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# The 13th International Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars

## SHIFTING LITERARY CULTURE SINCE STAGNATION IN THE BREZHNEV ERA: THE BALTIC PARADIGM



Riga, September 23–24, 2021

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**The 13th International Conference  
of Baltic Literary Scholars**

**SHIFTING LITERARY CULTURE SINCE  
STAGNATION IN THE BREZHNEV ERA:  
THE BALTIC PARADIGM**

**September 23–24, 2021**

National Library of Latvia,  
Level 11 (Kore),  
Mūkusalas iela 3, Rīga

Organized by the Institute of Literature,  
Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

September 23, 2021

<b>Registration</b>	<b>8:30–8:50</b>	Meeting the conference staff at the atrium of the National Library of Latvia		<b>Please be ready to show your vaccination certificate and the ID; you will be guided to the elevator and brought into the premises of the conference.</b>
<b>Opening</b>	<b>9:00–9:15</b>	Eva Eglāja-Kristsons, Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė, Anneli Mihkelev		
<b>The keynote speech</b>	<b>9:15–10:00</b>	Māra Grudule, Benedikts Kalnačs, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	Writing the History of Latvian Literature in the Soviet Period
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>10:00–10:30</b>			
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>10:30–12:30</b>	<b>Chair: Benedikts Kalnačs</b>		
		Aušra Jurgutienė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	The Cold War in the History of Literature
		Stella Pelše, Institute of Art History, Art Academy of Latvia	LV	Towards Humanist Stylistic Diversity: The “Open System” of Socialist Realism in Latvian Artwriting of the Stagnation Era
		Elle-Mari Talivee, Kri Marie Vaik, Hegely Klaus, The Museum of Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences	EE	Secrets of the Friedebert Tuglas House Museum: Founding a Memory Institution during the Era of Stagnation
		Deniss Hanovs, Riga Stradiņš University	LV	The Colonial Look from <i>Without</i> : Images of the Baltic Societies in Dissidents' Literature. Re-reading 12 Short Novels “A Compromise” (1981) by Serge Dovatov
<b>Lunch</b>	<b>12:30–13:30</b>			

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<b>Session 2</b>	<b>13:30–15:30</b>	<b>Chair: Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė</b>		
		Vita Zelče, University of Latvia	LV	Mention of Historical Personalities and the Attributed Meanings to Them in the Poetry of Ojars Vācietis
		Anneli Mihkelev, Tallinn University	EE	Stagnation and Innovation in Estonian Poetry during the 1970s–1980s: Poetry and Theatricality
		Akvilė Rėklaitytė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	Shifts in Lithuanian Poetry in the Last Decades of the Soviet Period
		Gintarė Bernotienė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	“You Were There, Oh Soul”: Colour Manifestation of the Sacred and Metaphysical Treatment of Flora in the Poetry by Sigitas Geda, Jonas Juškaitis and Leonardas Gutauskas in the 1970s to 1980s
		Donata Mitaitė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	Some Features of the Conception of Space in Soviet Lithuanian Poetry
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>15:30–16:00</b>			
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>16:00–18:00</b>	<b>Chair: Rita Grīnvalde</b>		
		Johanna Ross, Tallinn University	EE	Gender Conventionalism in Soviet Estonian Girls’ Novellas during the Stagnation-Era
		Sigita Kušnere, University of Latvia	LV	The Image of a Soviet Latvian Woman in Latvian Prose
		Zīta Kārkla, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	“You? Maybe me? It doesn't matter because we feel and live alike”: Corporeality and Everyday Life in Latvian Women's Prose (1970–1980)
		Kārlis Vērdiņš, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia / Washington University in St. Louis	LV	Borders of Gender Normativity in Soviet Latvian Modernist Poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s

September 24, 2021

<b>Registration</b>	<b>8:30–8:50</b>	Meeting the conference staff at the atrium of the National Library of Latvia		<b>Please be ready to show your vaccination certificate and the ID; you will be guided to the elevator and brought into the premises of the conference.</b>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>9:00–10:45</b>	<b>Chair: Zita Kārkla</b>		
		Zanda Gūtmane, Sigita Ignatjeva, Liepāja University	LV	Reception and Translations of Western Modernist Literature in the Brezhnev Era
		Ruta Kurpniece, University of Latvia	LV	Zoopoetics: Latvian Short Fiction during the Period of Stagnation
		Kaspars Zalāns, University of Latvia	LV	The Relationship Between Postmodernism and Socialist Realism in Mārgeris Zariņš' Works
		Solveiga Daugirdaitė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	The 1960s in the USSR as Reflected in the Memoirs of Simone de Beauvoir's "Tout compe fait" (1972)
<b>Coffee break</b>	<b>10:45–11:00</b>			
<b>Session 5</b>	<b>11:00–13:00</b>	<b>Chair: Solveiga Daugirdaitė</b>		
		Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	Lithuanian Drama in the Brezhnev Era (1964–1982): The Two Cases of the Theater of the Absurd in 1968
		Edīte Tiškeizere, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	The Immobile Hero of the 1970s. Visual Metaphors of Despair and Stagnation
		Ieva Struka, University of Latvia	LV	Pēteris Pētersons, Gunārs Priede and Self-Censorship in Their Plays about World War II
		Heili Einasto, Baltic Film, Communication and Arts Institute, Tallinn University	EE	Changes Demanded in Mai Murdmaa's Ballet "Master and Margarita" (1986) as Indicators of the Stagnation Period Fear

September 24, 2021

**Lunch** 13:00–14:00**Session 6** 14:00–15:45 **Chair: Elle-Mari Talivee**

	Edgars Raginskis, Hong Kong Baptist University	LV	“The wind that was not meant to blow.” The Censorship Incident of the Opera “Pūt, vējiņi!” (“Blow, wind, blow!”) by the Soviet Latvian Composer Felicita Tomsone
	Saulius Vasiliauskas, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	Activities of the Vilnius Young Writers' Section and Relations with Young Latvian Writers in the Late Soviet Era
	Dāvis Enģelis, Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music / Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	Music Metaphors in the Issues of Almanac “Latvian Music” Published in the 1970s
	Rita Grīnvalde, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	Entering Adulthood Under the Soviet System

**Coffee break** 15:45–16:00**Session 7** 16:00–18:00 **Chair: Dace Bula**

	Mārtiņš Mintauris, National Library of Latvia	LV	At the Doorstep of Stagnation. Depiction of Soviet Reality in 1967: The Case of Alberts Bels' Novels “Investigator” and “Insomnia”
	Ilze Ļaksa-Timinska, University of Latvia / Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	Renaissance of Socialist Realism: Revival of Latvian Soviet Authors of the 1920s–1930s
	Sandra Cīrule, University of Latvia	LV	Literature, Libraries, Society: Memories of the 1970s
	Viktorija Jonkutė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore	LT	The Role of Memory in Lithuanian and Latvian Cultural Press during the Transition Period of the Late 1980s
	Jānis Oga, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia	LV	Latvian and Estonian Short Stories about History: Contemporaries from the Past

Māra Grudule, Prof. Dr., Benedikts Kalnačs, Prof. Dr.  
Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

## Writing the History of Latvian Literature in the Soviet Period

Toward the late 1950s, the majority of the population in the Baltic countries had come to the painful consensus that the existing conditions under the Soviet rule would last much longer than initially expected, and started to cope with the situation even though below the surface there was deeply seated disagreement with the regime. All principal literary scholarship publications of the Soviet era in Latvia bear signs of this contradictory situation and were subjected to censorship. In our discussion, we examine some of the main sources of literary history writing such as the six volume history of Latvian literature, published between 1956 and 1963; the five edited volumes of Latvian literary criticism that appeared between 1956 and 1964; the investigation of Latvian literary criticism of the second half of the nineteenth century by Elza Knope in 1962; the history of Latvian literature in Russian, two volumes in 1971; a monograph on the history of the Latvian novel by Ingrida Kiršentāle, in 1979; and the history of Latvian literature from its beginnings until the 1880s, by Arvīds Grigulis, Milda Losberga and Oto Čakars, published in 1987. In all these undertakings, partially based on serious research and displaying the competent knowledge of the contributors, the scenery of Latvian literature was consciously deformed both on a large scale, partially suppressing or completely omitting important authors from the literary process, and in minor details, with scholars desperately struggling to recover some ground for their interpretations. In order to trace these attempts in more detail, our two case studies focus on one of the first Latvian novels, “Mērnīeku laiki” (*The Surveyors’ Times*, 1879) by Reinis and Matīss Kaudzītes, as well as on the Soviet-period reception of early Latvian language texts.

