and accumulate social as well as cultural capitals.

Kopsavilkums   Padomju Savienībā kopš tās pirmsākumiem varas pārstāvji pievērsa īpašu uzmanību rakstnieku jaunās paaudzes kontrolei un "izglītošanai", organizējot iesācēju literātu sanāksmes, dibinot literāros pulciņus un jauno autoru sekcijas skolās, universitātēs un preses izdevumu redakcijās, kā arī rīkojot literārus konkursus un nometnes iesācējiem. Padomju Lietuvā viena no svarīgākajām iestādēm, kas formāli nodarbojās ar jaunās rakstošo paaudzes izglītošanu, bija Viļņas jauno literātu sekcija (Rakstnieku savienības apakšnodaļa). Tai bija liela loma autora debijā un (ne)integrācijā literārajā vidē, jo iesaistīšanās sekcijas aktivitātēs bija gandrīz obligāts priekšnoteikums katram, kas vēlējās iestāties Rakstnieku savienībā un publicēties. 20. gs. 60. gados, kad apstākļi šai jomā sāka mainīties, Viļņas jauno literātu sekcija pamazām atteicās no saviem sākotnējiem mērķiem un pievērsās diskusijām par literāro estētiku, kritiku, žanriem, paaudžu atšķirībām un citiem ar politisko diskursu nesaistītiem jautājumiem. Viens no Jauno literātu sekcijas darbības nozīmīgākajiem aspektiem bija attiecības ar Rīgas jauno literātu apvienību. Kaut arī šos kolektīvos kontaktus starp "brālīgajām republikām" oficiāli veicināja padomju režīms, jaunie autori tos varēja izmantot, lai tīklotos, gūtu plašāku perspektīvu un uzkrātu gan sociālo, gan kultūras kapitālu.

Introduction   In order for the authorities to control various areas of the public life more easily, the Soviet regime established and maintained a dense network of state institutions that obligated various social and professional groups to live up to the regime's expectations. In the said network, a special role was allocated to artists – especially writers – since they, deemed to be "engineers of the soul", had to use their works as tools for bringing forth the image of the new socialist "reality". In order to control them, special literary institutions[1] were being established, the central among them being the Writers' Union. Overseers of the regime paid special attention to young beginning writers, because it was particularly the youth that could potentially bring about riots and other changes unfavorable to the Soviet regime. According to Loreta Jakonytė, despite the fact that young writers had already been distinguished as a separate group in pre-Soviet Lithuania, "the distinct attention towards debutants and the desire to control and educate them was brought to Lithuania by the occupying power, following the transferal of the supervisory measures practiced in the Soviet Union" (Jakonytė 2015: 115). (Here and elsewhere – translations by the author of the article.)

In the entire Soviet Union, the same model of controlling and educating young writers was applied. Schools and higher education institutions founded literary circles, and each Writers' Union had a special Chapter and a Commission dedicated entirely to the work of young writers. The latter also participated in various competitions, camps, and internships designed specifically for them and regularly consulted with literary advisors. However, this practice did vary to some degree. For example, contrary to its Lithuanian counterpart, Riga Young Writers' Association[2] (*Rīgas jauno literātu apvienība*) continued its activities after Latvia had regained its independence and formally disbanded only in 2007. Meanwhile the Young Authors' Association (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Junger Autoren*) of the German Democratic Republic was dissolved as early as 1974 in order to, according to Axel Reitel, reduce the excessive division between "young" and "senior" writers: its elimination as a separate structural unit helped to reform the whole system of applying for membership in the Writers' Union (Reitel 2007: 75–114).

From sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's[3] methodological viewpoint, the institutions dedicated to young writers' development can be interpreted as collective participants

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1   Literary institutions of the Soviet Lithuania have been discussed by Rimantas Kmita (Kmita 2019).

2   The situation of young writers in the Soviet Latvia has been studied in Signe Raudive's master thesis (Raudive 2017).

3   Wider application of Bourdieu's model while researching the Soviet literary field is discussed in one of my articles (Vasiliauskas 2018).

of the field. They regulated the rate of young writers' debut and integration into the literary field. Some of them experienced prolonged stay at the said institutions, received harsh criticism for their works, and were not allowed to publish books. Meanwhile, others were able to establish themselves inside the institutions more quickly, became members of the Writers' Union and took part in the official literary life with more ease.

In this context, Bourdieu's term *illusio* which defines the faith in the meaning of literary activities and an interest in participating in the literary game[4], gains more relevance. Even though the said faith was undoubtedly nurtured in the informal circles that were created further away from the official rituals (e.g. gatherings of smaller groups of peers, reading each other's works, indulging in the bohemian way of life, etc.), participation in the aforementioned institutions also had an impact on the level of writers' *illusio* – it could increase or decrease it, raise doubts as to the prospects of one's participation in the literary field or, on the contrary, encourage one to participate more actively. Having these and the aforesaid things in mind, it seems significant to research not only the developing activities of the Writers' Union but also the history of its subdivisions, dedicated to young writers making their debut. Even though, at first glance, the functioning of such institutions may seem self-explanatory, only after collecting sufficient amounts of information and analyzing the latter one can fully understand the relation between ideology and attention to text aesthetics inside such institutions and the impact they had on the development of young writers.

Thus the aim of this article[5] is to descriptively reconstruct the model of the institutional network of young writers in the Soviet Lithuania by concentrating on the historical dynamics of one of its central institutions, Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter. The article is based on various sources (documents, publications in the Soviet press, memoirs[6], interviews, etc.) typically used in similar studies. These sources may be divided into the four following groups: archival documents (various protocols, verbatim reports, personal files and so on); recollections and ego-documents; press publications (in newspapers, magazines and almanacs); and specially prepared semi-structured interviews.

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4   According to Bourdieu, "[the literary] game makes up the *illusio*, the investment in the game by the informed player who, possessing a sense of the game because made by the game, plays the game, and thereby makes it exist" (Bourdieu 1995: 290).

5   This paper is partly based on my PhD thesis, which I have defended in the autumn of 2021 (see: Vasiliauskas 2021).

6   Memoir sources can be divided into two groups: the first being the texts written in the Soviet period (diaries and letters), and the second encompassing recollections and autobiographies published after Lithuania regained its independence.

While reconstructing the history of this branch of the Writers' Union, I aim to distinguish the most important directions of its activities, briefly discuss their development, identify the more active members, and examine the practices of participating in this institution as well as attitudes towards the latter from a today's perspective. In order to assess the real impact of Soviet control (inertia and dysfunctions), the final part of the article focuses on one particular aspect of the Chapter's activities: the creative collaboration with the Latvian Young Writers' Association (*Rīgas jauno literātu apvienība*), which corresponded to the Communist Party's directive to cultivate the friendship and international relations among the "brotherly republics".

It is hoped that this paper will contribute to a better understanding of the place of this institution in the whole field of Soviet-era Lithuanian literature, as well as provide an impulse for potential comparative studies analyzing, for example, the similarities and differences between the institutions that "supervised" young writers in different republics of the Soviet Union.

The model of young writers' institutional (self-)development network

In the occupied Lithuania, systemic gathering of young writers began shortly after the end of the war. In 1945, the **Soviet Writers' Union of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic** with headquarters in Vilnius was formally established under the USSR Union of Writers. Not long after that, **Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter** began its operation, followed by the **Commission for Work with Young Writers** in 1947. Schools and higher education institutions opened their literary circles, the most important among which was the one in Vilnius V. Kapsukas University.

The supervision of the young writers was centralized. Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, and Panevėžys chapters, circles, or literary conventions were frequented by representatives of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter and/or the Writers' Union, as well as by political figures (representatives of the Leninist Young Communist League of Lithuania and the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party). The most significant directives and recommendations (for instance, to organize national conferences for young writers) were sent from Moscow and then practically applied in Lithuania. Trips to other republics and creative internships were also organized and their results presented during the meetings of the Chapter. Upon becoming members, young writers put effort an into utilizing the privileges (including the

implied privileges) of the membership. With the hopes of receiving monetary benefits, traveling allowances[7,] and tools necessary for their job (e.g. paper and typewriters), they applied for acceptance in the Literary Fund themselves. The more active ones could even be put on an apartment waiting list[8].

The procedure used in Soviet Lithuania to control young writers and their entrance into the literary field can be called ***the institutional network of young writers' (self-)education***, where "education" refers to the fact that the Soviet system aspired to create an "army" of loyal writers ("engineers of the human soul"), and "self" signifies the situations where, instead of obeying the orders of the system, young writers searched for ways to use the aforementioned network for more authentic creative endeavors.

This network can be viewed as a model that represents certain steps of the initiation into the literary field: the first step, which can be called **"early initiation"**, is related to school (in this case, the important factors include the role played by the teachers, the existence of literary circles at schools or editorial departments of local newspapers, young writers' competitions, camps and publications, and columns in mainstream media specifically aimed at the younger audience). The second step – **"middle initiation"** – is related to the academic environment and literary circles at universities or other higher education institutions, as well as the cultural climate of the city where studies take place, and writers as authority figures that one can encounter while studying. The third step – **"(non)establishment"** – is linked with the Writers' Union (a membership that officially certifies a writer's status). This entire model was supervised by an extensive censorship[9] apparatus and the KGB.

All these typical[10] steps were supposed to lead a writer towards their first book. However, fiction publishing in Soviet Lithuania was monopolized. Self-publishing

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7   For example, in 1947 a young writer Jonas Rozga requested the Literary Fund to cover his expenses of traveling to a Crimean sanatorium. However, the request was denied due to "comrade J. Rozga's lack of significant contribution to Lithuanian literature" (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 33. l., 77 lp.).

8   E.g., the prominent poet Donaldas Kajokas (born in 1953) received an apartment while he was the chairman of Kaunas Young Writers' Chapter (Kajokas 2019).

9   The censorship in Lithuania and Latvia have been thoroughly discussed by Streikus (Streikus 2019: 737–762).

10   Of course, future writers were not obligated to make all the said steps, but not joining the Writers' Union meant that almost all doors to the official literary field remained closed.

(*samizdat*) aside[11], the only official option available to young authors was to publish their books through the State Fiction Publishing House (which was renamed *Vaga* in 1964).

