

Workshop "Politics and Memory of Transitional Time".

Location: GD 311, Gräfin-Dönhoff-Gebäude, Europaplatz 1, 15230 Frankfurt (Oder), European University of Viadrina

Organiser: Gal Kirn (AvH visiting researcher at Kulturphilosophie, Philosophie der Kulturen, Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, Europa-Universität Viadrina / Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana)

Abstracts and biographies

Özgün Eylül İçsen, ICI Berlin

Capitalist Ruins and Allied Struggles: Archive, Digitality, and Counter-Futuring

Abstract: Today, more and more people face and witness economic and ecological collapse led by the state-capital nexus, causing the massification of debility in Jasbir K. Puar's terms. Thus, the threads across disaster and conflict zones and everyday life, or better to say, the spatial politics underlying the imperial logic of neoliberalism, comes to the surface. Yet, these sites are also where resistance could arise. The talk revisits Fredric Jameson's allegorical model of cognitive mapping, which mainly envisions a globally situated class consciousness, by emphasizing the politics of futurity. Through the guidance of counter-futuring, it tackles the shifting registers of archive and digitality as infrastructures for allied grounds for labor, migrant, and environmental struggles across borders. It does so within the historical and global situatedness of cultural production affiliated with the Middle East.

Bio: Özgün Eylül İçsen is an affiliated research fellow at the ICI Berlin. Eylül earned her PhD in Computational Media, Arts and Cultures at Duke University in 2020. Her dissertation examines the geopolitical aesthetic of computational media by delving into media histories and arts within the context of the Middle East. Her recent work focuses on counter-futuring at the intersection of materialist media theory, digital arts, and decolonial politics. She currently teaches at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and collaborates with Dr. Shintaro Miyazaki for the Counter-N, a web-based research exchange and publishing.

Ksenia Robbe, European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen

Other Transitions: Remembering the 1980-90s Crises and Reimagining Sociality in South African and Russian Literature

Abstract: In this talk, I would like to present some of the theses (along with the still rough ideas) for my planned similarly titled book. In this monograph, I'm exploring the regimes and forms of time and memory that have developed in postcolonial and postsocialist societies after the end of the Cold War and that are constitutive of the new round of wars. More specifically, I'm interested in the cultural mediations that in various ways critique the post-Cold War regimes of power and the forms of sociality that they generate. I focus on literary writing produced during the 2010s and ask how it re-imagines 'transitions' (or rather, the 1980-90s crises) that go beyond simple instrumentalizations of the past and articulate alternatives of different kinds in response to contemporary meta-narratives and to earlier authoritative cultural texts. My readings seek to define and theorize the modes of remembering transitions – by analyzing the characteristics of genre and time that facilitate these modes – that are shared by South African and Russian productions and to outline different themes and variations within these modes.

In the presentation, I'll outline two broad modes in literary recall and re-writing of the 1980-90s – 'melancholia' and 'repair' – and will map a few themes and structures on the melancholic-reparative spectrum that I find in contemporary Russophone and South African writing. In particular, my focus will be on the temporalities of 'promise' and the use of allegory; elements of tragedy in rewriting the 1990-2000s threshold; and the structures of intergenerational and inter-social repair.

Bio: Ksenia Robbe is a Senior lecturer in European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen. She works at the interfaces of postcolonial and postsocialist, memory and time, and gender and feminist studies. She is the author of *Conversations of Motherhood: South African Women's Writing Across Traditions* (University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2015) and (co-)editor of *Remembering Transitions: Local Revisions and Global Crossings in Culture and Media* (De Gruyter, forthcoming 2023), *(Un)timely Crises: Chronotopes and Critique* (Palgrave, 2021), and *Post-Soviet Nostalgia: Confronting the Empire's Legacies* (Routledge, 2019). She is currently co-editing a special issue "Feminist Strike" for the journal *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice* and is a PI in the project "Reconstituting Publics through Remembering Transitions" supported by the NETIAS programme.

