East European Memory Studies

News from the ‘Memory at War’ Projects

Dialogue and Exchange
Andriy Portnov (historian and Editor-in-Chief of Україна Moderna) and Maria Mäiksoo (MAW Tartu project) will both be visiting Cambridge on MAW Short Fellowships in March (on 14-23 March and 7-13 March respectively). Alexander Etkind (Cambridge) will be a visiting fellow at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March.

The Cambridge project has launched its partnership with leading Russian intellectual journal Neprikosnovennyi zapas (NZ). One of the aims is to provide English-speaking audiences with access to Russian intellectual and cultural debates. See our website under ‘Blog and Resources’.

The Memory at War facebook forum now has 70 members, and is still expanding. Joining the forum is an excellent way to keep up with the fast-changing memoryscapes in the region, as forum members based throughout the world share breaking news and information on East European memory events in real time. The forum is developing into an especially rich source of multimedia, from short films and cartoons, to music videos and print media. To join our forum, go to facebook and search for ‘Memory at War forum’.

The next major event coming up is the inaugural conference ‘East European Memory Studies’, the first of three annual graduate research triangles co-organised by Cambridge, Oxford and UCL. Graduate students from these three institutions and beyond will gather in Cambridge on 11-12 March for two days of presentations and debate, featuring a keynote address by Catriona Kelly and a CRASSH colloquium with Cathy Caruth. See page 7 for details.

Research Team Expansion
We are delighted to introduce the Groningen team’s two new research assistants, Janneke Fokkema and Maria Gordusenko.

Janneke Fokkema has a background in Slavonic Languages and Cultures and is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree at Groningen in Literary and Cultural Studies. She is also hoping to complete a BA degree in French Studies this year. Her research interests include the culture, society and literature of Eastern Europe and of Russia, in particular. For the MAW project, she will be working on contemporary Polish, Ukrainian and Russian novels and trauma.

Maria Gordusenko is a postgraduate Ford Foundation International Fellowship student who holds a degree in Art History. Her work on the MAW project involves the analysis of Russian, Ukrainian and Polish films on the Soviet epoch and WWII within the context of trauma theory and cultural memory.
Contemporary Russian literature is a bizarre and understudied field. It is only natural that imaginative writers develop their intuitions much faster than scholars develop their concepts, but I feel that some conceptual refurbishment is overdue in this field. The fantasy of post-Soviet authors seems unlimited, their actual themes overlap. They seem to be mostly interested in two areas of human experience, religion and history, which they combine in rich and shocking ways. At the same time, they are not concerned about other areas of literary interest, such as psychology or realistic analysis of social issues. They tend to go deep into the past in order to contextualize the present. Sometimes they construct a future that looks frighteningly like a past. Then, it becomes difficult to distinguish between mourning and warning; this conflation is exactly what the authors intend to accomplish.

In post-Soviet literature, there are stories about werewolves and werefoxes; about sectarians who copulate with the soil and biophilologists who clone the great Russian writers to extract the substance of immortality (Vladimir Sorokin’s *Blue Fat*); about the revival of the Vikings and the Khazars and their war which follows the collapse of oil prices after some techno-magic invention (Dmitrii Bykov’s *ZhD*); about a global dictator of mixed Russian-Chinese origins, whose teacher, a sectarian Old-Believer, educates him by citing Sigmund Freud (Pavel Krusanov’s *Angel’s Bite*); about resurrection, oprichnina in 21st century Russia (Sorokin’s *A Day of an Oprichnik*); about the survival of the old Finnish tribe, Meria, as a kind of religious sect among contemporary Russians, with the most bizarre sexual and funeral rites (Denis Osokin’s *Ovsianki*); and about vampires who pretend to be humans but rule over the Russians, suck their blood, and define Russian history in the manner of either the Free Masons, or the Soviet communists, or the post-Soviet oligarchs (Sergei Lukianenko’s multiple novels, Viktor Pelevin’s *Empire V*). These stories do not necessarily belong to ‘popular literature’, but rather cover the whole range from the low- (Lukianenko) to the high-brow (Vladimir Sharov). One can safely say that these writers are successful among Russian readers. They publish their novels with mainstream commercial publishers, produce literary scandals, and receive national prizes.

My point is that whatever these authors imagine in the past or in the future (and their fantasy is plentiful), the goal is usually the understanding of the central trauma, or rather the catastrophe, of the Soviet period. After catastrophic situations, say after Nazism or after Stalinism, the work of mourning and memory becomes the central preoccupation of national culture. In the post-Soviet condition, which is very different from the German example, narrative genres of high culture such as the novel and film, play the central role in this double-edged processes of mourning and warning. Like post-traumatic consciousness, the post-catastrophic culture cyclically returns to the overwhelming event in the past. We return there when we want to and we return there when we do not. These re-enactments are cyclical but of course they not eternal. There is a limit to intergenerational memory, as to any other memory, and we do not know when the process of mourning will be over. I think that, with regard to the Soviet experience, we are still in the middle of it.
Uncomfortably for a historian, materializing memory in the public sphere often entails fiction rather than truth, allegories rather than facts. However unrecognizable, these allegoric images retain their dependency upon the past; but this relationship cannot be described in those terms that Russian cultural criticism is accustomed to, e.g. as realistic, mythological, or nostalgic. Created by analogy with magical realism, my concept of Magical Historicism is both similar and different. It is similar because both make extensive use of magic in a novelistic construction. They also present an implicit critique of contemporary society by revising its historical foundations. But Magical Historicism is different from Magical Realism because it distances itself self-consciously from the traditions of the realist novel that are critical to Magical Realism. The post-Soviet novel does not analyze social reality; what it emulates and struggles with, is history.

In his trilogy *Ice* (2002-2004), Vladimir Sorokin tells the story of Snegirev, a student of astronomy, which he interprets as the history of the universe. In 1928, Snegirev goes to Siberia, where he finds his own marsh. Just as he is about to die there, he finds a piece of magic ice, which changes his nature. From now on, he is powerful, non-competitive, and communitarian, but only with his own kind. Instead of making love with his words and genitals, he can speak straight from his heart, with the advantage that he can do it with any of his peers, not only with the loved one. Born again through this ice, Snegirev recruits his fellowship by hammering humans with sacred Ice. A few are fully transformed, but many more are killed in the process. The People of the Ice make their way into the core of the KGB and exploit the system for their benefit. They infiltrate the NKVD and take their part in the building of the gulag, which they use as a kind of plantation for selecting and cultivating their peers.

