Title: The “Shape” of Mental Illness in Hollywood

Author: Andrei-Ioan Bleahu

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisors: Ott Puumeister, Katre Pärn

The aim of this work is to analyse Hollywood cinematic representations of psychopathology and to construct underlying schemas of their evolution, from a semiotic perspective. Representations of psychopathology in Hollywood can lead to a poor understanding of mental illness by various audiences, contributing to bias.

Textual analysis will be used to model how Hollywood films, taken as texts provide meanings of mental illness. The conceptual framework is based on Michel Foucault’s concept of biopolitics and Jacques Fontanille’s concept of *formes de vie*. Initially conceived by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the framework of analytical philosophy to locate the influence of cultural forms in the interpretation of languages, *formes de vie* is here used to provide a clear structural dimension for representations of psychopathology. As such, the proposed approach is to connect various stereotypes presented in films, ranging from rebellious free spirit to zoo specimen, to associated *formes de vie.* Expected results include the establishment of a typology of psychopathological *formes de vie*.

Title: Structures of feeling in Ali Smith's Seasonal Tetralogy

Author: Grete Pärn

Curriculum: European Languages and Cultures

Supervisors: Raili Marling, Eret Talviste

In June 2016, a referendum was held in the United Kingdom, as the result of which it was decided that the UK was going to leave the European Union. The quick emergence of novels reflecting on Brexit indicated that the referendum had not only affected politics but had also revealed deeper cultural and societal issues. The topic of my master`s thesis is the reflection of the Brexit-related structures of feeling in the seasonal tetralogy – *Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019) and *Summer* (2020) – by Ali Smith.

"Structures of feeling" is a concept developed by Raymond Williams in the 1960s and 1970s that combines the analysis of the social, the material and the affective infrastructures, and can be used to analyse how a period and its society are reflected in an artwork. In this master`s thesis, the concept is used together with the contemporary understanding of affect gained from affect theory in order to analyse the representation of the United Kingdom around the time of the Brexit referendum in the tetralogy. The four novels have been chosen, as all of them convey the reaction and the effect of Brexit on both an individual and a societal level. Although Smith`s works, as well as what have come to be known as 'Brexit novels', have already received a considerable amount of scholarship, there are as of yet no studies discussing the structures of feeling related to Brexit. This thesis seeks to fill that gap.

Title: Zara Mints as Interpreter of Work by Maxim Gorky

Author: Anastassia Jermolajeva

Curriculum: European Languages and Cultures

Supervisor: Lea Pild

Zara Mints (1927-1990), an outstanding literary scholar and professor at the University of Tartu, devoted her life to studying the works of Russian symbolists and, in particular, Alexander Blok. However, the range of her scientific interests was not limited to the mentioned topics. Her article "The Issue of Conventionality in the Work of Maxim Gorky" was published in the third issue of the Estonian journal "Keel ja Kirjandus" in 1968. The article was devoted to the analysis of the works of an author, who was proclaimed "the founder of socialist realism", "the leader of the Soviet writers". In the Soviet research studies, Gorky's works were opposed to modernism, which was considered a "wrong" literary school. Mints' article translated into Estonian remained unknown to the majority of Gorky scholars. The original of her text has not yet been found, that is why it was essential to make a back translation into Russian.

By "conventionality" the researcher means a system of literary techniques used by writer to cognize reality in a work of art. Zara Mints seeks to free her discourse from terms "romanticism" and "realism", which were often used by Soviet scholars in relation to Gorky's work. She is suggesting the concept of "anthropological realism" associated with the traditions of democratic art of the 19th century. She puts Gorky into the broader literary tradition, i.e., to the origins of Russian modernism, when Russian literature of *fin de siècle* began to move away from the realism that dominated for several decades. Mints characterizes literature of the end of the 19th century, as "an increase in the degree of conventionality", as by the poetics of antitheses, the schematism of plots, the polysemy of images, and the reduction of the volume of texts. All these features Mints discovers in the works of Gorky.

The vision of Mints is strikingly different from the studies of her contemporaries, the Soviet literary scholars of the 1960s. In her analysis, she relies in a hidden way on the structural analysis, which at that time was elaborated by the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. Thus, the researcher in her innovative article touches on the issues which were associated with the work of Maxim Gorky much later, in the times of perestroika.

Title: Peipsimaa Women's Everyday Dress.

