

## 'Windows' Project Ad Marginem or a 'Divided History' of Divided Cities? A Case Study of the Russian-Estonian Borderland<sup>1</sup>

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The modernist project of building nation-states proved to be entirely successful, and the notion of the world as a multicoloured mosaic has been perfectly internalized. For modern men, the world is a map made up of bright colour-logotypes, and it is a piece of cake for a schoolchild to decorate a skeleton map, having coloured in the empty spaces which are separated from each other by uneven lines. In fact, coloring in the vast patches of the Soviet Union in a soft salmon-pink was a difficult and quite boring task. Although this space has now been compressed and has become variegated with other colours around its borders, more fractured skeleton borders have appeared. These 'scarred lines' and 'other colours' do not only embody separation and isolation, but also the peculiarity and difference of another state. The state border acts as a break line, a fracturing of space that is not continuous but discreet, torn apart by the borders of nation states. Such 'break points' will become the only basis for social research, a testing ground for various theoretical constructs operating so well at the heart of the 'centripetally organized' nation states<sup>2</sup> but which are frequently questionable at the periphery.

The new post-Soviet borderland presents itself as a unique site for social research, where it is possible to observe simultaneous processes. Although they may differ in terms of meaning, significance and social effects, some of these include the process of 'divergence' of those formerly 'one's own', that is border reinforcement and the formulation of 'the others' in relation to active nation building. Also, the processes of eroding borders owing to the inexorable progress of globalization, the eroding 'Westphalian cartography' as well as the erosion of state boundaries are present. The phenomenon of the 'compression of time and space' in the globalized world significantly accelerates the pace of life and brings distant territories into closer proximity. State borders are already being interpreted as a symbol of the past, of a rigidly fixed world or 'space of places', which is now being restructured and transformed into a dynamic world or 'space

1. This is a translated and slightly edited version of 'Istoričeskii ikuor Ad Marginem ili nade-kompa primyat razdelenijskij gosudarst', in: *Ad Imperio* 4 (2004), pp. 283-312.

2. As a famous Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakoskij has written: 'it's a well-known fact that the Earth begins with the Kremlin'.

of flows.<sup>3</sup> Significant cross-border flows of people, information, goods etc. overcomes and ignores borders, and the borders themselves become invisible or are an element of the modern world that is on its way out.

The current essay will only look at an aspect of mutual relations between the two towns located on different sides of the recently erected state borders between Russia and Estonia. Namely, this paper will examine the process of writing 'new history', i.e. the appearance and functioning of new historical narratives that are reflected in the popular (or perhaps even 'popo') artefacts of history.

### Researching Borderlands

From the 1990s onwards, thanks to the considerable 'tectonic shifts' that reshaped the geopolitical map of the world, research into borders and border territories will enjoy unprecedented popularity in the social sciences. 'It is a paradox, but the border theme is attracting more attention than previously, during the time of the iron curtain'.<sup>4</sup> The popularity of the theme is not just linked to the appearance of new borders and the disappearance or transformation of the meanings or values of old borders. It is also related to the opening up of borders, the relatively free circulation of goods, capital, people, and information etc. A border is now 'not so much a limitation, but a meeting point, the site of cooperation, a neighbourhood'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the formerly static dichotomy of East-West is disappearing or being re-territorialized. West and East as well as the state are associated with these blocks: they lost and then reacquired the image of the 'others'. In this connection, research interests in territory, borders and identities are being brought up to date. The study of border territories can help us to find answers for some fundamental research questions, such as how the 'others' is constructed, how this is reflected in social actions and practices, how it is represented and how the 'others' constitutes ours.<sup>6</sup>

Practically all those researching borders and border territories observe the

special status of borderlands, setting them apart from the rest of the space of the nation state and endowing it with special values. The uniqueness of borderlands is linked first of all with the proximity of the neighbouring state, which, in turn, gives rise to interaction and the mutual exertion of influence. Social activity in borderlands is largely organized thanks to the presence of 'neighbours'.<sup>7</sup> All border spaces are heavily marked by national symbolism. On top of that, the meeting of borders brings national identity up to date, constantly calling for 'documentary evidence' of national identity, in particular the passport. In this connection, researchers believe that the proximity of the 'others' should provoke and recall national identities and thus constantly recall and exacerbate differences: 'Border regions are a privileged site for articulating national differences [...] It is Freudian narcissism'.<sup>8</sup>

In current research, however, borders are not seen as isolated spaces, where national differences are accentuated, but as a creative cross-border space.<sup>9</sup> E. Zerybavel considers border zones to be situated in 'several mental spaces at once'. Such a temporary situation implies that border space is essentially ambivalent, which presents a serious threat to today's rigid structure of classification.<sup>10</sup> So borderlands are not just zones where 'rigid classificatory structures like nation states are challenged, but must also be considered -not as an analytically empty transit zone, but as a site of creative cultural production'.<sup>11</sup> Border territories are seen as the centres of globalization, fulfilling not only an integration function, but also producing transborder social groups, particular lifestyles and identities. In this way, current research views border zones as an attempt to move away from the binary opposition of borders. New concepts of border space present new possibilities for the theorisation and conceptualisation of social space. For example, borderlands could be viewed and analyzed as a metaphor. The work of Gloria Anzaldúa can be considered an example of such conceptualization of borderlands.<sup>12</sup> Her research focuses on the experience of life in the Mexican-American border territory and sets out the specific history of

7 Cf. in particular Dajana Berdahl, *When the World Ended. Re-unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1997).

8 Beat Sablino, *Borderlands: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 270-271.

9 Orlin Hitt, 'Visiting the Neighbor Country: Border Crossing as a Cultural Practice', in *The U.S. - Mexico Border. Transversing Divisions, Crossing Identities*, ed. by David Spener & Karl Swartz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), pp. 103-120.

10 Yael Zerubavel, *The Fine Line. Making Distinctions in Everyday Life* (New York: Toronto: Oxford & Sydney: Free Press NX, 1991), p. 35.

11 *Borderlands. Culture and Trade. The Remaking of Social Anarchy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), p. 208.

12 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999).