Sorokin’s fantasy is very different from Pelevin’s, but they converge in depicting their central characters as superhumans who parasite on humans. Unlike the vampires in Pelevin’s *Empire IV*, the People of the Ice do not suck blood. In fact, Sorokin’s characters are vegetarians, and they are mortal. However, they are, like vampires, parasites on humans, whom they use with the utmost cruelty. In its own way, Sorokin’s fantasy responds to the same desperate quest for meaning of the terror that inspired Bykov’s *Justification* (2001), in which a contemporary Moscow historian with an advanced degree struggles to find his perished grandfather and develops an ingenious theory of Stalinism. He theorizes that people were subjected to torture and other kinds of suffering in order to select those few who were fit to survive it all. Those who gave up under torture and confessed to invented crimes betrayed Stalin and had to perish; those who resisted to the end were preserved, healed, and trained. Inspired by this theory, he travels to Siberia in hope of finding his grandfather in a secret Soviet-style reservation, and drowns himself in a Siberian marsh.

I take another example from the works of Vladimir Sharov. An author of seven novels and a trained historian with an advanced degree, Sharov is a great source for my speculations. I will talk about his *Rehearsals* (2008), but any other of his novels would be equally relevant. So, the narrator of *Rehearsals* is an historian who is working in Tomsk, in Siberia, in 1965 on the 17th century schism of the Russian church. Sharov himself defended his dissertation on the Times of Trouble. The narrator of this novel does not have an advanced degree, but there are some indications that what we are reading is his dissertation, though of course there was no chance he could have defended this bizarre work in 1965, or even much later. From his friend, Isaiah Kobylin, a survivor of the gulag and the last member of a mystical sect, the narrator acquired a manuscript, which was written about...
1666 by the founder of this sect, who happens to be a French theatre director, Jacques de Certan. Captured by Russian troops in Livonia, Certan lived at the court of Tsar Alexei and worked with Patriarch Nikon in his monastery, New Jerusalem, near Moscow. Certan documented his accomplishments in his notes in Breton, and the narrator took the effort to translate, update, and re-tell Certan’s story in the current book.

As the story proceeds, we learn that while building New Jerusalem, an amateurish copy of the Holy Land where every river and village has been renamed after the Palestinian originals (and this part is historically valid), Nikon asked Certan to rehearse in this land a full-scale mysteria, a theatrical re-enactment of Jesus Christ's words and passions and everything that is described in the four Gospels, plus some apocrypha. Everyone is depicted in these rehearsals but Christ, who is supposed to arrive later as the Messiah. When Nikon falls into disgrace, the hundreds of peasants that have been taking part in the rehearsals are exiled to Siberia. Certan dies on the road but his actors remain faithful to his teaching, form a sectarian community, and repeat the rehearsals in hope of the imminent arrival of Christ. Surrounded by Siberian marshes, they rehearse for generations, although conflicts do build up amongst them. The most important conflict arises between those playing Christians and those playing the Jews. The conflict escalates to the point where the former start to exterminate the latter, by which stage a gulag has already been established in their village. The former apostles become the commanders of the camp, and they continue their rehearsals as a method of atheist propaganda. The only Jewish survivor of this Holocaust, a little boy, is the one who supplies the narrator with his sources.

Though my current research focuses on imaginative literature and film, I see manifestations of the same, magical-historical way of understanding contemporary reality, in much contemporary non-fiction as well. On 10 December, 2010, the chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, Valerii Zorkin, published an essay, ‘Constitution against the Crime’, in an official newspaper. In this essay, Zorkin makes a subtle distinction between a criminalized state, which is a danger for the Russian Federation. Amazingly, in formulating his warning, Zorkin chose not the language of the Russian constitution but the language of Pelevin, from Empire V. I quote in my translation:

In a criminal state, our citizens will divide into predators, who will feel very free in the criminal jungles, and subhumans (‘недочеловеков’), who will understand that they are just food for these predators. The predators will be in the minority, the ‘walking beefsteaks’ among the majority. The gap between the former and the latter will constantly expand.

Zorkin also describes the majority of subhumans with a citation from Pushkin’s verses of 1823: ‘их надо резать или стричь’ (‘they should be either slaughtered or shorn’), he quotes. He further speculates that in this situation, the majority of subhumans will be longing for a ‘saviour’ who can arrive only as a dictator, and that the social basis of this dictatorship will still be criminal. This is not an anti-utopia, claims Zorkin, but a ‘negative scenario’. It is quite instructive to see that while we literary scholars doubt the usage of our soft language in describing legal or political phenomena, the top lawyer of the Russian Federation succumbs to this language eagerly and quite consistently.
In the current debates on president Medvedev’s project of ‘modernization’, one of the most skeptical voices belongs to Simon Kordonsky, a self-proclaimed sociologist who worked as the Chief Expert of the Russian Presidential Administration in 2000-2004, a well-informed and extremely conservative thinker. In an address, ‘Halfway to the Sharashka’, that Kordonsky gave at a Moscow meeting of pro-Kremlin intellectuals, ‘Russia, Forward!’ in January 2011, Kordonsky offered a systematic analogy between the current project to build a new scientific centre near Moscow and the sharashka, a type of fenced, secret laboratory in the gulag in which the researchers were prisoners and the bosses were the officers of the NKVD. Arguing his point, Kordonsky cites Stalin’s letter of 1930, which launched the notorious trial of the Industrial Party and then, the first sharashka of the gulag. Kordonsky also draws an analogy between Leonid Ramzin, the chief victim of that trial, and the recent trial of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The speaker explicitly suggested creating a sharashka in which Khodorkovsky could realize his talent for modernization.

Gleb Pavlovsky, the long-time leader of the post-Soviet political technologists, advisor to presidents Yeltsin and Putin, and a possible prototype for Pelevin’s Tatarsky from Generation P, is a political ally of both Zorkin and Kordonsky. In a recent interview with his own journal, Russkii zhurnal, Pavlovsky tells his story. Russia has entered a ‘period of turbulence’. No matter what we want to do, something different comes out of it, he says in visible despair. These are all indicators of the failure of our contact with reality, he admits. I quote Pavlovsky’s characteristic mumbling:

The least understandable forces in Russia are those that are in power. The Russian statesmen carry out guerrilla warfare. They get into places that are privatized by power and they are trying to hold on to them. They never know where they might succeed and what is dangerous to touch. For example, the minister of justice is leading a regiment of state guerrillas to the gulag jungles of the State Prison Administration, where they are trying to rationalize and humanize the world of the zone.