Each of these closely intertwined steps had a formal hierarchy, at the top of which were heads and chairpersons of institutional units, more active old-timers with bigger symbolic capitals, employees of editorial offices (responsible for cultural and literary columns), advisors, organizers, and members of commissions. In the informal (internal) hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, mutual assessment, present/potential symbolic and social capital were among the things that were important. It was specifically through this internal hierarchy – implemented during socialization – that the circles of like-minded individuals and groups of "us" vs. "them" were formed. Eventually, the participants of the field would ascertain whose opinion was noteworthy and whose was not[12] .

From the dark post-war period to the relatively bright late Soviet era: tracing the history of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter

Even though Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter operated sporadically already in 1940, it truly started its long-term activities on 7 February 1946[13] when the first list of members was compiled, the first chairman poet Kostas Kubilinskas[14] (1923–1962) and the board were elected, and the goals as well as bylaws were discussed. The members decided to meet weekly,

11   Vilius Ivanauskas summarizes that most writers "[w]ith the exception of Tomas Venclova, did not join the dissident movement and did not produce *samizdat* literature. Underground literature in Lithuania neither copied the model of Moscow intellectuals nor had the same idols. The existing configuration in Soviet Lithuania whereby even opposition poets and writers were part of institutional processes and gained the status of official writers illustrates the fact that the UW [Writers' Union] embodied a particular configuration" (Ivanauskas 2014: 656).

12   For example, when talking about Kaunas Young Writers' Chapter, Donaldas Kajokas claims: "There were some leaders whose opinion mattered to me. Others constituted background noise" (Kajokas 2019).

13   The Young Writers' Chapter also existed for a few months in Kaunas in 1941, with poet Eduardas Mieželaitis as its chairman.

14   A prominent poet, known for his children's poetry. In 1947, he was recruited by MGB (a Soviet security agency) and started collaborating with the Soviet authorities.

organize literary events and visit the literary circles of smaller towns. The main activities of the Chapter were as follows:

- Discussions of the creative work and first book manuscripts;
- Organization of literary events and trips and attendance of those organized by others (including the camps for creative youth organized by the Leninist Young Communist League of Lithuania and the all-union congresses in Moscow);
- Development and maintenance of relations with other Chapters and circles, with young artists in other fields and young writers from other Soviet republics (mostly the neighboring ones – Latvia and Estonia);
- Collaboration with senior writers;
- Integration of young critics and translators into the Chapter's activities;
- Initiation of the new generation into the literary field (by discussing and assessing their texts and positions of the candidates, allocating the symbolic capital);
- Promotion of publishing and literature in general (participation in radio and TV programs, visits to literary competitions for school students and so on);
- Ideological training (reports and discussions of political topics, collaboration with collective farms and the like);
- Formal administrative activities (chairperson's reports, board elections and distribution of responsibilities).

From the very beginning, the Young Writers' Chapter became a "hoop" that one had to jump through in order to participate in the public literary life and to gain the title of a "Soviet writer". However, in the difficult postwar period more informal initiatives (such as the Monday meetings in Eduardas Mieželaitis's apartment[15]) emerged, while the officially sponsored and politically supervised network weakened. Vilnius Chapter, although central in the republic, did not function as its founders had hoped: the beginning of its activities was plagued by public complaints about poor conduct during meetings as well as failures to implement plans, and press reports (full of slogans and ideological babble) that emphasized the members' low interest in activities, "remnants of a decadent spirit", and the need to visit various enterprises, factories, and plants in order to report on the "building of Socialism". Some of the young people embraced these activities enthusiastically and demonstratively; others refused, at least in part, to submit to the new parameters of literary activity and were sanctioned and/or expelled from the list of members.

Every year, the Chapter organized a number of meetings where the texts written by its members were discussed, presentations were made (usually on ideological

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15   According to Elena Baliutytė-Riliškienė, "the young people used to gather every Monday in Mieželaitis's apartment where it was possible to talk more freely, without having to write minutes" (Baliutytė-Riliškienė 2019: 68). Eduardas Mieželaitis (1919–1997) was a prominent poet with an established position in *nomenklatura*, a Lenin Award winner and a long-time chairperson of the Lithuanian Writers' Union (1959–1970).

topics, e.g. "How to Eliminate the Lag of Topics on Collective Farming"), and the writings of the authors most praised and idolized by the Soviet system were analyzed (e.g. those by Vladimir Mayakovsky, Maxim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy and others). During the meetings, offers were made to assist and consult the Chapter's weaker writers. Meanwhile, if a first book manuscript of a certain member received positive feedback, the board used to urge the State Fiction Publishing House to publish it. See, for instance, a letter written on 3 April 1952 to Albinas Žukauskas, editor-in-chief of State Fiction Publishing House, by the literary critic Vytautas Kubilius (1928–2004):

> On the 2nd of April, during the meeting of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter, Br. Mackevičius's collection of poems *In Formation* was discussed. The young poet's first collection was highly appreciated by the Chapter members. A decision was made to request the administration of the State Fiction Publishing House to start preparing the collection for publishing immediately. In order to assist the author, his collection must be reviewed as soon as possible, and the editing process should soon follow (LALA, 34. f., 1. apr., 288. l., 9 lp.).

Some of the young people imitated the imperative elements of Socialist Realism, i.e. the new rules of participation in the field or the *nomos*[16], very straightforwardly. Thus the meetings resembled a monotonous performance during which the actors changed roles, but did the same things over and over again by repeating the same ritual practices. In 1953, poet Algimantas Baltakis (1930–2022), then chairman of the Chapter, stated:

> Our meetings are often grey and uninteresting. We tend to talk about the most elementary things, things we have heard hundreds of times before. The only difference between meetings is often the fact that during one of them, Peter is "agitating" John, while during the other, John is "agitating" Peter on the same issue. Not only the young writers, but also the older ones have developed a harmful habit of rehashing the same things – like a broken record. If someone says something better or makes a mistake, and somebody else speaks up about it, this topic will travel from one meeting to another, from one newspaper to another, from one conversation to another endlessly (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 287. l., 117. lp.).

The main authority of the Chapter, the board (comprising nine people, two of which were the chairman and the secretary), was elected during annual debriefings[17].

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16   *Nomos* is Pierre Bourdieu's term for the specific norms of a given field that regulate the actions of actors. Although, according to Bourdieu, they are usually not publicly declared but simply collectively understood by the participants in the field (Bourdieu 1995: 223–227), in the Soviet empire they were declared, emphasized in public discourse and controlled by the monopoly of political power (non-compliance with the *nomos* could lead to severe sanctions or, especially in the early Soviet era, to elimination from the field).

17   In the minutes of the meetings, such areas of the Chapter's activities as *quantitative growth, political education of members, organizational work, support of senior writers*, etc., which demonstrate the structure of ideological education, are emphasized.

During these meetings, the chairperson presented an annual report and, together with other members, discussed plans and tasks of the upcoming year. The work of the Chapter was evaluated from an "industrial" viewpoint – i.e. by estimating its artistic production (books and publications) per year and assessing its active participation in the literary life. All members used to receive episodic letters from the chairman, demanding to provide information about their creative activities[18]. Those who wanted to become members had to meet the official requirements which included providing recommendations from two other participants in the field, having some works published in the mainstream media, and submitting a motivational-biographical application.

The most active members of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter during the early Soviet period (Mykolas Sluckis, Jonas Avyžius, Vytautas Kubilius, Antanas Jonynas, Adolfas Sprindis, Tatjana Rostovaitė, Alfonsas Maldonis, Algimantas Baltakis (from 1952), Justinas Marcinkevičius (from 1953) and others) used the Chapter to network and to establish themselves in the Writers' Union (where they soon secured senior positions) and in the literary field in general. Vilnius Chapter started receiving requests from representatives of libraries and editorial offices to organize literary events in smaller towns and to evaluate texts written by members of local literary circles[19]. The atmosphere in the Chapter and the scope of indoctrinating beginner authors at that time are evident from the memories of J. Marcinkevičius, who was one of the most prominent poets of the 1930s generation (along with Baltakis and Maldonis):

> On 6 May 1953, I became the member of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter. On 5 October 1954, I was elected its chairperson, and two weeks after that – the secretary of the Komsomol Organization of the Writers' Union. Under my leadership, neither the Chapter nor the Komsomol organization did anything special. At that time, creative reports and discussions of first books were popular and often attended not only by members of the Chapter and the Komsomol organization, but also by litterateurs from higher education institutions – especially universities – and by journalists from youth media. We urged the writers to be active and appreciate not only books but also

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18   An example of such a letter: "In order to maintain the communication with its members, the Board of the Young Writers' Chapter of Vilnius Region requests to receive regular information about your work – what you are writing at the moment, your previously published pieces, and assistance you are in need of [..]. As a member of the Chapter, you have the duty to organize a local young litterateurs' circle. It must operate under the editorial office of the local newspaper and gather the strongest litterateurs in your district [..]. Please inform the board about how the procedure of organizing literary circles in the district is implemented" (LALA, 34. f., 1. apr., 288. l., 4. lp.).

19   A letter from a library in Panevėžys to the secretary of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter (4 April 1947): "We invite and hope to see you at our literary-art event. The entire community of Panevėžys – workers, pupils and working intelligentsia – are waiting for you to come. Hopefully, not in vain" (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 38 l., 104. lp.).

separate poems, short stories and feature articles as well. At that point, the Writers' Union only had about fifty members – maybe that was the reason why we didn't feel a particular division between beginning and senior writers. One could say that we all enjoyed the same rights. [..] There was a particular word: combativeness. It sat at our meetings, spoke from the podium, interfered in our assessments, was stern and, unfortunately, not always fair (Marcinkevičius 1986: 24).

After Nikita Khrushchev denounced the Stalin's cult in 1956, ideological restrictions became looser. Nevertheless, the meetings retained their declarative Soviet rhetoric, and those who opposed it were condemned.

Censorship and editing practices were also discussed during the Chapter meetings or less formal conversations afterwards. For example, the poet Jonas Jakštas (b. 1931), who worked in the editorial office of the *Švyturys* magazine from 1957 to 1963, recalls how the then editor-in-chief Alfonsas Bieliauskas (1923–2018) banned the printing of a poem by the younger generation poet Judita Vaičiūnaitė (1937–2001), which contained the lines "[..] fates, like traffic lights, / here change their colours – red, yellow, green [..]" [colors of the flag of independent Lithuania – SV]. This incident was later discussed in the Chapter: "A meeting of the Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter took place soon after. Judita had apparently already told someone that I had rejected her poem (and of course why). The young poets started to make fun of me. I told them point blank who actually did it [..]" (Jakštas 1992: 58–59).