Author: Anastassia Kortšinskaja

Curriculum: Ethnology

Supervisor: Kirsti Jõeste

Clothes accompany people from the earliest years of civilization's existence. For a long time it was considered that clothes are the thing that distinguishes a human being from an animal. But, despite that, clothes were considered not serious enough for academia, and belonged to some marginal area of research as not deserving any intellectual consideration.

Dress and fashion got into the eyes of scholars in the 18th century, when the first dress history publications were issued. In the 19th century dress and fashion were considered in relation to economics. By the end of the 19th century there was a clear distinction between dress as clothing and fashion as a trend, and the interest towards the latter was dominating in humanitarian research.

Everyday dress was mostly researched as a form of a traditional or folk dress, or, in case of non-folk or city dress, not researched at all.

The interest towards dress as a non-fashion element of human life arose in the 20th century due to social sciences, which started seeing the dress not as a fashion or trend, but as a material object or a part of human activity, which is reflected in many other aspects of human life.

The main topic of my presentation is everyday clothes, worn by women in Russian villages on the Peipsi lake coast. Those villages have been traditionally Russian since the 17th century, when the first Old Believers moved there from the Russian Tsar's oppression. Natively Russians, they brought their Russian traditional costumes with them, which came out of use over 100 years ago, replaced by modern practical everyday clothes.

This research is dedicated to the question of what do contemporary women of old believer's villages wear, what are their everyday and festive clothes, what are the rules and tradition for wearing clothes in that region, is there anything, that makes Russian Peipsi women different from any other women living in other regions of Estonia.

Title: La Mas Draga: Am Ethnography of a Mexican Drag Show

Author: Israel Palacios Fierro

Curriculum: Folkloristics and applied heritage studies

Drag culture has been on the rise in recent decades, not only accepted for its performative and entertainment value, but also for its ability to give visibility to new gender identities and gender expressions. Movies, series, reality shows and now the internet and other digital platforms have opened new ways to consume, share, and present this type of content.

Drag has evolved beyond the exacerbation of femininity or gender archetypes, it can take references from the animal world, dark creatures, and even other worlds. RuPaul's Drag Race, an American reality Drag Queen competition television series, being hegemonic and western, has been more accessible and visible, therefore it has been a milestone in the positioning of drag culture in the mainstream. It currently has franchises in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Italy, Netherlands, Philippines, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States.

In order to give visibility to the other worlds of drag and performance, I have decided to carry out a digital ethnography of the Mexican reality show La Más Draga, which not only seeks to be a platform for entertainment, but also for *dragtivism* by sensitizing viewers about the stigmas of the LGBT+ community through challenges that exacerbate the Mexican identity and folklore, such as *La Más Pintada*, where participants walk the runway with an outfit inspired on paintings and murals by Mexican artists from the XX century.

La Más Draga is broadcasted through YouTube, allowing a wider geographical reach in Spanish-speaking countries, expanding its audience and even the nationality of one of its participants for this fourth season. I have decided to create an educational illustrated booklet that not only gives an account of the most relevant findings of the ethnography that I will carry out, but also breaks down important terms and details of the Mexican drag culture.

Title: Matriarchal Charming Tradition: Gender and Socio-cultural analysis of Zulekhavi tradition in Multan city

Author: Kashif Farooqi

Curriculum: Folkloristics and applied heritage studies

Divination and charming have an intertwined historical relationship. Charming practices can enter another domain and serve the purpose of healing physically and mentally. In my paper, I shall present my proposed MA-level research, which attempts to delve deep into the arena of charms, charming and matriarchy to find answers to these questions and analyze one of the matriarchal charming traditions in the ancient city of Multan through a socio-cultural and gender lens. Digital tools will be used during the research to gather qualitative data to pilot-test alternative data collection tools in the course of the pandemic.

The research will engage with the charm performers, beneficiaries and others who have directly or indirectly benefitted or observed the practices. The research will try to find answers to questions like how the carriers of the tradition were able to keep this matriarchal tradition alive, how do they foresee the future of this tradition, how the technological advancement in the society has impacted this tradition.

In patriarchal societies, the area of charming is dominated by men, which raises the question of how comfortable women and girls are in seeking help from the charmers about women-specific issues. Does the need for women-friendly solutions give birth to matriarchal charming traditions or have they existed in the societies on their own? The research will also dig into the question of whether the tradition has developed resilience in the women or created more dependency? Has it changed the family relationship of beneficiary women at their homes?

Title: Are Setos an (Indigenous) People?