According to this insider, state prisons in Russia are still a gulag, fifty years after this institution was officially disbanded. Russian officials with all their bureaucrats, bodyguards, and budgets are guerrillas who operate in the jungles of uncertainty, resistance, and danger. In this unbounded mythologizing, Pavlovsky transfers responsibility from these hapless or corrupt officials onto anonymous, fantastic forces. Speaking of the internet and its alleged danger to Russian sovereignty, Pavlovsky laments: ‘There are half-natural creatures operating in this world, with their inhuman politics’. He compares these harmful forces disturbing the work of Russian officials and political technologists, to sharks and volcanoes. Finally, he reveals the source of his imagination: the current situation in Russia, he says, is like ‘pictures in certain novels: it is a gloomy morning, and there are swollen, incomprehensible people coming out of the woods, gathering in clusters. To what end is unclear’. Pavlovsky does not name these novels but they definitely belong to the genre that we are discussing here.

Alexander Etkind

Sources:

- Валерий Зорькин, “Конституция против криминала” (http://www.rg.ru/2010/12/10/zorkin.html)


DIARY OF EVENTS

Events coming up at Memory at War partner institutions and beyond

Cambridge

FRI 11-SAT 12 MARCH
EAST EUROPEAN MEMORY STUDIES:
GRADUATE RESEARCH TRIANGLE
King’s College, Cambridge
See page 7 for details.

TUE 15 MARCH, 1:00PM
MAW Special Event
ANDRIY PORTNOV, ‘Thinking about Memory in the Polish-Russian-Ukrainian Triangle. Tendencies, Common Places, Prospects’
MAW Research Space, Cambridge

WED 16 MARCH, 5:00PM
East European Memory Studies Research Group Seminar
DAVID FERRIS (University of Colorado), ‘Spacings of Memory: Benjamin’s Moscow’;
and STEPHANIE BIRD (UCL), ‘The History of Destruction and the Possibility of Comedy in the Work of W. G. Sebald’
CRASSH, Cambridge

THURS 17 MARCH, 7:30PM
Europe East and West:
Film, History and Mourning Series
PHILIP CAVENDISH (UCL-SSEES) talk on Ilya Khrzhanovsky’s 4 (Russia, 2005)
Keynes Hall, King’s College, Cambridge

SAT 2 APRIL, 3:00PM
BASEES Conference
MARKKU KANGASPURO (Helsinki), ‘Interpretations of World War II and the Great Patriotic War’
Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge

SUN 3 APRIL, 2:00PM
BASEES Conference
JULIE FEDOR (Cambridge), ‘Defining “Historical Falsification”’

WED 27 APRIL, 5:00PM
East European Memory Studies Research Group Seminar
JACEK PURCHLA (Krakow), ‘The Heart of Poland’;
and MARKKU KANGASPURO (Helsinki), ‘Victory Day in History Politics’
CRASSH, Cambridge

TUE 15 MARCH, 4:30PM
Digital Memories Conference
ELLEN RUTTEN (Bergen), ‘Web Wars, or Eastern Europe’s Digital Languages of Memory’
Prague

... And beyond

THURS 10 MARCH, 3:00pm
From Central to Digital:
Television in Russia
RGGU/Leeds Conference
VERA ZVEREVA (Bergen/Moscow), ‘The Discourse of Digital Television in Russian Media’
RGGU, Moscow

TUE 15 MARCH, 4:30PM
Digital Memories Conference
ELLEN RUTTEN (Bergen), ‘Web Wars, or Eastern Europe’s Digital Languages of Memory’
Prague
This month we are launching the annual Graduate Research Triangle conference series. The graduate conference ‘East European Memory Studies’ will take place at King’s College, Cambridge, on 11-12 March.

This conference is the first of a series of three to be held annually between the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, and the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London. The conference series is designed to provide a forum for the rapidly expanding number of postgraduate students pursuing research on East European memory.

We were overwhelmed by the response to our Call for Papers, and sorry that we had to turn down so many excellent proposals due to limited places. Those whose papers were not accepted this year are strongly encouraged to re-apply for next year’s conference.

This first conference will feature a keynote address by Professor Catriona Kelly (Oxford). See page 8 for full programme details.

Abstracts of papers and other materials are available on our website: www.memoryatwar.org/events

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Cambridge
Alexander Etkind
Uilleam Blacker

UCL-SSEES
Polly Jones

Oxford
Muireann Maguire
Josie von Zitzewitz

MORE INFORMATION: info@memoryatwar.org
Friday 11 March

9:30am Welcome and Keynote address:

- Opening remarks: Dr Emma Widdis (Cambridge)
- Keynote address: Prof. Catriona Kelly (Oxford), ‘Trajectories of Memory: Everyday Life in Trans-Socialist Cities’

11:00am Coffee

11:30am Panel 1: Forces of Oblivion

- J J Gurga (UCL), ‘Remembering (in) Ukrainian Cinema of the 1960s’
- Zarifa Mamedova (Munich), ‘Stalin’s Memory at War: Trying to Forget and Striving to Remember in Russia and Poland’
- Eleanor Sarah Ryan (UCL), ‘Artefact as Amnesiac’

1:00pm Lunch

2:00pm Colloquium on the Work of Professor Cathy Caruth (CRASSH, Mill Lane, Cambridge)

Evening: Conference dinner

Saturday 12 March

9:00am Panel 2: Urban Memoryscapes

- Ed Saunders (Cambridge), ‘Kaliningrad and Cold War Ghosts in Late Tarkovsky’
- Hanna Baumann (Oxford), ‘Post-Communist Iconoclasts: Repression and Identity in the Urban Landscape of East Berlin’
- Michał Murawski (Cambridge), ‘Inappropriate Object: Warsaw’s Palace of Culture after Smolensk’

10:30am Coffee

11:00am Panel 3: Post-Communist Memories in Literature

- Aleksandra Rychlicka (UCL), ‘No Matter How Hard We Tried: Can We Decipher the Present without the Past?’
- Tanya Zaharchenko (Cambridge), ‘While the Ox is Still Alive: Emptiness and Memory in an East Ukrainian Novel’
- Maria Pasholok (Oxford), ‘Memoirs on Wallpaper: Remembering the Soviet in a Post-Soviet Interior’

12:30pm Lunch

1:30pm Panel 4: Remembering War and Violence

- Oliwia Berdak (UCL), ‘I Know What I Saw…: Autobiographical Writing and Collective Memory of the 1991-95 War in Croatia’
- Simon Lewis (Cambridge), “‘Official Nationality’ and the Dissidence of Memory in Belarus: A Comparative Analysis of Two Films’
- Monika Żychlińska (Warsaw), ‘We Poles Have Always Been Fighting: The Museum of the Warsaw Uprising’