At the beginning of the 1960s, there were attempts to expand the communication with the creative youth from other artistic unions, e.g. musicians, painters and cinematographers, and these activities fell under the responsibility of the Writers' Club[20]. Nevertheless, the most interesting and less formalized literary initiatives came to life in the academic environment, nurtured first and foremost by students of Vilnius University. Poet and prose writer Henrikas Algis Čigriejus (1933–2016), one of the most passive members of the Chapter, whose debut happened considerably later than that of his peers due to his extraordinary position that opposed the system, did not consider the membership to have been of particular importance. In his opinion, the consultations that his friends – Sigitas Geda (1943–2008) and Marcelijus Martinaitis (1936–2013) – provided while preparing his first book were much more impactful. This proves that members of the Chapter were not expelled permanently, and their activeness in the literary field held more significance:

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20   The Writers' Club, which was established by the Writers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR in the autumn of 1945, was responsible for the promotion of literature and the organization of events with writers. In addition to the more traditional activities such as creative evenings and celebrations of writers' anniversaries, the Club's plans included exhibitions and discussions of artists (and also of publishing and book illustration); meetings with composers, geologists, and scientists from other fields; talks on various topics (e.g., "on the hygiene of a writer's work and rest" or "experimental medicine"); and trips to visit workers.

I was a member [of the Chapter – SV] until they expelled me, because I didn't publish anything [..]. Most probably, up until something like 1960, I was nowhere to be seen. So they kicked me off the list. However, when my first book was published in 1971, they kind of brought me back to the Chapter. It was OK for me to come back then. But, actually, it was both Marcius and Sigitas who had helped me publish my book – they contributed. I brought them the manuscript, I mean the typescript, and asked to mark the places I should get rid of or edit. I still have the manuscript with all their notes. I corrected a couple of things, and it got approved (Čigriejus 2015: 165).

However, even in the Chapter during the second half of the 1960s after the beginning of the Thaw there were events that were well remembered by the participants and testified to the liberation of the regime. One of the most memorable meetings was a discussion of the work of the poet Tomas Venclova (b. 1937, emigrated to the USA in 1977). Venclova's modern poetics were not warmly received by the older generation of writers loyal to the Party. Raimondas Kašauskas (b. 1934), then chairman of the Chapter, recalls:

[W]hen I just started working as the Chapter's chairperson, the sleepy literary life was invigorated by a special event – the discussion of Tomas Venclova's poems. Oh, the amount of commotion it generated!.. The poems were presented by Vytautas Kubilius who had reviewed them. They were unique and reminded of the works of such "Silver Age" Russian poets as Boris Pasternak or Osip Mandelstam, also the pre-war Lithuanian poets. In addition, Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* had been recently published, and there was a lot of outrage due to that: in factories, meetings were held to condemn the book, even though their attendees hadn't even read it… After Venclova read his poems, everybody was shocked – the youth sat quietly but showed a lot of interest, whereas some senior writers started berating and even attacking the author. You see, there was no balance of power… And we, the young ones, listened with our jaws on the floor, even though we couldn't entirely understand where this poetry was coming from (Kašauskas 2022: 151).

During the 1970s when the Chapter was joined by such charismatic, bold and more open-minded writers as Vytautas P. Bložė (1939–2016), Sigitas Geda (from 1965), Marcelijus Martinaitis and others (who later on became the most prominent modernizers of the Lithuanian poetry), the discussions during the meetings became more and more lively, more vigorous and more provocative. This change, in its turn, rejuvenated the literary life. For example, during one meeting, instead of simply giving feedback about the writings of the candidate authors, Bložė attempted to raise much broader questions about the expectations of readers and the importance of an author's individuality (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 587. l., 8. lp.). Among others, the attitude of the famous prose writer Saulius Tomas Kondrotas (b. 1953), who later joined the Chapter, stands out. In the recommendation by the literary scholar Algimantas Bučys, written when Kondrotas joined the Writers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR, it is stated that Kondrotas disturbed "the formalism and staleness of the meetings of the Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter" (LALA 34. f., 4. apr., 104. l., 17. lp.). Reading

the minutes of the Chapter's meetings, it seems that Kondrotas simply did not hit the mark and was looking for more critical arguments that were not tied to ideological "truths". Today he recalls his behavior during the Chapter meetings as follows: "I tried to liven up the discussions. I was young and arrogant and said what was on my mind. And it wasn't always praise" (Kondrotas 2018: 142).

The records from those meetings reveal that not only did the viewpoints of the more charismatic and bolder newcomers affect and enrich the proceedings of the meetings, but they also signaled about the inner climate becoming freer and gradually losing its formal performative rhetoric.

However, following the events in Kaunas in 1972 – the self-immolation of student and dissident Romas Kalanta and the massive protests demanding the freedom of Lithuania –, the efforts to control the young writers became more intense. In 1976, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union passed a resolution "Regarding Work with Creative Youth".[21] The more demanding ideological "education" was also reflected by the number of Chapter members which suddenly started growing in the 1970s. The changes in the said number were as follows[22]:

Year	Number of members
1961	33
1970	34
1971	37
1972	50
1975	61
1977	64
1978	72
1980	63
1981	69

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21   Literary critic Valentinas Sventickas (born in 1948), who was the Chapter's chairperson from 1976 to 1978, claims that it brought about more attention to young writers: "The thing is that in 1976, I think, CC of CPSU passed a resolution 'Regarding Work with Creative Youth'. That's why I have information in my notes about the chairperson of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter 'having the honor' to speak at important forums: the Writers' Union Convention (1976), the Conference of Young Creative Workers (Art Workers Palace, 1977), the Meeting of Writers where the new USSR constitution was discussed (1977), the Plenum of the Writers' Union Board (1978), etc. The Party did take care of us and our ideology indeed!" (Sventickas 2011).

22   The figures are not entirely accurate because they also used to change during the year, as new members were admitted or inactive members were removed (I have not been able to locate all the lists in the archives, but there is a tendency in the lists shown).

However, instead of signaling easier access, the increase in the number of members and their average age indicated "frozen" memberships, delays in publishing first or second books, and deliberate obstacles to join the Writers' Union.

While discussing the main factors that helped to enrich the Chapter's meetings in the Late Soviet period, **the role of the critics** must be pointed out. By providing a more comprehensive and deeper analysis of creative texts and/or by giving longer presentations, they – Jūratė Sprindytė (b. 1952), Marijus Jonaitis (Šidlauskas, b. 1953) and others – brought more vitality to the overall activities of the Chapter. The goal of these discussions – especially during the last decade of the Chapter's existence – was to provide a broader view of the literary field, formulate tendencies of development as well as to question its tradition, social positions and standpoints.

From 1983 to 1987, the chairman of the Chapter was Vaidotas Daunys (1958–1995) – a poet and an active literary persona, who maintained a more problem-oriented and more academic atmosphere during the meetings. Not only did he undertake personal initiative, but also encouraged and supported the ideas of others as well. For example, the poet Alis Balbierius (b. 1954) associates the Chapter with the beginnings of an environmental movement that took the form of an ecological march:

> And he [Daunys] organized, on my initiative, the ecological march of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter [..]. We swam in the Žeimena and the Neris rivers. With us were Braziūnas, Daunys, me, a friend of mine who worked as an ornithologist in Cape Ventė, and Valentinas Pabrinkis (Balbierius 2011).

Prose writer Danutė Kalinauskaitė (b. 1959), who joined in 1981 (at the same meeting as Daunys), appreciates her participation in the Chapter's activities and has expressed an opinion that, compared to the Writers' Union, the Chapter had more power and strength in the intellectual sense, and occupied a hierarchically superior position than Vilnius University Literary Circle:

> When Vaidotas [Daunys] came to head it, he raised the intellectual bar considerably. [..] What impressed me was that there were a lot of young literary scholars there: it was the kind of company that was well prepared not only for creative but also for theoretical reflection. It was elevated to a certain level, and this level came with Daunys. [..] But in terms of the preparation of its people, its intellectual level, the Chapter was way above the [Writers'] Union (Kalinauskaitė 2020).

In 1984, Daunys initiated discussions in the Chapter about the necessity to publish a new almanac of young authors' writings. After two years, in 1986, the first issue of *Veidai* (Faces) saw the light of day.

In 1988, the third issue of the said almanac included commentary on the topic "Chapter or study?" It represented different attitudes of young authors regarding collective activities as well as the correlations between loneliness, individuality and teamwork. Kalinauskaitė, who thinks highly of the Chapter's activities, emphasizes

the intellectual level of its discussions that were later published in the almanac: "The situation in the Chapter is well reflected by *Veidai*. The most beautiful and impressive feature of the latter was the attempts to discuss things in an essayistic manner, reflect on them from a theoretical standpoint and to formulate problems" (Kalinauskaitė 1988). Whereas literary critic Marijus Jonaitis (Šidlauskas, b. 1953) discusses the factors that unify the members and questions the necessity to upgrade the Chapter: "The idea that, in order to achieve a more radical upgrade, we should all go our separate ways and make room for our younger colleagues, is also correct. But the younger colleagues are not very eager to take our place – are we supposed to drag them here like conscripts?" (Jonaitis 1988). In addition, writer Markas Zingeris (b. 1947) has a critical outlook on the social-climbing of young authors: "[I]t seems that everybody wants to be accepted into the admired Writers' Union, instead of listening to their own voice…" (Zingeris 1988).

Some of the young people in the Chapter opted for a passive (formal) participation strategy. For instance, the famous essayist Rolandas Rastauskas (b. 1954) recalls that he rarely visited the Chapter because, according to him, the atmosphere in the Chapter was depressing: "I remember only Vaidotas Daunys, with whom I soon became closer. I believe that he was the reason I joined the so-called 'forge of future Soviet Lithuanian writers'" (Rastauskas 2020); whereas the (former) poet Virginijus Gasiliūnas says: "I never exaggerated my affiliations, nor did I ever do anything there" (Gasiliūnas 2019). The poet Ramutė Skučaitė (b. 1931), who was on the Chapter's official list, claims: "I did not participate in any gatherings. Sometimes I think that maybe I haven't lived at all? In the sense of literary activity, of course" (Skučaitė 2015). This raises the question: to what extent such retrospective assessments are determined by the position of a particular writer in the local literary field – and by the development of the field itself?