3 Marnel Casella, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

4 Josef Langer, 'Towards a Conceptualization of Borders: The Central European Experiences', in: *Cartesian of Iron and Gold. Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, ed. by Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Likanen & Jukka Oksa (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 1999), pp. 25-42, in particular p. 25.

5 Sergey Medvedev, 'Across the Lines', in: *Cartesian of Iron and Gold. Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, ed. by Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Likanen & Jukka Oksa (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 1999), pp. 43-56, in particular p. 54.

6 Anssi Paasi, 'The Finnish-Russian Border in the World of De-territorializations in: *Working Papers of NUI on North European and Baltic Sea Integration* (Oulu: NUI, 1999).

the Mexican Chicanos, Mexicans who have lived in the border zone for a long period of time, and who the author believes have a particular border culture and «intermediate identity», linked to the uniqueness of the practices of constant border crossings. According to Anzaldúa, in borderlands «the lifeblood of two worlds [merge] to form a third country – a border culture. [...] A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge»<sup>13</sup> of the states themselves, and the Chicanos themselves are «faceless, nameless, invisible»<sup>14</sup>, but could easily become small change in political games. Borderland inhabitants «constantly walk out of one culture and into another»<sup>15</sup>, and it does not seem so important to «stick» to one culture or another, which is precisely why a border culture with an ambivalent identity comes into being, which tolerates difference and «divided, or perhaps undefined, loyalty, i.e. it is possible to talk of a particularly instrumental, but unemotional attitude to citizenship».

Thus, we can identify two central theses around which the current debate on borderland is formulated:

Borderlands are «Freudian narcissism»: the situation of the proximity of the border provokes a search, formulation and accentuation of the difference of the inhabitants of neighbouring states. In this way, a defined (formulated) social border between «them» and «us» is formulated, coinciding with the limits of the nation state. Borderlands have a mirror effect. There is a constant convergence of images, models of behaviour and lifestyles. The social border in border territories is eroded and some kind of unified cross-border space results that are «temporary» in the context of nation states.

### Divided Cities

This paper addresses precisely this «problematic» marginal space with the so-called divided cities Ivangorod and Narva which are situated on the Russian-Estonian border. In Soviet times Ivangorod and Narva shared a territorial and administrative border with the status of a border of Union republics. Thus Ivangorod and Narva created a single labour market and a single infrastructure, and even until 1999 a unified water collection and purification system was in place. Moreover they constituted a single space of daily life, that is, a common space where daily routines were carried out. People worked, lived, went shopping, took their children to school, had gardens, and buried their dead and so on in

13 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, op.cit. (note 11), p. 25.

14 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, op.cit. (note 11), p. 33.

15 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, op.cit. (note 11), p. 99.



Figure 1.1: The Border between Narva and Ivangorod demarcating Russia and new Europe in July 2000. Photo: O. Brednikova.

both towns. For example the huge firm «Kresogolnitskaya Manufakturna», situated in Narva, built houses for its workers in Ivangorod. The differences between the towns defined a different administrative outfit, which in turn decided on sources of financing, supply, infrastructure, and the general conditions of these towns. It could be said that the towns had different statuses. Ivangorod was a small peripheral town of the Russian Federation, whilst Narva was the third largest in Estonia.

Although during Soviet times the formal administrative borders of territories often played no role at all in everyday life, there was nonetheless a symbolic hierarchy constructed through prestige. In the case of Ivangorod and Narva, it was more prestigious to live in Narva, for Estonia was considered to be the «near abroad» by Soviets. The «reality» of the administrative border constantly reproduced itself both through the myth about differences in everyday culture between Russia and Estonia. In spite of the lack of significant differences in the lives of the population on both sides of the border river, some kind of cultural border existed in people's minds, bringing it into correlation with the administrative border.

Without taking the reproduction of the cultural border between the towns into account, Narva and Ivangorod are currently exposing the problem within

the social debate as divided cities, as «a formally divided but inseparable pair» (from an interview with a female inhabitant of Narva aged 47). A simple experiment may be done in terms of their «inseparability». In an online journal database for 2003, there are nearly as many publications in the mass media containing the word «Vaangorod» as those containing the combination of «Vaangorod and Narva».<sup>16</sup> Incidentally it is worth noting that «Narva» appears as an independent entity and is not necessarily connected with Vaangorod, whereas Vaangorod is almost always «accompanied» by Narva. However, if a text is talking about the two cities at the same time, they are nearly always presented and the problem is exposed in the discourse of the Russian mass media as something joint. To this end the most frequently employed category is «divided city», that is, a space which was once united but which is now a divided urban space. Researchers categorizing Narva and Vaangorod as a double town and a bi-national town make a significant contribution to reinforcing notions of «unity» or at least the dubious links and interdependency of these towns.

### Artefacts of History: The Creation of the «Popular» Narrative

During the last century, Russian and Soviet history has already been rewritten several times. When this occurs, a reinterpretation of events takes place, the same facts are subject to differing moral evaluations, and in addition «new», previously neglected facts are enlisted. At the same time, those facts previously deemed current and fundamentally important are effaced. The post-Soviet generation socializes itself with the help of new textbooks. And although for adults history lessons remain in the distant past, everyone is in one way or another involved in, or observant of, such a new interpretation process. This work will only consider some of the artefacts which play a role in the representation of history: memorials, museum exhibits and souvenirs. Of course, these artefacts are not all of equal significance, they are varied and present new historical narratives of various kinds. In addition, they address different audiences – who goes to museums and buys souvenirs these days? Nonetheless, these artefacts – as «material evidence of history» which bears a heavy semantic and symbolic burden – play an active part in the representation of various histories. They are like pieces of a puzzle, which fit into the general picture; they have some general meaning, they historicize and make space a subject of discussion.

Accordingly, the museum exhibits, memorials and souvenirs on display in

Narva and Vaangorod will be analyzed. Here the task of the current research is not so much to answer the question as to «how history is made» but to understand the reasons and aims behind its richly varied versions and forms.

### Museum Composition in Narva

A museum composition can be looked at as the most concentrated and conceptual form for representing various versions of history. Together, the various thematic exhibits create concepts, or «complete images», of history, bringing a certain «message» from the depths of the centuries to today. Of course, such messages are not always so obvious. But we can say with certainty that even museum expositions that have remained unchanged for decades will provide us with different messages and will be integrated according to various political conditions and in varied cultural contexts. We will try here to «read» the modern version of history that is presented in the Narva museum.