3:00pm Coffee

3:30pm Panel 5: Commemorative Practices

- Judy Brown (Cambridge), ‘Scraping the Memoryscape: Territory and Memory in the Crimea’
- Nataliya Danilova (Nottingham), ‘Victory Day: Rituals and Practices of Commemoration in Russia’
- Oksana Vynnyk (Warsaw), ‘Ceremony and Memory: The Cemetery of the “Young Eagles” in Lviv’

5:00pm Panel 6: Post-Socialist Memory Discourses

- Kate Pride Brown (Vanderbilt), ‘“What is Enlightenment?” in the Post-Soviet Present: Using Kant to Explore how Russians Remember the Soviet Union’
- Filip Lyapov (Oxford), ‘The Tyranny of Memory: The Batak Massacre and Modern Historical Theories in Bulgaria’
- Tina Schivatcheva (Cambridge), ‘The Political Economy of Collective Memory: The Case of Post-Communist Bulgaria’
Berlin

Katyn across Boundaries


Her paper explored the reception of Wajda’s film across generational boundaries, and set out to assess whether the film fulfilled Wajda’s desire to inform the younger generations, who he believes are ‘forgetting about history’, about the Katyn massacres. The film has become part of the Polish national curriculum, with every school student required to see it; this in itself tells us little, however, about how it was actually received by them. The paper cited a study done by Joanna Zablocka-Korek, who surveyed several hundred students across the country, asking which they thought were the most important Polish films, and which films were their favourite. Katyn failed to appear at all in the latter category, unsurprisingly given its subject matter, but was at the top of the former list.

The paper also examined the extent to which Wajda’s film has been imbricated in the atmosphere of reconciliation between certain sections of Polish and Russian government, citing some positive responses in the Polish and Russian press to the Russian screening of and debate on Katyn.

Cambridge

Digital Stalin

On 18 February 2011 the Cambridge MAW team was pleased to welcome Vadim Staklo of Yale University Press to talk about the Digital Stalin project. The project, which is funded by the Mellon Foundation, aims to fully digitalise Stalin’s personal archive, which is held in Moscow. This massive digitised archive will provide a unique and valuable tool for researchers working on Soviet history, giving them full, detailed access to materials but eliminating the necessity of travel to Moscow and laborious archival searches.

The materials in question include vast numbers of documents, from brief notes and telegrams to lengthy correspondences, drafts of manuscripts and Stalin’s own books with his handwritten notes on the margins. It contains documents relating to some of the key episodes of Soviet history, from Stalin’s communications with the NKVD command to his correspondence with Hitler. The project will be made available online, and will be searchable in Russian and English. Documents can be viewed as high quality colour scans, with translations available. The website will also provide full access to relevant Yale University Press publications.

Vadim Staklo gave the MAW team a guided tour of the preliminary version of the website, which despite having access to only a part of the total documentation, provided fascinating viewing. The team was invited to suggest search terms, many of which threw up surprising and intriguing results. Particularly striking were Stalin’s extensive handwritten notes on his own manuscripts, visible in high definition, which betrayed an obsessive meticulousness and industriousness.

The digitisation process, which is being carried out in conjunction with the archive staff in Moscow, is well underway, and the project is expected to go live by 2012. While the volume of materials is truly overwhelming, there is one item that has evaded it, and which Vadim Staklo would dearly like to get his hands on: Stalin’s own annotated copy of Machiavelli’s The Prince, which went missing from the archive some years ago. As revealing as this document may be, it represents only a tiny gap in a truly impressive and valuable resource.
Cambridge Heritage Research Group

Memory and Heritage

On 3 March Uilleam Blacker (Cambridge) spoke to the Cambridge Heritage Research group. The Heritage Group works on such topics as monuments, memorials and the heritage of traumatic pasts, and the seminar series brings together researchers working on related topics from across the university and beyond.

In the MAW focus countries, memory discourse is often focused on material cultural heritage. Communities in Eastern Europe often live surrounded by the heritage of vanished groups, be it the heritage of the Jews murdered in the Holocaust, or the heritage of deported groups, such as that of Germans in Western Poland, or of Poles in Western Ukraine. This heritage may be ignored, treated with hostility, or inspire dialogue and creative responses. The material legacy of Nazi or Soviet terror presents different problems, and again the approach varies. It is striking to compare the well-preserved concentration camps in Poland with the ambivalent, often neglectful attitude to the physical legacy of Soviet terror in Russia. Related to this is the wider issue of the heritage of communism. The fall of communism was followed by an initial rejection and erasure of its architectural and monumental legacy. In recent years, however, this has often been replaced by an attitude of ironic nostalgia or a re-appropriation of this heritage and ‘forgetting’ of its original context. Soviet monuments can, however, still provoke powerful resentment and even violent protest, and yet can also be accepted and respected as integral to the city fabric, especially in Russia.

Cultural heritage plays a central role in the creation of cultural memory. The processes of preserving, destroying or ignoring sites of heritage provide a tangible, physical text, which, when deciphered, can reveal how the physical manifestation of memory builds a society’s self-image and the image it has of others.

Plymouth

Russian History Textbook Wars

On 16 February Julie Fedor (Cambridge) gave a talk to the University of Plymouth’s Modern History Seminar. She presented an account of three major scandals of the past decade related to Russian history textbooks, the controversies surrounding history textbooks authored by Dolutskii (2001), Filippov and Danilov (2007), and Barsenkov and Vdovin (2010), and traced their connections to a series of state interventions in history teaching.

Her paper focused on the key problem of devising basic narratives of the Stalinist terror, on the one hand, and post-Soviet history, on the other. She examined successive attempts to distil these events into coherent and simple narratives, in the form of official texts such as the federal state education standards (2004) and the draft senior secondary education reform plans (2010-11). Her paper used sample multiple-choice questions from the Russian Unified State Examination in History in 2009 and 2010 to illustrate the ongoing ideological confusion surrounding 20th-21st history and to identify the strategies being employed to negotiate this uncertain terrain.
The booms in media and memory provide challenges for our understanding of the ways in which the past is made relevant to individuals and groups today. Emergent media and memory concepts seek to capture some of the transformations in these fields (‘new’, ‘digital’, ‘network’, and ‘prosthetic’, ‘multidirectional’, ‘connective’, respectively). Yet, at the same time, those terms established in earlier times (‘mass media’, ‘collective memory’) have continued resonance. This picture is further complicated by the array of disciplines and sub-disciplines that operate radically different modus operandi in their study of memory in and between the cognitive, social and cultural domains, as well as the contested boundaries of such divisions.

