Crisis, Junctures, and Breaking Points : Understanding, Contextualizing, and Overcoming Crisis as Discourse (book of abstracts)

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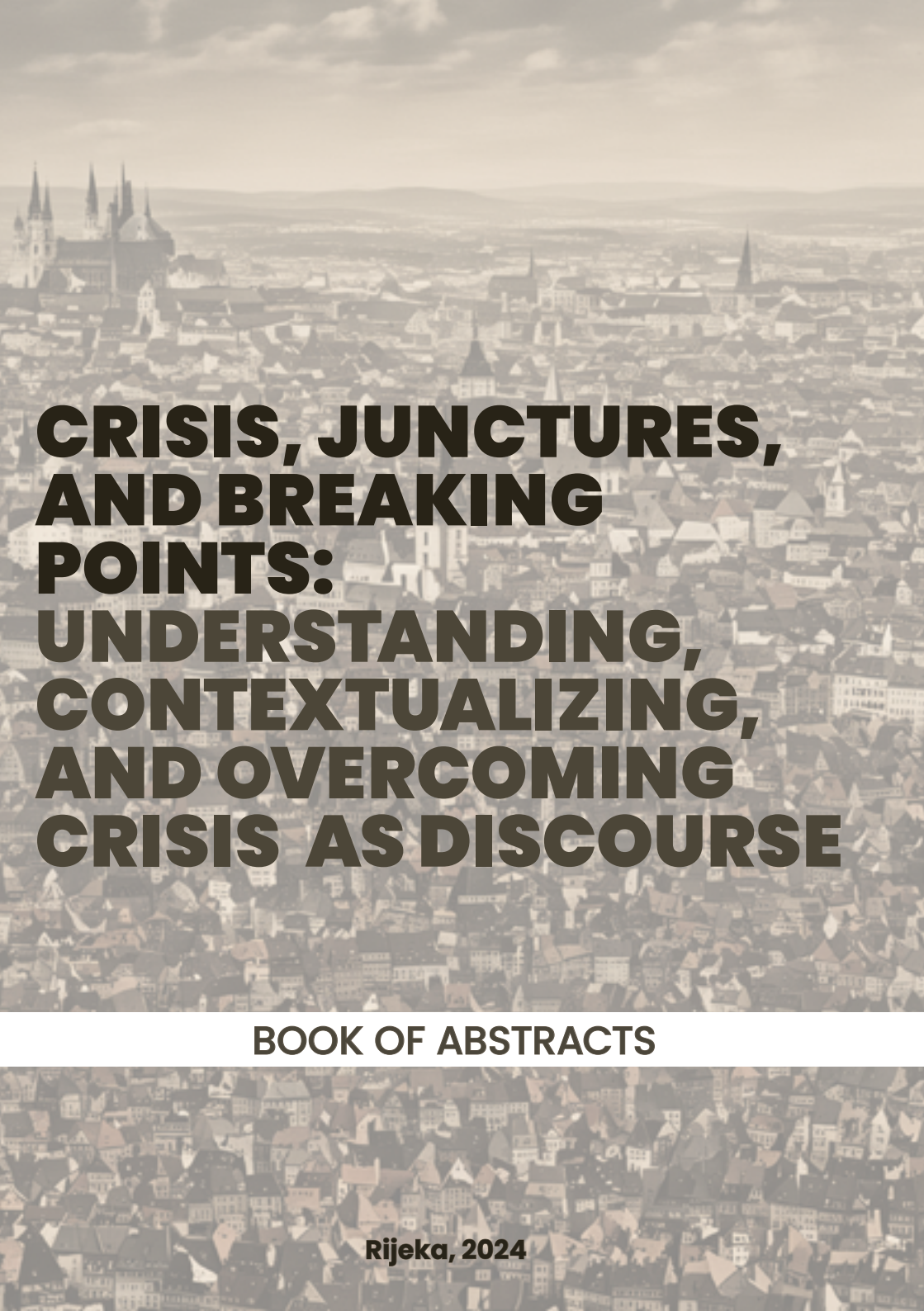
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CRISIS, JUNCTURES, AND BREAKING POINTS: UNDERSTANDING, CONTEXTUALIZING, AND OVERCOMING CRISIS AS DISCOURSE

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Rijeka, 2024

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Crisis, Junctures, and Breaking Points: Understanding, Contextualizing, and Overcoming Crisis as Discourse

Wirth Alumni Network

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Rijeka

Croatian-Canadian Academic Society
(Hrvatsko-kanadsko akademsko društvo - HKAD)

Rijeka, 2024

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The Conference was organized by the **Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences** (University of Rijeka, Croatia, EU), the **Wirth Alumni Network** (Canadian Studies Centre, University of Innsbruck) and the **Croatian-Canadian Academic Society** (CCAS-HKAD)

The Conference was supported by the **Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies** (University of Alberta, Canada) and the **Embassy of Canada to Croatia** in Zagreb, Croatia.

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

09:00 – 09:15 | REGISTRATION

09:15 – 09:30 | WELCOMING REMARKS | Room F–006

Dr. Antonija Primorac, Chair of the English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Rijeka)

Dr. Aleksandar Mijatović, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Rijeka)

Dr. Snježana Prljić-Samaržija, Rector of the University of Rijeka

H. E. Ms. Jessica Blitt, Canadian Ambassador to Croatia

09:30 – 11:00 | PANEL A | Room 207: Migration Policies and Politics

Dichotomous Rhetoric and Purposeful Silencing: Contradictions of Czech and Polish post-2015 Migration Policy vis-à-vis Immigration from South Asia

Zbyněk Mucha, Charles University, Czechia

Time for Independence (?) – Future of European Defence and Security

Ágnes Vass, Hungarian Institute for International Affairs, Hungary

Migrations in antiquity and today, and their literary embodiments

Kristof Jacek Kozak, University of Primorska, Slovenia

09:30 – 11:00 | PANEL B | Room 206: Staging Crises Through the Ages

Elfriede Jelinek/Nicolas Stemann's Wut: Rage and Crisis on Stage.
Piet Defraye, University of Alberta, Canada

Crisis Management in Theatre during Pandemic: Discourses and Practices in Budapest and New York, 1918–2020
Gyöngyi Heltai, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam

Exploitation in the Anthropocene: Crises from the Windswept Peaks of the Mountains to the Darkness of the Mines
Helga Mitterbauer, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