The Narva museum is situated inside the old medieval fortress and the architectural peculiarities of the museum – the tall, narrow tower with a thematically different hall on each floor – allows one to create individual, self-contained, and logically complete historical images that are often unconnected to one another. We can focus here on two of the historical concepts that stand out the most, the two dominating historical narratives that pertain to various periods – Swedish Narva and Narva at the beginning of the last century.

The largest and most impressive exhibit in the Narva museum is called «The Swedish city of Narva». This exhibit came about in 2000, and was presented to Narva by the Swedish government. Narva's Swedish period lasted for about 120 years, and is now known as Narva's «Golden Century», due to the quick pace at which trade, craftsmanship, and science developed. The main theme or key idea in the exposition is connected with the success and prosperity of Narva in that period. The exhibit employs modern museum technology – music, lights, interactive models, etc. – and attracts a lot of visitors.

The other image of the city is «Narva at the beginning of the last century». First and foremost, this is a city of culture, with a fertile cultural life in which the artistic and poetic intelligentsia of St. Petersburg actively took part when visiting Narva-Joensuu on vacation. The photographs of familiar and widely known personalities of the Silver Age are placed against the peaceful seascapes of Lääne-Narva, of views of old Narva, etc. The exhibit is done in the yellow and beige tones of old photographs, and, in accordance with the concept, should evoke the impression of «gentle nostalgia» – of the peaceful, beautiful, stylish, culturally rich, and poeticized life of Narva in the beginning of the previous century.

Of course there are other exhibits that produce varied images of the city. We see the image of medieval, chivalric Narva, or the image of mercantile Narva.

<sup>16</sup> The source [www.publi.ee](http://www.publi.ee) (accessed on May 12th, 2004).

tion going on. Ivangorod is mentioned in the history of Narva in connection with the battle between Narva and Ivangorod for primacy in the region.<sup>19</sup> Here, emphasis is placed on the fact that Ivangorod was founded more than 200 years after Narva.

The fact that Russia is such a close neighbour is not stressed at all. The Russian ethnicity (or nationality) is only mentioned once throughout the entire museum. One of the commentaries to the 'Narva – a Swedish' exhibit states: 'After the capture of Narva by the Swedish army, there were 24 hours allotted for the pillage of the city, in which were killed both Russians and peaceful citizens.' Of course, such a statement can be interpreted as either a misstatement or a conscious opposition of 'Russians' and 'peaceful citizens'. This statement is practically the only reference to their neighbour's ethnicity as it is also its only classification. Also interesting is that in the exhibit dedicated to the Narva of the Silver Age, there are no 'Russian' poets or artists. These important and famous figures do not have an ethnicity; the only important thing is their cultural status.

However, although Estonia's neighbour is for the most part missing from the exhibition, the notion of a border resonates within the exhibits. In the last four years the museum has been host to at least two exhibits that were intimately connected with the existence of the border. One of these focused on the border with Soviet Russia from the 20s to the 40s, and the other was devoted to alcohol smuggling. The exhibits display a relatively cheerful image of the border, not one connected with any kind of drama. They are more akin to an 'attractions' interactive displays are used, and it is 'fun' to walk past, the guard at the checkpoint who puts a nice little stamp on your hand, or to wonder at the inventiveness of the smugglers.

#### Monuments

Monuments are meaningful artefacts that contribute to the representations of the city. Their meaning is even more significant in the Post-Soviet era as they play an important role in nation building according to Benedict Anderson.<sup>20</sup> In Narva, there have appeared two monuments in the last decade. The first one is a monument to Alexander Pushkin, erected on one of the main streets close to the main city square. According to town history, a monument stood on the exact same spot before the revolution, and was erected with money from Narva's inhabitants to honour the one-hundredth birthday of the poet. It was later destroyed and, a hundred years later, restored. In such a case, the monument takes on the meaning of 'restoring what was lost', and 'returning to the

19. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Karnon Press, Kuchino Pale, 2001), p. 258.

And nearly all the compositions emphasize the special, transitory role of Narva in both the geopolitical and the cultural sense. Besides these, the museum also holds many temporary, often changing, or transitional exhibits that take up the upper floors of the fortress or the 'empty' space in the corridors connecting the main exhibits. For example, an exhibit called 'Narva and the Tatars' is located between the first and second floor of the museum. However, these images are located on the periphery of the exhibition halls – they are not as accented or noticeable as Swedish Narva or Narva in the Silver Age.

We should note here that, as a rule, the exhibits are not connected. The only connecting factor is the sequence of the epochs – the simple chronological flow of time. We cannot really say that there is continuity between these epochs, or that they are connected and flow logically from one to another, or that there is 'evolutionary development'. The images of Narva are more autonomous and self-referential. For example, 'Cultural Narva in the beginning of the last century' in no way 'carries anything over' from the Swedish period. There are even some inconsistent and contradictory valuations when integrating the same events. For instance, in the 'Chivalric Narva' hall, one of the last written commentaries says, 'Then the Swedish troops laid siege to and destroyed Narva'; then the next hall introduces the visitor to the 'Golden age of Swedish Narva'.

One interesting fact is that as of now the image of Soviet Narva has practically disappeared: nobody denies it, nobody argues about it, and nobody remembers 'the horrors of the totalitarian regimes'. It simply does not exist. D. Khaevaeva noted this phenomenon when she wrote that today there is not just a decline in the interest in Soviet history (interest in which grew during the period of Perestroika), but rather complete silence, a 'removal of part of the past from history'.<sup>21</sup>

The presence of a neighbouring city is almost absent from the exhibitions. Only the model of the two fortresses reflects exactly how near Narva's neighbour is, because the closeness of the two fortresses is an important factor in the uniqueness of the area: 'The Narva fortress and the Ivangorod fortress are the two closest enemy fortresses in the world.' In Soviet times, both fortresses together made up a single tourist complex, and most tourists went to see them both, thus having the opportunity to compare and contrast.<sup>22</sup> The image of the two fortresses together was firmly established and widely recognized. For example, no one today is much bothered by the fact that both fortresses appear on the Estonian 5-kroon bill; apparently, there is even some symbolic border expansion.