It is against this background (and following Erll, 2008; Brown and Hoskins, 2010) that we develop a disciplinary-bridging vehicle to illuminate some of the trajectories in the contemporary relationship between media and memory. We draw upon a traditional model of remembering (originating in experimental psychology, but also evident in other disciplines such as sociology) as a sensitising tool to this end. This is the idea of schema. Schemata are a kind of framework and standard, which the unit of memory (mind, group, society) forms from past experiences and by which new experiences are expected, measured and also reflexively shaped. The term is associated with the neurologist Henry Head (1920) and later with the influential work on the psychology of memory by Frederic Bartlett (1932).

Most schemata are in fact media schemata, i.e. they are produced and disseminated within media culture (e.g. via oral speech, texts, and images). It is through such schemata that the basis for future experience and its representation and circulation is premediated (Erll 2009, Grusin 2004, 2010, Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010). Premediation is then a key dynamic in both how events come to be remembered and in also providing frameworks that shape incoming experiences and the interpretations of new events.

This paper traces the development, application and usefulness of schema, premediation and their associated concepts, across some of the key areas of memory studies. We then develop our model of premediation with reference to the mediations and commemorations of contemporary warfare, often seen as a key driver of the late modern memory boom. For instance, the pervasiveness of the mediation of contemporary warfare is intricately connected with the highly selected ghosts of earlier conflicts and catastrophes; discourses on the past are employed as key arbiters of emergent threats and as powerful ‘blueprints of legitimacy’ to promote and to contest existing and future conflicts. Furthermore, we consider how schemata are increasingly operationalised under the conditions of the ‘connective turn’ (Hoskins, forthcoming) whereby it is the dynamics of connectivity that increasingly define how an apparently much more abundant and accessible past is represented, experienced and made more or less usable in the present.

Andrew Hoskins is Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of Research in the Department of Culture, Film & Media, University of Nottingham. His books include: Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse (Palgrave Macmillan 2007/2009), War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War (Polity Press, 2010) (both with Ben O’Loughlin); Media and Radicalisation: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology (Routledge, in press, with Akil Awan and Ben O’Loughlin). His Mediatisation of Memory: Media and the End of Collective Memory is forthcoming with MIT Press. He is founding Editor-in-Chief of the Sage journal of Memory Studies and Co-Editor of the Palgrave Macmillan book series of the same name.

Astrid Erll is Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main (Germany). Her main fields of interest are comparative literature and cultural history, cultural memory, transcultural studies, media theory, and narratology. Publications include an introduction to memory studies (Kollektives Gedächtnis, Metzler 2005 / Memory in Culture, Palgrave Macmillan 2011) and a book on the medial representations of the “Indian Mutiny” (Preamediation - Remediation, WVT 2007). With A. Nuenning she is general editor of the series Media and Cultural Memory (de Gruyter, since 2004) and co-editor of Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook (de Gruyter 2008). With A. Rigney she edited Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory (de Gruyter, 2009).
Russian New Media

Vera Zvereva and Ellen Rutten (MAW Bergen team) both presented papers at the Third Future of Russian Conference, ‘F3: The Russian Internet in a Global Context’ in Passau. The conference was hosted by Dirk Uffelmann (Passau) in conjunction with Ingunn Lunde (Bergen).

Vera Zvereva’s talk, “Russian Talk” in Twitter”, explored the impact of digital communication services on Russian language norms and poetics. She examined the ways in which new communication tools and technologies not only provide new facilities and recombine such functions as blogging, commenting, posting multimedia files and involving into social networks. They also modify the possibilities of the users’ self-expression and self-representation. At the same time, these services imply different uses of language.

Her paper focused on micro-blogging. It dealt particularly with the question of adaptation of Russian to the capacities and requirements of Twitter. Twitter is less popular among Russian web users than LiveJournal. The latter has formed generations of LJ users with their heroes and legends, as well as slang, styles, literary experiments and communication practices. Twitter in Russia, on the other hand, sways between public interest and lack of popularity.

The paper aimed to study the adjustment of Russian -- of its norms, the poetics of ‘Russian talk’, worked through communication techniques from LiveJournal.com and fora -- to Twitter. Does the Russian communicative specifics retain in micro-blogging? Or does this global medium eliminate all special features? In order to answer this question, in this paper attention was given not only to Twitter, but also the ongoing attempts to create its Russian-speaking analogues.

In her presentation, ‘Hyping the Writer’s Typo: Russian Rage or Global Trend?’, Ellen Rutten advocated a transnational approach to Russian digital language culture. Her paper drew attention to a curious paradox characteristic of studies of online language. Several leading publications in the field explore anglophone material, taking the linguistic and cultural context of their material for granted. When speaking of ‘the Internet’, ‘the blog’ or of ‘social media’, more often than not experts limit themselves to English-speaking links, blogs or social-networking sites. They do without specifying that linguistic demarcation. Among Russianists, a diametrically opposite trend dominates: many a scholar of Russian online language discusses his/her sources as culturally specific material, while neglecting or only marginally pondering the global trends with which they align.

This paper represented an attempt to break with that habit. It scrutinised the topic that Ellen Rutten explores for the Future of Russian project: the language employed in Russian writers’ blogs. Her research delves into the grammatical and stylistic laconism which marks the language of Russia’s widest-read literary blogs. She purports that -- rather than a result of authorial sloppiness -- the linguistic laconism pervading these blogs is, in fact, meticulously constructed.

In Passau, she discussed this trend relying on the literary blog writings of the young Russian cult author polumrak. She questioned to what extent polumrak’s language requires a discussion in terms of Russian cultural paradigms. His linguistic idiosyncrasies can be analysed as a response to social and rhetoric developments that are unique to (post-)Soviet Russia; but they cannot be understood properly without taking into account other, more globally enacted cultural trends. Pertinent among these is the trend which she calls ‘deliberate imperfection’: a defiance of professionalism and perfectionism in creative spheres which rely on new technologies. At the moment, this trend can be discerned within a wide range of creative disciplines -- and on a global scale. Having been trained as a Slavist, she is used to contemplating the culturally specific features of her material; but is it productive to approach polumrak’s ‘deliberate imperfection’ from that angle? Or should she frame her project (as scholars of anglophone sources do) as a study of general cultural trends, which happens to depart from Russian case? As her paper demonstrated, the answers to these theoretical questions can have highly tangible practical implications.
In January I was conducting some preliminary fieldwork in the Crimea. One afternoon I was dashing through a market square in Yalta to catch a minibus back to Simferopol and I came across this big standing stone which stopped me in my tracks. It was a large and bulky stone standing on a pedestal. There was no plaque on it but had graffiti and the odd sign attached to it – this one reads ‘shop for rent’. I went up to a vendor in a nearby kiosk and asked her whether it was a monument and, if so, to what. She said, ‘It used to be a monument to workers but they took the plaque off it and now it’s just used for whatever’. I found that instance of ‘urban decay’ very intriguing; during the seminar I discussed it in light of theories of monuments and monument ‘iconoclasm’ and theorized this (former) monument as a liminal zone where time starts again and signage slips into oblivion. This case was highly specific and I dedicated most of the seminar to reviewing my research to date.

