**LIST OF ABSTRACTS**

**Panel 1: Political Thought**

*The reception of Georges Sorel in interwar Europe*

Tommaso Giordani, Tallinn University

Virtually the entirety of the available scholarship on Georges Sorel (1847-1922) assumes an unproblematic continuity between the work of the French syndicalist and that of his numerous disciples, followers, and readers in the interwar. The present research starts from the opposite assumption, namely that the events separating the belle époque world of Sorel from the interwar of his younger readers are radically different, and that therefore it is problematic to assume a continuity. The work of discerning different voices and concerns, of separating the work from its receptions, promises to be fruitful on two fronts. Firstly, the very common conflation of Sorel with various Sorelianisms can be avoided, restituting more historically accurate portrayals of both master and disciples. Secondly, tracing the main axes through which Sorel’s ideas were re-signified and put to a new use can help us understand more general movements of ideas which marked the transition from the belle époque towards the interwar. After an introductory outline of the main assumptions of my research project, I will proceed to illustrate a specific case study concerning the reception of Sorel in Great Britain.

*Between “the Balkans” and “Europe”: Yugoslavian socialist intellectuals in the 1920s and 30s*

Paul Alke, Frankfurt University

The history of the Yugoslavian leftist intellectuals of the 1920s and 30s is the history of a European avant-garde. As a result of World War I, ruptures in the political, cultural, social and day-to-day life, have paved the way for a boom of the literary left in Yugoslavia.

The new common Yugoslavian medial mass-market (although relatively small), the unnoticed growth of urban centers like Belgrade or Zagreb, as well as their (post-) imperial international connections, laid the foundations for a fertile intellectual environment. The supply of high quality left wing cultural magazines flourished in spite of the increasingly authoritarian and anti-communist state agenda. Yet, those magazines were much more than ordinary literature-revues, they were “the new, legal tribune of the revolutionary movement”. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, where social-democracy played a minuscule role and CPY was driven into illegality and underground, it was only through articles, essays and commentaries by intellectuals like Miroslav Krleža, Stevan Galogaža or Marko Ristić that the socialist world-view was presented publicly. Especially the younger cohort that stepped into the literary lime-light around 1925 proves to be not only the Yugoslavian socialist elite but also a highly entangled scene in the webs of a European and first and foremost Western-European avant-garde.

The biographies and works of Oto Bihalji-Merin (1904-1993) and Koca Popović (1908-1992) show how lives were impacted by the spatial differentiation between center and periphery. Bihalji-Merin and Popović – although being adversaries regarding literary questions – acted both as conscious modernizers towards socialism but also towards mitigation of the perceived spatial, political and cultural gap between Europe and the Balkans. Different sources illustrate the impact of their European interactions: magazines like *Plamen, Nova Literatur* or *Nadrealizam Danas I Ovde*, letters to and from important intellectuals, and even court or police documents. They shed light on the importance of re-evaluating the role and re-defining the place of Yugoslav intellectuals within a European avant-garde movement. An interdisciplinary approach including discourse analytic elements, art and literary history, social and also cultural sciences, may all support a better understanding of continuities and ruptures of left-wing political thinking in this area and may also explain further developments after World War II.

**Panel 2: Transnational networks**

*European spaces and intellectual agencies: the case of the interwar PEN Club*

Tara Windsor, Liverpool John Moores University

Founded in Britain in 1921, the PEN Club – which stands for Poets, Essayists and Novelists – was initially envisaged as an intellectual ‘dinner club’ that would draw the nations together as a kind of ‘United States of Europe and America in literature’ after the First World War. By 1926, 23 national sections had been founded, most of them in Europe, and as its structure, organisation and ethos developed, the International PEN Club came to be viewed, amongst contemporaries as well as in later scholarship, as a kind of League of Nations for writers. As such, most scholarship on the International PEN and its constituent national PEN centres has thus far centred on discussions about the (non-) politicisation of intellectual life, ideological tensions, and the relationship between nationalism and internationalism within the organisation.

Expanding on earlier studies, this paper argues that the example of the International PEN Club can be used more fruitfully and holistically as a framework to examine and re-assess the spacial dimensions of European intellectual history in the interwar period. More particularly, it stresses that this must be done not only in relation to *ideas* and *concepts* of Europe and European identity that were discussed and propagated by PEN’s various intellectual members, but also by taking into account the following interrelated aspects: firstly, the European and wider international *networks* it facilitated; secondly, its transcendence and interlinking of the literary, cultural and political *fields* (in a Bourdieuian sense) across national borders; and thirdly, its contribution to European *discourses*, for example, in the context of its international congresses and executive meetings, local readings and galas attended by intellectuals of various nationalities, and in its members official and private correspondence. In doing this, the paper also tests a new methodological model which ties intellectual history together with approaches from transnational and the so-called ‘new international’ history, as well as cultural sociology.