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Aušra Jurgutienė, PhD  
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

## The Cold War in the History of Literature

After the Cold War (1947–1991), during which the world was divided into two opposing military blocs of the capitalist West and the socialist East, John Neubauer revisited the perspectives of European national literary histories in *History of Literary*

Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries (2007). In it, he not only highlighted their positive nation-integrating impact, but also their negative isolating effect that triggered hostility towards national minorities and neighbours. His idea that, on the one hand, these histories had the strongest influence on ideology and, on the other, were most influenced by it and his criticism of the shortcomings of the history of a national literature is relevant, but, in my opinion, it is too one-sided and inaccurate as it misses the new processes of integration and disintegration caused by the Cold War. For this reason, in my paper I will discuss how the identity of a national literature was disintegrated during the Cold War and how it preserved the basic features of integration. In the two literary histories of Soviet Lithuanian literature (the first, "Lietuvių literatūros istorija" (ed. Kostas Korsakas, in four volumes, 1957–1968; The History of Lithuanian Literature), and the second, with an identical title, edited by Jonas Lankutis, in two volumes, 1979–1982, which was written in parallel with its Russian version), the front line divided the national literature into two different parts: 'ours', loyal to the Communist Party, and 'the enemy's', i.e., émigrés from bourgeois ideology, constantly criticised or banned altogether. The merit of the literary histories of the diaspora ("Lietuvių literatūra svetur: 1945–1967" (ed. Kazys Bradūnas, 1968; Lithuanian Literature Abroad: 1945–1967) and "Lietuvių egzodo literatūra, 1945–1990" (ed. Bradūnas and Šilbajoris, 1992; Lithuanian Exodus Literature, 1945–1990, and its version in English by Šilbajoris) is that they were not barricaded in anti-communism by fighting the red Lithuania; they also followed the principle of supplementation, thus creating a common projection of the national literature.

The geopolitical influence of the Cold War resulted not only in variants of fragmented and alienated national literature. The national literature was also strongly influenced by the geopolitical forces disintegrating it, and they are best seen in the opposition of Soviet comparative literary studies: those belonging to the Eastern Bloc were best demonstrated in the texts by Korsakas: "Literatūrų draugystė" (Literary Friendship, 1962) and "Literatūriniai kontaktai" (Literary Contacts, 1987), while the opposition belonging to the field of Western Literature was best represented by Vytautas Kubilius's "Lietuvių literatūra ir pasaulinės literatūros procesas" (Lithuanian Literature and the Process of World Literature, 1983) and in Donatas Sauka's "Fausto amžiaus epilogas" (The Epilogue of the Age of Faust,

1998). All the volumes of Lithuanian literary history written on both sides of the Iron Wall form a paradoxically strange general picture of the national literature that is still awaiting broader discussions and more analytical assessments.

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Stella Pelše, Dr. art.

Institute of Art History, Art Academy of Latvia

## **Towards Humanist Stylistic Diversity:**

### **The "Open System" of Socialist Realism in Latvian**

#### **Artwriting of the Stagnation Era**

While the late 1950s, known as the Khrushchev's Thaw, brought partial liberalisation and exoneration of modernism into Latvian thinking on art, the early 1960s came with a new tidal wave of ideological supervision. Conservative circles in the USSR got scared by widely resurging interest in Western art. The so-called Manege Affair, Nikita Khrushchev's scandalous rant against modernists at the Manege exhibition in Moscow (1962), began a campaign denouncing formalism, reverberating through all Soviet republics and taken up by local ideologues. However, in the following era ruled by Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982), neither art nor artwriting could be returned to the earlier neo-academic Stalinism. Art critics tried to manoeuvre between objections against naturalism and too radical modernisation of form, extolling such qualities as "freshness in the perception of life", "spiritual depth", etc. Theoretically more elaborated ideas about Socialist Realism as an "open", "dynamic", etc. system emerged in the USSR during the early 1970s, codified in Dmitry Markov's publication "Theoretical Problems of Socialist Realism" (1975) and officially sanctioned by Brezhnev's speech at the conference of European Communist parties (1976). In Latvian artwriting of the time, most publications embraced constant development, diversity and change in socialist art, claiming that principles of Socialist Realism should not be seen as a restrictive code of regulations. Instead, artists were said to have been liberated from subservience to any narrow approach, style or trend. Especially puzzling from today's viewpoint are attempts to differentiate between formal elements in bourgeois modernist art and apparently similar ones in realist art, the latter tolerated as far as they are "socialistically true", "internally connected with the Marxist worldview" or "serving socialist humanism", without,

however, providing any clues to how the presence or absence of these qualities could be verified.

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Kri Marie Vaik, Digitization Specialist and Head of Museum Department, MA

Hegely Klaus, Senior Treasurer, MA

Elle-Mari Talivee, Senior Researcher, PhD

The Museum of Under and Tuglas Literature Centre  
of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

### **Secrets of the Friedebert Tuglas House Museum: Founding a Memory Institution during the Era of Stagnation**

The Museum of Friedebert Tuglas and Marie Under holds the intellectual and material legacy of two very famous Estonian writers: their library – in Under’s case particularly from her years in the Estonian diaspora –, collections of photographs, manuscripts, documents, and art. The Museum is in the house, which was built in 1933 by the literary couple Artur Adson and Marie Under. In 1944 the family fled from the war to Sweden, and after the war Friedebert and Elo Tuglas, having lost their own residence to the war, moved into the building.

In the era of Stalinism, Tuglas lived as an inner exile there from 1950–1955. Already then, although desperate, Tuglas began to organise his cultural heritage. Since 1955, he was acknowledged as a writer and classic again. He continued then with the hope that all his treasures could still be accessed by a wider audience: so, the idea of a museum and a research centre in his home began to mature.

Tuglas bequeathed his cultural collections to the Estonian Academy of Science. Founded in 1971 after Tuglas’ death and opened in 1976, this little pearl of Estonian cultural heritage is at the same time a museum of the Stagnation era. The idea of the museum may have roots in the Khrushchev Thaw; the way Tuglas organised his collection reflects at least in some parts the fears of the Stalinist era. The museum of Tuglas is in a sense an example of non-violent resistance, while its appearance is a true reminder of the 1970s interior and museum design. Although this house had been the home of Marie Under during her most prolific years, her name was not mentioned in the Museum at all.

The paper intends to show through various examples how the collections carefully organised by Tuglas sometimes tend to hide information rather than to disclose it. But the owner of the

collections, although rather pessimistic at the end, maybe hoped that one day the need to play blindman’s buff would end.