11:00 – 11:15 | COFFEE BREAK

11:15 – 12:45 | PANEL 2A | room 206: Crisis, Imagination, and Narrativity in History

… and the Devil was walking among the people. Urban legends and disinformation narratives in times of medical crises
Eva Jarošová, Charles University, Czechia

"Echoes of Catastrophes: Exploring Disaster Stories and Songs in Hungarian Chapbooks"
Emese Ilyefalvi, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

F*rom Crisis to Confidence: Rebuilding Trust in Science*
Vito Balorda, University of Rijeka, Croatia

11:15 – 12:45 | PANEL 2B | Room 207: Central-European Political Systems and Crisis

The Crisis of Liberal Democracy in Central European Countries and its Influence on the Interpretation of Constitutional Identity

Biljana Kostadinov – Dora Pavković, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Political polarisation, liberal democracy, and organisations of political prisoners

Klára Pinerova, Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies at the TU Dresden, Germany

Narration as crisis management in Tamas Dobozy, Crosswords

Éva Zsizsman, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Hungary

13:00 – 14:00 | LUNCH (catered lunch at room 207 lounge)

14:00 – 15:00 | KEYNOTE LECTURE | Room 207

Uncanny Organization and the Immanence of Crisis: The Public Sector, Neoliberalism, and Covid-19

Kevin Orr, University of St Andrews Business School, Scotland, UK

15:00 - 15:15 | COFFEE BREAK

15:15 – 17:15 | PANEL 3A | Room 206: Crisis in Text, Crisis in Memory

Narrating Complexity: Port Cities as Microcosms of Crisis and Resilience through Literary Lens

Petra Sapun Kurtin, University of Rijeka, Croatia

Crisis of Poetics: Deconstruction of Identity in Serbian Modernist Novel

Aleksandra Matić – Časlav Nikolić, University of Kragujevac, Serbia

Marisa Madieri and Fulvio Tomizza. Crisis and its Memories

Gregor Kokorz, University of Innsbruck, Austria

15:15 – 17:15 | PANEL 3B | Room 207: Crisis in Text, Crisis in Memory

Crisis and the Fate of Man in The Modern World
Filip Martin Svibovec, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Development Trends of Hybrid Regimes: The Case of Hungary
Richard Szentpéteri Nagy, Hungary

Crisis-based and Balanced-based Plots - Comparison of Narrative Strategies in Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Fiction
Jana Marešová, Charles University, Czechia

19:00 | CONFERENCE DINNER

All sessions are hosted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Sveučilišna avenija 4, Rijeka, Croatia. Please note: this is a preliminary program and could be subject to changes.

FOREWORD

The past decade has seen a seemingly unparalleled number of crises, which appear to have become a constant in our globalized discourse, ubiquitous in their many forms, whether economic, political, social, healthcare, environmental, etc. In our era of unprecedented flow of information, ever accelerating and complicated by further tech advancements, crisis as a paradigm is often perceived as being omnipresent in today's media, whose (mis)information can spark global consequences. Despite the (over)use of the concept, there has been little cross-disciplinary academic research on crisis that takes into account the complexity of our present moment of constant change and the way it connects to history, especially in the context of seeking alternative terminology, readings, and aspects that could aid in its understanding.

We first approached the topic with some initial questions that emerged when thinking about crisis, such as: How can media-created information bubbles contribute to the perception of crises? How can we overcome biases and identify truth beyond globally perpetuated and polarizing narratives? What can we learn about contextualizing crises across and beyond binary approaches of the local/global or the contemporary/historical? Is an outstanding occurrence of crisis in today's discourse a product of a shifting world or a change in perspective? How and why do transnational and globally perceived crises take precedence over our daily lives? Is 'crisis' a loaded term and what alternative terminology as well as approaches can we use to discuss the various disruptions, ruptures, and events that can cause flux in our present?

Guided by these initial questions in mind, we invited contributions that discussed and problematized the many forms,

meanings, and implications of the concept of crisis as well as addressed its alternatives, exploring their usage and significance across various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. To honour the Canadian and Central-European academic connections that have brought our network together and their intersecting in the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, University of Alberta, Canada, we especially welcomed contributions that dealt with lessons, voices, or ideas on crises as discourse and phenomena stemming from these two distinct yet interconnected regions.

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The 2024 international multidisciplinary conference Crisis, Junctures, and Breaking Points: Understanding, Contextualizing, and Overcoming Crisis as Discourse was a joint effort of three partnering institutions, the Wirth Alumni Network, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Rijeka, Croatia), and the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society, supported by the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central-European Studies (University of Alberta, Canada) and the Embassy of Canada to Croatia. Organized in Rijeka, Croatia, on 13 June 2024, and hosted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the conference is an inaugural academic event for the Wirth Alumni Network, marking a new era in (re)establishing academic and research connections between Central European scholars. The collaboration with the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society (Hrvatsko-Kanadsko akademsko društvo – HKAD) was an obvious choice, as the Society's endeavours in promoting cultural and academic connections between Canada and Croatia as a part of a wider Central-European network (CEACS) have been well-established over the course of its decades-long existence, appropriately marking their twentieth anniversary in June 2024. Hosting the conference in Rijeka, a port city of complex history, was a deliberate choice, as the city itself faced numerous and continuous crises, equally part of Central Europe as well as

the Mediterranean and the Balkans, marked by legacies of the Habsburg Empire and other competing imperial forces. We look forward to contributions from an array of disciplines, including Law, History, Economics, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, History, Folklore Studies, Philosophy, Theatre Studies, Musicology and more, to probe the existing and establish new discourses on crises in an international and interdisciplinary setting.

In our capacity as the Scientific
and Organizational Committee:

Petra Sapun Kurtin (University of Rijeka, Croatia)
Eva Jarošová (Charles University, Czechia)
Daniel Semper (University of St Andrews, UK)
Jana Marešová (Charles University, Czechia)
Emese Ilyefalvi (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

KEYNOTE TALK

Uncanny Organization and the Immanence of Crisis

Kevin Orr

Kevin Orr is Professor of Leadership and Governance at the School of Management, University of St Andrews, and Senior Fellow at UC Berkeley, Institute of European Studies. His research focuses on aspects of managing and organizing in public sector and political settings, and he has a particular interest in the idea of organizations as haunted spaces. He has published widely in established international journals, including Organization Studies, Organization, Public Administration, and Public Administration Review.