At the same time, the paper demonstrates that these European ideas, networks, fields and discourses comprised multiple – often competing – local, national, regional, continental and global facets, resulting from the diverse agendas of the many private and state-affiliated actors involved in PEN activities. While interwar European intellectuals were often rooted in particular national or regional spaces, they also had considerable agency in transcending conventional divisions, resulting in more connectivity and hybridity than is often assumed, both within and across geographical and ideological boundaries.

*Travelers, envoys, bon vivants: writer-diplomats and cultural diplomacy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*Vladislav Lilić, Vanderbilt University

Five percent of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s writers entered diplomatic service between 1918 and 1941. Despite their centrality to interwar Yugoslavia’s cultural diplomacy, a systematic attempt at studying these writer-diplomats has never been made. I hold that the subject deserves attention for three reasons. First, a stream of recent scholarship has charted vibrant interwar Eastern European intellectual fields, dramatically challenging old assumptions about the region. New studies of Marxist literary circles, phenomenology, structural linguistics, and surrealism have made it virtually impossible to narrate the histories of grand continental intellectual movements without a serious engagement with interwar Eastern Europe. Second, a growing interest in cultural diplomacy has further blurred the lines between culture and politics. This has enabled researchers to creatively reconsider dynamic interpenetration of interwar international relations, ideology, art, state- and nation-building processes. Finally, in a context altered by the First World War and its turbulent aftermath, Eastern Europe witnessed a series of intellectual engagements with modernity’s master ideologies – nationalism, liberal democracy, fascism, communism, and capitalism. Thus, Eastern European historiography stands to profit from a renewed focus on the role of intellectuals in politics.

My project brings together these trends and combines themes of intellectual, cultural, diplomatic, and political history to revisit a country that has long suffered from historiographical neglect – the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941). I follow a group of ten interwar Yugoslav writer-diplomats who traversed political and cultural boundaries from Buenos Aires and Chicago to Bucharest and Cairo. Their official roles enabled them to (re)negotiate Yugoslavia’s peripheral place in transnational intellectual arenas. Moreover, these writer-diplomats provide clues into the diverse ways in which “small” states of Eastern Europe tried to (re)define their international standing in a period of prolonged European crisis. Consequently, their literary ambitions and diplomatic functions should not be separated. As writers, they sought membership in transnational cultural networks of the receiving polities. Depending on their intellectual and national backgrounds, they either stood as standard-bearers of a new, supranational Yugoslav culture or as promoters of one of Yugoslavia’s distinct ethnocentric cultural traditions – be

that Croatian, Serbian, or Slovenian. In both cases, they were mindful of global literary hegemonies and forced to confront issues of literary “smallness”, “backwardness”, and marginalization.

Such cultural dilemmas were easily translated into political challenges. A post-war creation, Yugoslavia faced significant internal and external pressures, none greater than the precarious geopolitical surrounding and the continuous disputes among its many nationalities about the nature of the shared state. By scrutinizing writer-diplomats’ understanding of historical agency exercised through diplomacy, I aim to place these figures in a context of the Yugoslav state’s efforts to legitimize its own existence. As the state attempted to exploit transnational channels of political and cultural communication, writer-diplomats had to reconcile multiple literary, cultural, diplomatic, and political agendas. This study of their successes and failures demarcates a complex politico-cultural experiment whose ultimate objective was to disrupt internal centrifugal forces, resist external challenges, and secure “first” Yugoslavia’s place in the interwar international order. In so doing, the project questions traditional historical accounts that too readily inscribed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s violent dissolution back into its short, convoluted history.

**Panel 3: Theorizing and reinventing literature**

*“As we sit here / There by the arena”: London Modernism and the “Mind of Europe”*Henry Mead, Tallinn University

In early June 1922, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound sat together in the arena at Verona. Eliot had just completed *The Waste Land*, his attempt, through literary form, to give “a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history”. Pound was at work on a modern epic, a form he described as “a poem containing history”. In his *Cantos*, Pound recalls the visit to the arena several times, remembering how “past time... was present around them”: a “luminous” moment capturing his sense of common mission with his compatriot. Although US emigres, the two writers had led the way in defining the British modernist aesthetic and its relationship to what Eliot called “the mind of Europe”. However, their visions would ultimately differ. This paper identifies two currents of thinking about Europe within modernism as it was initially developed in London from 1908-1922 and later in divergent forms by Eliot in England and by Pound in France and Italy through the interwar period. Pound sought throughout his career a current of vital energy, traced to a Neoplatonic tradition, which he saw not only as the subject of true poetry, but also as the force behind historical process. Eliot followed a different line of thinking; at first drawn to the 'classicist' attitudes of the French neo-royalists *Action Française*, he moved beyond this political rhetoric towards a true Anglo-Catholic commitment and a sharp distinction between history and the divine. These different attitudes are exemplars around which one can map a host of British writers and artists who constructed views of Europe and history in the interwar.