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Deniss Hanovs, Prof. Dr. art.

Riga Stradiņš University

### **The Colonial Look from ‘Without’: Images of the Baltic Societies in Dissidents’ Literature. Re-reading 12 Short Novels “A Compromise” (1981) by Serge Dovlatov**

The presentation reflects upon images of Estonians and Latvians in the works of Serge Dovlatov. Both ethnic groups appear in the volume of short novels “Compromise”, which was first published as a complete work after he left the USSR in 1981. The volume consists of twelve stories, all reflecting Dovlatov’s life and work in Tallinn as a journalist in the Soviet printed media.

Dovlatov defined the stories in his letters from Vienna as “a text on journalism, semi-documentary”. Thus the volume is a literary diary, based on the author’s short articles in the newspaper “Soviet Estonia”, a typical ideological tool of the Soviet regime for Russian-speaking inhabitants of the occupied Baltic states, which were turned into Soviet socialist republics 1944–1991.

Dovlatov’s stories can be analysed using post-colonial discourse in its Baltic dimension. The author, the newspaper and Dovlatov’s colleagues are to be defined as tools and actors of Soviet colonialism, not exotic one, with overseas non-European cultures. Dovlatov’s literary hero, very close to the author, but not a copied image, scrutinises Estonians and Latvians as the Other of the Soviet regime - linguistically, culturally and on the level of everyday communication etiquette.

History of the Soviet occupation and the participation of the inhabitants of the Baltics in the SS Legion during WWII is known to the literary hero, his colleagues and co-drinkers, but this knowledge is the tool for the Russians-speaking journalists to create and experience their own distance to the Soviet regime, to be kitchen dissidents. The compassion to the tragic history of the Baltic nations is almost non-existent, it is still a part of the exotic Other as these nations can be defined. Throughout the volume, the literary hero looks at the Baltic nations as a representative of a colonial reversed discourse, using Soviet Orientalism as the language of communication, but putting on the image of Caliban on

the Russians-Soviets, leaving Prospero's role to the colonised. The West becomes an exotic territory, defining the East, Soviet political culture as a colonial power. The Baltic indigenous nations represent the limited and thus imagined territory of the colonised West, which is perceived as dominant in its upside down position of the colonised territory.

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Vita Zelče, Prof. Dr. hist.  
University of Latvia

### **Mention of Historical Personalities and the Attributed Meanings to Them in the Poetry of Ojārs Vācietis**

Latvian poet Ojārs Vācietis (1933–1983) released six volumes of poetry during a 'time of stagnation' in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Indeed, he was among the most widely read poets of his day. The poems evoke the atmosphere of the 'time of stagnation,' as characterised by a widening gap between the regime and the people, the ritualisation of ideology, increased public cynicism, as well as an expansion of double morals and flourishing of the Soviet consumer culture and worshipful cult related to goods that were in short supply. In interviews conducted during the 1970s, Vācietis admitted that he was worried about an increasing sense of alienation among people, a lack of ideals, and a consumer lifestyle. Vācietis' poems were always contextual, and the framework of the specific time period had an effect on their content. It has to be noted, too, that childhood experiences from World War II deeply traumatised Vācietis. During the 'time of stagnation', he constantly returned to the topic of war, reflecting on how violence, destruction, horror and death affect people and communities. Vācietis' approach to the war was very different from the constant laudation of victory and heroism that was typical of the Brezhnev era.

Approximately 7% of the poems that were published during the 'time of stagnation' include the names of real individuals, as well as images from literature, religion and mythology. I have identified these via the method of content analysis. There is a distinct difference between the poems, which Vācietis wrote in the 1950s and 1960s in terms of real persons who were named therein, as opposed to the symbolic images that were created in culture. During the 1950s and 1960s, Vācietis frequently relied on symbols of revolutionaries, politicians and scientists as transformers of the world, defenders of oppressed people and inspirers of change,

thus encouraging people to pursue their own ideals in life. Poems from the 1970s and early 1980s, by contrast, hardly ever contain the names of those seeking to transform society and the world. Instead, Vācietis was comparatively more likely to rely on the names of writers, poets, painters and composers who were highly rated in Latvian and world culture. We find the names of Čaks, Rainis, Merkel, van Gogh and Liszt. Furthermore, the poems contain biblical references. For example, Cain appears several times as a reference to betrayal. Vācietis also uses the images of Jesus Christ, Adam and Eve, and Goliath. Another group of figures in his poetry consists of politicians, military leaders and philosophers from Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, as well as mythological heroes such as Prometheus and Pegasus. The poems from the period of stagnation did not have a black-and-white worldview, but there are a few negative figures therein such as Rosenberg, Nero and Baron von Wolff. Later poems contain reflections on Don Quixote, the point being that a yearning for ideals can be seen something akin to tilting against a windmill. The poems which Vācietis wrote during the Brezhnev era make it clear that he was desperate and helpless in front of the realities of the 'time of stagnation', as well as how much he was hurt by a lack of social and national prospects.

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The research was funded by the Latvian Council of Science, project "Jeopardizing Democracy through Disinformation and Conspiracies: Reconsidering Experience of Latvia" (lzp-2019/1-0278)

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Anneli Mihkelev, PhD  
Tallinn University

### **Stagnation and Innovation in Estonian Poetry during the 1970s–1980s: Poetry and Theatricality**

The 1960s were golden years in poetry, music, drama and visual arts. Estonian researchers still believe that the high tide of radical textual innovations actually occurred in the period 1968–1972. At the beginning of the 1970s, Estonian poetic language becomes more metaphysical: unable to express their ideas directly, poets conveyed them through suggestion and connotation. The borders between literature and folklore became less distinct.

The best example of this is the work of Hando Runnel (1938) who was one of the main poets of the literary resistance

movement. The paper analyses Runnel's poetry from the collection "Punaste õhtute purpur" (The Purple of Red Evenings, 1982).

Paul-Eerik Rummo (1942) was another very important poet from the same period. He was very significant in the end of the 1960s. After 1968, Rummo's poems were printed mainly in periodicals, and for 17 years he did not publish a new collection of verse. In 1972 he assembled a manuscript collection of his poems written between 1968 and 1972, entitled "Saatja aadress" (The Sender's Address, 1985), which remained unpublished at the same time because of political censorship. These works were printed only in 1985 and 1989 as parts of two later collections.

Juhan Viiding's (1948–1995) innovations occurred in the 1970s and later. Viiding's poetry saw peasant culture as the source and essence of Estonian national identity. He was a professional actor in the Estonian Drama Theatre, and he used the pen-name Jüri Üdi which is more than just a pseudonym: this name represented the author's consciously expressed alter ego. Theatricality was one of the main features of Viiding/Üdis's poetry.

This paper is focused on the works of Hando Runnel, Paul-Eerik Rummo and Juhan Viiding.

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Akvilē Rēklaitytē, Dr.

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

## Shifts in Lithuanian Poetry in the Last Decades of the Soviet Period

During the national resistance movement in the late 1980s, some Lithuanian poets had gained great symbolic authority and their poetry, in some respects, served as a kind of religion. Interestingly, the emergence of such an emotional burst usually is taken for granted, relating it with evident transformations in society. I support the New Historicists' idea that literature not only captures the unconscious shifts in mentality but also actively designs them by providing certain imagery, and thus activating a certain type of emotional culture.

In my presentation, I focus on the poetics of the last two decades of the Soviet period and aim at grasping the inception of changes to come. I pay particular attention to poetry publications in the annual almanac "Poezijos pavasaris" (Poetry Spring) and poetry publications in the literary magazine "Victory" (Pergalė).