17. Dina Khaevaeva, *The Era of Communitarianism* (St. Petersburg: Zenit Publishing House, 2002), p. 135.

18. Right up until Estonia's break away from the Soviet Union, excursions ended on the French-style bridge, from which there is a beautiful panoramic view of both fortresses, and on which there is now located an international border.

museum undoubtedly «museumifies» the sculpture, making it an exhibit as well. According to a legend that was thought up and actively spread by the restaurant's proprietor, anyone to whom Lenin points is destined for bankruptcy, which already happened to Krongauz's factory and restaurant. The statue is now turned toward the city of Ivangorod, and «there, things are really bad».

#### Souvenirs

Souvenirs represent and propagate images of the city as a material incarnation of the symbols and signs that form the uniqueness of the area and as such they also contribute to the writing of history, or at least of its various versions. They are, of course, directed «outwards». Being something «exotic», they are intended for tourists visiting the city, who, in turn, will propagate these symbols in various directions. Being first the «spools» of the tourist, and then collecting dust on some shelf in someone's house, souvenirs tell a story. They remind the tourist of the place where he or she procured the artefact.

We should note the variety of souvenirs that can be obtained in Narva that refer to different spaces. At any of the multitude of souvenir stands near the central square and in the fortress stores, one can find Easter eggs painted with the image of Nicholas II, religious icons, Soviet tin soldiers and busts of Lenin, nesting dolls and balaikas, mittens and sweaters with Estonian patterns, alarm clocks with views of Narva, and the like. This variety, along with what might seem like incongruity, reflects and represents modern Narva. One can read the history of the city through these souvenirs, a history that is being distributed to the tourists. Various images of the city are for sale: «Pre-revolutionary Narva» and «The Soviet Period», as well as «Estonian Narva» and «Russian Narva». «Pre-revolutionary Narva» is represented mostly by antiques whose origin is not quite clear, but just the fact that they are being sold in Narva allows one to connect, for example, an antique chair with Narva at the beginning of the twentieth century. There are an overwhelmingly large number of Soviet souvenirs available. They have become universal markers of the entire post-Soviet region. Their popularity among foreign tourists is more or less understandable, and connected with their exotic quality. What is interesting is that they are becoming popular among the inhabitants of the post-Soviet areas themselves. As one young woman buying a horn used by the Pioneers (a Soviet youth organization) for someone as a birthday present noted, «This is hilarious!» This kind of irony is connected with having a feeling of power over time, with taming your past and distancing yourself from it. It is an indication that that particular historical period has ended, has been assigned a meaning, and its symbols are already becoming souvenirs to be sold. Narva, just like the entire post-Soviet region, is included in this process. On the one hand, this type of attitude towards everything «Soviet»

past». And Pushkin, of course, (being «our everything») is undoubtedly, inconceivably, a hero. Moreover, just like the personalities of the Silver Age that were mentioned above, he is «outside of ethnicity». He, one might say, «belongs to the whole world». However, in the nation-building situation in the Estonian Republic, the reference to a «Russian poet» takes on another meaning, related to the problem of preserving «Russian culture». Currently, in Estonia in general and in «Russian-speaking» Narva in particular, there is active discussion concerning this very topic.

The second monument was erected in the year 2000, and is dedicated to the memory of the Swedish period of Narva; it is known as the «Swedish Lion». It was erected on the initiative and with funding from the Swedish government. It, however, is located somewhat further away from the main streets of the city – in a park – and thus is not as noticeable as the Pushkin monument. Only one in four passers by can tell you where it is located. There is no explanatory text nearby, and its «messages» may be lost to the uninformed.



Figure 1.2: Lenin monument inside of the museum's court in Narva 2000.

Photo: O. Brednikova.

There is an interesting history surrounding the Lenin monument that once stood in the city's central square. A few years ago, the owner of a restaurant located within the fortress decided to purchase the statue and place it near the restaurant, in the courtyard of the fortress. The fact that it is now located near the city

creates a distance from it, and on the other hand it unites it with everything post-Soviet.

The sale of Soviet souvenirs in Narva is completely understandable – it is a part that is too close; it is still «alive» in people's memories. Nevertheless, some of the souvenirs for sale have an exclusively «Russian» feel about them – icons, nesting dolls, babushkas, fur hats, and the like. Of course, the sale of these souvenirs is connected with the high demand for them. You can surely find these things almost anywhere, but the Orthodox icon brought home from Narva by a Scandinavian tourist will give the impression that Narva is Eastern Orthodoxy, a «Russian city». This is how the presence of such souvenirs in Narva's tourist shops characterizes the area – they participate in creating the idea that Narva is «Russian orthodox territory» and «Russian territory».

«Estonian» souvenirs are, for the most part, things with symbols of the state on them – lighters, pens, business card holders, and the like, all imprinted with emblems of the Estonian flag, crest, and other symbols of the Estonian Republic. Besides the state symbols, «Estonianness» can be seen in the hand-made items: the sweaters, the hats, and the mittens made using «national» patterns. This type of souvenir is sold all over Estonia; they «cover» the whole territory. Their presence in Narva is in no way connected with any local tradition specific to the city. Rather, it confirms the fact that Narva is an «Estonian city», which also attests to the city's ethnicity.