Abstract

In this talk I use the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny to develop a new perspective on crisis, one that challenges its associations with turning points and opportunities. The discussion identifies the immanence of crisis in organizational life. Engaging with the work of the philosopher Julia Kristeva, the uncanny is explored as an integral part of our subjectivities, one which disrupts our social stabilities and patterns of organizing. The concept of the uncanny also lets us apprehend the haunted and burdensome aspects of organizational life and the significance of the action in the shadows, atmospheres, and margins of organizations. Examining crisis through the lens of the uncanny brings to the fore the elusive and affective aspects of socio-political and organizational life. This perspective draws us away from an understanding of crisis as a passing phenomenon or as an opening that can be instrumentalized for cunning managerial purposes. Instead, it suggests the more radical insight that

crisis is a condition of organizing.

Keywords: crisis; uncanny; Covid-19; affect; public sector; psychoanalytic; Ethnography < Research Design and Data Collection; montage; juxtaposition; neoliberalism

PRESENTATIONS

From Crisis to Confidence: Rebuilding Trust in Science

Vito Balorda

Vito Balorda completed his PhD in Philosophy in 2024 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka. He is currently a research assistant at the Department of Philosophy, University of Rijeka. His doctoral thesis, titled *The Causal Explanation in Molecular Biology* was funded by the Croatian Science Foundation. Vito has authored two papers in Q1 international peer-reviewed journals, one of which was co-authored, and has also published a book review. During the academic year 2022/2023, Vito was a Croatian Doctoral Fellow at the University of Alberta in Canada, as a recipient of the Wirth Institute fellowship. He was also a visiting scholar at the Ruđer Bošković Institute (Zagreb, Croatia) and the University of Padua (Italy). Vito has delivered numerous talks at international conferences, including those at the Universities of California (Berkeley), Alberta, Berlin, Bordeaux, Oslo, Salzburg, and Geneva. He is a recipient of the Rector's Award for Excellent Achievement (University of Rijeka, 2023).

Abstract

The paper addresses the challenges surrounding the current crisis of knowledge, particularly evident in science. The COVID-19 pandemic and conspiracies related to climate change are examples that significantly contribute to the crisis, specifically through the proliferation of misinformation, fostering unwarranted skepticism and eroding public confidence in scientific endeavors.

The paper proposes two solutions to restore public confidence in science. Firstly, it advocates for the improvement of scientific

knowledge communication, focusing on explanatory vehicles such as representations (e.g., models). These representations are often either highly abstract, i.e., omitting some aspects of the truth, or idealized, that is, intentionally bending the truth that represents phenomena. Although, at first glance, this might be perceived as an issue that could cast doubt on science by not fully revealing the truth, the paper contends that it is crucial to communicate that abstractions and idealizations are beneficial for science. They enhance scientific knowledge and yield better results by improving reflection and understanding of the phenomena around us.

Secondly, the paper advocates for emphasizing the tangible successes accomplished by science, particularly in the realm of technological achievements (e.g., biotechnology, green technology). These practical advancements are more relatable to individuals, as they are part of their everyday lives, allowing them to directly witness the impact of science in action. This emphasis on applied science, in contrast to theoretical concepts, can make significant strides in regaining lost confidence in scientific communities.

Keywords: scientific knowledge; idealization; abstraction; technology; applied science

Elfriede Jelinek/Nicolas Stemann's Wut: Rage and Crisis on Stage.

Piet Defraeye

Piet Defraeye (PhD U Toronto, 1994) is a theatre scholar and director, and teaches in the Drama Dept of the U Alberta, Full Professor). His research is in the field of Comparative Performance Studies, straddling Cultural Studies. He has a particular interest in Austrian theatre, and has published, among other themes, on contemporary German, Austrian, Romanian and Dutch/Flemish theatre. He is the Co-Editor (with Helga Mitterbauer and Chris Reyns) of *Brussels 1900 Vienna*, on the cultural exchange between Belgium and Austria around the turn of the century (Brill, 2021). His current research focuses on the figure of Patrice Lumumba in cultural discourse, and he is also Guest Editor for a special issue of *Theater* (Yale) on Swiss director Milo Rau. He has staged, among others, Peter Handke, Elfriede Jelinek, Arthur Schnitzler, Raymond Federman, Evelyne de la Chenelière, and Pieter De Buysser and toured productions in several European cities. He also maintains an active liaison with Universität Innsbruck, L. Maximilians Universität München, Universiteit Antwerpen, and Universiteit Gent.

Abstract

Austrian Nobel Prize Winner Elfriede Jelinek has become notorious for her unapologetic literary confrontations with events and political discourse that shakes the comfort of our European identity to the core. Like no other author, she deals with crisis, in a discourse that is itself in crisis, and characters that are loosely anchored in opportunistic points of view. Her theatre is essentially a theatre of crisis that tries to bring Europe's political anxiety —on microlevels as well as macrolevels— to the stage and in the public domain through the controversies her

theatre engenders. For the last decade or so, the German director Nicolas Stemann has had numerous remarkable collaborations with Jelinek to bring her so-called parasitäre Texte to the stage, in controversial and provocative mise-en-scène. Jelinek's play Wut (2016) deals with Europe's response to the terrorist threats in Paris and Brussels (2015-16), and which reverberated across Western Europe. Stemann's mise-en-scène (Kammerspiele, Munich) is enraging and enlightening, it draws in, and gets under your nails. Typically a third of the audience have left by the end of the play in protest, out of exhaustion, or in disgust. Clearly, Jelinek's (and Stemann's) theatre signal a dystopian end-of-times, a global crisis of faith in the future, a radical questioning of their own discourse and imagery in mapping the crisis in the first place.

I propose to present an analysis of both Jelinek's discourse and Stemann's creative stage response, using my own recollection and notes of the play, extensive reviews of the production, alternative stagings of the same play, and traces of audience response.

Keywords: Elfriede Jelinek; Nicolas Stemann; Theatre of Crisis; *Wut*

Crisis Management in Theatre during Pandemic: Discourses and Practices in Budapest and New York, 1918 – 2020

Gyöngyi Heltai

Gyöngyi Heltai is a theatre historian and currently a Hungarian Visiting Professor at the Faculty of History of the VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, Vietnam. From 2017 to 2020, she was a Hungarian visiting professor at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Heltai graduated from Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary) where she studied Hungarian and Russian Literature and Cultural Anthropology. Heltai defended her PhD thesis entitled *Usages de l'opérette pendant la période socialiste en Hongrie (1949–1968)* in 2006 at Laval University (Québec, Canada). Between 2006 and 2017 she has been teaching at the Atelier Department of European Social Sciences and Historiography of the Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest). Her primary teaching and research areas are Hungarian Theatre History, the History of Hungarian Popular Culture (operetta), Culture of the Socialist Era, and Cultural Heritage.