By the end of the 1980s, the Chapter's activities became increasingly more fractured, and finally stopped altogether. In the midst of political change, the outlook on the literary institutions created during the Soviet period was also changing. The young writers' chapters lost their significance and became irrelevant. Even though the Writers' Union remained after Lithuania had regained its independence, and has been active up to this day, the functions of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter – or any other chapter for that matter – have not been renewed.

Relations with young Latvian writers   The promotion of literary connections among the "brotherly" Soviet republics constituted an official part of the Soviet politics. The main forms of maintaining such relations were translations and their publications (through separate columns in the press dedicated to showcasing the literature of other republics) as well as participation in literary events and festivals in other republics.

The relations between Lithuanian and Latvian writers have been extensively discussed by Kęstutis Nastopka (see: Nastopka 1971). According to him, they started during two meetings of writers – the one in Vilnius in 1952 and the one in Riga in 1956, when "for the first time after the war, delegations visited each other's countries and established closer personal relationships" (Nastopka 1979). Signs of such creative collaboration can be found in the history of young writers' Chapters as well.

Former members claim that the communication with the young Latvian writers – members of Riga Young Writers' Association – was one of the most significant activities of the Chapter. It became more intense during the 1960s and the 1970s, as the writers from both countries organized joint events and trips and published mutual translations (in historical documents, such communication was ideologically called "the international education of the young generation of authors").

The translator Arvydas Valionis, who avidly contributed to maintaining this relationship, claims that the first seeds of the collaboration with the young Latvian writers were planted in 1961, when a Latvian language circle was established at Vilnius University. The Chapter, in its turn, helped to develop and accelerate it:

> Later on when we, the writers of Vilnius and Riga, started collaborating, in my opinion, it was the most incredible period that lasted for about five years. We used to exchange groups – we used to go to Riga one year, and then the Latvians used to visit us the following year. We travelled around Latvia, visited literary spots, writers' museums, attended meetings, read translations... (Valionis 2019).

However, there are traces of an even earlier collaboration between the Chapters of young Latvian and Lithuanian authors – e.g. the almanac *Jaunieji*, published in 1957, which included the translations of poems by Arvīds Skalbe, Andris Vējāns, Ojārs Vācietis, Jāzeps Osmanis, and Jānis Plotnieks. The same year in Latvia, the newspaper *Padomju Jaunatne* (the issue of 15 December 1957) introduced the column "Words of Young Lithuanian Writers" (that, among others, presented the creative works and ideas of Antanas Drilinga, Judita Vaičiūnaitė, and Jonas Jakštas) and a small delegation of Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter, supervised by its chairman Eugenijus Matuzevičius, visited Riga. In 1958, a group of young Latvian authors came to Vilnius, and in 1959 some members of the Chapter travelled to Riga and Tallinn – funds for such trips had been acquired from the board of the Writers' Union.

The Chapter's annual report of 1973 mentions a gift that came to be a symbol of this collaboration: "During a TV program, the Latvians pleasantly surprised our Chapter with a present – a tree branch of the Latvian poetry (a wooden carving), in the hope that it would become something like a prize for translations of Latvian poetry. We gladly turned it into a prize, which is now awarded every year for the best translation of a Latvian poem into Lithuanian" (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 625. l., 49. lp.). The Chapter undertook not only to organize meetings with young Latvian writers every two to three years, but also to publish an annual "page presenting the work of young Latvian writers with a review article by a Latvian critic" (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 625. l., 76. lp.) in the press. In 1980, the 5th issue of *Nemunas* included texts by the young Latvian poets Knuts Skujenieks, Māra Misiņa, Māra Zālīte, and Viktors Avotiņš. In the introduction, Zita Mažeikaitė stated that this represented "the fruit of the strengthening friendship between Vilnius and Riga young writers' Chapters" (Mažeikaitė 1980: 37). At the end of October 1983, members of the Riga Young Writers' Association – Inese Zandere, Klāvs Elsbergs, Hermanis Marģers Majevskis and Māris Melgalvs – visited Vilnius and Panevėžys. But how were these connections viewed and assessed by the writers themselves?

Danutė Kalinauskaitė, who became a Chapter member on 26 March 1981, recalls the relations with the Latvians as a positive experience: "I remember our trip to Riga. [Hermanis] Marģers Majevskis, Judita Vaičiūnaitė's husband, took us to Riga to meet not only its young writers, but also the members of their Writers' Union." In addition, Danielius Mušinskas claims that the communication with the Latvians was one of the more interesting activities of the Chapter: "I remember Māra Zālīte, who became the senior editor of the *Karogs* magazine later on, also Hermanis Marģers Majevskis, who spoke Lithuanian and played the role of our representative. At that time, the chairman of the Young Writers' Chapter was Dainis Grīnvalds – I've noticed that his works are still being published in the Latvian literary periodicals." Furthermore, Virginijus Gasiliūnas has claimed: "To us, this communication with Latvians or Estonians seemed more meaningful than with the young writers from Kaunas or with the students studying literature at the Pedagogical Institute" (Gasiliūnas 2019). Moreover, more than once, during the Chapter meetings, the Lithuanians discussed the things they could learn from their neighbors' Chapter, and even suggested an idea to publish collections of Lithuanian and Latvian prose, which, unfortunately, did not come to fruition. Daunys argued: "Whether or not we will adopt the experience of the Latvian study is a matter for debate. Their profile is different" (LALA 34. f., 1. apr., 891. l., 5. lp.).

The tangible outcome of this Lithuanian-Latvian friendship was two publications – a collection of poetry by 10 young Latvian authors published in Lithuania in

1983, called *Mes atėjome į šį pasaulį* (We Have Come to This World), and a collection *Ausmā dzimusi sirds* (A Heart Born at Dawn), published in Latvia in 1984:

Mes atėjome į šį pasaulį (compiled by A. Valionis, introductions by K. Skujenieks), 1983 [3000 copies]	*Ausmā dzimusi sirds* (compiled by H. M. Majevskis), 1984 [5000 copies]
Pēteris Zirnītis, Uldis Bērziņš, Jānis Rokpelnis, Leons Briedis, Dagnija Dreika-Matule, Māra Misiņa, Māra Zālīte, Hermanis Marģers Majevskis, Māris Melgalvs, Viktors Avotiņš	Onė Baliukonytė, Gražina Čieškaitė, Gintaras Patackas, Vidmantė Jasiukaitytė, Almis Grybauskas, Antanas A. Jonynas, Algirdas Verba, Jonas Kalinauskas, Rimantas Vanagas, Zita Mažeikaitė, Vytautas Rubavičius, Kornelijus Platelis

This is just a brief attempt at reconstructing the traces of this communication, becauce a more conceptual analysis would require a separate and a more detailed study.

Today, this relationship can be assessed from two different perspectives – formal and informal. From a formal standpoint, such relations were encouraged by the system and their establishment was fostered artificially. But at the same time, they promoted informal communication, cultural exchange, and the expansion of literary horizons.

Conclusions   In the literary field of Soviet Lithuania, Vilnius Young Writers' Chapter was one of the pivotal institutions that brought young writers together and was supposed to "educate" them. When the conditions of the field started changing, the Chapter began receding from its initial goals (which became more of a façade) and started focusing on discussions regarding literary aesthetics, criticism, genres, generations and other actual issues.

Membership in the Chapter helped to accumulate symbolic capital as well as social (grouping), cultural, and economic capital (fees for events and writers' trips; higher chances to get a flat), and also helped to legitimize the status of a writer. Statements by former members demonstrate that the official, i.e. façade-ideological purpose of the Chapter was outweighed by the aura created by the participants and their common belief in the meaning of literary activity or – in the words of Pierre Bourdieu – the *illusio*. Interestingly, some members of the Chapter chose to be active participants (e.g. D. Kalinauskaitė), while others remained passive observers / formal affiliates (e.g. H. A. Čigriejus).

The historical development of the Chapter may be briefly summarized as follows. During the post-war period, when the institutional network for supervising writers was being created in Lithuania and the said process faced certain difficulties, the Chapter's meetings were dominated by an ideological rhetoric, clichés of Socialist Realism and behaviors of putting up a façade. Young writers were often criticized for being passive (instead of the desired "combativeness") and for displaying politically disloyal conduct which was deemed inappropriate for Soviet writers. After denouncing the Stalin's cult from the end of the 1950s through the beginning of the 1960s, the Chapter's meetings started having more discussions about the aesthetic aspects of texts. The most significant stage in the Chapter's existence, probably, was the period from the middle of the 1970s until 1988. At that time, the role of young critics participating in the meetings became more prominent: their presentations and discussions generated deeper literary reflection and an overall rejuvenation of the field. During the years of Vaidotas Daunys' chairmanship (1983–1987), the Chapter's meetings, characterized by intellectual discussions as well as theoretical (auto)-reflection, became even more academic. Afterwards, the Chapter started operating in an increasingly fragmentary manner, until its activities stopped altogether and were not renewed following the regaining of the country's independence (contrary to the Latvian Chapter).

One of the most important aspects of the Chapter's activities, discussed separately in the article, was communication with young writers from other republics, especially Latvia. These relations, even though formally promoted by the Soviet regime, failed to meet the system's expectations, as they were typically employed as a convenient infrastructure to create informal relationships, distribute personal works, participate in free discussions as well as develop personal talents and aesthetic tastes. Arguably, the most important evidence of these connections were two collections of poetry translations by ten Lithuanian and ten Latvian authors, published in the 1980s.

In summary, the Chapter can be interpreted as a collective participant of the literary field in the Soviet Lithuania, which regulated the debut and initiation into the literary field in a twofold manner:

1) from the institutional perspective, it could help to become or prevent from becoming a member of the Writers' Union of the LSSR;
2) from the sociological perspective, participation in its activities enabled the accumulation of one's symbolic, cultural and social capital and helped to legitimize the identities of the participants in the literary field (i.e. writers or critics), expand one's worldview, and accelerate or delay the movement towards the center of the field.