Within the Memory at War project, I am looking at the territory of the Crimea, an Autonomous Republic of Ukraine forming a peninsula which juts out into the Black Sea. The Crimea was conquered, controlled and settled many times in its history and the subsequent mix of ethnic identities makes it a distinct region within modern-day Ukraine and a fascinating site for modern-day East European Memory Studies. It is a case study in its own right but also one from which we might draw theoretical as opposed to empirical generalizations for Eastern Europe.

The Cambridge MAW team is working with the ‘memory event’ paradigm which is seen as more relevant for regions such as Russia and Eastern Europe where there are perhaps fewer ‘sites of memory’ as traditionally understood. In my own work I am finding it fruitful working with the memory event concept, first and foremost because it encourages me to examine artifacts of cultural memory which invoke the past without necessarily being linked to a place – press articles, blog postings, government speeches, TV debates, monuments, museum exhibits and so forth. However, my research thus far has underlined the importance of territory to memory. Another dimension of memory studies which is emphasized in the case of Crimea is the issue of transitional justice. A number of the memory conflicts are intrinsically linked to on-going legal battles, the claims for which are rooted in the past. In these instances there is a closer correlation between memory, identity and claims than a general sense of grievance regarding the past.

Regarding methodology, I have the ongoing task of literature review and have been in the field since October reviewing the Crimean, Ukrainian and Russian press. I went to Crimea for two weeks in the New Year for initial on-site fieldwork. I was based in Simferopol, took trips out to Sevastopol, Yalta, Alushta, and I visited the Tavrida university, a few museums and met with some NGO groups. I carried out a number of semi-structured interviews but principally began to build a network for subsequent visits. In this paper I discussed three prominent topics of interest to the study of memory in the Crimea: the Crimean Tatar question; Ukrainian language policy and practice; and Russian imperial/Soviet heritage.

Perhaps the foremost issue of memory in Crimea is focused around the Crimean Tatar community. The Crimean Tatars were deported en masse in 1944 and many began to return with their children in the early 1990s. During their time in exile, the idea of Crimea as the Crimean Tatar homeland was very strong and transmitted inter-generationally. Ethnographic studies carried out among Crimean Tatar communities reveal the importance of territory and sense of place to their group narrative (expressed in the persistence of homeland rhetoric),
which goes against one of the current trends in memory studies of emphasizing deterritorialised memory.

The continued salience of memory in the Crimean Tatar question is, in many ways, attributable to its prominence in the press and relevance to ongoing legal battles over land disputes. The most recent developments include the government’s land auction scheme (they offer Crimean Tatars new land or settlement sites in exchange for vacating current plots which are then auctioned off) and a number of locked battles and fresh decisions over the construction of new mosques, the petitions for which often rest on historical claims that a mosque or Muslim graveyard used to stand on that site.

The second area for discussion concerns language policy and practice. During the Yushchenko administration attempts were made to Ukrainianise language throughout the territory of independent Ukraine. The Constitution of Crimea says that Ukrainian is the only state language but recognises Russian as the language of the majority in Crimea and ensures its use ‘in all spheres of public life’. Russian is the language of commerce and higher education, and largely also of primary and secondary education. It is the language spoken on the street and of the majority of local press. So we might say that this is an area to which Ukrainianisation did not extend or an instance where it has failed. But it must be said that there is a lot of Ukrainian written about the place – street signs, administrative signs, advertising, public transport, food labels and medicines. I did not have to speak a word of Ukrainian in Crimea but had to read it a lot.

There is a considerable history to name changing on the peninsula in the 19th and 20th centuries. After the war a majority of Crimean Tatar names were removed from villages and areas and replaced with Greek or rather simple Slavic-origin names such as Чистенькое (clear/clean). Some literature has been written about how, in such cases, people lose their bearings entirely and, as a result, forget not just where they are but who they are. Other researchers have found that people keep on using the older names and that this is a form of resistance. For my part I just would not underestimate the power of changing names and signage, which I think does profoundly change the memoryscape of a territory and is thus of great interest to me. This trend does not seem to be slowing down or reversing in Crimea and I encountered a lot of disillusionment that Yanukovych has seemingly gone back on his promise of making Russian a second official language. This remains therefore a memory conflict – the memory of which languages were historically spoken in Crimea.

Thirdly, I turn my attention to the Russian community in Crimea, which we can take as the 58% who self-ascribe as ethnically Russian or the 77% who give Russian as their mother tongue. Unsurprisingly the memory focus of this group is largely orientated on the fate of Crimea under the auspices of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. An almost omnipresent theme is the role of Crimea in both the Crimean War and then again the echo of this in the Great Patriotic War a century later. A key memory site is the port town of Sevastopol, besieged and heroically defended during both wars, and which now stands itself as a monument to these events. It is also the uneasy home to both the Ukrainian and Russian navies and there has been fiery rhetoric surrounding the decision whether or not to extend the lease to the Russian navy in the port which culminated in a brawl in the Ukrainian parliament last year. Yes, this was a memory event, but it was linked to territory and contemporary territorial questions.

On a subtler but I think no less salient point there is a lot of memory regarding Crimea as a sanatorium and holiday resort destination. It was the one of the main destinations for state-sponsored holidays during the Soviet era and places like Yalta have monuments showing Lenin’s decree that Crimea was to be used for the health and well being of workers. The tourist industry to a certain extent plays on this heritage. But given that people come in their droves from the former Soviet Union, there is a sense in which they go there because they just always went there. I interviewed a Crimean Tatar girl about my age who has a degree in tourism management and jointly runs a resort in Feodosiya. She affirmed the phenomenon of ‘nostalgia tourism’ and was surprised that Russians keep favouring Crimea over other cheaper sun holiday destinations. Seemingly this nostalgia tourism is not very interesting to academics because it is seen as fairly apolitical, but I think there is something to be said for the attitude that ‘Crimea is still ours because we had our summers here’. A frequent theme in historical/memory debates is over why Khrushchev ‘gave away’ Crimea in 1954; this plays into these sorts of questions and also the ongoing negotiation of the status of Crimea, which many believe remains unresolved in the post-Soviet era.