Abstract

Theatre as an institution is prone to all types of crises. Among the possible causes, a pandemic is particularly threatening as – blocking the simultaneous presence of the actors and the audience during the shows – endangers the operation of this art and commercial entertainment form. The presentation will focus on handling the Spanish flu and COVID-19 in Budapest and Broadway theatres. The comparison of the 1918 and 2020 discourses and practices can reveal diverse consequences that point to the different functions of theatre in the given society. Although the commercial theatre industry in Budapest and New York had

shown signs of parallel development in the early 20th century, their operational models diverged after 1945. The presentation outlines the responses to the pandemic by the theatrical stage employees, the labor organizations and the press in 1918 and 2020. As COVID-19 caused the longest-ever ever break in the operation of theatres, the unprecedented situation generated reform ideas (e. g. streaming) both in Budapest and New York that can influence the aesthetics and self-image of the medium in the long term.

Keywords: Spanish flu; COVID-19; theatre industry; Broadway; state and municipal funding

Echoes of Catastrophes: Exploring Disaster Stories and Songs in Hungarian Chapbooks

Emese Ilyefalvi

Emese Ilyefalvi studied folkloristics, religious studies and philology at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. She worked from 2013 to 2018 as a Junior Research Fellow in the "East–West" Research Project (*Vernacular Religion on the Boundary of Eastern and Western Christianity: Continuity, Changes and Interactions*, ERC project No 324214). Within the framework of this project, she published a new Hungarian charm collection in 2014 co-authored with Éva Pócs and the *Digital Database of Hungarian Verbal Charms in 2018*. She finished her PhD Thesis in 2019 about the theoretical, methodological and technical questions of computational folkloristics. She was a visiting scholar in Vienna (Collegium Hungaricum Wien), in Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam), and in Edmonton (University of Alberta, Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies.) Since 2013, she has been giving lectures and seminars related to her research at Eötvös Loránd University and the University of Pécs. At present, she is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Folkloristics (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary).

Abstract

Icy floods, fires, devastating epidemics and earthquakes. You might as well read it in today's news. However, this research focuses on chapbooks from the 18th and 19th centuries that contain stories, news or songs of natural disasters.

These cultural artifacts shed light on how communities of the past coped with and responded to calamities, offering insights into their resilience amidst adversity. In Hungary, the heyday of printed chapbooks was during this period. Drawing from

material in major Hungarian libraries, museums, and archives, a significant number of chapbooks documenting domestic and international disasters were identified. Analyzing Hungarian, German, and Czech songs provides a valuable transnational perspective on this genre. Despite cultural variations, the themes and motifs in disaster songs resonate universally, reflecting shared experiences and emotions in the face of adversity.

Keywords: disaster songs; chapbooks and broadsides; 18th-19th centuries; news culture; natural disasters

… and the Devil was walking among the people: Urban Legends and Disinformation Narratives in Times of Medical Crises

Eva Jarošová

Eva Jarošová graduated from Charles University, Prague, and holds a PhD in history. Her main interest is the cultural history of the 16th and first half of the 17th century with an accent on funeral culture. She was a Czech Doctoral Fellow of 2018/2019 at the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies and now serves on the Wirth Alumni Network Executive Board as President.

Abstract

„5G installations would be spreading the corona virus."

„COVID-19 is an infection caused by the world's elites for reducing population growth."

„Drinking bleach or pure alcohol can cure the coronavirus infections".[1]

Are these narratives something that emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic, or have they been with us always? The proposed paper focuses on disinformation narratives emerging during times of health crises, seeking their roots, continuity, actualization, and potential mechanics of how to deal with them. On the particular example of plague and cholera epidemics in medieval and early modern Central Europe, the submission divides the narratives into two groups: supernatural images and

[1] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/tackling-coronavirus-disinformation_en (online 1.3.2024)

disbelief in the system, with plague epidemics representing more of the supernatural imagination while cholera serves to illustrate the distrust in the early modern state and its ability to manage health crises.

Keywords: disinformation; early-modern period; epidemics; cholera; plague

Marisa Madieri and Fulvio Tomizza. Crisis and Its Memories.

Gregor Kokorz

Dr. Gregor Kokorz is a musicologist who works in the field of music and cultural studies with a focus on the 19th and 20th century. He is particularly interested in the aspects of cultural transfers, border studies, and the construction of musical spaces. In his present research project Carlo Ferdinando Lickl – A Composer between two worlds, Dr. Kokorz focuses on the music history of Trieste in the 19th century and the role of musicians in the multicultural border region of the Habsburg Empire. Dr. Kokorz is a Senior Scientist in the department of musicology at the University of Innsbruck. He received his PhD from the University of Graz/Austria with a dissertation on the history of Ethnomusicology (Auf der Suchen nach der Differenz) and participated there in the Special Research Project Vienna around 1900. Modernism in Central Europe. He has served as Mellon Visiting Scholar to the University of Chicago and as Austrian Visiting Professor at the University of Alberta from 2018-2022.

Abstract

Confronting Marisa Madieri's *Verde Acqua* (1987) with Fulvio Tomizza's *Materada* (1960) this paper will develop a discourse on the mechanisms of crisis in our conference's locale. It will focus on the manyfold history of Istria and how this history is presented in the Italian literature of the second half of the 20th century. Both authors have contributed well known and influential texts on the crisis of loss and migration in the aftermath of the first and second world wars, when the Istrian territory was heavily reshaped along newly inserted state borders. One of the consequences, the experience of loss and migration – an experience very much present in today's world – is discussed in its

historic retrospective. As much as this paper uses literature, it is not a literary paper but aims to use the discourse in this field for an investigation on the mechanisms of crisis and its memories. Drawing on Halbwachs' and Assmann's reflections on collective and cultural memories in my analyses, I will focus on the aesthetic transformations taking place in the literary narrative which both ease and intensify traumatic experience. These narratives also make such experiences accessible to the outside and add to the actualization of historic crises in the discourse of the present day. Literature narrates, forms, shapes and reshapes memories and thus creates our understanding of realities. While this paper focuses on the impact of past crises, it equally invites us to imagine future memories of present historical crises.