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Viktorija Jonkutė
PhD, literary scholar
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
E-mail: viktorija.jonkute@gmail.com
DOI: 10.35539/LTNC.2023.0052.11

The Discourse of the Past and the Role of Memory in the Lithuanian and Latvian Cultural Press during the Transition Period (1988–1992)

Pagātnes diskurss un atmiņas loma lietuviešu un latviešu kultūras periodikā pārejas laikposmā (1988–1992)

Keywords:	**Atslēgvārdi:**
past,	pagātne,
time,	laiks,
the 1980s,	20. gs. 80. gadi,
the 1990s,	20. gs. 90. gadi,
the Baltics,	Baltija,
periodicals,	periodika,
historicity	vēsturiskums

Summary   The aim of the article is to analyze the discourse of the past that developed in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press in the late 1980s and early 1990s, discussing the dominant conceptions of history and perception of time. It is generally argued that with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union an era of presentism began. However, the post-Soviet transition materialized in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press as a reconstructive, retrospective transformation, dominated by narratives about the past. This research is based on theoretical assumptions about collective memory (Halbwachs 1951; Assmann 2020), the regime of historicity (Hartog 2015; Koselleck 2004), and the inventory of temporal perspective (Zimbardo, Boyd 1999; 2008). Most of the analyzed material is cultural periodicals: weekly *Literatūra ir menas* (Literature and Art) and *Šiaurės Atėnai* (Athens of the North) and monthly *Pergalė* (Victory; in 1991 renamed *Metai* (Year)) and *Kultūros barai* (Domains of Culture), *Sietynas* (The Pleiades), *Nemunas* (The [River] Nemunas); Latvian monthly periodicals *Avots* (Source) and *Karogs* (Flag) and weekly *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art). These are occasionally supplemented by other periodicals and publications, as well as by the general context. Researching them, ten discursive functions of the interacting (re)constructed forms of memory were identified: communicative/informational, functional/pragmatic, testimonial/justice-driven, emotional/therapeutic, ontological/metalinguistic, reproductive/mimetic, identity-based, social/ mobilizing, ethical/moral, political/ideological.

Kopsavilkums   Raksta mērķis ir analizēt pagātnes diskursu, kas Lietuvas un Latvijas kultūras periodikā veidojās 20. gs. 80. gadu beigās un 90. gadu sākumā, aplūkojot dominējošās vēstures koncepcijas un laika uztveri. Tiek apgalvots, ka līdz ar Berlīnes mūra krišanu un Padomju Savienības sabrukumu esot sācies prezentisma laikmets, tomēr pēcpadomju pāreja Lietuvas un Latvijas kultūras izdevumos pārsvarā izpaudās kā rekonstruktīva, retrospektīva transformācija, kurā dominēja naratīvi par pagātni. Pētījuma pamatā ir teorētiskie pieņēmumi par kolektīvo atmiņu (Halbwachs 1951; Assmann 2020), vēsturiskuma režīmu (Hartog 2015; Koselleck 2004) un laika perspektīvas inventāru (Zimbardo, Boyd 1999; 2008). Analizēto materiālu lielākā daļa ir kultūras izdevumi: lietuviešu nedēļas izdevumi *Literatūra ir menas* (Literatūra un māksla), *Šiaurės Atėnai* (Ziemeļu Atēnas) un mēnešraksti *Pergalė* (Uzvara; kopš 1991. gada *Metai* (Gads)), *Kultūros barai* (Kultūras jomas), *Sietynas* (Sietiņš), *Nemunas* (Nemuna), latviešu mēnešraksti *Avots* un *Karogs*, kā arī nedēļas laikraksts *Literatūra un Māksla*. Tos daļēji papildina citi periodiskie izdevumi un publikācijas, kā arī kopējais konteksts. Pētot minētos materiālus, tika identificētas desmit (re)konstruēto atmiņas formu mijiedarbības diskursīvās funkcijas: komunikatīvā/informatīvā, funkcionālā/pragmatiskā, liecības/taisnīguma, emocionālā/terapeitiskā, ontoloģiskā/metalingvistiskā, reproduktīvā/mimētiskā, identitātē balstītā, sociālā/mobilizējošā, ētiskā/morālā un politiskā/ideoloģiskā.

The transition period:
between the past and future

The so-called *perestroika* and the transition period of the late 1980s were times of multifaceted, accelerated processes of change, an intense and comprehensive transformation. The restoration of independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union are usually seen as one of the main results of the development of the Baltic states and other countries in the region. There were various kinds of liminality and borderline states manifested in society in its near-revolutionary state, including a sensitive perception of temporality and historical time. As the Soviet Union dissolved, the previously promoted visions of the past and future deformed as well. Some contemporary Lithuanian historians and political scientists tend to interpret the post-communist transformation as the dismantling of the Soviet modernity (Ulinskaitė et al. 2022).

However, despite all kinds of crises and an atmosphere of uncertainty, the beginning of the transition period still was a hopeful time full of expectations. A revolutionary "utopia," projects of modernity, space exploration, technology, and fantastical adventures were included in the bright Soviet vision of the future in the 1980s. Some contemporary movies and texts expressed an intention to invent the future or to build a new life. The famous five-part miniseries *Gostya iz budushchego* (Guest from the Future, 1985) by Pavel Arsenov is one of such examples. Similar cases also appeared outside the Soviet Union, for example, the cult movie *Back to the Future* (1985) by American director of Lithuanian origin Robert Zemeckis, in cooperation with Steven Spielberg. Time machines, traveling to the future, and robots from the Institute of Time were quite typical elements of such stories.

At the beginning of *perestroika*, there was still a temporal sensibility based on a belief in the progressive development of society and politics. The ideals of the interwar period and other "golden ages" also created a myth of the future but, despite political aspirations, this paradise did not arise. Utopian projects, reflected in politics, literature, cinema, and other kinds of art, were changed by dystopian visions still present in the Soviet era. After the Chernobyl disaster, the idea of a happy future and progress completely collapsed into a liminal, pathological in-between state, characterized by a considerable hunger for ideology and future projects. Futuristic, socialist fantasies and romantic poetic images were replaced by motifs of death and suffering.

To this day it is still said that after independence, "the dark side of the Awakening, the other Awakening, crude and painful" appeared (Ēlerte 2005: 450). Among many others, the transition period was described in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural

presses with destructive titles such as "vacuum", "emptiness", "chaos", "crisis". The Lithuanian historian Aurimas Švedas, discussing this anxious period of change and the prevailing concepts of time, defined the source of this feeling as a lack of institutes, values, and ideas creating and maintaining a sense of certainty, or a lost confidence in these things. "Is it possible to save the future from becoming a posthistorical dystopia?" he asks (Švedas 2020: 59, 113). (Here and henceforth – translations by the author of this article.) Such attitudes also reflect the general tragic and traumatic experiences of the twentieth century. Assmann notes:

> Under these conditions, the future no longer serves as the Eldorado of our hopes and dreams, while at the same time any heady talk about progress has begun to sound more and more hollow (Assmann 2020: 4).

Assmann claims that a continental shift is occurring in the structure of temporality, using the term "anomaly" to describe the unprecedented return of the past. It is worth mentioning a decolonial researcher, Madina Tlostanova, who suggests the notion of post-Soviet experience as a "futureless ontology". She bases her assumptions on the claims of the Soviet immigrant Boris Groys (2008), saying that post-Communist life is lived backwards and that it is a movement against the flow of time: not from the past to the future, but from the future to the past (Tlostanova 2018: 9).

Temporary changes were also noted by Lithuanian and Latvian authors in public space. In 1991, the famous Lithuanian semiotician and essayist Algirdas Julius Greimas (1917–1992), feeling the impermanence of the present and polemicizing the prevailing retrospective trends, wrote a memorandum on the matter of Lithuania's future for the political leader Vytautas Landsbergis. In it, he shared his regret that the struggle for freedom manifested itself more like a desire to recreate the past than to create the future. However, his project on future perspectives did not get enough attention at that time and was published only six years later as archival material (Greimas 1997).

Lithuanian cultural policy is almost exclusively an ideology of memory (the past), 'postmodern' in its own conservatism, futurophobic consciousness manifested in the desire to remain within the 'familiar' semiosphere – art critic and photographer Virginijus Kinčinaitis (b. 1965) noted an important aspect, while discussing Lithuanian postmodernism in *Kultūros barai* (Kinčinaitis 1991: 5). But such polemical remarks and the futurist orientation were exceptional cases rather than a tendency in the dominant discourse of the past, as Greimas was an emigrant and Kinčinaitis was a representative of the young generation at that time. Furthermore, the same Greimas had called history one of the most powerful factors for the rebirth of the Lithuanian nation and historical community (Greimas 1991).

At the beginning of a new stage of development, it is typical to look back to the past, but excessive nostalgia and the Lithuanian and Latvian tendency to connect

the coming modernity with the experiences of the past more than with the horizon of expectation remain paradoxical. The idealization of the past and the preference for preserving and reconstructing the past instead of creating the future may seem surprising even in the wider context of "the memory boom" (Nora 1989; Winter 2007) and the rise of the heritage industry of that time. Nevertheless, all this proves that time and temporality have become key categories in describing modern societies.

This article aims to analyze the discourse of the past that emerged in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, as it discussed the dominant concepts of history and perception of time, as well as some fragments of (re)constructed memory in more detail. This paper addresses the following questions: how do people relate themselves to time in the dimensions of the past, present, and future, and how does one's relation to each of these change, given various factors of the transitional moments? How was the discourse about the past and temporal dimensions reconstructed in the Latvian and Lithuanian cultural press in the late 1980s and early 1990s? What role did memory play in Latvian and Lithuanian societies during the post-Soviet transition? As memory has become an all-embracing term, it is also understood here more broadly, covering different categories of temporality: the past, history, and time in general.

Methodological framework and the research material

The concept of time is explored in various fields using different research methodologies: starting from classical philosophy, history, and cognitivism, continuing with narratology, among many others. It is difficult to find a common theoretical basis and converging methodology among them. In the last decades, there has been an increasing interest among historians in temporality (Koselleck 2004; Hartog 2015; Tamm, Olivier 2019; Assmann 2020). Some international research projects on time perspective, which have also included Lithuanian and Latvian participants, adapt the theoretical framework of Philip George Zimbardo and John N. Boyd (Zimbardo, Boyd 1999; 2008). These authors have suggested five main temporal categories: past positive, past negative, present fatalism, present hedonism, and future. While the past positive perspective reflects a sentimental attitude toward the past, a preoccupation with the negative past and a lack of a positive future, particularly characteristic of the post-Soviet Latvian and Lithuanian societies, are associated with psychological pain and pathologies. Although the proposed categorization is generally used to study an individual's views, it can potentially be applied to various cultural and social studies on a collective level. Therefore, it implies

that we can speak not only about an individual time regime, but also about cultural time regimes.