Gintarė Bernotienė, PhD

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

## "You Were There, Oh Soul": Colour Manifestation of the Sacred and Metaphysical Treatment of Flora in the Poetry by Sigitas Geda, Jonas Juškaitis and Leonardas Gutauskas in the 1970s–1980s

During the first decade of stagnation, the potentiality of Lithuanian literature was increasing, and some young poets managed to turn their works away from ideological demands to literature. The poet Kornelijus Platelis has called 1971–1972 the threshold when Socialist Realism suffered [or simply got] a death blow and the modernisation of literature, and especially poetry, gained momentum. This breakthrough was realised by poets who debuted after 1960 – Judita Vaičiūnaitė, Leonardas Gutauskas, Jonas Juškaitis, Marcelijus Martinaitis, and Sigitas Geda – who did not turn their work towards social progress or other ideological themes, but sought aesthetic newness. Vaičiūnaitė's, Gutauskas' and Juškaitis' second collections of poetry (and Geda's first one) highlighted their intense colour perception of the world. In Geda's, Gutauskas' and Juškaitis' work the ecstatic experience of existence in colour was linked to the poetics of visions and the religious experience of the landscape. In their poetry, the experience of the sacred included the metaphysical treatment of flora and the concept of plants as having a soul.

The works that Geda, Gutauskas and Juškaitis created during the Brezhnev period were a clear and conscious step in the opposite direction to Socialist Realism in terms of themes and ideas. In this paper, I aim to shed light on the philosophical and theosophical concepts of being and soul that underpinned the poets' reflection of the sacred in the landscape, at a time when landscape in literature was seen as a bourgeois relic, a manifestation of nationalism and aestheticism. The rich layers of world culture, esotericism, and Christian faith, which were explored in discussions in small groups of like-minded people, in pre-war publications, or in art albums successfully brought back from other countries, formed a specific perception of the world as an eternal metamorphosis, a picture of harmonious existence based on the poetics of vision, the genesis of which was given a distinctive quality by the archetypes of the ancient Baltic culture. In the poetry that Geda, Gutauskas and Juškaitis created in the

1970s and 1980s, the metaphysical treatment of flora was a counter-cultural gesture to atheisation and the impoverished world-view of the Soviet era. This unexpected continuation of the metaphysical thought that characterised Lithuanian poetry between the two world wars and in the diaspora brought back to poetry the dimension of the sacredness of the landscape of the homeland, the sense of the great cycles of the Universe, and the connection of the individual with his or her native place, strengthened by the reiterations of extinction and rebirth.

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Donata Mitaitė, PhD  
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

### **Some Features of the Conception of Space in Soviet Lithuanian Poetry**

Similarly to other unfree countries, life in the Soviet Union has been compared by its people, especially artists, to living in a cramped prison with a lack of air. This report is based on the examples of works from three poets (Alfonsas Maldonis, Judita Vaičiūnaitė, Antanas A. Jonynas) that belonged to different generations. In the works from the 1960s and 1970s, A. Maldonis (1929–2007), who in his poems has often talked about unsafety of larger spaces, started stressing the lyrical subject's wish and ability to hide; and in one of his poems – to look for the truth, for knowing the world similarly to how roots of a tree look for food and water – by creating own winding secret paths. In her life and poetry, Judita Vaičiūnaitė (1937–2001) has walked the streets, squares and alleys of Vilnius. Interestingly, in the poem “Farewell” she exchanges the aspects of images that usually signify the openness and closeness of the world. In the poem, the real (in this case also sacred) speech and life probably remain only in a madhouse ward (likely this is a reference to the Soviet penal psychiatry), and the person that escaped the Soviet world becomes unreal, moving “beyond time”. In the Soviet times, Antanas A. Jonynas (b. 1953) has raised suspicions for censorship by writing that “the railway turns west”. The word “west” was showing a suspicious space. The poet has still managed to protect the word and the poem. His works of the Soviet time have a lot of dead ends; one of the poems also talks about self-addressed letters. The world is closed – railways, roads, even streams go nowhere, and people's contacts are restricted.

Johanna Ross, PhD  
Tallinn University

### **Gender Conventionalism in Soviet Estonian Girls' Novellas during the Stagnation-Era**

The so-called stagnation era has been described as a period of return to traditional gender norms in the Soviet Union, or even as a period of gender conventionalism (Anna Rotkirch) – an almost conscious longing for “traditional” division of labour. The popular genre of ‘girls’ novellas’ serves as a useful material for examining this idea. These widely read and appreciated books often tried to reconcile the narrative of proper Soviet upbringing with a romantic tale of first love. Doing so, they cultivated a notable antagonism of the sexes, especially visible due to the somewhat simple, didactic nature of the genre.

Already earlier Soviet girls’ novellas put a lot of emphasis on the sentimental nature of young girls, often using the diary-like first person narration to help the reader get under the skin of the protagonist. In the stagnation-era texts, the antagonism becomes even more stunning. When the loaded topic of work is discussed, girl protagonists may try their hand at the ideologically significant factory work, but after that they gravitate towards professions such as a teacher, writer, or artist. Boys are carefully shown to be able to perform domestic tasks, when necessary, but it soon becomes apparent that the “natural order of things” is for girls to do them. Girls are generally portrayed as better-behaved than boys and their transgressions are treated as bigger problems. Perhaps the most curious case is that two Estonian girls’ novellas from the late 1960s–1970s base their plot wholly on the idea that men, even high school boys, simply won't talk about unpleasant things.

This gender-conventionalist antagonism, combined with the framework of education narrative—and discussion of admittedly engaging and realistic topics – gives a vivid picture of the contradictory layers of the late Soviet gender discourse.

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Sigita Kušnere, Mg. philol.  
University of Latvia

### **The Image of a Soviet Latvian Woman in Latvian Prose**

Women writers played an important role in Latvian writing in the 1960s and 1970s. They reveal the image of a contemporary

woman in their works, contributing to a woman's social role, behaviors, lifestyle, education, profession choice, family model, and so on. The study, using the methodological approach of New Historicism and literary anthropology, examines the works of Regīna Ezera, Lija Brīdaka, and other authors of the mentioned period in relation to historical research to build a concept of the image of a Soviet Latvian woman in real life and literature.

The fictitious women become the model of the ideal Soviet woman. Do-it-yourself culture and practices (such as all kinds of domestic skills) are one of the most essential components of women's daily lives in the Soviet Union, and they are sometimes emphasized as being more important than academic education or professional career.

The subject of sexuality and how it is portrayed in women's writing can be considered a different sub-theme.

During the socialist era, literary works played a vital role in shaping behavior, directing cultural and social practices, influencing social interactions, and constructing women's identities and was an important part in the "socialist way of life" process.

In this context, Latvian literature assisted Soviet institutional authorities in communicating the idea of the ideal socialist woman. It was argued that the ideal socialist woman was a crucial ally in implementing socialist ideas in the everyday lives of Latvians, thus allowing the Soviet Communist Party to refocus on the competition with the West, as opposed to material conditions and standards of living, as well as qualities that were far more difficult to measure directly – morals, values, emotions, interpersonal communication, or ethics.

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Zita Kārkla, Dr. philol.