Keywords: crisis; memories; Istria; literature; migration

Literature:

Marisa Madieri, Verde Acqua. *La Radura e altri incontri*. Torino: Einaud, 1998.

Fulvio Tomizza, Materada. Milano, 1960.

Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Halbwachs, Maurice, *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980.

The Crisis of Liberal Democracy in Central European Countries and Its Influence on the Interpretation of Constitutional Identity

Biljana Kostadinov, Dora Pavković

Biljana Kostadinov is a Full Professor with tenure and the head of the Department of Constitutional Law at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law. Her main area of research is comparative constitutional law, especially the organization of government in developed democracies (France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany), direct democracy (Switzerland, USA, Italy) and constitutional adjudication in member states of the European Union and the USA. In her research she has also focused on Canadian asymmetric federalism and the position of the President of the Republic in the French Fifth Republic. She is an author of many articles and books, an editor of several books and journals, an alumna of several scholarships, including Fulbright and Bourse du gouvernement français. She is also a member of many associations of legal scholars, including the Croatian Association for Constitutional Law, of which she is the President, and the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society, which she founded.

Dora Pavković is a Research Assistant at the Department of Constitutional Law at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law. Since June 2022 she has been enrolled in doctoral studies in legal sciences at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law. The topic of her doctoral thesis is: *Constitutional Identity in the Member States of the European Union*, her mentor is Professor Biljana Kostadinov. Her main research interests include, apart from constitutional identity, the crisis of liberal democracy in Central Europe, the independence of judiciary, and COVID-19 crisis. She has published several papers on those issues and presented them at scientific conferences. She serves as Secretary and a member of the Board

of Directors of the Croatian Association for Constitutional Law (May 2023 – present) and is a member of the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society, as well as the Central European Association for Canadian Studies.

Abstract

Constitutional identity is usually referred to as an unamendable part of a constitution. Within the European Union, however, it has been used as a sort of "tool" by some constitutional courts in order to control the scope of the transfer of competences from Member States to the European Union, and European integration more broadly.

Constitutional identity as a concept has always received various criticism. However, its "reputation" was severely damaged when it started being used as a pushback by Central European countries in the midst of a crisis of liberal democracy; which can primarily be observed in two countries – Poland and Hungary. One of the pillars of this crisis can be found in the capture of the constitutional courts.

The aim of this presentation is twofold.

Firstly, we will analyse how the interpretation of constitutional identity has evolved in both Poland and Hungary and we will examine the role of the independence of the constitutional courts therein. The main thesis is thus the following: the change in the interpretation of constitutional identity, which was described as 'abuse' thereof, happened partly as a result of this institutional capture.

Secondly, in Croatia, while the issues cannot be described as a full-blown crisis of liberal democracy, there are, nevertheless, concerns regarding the independence of the Constitutional Court. The main question is therefore: are similar developments of constitutional identity to be expected in Croatia, as well?

Keywords: constitutional identity; liberal democracy; captured courts; Central Europe; crisis

Migrations in Antiquity and Today, and Their Literary Embodiments

Kristof Jacek Kozak

Dr. Kristof Jacek Kozak, Professor, graduated from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in Comparative Literature and Philosophy. In 2002, the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, awarded him a PhD in Comparative Literature. In 2003, he started a three-year Joseph Kuchar Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the University of Alberta's Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies where he also held the Assistant Director position.

He is employed at the Department of Slovenian Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska. There he held the positions of the Chair of the Department of Slovenian Studies and the Associate Dean for International Co-operation and Development.

Dr. Kozak published two books: *Privlačna usodnost: subject in tragedija* (translated into Serbian, Slovak. Its English version was published by the Editions Champion, Paris, in 2015), and *The Aesthetics and Ideas Influencing Josip Vidmar's Pre-War Drama and Theatre Criticisms* (1998).

Dr. Kozak's research focuses on modernist and contemporary drama, in particular the tradition of tragedy, as well as philosophy and politics of literature with special attention to its correlations with contemporary society.

Abstract

Migrations and related migrant crises - of course there are more of them than just the Mediterranean one from 2015 – as we understand them today are chiefly associated with modernity, which is why we may be surprised to find out that this has been old, almost eternal theme in history and, consequently, in litera-

ture. Equally surprising may be the fact that they are among the main topics of one of the most respected genres: ancient tragedy.

In view of this, the questions about the understanding of migrant problems then and now appear automatically. If today we are grappling with the existential, but also the ethical, issues of migration crises, the logical question then is about the ways they had been understood in antiquity.

For the purpose of the WAN conference, when searching for answers to the above questions, the paper will focus on a comparison between two plays, namely between Aeschylus' text The Suppliants and Elfriede Jelinek's play *Die Schutzbefohlenen*.

In addition to their various undertones, the issues primarily concern the attitude of the receiving community towards migrants. Interestingly enough, Aeschylus' drama which belongs to the tragic corpus, ends positively, inclusively, humanely, which is why the observation that in antiquity they had a much more straightforward and human attitude towards migrants/refugees than we have today seems logical and, hence, also alarming.

It is therefore absolutely evident that antiquity with its messages should still be a necessary point of reference for our contemporary behavior.

Keywords: migrations; ancient tragedy; ethics; Aeschylus; Elfriede Jelinek

Crisis-based and Balanced-based Plots - Comparison of Narrative Strategies in Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Fiction

Jana Marešová

Jana Marešová, PhD, completed her PhD at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic and worked as a Research and Teaching Assistant at the Department of English, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic. She is a member of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies and of the Indigenous Literary Studies Association. Her main research interests are contemporary Canadian Indigenous fiction, oral storytelling, and Indigenous epistemologies and their reflections in Indigenous writing. In her publications and presentations, she explores contemporary Indigenous writing as a continuation of oral storytelling practices and the interconnections of Indigenous and Central European cultures. She has been awarded a Doctoral Research Fellowship by the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, University of Alberta, Canada (2014–2015), the Eccles Centre European Postgraduate Fellow in North American Studies Award, Eccles Centre, British Library (2016), and the International Council for Canadian Studies Graduate Student Scholarship (2018). In 2023, she received the Best Doctoral Thesis in International Canadian Studies Award for international scholars by the International Council for Canadian Studies Awards and Grants Committee.