*On the Reception of Jan Mukařovský in Tartu-Moscow School: Theoretical and Historical Aspects*

Mikhail Trunin, Tallinn University

A formation of the structuralist scientific paradigm was accomplished by the Prague Linguistic Circle in the mid-1930s when leading figures such as Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) and Jan Mukařovský (1891–1975) proposed a programme integrating structural linguistic and semiotic methods for the study of languages, literatures, and cultures. Later, in the 1960s, the Tartu-Moscow scholars resurrected and revamped the ideas voiced by the Russian Formalists and Prague Structuralists. My presentation is devoted to Juri Lotman’s involvement in the Russian editions of Mukařovský’s works on structural poetics. It is important to notice the fact that the intellectual relationships between the older and the younger scholars were paradoxical: as Mikhail Gasparov argued in a provocative paper, Lotman evolved from Marxism to structuralism, while the structuralist Mukařovský, vice versa, converted to Marxism in the late period of his creative activity. Lotman started working on a two-volume edition of Mukařovský’s works in the mid-1960s together with his friend Oleg Malevich, a prominent Russian Bohemist. The project was proposed to Moscow publishing house Iskusstvo (Art). This edition could have had the same impact on the development of poetics in the USSR as John Burbank and Peter Steiner’s English-language editions of Mukařovský had in North America in 1977 and 1978. However, the Russian edition was suppressed after the “Prague Spring” of 1968, and two volumes edited by Malevich and Lotman saw the light of day only after Lotman’s death (in 1994 and 1996). My presentation analyses this project of Lotman in the context of the politics of publishing house using materials from Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Moscow).

**Panel 4: Writing and thinking history**

*History, Science and Politics: Popper and Collingwood*

Tyson Retz, University of Stavanger

Karl Popper and R.G. Collingwood held in common the ambition in the interwar period of applying their respective philosophies to the political sphere. For Popper, the concept of falsification central to his philosophy of science served as a theory of progress by which human societies could advance through error-elimination. He developed in interwar Vienna a vision of science as an exploratory revolutionary project, an endless search for growing but never certain knowledge. On the one hand, Popper was an anti-relativist—he viewed scientific knowledge as ever expanding and new scientific theories as improvements on former theories. On the other hand, Popper’s notion of progress incurred the liability of historical relativism. Scientific knowledge depended on scientific decisions, and he regarded scientific decisions as historical events that arose from historically specific problem-situations. This paper examines Popper’s attempt to reconcile his vision of a progressive open society with the context dependency of his scientific method powering progress. Collingwood viewed the decline of liberalism in the interwar period as a crisis of civilization generated by an excessive deference to natural science. In contrast to Popper whose scientific method yielded the fruits of human progress, Collingwood inveighed against its utilitarian mindset and articulated a vision of liberalism in which a rapprochement of history and philosophy generated self-knowledge through the historical study of tacit presuppositions. Popper’s situational analysis and Collingwood’s theory of presuppositions held in common the idea that historical actions, including, for Popper, scientific decisions, were to be viewed as rational responses to problems and that by analyzing the background on which the problems arose, European civilization could ward off the dangers of irrationalism and historical determinism. This paper evaluates the extent to which Popper and Collingwood succeeded in their attempts to reform interwar political thought via the application of their philosophies of science, mind and history.

*The Raging Chroniclers: Interwar Literary Reportage and Photography, 1924-1933*  
Per Rolandsson, University of S. Andrews

Walter Benjamin wrote in the mid 30’s that the dominant form of narrative knowledge of the historical present was the newspaper and the press. Benjamin’s idea was not, however, an original insight but an incisive reflection of a change in popular representations of the present that had occurred during his lifetime. In this paper, I propose to give a broad account of a development in literary and photographic representations of the just elapsed present that took place between 1924-1933 to discuss how we might best approach the issues of interwar periodization and methodology.