#### Museum Composition in Ivangorod

Being now located near an international border, the museum of the city of Ivangorod has moved more than once due to the appearance of these new borders and the general restructuring of the state. It now takes up half of a small building not far from a border checkpoint and a bus station. The Ivangorod fortress doesn't contain a museum, and is simply a «protected historical site». You can tell that the museum employees have tried to include the already existing exhibitions into the new museum space, thus giving the impression that the Ivangorod museum does not have a holistic concept of how to represent the images of the city and its history. Neither are there separate but «logically isolated», self-contained, and autonomous images. The exhibitions look eclectic: the same hall, the same exhibition space, can encompass the most varied epochs and historical events. For example, the stands on the history of the Ivangorod flax-jute factory are right next to the musical display and the exposition dedicated to the daily life of Russian peasants. The space is not divided, and there are no «invisible boundaries» that form logical and conceptual nooks, or that allow one to recreate and envision various historical events and facts. In fact, the most accentuated and detailed hall is the one devoted to the courage of Peter the First's army and the

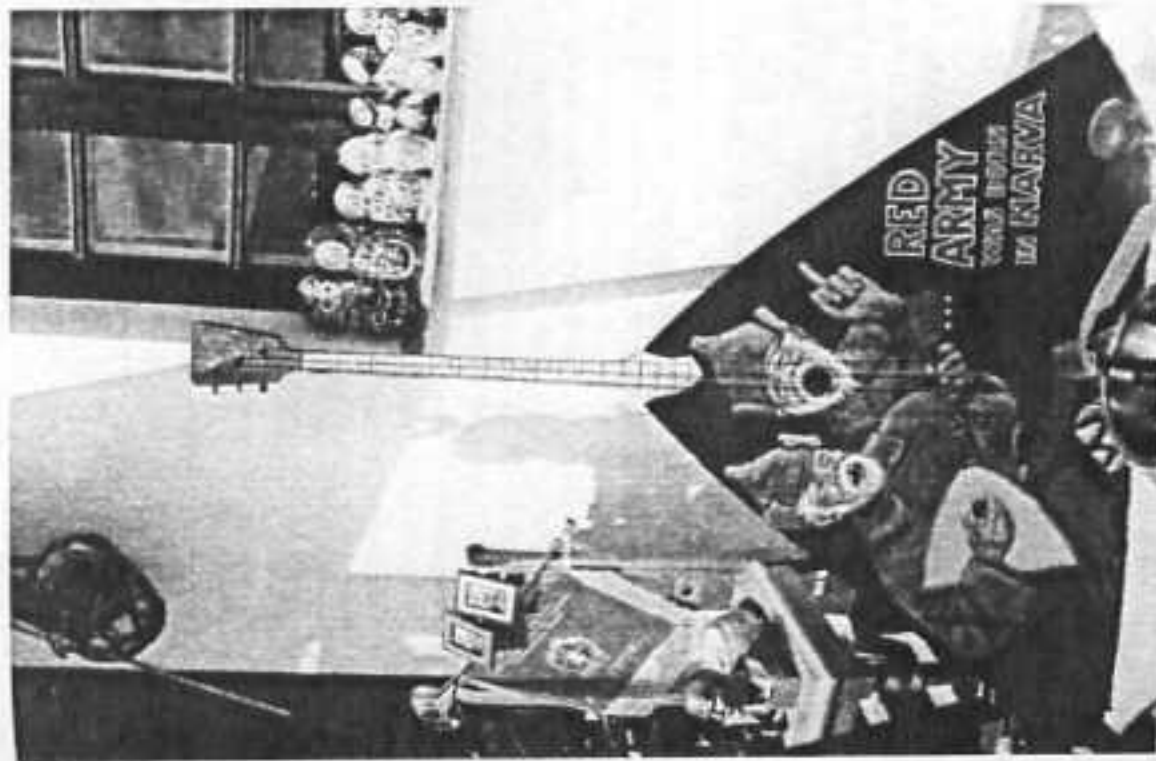


Figure 1.3: Souvenir shop by the city museum in Narva, 2000.  
Photo: O. Brezhneva.

ship building industry during his reign. There is practically no notable social history; there is nothing of the sort in any hall. However, as opposed to the Narva museum, it is there – chronologically tied into other themes and exhibits. And so within the history of the flax-jute factory the Soviet period is present. It should also be noted that the museum also includes a small and de-emphasized, but thematically separate, exhibit on World War II.

The museum's composition gives you the sense of the unity of Russian history throughout the entirety of Russia. For example, in the exhibit on peasant life of the 18th century, there is a model of a house that a peasant of the Tver' region might have lived in. And there is no basis or explanation for this... nothing explaining what a peasant house from such a faraway place as Tver' is doing in an Ivangorod museum. There is no text concerning the differences between a peasant home in Tver' and one in Ivangorod. The fact that there is only a house, without explanation, leads one to infer that peasant houses were all identical, regardless of location.

Despite the seemingly eclectic nature of the entire composition, in the Ivangorod museum there is a unifying idea, one that connects the entire route travelled when going through the museum. According to the exhibit, throughout Ivangorod's entire history, the town has served it's only – although exceptionally important – purpose: safeguarding the western border of the Russian empire. And the accent here is not on the fact that Ivangorod is some kind of 'gateway to another world', but rather that it is above all an outpost and fortress, that it fulfils a key role in the defence of the nation.

A strategy completely different from the one used in the Narva museum was chosen in creating the plan for exhibits in the Ivangorod museum. The exposition is not based on recreating or conceptualizing a particular historical period, giving it specific, individual characteristics. Instead, museum planners looked for a suitable personality around whom could be built a definite historical narrative. And of course, this 'personality' must be somehow connected to Ivangorod. In speaking about the plans for the formation of the new exhibition, the museum director concentrated on a number of famous people who were born in, spent time in, rode by, or noted the beauty of Ivangorod. Their accomplishments, service, and glory are only important in regard to their involvement with Ivangorod. For example, it is important that Georg Ovs'<sup>20</sup> uncle lived in Ivangorod and sang in the city choir, and that his nephew visited him a number of times here. It's important that Baron Shriglits (founder of the Russian Bank and the Art Academy in St. Petersburg), who for the most part worked in St. Petersburg, is buried in his family's vault in Ivangorod. And thus the local details, the

<sup>20</sup> Georg Ovs is a famous Estonian singer of Soviet times.

uniqueness of the area, are explained based on its relation to greatness, its role in abig history.

### Monuments

In the last decade in Ivangorod, just as in Narva, two monuments have been erected. Both of these refer to the same period of Russian history – the era connected with Peter the Great. Here is a very illustrative and revealing quote from an interview with the director of the Ivangorod museum:

Recently in Ivangorod, in the year 2000 to be more exact, we opened to the public a memorial to the fallen soldiers of Peter the Great. It was actually erected before that, but it was opened on November 19th, 2000. There is an inscription there on a marble slab that says something to the effect that here lie the soldiers of Peter the First, who died during an unsuccessful storming of the Ivangorod fortress in August of 1714. Even before that, we erected a memorial cross where the headquarters of Peter the First were located.