Abstract

Conflict, crisis, and resolution form the basic founding steps of storytelling techniques in Western tradition, however this tradition was destabilized and challenged by modernist and postmodern approaches to narratives. Indigenous storytelling, on the other end, accentuates restoration and balance in plot

structures, which correlates with the need for balance in Indigenous epistemologies. This paper compares these narrative strategies, explores the sense of balance through the lenses of relationality, a pivotal concept in Indigenous theory, and its reflections in Indigenous literary theory (Maracle, Weaver, Tylor), and showcases the balance-based plots using examples of contemporary Indigenous Canadian fiction. For instance, Moon of the Crusted Snow and its sequel, Moon of the Turning Leaves, by Waubgeshig Rice, novels dealing with what Western literary theory would call dystopian futurism, will be discussed. Despite the fact that the whole plot in these novels revolves around a worldwide crisis, the crisis itself is not magnified and overly dramatized in the narrative and rather the restoration of community and sustainability is emphasized.

Keywords: narrative strategies; storytelling; relationality; crisis; balanced-based plot

Crisis of Poetics: Deconstruction of Identity in Serbian Modernist Novel

Aleksandra Matić, Časlav Nikolić

Aleksandra Matić was born in 1990, in Kragujevac. She completed all levels of studies at the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac. She defended her master's thesis titled *Slavdom in the Early Works of Rastko Petrović*. She defended her doctoral thesis, *Folklore Patterns in Serbian Literature of Romanticism, Avant-Garde and Modernism*, in 2020. In June 2022, she was elected to the position of Assistant Professor for the scientific field of Serbian Literature. She published over forty scientific papers and participated in a large number of international and national scientific conferences. She authored scientific monograph *In the Mirror of the Primordial* (Contributions to Rastkology) (2023) As a researcher, she participated in the work of the projects of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Faculty of Philology and Arts. Since 2022, she is the secretary of the Department of Philology, Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac.

Časlav Nikolić was born in 1983 in the city of Peć. He enrolled in and graduated from the undergraduate studies of Serbian language and literature in 2006 at the Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac. He defended his master's thesis *The Problem of Biographical Method and the Biography of Pero Slijepčević* in 2008 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of East Sarajevo. He successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, *Political and Ideological Horizon in the Novels, Essays, and Newspaper Articles of Miloš Crnjanski*, in 2011 at the Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac. He is employed at the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac as a Full Professor in the Department of Serbian Literature. He authored scientific monographs *Biography of Pero Slijepčević* (2013) and *The Book about London* (2022).

He edited the critical edition *Political Articles 1919–1939 by Miloš Crnjanski* (2017). Also, he is co-editor with Dragan Bošković, Full Professor, PhD, of a thematic literary-anthropological collection from the international scientific conference *Serbian Language, Literature, Art* and Editor in Chief of the university journal for literature, language, art, and culture *Lipar* (2012 – present). Currently, he is preparing a thematic collection of scientific papers *Stars: Literary, Linguistic, Artistic, and Cultural Astrophoetics* (with Đorđe Radovanović, Assistant Professor, PhD).

Abstract

The horizon of modernist literature in the history of Serbian literature reflects important changes in the dimensions of humanistic self-understanding. As literary modernism approaches its end, a crisis of important categories manifests at its borders: humanity, ontology, metaphysics, ethics, etc. The subject in 20th-century literature is always depicted as destabilized, and in the decades following World War II, this destabilization of the subject becomes increasingly radical. Parallel to changes in the position of the subject, the horizon of narrative poetics also changes. Namely, narrative no longer believes in the unchanging possibility of the humanistic tradition. On the contrary, novels of the second half of the 20th century reveal a transformation of imagination towards a nihilistic feeling. Man is portrayed either as a grain of dust (Miloš Crnjanski, Miodrag Bulatović) or as a robot (Borislav Pekić). The interpretation presented in this paper will indicate how the modernist crisis – recognized by Peter Sloterdijk as a catastrophe of the sphere – manifests itself in shaping the identity of the subject, in changing the perspective through which man is viewed, in the deconstruction of values that have shaped the human being.

Keywords: poetics; crisis; deconstruction; modernity; novels; identity

Exploitation in the Anthropocene: Crises from the Windswept Peaks of the Mountains to the Darkness of the Mines

Helga Mitterbauer

Helga Mitterbauer is a Full Professor of German Literature at the Université libre de Bruxelles. From 2010 to 2015, she was the Austrian Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Alberta. She has published over 20 books and numerous articles on Austrian, German, and comparative literature. Recent Book Publications: *Franz Blei: Das trojanische Pferd* (ed., Berlin 2023); *Brussels 1900 Vienna: Networks in Literature, Visual and Performing Arts, and other Cultural Practices* (co-ed, Amsterdam 2022); *Vorstellungen vom Anderen in der tschechisch- und deutschsprachigen Literatur* (co-ed., Berlin 2021), *Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine 15* (Brussels 2021, co-ed.), *Crossing Central Europe: Continuities and Transformations, 1900 and 2000* (co-ed., Toronto 2017).

Abstract

On 17 February 2023, an extraordinary first performance took place at the Volkstheater in Vienna. Together with the play *In den Alpen* by Elfriede Jelinek, the commissioned work for the Congolese-Austrian author Fiston Mujila Mwanza *Après les Alpes* was presented to the public for the first time. While Jelinek's play focuses on the crisis of tourism, Mwanza transposes and intensifies the discourse on the diverse exploitation of people and nature in the extraction of natural resources in Africa.

In the two pieces and their combination, crisis is addressed in a variety of ways. I will focus on the fact that both plays are dealing with a massive exploitation of people (whose lives are put at risk in favour of maximising profits) as well as a massive destruction of nature. In this respect, the paper links the discourse of crisis with current debates in the field of

ecocriticism. In addition to that, the connection between the two pieces points out the trans-national dimension of every crisis on this planet and that the cri ses addressed in the play show very similar patterns. This corresponds with the aesthetic forms used by the two playwrights: Both share a strong affinity for music, which is clearly visible/audible in the rhythm of the texts.