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

### **"You? Maybe me? It doesn't matter because we feel and live alike": Corporeality and Everyday Life in Latvian Women's Prose (1970–1980)**

In the mid-1950s a new generation of women writers emerged in Latvian literature. While initially their works were characterized by the themes and ideological perspective of Socialist Realism, starting from the 1960s, with the changes in overall literary scene, women authors increasingly began to address women's private

lives and experiences, voicing their opinions more or less openly. Regīna Ezera (1930–2002) was among the writers who in her prose predominantly focused on exploring the life of Soviet Latvian women in all its aspects, including the exposure of female "double burden". When in 1985 the next generation of writers introduced new trends in literature, the majority of those writers were women who among other themes also confronted Soviet reality of everyday life. Andra Neiburga (1957–2019) belonged to this generation inscribing in her short stories different vision of reality. The paper will examine Regīna Ezera's and Andra Neiburga's short stories from a gendered perspective, centering on the female body and material intensity of women's everyday life and revealing links between emotion, power and the female body.

This paper is a part of the ongoing postdoctoral research project "Embodied Geographies: History of Latvian Women's Writing" (Nr. 1.1.1.2./VIAA/3/19/430).

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Kārlis Vērdiņš, Dr. philol.

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia / Washington University in St. Louis

### **Borders of Gender Normativity in Soviet Latvian Modernist Poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s**

The paper addresses the question of gender normativity in Latvian poetry of the Soviet period when established gender norms were challenged by poets who looked out for less ordinary ways of both depicting masculinity or femininity as well as challenging the strong gender difference inscribed in Latvian language by making nature symbols in their poems sexually ambiguous. I take as an example three poems written by Monta Kroma, Ojārs Vācietis, and Vizma Belševica to analyze different approaches to gender normativity used by each poet.

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Zanda Gūtmane, Dr. philol., Sigita Ignatjeva, PhD

Liepāja University

### **Reception and Translations of Western Modernist Literature in the Brezhnev Era**

During the Brezhnev era, for Latvian readers, there are two primary sources of information about Western literature, including Modernism, Late Modernism, and Postmodernism: translations

into Latvian and the presence of Russian literary space in Latvia.

Since the late 1950s and 1960s, the centre of the Soviet world, Moscow, became the gateway to the West for the Baltic States. "Inostrannaya Literatura", a magazine dedicated to the translation of foreign literature (published since 1955), played a particularly important role. Already at the beginning of the Thaw period, Latvian literary periodicals "Karogs" and "Literatūra un Māksla" contain many references to "Inostrannaya Literatura" publications. In the Brezhnev era, we can also read many translations of publications of "Inostrannaya Literatura" in Latvian magazines, most of which are dedicated to foreign literature. Still, Latvian magazines are much more careful about ideological violations. There are no translations into Latvian of many significant works of Western modernist and postmodernist literature that have been translated and published in Russian.

Nevertheless, Latvian periodicals occasionally mention modernists and Modernism, mostly as a negative (decadent, capitalist, formalist) opposition to progressive Realism, and in many cases, those mentions appear in reports or commentaries about a book or a magazine article published in Russian. Although the condescending attitude dominates, there are also some less ideological analytical articles, both translated from Russian and written by Latvian authors, especially since the late 1960s. There are also a few translations of fragments from modernists' works.

The main source of knowledge of modernist literature in Latvia was the translations into Russian during the stagnation when the number of significant translations of modernist works into Russian increased. This progress cannot be observed in Latvia; notwithstanding a few exceptions, there was a real stagnation in the field of translated literature.

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Ruta Kurpniece, Mg. philol.  
University of Latvia

### **Zoopoetics: Latvian Short Fiction during the Period of Stagnation**

This paper mainly covers the topic of zoopoetics – one of the research methods in the field of animal studies, which developed in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Animal studies are a set of theories, which make it possible to study zoological characters in literature, media, etc. For example, these are post-colonial theories, narratology, semiotics and many more.

The purpose of the paper is to study theoretical material of zoopoetics, actualizing and conceptualizing the use of zoological characters and their mutual relations in the formation of the character system of literary works, as well as portray how zoopoetics can be used in the context of Latvian short fiction during the period of stagnation. Regīna Ezera and Zigmunds Skujiņš' short fiction is used as an example, where animal characters simultaneously function as independent characters, as well as fulfil the function of portraying human characters. Both these aspects – an animal as an independent character and animal as a portrayer of human characteristics – point to an innovative approach to the creative work of stagnation-era Latvian writers.

The result provides an insight into the formation of the system of zoological characters, its interaction with people, as well as defines different principles for the use of animal characters in the period of stagnation.

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Kaspars Zalāns, Mg. philol.  
University of Latvia

### **The Relationship Between Postmodernism and Socialist Realism in Mārgeris Zariņš' Works**

The thesis of Kaspars Zalāns research is that Postmodernism as a genre and literary form in itself could function as criticism and deconstruction of the Soviet regime and the Socialist Realism art frame that was prevalent during that era.

The research paper explores two novels, namely "Viltotais Fausta jeb pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata" (Counterfeit Faust or Corrected and Supplemented Cookbook) and "Trauksmainie trīsdesmit trīs" (The Frantic Thirty Three's), as case studies of what Postmodernism meant as an ideological change in literature during that era, as well as how the relationship with the occupation regime was deconstructed through the author's irony and reinterpretation of cultural tropes and references (for example, Faust and Mephistopheles).

Mārgeris Zariņš (1910–1993) was an influential Latvian composer and writer who is seen as one of the pioneers of the post-modern genre in Latvia. The characteristics of his writing were novel phraseology, linguistic style and unorthodox word choice, as well as the mixing of fantastical, realistic, comical and theatrical elements. His prose was also oftentimes grotesque and/or humorous.

“Viltotais Fausts jeb pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata” can be seen as a retelling of Christopher Marlowe’s version of Faust, one that at the time of its publishing and to this day continues to baffle and intrigue both readers and critics, by examining the relationship between an artist and society, his own work and historical interpretation and reinterpretation.

“Trauksmainie trīsdesmit trīs” follows the lives of artists and writers from the year 1933 (just before Kārlis Ulmanis’ coup) until 1945. It is the story of strong personalities trying to come to terms with the new social and political realities. Yet also 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 the previous ones.

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Solveiga Daugirdaitė, PhD  
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

## **The 1960s in the USSR as Reflected in the Memoirs of Simone de Beauvoir’s “Tout compe fait” (1972)**

The paper aims to discuss cultural policy changes in the USSR in the 1960s based on Simone de Beauvoir’s memoirs. In 1962–1966, Beauvoir regularly visited the Soviet Union together with Jean-Paul Sartre, spending several weeks in different parts of the country and, contrary to Sartre, left a written account of the political and economic situation. Beauvoir captured the breakthrough from the so-called thaw to the stagnation that occurred in the 1960s. 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 anti-Semitic courts began. Beauvoir and Sartre’s ties with the USSR were finally severed by the crushing of the 1968 Prague Spring.

Beauvoir would discuss the cultural situation that was slightly changing every year, regarding the censorship in literature and cinema. She also paid close attention to the persecution of writers, re-telling stories of writers’ trials, notably those of the poet Joseph Brodsky and the prose writers Daniel and Sinyavsky. Beauvoir discussed not only the everyday life of ordinary people, the food supply situation, the shortages and queues, but also her resentment against the absurd bans on foreigners’ free travel within the country as well as the mandatory and bothersome government procured chaperons.