Author: **Oliver Loode**

Curriculum: Ethnology

Supervisor: Aet Annist

According to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), "indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination". Moreover, the UN estimates that there are over 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries, though it is unclear what this estimate is based on given that no formal criteria of indigenous peoples exist. This inevitably creates a situation where the status of indigenous peoples is contested (including between indigenous groups and states, but also within indigenous groups themselves) and often politicised. And while most UN member states in principle support the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, many of them deny the existence of indigenous peoples on their own territory, thus effectively externalising the issue to other states.

An intriguing case in point is that of the Setos, a cross-border (Estonia + Russia) Baltic-Finnic group whom Russia recognizes as a small-numbered indigenous people while Estonia regards them as part of the Estonian ethnos (people). Hence there is an ambiguity about the status of Setos as indigenous people, including whether they have a right to self-determination.

The objective of my planned master's thesis is to propose an analytical framework(s) for systematic thinking about the issue of Setos' indigenous status which could also be relevant to analogous situations faced by other ethnic groups and states.

My presentation will focus on two main parts: first, a theoretical one where I will outline some of the existing (unofficial) criteria, definitions and interpretations of the meanings of the term "indigenous people" in the context of international human rights law. In doing this I hope to highlight the contributions of the fields of ethnology and anthropology in shaping the meaning of the term "(indigenous) people". In the second part, I will apply selected theoretical frameworks to the Setos, thus pressure-testing the divergent positions of Estonia and the Russian Federation on this issue, as well as the views of at least some parts of Estonian Setos that Estonia that Setos indeed are an indigenous people.

Title: Safeguarding of the Local Weaving Tradition in the Hancavičy District (Belarus)

Author: Siarhiej Makarevič

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisor: Kristin Kuutma

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has set a new framework for dealing with living cultural practices. Being among the first State Parties to the 2003 Convention Belarus has declared its readiness to adopt proposed approaches both in theory and in practice. The present MA project provides an overview of the new heritage policies in Belarus and explores the possibility of their practical application on the example of the nomination of the local weaving tradition of the southern part of the Hancavičy district (Belarus) for the national ICH inventory.

The theoretical framework of the project is based on the relevant key terms and concepts with regard to peculiarities of their understanding and usage in the international and national contexts. The foremost attention is paid to the concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), its development and relations to other terms describing similar notions. Another point under discussion is craftsmanship as an integral part of ICH with the focus on the crafts research approach, which is utilised to explore the object of the study integrally. Furthermore, heritage policies are explored with particular attention to safeguarding as the basis of the ICH management.

Analysis of the implementation of the heritage policies on different levels (national, regional, local) in Belarus created a background for realisation of the practical part of the project. The analysis is based on the study of legal documents, literature, secondary sources as well as fieldwork materials that include semi-structured interviews and case studies. Nomination files for the inscription of the new element on the national ICH inventory were prepared aiming at fostering revitalisation and sustaining the local weaving tradition. Reflections on the experience of going through the inscription process resulted in the development of a set of proposals for improvement of the heritage management policies and guidelines for local ICH specialists that could be used in their work on future nominations.

Title: Creating a Podcast on Korean Traditional Arts and Crafts

Author: Sabīne Puste

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

The interest in Korean culture has skyrocketed in recent years, thanks to the ever-growing popularity of Korean pop culture. The Internet is a never-ending source of dramas, movies, K-pop music, manhwa and so much more. Access to Korean traditional culture, however, is quite limited. Especially for those who do not speak Korean and, even worse, for those who do not speak English. The number of students choosing to go for Korean studies in Latvia grows faster than the material available to them. This is alarming, since it means that more students will limit themselves to the easily accessible popular culture.

Traditional culture and history of the Korean peninsula is rich but understudied, gaining the interest of Western scholars only very recently. Academic works are rare, expensive, and tend to go out of print quickly. There is a vacuum of information on this topic, and my master's project aims to contribute to filling it.

To achieve this, I have decided to create an educational podcast dedicated to traditional Korean arts and crafts. Creating an audio material on something that is very tactile and visual might seem counter-intuitive. However, it is a wonderful new way to reach wide audiences easily, due to the growing popularity of podcasts and the ease of access to the podcast platforms. And, since it is possible to add materials in different formats to the episodes, information given does not necessarily have to stay strictly audio. Given the fact that this would be the first time a podcast has been made in Latvian on Korean culture, this could become a valuable source of information for anyone in Latvia interested in not just Korea, but Far East Asia in general.

In this presentation, I will introduce the plan of my podcast, and the way I have structured my first episode.