Keywords: crisis; Elfriede Jelinek; Fiston Mujila Mwanza; exploitation; Alps; Congo

Dichotomous Rhetoric and Purposeful Silencing: Contradictions of Czech and Polish post-2015 Migration Policy vis-à-vis Immigration from South Asia

Zbyněk Mucha

Zbyněk Mucha is a PhD candidate in History and Asian Studies at the Institute of Asian Studies, Charles University in Prague. His research focuses on the role of native migration brokers in facilitating contemporary student and labour migration from Bangladesh to Central Europe. He is particularly interested in historical migration brokerage practices emerging in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean and their continuity in the present-day migration governance. In his dissertation, he combines ethnography and critical analysis of migration policies of Czechia, Poland and the EU.

Abstract

Immigration became an especially thorny and publicly discussed issue with the so-called Refugee Crisis beginning in 2015. The stance of the Czech and Polish governments was dominated by strong anti-Muslim and anti-immigration rhetoric. Still, both countries have witnessed a steady increase in mainly short-term immigration from various Asian countries such as Bangladesh or Pakistan ever since. This paper analyses Czech and Polish migration policies against the backdrop of a historically constructed notion of anti-illegal immigration policy, and category of temporary migration, coupled with the problematic nature of debt-financed migration in Asia. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Czechia and Poland (2018-2021), in-depth and semi-structured interviews with migration

experts, academic and grey literature, official documents, this paper argues that silencing of actual labor immigration in political communication while employing anti-migration rhetoric represents a discursive gap typical for liberal democracies. It further concludes that rendering migrant labor as a temporary commodity and turning a blind eye on recruitment of international migrants represents a continuity practice of migrant labor subordination within the nation-state, originating during colonialism and the advent of capitalism in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: discursive gap; labor recruitment; migration policy; refugee crisis

Political Polarisation, Liberal Democracy and Organisations of Political Prisoners

Klára Pinerová

Klára Pinerová. Historian. Received PhD at Charles University in Prague, researcher in the field of postwar history in East Europe. Her main interest is the prison system and the history of socialist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia and German Democratic Republic and politics of memory. In 2011 she took a one-year scholarship at The Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies in Edmonton, Canada as a Research Assistant. Until March 2016, she worked at the Herder Institute in Marburg studying individuals' prison experience. The project resulted in the monograph Do konce života. Političtí vězni 50. let - trauma, identita, adaptace [Till the End of Life. Political Prisoners of the 1950s. Trauma, Adaptation, Identity]. In 2017-2019 she was the implementer of the junior grant of Czech Science Academy Transformations of the Prison System in the Czech Lands in the Period 1965–1992. Systemic and Individual Adaptations at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in the Czech Republic, as part of which was published in the book Prison as a Mirror of Society. The Unequal Battle between Politics, Science and Humanity, Czechoslovakia 1965–1992. She recently received Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Fellowship for the project Political Polarisation and Communist Past: Czech and German Case, which is implemented at Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies at TU Dresden.

Abstract

Young post-communist democracies are recently struggling with political polarization, which manifests itself by illiberal tendencies and populism. This crisis of liberal democracy stems

from many factors. The characteristic feature of post-communist countries is that populism and illiberal tendencies stem also from their communist heritage which has transformed into a strong anti-communist narrative and polarising politics of memory, which may affect political and economic stability. The polarised narrative has penetrated into society in various ways, among others through special memory groups. After 1989, organisations of political prisoners in Czechia and Germany appeared on the political scene as distinct and powerful memory associations whose radical anti-communist worldview influenced various societal groups. While these organisations are rightly understood as legitimate representatives of victims and their claims, their influence on democratic political developments can be controversial, to say the least. Their activities on the one hand helped society cope with the difficult past, but on the other brought to public space a polarized narrative that was not limited to members of the Communist Party, but to other ethnic, religious, and sexual minority groups as well.

The aim of the paper is to describe the role of organisations of political prisoners in Czechia and Germany in transitional justice after 1989, especially in the crisis of democratic development. It will focus on the rise of negative phenomena, such as radical anti-communism in the Czech case and leaning towards right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Germany.

Keywords: Czech Republic; Germany; political prisoners; anti-communism; polarisation

Narrating Complexity: Port Cities as Microcosms of Crisis and Resilience through Literary Lens

Petra Sapun Kurtin

Petra Sapun Kurtin is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Zagreb and teaches at the Department of English at the University of Rijeka. She was awarded the Fulbright scholarship for her interdisciplinary research on cities and literature and spent a research year at New York University in New York and Tulane University in New Orleans, US. She also spent a research year as a Doctoral Fellow at the University of Alberta in Canada (Wirth Doctoral Fellowship). She is serving her second term as the elected President of the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies. She co-founded the Young Canadianists network and is currently a member of the Executive Board and Meeting Chair of the Wirth Alumni Network. Her scholarly interests lie primarily within the disciplines of American, Canadian, and Mediterranean Studies, focusing on the intersection of spatiality (urban studies), technology, and culture/literature. Her thesis explores representations of New Orleans as a port city in contemporary American texts. Besides her academic endeavors, she has worked as a literary editor at a publishing house, translator, journalist, consultant in the creative and digital industries, and collaborates regularly as a liaison between local institutional partners and international guests for cultural and academic events.

Abstract

In recent years, scholars have increasingly examined port cities as sites of both vulnerability and resilience, particularly in the context of contemporary crises (Borde/Grevet/Martin/

Warlouzet 2017, Hein/Schubert 2020, Konvitz 2020). This presentation will explore the nuanced dynamics of port cities as microcosms of the contemporary conjuncture, i.e. the current socio-economic landscape influenced by intersecting mobilities of people, cultures, goods, and capital. Drawing on examples such as New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rijeka's contested 20th-century history, the paper highlights the disparity between official narratives and local responses in these two complex (post-)industrial cities during times of crisis. Framed within a humanistic perspective, this presentation examines the inherent complexities of port cities as liminal, porous zones (Benjamin) characterized by intersecting narratives and questionable histories. Through a geocritical approach (Westphal), the paper suggests that a *longue-durée* analysis of literary canons and writing from port cities can provide clarity amidst the complexity of our present reality. By illuminating patterns of complexity often obscured by globalized media discourse, this comparative analysis of recent critical attempts by literary scholars to organize literary canons underscores the importance of viewing port cities as contact zones that encapsulate contemporary experiences. The paper advocates for a deeper understanding of port cities through the lens of literature, offering alternative narratives that challenge dominant discourses, whether those proposed by various levels of authorities or the globalized and digitized mass media.