Memory plays a key role in the processes of change and transition, as it is flexible and has a transformative quality (Assmann, Shortt 2011: 3). Time and memory also appeared to be among the agents of change at the turning point of the late 1980s. Assmann discusses those changes in time consciousness in her book "Is Time out of Joint?" (Assmann 2020). Through literary examples, she reveals the complexity of the relationship between time and modernity. According to French historian François Hartog (Hartog 2015: 3), since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union our relationships with time have been suddenly and irreversibly shattered and the question of time has become an important issue, occasionally to the point of obsession. Exploring such crucial moments and reflecting on the ways individuals and groups situate themselves in time, the scientist suggests the hypothesis of present-ism, indicating "a crisis of the future", and defines a methodological instrument – "the regime of historicity". Using his own definitions, Hartog studies the way in which a given society approaches its past and the modalities of self-consciousness that each society adopts in its perception of time (Hartog 2015: 9). Hartog's assumptions are partly based on theories of the German historian Reinhart Koselleck (Koselleck 2004), exploring how the temporal dimensions of the past and future are related in any present. Some theoreticians use the term "present past" (Huyssen 2000). When the future is not so clear, the past becomes more relevant as a resource for the present. Similarly, a return to the past is provoked by a sense of a lack of authenticity in the present. The questions raised and topics addressed by the mentioned authors are not limited to historiography or historiosophy, but also include some intriguing aspects of the sociology and anthropology of the time, even mentality studies. Therefore, a comparative perspective enables one to note cross-cultural similarities and differences in time perception and explore forms of temporal experience in a particular society or community.

The gap and crisis described by Hartog and other predecessors, as well as existential dramatization in the late 1980s, were felt strongly in the Baltic states and beyond. Reflecting on the flow of historical events, the American writer and political theorist Francis Fukuyama asked, whether this was "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1989; 1992). However, unlike Hartog's assumptions, the past and not presentism dominated Latvian and Lithuanian public discourse at that time, because "it turned out that there was nothing to say about the present" (Jermolajeva 1991: 4). The literature that appeared during that time also witnessed the liminal situation, but the very events were hardly reflected. Reflections on the positive and negative past supposed some interpretations of the fatalistic present but did not suggest clear

perspectives on the future. Such interest in history and memory has come, among other things, from the effort to overcome the past mankurtization of the Soviet era and to restore historical continuity. The New Historicism and works of American literary historian Stephen Greenblatt, especially his famous phrase "I began with the desire to speak with the dead" (Greenblatt 1988), should be mentioned here as well. The metaphor of the conversation with the dead was also paraphrased in some literary texts by the Lithuanian and Latvian authors. For example, Lithuanian poet Marcelijus Martinaitis (1936–2013) expressed disappointment that the place of the then-present writers was taken by those who were far away or dead (Martinaitis 1990: 2) and titled his book of poetic essays *Papirusai iš mirusiųjų kapų* (Papyri from the Graves of the Dead, 1992). Likewise, the documentary novel *Ekshumācija* (Exhumation, 1990) by the Latvian writer Anita Liepa (1928–2022) symbolically conveyed the motive of exhuming the dead as a recalled memory. These are just two examples of expressive titles, proving the historical function of cultural press as such and of the literary texts that also appeared in the cultural press. Recalling the past, making sense of memory, and cultural/historical reconstruction became essential components of self-perception in the modern society of the late 20th century.

Therefore, at the end of the 1980s an impulsive shift from the discourse of the future to the past and from the progress ideology to the generation of memory and historicism occurred in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press. Hereby, the transition materialized as a retrospective, reconstructive movement, dominated by narratives about the past and motifs of "preservation" and "restoration". Lithuanian philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris (1944–2019) symbolically nicknamed the year 1990 "a time of returning" and perceived this retrospective tendency as an ontological form of being. "A repeatedly re-born nation first returns to the past, turning away from the present and looking to the future only from the corner of the eye [..]. Without reviving the past and recovering the first rebirths, it is impossible to be reborn again. The return or recovery of the past binds together the broken chain of time and restores a coherent historical self-consciousness" (Šliogeris 1990: 155), he wrote, defining the national revival movement. The doctoral thesis (Jonkutė 2020) on which this article is partly based has shown that the cultural press used peculiar memorial communicative rituals to develop a distinctive culture of memory. One of the key tasks that emerged was the search for authentic memory and the filling-in of the so-called "white spots of history". Periodicals were full of memory topics. They published numerous archival post-war Soviet documents, lists of the exiled and repressed, biographies, memoirs, interviews with witnesses, various testimonies and documentary literature, as well as intense discussions about cultural heritage and monuments, among many other historical texts. For example, the memoirs of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987),

a Lithuanian who had been deported to Siberia, published in *Sietynas* and *Pergalė* in the summer of 1988 with the mediation of writers Kazys Saja and Justinas Marcinkevičius and a few editors, were the first literary and historical text of this kind, as well as a political resistance gesture. Among such publications, a special role was played by *Via dolorosa* (1990), the first collection of memories and poems about Stalinist repressions published in Latvia. Some publications of banned texts, written by foreign authors, were also sensational and risky. The novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, translated by Silvija Brice and published in *Avots* in March 1988, is one of such examples. Especially considering the fact that the editor Klāvs Elsbergs was found dead under mysterious circumstances in 1987. Writers, editors, and authors – and also readers – actively participated in the process of (re)creating collective memory.

Most of the research material consists of literary periodicals published by the Lithuanian and Latvian Writers' Unions: the weekly *Literatūra ir menas* (Literature and Art) and the monthly *Pergalė* (Victory; in 1991 renamed *Metai* (Year)) and their almost analogous Latvian counterparts *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art) and *Karogs* (Flag). They are occasionally complemented by cultural publications such as the Lithuanian monthly periodicals *Kultūros barai* (Domains of Culture) and *Nemunas* (The [River] Nemunas). Some of the periodicals, such as the Lithuanian weekly *Šiaurės Atėnai* (Athens of the North), monthly *Sietynas* (The Pleiades), and the Latvian monthly *Avots* (Source), began to be released during the transition period and were more conditioned by it. The most popular cultural magazines and newspapers were in extremely high demand. By 1991, the circulation of some of them had reached even 100,000 copies, which in some cases is about fifty times more than now.

Latvian periodicals	The largest circulation	Lithuanian periodicals	The largest circulation
Avots	87 000 Latvian lang. 53 000 Russian lang.	*Nemunas*	94 000
Karogs	40 000	*Pergalė* (later *Metai*)	30 000
Liesma	200 000	*Šiaurės Atėnai*	51 000
Literatūra un Māksla	108 536	*Literatūra ir menas*	73 369

Table 1. The largest circulations of the Latvian and Lithuanian cultural periodicals in 1990, indicated in the editions.

The research conducted by Lithuanian literary scholar Loreta Jakonytė has revealed that writers were treated as a distant social group which was closely tied to political, social, and economic changes in Lithuania and the general atmosphere of the literary field in the 1990s (Jakonytė 2005). Editors and writers actively

participated not only in the literary and cultural field, but also in environmental and historical heritage activism, the Green Awakening, the battles over street names, and other civil movements. Therefore, the cultural press was an active medium and a tribune of intellectuals, which had a significant impact not only on the field of literature, but also on national and social processes of cultural development. It became an intense and influential cultural, social, and political force, performing much more functions than before or after the transition period.

Perception of time and concepts of the past in cultural press

The transition period distinguished itself through its concentration of time and a sensitive perception of historicity. The time seemed to speak for itself. Some reflections contained direct references to the coming changes and a new age. Such terms as "the fateful hour", "the New Era", "the great Time", and "our time" were used in the press. The expression "the new time" also referred to historical contexts of previous national movements and newly actualized symbolic figures: the poet Rainis (Jānis Pliekšāns, 1865–1929) in Latvia and the poet Maironis (Jonas Mačiulis, 1862–1932) in Lithuania. Abstract titles, sometimes even capitalized, indicated the intangibility of the time and the search for greater articulation.

A sense of breakthrough, a fear of sudden changes, and pains of transition pre-cipitated the belief that the outcome of historical events is not only a result of con-scious determination and responsible behavior, but is also predetermined by external forces and fate. "We are the blood of the age [..]. Man is a blood cell of his time and age," wrote poet Ojārs Vācietis (Vācietis 1984: 19).

Many who were actively involved in the transition processes highlight an emotional upheaval and symbolic, poetic actions. The term "Awakening" was com-monly used as an imaginative metaphor, characterized by abstract idealistic, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Such words as "miracle", "dream", "magic", "cosmic", and "spiritual aura" were also used to describe it, indicating its unexpectedness and mys-ticism, and also showing a lack of precise and original expressions. Some authors even interpreted the awakening as a manifestation of the mystical essence or as a gift of destiny (Ūdre 2019: 165). It was strengthened by images such as the crossroads or a child at the crossroads (Zālīte 1988). This perspective of the fatalistic present formed a dramatic, helpless attitude towards the future and life (Zimbardo, Boyd 1999) which manifested itself both in everyday life and in literary and cultural reflections.

The more one's willpower is exhausted, the more attractive the theory of a person's dependence on historical circumstances seems. We do not choose time, but

time chooses us, so it is hopeless to resist. The common sense advises us to adapt and obey. The editors of *Sietynas* wrote this in the first issue of their magazine ([Anon] 1988: 4). Similar declarations also appeared in the Latvian press.

"We often transfer cultural teleology (the future) to cultural archeology (the past), and I do not deny the significance of its restoration. But there is an element of fatalism in believing that the past itself will bring the future", Latvian philosopher Ella Buceniece (b. 1949) has stated when discussing contemporary cultural determinations (Buceniece 1989: 129).

Latvian sociologist and anthropologist Vieda Skultans considers fatalism to be a part of folk tradition and claims that much of Latvian history has been represented as the working out of a cruel destiny (Skultans 1998: 61). Collective history and individual lives were perceived as interdependent factors.

The intensity and fatality of the transition period was expressed by paraphrasing the insights of philosopher Heraclitus on change and flow. The Latvian poet and playwright Māra Zālīte (b. 1952) used the motif of running water, comparing it with the flow of time in her libretto of the rock-opera *Lāčplēsis* (The Bear-Slayer), published in *Avots* in 1988. Time – or, symbolically speaking, the river of time – participated like an active agent, symbolizing an internal time. The flow of the river Daugava interacted with the flow of historical, mythological and inner times in these poetic lines:

> That is not the water that flows in the Daugava.
> That is Time.
> That is not the blood that flows in your veins.
> That is Time.
> That is not the wave that swashes us.
> That is Time.
> That is not a maelstrom that is turning around.
> That is Time.   (Zālīte 1988: 16)

Although Zālīte was mostly reflecting on the long-term, cyclical and mythological time, she also indirectly referred to the manifestation of intensive present – the dynamic moment of a historical breaking point and diverse events in the flow of time.