[In Ivangorod] there really should be many more monuments... I myself have raised the question of erecting a monument to Peter the Great. I went personally to the governor of Leningradskaya Oblast when he was here on a visit. I said, Valeriy Pavlovich, it would be nice to have a memorial in honour of the capture of Narva. He thought about it and answered, 'But Narva's not ours anymore, is it now?' So there you go – no monument. But it seems to me that we still need some kind of monument. I mean, he [Peter the First] was only in Peteravoski, one day, and they have a monument. Just one day! He had two battles here: he was here a lot!

Peter the Great is the exceptional, unparalleled hero. He is fought over, as you can see by the reference to Peteravoski. What is important is that he is undoubtedly a hero, acknowledged by everyone, and has become a powerful symbol of Russian history. This is the reason why Peter is somewhat of a 'wild card', and is such a prized resource in Ivangorod. Other 'monument candidates' are the artist Bilbin – a native of Ivangorod, and Baron Shriglits, who is buried in Ivangorod. It seems to me that this strategy of monument building is only worthwhile when it concerns famous personalities and figures. It is not the actual historical facts that are important – Ivangorod needs a hero.

Interestingly enough, in both Narva and Ivangorod, the same historical period is in the forefront – the era connected with the Great Northern War. Obviously, one could even speak about a 'dialogue, or a contraposition, carried on through the medium of these monuments. There is a project drawn up for a joint monument between Narva and Ivangorod. This would consist of statues of Peter I and Charles XII, standing on opposite sides, each holding a double-edged sword. From the commentary on the project that has been published in both Narva and Ivangorod local newspapers, the project is meant to express the

History, in the end, is basically just a text illustrating various -material evidence of the past. Writing history, then, is mostly an editor's job: rewriting and perfecting, skipping one chapter and inserting another, changing parentheses to quotes, changing capital letters to lower-case and vice versa, etc. In this work, having only touched on the problem of which means and methods are used in creating history, we are trying to reflect upon why one particular version of history is called for and not another, and also which larger-scale and global projects this version fits into.

#### The History Written in Narva

The reconstructed historical narratives of Narva, in my opinion, are somewhat of a variegated, patchwork mosaic of facts, references, important figures, and the -necessary- time periods. Thanks to this variety and hodgepodge, the flow of historical time in Narva is neither linear nor evolutionary. Its historic images are almost unconnected to one another: they are autonomous and self-sufficient. Moreover, either the images are self-referring and self-sufficient, or there is no -common denominator- when, for example, a common moral appraisal (what is good and what is bad) unites all possible images. -Education in Narva in the 20th century-, -Mercantile Narva-, and -Chivalric Narva- are all -rights and -goods-. It seems that the various epochs in Narva's history are equally important, and that the various historical images of Narva do not compete with each other for dominance; they are not arranged in any kind of hierarchy according to events. They all have an equal right to coexist peacefully. A cemetery in which German soldiers from WW II are buried was recently restored in order to restore -justices and -balances-. What is important is that the Soviet soldiers' cemetery has just been destroyed or forgotten. This symbolic act illustrates the changing accent on, and rewriting, the history of the -Great Patriotic War- (the Eastern European Theatre of WW II) into the history of the Second World War. Even the Soviet period, which has been virtually removed from the museum exhibitions, still remains in the souvenirs. It seems that every image can be made to be -exotic-, obviously to increase its sales and to take into consideration a varied consumer base.

It is both interesting and important that in an environment of active nation building, the national history of Narva takes a role nowhere near as dominant. It is just -one of...-, and has the same right to exist as the -Swedish- or -Finnish- history of Narva. You get the impression that the local history in Narva is more important and in greater demand than a unified national history. And it is this local history, alongside the others, that includes the -national component-.

In the modern version of Narva's history, there is no hero image, and in particular no war hero image, or image of a defender of the motherland. Currently,

interdependency and close ties between the two cities which, according to the author, needs to be -roads not as enmity, but as the inseparability and indelibility of this relationship. And thus, near the border on the Estonian side, a joint memorial (re)creating a unified history is already in the works. The sculptor is from Ivangorod, and the statue is to be located in Narva. However, this is all still just an idea, and the financial backing needed to fund the project has yet to be found.

In closing, I would like to give another quote that illustrates how legends, and also monuments, are born:

And among the most recent historical acquisitions is the imperial oak tree in the park of Baron Shinglas. They say that it was planted by Peter the First. Why? Because it is exactly this location that saw the death of 1000 horsemen in the year 1700 while crossing the river. Most likely that is why. Because Peter the First was here and planted it. It looks massive too, just about 300 years old. It's a huge, thick oak. There are few houses, crowbuds, and the like there now. There it is, though - obviously the imperial oak of Peter the Great (laughs). There's also another oak there in Pariminka in Ivangorod. It has a fence around it. They say that it was planted by Alexander III in 1890. But that one's a rather sickly oak. The other one is obviously an imperial oak.<sup>21</sup>

#### Souvenirs

Ivangorod and its history are not really present in souvenirs. And this is despite the fact that the Ivangorod fortress and museum is visited by tourists, even if not as many as those who visit the museum in Narva. At the modest souvenir counter in the museum, you see only religious -icons- and -folk- painted Easter eggs and nesting dolls which carry with them more of a national feel, and lack any expression of the specific locality. No Soviet souvenirs are sold.

#### Different Histories for Different Projects?

History, being an academic or even more widely, a social construct, is written everyday. It is always created in the -here and now-. It is not, however, a collection box. History is not just the pile of certain sequential, chronologically arranged, and non-contradictory facts that is filled with -new events-. It is always a project, a project of the present time. We write history as it corresponds to our -today-, to our current strategic goals and long-term projects. That is why history, for the most part, tells us more about the present than it does about the past.

21. We can also note another important detail in this dialogue - the hierarchy of Russian uses.

ingly, diverse versions of history. It appears that Narva is in some sense already 'more a part of Europe than the rest of Estonia, for it goes beyond the national level (recall, for example, its identification with Sweden), and is inscribed in a different 'European project' which has better prospects and seems more alluring.