Because she did not speak Russian, Beauvoir had to rely on

other sources for the information. There were liberal writers, such as Ilya Erengurg, Yefim Dorosh, translator Lena Zonina and others. Apart from Moscow and Leningrad, Beauvoir and Sartre, accompanied by Zonina, also visited the Crimea, Kiev, Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia, and Georgia. However, some intellectuals, especially dissidents, condemned the philosophers for their cooperation with the Soviet officials (for example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn refused to meet Jean-Paul Sartre). As a documentary narrator, Beauvoir does not show any empathy or compassion for the people whose lives she is describing; she does not try to place the blame for their troubles nor does she question the sense of creating the communist society. This is due to her narrative style and worldview. Nevertheless, Beauvoir’s account of the situation in the 1960s is very close to the way the situation was presented by local memoirists and thus negates the stereotype that Westerners, especially the left-wing ones, were not able to assess the complexity of Soviet reality.

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Aušra Martišiūtė-Linartienė, Prof. Dr.  
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

## **Lithuanian Drama in the Brezhnev Era (1964–1982): The Two Cases of the Theater of the Absurd in 1968**

Following the Khrushchev Thaw, Lithuanian theater and drama found a new direction— productions of historical-poetic dramas, which suited and attracted different theater personalities. For almost three decades the historical drama had become the most significant drama form artistically and socially, performing a defensive function.

This presentation focuses on the context of modern foreign and Lithuanian drama, in which the first two performances of the Theater of the Absurd appeared.

According to the history of Lithuanian theater, only a couple of plays based on modern drama were staged in 1940–1956. 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 and Lithuanian playwrights.

During the season of 1966–1967, plays directed by Miltinis based on Grušas’ “Adomo Brunzos paslaptis” (The Secret of Adomas Brunza, 1966) and “Pražūtingas apsvaigimas” (Fatal

Intoxication, 1967), and Jurašas's plays by Slawomir Mrozek's "Tango" and Leonid Zorin's "A Warsaw Melody" directed in 1967, for many theatergoers was a turning point. They signaled a transition to a new theatre language, the directors rejecting the traditional realistic rendition of a play and creating a conditional theater of metaphors.

In the spring of 1968, the play "Duobė" (The Pit) was performed at the Corridor Theater by the students of the State Art Institute of Lithuania (written by Arvydas Ambrasas (1947-1970) and Regimantas Mėdikis (1947-2015), directed by Ambrasas). At the end of the year, the premiere of Kazys Saja's (b. 1932) play "Mamutų medžioklė" (The Mammoth Hunt) directed by Jonas Jurašas (b. 1936) took place at the Kaunas Drama Theater. The Modris Tenisons (1945–2020) Pantomime Troupe, which had just been transferred to Kaunas Drama Theater, also performed in the play. The performances, based on the poetics of the Theater of the Absurd, became special events in the history of the theater and in Lithuanian culture. The new plays confused censors, who only a year later realized the message these performances were conveying to the audience.

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Edīte Tišheizere, Dr. art.

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

## **The Immobile Hero of the 1970s. Visual Metaphors of Despair and Stagnation**

At the beginning of 1970s, when Latvian theatre was functioning under Soviet ideological censorship, scenography, space and visual metaphors became a significant vehicle for subtext. Many artists worked in tight tandem with their "own" directors. Their collaboration created the foundation for the so-called 'active or dynamic scenography'. Stage design became not only a partner or a 'keyboard' for the actor, but also had a psychological influence on the audience, guided actions, and – most importantly – personified the subtextual meanings, which could not be hinted at in words. Such was, for example, Ilmārs Blumbergs' low, overturned pyramid with one point of support in "Brand" (Daile Theatre, 1975, dir. Arnolds Liniņš, Kārlis Auškāps), where one could balance only by standing perfectly still, – a symbol of protagonist, robbed of any opportunity to act.

Similar ideas were developed significantly not only by Blumbergs and Andris Freibergs in Latvia or David Borovsky et.al. in the Soviet

Union, but also by directors and scenographers in the 'Socialist Bloc': Tadeusz Kantor and Jozef Szajna, representatives of 'visual directing', in Poland, and Jozef Svoboda in the former Czechoslovakia.

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Ieva Struka, Dr. art.

University of Latvia

## **Pēteris Pētersons, Gunārs Priede and Self-Censorship in Their Plays about World War II**

In the centre of the paper there are two significant plays written by two outstanding playwrights and Latvian intellectuals – Pēteris Pētersons (1923–1998) and Gunārs Priede (1928–2000).

The short drama "Centrifūga" (Centrifuge) of Gunārs Priede was written in 1985. The poetic drama "Tikai muzikants" (Only Musician) was written by Pēteris Pētersons in 1986. Both plays depict a very complicated period of autumn and winter of the year 1944/1945 in the so-called "Kurzemes katls" (The Pot of Kurzeme) or blocked territory at the Baltic seaside where lengthy and deadly battles between the Soviet and Nazi armies took place until the end of the war. Both plays were staged in theatres shortly after they had been written.

The second play has been written only one year later than the first one; however, this year is remarkable because of significant changes in the social and political life of Soviet Latvia and the Soviet Union. As a result, changes in society required more opened and honest artistic productions.

We could presume Pētersons' play written in 1986 was more courageous in representing situation of Latvians civilians and war refugees as well as captives in the Pot of Kurzeme, especially after Priede's play "Centrifuge" was published in the literary magazine "Karogs" (The Flag, 1985) with 43 000 copies and staged in the Youth Theatre by the famous theatre director Ādolfs Šapiro. However, the situation was just the opposite. Priede's play in 1985 opened up a new debate about art reflecting on the history of Latvia, while Pētersons' play repeated Soviet clichés about the World War II. In 1998, shortly before his death, Pēteris Pētersons openly spoke about it in the interview I did for my book about his creative work.

With this paper I am interested to investigate the reasons why Pētersons who remembered the first independence period of Latvia much better than the five years younger Gunārs Priede was

more afraid to write about his experience in Kurzeme during the last year of the war.

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Heili Einasto, PhD

Baltic Film, Communication and Arts Institute, Tallinn University

### **Changes Demanded in Mai Murdmaa's Ballet "Master and Margarita" (1986) as Indicators of the Stagnation Period Fear**

In 1986 Mai Murdmaa choreographed ballet based on Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "Master and Margarita" to the music by Eduard Lazarev. The artistic council of the theatre required the choreographer to make some changes (suggested by the Communist Party ideology secretary) before it would be allowed to premier. The major worries at that particular moment concerned the religious aspects of the piece and the appearance of Jeshua.

However, the changes did not stop there: several requests were made, mostly concerning costumes (the crowd should be dressed in black instead of red and black, the critics' caps that resembled militia caps had to be removed) and props (the cross was replaced by X, the ropes in the hands of critics with which they tied the Master were abandoned) that had to be changed during subsequent performances. Due to a complaint of a principal dancer, Yuri Grigorovich, the artistic director of The Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, was invited to judge the ideological „correctness" of the work. (He found it appropriate.) Thus, minor changes took place over a season, but the main structure and choreography of the work could be maintained. With the progress of Gorbachev's glasnost, some of the required changes could be turned back, and in addition to the popular acclaim, the ballet also received official recognition.

In my presentation I discuss the changes I witnessed as an audience member (I saw most of the performances during the first season, and several in later seasons), and the background of these changes as revealed by the interviews with the choreographer and several people working in the ballet company at the time. These indicate the shifts in ideology and the anxieties in the ranks of the Communist Party in the mid-1980s when the Brezhnev era was over but Gorbachev's "rule" was just beginning.

Edgars Raginskis, M.A.