Between the years 1924 and 1933, the forms of literary reportage and photography increasingly came to dominate both the consumer market and the intellectual debates of Germanophone society. Though separated in style of presentation, many of the active practitioners within literary journalism and photography shared an expressed interest in how to best convey a sense of immediacy and contemporaneousness. Tellingly, journalistic authors and photographic artists shared the trope of being frequently referred to by others or themselves as chroniclers or historians. The notion of history that these modern genres recorded was increasingly geared toward relaying the moment ‘Augenblick’ in which events transpired. The task of the modern literary journalist or photographer was thus taken to be the conveying of ‘historical moments’ to the public. The result of this was an increasing awareness amongst journalistic writers and photographers to develop representational strategies that would, on the one hand, emphasize their proximity to the just elapsed present, and on the other hand guarantee the reportage’s place in an expanded historical continuum – to not risk the journalistic product becoming irrelevant. The reporters and photographic artists that were on the forefront of this development included Egon Erwin Kisch, Gabriele Tergit, Kurt Tucholsky, John Heartfield and Erich Salomon. Furthermore, cultural critics, such as Walter Benjamin or Siegfried Kracauer, formulated many of their famous essays on mass culture and temporality in relation to this representational development.

The fact that journalists and photographers were recording their present as belonging to a new period in need of novel forms of historical consciousness should be studied in contrast and comparison to the already extensive literature on interwar conceptions of temporality. My paper will be an attempt at looking how we might methodologically approach intellectual histories that explore the tension between representations and analyses of the just-elapsed past in the interwar period. Hopefully, my presentation will show the need to put ‘established’ interwar conceptions of time in relation to other genres and forms of representation.

**Panel 5: The left**

*Organizing antifascist culture in Italian periphery during the establishment of dictatorship: the correspondence between Guido Dorso and Tommaso Fiore in 1925*Mario de Prospo, University of Pavia

This paper will focus on the first encounter between the two Italian *meridionalisti* Guido Dorso (1892-1947) and Tommaso Fiore (1884-1973), in 1925. At that time, while the fascist government threatened freedom of expression, they were mutually connected to the network of democratic intellectuals promoted by Piero Gobetti (1901-1926) and his review *Rivoluzione Liberale*. Through the analysis of their correspondence, it will be analyzed their unsuccessful attempt to establish a journal and a publishing house focused on the economic, social and cultural underdevelopment of Southern Italy, following the example of Gobetti. The encounter will be explored as an example of an attempt to organize antifascist culture in the Italian periphery, in such hard and watershed political juncture for this country. This case study could offer very interesting insights regarding the space in which European intellectuals operated in interwar years, in particular in the context of a peripheral area of the continent. Moreover, by exploring the relational and organizational aspect of intellectual life, the paper aimed to explore an identified methodological stance, dialoguing with similar or different approaches of intellectual history.

*Natality and Nationality on the European Left Between the Wars*

Cat Moir, University of Sydney

Between the two World Wars, discourses of natality and nationality intersected across a range of European countries. Some governments adopted pro-natalist policies to encourage demographic growth. Meanwhile, voices for sex reform advocating birth control and family planning were also prominent across the continent. Pro-natalist and eugenicist arguments were often couched in more or less explicitly nationalist terms: pro-natalists frequently portrayed reproductive labour as a service to the nation, while eugenicists often recommended (self-imposed) restrictions on reproduction in order to preserve the health of a social whole conceived in national terms. This paper interrogates the parameters of a European interwar intellectual history through the lens of debates on the political left concerning the interconnected questions of natality and nationality in the period 1918-1939. It argues that the question of nationality was a horizontally defining feature of debates about population, cutting across distinctions in political affiliation, ideological commitment, and other contextual specificities.

Chronologically, the interwar focus is justified on two counts. First, the destruction of the First World War made questions of population and demographics salient in all European countries after 1918, while the implementation of extreme eugenicist policies in Nazi Germany made such discourses suspect after 1945. Second, and relatedly, the interwar period also saw the growth of an international sex reform movement centred on Europe and embodied institutionally in the World League for Sexual Reform. In spatial terms, the focus on the left allows the integration of both transnational and comparative perspectives. The organised left exchanged information through correspondence networks and political congresses. Meanwhile, the natural scientific basis for many of the claims put forward in these debates also lent arguments legitimacy across national boundaries. Left-wing intellectuals and policy makers in different national constituencies took divergent approaches to question of population based on a range of context-specific factors, such as whether the left was in government or opposition during the period. Though the left was internationalist in orientation, discourses of nationality nevertheless infused discussions of demographics among leftists. Methodologically, I argue that questions of population and sexual politics can only be addressed by reading the history of science and the history of social and political thought in tandem with one another, and as such Europe’s interwar intellectual history cannot be approached in isolation from this cognate field.