I would like to give two current examples in favour of the 'European project' of Narva. On the announcement board of a building in Narva hangs an advert for language courses, and it reads: 'Estonian – guaranteed success in citizenship exam! English – most recent communication methods! Emphasis and priorities are clear from this announcement – English is for communicating, whereas Estonian is exclusively for official procedures. Knowledge of various languages is required to solve all sorts of problems, so for universal communication English is the language of choice, whilst Estonian is intended for a unique, authorised task, but certainly not for long-term prospects. Setting out to become part of Europe also means taking on its risks and problems. A teacher from a Narva high school talked about the fact that straight after the accession to the EU, the principal ran through the new professional tasks at the teacher's in-service: 'We must all be prepared for the fact that in the new academic year we will have pupils from other countries, for example from Turkey.' The problem had not yet appeared and was hypothetical, but being European and sharing common duties and responsibilities, they were prepared to take it on and to start finding ways to solve it.

#### The History Written in Ivangorod

The history of Ivangorod is written slightly differently. Its aims and challenges are different; it points to a different project. Above all, its orderliness, consistency, logic should be noted. It is a consistent and orderly history of solidity, a history of an outpost on the western border. It is also an unconditional and accentuated military history in which basic moral values are linked to 'spousess and the fatherlands'. In history and what was created in Ivangorod, the form of the enemy can change constantly, but what remains constant is the overall purpose of the town. In this version, Ivangorod acquires an important and exclusive status as the 'defender of the Fatherlands'.

This historical narrative is created by formulating a form of hero, around which history evolves. Therefore, we are dealing first and foremost with the hero-soldier. He must be free from doubt and exclusive, irrefutable. Thus, Peter I becomes a hero, his image is already formulated, his moral values and intentions are indisputable and they are not subject to revision or re-evaluation even during a period of radical reassessment. There is even some competition for him, and exploitation of the form is legitimised by the fact that Peter I was often near Ivangorod. In this connection, I think the relation to the Soviet pe-

there is no 'Military Narva'. The historic images of the town are not created using any outstanding heroes around which a narrative is built. Historic periods are either defined anonymously or 'populated' with important – but in no way central – figures. In other words, there is no 'heroization' of history like in the Soviet era.

Almost no 'others' is required for the creation of historical images in Narva for constructing a 'self'. The close proximity of a neighbouring state in general and Ivangorod in particular, is of little significance. An impression is formed of the ignorance of neighbours, and adopting the metaphor of Erhard Stoelting,<sup>22</sup> it could be said that Narva 'looks away from the borders, ignoring its neighbours. Common history is only important in the context of general Soviet history, but it is unified for the entire post-Soviet space and is not defined specifically by proximity to Ivangorod. To be fair, it should be pointed out that, contrary to the accepted version of history, everyday discourse deals with the presence of Ivangorod as well as that of 'the Russian neighbours'. Thus the curator in the Narva museum comments, 'Look here, Russia catapulted such cannon-balls! What matters here is not so much the evaluative utterance but the fact of naming, accentuating and categorising, the isolation of the 'others'. And it should be noted that this comment was made in Russian for exclusively Russian-speaking visitors of the museum.

I believe it is appropriate to view such a strategy for writing history as an identity policy. Attention to the local makes it possible to overcome a number of limitations and a narrowly oriented national approach and create a wide spectrum of all possible historical versions. In Narva, what is being brought up to date is not a policy of difference and opposition, that is, the actual creation of new and different social borders but rather a policy of identity in connection with the relevance of the most diverse forms and images. Evidently, the policy of difference would not have allowed for the creation of such a variegated mosaic of versions, and would have limited the possibilities presented by a policy of identity. Various groups in different situations and contexts can call for a more appropriate and adequate alternative for the situation, and the more proposed versions there are, the wider the possibilities of identification. And it is also possible to construct locality, exclusivity and uniqueness of a place through the diversity exhibited and communicated to the outside. I consider that such a strategy is built into the more global project of 'creating a part of Europe' within which there are no longer borders, but where there is most likely still a demand for punctuated, local and at the same time very diverse identities and, accord-

22 Erhard Stoelting, 'The Social Meanings of Borders, in: *Nonstatic Borders. Working Papers of CEM* 7, ed. by Olga Brodskina & Viktor Vuonturi (St. Petersburg: Centre for Independent Social Research, 1999), pp. 87–90, in particular p. 88.

road is interesting here. Its displacement is perhaps linked not so much to the 'disagreements' but to some lack of absolutism or lack of certainties. A quick and fundamental revision and re-interpretation of what went on casts doubt on the value of the Soviet period. From the whole of Soviet history, only the period of the Great War is relevant, because it fits in well with general military history. Moreover, the military period makes it possible to find 'heroes free from doubt' and use a strategy for writing history using well-known figures.

The history of the town is inscribed in national Russian history, common to the whole of Russian territory. This is precisely why it is not so important that the museum should display a model of a peasant house of Tverskaya province (are they the same all over Russia?), whilst in the souvenir shop you can buy uniform, faceless 'Russians' souvenirs. What is important is their 'Russianness', their belonging to Russia. The production of locality in Ivangorod is not linked to the creation of uniqueness, but rather with the claim of a special status and a special mission for the town whose history is inscribed in the common, unified history of Russia. In this connection, a policy of 'participations' in the 'great and -integral' was chosen, inscribing city's history into the history of the state. There is a reason why increasing the significance and status of the town is often formed by exploiting the 'greats', for example, through the fact that famous figures had been to Ivangorod:

Just think, there are few towns in Russia, especially such tiny ones as Ivangorod! Yet Velain and Sobchak flew over here in a helicopter, and Zharinovskiy was here. And Putin himself, when he was still working together with Sobchak, came here (female citizen of Ivangorod, aged 34).