Judy Brown
Memory at War project
Department of Slavonic Studies
Cambridge
jb248@cam.ac.uk
**Europe East and West: Film, History and Mourning**

**Seminar**

**February 2011**

### MEMORY AND THE CHECHEN WAR

*Zhivoi* met with unanimous approval from film critics upon its release in 2006, receiving two awards for best film and high commendations at two domestic film festivals. The general public, however, greeted the feature with a lukewarm reception and *Zhivoi* grossed a mere US$3.2 million at the box office (a small amount in comparison to the US$23.5 million earned by Sergei Bondarchuk’s *9aia rota*, a blockbuster-style depiction of military operations in the Afghan War that had been released the previous year).

The discrepancies between the response from critics and that issued by the mass audience could be explained by differing attitudes towards the sensitive nature of *Zhivoi*’s narrative material and how death, grief, and mourning should be treated on-screen when memories of recent war still occupy a prominent position in the post-Soviet popular consciousness. In this filmwork Veledinskii set out to challenge the official Russian discourse about the war in Chechnya and to expose its morally, spiritually, and psychologically damaging effects on present-day Russian society; the film’s producer Sergei Chliiants declared that *Zhivoi* is, above all, a film about conscience («Живой», это, прежде всего, фи́льм о совести).

In my presentation to the seminar ‘Europe East and West: Film, History and Mourning’ in February, I investigated the role played by memory and mourning in facilitating the journey of a single protagonist, Kir, a crippled war veteran with first-hand experience of life at the centre of the Chechen warzone, as he travels between the worlds of the natural and supernatural in an attempt to retrieve all that he has lost in moral, ethical, and spiritual terms and how this undertaking is achieved specifically in the context of cinema.

I explored the relationship between haunting and memory as visualised in the on-screen presence of two ghosts, Igor’ and Nikich, who embody and conflate key elements from two filmic traditions: the ghostly/fantastical and the mimetic/realistic. Secondly, I analysed the importance that Veledinskii and Chliiants attach to religion, or, more specifically, to Russian Orthodoxy, before I investigated their treatment of death both inside and outside the context of war. In this third and final section I assigned particular attention to how the notion of justice shifts when its execution occurs alongside poorly-defined patriotic sensibilities.

When filming *Zhivoi* Veledinskii and Chliiants set themselves the task of creating a production that they alternately described as a ‘film dream’ (фі́льм-сон), a ‘mystical tragicomedy’ (мистиче́ская трагикомедія), an ‘optimistic tragedy’ (оптимистиче́ская трагедія), and a ‘travel film’ (фі́льм-путешествіе). As Maksim Lagashkin, the actor performing as ghost Nikich, remarks, *Zhivoi* is a film that highlights ‘the action of human souls’ (екшн чело́веческих душ).
The filmmakers’ willingness to raise questions and then leave them unanswered, as demonstrated by ghost Igor’s repeated response, ‘Ask me something else’ (Sprosi chto-nibud’ polegeche), allows them to pursue alternative notions of patriotism and responsible foundations for national unity in both physical and spiritual terms, to reveal a degree of uncertainty when embarking on a cinematic commentary of Russia’s moral state and the country’s dealings with Chechnya as an enduring national trauma, and to stimulate independent thinking on the part of the audience. Despite the tragic nature of the events depicted on-screen and the film’s seemingly cyclical narrative structure, beginning and ending with scenes set in snowy forests and a hospital that are presented alongside two near-identical sequences showing road-traffic accidents, I proposed that Zhivoi ultimately betrays an element of hope for those affected by the atrocities induced by the Chechen war.

In the movie’s concluding sequence, the viewer witnesses a nurse repainting a toilet door, the very same nurse who helped to care for Kir and other injured war veterans upon their return to civilian life; as she starts to cry and proves unable to finish her task, it is revealed that a halo has been added to a graffiti-drawing of a soldier that was previously shown in the film’s opening scenes. The audience then sees Kir, smiling and walking without a limp in the company of his fallen comrades under a bright sky in the afterlife, his physical and psychological sufferings receding; it appears that the process of mourning has finally begun. While Kir’s deep-rooted sense of personal responsibility before his military brotherhood stands out against the backdrop of emotional pragmatism and ethical complacency that is shown to saturate present-day Russia with few notable exceptions, his ability to forgive himself for his actions both inside and outside the context of war demonstrates that society’s progression beyond its moral decline will eventually be possible when its sins are repented, its traumas are recognized, and its losses are acknowledged, grieved, and mourned.

Rosie Baker
Department of Slavonic Studies
Cambridge
reb66@cam.ac.uk

Rosie Baker is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Slavonic Studies, Cambridge. Her research examines the relationship between word and image in Soviet cinema from 1926 to 1932, with a particular concentration on the role of intertitles in silent film productions.
RUSSIA
Memory Dates on the Calendar

This February marked the inaugural celebration of a new official commemorative date in Russia: the ‘Day of Russians who Fulfilled their Service Duty beyond the Borders of the Fatherland’ (15 February). This is the date when the last Soviet troops left Afghanistan, and was previously celebrated unofficially by veterans of the war in Afghanistan and other ‘internationalist-warriors’ (the Soviet euphemism for soldiers serving abroad). This move towards institutionalising the memory of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and honouring the troops killed in that war might also be read as an implicit reminder that Russia’s sacred sites of memory are located not only on Russian territory, but also elsewhere in the post-Soviet and post-communist space.

This new date was introduced in November 2010, making it the eleventh ‘commemorative date’ (памятная дата) on the Russian official calendar. The category of the commemorative date is governed by the 2005 Federal Law ‘On Russia’s Days of Military Glory and Commemorative Dates’. The category covers (non-military) dates ‘linked to important historical events in the life of the state and society’ deemed worthy of ‘immortalisation in the popular memory’ (2005 Federal Law preamble).

Commemorative dates are working days (unlike full official public holidays, праздничные дни), but they can be used lawfully for mass public events including demonstrations, and federal funds are allocated to related commemorative activities. It seems plausible that this intermediate category was designed partly to deal with especially problematic and divisive Soviet holidays, such as 7 November, previously a public holiday marking the Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and now, after a series of abortive attempts to re-define it, also a ‘commemorative date’ (as of 2005).