Title: The OBERIU Declaration as an Avant-garde Art Manifesto

Author: Yulia Tishkina

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisor: Peeter Torop

An art manifesto is an interesting object for analysis within literature studies both from the historical and semiotic points of view. The very genre of art manifesto becomes more visible in case of Russian cultural situation between the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

We would like to focus precisely on the declaration of OBERIU (Union of Real Art) which was published in 1928. Repeating the common revolutionary rhetoric of Russian avant-garde art manifestos of the beginning of the 20th century, on the one hand, the members of OBERIU in their literature work to some extend move away from their initial statements representing interesting and original poetics.

Our purpose is to observe several literature manifestos of the early Soviet avant-garde, to make a structural linguistic analysis of the text of the OBERIU declaration per se. The structural approach seems suitable for delineating dominants and notable features of the genre of avant-garde manifesto in general which form so called *ID card of avant-garde phraseme* elaborated by Irina Zykova, and the OBERIU declaration in particular.

We hope that analyzing linguistic components of this declaration, we can make a precise image of the OBERIU group as its members wanted to be perceived at the cultural background of the late 1920th.

Title: Postironic Interpretation of the 9th Chapter of David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*

Author: Ott Abroi

Curriculum: European Languages and Cultures

The Pale King (2011) is the posthumous novel by the American writer David Foster Wallace. The novel's experimental framework introduces different concepts for constructing the narrative throughout its 50 chapters. Some of the more intriguing chapters are the 9th, 24th and the 38th, which are narrated by a character named David Wallace, who also claims to be the author of the book. For my presentation I will focus on the first of these chapters, providing a reading from the viewpoint of Lee Konstantinou's (2017) concept of postirony and discussing the chapter's possible implications for the reader and how their relationship with the text can be interpreted.

Title: From Sky Ladder Myth to Space Aircrafts – New Interpretations of Classical myths within Public Discourse in Contemporary China

Author: Yi Wang

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisor: Alevtina Solovyeva

From the Kunlun Mountain and Jianmu, which are believed to be the ladder connecting the sky and the earth in classical Chinese myths to the actual spacecrafts nowadays, which are named after important figures in Chinese mythical stories, it is evident that myths are acting like a bearer, passing down Chinese people's romantic fantasy about the universe from generations to generations.

In this presentation, I plan to outline some important aspects in my master thesis: how the classical Chinese Sky Ladder myth motif can be connected to the naming of several Chinese space aircrafts in nowadays China, as well as how this mythical story, which associates itself with the remote history of China, functions and can be newly interpreted in contemporary public discourse.

This presentation aims to also investigate the uniqueness when dealing with mythology and nationhood in the context of contemporary China, where the promotion of Han majority's culture and myths almost covers up the diverse culture of other fifty-five ethnical groups, trying to evaluate how it fares as a means of calling for ethnical consolidation and nation-state construction in modern China within politics and public discourses.

Title: Political Possibilities of Naming, the Case of “Las FARC-EP”

Author: Sergio Alejandro Velásquez Sabogal

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisors: Andreas Ventsel, Ott Puumeister

This presentation can be understood within the framework of what some authors as have called political semiotics in recent decades. That is to say, in the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological intersections that can be built between political theory and semiotic theory, for the present case we assist to the particular case of post-structuralist political theory and Tartu-Moscow Semiotics School approach to the phenomenon of culture. The objective of this presentation is to interpret the different naming changes that "FARC-EP" guerrilla has had in Colombia from its beginning as a guerrilla organization (1964) going by its transformation into a political party in 2016 until its last name change in 2021 through the categories of naming, translation, and auto-communication.

Preliminarily, I argue that the different naming changes are not only label changes but also have profound implications in the semiotization of the text (semiosphere) in question (FARC-EP), and the different representations it implies. Therefore, these naming processes imply translation operations, as condition for communication and auto-communication processes, on the border of particular and antagonistic texts or semiospheres (guerrilla, Colombian government, people) which allows us to understand the very political component in every semiotic event.

Title: Representation of Soviet everyday culture in Estonian regional museums

Author: Anastasiia Avramenko

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisors: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, Kristi Jõesalu

In my MA research, I will consider theoretical and practical aspects of approaching Soviet heritage. This research attempts to answer how this heritage could be theoretically framed today and represented in practice in museum exhibition spaces. This topic is related to the question of how, based on the materiality of everyday life, to reveal cultural meanings and show features of the historical period to which these artifacts belong.