Keywords: port cities; crisis; conjuncture; complexity; literary canon; New Orleans; Rijeka

Crisis and the Fate of Man

Filip Martin Svibovec

Filip Martin Svibovec holds a B.A. in Religious Sciences and M.A. in Philosophy from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus, and an M.A. in Theology from the Philosophical-theological Institute of the Society of Jesus (affiliated part of the Pontifica Universita Gregoriana, Rome), University of Zagreb. He spent a total of two years as the holder of the Doctoral Research Fellowship at the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, University of Alberta in Canada (2019-2021), and has been a member of the Wirth Alumni Network since 2021. He is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, writing a thesis on the topic of *The Aspects of the Concept of Time in the Philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev.*

Abstract

„It has become a banality to say that we live in a time of historical crisis, that a whole epoch is ending, and a new one, as yet without a name, is beginning", writes the Russian philosopher Nikolay Berdyaev as he explores *The Fate of Man in The Modern World*, and the crisis that has befallen all of mankind. As we are stepping into the yet unknown era of advancement in all fields, especially the field of technology such as A.I., machines, and automation, humanity is faced with a profound crisis: the crisis of religion, spirit, creativity, culture, politics, and even humanity. Henceforth, it is important to dedicate a thought to the crisis and the fate of man in the modern world, as the experience of crisis forms a pivotal moment in man's future formation. Crisis forms a basis for change, for rethinking one's actions as one goes forward into new endeavors. As we live in a world marked by catastrophe, many small crises that arise may serve as stepping stones to move us forward into an era of heroism in which the human spirit shines most brightly in spite of the overwhelming

pressure from the objectified and hyper-technical era.

Keywords: crisis; Berdyaev; fate of man; future man; new epoch

Development Trends of Hybrid Regimes: The Case of Hungary

Richard Szentpéteri Nagy

Richard Szentpéteri Nagy (PhD) was born in Kiskunhalas, Hungary in 1965, is author of seven books on Hungarian political system, has been teaching constitutional law and political science in various Hungarian universities, and was an intern at the Canadian (Wirth) Centre for Austrian and Central European Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada in 2002-2003.

Abstract

The crisis of democracy and the rule of law has been a worldwide phenomenon in recent years. The post-communist countries, however, have had specific signs of this phenomenon in recent decades. Some of these regimes are democracies, others are clearly dictatorships, and, interestingly enough, there are many mixed systems in the intermediate range. The latter are usually called hybrid regimes (or mixed regimes, for that matter, Bunce – Wolchik 2011). In the first stage of the democratic transition, the features of the democratic and autocratic system were usually still mixed (O'Donell – Schmitter 1986). However, transformation is rarely an irreversible process. It may happen that countries previously considered democracies slip back to the level of a competitive authoritarian system or to a completely autocratic system (Linz 1978). Hungary is a special case. Development in this country is one-way and clear. The country, which became a democracy in 1989-90, embarked on a new path from 2010. After the 2010 elections, a new political system emerged, which was given various names in the political and political science literature using previously developed concepts (Diamond – Plattner 2002; Levitsky – Way 2010; Sharp 2012 etc). The presentation tries to summarize the main characteristics of the system,

to determine the clear direction of the Hungarian hybrid regime and to find an answer to the question of whether the Hungarian system can still be called a hybrid regime at all.

Keywords: crisis, constitutional democracy, political order, hybrid regime, democratic backsliding

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Time for Independence (?) – Future of European Defense and Security

Ágnes Vass

Ágnes Vass, PhD, works as Research Director at the Hungarian Institute for International Affairs. Before this position, she worked for the Embassy of Canada in Budapest. She obtained her PhD at the Corvinus University of Budapest. Her research includes Central Europe, minority rights, and majority-minority interactions. She was a fellow at the Wirth Institute in 2015/2016.

Abstract

Current security challenges in Europe and the region have raised yet not answered questions and many uncertainties concerning Europe's security and defense capabilities. The EU faces serious challenges from staff shortage to lack of resources in the field of defense, while neighboring actors, such as Russia, are capable of maintaining and developing their defense capacities without significant hurdles. European countries are vulnerable from a defense and security perspective and this vulnerability threatens other sectors as well, such as the economy. Conflicts in the region have a significant impact also on the nature of transatlantic security relations while it is also visible that a new Eurasian security order is under creation. The current structure of the EU might not properly reflect the recent developments in the EU's defense agenda (e.g. there is a need for a Defense Commissioner within the Commission). The EU needs to learn to think like a geopolitical power, especially from the defense perspective. This research would like to explore the possibilities of an autonomous European defense system and the effects and

possibilities of the current interstate war in Europe.

Keywords: security, defense, cooperation, future of the EU, autonomy

Narration as Crisis Management in Tamas Dobozy, Crosswords

Éva Zsizsmann

Éva Zsizsmann completed the English and American Literatures and Cultures PhD Programme of the University of Szeged, Hungary. Her field of research covers Postcolonial studies, Canadian literature as well as place and memory in contemporary Canadian fiction, with a special focus on Alice Munro's short stories. In 2012 and 2013 she was a doctoral research fellow at the Wirth Institute, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. She currently teaches ESP (English for Special Purposes) and translation at MATE (Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences) and the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, both in Budapest.

Abstract

The short stories in Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize winner Tamas Dobozy's latest collection, *Ghost Geographies* (2021) trace the relationship between story and history, the individual and the collective. The characters inhabiting the texts are mostly Hungarian-Canadians, living in an in-between world, haunted by memories of the Second World War and communism. Most of them are immigrants who seem to follow a trajectory of decline and fall.

My paper focuses on representations of the crisis of communication between characters in Crosswords, a crisis rooted in the stubborn clinging to conflicting interpretations of historical events, as well as the problematic nature of belonging to a nation or an ethnic group, where ethnic identification is used to

manipulate and oppress.

Dobozy is masterful in offering psychological explanations, exploring the human side of historical events. The sarcastic, ironic tone, the wisdom of disillusionment is coupled to the effort of understanding human behaviour, the nuances of character. The grudgy old man in Crosswords is an example of a fully-rounded, lifelike character: he is in constant fight with a Canadian veteran, unable to go beyond patriotic clichés in his single sided narrative about the Second World War. My paper aims to throw light on the narrative techniques of the text which might be considered an attempt to manage the crisis, to contain conflicting views and voices.

Keywords: crisis management; ethnic identification; immigrants; narrative techniques; story and history



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