Hong Kong Baptist University

### **"The wind that was not meant to blow." The Censorship Incident of the Opera "Pūt, vējiņi!" ("Blow, wind, blow!") by the Soviet Latvian Composer Felicita Tomsone**

In 1960, Felicita Tomsone became the first female composer in Latvian music history to have her opera produced and performed on the stage of the Latvian State Theatre of Opera and Ballet. However, after receiving only 11 performances and substantial criticism from the Soviet Latvian musicologists, the opera "Pūt, vējiņi" (Blow, wind, blow!) was removed from the repertoire and rapidly fell into obscurity.

The research article inspects the hierarchical structure of the musical environment of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic of the early 1960s and its role in the fate of the newly written operatic work. The article analyses how the coercive and censorial processes that transpired during the production of the Blow, wind, blow! forced the composer to alter her original creative work. This paper contextualises and re-evaluates the musical and artistic qualities of "Blow, wind, blow!" from a distance of over 60 years since the premiere of the opera and argues that the overwhelmingly negative press reviews of the opera were musicologically unjustified and ideologically biased and in conjunction with the psychological peer pressure the composer endured in the production process of "Blow, wind, blow!" resulted in such a detrimental effect on Felicita Tomsone that she discontinued composing altogether. Additionally, it discusses the relevance of traditional gender roles within the Soviet Latvian arts sphere and the contribution of this component in the established procedures of the censorship apparatus. Finally, this article attempts to facilitate the posthumous recognition of Felicita Tomsone and reinstatement of her musical heritage as a valuable part of Latvian musical history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Activities of the Vilnius Young Writers' Section and Relations with Young Latvian Writers in the Late Soviet Era

From the very start of the Soviet period, the authorities paid particular attention to the control and 'education' of the new generation of writers by organizing conventions for novice authors, establishing literary circles and young writers' sections (the latter only in the big cities) at schools, universities and in editorial departments, and initiating writing competitions, as well as camps for newcomers. First and foremost, young writers were thought to be 'workers of the ideological front', obligated to 'fight for the education of young people in the Communist spirit'.

One of the most important institutions in Soviet Lithuania for educating the new generation formally was the Vilnius Young Writers' Section, officially established in 1946. As the conditions of the field started changing in the 1960s, the Vilnius Young Writers' Section, which had had the original purpose of preparing an army of writers, who were supposed to 'educate' the masses, eventually, 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 issues, unrelated to the politicised discourse. Membership of the section helped to accumulate the symbolic, social and cultural capital and legitimise the status of a writer.

With reference to various sources (archival documents, publications in the Soviet press, memoirs, interviews, etc.), this presentation outlines the history of the Section's formation, its structure and its place in the broader institutional network of young writers' (self)education in Soviet Lithuania.

The second part of the presentation is devoted to the Section's relations with the Rīga Young Writers' Association (Rīgas jauno literātu apvienība). The most intensive cultural contacts with young Latvian writers were maintained in the late Soviet era. Evidence of these contacts include: trips to Vilnius and Rīga, special publications of translations, and finally anthologies of ten Lithuanian and ten Latvian young poets: "Mes atėjome į šį pasaulį" (Vilnius: Vaga, 1983) and "Ausmā dzimusi sirds" (Rīga: Liesma, 1984).

## Music Metaphors in the Issues of Almanac "Latvian Music" Published in the 1970s

In Soviet Latvia, the main driving force for publishing musicological thought was the yearbook "Latvian Music" published with slight breaks from 1958 to 1990 in 19 issues. From the perspective of the literary genre, the almanac consisted mainly of analytical essays, biographical studies, accounts, and summaries of musical events in specific contexts. Albeit a significant part of the Latvian musical thought, it did not cover the whole field – besides weekly periodicals, the other half of the music-related discussions took place simultaneously in the writings of the Latvian diaspora.

Although scholarly and historical relevance of most of the articles found in the almanac has decayed, they still inform of the ways how Latvian musicologists contextualized their musical experiences, living under the Soviet occupation.

In this paper, I focus on the contextualization of music by the use of metaphors, drawing from the findings of cognitive sciences (mainly Conceptual Metaphor Theory, also Billman (2017), and Mandler (2014)) of how we contextualize and represent the world through metaphoric language. With the help of content analysis, I have categorized the metaphors found in the almanac issues published during the 1970s (six of them in count, approximately 300,000 words total). Among the quantitatively most relevant source domains, Soviet Latvian scholars use space metaphors (with a prevalence over the diaspora authors) to evaluate new works of music based on the abundance or lack of deep philosophical or emotional value, thus fulfilling one of the main roles of a soviet musicologist – to explain the meaning of a piece of music to the general public.

## Entering Adulthood Under the Soviet System

In the USSR, coming of age and reaching the age of 18 was celebrated with ideological rituals. The Celebration of the Age of Majority (in Latvian, Pilngadības svētki) belonged to Soviet civil

traditions performed at a semi-official level. It marked the end of one's adolescence and the beginning of the young adult's life. This festivity was invented under Nikita Khrushchev in 1958, lasted all throughout the Brezhnev era, and ended at the same time as the Soviet Union. The structure of the festival was provided by regulations developed centrally in the Soviet Union and passed top-down via the responsible authorities of the Soviet Republics. However, some interpretation was also left for each case of celebration.

In the paper, the ideological upbringing, as presented by the scenarios of the events and the public greeting speeches in the Latvian SSR, will be analyzed. Along with that, some lesser expected aspects will be discussed. Thus, the celebration of Soviet traditions may be viewed in the context of popular culture of the Cold War time. The consumerist volition, albeit very limited during the stagnation years, as well as the perspectives of the "socialist escapes" (Giustino, Plum, Vari 2013) which invigorated individual youth agency under socialism will also be brought forward.

The main sources of the study are the written and photographed fieldwork documentations of Soviet traditions collected by the Institute of Latvian History and held by their Repository of Ethnographic Material. In addition, the descriptions of "the new Soviet traditions" at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, ILFA UL, and press publications will be examined.

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Mārtiņš Mintauris, Dr. hist.  
National Library of Latvia

## **At the Doorstep of Stagnation. Depiction of Soviet Reality in 1967: The Case of Alberts Bels' novels "Investigator" and "Insomnia"**

Time around 1968 in the history of the Soviet Union was a moment at the beginning of the Stagnation Era. Although the very concept of Stagnation (meaning the period of slow decay and weakening of the USSR) was coined much later, after 1985, for the sake of then current political agenda, this concept has been widely used by historians, political scientists, and other scholars working on various subjects of Soviet history from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s.

Apart from the Prague Spring and its breakdown in 1968–1969, the situation within the USSR in the year when the 50th

anniversary of the 'Great October Revolution of 1917' was celebrated displayed a package of inner strains and tensions. The Brezhnev Era had just began still holding the banner of 'collective government' established in late 1964 yet coming to terms obviously as new challenges for the Soviet regime emerged on both international and domestic level. However, the short period from 1965 to 1968/1969 was marked by attempts to re-shape the previously closed Soviet society (left alone the political system unscathed) according to some standards of modernization, belated as it was when viewed from the contemporary Western perspective. Testing the borders of the allowable 'inner opposition' in the USSR is typical for this period.

In this context, the two novels written by young Latvian author Alberts Bels (aka Jānis Cīrulis, b. 1938), "Investigator", published in 1967, and "Insomnia", completed in 1969 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, condemned by the CPSU some ten years ago but still present in the Soviet political agenda, and the upcoming Stagnation Era. In the vague space between formally closed past and the ever-lasting 'present continuous' waiting for the once promised Communism to become a reality, the two novels depict social processes taking place in the Soviet society in general, along with the particularities of the Latvian SSR in the late 1960s. Therefore, it is worth to take a look on the two novels in question as a kind of texts being 'diagnostic' for this period of time.