In this paper, I will discuss the theoretical framework of my research. It lies within such topics as «difficult» heritage, Soviet everyday life, cultural memory, cultural representations, material culture. The research is focused on the educational and representative role of the museum, on finding relevant methods and techniques used in museums' exhibition space when it comes to the Soviet past.

The empirical data of the research will be exhibitions dedicated to the Soviet period in several regional Estonian museums. Besides the analysis of exhibitions, the research subject also includes other aspects of representation such as excursion tours and museums' website content. Interviews with museum educators and exhibition curators regarding the representation of the Soviet era in museum exhibitions and educational programs will provide an additional interpretative framework for the research.

Title: Ghosting men: Ghostlore of Resilience Against Gender-based Violence

Author: Rash-ha Muntaqaa

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage

Supervisors: Ulo Valk, Margaret Lyngdoh

Eleven small ethnic groups reside in the hills of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Each has their own diverse culture, language, values, and practices. I spent the year of 2018 in the hills to understand indigenous belief systems, focusing on the ghostlore of three majority groups: the Chakma, Marma, and Tripura. Conducting ethnographic research, I could see a pattern of subjecting women to discrimination fuelled by both religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. I decided to work specifically on ghosts that are related to women, because I could hear women's stories from their ghostlore that interestingly enough followed different patterns than the narratives and beliefs that lead to women's oppression.

This presentation focuses on ghosts of and for women in the hills, how they are shaped by the stories and presences of personal and collective trauma, and how they sculpt women's position in public and personal spaces. Trekking miles through the perilous hills I have attempted to collect, document, understand, interpret, and analyse the creation, usage, and impacts of ghosts that relate to women in the hills. Women here are and have always been victims of rape, murder, and culturally accepted discrimination mostly practised by men, in every aspect of life; still surviving with strong determination to feed children, cultivate the almost infertile lands, to conform, and push through. Drawing on interviews with around sixty women and men, I argue in this presentation that women’s ghostlore creates multiple ambiguous and riddling realities as a form of resilience from domestic and cultural gender-based violence.

Title: Representing the Scars: How Traumatic Past is Mediated and Remembered in the Case of Covid-19 Outbreak in Wuhan

Author: Hongjin Song

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisors: Peeter Torop, Maarja Ojamaa

On Jan. 23rd, 2020, the Municipal government of Wuhan declared a lockdown in the city to contain the coronavirus. During the lockdown the residents of the city witnessed and experienced absurdity, despair, and anger unseen in any of the other lockdowns around the globe. Those negative feelings left trauma for many of the people from Wuhan to remember.

However, the remembrance of the same events varies. Due to the complexity of the transmedial environment, the traumatic memory of those happenings last differently and are represented as different versions of the same past. With the analysis of the social representations and interviews, the focus of the research is to interrogate the reciprocal process of personal memories and the social representations shaping each other, thus providing a framework for these problematics.

Title: (mine)Crafting a Folklore Archive

Author: Aaron Reed

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisor: Kristel Kivari

Empowering a community to collect and curate its own folklore is a complex task. Before we can effectively begin changing the perception of folklore from its vernacular definition to the more open-ended one(s) used in academia, tools must be put in place to help preserve and present the lore collected. Additionally, this should be done in a way that reaches as many people as possible while introducing the lowest practical hurdles or cost.

In this presentation, I explore the concept of the informal virtual archive using Minecraft, a video game already in the hands of hundreds of millions of people. Players range in age from primary school to post-retirement and spread across the globe.

Because of the open-ended nature of Minecraft, the archive will offer several advantages over more traditionally structured internet-based archives. Being a video game, it is by definition interactive, creating engagement through edutainment. The framework is scalable, manageable, and customizable with little additional cost or technical knowledge by the local archive manager.

Title: Crafting Digital: Speculative Features of Craft and Technology Convergence

Author: Chahal Garg

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisor: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa

Traditional craft practices and digital technology are often construed as binary opposites, one planted firmly in the past and evoked as heritage, and the other facing the future, symbolising progress. However, as humans more prominently inhabit digital realms, issues of radical lack of diversity of human futures arising out of centralized conception and development of digital technology are being exposed. Yet, for millennia, traditional crafts practices have approached making in decentralised, humane, often idiosyncratic ways, responding to needs of local communities and controlled by them. As such, there is potential for convergence between the process of making technology and that of making craft.

Through my MA research project, I aim to explore mutual interdependence between these seemingly contrasting processes, to understand how a "craft lens" may inform development of participative and principled digital technologies, and on the other hand, "craft thinking" could be applied to contemporary issues to illuminate new pathways for craft conservation.