The title of a poetry book *Labrīt, Heraklīt!* (Good Morning, Heraclitus!) by Latvian poet Māris Čaklais (1940–2003), published in 1989 and actively presented in cultural press, was also very symbolic, emphasizing the passage of time and the moment of awakening. The transience of the moment brings back fragmentary childhood memories, "holy scriptures of human memory". Heraclitus appears not only in the title, but throughout the text. The most obvious paraphrase of the philosopher appeared in the poem "*Tumsā pie upes*" (In the Darkness by the River; Čaklais 1986: 14): Heraclitus invites the lyrical subject to explore the river at night and to experience that *you cannot step in the same river twice*, and it becomes a revelation and an awakening.

The transition was described as a flowing river in Lithuanian press as well, but a sense of fatalism and dependence on external factors were expressed in a more subjective and defined way.

"Lithuania is once again going through a time when *You can't stop the river from running [..]*. We can try to stop those people, detain them, arrest them like before, slander them, blackmail them, but they are going to live", claimed the famous Lithuanian poet Sigitas Geda (1943–2008), invoking Maironis in one of the first rallies in 1989. There were much more such reflections of the transition as a flowing water. The river, being an archaic mythologized and universalized symbol in Baltic cultural tradition and a constant feature of the landscape, became the dominant metaphor, describing intensive historical events and representing time as a factor of change.

There were also some reflections where the transition period was defined as an intangible "present continuous" (Živitere 1987: 49) – paraphrasing Chingiz Aitmatov, *the day lasts more than a hundred years*. Latvian literary critic Ausma Cimdiņa (b. 1950), discussing Latvian literary tendencies, defined such duration as a present past: "We carry within us all that has been [..]. The moving from the present to the past, becoming a peculiar archeology of the consciousness," she noted in *Literatūra un Māksla* (Cimdiņa 1990: 6). Thus a mixed, multiple time regime, covering the present and the past, was (re)constructed.

Although some moments of criticism appeared in the unified discourse, signaling changes in time regime and attitudes, it was still quite monologic, and the greater part of temporal reflections in the Lithuanian and Latvian press were past-oriented. There was not only a flood of dramatic and romantic personal and collective memories, documentary and historical literature, journalism, but also some historiosophical reflections on the past or time in general. A few characteristic examples of the dominant positions are briefly discussed below.

> What are we looking for when wandering among the shapes, silhouettes that are reflected in the depths of memory, what do we try to hear when we are listening to the echo of silent voices, why are we worrying about what is no longer there? Going back where it is impossible to return is a paradox, but not an absurdity (Papievis 1989: 7).

Lithuanian prose writer Valdas Papievis (b. 1962) noticed this in *Nemunas*, discussing his new book and the analogies with the Proustian time. The phenomenon of the lost time was poetically described using auditory, sensory motifs of oblivion – "silence", "echo". The author defined it as a directly intangible phenomenon that no longer exists in the present but still opens its perspective. The past is perceived as a causality of the present.

A traditional, romanticized approach, usually expressed in poetic images, was felt in most reflections published at that time. For example, the audience greeted

the speech of philosopher, publicist, and politician Arvydas Juozaitis (b. 1956), given in 1988 at one of the first gatherings of the Reform Movement, with loud applause. "When we think about the history of Lithuania, even without knowing it – after all, they hid it so diligently from us – we feel that it runs in our blood", he claimed.

Lithuanian prose writer Saulius Šaltenis (b. 1945) was also poetic and defined a person in the past by a hyperbolized parallel of a mouse and mammoth:

> We are so small in the world, like a mouse, but the shadow of our history is long and falls as if from a giant mammoth of the ice age. We have been protected and are still protected by the past! It will be our rest and shelter. The past is spacious and safe, without oppressive uncertainty like our present and tomorrow (Šaltenis 1990: 1).

Greimas, despite his usual critical approach, has described the greatness of the past similarly, even chosing analogous images and comparisons – "the shadow of history", "the smallness of humanity" (Greimas 1991: 331). Such concept of the past expressed not only retrospective cultural tendencies, but also futurophobic senses. Intensified memory culture and historical self-concept reflected the effort to create a sense of stability and safety.

In 1991 Martinaitis suggested a similar interpretation of temporality, expressing an alienation from the present and describing the past as a protective space in which to hide or to escape to: "Our man in a way had to leave the present, to get somewhere, go through difficult times with the nation, but he could only go to the past, inhabited by the dead ancestors" (Martinaitis 1991: 3).

However, when following the public discourse, we can notice some changes in reflections. Two years later Martinaitis sounded more skeptical and called the actualization of memory and cultural martyrology arising from it paranoid. "When will the past pass?" he asked at the beginning of 1993, stating that only then the present had finally started.

For comparison, it is worth quoting here some critical thoughts of the Latvian painter Miervaldis Polis. Almost at the same time, he stated the following in a discussion about the idealization of the past and utopian model of the future:

> What does it mean to 'live in the past'? It is like an illness. The same is true for life in the future. We need to live only and only in the present. (Polis 1993: 5):

Lithuanian writer and translator Tomas Venclova (b. 1937) has also expressed a critical attitude towards the glorification of the past. Speaking of the period of independence, he mentions that filling in the white spots of history sometimes turned into an uncritical apology and that political and cultural mythologies were supported by "romantic ritual gestures" (Venclova 1990: 3).

Such statements were not only an intellectual dynamics and an encouragement to start polemic discussions, and/or a form of provocative criticism, but also an

expression of (self)reflection and (self)analysis, a way to participate in the reflected reality, and sometimes even an opportunity to change it.

Excessive romanticization of the past, a past negative perspective, and present fatalism dominated in the reflections in the Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press. The loss of a coherent link between the past, present and future, a disbelief in the idea of the future, and the lack of perspectives resulted in a number of pathological consequences, but also enhanced creativity and caused some essential changes in the social and cultural mentalities of Latvian and Lithuanian societies. The limited scope of this article allows us to discuss only a few textual examples, but these examples give an insight into their temporal context. The final part of this article summarizes the role of memory in the cultural press.

Functions of (re)constructing memory in press

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the notions of the past and memory dramatically increased their range of meanings. As Assmann has noted, now cultural memory is not just a passive "storage memory", but also an active "functional memory" (Assmann 2020: 211), referring to a broad spectrum of cultural practices and involving all the possible forms that the social use of the past can take. Since the public discourse of the cultural press in the late 1980s allows as to identify the Latvians and Lithuanians as past-oriented fatalistic societies, some related questions may arise. What were the reasons why the past was so actualized? What role did the memory play? What distinguished the cultural press and literary texts from other memory contexts and media?

The discourse of (re)constructed memory and the content forms were very diverse: pure factography and documentary, archives, emotional individual and collective testimonies, imperatives to remember, appeals to morality and justice, and poetic reflections, among others. Reading the Lithuanian and Latvian periodicals, it is possible to identify at least ten interacting functions of memory. They are briefly presented below.

Communicative/informative. Starting with the *glasnost*, the censorship gradually weakened. The laws on the press and other mass media that were adopted in Lithuania and Latvia in 1990 created conditions for the formation of a new press culture and journalistic writing tradition (Vaišnys 2020).

> Now is the time of freedom. Write what you want and almost wherever you want. [..] Militia and security police, and even more the censorship, can not control anything for a long time. The "internal censor" that faithfully accompanied the knights of the quill, now seems to have disappeared by itself ([Anon] 1990: 2).

This is how the editors of *Šiaurės Atėnai* described the changing situation of the press and writers.

The intense processes of disseminating information that took place at that time were labeled in such terms as "the flood of publicity" (Landsbergis 1989), "the information banquet, feast" (Ardava 2015), "the golden honey period of journalism" (Veinberga 2010), and "magical rituals" (Ēlerte 2005). Poet Imants Auziņš, reflecting on the period at the Writers' Union Congress, defined it as a time of collecting and synthesis (Auziņš 1990).

The Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press became a kind of a bulletin board, medium, and historical source. In this way, an open public sphere and a dynamic mass communication channel was created. Gradually, archives and special library funds were opened. Previously hidden historical and political documents, various lists, letters, and other information from the deported and the people who disappeared in the diaspora were published through the mediation of writers and editors. There were intensive discussions on heritage and memory-related issues. More and more foreign authors began to be published.

Functional/pragmatic. The cultural press helped to collect and archive memories, becoming not only a static storage of memory, but also an active tool employed to actualize and structure the past and to (re)construct heritage. For example, in March 1988 the Writers' Union of Latvia formed a commission to assess the crimes of Stalinism, which aimed to collect and systematize the documentary archive of the deported and to prepare a book of memories. Deportees and their relatives constantly sent their letters, memoirs, and documents to its editorial board. Various new sections devoted to memory and the past appeared in the cultural press.

Testimonial/justice-driven. Editorial boards of cultural media were flooded with documentary texts striving for historical accuracy and social justice. Writers and editors became mediators and carriers of the past and memory. Not history and historians, but eyewitnesses of the events, their memories and testimonies took a central position at that time. As is typical for transition processes, the voices of the victims moved from oblivion to the center of society.

In most cases, the memory of suffering was actualized. It often appeared in the reflections of deportations and exile in the Lithuanian press. The memories of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė is one such example. Her personal existential experience acquired the features of a community narrative, the individual intertwined with the collective. Memory and remembrance became a moral duty. The author felt obliged to convey her experience, to testify, to speak for the dead, to commemorate them, and to give the meaning to the tragic events of the past in this way: "It is my duty to talk about them" (Grinkevičiūtė 1988: 150).

Similarly, writer Antanas Kryžanauskas (1908–1992), paraphrasing Chilean poet and politician Pablo Neruda, wrote in his memoirs, published in *Pergalė*: "I testify! I was, / I was there, I suffered. / And now I confirm everything again! / If no one remembers, / I am the one who remembers" (Kryžanauskas 1989: 78).

Therefore, he perceived the storytelling as a testament left by the dead, which he had to fulfill. It became a duty to recall such testimonies and the imperatives of memory resulted in autobiographical literature – a similar concept to the Hebrew *Zachor*. In this way, witnesses and their testimonies created connections between individuals and the collective, which is especially important in post-conflict societies.

