

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

“Loss of artworks, reflections on loss in Central, Balkan, and Eastern Europe: corpora, methods, discourses (19th–21st centuries)”

Co-organizers: Daniel Baric, Romain Marmont, Guilhem Pousson, Andjela Radonjic (Eur'ORBEM [SU/CNRS])
Paris, Sorbonne University/ Centre d'études slaves – October 8 and 9

Day 1 — Thursday, October 8

MORNING SESSION — LOSS OF OBJECTS AND METHODOLOGY

9h00–9h10	Welcome & Introduction
9h10–9h50	Opening Lecture — Vanessa de Senarclens (Lecturer, Humboldt University), “The Unease of Loss: Towards a Cultural History of Displaced Books in the German-Polish Region Since 1945” Vanessa de Senarclens will focus on the loss of books and manuscript collections - whether through their destruction, disappearance, or displacement - in the German-Polish context since the beginning of the Second World War. Through the notion of unease, she will examine what these losses continue to produce today, both in Poland and Germany, and the different forms this unease may take in each context: silences, deadlocks arising from divergent legal frameworks, but also one-sided narratives that leave the perspective of the other side out of view. Yet these books and manuscripts have something in common: on either side of the Oder, they have become objects of mourning and of a desire for the book that continues to this day. When they survived the war, their trajectories through time and space are not a history external to the book: they become part of its biography and add a new layer of meaning to the object. It is this capacity of the book to be transformed by its migrations, to carry within itself the history of its movements, that Vanessa de Senarclens proposes to conceptualize through the notion of <i>Bibliomigrancy</i>.
Session 1	
Moderation: Luba Jurgenson	
9h50–10h15	Marcelina Mroz (PhD candidate, Sorbonne University and CNRS), “Chana Kowalska and Baruch Winogora: How Can We Reconstruct Lives That Have Fallen into Oblivion?” This presentation examines the trajectories of Chana Kowalska and Baruch Winogora, Polish Yiddish-speaking artists who emigrated to Paris and were murdered at Auschwitz. Drawing on the few surviving artworks and archival materials, it seeks to reconstruct their life paths and networks. It explores the combined impact of material destruction, extermination, and the marginalization in collective memory of their communist commitments on the enduring erasure of certain artistic lives.
10h15–10h40	Stéphanie Cirac (Research and learning Engineer, CNRS/Eur'ORBEM), “Readings of Absence: The ‘Dostoevsky Society’ in Interwar Prague” Taking the turbulent history of Apollinaria Suslova’s diary as a starting point, this presentation examines the impact of exile on Dostoevsky scholarship in interwar Prague. It explores the “Dostoevsky Society” and the work of Alfred Bem, a scholarship shaped by physical distance from primary sources, archives, and Russia itself. It demonstrates how absence becomes both a practical challenge and a guiding principle of research.
10h40–10h55	Pause

10h55–11h20	Anna Berezowska (PhD candidate, University of Wrocław), “Invisible Loss: Mikveh Heritage and the Feminist Reconstruction of Cultural Absence in Central and Eastern Europe” This presentation examines the disappearance of women’s Jewish heritage through the case of mikvahs in Central and Eastern Europe. Drawing on the example of the Wrocław mikvah, it combines architectural analysis, feminist critique, and material traces of women’s experiences. It demonstrates how the destruction of these sites and their erasure from male-centric scholarship have resulted in a twofold loss within cultural memory.
11h20–11h45	Nenad Milosavljevic (PhD candidate, Sorbonne University and CNRS), “A Manuscript Lost and then Retrieved s a New Work: Milivoj Srebro’s Literature of Crisis” This presentation examines a manuscript by Milivoj Srebro that was lost during the Yugoslav Wars, recovered more than thirty years later, and published in a radically transformed context. It analyzes the impact of loss and rediscovery on a work’s identity, particularly when the author himself rereads it as the text of another. Through this case study, it explores loss as an active force in the reinterpretation of literature and memory.
11h45–12h30	Discussion
12h30–13h30	Lunch Break

AFTERNOON — OBJECTS OF LOSS (FORM)

Panel 2

Moderation : Andjela Radonjic

13h30–13h55	Alena Vikova (PhD candidate, Sorbonne University and CNRS), “Unfinishedness as Form and Stance: The Case of Pammrová” This presentation focuses on the fragmentary body of work of the Czech poet and philosopher Anna Pammrová. It examines the publishing obstacles, the destroyed or lost manuscripts, and the deliberate choice of an unfinished mode of thought. It demonstrates how incompleteness becomes a component of her intellectual and feminist project.
13h55–14h20	Julie Gerber (Associate professor, Université Grenoble Alpes), “The Use of Redaction in Contemporary Russian Literature: Loss or Reconfiguration of Meaning?” This presentation examines the practice of redaction in contemporary Russian publishing, exploring the interplay between adaptation to new forms of censorship and the transformation of reading habits. It also analyzes the subversive use of this technique by the artist Sinij Karandaš in <i>Evgenij Onegin. Blackout</i>, where the erasure of Pushkin’s text generates new political statements. It demonstrates how the forced loss of textual fragments can become a site for the reconfiguration of meaning and for artistic resistance.
14h20–14h45	Magdalena Kowalska (Associate professor, Université de Toruń), « Is this a novel? Is this a hero? Status of plans and outlines of unfinished literary works on the examples of two Polish Romantic novels. » This paper examines the unfinished projects of Juliusz Słowacki and Narcyza Żmichowska. It explores how outlines, sketches, and fragments have enabled these works to retain their place in Polish literary history. It also investigates both authors' doubts regarding the forms and powers of the novel.
14h45–15h20	Discussion
15h20	Closing remarks