The project aims to use speculative design methods to design prototypes, wherein critical thought is translated into imagined future scenarios. These speculative prototypes are meant to provoke an audience and invite dialogue and contemplation at the intersection of crafts and technology. By helping the audience to step out of normative applications and relationships of the two through plausible future imaginaries, the project aims to extend the social limit of achievable alternatives to the queries:

1. What constitutes healthy digital technology, who makes it and how

2. How a craft ethos may transcend the established boundaries of craft making and be beneficially applicable beyond them

Title: Postmodernity 2: Why is Being Alive so Expensive When I'm not Even Having a Good Time

Author: Richard McLawhorn

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisors: Ott Puumeister, Silver Rattasepp

The rapid and extreme socio-cultural changes of the early twenty-first century have allowed for tumultuous shifts in the contemporary cultural semiotic landscape. The techno-capitalist promises of freedom and choice, crucial for semiosis, have given way to determinism, credentialism, and nightmarish, ostensibly inevitable futures. The worldwide prominence of asset bubbles, frantic entertainment cycles, ephemerality of identities, the death of punk, and the cults of artificial intelligence may at first seem to be disparate issues rising from radically different sources, but there is a singular, shared emergent cultural logic present between them. The future itself has been enclosed, and the subjects of postmodernity 2 are left in a wasteland of determinacy, at the mercy of algorithms and skinner boxes – a point where semiosis is seemingly impossible, and all choices denied appears to be on the immediate horizon.

This research searches for the semiotic roots and implications of this emergent cultural logic. Is this a Fukuyamist "End of History"? Are we witnessing what Bifo Berardi called the "slow cancellation of the future"? Or are we finding ourselves in the midst of what Jameson referred to as "the cultural logic of late-stage capitalism"? The hope here is that these varied cultural theories regarding the end of time and our contemporary cultural situation may be used to construct a more unified framework capable of providing context to future discussions regarding the semiotic status of the end of history.

Title: Hegemony of Conflict: Crisis of Political Meaning Making in Georgia

Author: Levan Ilariani

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisors: Andreas Ventsel, Mari-Liis Madisson

For the last decade, political space in Georgia has been dominated by the conflicting discourses of the ruling party and the biggest opposition party, both building their discourse on demonizing the opponent. This has created the atmosphere, where their conflicting dialogue acts as a dominant, closed semantic field, which is hard to penetrate and can be described in terms of the communicative type of totalitarian populism.

This, in return, has resulted in the crisis of political meaning making and democracy. On the other hand, this crisis has been developing alongside the development of social media, which the connective action theory sees as a possible tool for democratic mass mobilization and ad hoc formation of massive grassroots discourses. Even though all the social media platforms are available and are in no way restricted in Georgia, all the attempts at formation of connective action, e.g., student movements, have failed to this point and the dominance of the abovementioned conflict is still maintained. Therefore, the goal of my research is to understand how the conflicting discourses manage to maintain their dominance on social media, avoiding the formation of connective action.

For this goal I will have to first identify how they create their social media identities, concentrating on the political crisis after 2020 elections and on the other hand, how they deal with new discourses, focusing on the grassroots movement against the building of a hydroelectric dam. For this, I will be analyzing social media posts by the most popular users, by engagement, from both sides, with the help of critical discourse analysis. Thus, due to the lack of academic research of this aspect in Georgian politics, I hope this research can be a starting point for more in-depth analysis in the future and hopefully for overcoming the crisis.

Title: The Long March Through German Literature

Author: Kole Galbraith

Curriculum: German Literature and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Marco Pajevi

The two German authors, Uwe Timm and Peter Schneider, have written prominent books portraying the 1968 West-German student movement. Their firsthand experience sheds an authentic and critical light on a student's engagement and subjective experience within these movements. With focusing on the protagonists' experience of political engagement, the two books Heißer Sommer by Uwe Timm and Lenz by Peter Schneider allow a critical reader to dissect the inner workings, successes, and problematic elements of political praxis during this time.

This thesis will begin by surveying the debate between Critical Theorists and Sociologist Jürgen Habermas and the prominent member of the Socialist Student Group (SDS) Rudi Dutschke, at the Conditions and Organization of the Resistance Conference in Hannover on June 9th, 1967. At this conference critical questions about the strategy for political engagement and the beginning of the "Long March" were debated and discussed. From this foundation, this thesis will analyze the literary representations of political praxis, specifically the literary depictions of "the Long March Through the Institutions," in these two books. Finally, this thesis will bring these literary depictions of political praxis into analysis with more contemporary theories, such as Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe's theory of Hegemony.