Gal Kirn, University of Ljubljana

Primitive Accumulation and Resistance: For Critical Theory of Memory

Abstract: The lecture will first present some theses on Marx's concept of the so-called primitive accumulation of capital and extend its use to the field of memory, sharpening the relation between capital and memory often missing in the memory studies. The totalitarian concept of violence is here replaced by a more contextual, and Marxian notion of violence. Furthermore, in the second part of the lecture the (dialectical) approach between so called primitive accumulation of memory and resistance will be discussed and I try to answer the following questions: in what way memory is always already resistance (both in psychoanalytic and political sense)? Conversely, does and how does resistance – in the line of Walter Benjamin's "tradition of the oppressed" – also carry its own counter-archival practices, and by this carry further the shrapnels of emancipation that destabilise the dominant spatiality and temporality of nation and capital?

Dr Gal Kirn is Assistant Professor of Sociology of Culture at the University of Ljubljana, and a guest fellow at European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder). He has been working for last 10 years in the German academic context (Institute of Cultural Inquiry - ICI Berlin, Humboldt University, TU Dresden, GWZO Leipzig). Kirn's research has focused on the theme of transition in (post)socialist context, in particularly in the fields of art, politics and memory in the period of national liberation struggle and the socialist Yugoslavia. He led a research project *Counter Archives* (Rosa Luxembourg Foundation at ICI Berlin) and published two monographs *Partisan Ruptures* (Pluto Press, 2019) and *Partisan Counter-Archive* (De Gruyter, 2020). Kirn recently co-edited (with Natasha Ginwala and Niloufar Tajeri) a volume *Nights of the Dispossessed. Riots Unbound* (Columbia Press, 2021), and with Marian Burchardt *Beyond Neoliberalism* (Palgrave, 2017).

Lea Kuhar, independent researcher

Unforgetting the Future: A Marxist Defence of Contingency

Abstract: For Marx, class struggle is atemporal but not ahistorical. At an ontological level, it indicates that society is not whole; there is a fundamental antagonism at the core of every social bond, and every concrete social organization represents a different way of resolving this antagonism. Under the capitalist mode of production, this antagonism is resolved by transforming labour from a primary social activity into labour power, a force that interacts solely with itself and produces abstract labour feeding into the constant self-valorisation

process of capital. In this way capital's valorisation process introduces its own temporality, retroactively intertwining the past, present, and future of external reality, allowing it to resolve its own contradictions. It also reproduces concrete historical circumstances that enable its existence, including private property and diverse forms of individualities that emerge for it.

In the paper, I will argue that Marx can reconcile the atemporality and historicity of class struggle only by highlighting a moment of contingency at the core of the existence of every social relation. I will show that there may be a certain necessity inscribed in the actions of capital, but this necessity is not necessary. In addition, I will also demonstrate that the logic Marx uses to explain the existence of capital as the currently prevailing social relation can also be applied to the question of the emergence of a new social relation. The question of the emergence of a new social relation is essentially a question of how the future is inscribed in the present. I will argue that Marxist politics do not begin by recalling past revolutionary struggles but by establishing new forms of collectivity. These new forms of collectivity cannot be inscribed in the present as part of some teleological historical process. Instead, they can emerge through "unforgetting" the currently existing forms of individuality that shape and determine our lives.

Lea Kuhar holds a doctorate in philosophy. From 2016 to 2020, she worked as a young researcher at the Philosophical Institute of ZRC SAZU in Slovenia. In 2020, she defended her doctoral dissertation at the Postgraduate School of ZRC SAZU. Her research focuses on Marxism, epistemology, and contemporary political philosophy. In 2023, she participated in the Humboldt-Residency Programme. Her first monography *Materialism Without Matter: Marx's Theory of Objectivity* will be published this year at Slovenian publishing house Sophia. She is also the author of several scientific articles published in both domestic and foreign journals. Currently, she works as an independent researcher.