Day 2 — Friday, October 9

MORNING SESSION — PARADIGMS OF LOSS

9h00–9h05	Opening remarks
9h05–9h45	Opening Lecture — Nicolas Aude (Professor, Sorbonne University), <i>Lost and Rediscovered Literary Writings in Biographical Fiction</i> This lecture sets out to sketch a phantasmatic critical reading of the motif of the lost manuscript in twentieth-century literary fictions centered on writers. I will focus on a heterogeneous corpus concerned with the cultural memory of two Jewish writers from Eastern Europe: Isaac Babel and Bruno Schulz. Comparing the biographical meditations and narratives of philological investigation inspired by the “incomplete works” of these two authors leads us to consider the paradoxical productivity of loss.
Session 3	
Moderation : Naïma Berkane	
9h45–10h10	Alexandra Urakova (researcher, Södertörn University), « <i>Origins of Superfluity: Loss, Non-Recognition, and Queer Misalignment in Turgenev’s Diary of a Superfluous Man</i> » This paper re-examines Turgenev’s <i>Diary of a Superfluous Man</i> through the concepts of loss, lateness, and non-recognition. It demonstrates that Tchulkaturin embodies a form of superfluity that eludes the typologies established by 19th-century criticism. It thus proposes a re-examination of this canonical figure by focusing on its margins and its disjunctions.
10h10–10h35	Elisabeth Kyriakou (PhD candidate, Sorbonne University and CNRS), “Reconstructing absence: spectrality, archive and memory of the “Berezil” theater by Les Kurbas” This intervention studies the Berezil theater of Les Kurbas, dissolved during the Stalinist purges and known only through fragmentary traces. She analyzes the testimonies, archives and reconstructions which allow us to approach a stage art that has been irremediably lost. It shows how these materials produce a new object, between document, interpretation and recreation.
10h35–11h00	Nadia Lichtig (artist/researcher, MO.CO. Esba, Montpellier), “Tracing Ghosts: Loss as an Agent of Creation and Knowledge” This presentation considers loss as an active principle of creation within practices that combine painting, voice, and archives. Drawing on frottages, transcriptions, and fragmentary narratives, it examines works that operate from within the gaps of history rather than seeking to fill them. It demonstrates how “ghost images” can allow a past to persist without reconstructing it.
11h00–11h30	Discussion
11h30–11h45	Pause

Session 4

Moderation : Daniel Baric

11h45–12h10	Svetlana Tomic (professor, Alfa BK University, Belgrade), « <i>Counterbalancing the Culture of Loss: Traces as Pathways to Discovery</i> » This presentation examines the traces that enable the recovery of works and archives obscured within Serbian and Yugoslav cultures. It distinguishes between accidental losses and erasures orchestrated by ideological and institutional frameworks. It reflects on the methods, research languages, and digital tools required to give voice to these clues.
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12h10–12h35	Marinika Sadgyan (PhD candidate, Sorbonne University), « In Search of a Lost Landscape » This presentation examines the disappearance of a landscape and the search for traces of it. It is part of an ongoing doctoral project focused on the disappearance of the Aral Sea in Central Asia and the consequences of this environmental catastrophe for the communities living along its former shores. It explores what happens when the lost object is a sea, that is, a native landscape, a living environment, and a setting for daily practices and cultural identity.
12h35–13h00	Ioanna Kouki (PhD candidate, University Toulouse Jean Jaurès), "Ioannina and Its 'Loss': Conceptualizing the Balkan City in Dimitris Hadzis's <i>The End of Our Small Town</i>" This presentation analyzes Ioannina as a place where the disappearance of an Ottoman Balkan world makes the effects of modernization visible. Through the short stories of Dimitris Hadzis, it examines the decline of trades, local bonds of solidarity, and traditional forms of urban coexistence. It demonstrates that loss becomes a lens through which to understand the city's social history.
13h00–13h30	Discussion
13h30–14h30	Lunch Break

AFTERNOON — OBJECTS OF LOSS (MOTIF)

Session 5

Moderation : Romain Marmont

14h30–14h55	Paola Ferrandi (Lecturer, University of Bari "Aldo Moro" and University of Chieti-Pescara "G. d'Annunzio"), "The Circulation and Loss of Books as a Discourse on Cultural Heritage and Self-Legitimization in the Work of V.S. Grossman (1930s–1950s)." This paper examines the role of books and libraries in the work of Vasily Grossman, spanning the 1930s through the post-war period. It demonstrates how their circulation, transmission, or destruction shapes access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and the characters' legitimization within Soviet culture. Finally, the war narratives frame the book as an object of symbolic preservation in the face of the annihilation of written worlds.
14h55–15h20	Jia Xing (PhD candidate, University of Toronto), "From Trace to Narrative Operator: Minor Objects and Loss in <i>The Book of Laughter and Forgetting</i>" This paper analyzes the function of ordinary objects in Milan Kundera's <i>The Book of Laughter and Forgetting</i>. Letters, notebooks, and household items preserve traces of a vanished world while structuring the characters' narratives and quests. It demonstrates that preservation can prolong absence and hinder access to the present.
15h20–15h50	Discussion
15h50	Closing Remarks