Title: Towards a Political Theory of Semiocide

Author: Erfan Fatehi

Curriculum: Semiotics

Semiocide, a coinage of Estonian geologist Ivar Puura, inclusively refers to the destruction of signs leading to placing the affected person's identity on the line. With this knowledge in mind and in view of the facts: 1) the concept of semiocide holds out the promise of an effective theoretical framework to explain the interplay among power, knowledge, and memory and 2) it remains unexploited beyond biosemiotic studies. The aim of this research is to bring the concept of semiocide into the realm of the political and take the understanding of the concept beyond its initial definition.

To this end, prior to demonstrating historical instances of methodical semiocide in recent times, its different forms and also the mechanisms of enacting semiocide in systems of power are explained. Apart from bringing forth a typology of semiocides, the key findings of this research are the following: a multi-pronged model – pivoting on memory, discourse and ideology – for various types of semiocidal measures in systems of power, the workings and mechanisms through which the process of semiocide is implemented, the socio-cultural ramifications of semiocidal measures in affected societies and finally an illustration as to what respect the case of mass execution of Iranian political prisoners in 1988 is a systematic instance of semiocide. The study of the case of 1988 semiocide in Iran was carried out by means of conducting a review of personal memoirs, verified historical documents, and reports by international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, along with the implementation of practical research methods including interviews with the survivors of the incident.

Title: Local Craft and a Global Economy: Muhu Island slippers as a lens into the world

Author: Emily Celeste Watts

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Supervisor: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa

In this master's project, with the tentative working title "Local Craft and a Global Economy: Muhu Island slippers as a lens into the world", I will address issues and ideas related to defining space, place, and identity and how the dissemination of handcrafted culture specific to a location impacts its meaning. To this end, I will focus on the embroidered slippers of Muhu Island, a small island off the west coast of Estonia: their history, the culture from whence they developed, and how they have been shared and presented to Estonia and the world at large.

The project comes in two parts: first, a theoretically-based paper, and second, a book illustrating a contextualizing view of the culture of the island, both historical and contemporary. The theoretical component draws on background research from previously-published articles in a variety of fields including: histories of the island, Carl Von Sydow's concept of *oikotype* (referring to the modification of folk items across space and time), and biology's theories on certain types of speciation. This will be supplemented by my field research interviews with Muhu island residents, along with other conceptually related parties. These interviews will inform the book's content. Ideally the final book will illustrate a holistic view of the culture of the island by including not only craft patterns and practices, but also personal histories and recipes. By synthesizing one source, through the lens of local craft and place, this will form a new and unique body of research, particularly in English, and will provide a snapshot of the island culture. These two components, theoretical and practical, jointly can form a better understanding of the production of these slippers, through which the practitioner, researcher, or consumer can fully understand their cultural context.

Title: Semiotic Analysis of Structured Pedagogy Toolkits

Author: Kaustubh Khare

Curriculum: Semiotics

Supervisor: Maarja Ojamaa

India has over 260 million children and 1.5 million schools. While primary enrolment is at 97%, learning levels are alarmingly low. More than 50% of children in grade 3 are unable to read simple text or do basic mathematics. Under-resourced communities across the globe face similar challenges. A popular technique to address this is 'structured pedagogy toolkits' which consist of multiple components (lesson plans, student worksheets, teacher training) that work together as an integrated system. I've participated in one such project as a designer and this thesis is an opportunity to critically reflect on our work and analyse toolkit usage by teachers in a pilot. A combination of textual analysis, interviews, classroom observations and personal experience will be used to analyse the numeracy toolkit in three steps.

First, Semiosphere (Lotman, Torop & Ojamaa) dynamics of core-periphery, boundary, self-description & translation will be used to theorize how toolkits intend to change classroom culture. Since change is always in relation to stasis, what the toolkit tries to keep the same and what it tries to change will be analysed in the framework of 'What to teach' (Learning outcomes & skills), 'How to teach' (Instructional practices) and 'When to teach' (learning sequence in a day/week/month/ year). In step two, a multimodal (Kress & Leeuwen) analysis will bring out design techniques the toolkit uses to communicate 'What', 'How' 'When' and their relations. Since each teacher can use the toolkit differently, leading to diverse classroom practices. Step three will analyse 3-5 teachers' practice as intersemiotic-translation from print (verbal and visual) into multimodal classroom interactions (gesture, talk, inscription, object manipulation etc.) and propose a visual tool to map this translation.