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Ilze Ļaksa-Timinska, Mg. philol.  
University of Latvia / Institute of Literature,  
Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

## **Renaissance of Socialist Realism:**

### **Revival of Latvian Soviet Authors of the 1920s–1930s**

In the 1920s–1930s, the Latvian diaspora in the USSR consisted of about 180,000 Latvians, whose culture and literary processes developed separately from the literary process in Latvia. The Latvian Cultural Association and the publishing house "Prometejs" gathered around them most of the Soviet Latvian writers – many worked in the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines, performed various duties in the publishing house, or simply published their works in "Prometejs" publications. During Stalin's

“national operations”, the association “Prometejs” as a developer of Latvian national culture was liquidated and most of those involved in the Association’s activities were arrested, including almost all Latvian writers. Most of them were shot.

After the Soviet occupation in the 1940s, censorship and the ideas of Socialist Realism were aggressively introduced into Latvian literature. Even though Latvian authors already created works in the paradigm of Socialist Realism in the 1930s – they were not mentioned in any way. It was only after Stalin’s death in the 1950s when the authors were rehabilitated and gradually the acquaintance of the pioneers of Latvian Soviet literature and the transfer of their works in the Latvian SSR began. Literary scholars found it difficult to update these authors in various ways: scant information about the authors and a small number of contemporaries/acquaintances who could tell about them; how to justify the silence about these authors for 15–20 years; how to write about works that no longer thematically or formally corresponded to the spirit of the era; how to criticize or point out the mistakes of the authors, who should be perceived almost as role models and classics of Socialist Realism?

The aim of the report is to examine which authors and works of the 1920s–1930s were reawakened and published in the Latvian SSR, how they were interpreted and how they were integrated into the historical and political narrative of the USSR at the time.

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Sandra Cīrule, Dr. philol.  
University of Latvia

### **Literature, Libraries, Society: Memories of the 1970s**

In the 1970s the link “book–library–reader” was deliberately strengthened, because of the opinion that the ideal Soviet man has a broad view and diverse interests, and the library was an active agent in these processes. Both the methodological materials and the library statistics show active, targeted work with literature and readers. Also, in interviews with the librarians of that time the respondents confirm that the key issue was to maintain the reading activity and to focus on the reader.

Statistics of that time shows that collections of public libraries were diverse in terms of the content. Collections were dominated by fiction. There were enough translations of classic and popular literature from Russian and foreign authors, and readers drew attention to them. Latvian original literature, useful professional

literature and books of the popular series were in demand.

Popularisation of literature in libraries demonstrates a flexible approach and creativity to fulfil both the instructions of the ruling ideology and the readers’ expectations. The direction of work called the “reading management”, which formally had to be implemented to educate the reader and guide his/her choice of reading material in an ideologically correct way, was used to promote quality fiction, so that the reader would get the best.

Statistics shows that socio-political literature was competing for readers’ attention with fiction, art and sports literature, as well as literature of natural science, history and geography. The results of reading research at that time confirm that Latvian readers were holding on to their personal choices, and former librarians note that readers were more interested in topics such as love, old times, history and world trips. They wanted to know more about the world and life of humans.

Formally, libraries were one of the institutions supporting Soviet ideology, but interviews with former librarians show that the atmosphere in each particular library depended on local government and the librarian’s own personality.

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Viktorija Jonkutė, PhD  
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

### **The Role of Memory in Lithuanian and Latvian Cultural Press during the Transition Period of the Late 1980s**

In each historical period of change, revolution brings along hopes and illusions of a bright future. The transition period of the late 1980s was, accordingly, a hopeful time full of expectations. But the idea of a happy future and progress had already collapsed into a liminal, in-between state described as a vacuum, characterized by a considerable hunger for ideology and future projects. Because there were no accurate, effective models or perspectives available, it was commonly viewed as a time of returning. One of the key tasks that emerged was quest for authentic memory and the filling-in of historical interruptions. Estonia invented the term ‘ethnofuturism’. In Lithuanian and Latvian cultural press, the transition materialized as a reconstructive transformation, dominated by narratives about the past. It is possible to identify at least ten principals, interacting discursive functions of (re)constructed forms of memory, such as communicative, ontological, reproductive, testimonial, identity-based, functional,

ethical, emotional, socio-political, etc.

Some contemporary quotes include: “To return there, where it is impossible to return – a paradox, but not an absurdity” (V. Papiēvis, 1989); “The movement from the present to the past, becoming a peculiar archaeology of consciousness. The feeling of present continuous” (A. Cimdiņa, 1990); “We often transferred cultural teleology (the future) to cultural archaeology (the past). But there is some kind of fatalism that the past itself will bring the future” (E. Buceniece, 1989); “The past is spacious and safer, without oppressive uncertainty like our present and tomorrow” – it was claimed even after regaining independence (S. Šaltenis, 1990).

This presentation aims to briefly introduce such reflections, trying to answer, what was it – a post-soviet “futureless ontology”? Cultural policy “almost exclusively an ideology of memory (past), postmodern in its own conservatism, futurophobic consciousness, manifested in the desire to remain within the ‘familiar’ semiosphere” (V. Kinčīnaitis, 1991)? Or some special time mode of historicity and presentism, which define the transition period?

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Jānis Oga, Dr. philol.

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

## Latvian and Estonian Short Stories about History:

### Contemporaries from the Past

This paper reflects on parallels and differences in short stories dedicated to history written by Estonian writer Jann Kross (1920–2007) and Latvian writer Zigmunds Skujiņš (b. 1926) at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, when Baltic writers were engaged in quest for identity and history-based roots. In short fiction, in comparison to novels, there was an immediate resonance with the celebration of historical events, highlighting and rehabilitating key figures of these events. For example, the centenary of the first Latvian Song Festival inspired Zigmunds Skujiņš to draw attention to the pastor and writer Juris Neikens (1826–1868), who was the initiator of the song festival tradition. Neikens was turned into a protagonist in Skujiņš’ short story “Neikens iet uz Roperbekiem” (Neikens Goes to Roperbeki, 1973), whereas one of the organizers of the first Estonian Song Festival (1869) – journalist Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819–1890) – is a character in Jaan Kross’s story “Pöördtoolitunnis” (Swivel Chair Hour, 1971). Moreover, Kross’s story “Neli monoloogi Püha Jüri asjus” (Four Monologues on St.

George, 1970) was written in connection with the quincentenary of the outstanding Renaissance artist Michel Sittow (c. 1469–1525), who used to live in Estonia.

Epp Annus writes about Jaan Kross’s “decolonial mission” arguing that “he presented historical figures – Estonians, importantly – who were active subjects of history, foregrounding their important contributions in science, arts, or politics, and in this way fostered national pride” (Annus 2018). His Latvian fellow is Zigmunds Skujiņš, one of the most outstanding and popular Latvian writers in the second half of the 20th century. Skujiņš, along with other writers of his generation, restored the connection with the pre-war Latvian literature and called for believing in the strength of the Latvian people, learning the history of Riga and Latvia, protecting, nurturing, and developing the Latvian language, and opposing Russification.

In their short stories, both authors are engaged in dialogues with their heroes, asking them to answer questions that concern the authors themselves: artist’s identity in a colonial situation, compromises, and conformism, relations with contemporaries and power structures, midlife crisis, and ageing.

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LU Literatūras, folkloras mākslas institūts  
Mūkusalas iela 3, Rīga, LV-1423, Latvija  
info@lulfmi.lv  
lulfmi.lv

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