Emotional/therapeutic. Most of published testimonies were traumatic. Hartog has claimed that traumatized victims as emotional witnesses have replaced historians as the authentic authority concerning the past (Hartog 2015). Witness took a similar position in the Latvian and Lithuanian cultural press. For example, a member of the commission for the evaluation of the crimes of Stalinism, writer Rimants Ziedonis, publishing letters and other material from the repressed in *Karogs* in 1988, called them "emotional documents". He encouraged emotional openness and empathy in the following words:

> We would like to invite historians to not be shy, not to suppress their emotions when writing about the children who died in Siberia and about everyone who was forcibly taken away from their homeland (Ziedonis 1988: 121).

Writing and publicizing such memories worked as an alternative therapy for past and history, a way of self-reflection and self-reconstruction. Narration was like a repetition of events in words, turning an authentic and alive experience into the past.

Ontological/metalinguistic. Reconstructing and sharing memories were a kind of a symbolic, secondary existence in the forms of memory communities. Latvian-born German writer Margita Gūtmane (b. 1943), reflecting upon her experience of post-war emigration, defined the historical interruption and mythological dimension as follows: "After 1945 [..] we could no longer be the continuers of our history, because the exiled one finds himself beyond history. Therefore, we tried to be a memory, a mythical memory of our past" (Gūtmane 1996: 180). Thus, the perception of history as a myth was developed, emphasizing the metonymic, metaphorical nature of that time. The mythical memory, transcending the boundaries of historical time and experience. Such features remind of the behavior of the so-called "cold" societies, as defined by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (Levi Strauss 1962: 313, 348), and the pre-modern world, focusing on the space of experience (Koselleck 2004).

These tendencies appeared both in literature and criticism. For example, exiled literary critic Rimvydas Šilbajoris (1926–2005), discussing the mythologies of Lithuanian writers, emphasized the poetic reflection of the past and the metaphorical nature of national existence (Šilbajoris 1986). Therefore, such an existence was defined by two

dimensions of time: an external, historical, fatalistic present and a boundless internal archetypal time characterized by ritualistic practices of mythologizing and constant returns to certain images and states. The human presence in time and space was perceived not only as an individual experience, but also as communal and social.

Reproductive/mimetic. Although the transition, among other names, was also called a revolution, and although it had a modern and innovative stage, the Restoration of independence and statehood was of restitutive nature. Despite some tension between the followers of conservatism, traditionalism, and modernism, the re-awakening of the interwar heritage and the cyclicality of traditions prevailed. "Without reviving the past, without recovering the first rebirths, it is impossible to be reborn again," philosopher Šliogeris wrote in 1990.

The cultural press intensively generated the discourse of the past by using commemorations and other memorial communicative rituals. This was particularly noticeable in reflections on exile in the Lithuanian press. Some of them emphasized the illustrative, mimetic, or simulative aspects of the discourse and forms of expression. The meanings of the content of public memory and commemorative culture did not always coincide with the meanings of personal testimonies. "The massive wave of transportation of corpses from Siberia, which often turns into a theatrical action – is it not an indicator of the same path? In this way, the very idea of memory can be compromised," Lithuanian painter Vytenis Rimkus (1930–2020) pointed out (Rimkus 1990: 1). "We are dominated by oblivion. The louder and more often we shout about historical memory and restored justice, the less of that memory and justice remain in us," poet and literary critic Valdemaras Kukulas (1959–2011) stated (Kukulas 1992: 9). Therefore, the patriotic rhetoric of tribunes, oratorical poetics, and theatricality began to dominate over personal, silent, tragic, authentic, deeply felt – rather than publicly expressed or demonstrated – experience. Furthermore, the element of imitation was conducive to hiding a complicated reality and to reducing feelings of uncertainty.

Identity-based. According to the prevailing cognitive and narrative theories, memory serves as a tool of self-creation by constructing individual and sociocultural identities. Identity narratives actualized by communication are a kind of practice of collective memory, and the circulation of shared meanings of the past create a sense of commonality (Assmann 2008). This was strongly noticeable in reflections upon deportations, exile and other traumatic memories. As Assmann and Shortt noted, individual memories of the victims create a new authoritative account of a nation's past, effectively transforming the nation's self-image into an "imagined community" (Assmann, Shortt 2011). The cultural press functioned as a mediator of various memory-based national communities.

Social/mobilizing. Collective memory theorist Maurice Halbwachs claimed that the main function of group memory is the maintenance of the unity of the collective (Halbwachs 1951). So-called mnemonic socialization strengthened the sense of belonging and socio-cultural integration during the transition. Even individual memory was more often used as a part of collective narratives and was strongly affected by social frameworks. Latvian historian Vita Zelče, with colleagues, has traced how history became one of the main tools for national political mobilization and how social memory functioned as a driving force within Latvian society (Zelče 2014). The activities of the cultural press proves that memory played a key role in nation-building during the transition period. The emerging nation-states attempted to establish continuity with a suitable past. Heroic episodes of the past, mythical motifs, dramatic, traumatic experiences of deportations, the exile, and horrors of the Soviet era were used to build national communities.

Ethical/moral. The Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press fragmentarily actualized memories of national minorities and communities (Baltic Germans, Jews, Poles, Russian speakers, and others). Therefore, not only the demand, but also the right to remember was manifested. Transnational memory highlighted the tensions of the competing memories of the multicultural Lithuanian and Latvian national communities and conflicting moments in the collective memory of the Baltics. It also included some problematic cases of interaction between collective memory and national identities, as well as the divide between the official, homogenized, national, commemorative culture and the dynamic, inertial, social memory. Most of the time, this meant the division into "them" and "us" or "our own" versus "other".

> Does another nation (not necessarily Russians) have the rights to memory? Why is the memory of one's own nation considered "right" and the memory of other nations "wrong"? (Popovs, Adžubejs 1988: 189).

Such questions were raised in the discussion about activities of the Latvian society "Memory".

Tensions were most evident in the discourse of guilt, often in the motifs of victimization and appealing to historical truth, especially in reflections upon Soviet crimes and the Holocaust. Some of the shared memories related to these events had a postscript, "for truth and justice". In Assmann's words: "A past that is associated with trauma and guilt continues to make demands on the present: it calls for recognition and the acceptance of responsibility" (2020: 216). Such collective memories included a moral judgement that directed action, although the attribution "moral memory" can be subjective.

Political/ideological. The Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press actualized some political aspects of collective memory. Oft-discussed was how the ideological,

politicized memory of the Soviet era caused a "memory crisis". The press also published some discussions on Holocaust commemoration and other fragments of commemorative discourse, as well as the memory of national minorities. "It was not the Lithuanian nation that killed the Jews, and it was not the Jewish nation that took the Lithuanians to Siberia," said the chairman of the newly established Jewish Society in Lithuania, Emanuelis Zingeris (b. 1957), emphasizing it in both in Lithuanian and Latvian (Zingeris 1989: 2).

Memory was used as an instrument of politics, and the control of memory was perceived as a form of power. Political leaders participating in commemorative events sometimes tended to reflect conflicting memories in their speeches. For example, the speech of politician Anatolijs Gorbunovs, given during the com-memoration of the Rumbula Massacre in Latvia, caused emotional reactions of Latvians and the Jewish community:

> It was not a nation of Latvians. Even not a part of it. Here we must talk about individual criminals [..]. The Jewish nation could also look critically at the role played in history by some its personalities of previous generations, especially in the revolution of 1918 and in the events in Latvia in the 1940s (Gorbunovs 1992: 45).

Such statements sounded like self-defensive excuses and expressed an attempt to restore a positive national self-image. Although they caused conflicts, only in this way an open discourse and dialogic culture of memory, including different versions of the past, can be addressed and collectively formed (Cohen: 2001). A shared truth about injustice and crimes is necessary to understand the traumatic past and create a stable future.

The above-stated functions of (re)constructing memory define not only the Lithuanian and Latvian cultures of memory and its features in the late 1980s, but also serve as a reflection of the societies at that time, revealing their development and perspectives. This gives a hope that the cultural perception of time in these nations will be stabilized and the continuous temporality – connecting the past, present, and future – some day will be renewed. This is probably the only way to turn communities of traumatic memory into living communities; to bring historical and cultural time closer to real, lived time; to heal various kinds of chronophobia, and at the same time to reduce the historical and social conditionality of literature and other arts.

Conclusion

The transition period of the late 1980s was a multi-temporal historical era which was characterized by a concentration of time. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought changes to the experiences of time and historicity in

post-Soviet societies. The Baltic states were no exception. Memory and time were agents of change there. Although presentism was supposed to dominate alongside ideas of the expected future, the transition materialized as a reconstructive and retrospective transformation. Periodicals were full of texts containing memories and narratives from the past. The Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press of 1988–1992 testifies that reflection of the past was one of the most important components of the individual and socio-cultural identity of that time. Thus, national historical narratives became a tendency of the contemporary Lithuanian and Latvian culture, which until now is quite problematic and always provokes debate. A shortage of present experience in literature and culture is still felt.

Although there were some cases of polemical criticism and instances of change, the public discourse generated in the cultural press was quite monologic and unified. Lithuanian and Latvian societies were mostly associated with past positive and past negative time experiences in their contemporary reflections. The first reflections were characterized by a traditional, romanticized approach to the past and an anti-historical conception of time. The perception of history as a myth emphasized the metonymic and metaphoric nature of that time. The intensification of memory culture attempted to create a sense of stability and safety. Therefore, the past was perceived as a protective space and an alternative reality. The second wave of reflections mostly focused on traumatic memories and painful experiences. These past perspectives also supposed some interpretations of the fatalistic present, which was more frequent in Latvia than in Lithuania.

When reading the cultural press of that time, it is possible to identify at least ten predominant and interacting discursive functions of (re)constructed forms of memory: communicative/informational, functional/pragmatic, testimonial/justice-driven, emotional/therapeutic, ontological/metalinguistic, reproductive/mimetic, identity-based, social/mobilizing, ethical/moral, and political/ideological.

The conducted research highlighted only a small part of the past discourse, noting its static and dynamic moments and discussing some individual reflections on time and temporality. However, it is a starting point for further, more detailed comparative investigations on the concepts of memory, time, and historicity, including comparative studies of the Baltic societies of different generations and eras.

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52

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