At this initial stage, feedback on the theoretical framework, tips for classroom observations and recommendations for similar studies would be very valuable.

Title: Social Reproduction of the Working Class in the Northern Baltics

Author: Harly Kirspuu

Curriculum: Applied Anthropology

Supervisor: Aimar Ventsel

I am here to argue that the social reproduction of class in the context of Estonia is not dependent upon the socioeconomic situation of the actor itself, but rather all details and actors around it. What makes the situation in Estonia different to most all the western world is the historical background of the country, having been a part of the Soviet Union, and as such, at least ostensibly a society without any class differences, until 1991.

The working class in Estonia is not a movement, as it could be viewed in the ordinary Western society. For reasons mostly pertaining to a 50-year occupation by the Soviet Union, the concept of class is something most of the society seems averse to. Unlike in most modern capitalist societies, like those found in Scandinavia, the union movement for instance is nonexistent and holds no power, with those in charge of the capital either keep up mock unions that mostly serve the interests of the employer and have been originally brought forth for that reason, or simply are not working in the ways and reasons that unions were originally meant for – it generally is not a part of a dialogue or a partnership between members of the capitalist and working classes. In Estonia, the notion of a class consciousness – as understood by Marxist theory, e.g. positioning oneself as a member of a socioeconomic class - or a workers' movement is not what it is, for instance in Scandinavia, where most governments in the last hundred years have been of a social democratic persuasion and as such have sought to design the society as decidedly capitalist, but socially equal.

Title: An Award of Being Eaten: on one Motivation of Dietary Rules by Old Believers in Lithuania

Author: Ilja Magin

Curriculum: Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies

Old Believers are a rare group of Christian with strict food prohibitions, close to those of Judaism. Unlike the latter, Old Believers elaborated various explanations for restrictions and allowance to eat. One of such explanations is an animal's good or bad legendary deeds, for which it is awarded by being eaten or punished by being valued as inedible: "Eel is such a fish, like a viper, but can be eaten. That's how it happened, Jesus Christ moved by sea and somebody made a hole in the ship. And Eel turned it up with his tail. This is why it can be eaten, although it's like a viper" (Novikov 1999: 66).

To a contemporary audience this motivation sounds exotic. In Leslie Charteris' comics (1960ies) a turkey looks at newborn Jesus, saying "That is one ugly baby" and the subtitle explains "How the Turkey became traditional Christmas fare".

The idea of being eaten for punishment sounds so evident for Europeans and the contrary concept so unevident, that even Italian miller Menocchio of 16 century, could owe a latter approach only to the savages, about whom he read in "The travel of sir John Mandeville" (14 cent.). Menochio interpreted the story as they ate their near-dead "and if he tasted good, he was sinless, and if he tasted bad, he had many sins" (Ginzburg 1992: 47).

Yet with some change of optics, the same attitude can be observed in modern culture: a journalist of the newspaper "Soviet Estonia" writes about a mycologist: "...he knows a sort of amanita, which is unjustly offended by people, it is a tasty, harmless and nutritious mushroom" (Dovlatov 1973). From this prospective eating can be regarded as respect for the food (et v.v.) within a row of examples (such as ATU 480A*), recognizable for modern culture.

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Title: Materiality and Meaning: Ontological Relations

Author: Denys Sultanhaliiev

Curriculum: Semiotics

The project is devoted to the problem of ontological relations of materiality and meaning in a biosemiotic context. This approach will allow us to look at the place of biosemiotics and its key concepts in the context of contemporary materialistic discourse, and especially its continental part.

At first, the main task will be to analyze the materiality of the elements of meaning both at the level of the "interpretant" and the level of the "object". In the first case, in addition to the definition of the meaning, there is also modelling and then unmasking of the contradiction between the concepts of "incorporation" and "ententionallity", as two concepts that connect meaning with materiality. In the second case, the modelling of the discussion between the "new materialists" and the ecosemioticians regarding the role of the materiality of the sign's object would be significant. Then an attempt is needed to rethink these relations in the context of the processual ontology of biological life.

The theoretical background of the work consists of several layers. Initially, there are works on biosemiotics that are based on the legacy of Pierce and Uexküll. Further, there are philosophical works that innovatively discuss the materialist philosophy of life – «new materialists», Terrence Deacon, theorists of "incorporatedness". Finally, these are processual philosophers who oppose the static nature of both biological and semiotic phenomena. Thus, the work offers a comprehensive analysis of the ontological status of the materiality of the biosemiotic phenomenon of meaning.