As in Narva, in Ivangorod the 'others' is neither required nor formulated. Incidentally, the close proximity of neighbours, whilst not accentuated, is nevertheless considered. In the promotional brochure of the Ivangorod fortress it says: 'Nowadays, together with our Estonian neighbours and Narva, Ivangorod is by its very history called towards mutual cultural enrichment and the strengthening of good relations with neighbouring countries.' These words on the one hand demonstrate some kind of complicity and solidarity with Narva by forming common goals – 'together with our Estonian neighbours – and on the other, a recognition of their otherness through the designation of the 'ethnicity' of the neighbours. It is therefore important that 'neighbouring countries' which are anonymous follow the mention of Narva and Ivangorod, as they have no different characteristics or qualities except that they are neighbours. The 'others' is not so relevant; the history of Ivangorod is merged with the history of Russia, although the absence of the 'others' is not as unimportant as in Narva. It appears that Ivangorod is more oriented towards Russia, and that for its history it is much more important to be 'complicit'. In my view, the strategy for the creation of a

version of Ivangorod history is its inscription in Russian national history. In this way, Ivangorod is more included in the project of nation-building than Narva.

So in Narva and Ivangorod there is a need for various histories, the writing of those histories serves different purposes and they are inscribed in different projects. It is significant that the histories of 'divided cities' practically do not enter into the dialogue, they do not compete or solidify in the interpretation of joint historical events. Moreover, in these histories there is even a need for 'close neighbours' to play the role of the 'others', some locating axes in order to find their position in terms of one another. For Narva and Ivangorod other references are important and significantly 'shattered' in the space. It could be said that Narva and Ivangorod are looking in opposite directions, and if Narva is turning towards Europe, leaving aside its national level, then Ivangorod is looking towards Russia, taking part in the internal national project.

### In Search of Adequate Explanatory Patterns... In Place of a Conclusion

The social transformations in post-Soviet space are generally conceptualised on the basis of the prospects of nation building, in particular the creation of a national history proper, and 'native' national heroes. Moreover, the prospect of colonial/postcolonial and imperial/post-imperial research requires the active use of metaphors of change in relation to the Soviet Union. In accordance with this approach, identity in post-imperial conditions is confirmed 'differentially' through a game of comparisons and contrasts, and the whole post-colonial theory is to a large extent built around the understanding and conceptualisation of the 'others'.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, these concepts have an explanatory power and heuristic potential. Undoubtedly, in Tallinn or Tartu other histories are being written, and in Petersburg or Moscow other strategies are used for building forms which differ from those in Narva or Ivangorod. And these 'other histories' fit perfectly with the explanatory pattern suggested by concepts of nation state building or post-imperialism. I think that a good example of this could be found in the fragment of an observation mission to Tartu, in which the 'national hero' of Colonel Duchev, who in 1991 refused to withdraw his troops from among the local population, certainly figures. And this evaluation beautifully illustrates the situation of 'mirroring', although with different interpretations. In Russia and Estonia the same figure is endowed with contradictory assessments.

25 Cf. in particular Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

As is well-known, the weakness of 'global' theories lies above all in their high degree of generalisation. And contrary to general trends, there are certainly marginal cases which perhaps are not fundamentally opposed, but nevertheless require their own conceptualisation. And these marginal cases are often *ad marginem* spaces. As demonstrated above, researchers link the particularity of borderlands exclusively with the proximity of neighbours, when social life is largely predetermined not so much by the context of one's own state as of that located close by. However, it remains that in the strategies for writing one's own histories and, more broadly, in identity policies, Narva and Ivangorod do not need each other at all. Until now, they have rather been important as a single region of everyday life or as a space for concentrated cross-border links and networks. In this connection, the use of approaches and concepts of borderlands cannot present an adequate explanatory pattern.

To grasp the social transformations in this new (post-soviet) borderland, it is necessary to take into account some significant local particularities in connection to the nation states involved. In relations between Narva and Ivangorod, the latter's status as a rather small town and its position within the social space of Russia is problematic as is the complex situation regarding citizenship in Narva, being some kind of a problem zone for Estonia. Both parties deem a resolution of their problems possible only via the 'third court' – the EU. Thus, a three-tiered approach, taking into account the global/transnational, the national and the local is adequate.

I think in order to understand the interaction of the two towns and some processes 'reshaping identities' the use of metaphors is heuristic. The current border is not a mirror when there is an interdependency, when there is a need for the 'orbiter', and relations are practically mirrored, they reflect one another, even though perhaps with different 'sigmas'. Neither is the border 'shop windows when the aim of interaction is to present, to exhibit something outside. I believe that in the researched situation the metaphor of the window is more appropriate. The border becomes a window beyond which life itself carries on. One can look into this window, but those looking will remain external observers, since there is no participation in observation. This 'peepings' will not change life on either side of the window, for on both sides each active person is involved in his own project.

## From Silenced to Voiced: Changing Politics of Memory of Loss in Armenia<sup>1</sup>

Tzvetana Darvas

Recent work on social and cultural politics of memory in Europe has been dominated by certain phenomena such as the trauma of displacement and grievous loss. Not only most obvious instances such as the Holocaust, but also other violent catastrophic events in different parts of the world receive more and more attention from scholars and politicians. The shift of European historians has given rise to questions about the moral demarcation of the boundaries of a 'New Europe', such as reconsideration and reorganisation of the boundaries of a moral community of remembrance and the construction of a new shared memory in Europe. This process includes the struggle over public heritage and competing political views on space and the boundaries of a new community. A good example of this process is the debate between Germany and Poland over contested representations of a 'shared' European victim identity, a violent past and, in particular, about the proper location of the future European Centre against Expulsion (*Europäisches Zentrum gegen Vertreibung*). The interesting point about the vision of the recent European victimization history relates to the inclusion of Armenian loss and suffering during the large-scale massacres in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. On the chronological scale, the Armenian expulsion and suffering are classified as the genealogical beginning of a 'shared memory' of European death.

The act of revealing genocide and expulsion in 'ethnic', 'regional' or 'national' histories involved more than the emergence of a single shared memory. Following perestroika, the reemergence of the 'suppressed' in socialist societies

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank to Levon Aldunian for his useful comments during my field work in Yerevan. A part of the paper was presented under the title 'Memorizing after Violent Loss in Armenia' at the German Society of Anthropology (DGVA) Conference held in Halle (Saale) in September 2005, and another part under the title 'Changing Politics of memory of loss in Armenia' at the 11th ANS Conference in March 2006, at the Harvard Institute of Learning University, USA. I am most grateful to Stephan Fuchsberg (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK) who made an inspiring comment about the concept of this paper and Elia-Bair Gachhava (Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Yerevan) for discussion of the draft of this paper.

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