The next official commemorative date on the horizon is Cosmonautics Day (12 April). Celebration of this date promises to be especially lavish in this jubilee year marking the 50th anniversary of Gagarin’s flight, the single most unequivocally positive symbolic event in the Soviet historical repertoire after Victory.

At the end of the month, Mikhail Fedotov, head of the presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, outlined plans to review the status of various commemorative dates on the Russian official calendar in the interests of ‘modernisation’. Two of the proposed changes, if implemented, would represent significant shifts in the official historical narrative.

First, Fedotov proposes re-conceptualising the entire Soviet period as a prolonged state of civil war. His council suggests renaming the Day of Popular Unity (4 November) as the Day of National Reconciliation and Memory of the Victims of the Civil War, reflecting the council’s view that the totalitarian regime waged war against the people of Russia from 1917 to 1991.

Second, Fedotov’s comments indicate a shift in the official line on the legacy of the Soviet security organs. Fedotov suggests that Chekist’s Day (currently celebrated on 20 December, marking the creation of Dzerzhinsky’s VChK in 1917) be moved to another date, with a view to reflecting the fact that Russia’s intelligence services were created long before 1917. He noted that ‘Staff of the organs must understand that they are the defenders of Russian statehood, and by no means continuators of the cause of Dzerzhinsky-Yezhov-Beria-Andropov’ (Итоги, 28 February 2011). The inclusion in this list of Andropov, who previously featured in official discourse as a respectable chekist reformer and predecessor of Putin, is especially striking.

Julie Fedor (Cambridge)
POLAND

Katyn Museum and Build-up to Smolensk Anniversary

Polish media have reported that work on a new museum dedicated to the Katyn massacre should begin this year. Curator of the collections Sławomir Frątczak told the website naszemiasto.pl that the idea for a museum arose after the admission by the Russians of Soviet involvement in the massacre in the early 1990s. The archeological excavations that this enabled uncovered thousands of objects belonging to the victims of the massacre. These were removed to Poland and placed in the Polish Army Museum, where they formed a separate exhibition that was intended to be ‘the beginning of the dignified cultivation of memory and the revealing of the truth about the crime’, according to Frątczak. The number of objects grew to around 30,000, yet in 2009 the exhibit had to be closed due to the poor condition of the collection. According to Frątczak it was this crisis that led to the plans for the regeneration of the collection and establishment of a major new modern museum in a specially designed location. The curators have also completed a major programme of digitisation of the collection.

While the poor state of the collection no doubt provided part of the impetus for the establishment of the new museum, the transfer from poorly maintained side-exhibit to major museum must also owe a great deal to the tragic air crash of 2010 that threw the Katyn massacre into the limelight once again, and also played a part in the decision of the Russian Duma last year to officially recognize Soviet culpability for the massacre. In addition, the success of Andrzej Wajda’s film, itself enhanced by the Smolensk tragedy, has also undoubtedly played its part in raising the collection’s profile. The latter factor is perhaps fitting, as, according to Frątczak, the museum curators worked closely with Wajda’s team on the production of the film.

The development of the museum is one sign that the Katyn memory thread continues to develop. Another significant development in this regard is the release of new documents from the Russian investigation into the massacre to the Polish Institute of National Memory. The Polish press have already begun to speculate that the documents, relating to an investigation that took fourteen years from 1990 to 2004, when it was suspended by the Russians, may include the so-called ‘Belarusian list’, which should establish the as yet unknown names of 3,870 victims of part of the massacre that took place in Belarus. As the Institute of National Memory works through the documents – 137 volumes of the total 183 that make up the investigation – further stories are bound to emerge. At the same time, the missing volumes, which include the documents relating to the decision to suspend the investigation, are bound to provoke further speculation and frustration among Poles.

Another factor that is likely to contribute to the development of the Katyn discourse is the anniversary of the Smolensk air crash on 10 April. Rzeczpospolita reports that six films are being released in the run up to the anniversary, 5 of which are documentaries, and the other one, ‘Prosto z nieba’ (Straight from the sky/heaven) by Piotr Matwiejczyk, is a fiction film. There have already been three documentary films made about the catastrophe. The films show a range of perspectives on the tragedy, range from the apolitical to the overtly patriotic, from conspiracy theories to deconstruction of the now mythological status of the catastrophe.

The films first of all represent the development of a powerful, though variegated memory narrative surrounding the Smolensk tragedy itself, which will find its first significant iteration on the first anniversary. What is even more significant is the impact this event will have on the wider development of the memory of the Katyn massacre itself: the two tragedies have become so intertwined in Polish discourse, and for many they are directly linked in a cause-and-effect or even mystical way. The future shape of this intertwining of memory events over the coming months will have a significant impact both within Poland and between Poland and Russia.

Uilleam Blacker (Cambridge)
UKRAINE
Observing Poland’s Holocaust Memory: Memory Rift between Culture and Politics

In our previous newsletter we reported on the Polish reaction to the forthcoming publication of Jan Tomasz Gross’ new book Golden Harvest, which investigates the role of Poles in the Holocaust, and alleges that many Poles used the mass murder of Jews for personal material gain. The topic was observed in Ukraine and Russia. On the Russian website Uroki istorii (Lessons in History), Ukrainian historian Andrei Portnov (who will be visiting Cambridge in March on a Memory at War Short-term Fellowship) closes his analysis of Gross’ controversial and challenging writings on Polish history by looking at the situation among Poland’s Eastern neighbours. Portnov’s analysis shows that memory of Jewish-Polish history is still a painful and unresolved area in Poland, yet at least, thanks in a large part to Gross, a large scale public discussion is taking place: ‘in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus or Moldova the topic of the Holocaust and participation in it by local population remains to a significant degree taboo, and is disproportionally weakly represented in the press or in state politics’.

Portnov’s comments show the potential for a memory event such as the publication of Gross’ book to cross borders and plant the seeds of a new memory discourse. Of course, voices such as Portnov’s are relatively few in Ukraine or Russia, and hopes for any significant engagement with the Holocaust in the way he describes are slim, but his comments nevertheless show that the potential is there.

Ukraine’s intellectual community has recently mounted a challenge to official memory discourse, however, albeit in a more safely pro-Ukrainian field. A novel by leading contemporary writer Vasyl Shkliar, Zalyshenets: Chornyi voron (Black Raven), which deals with the anti-Bolshevik resistance in central Ukraine in the 1920s, has become the centre of a rift between the authorities and leading cultural figures. The novel had been in line to receive the prestigious state Shevchenko Prize for literature; however, this decision provoked protest from some politicians close to President Yanukovych. According to the literary website Bukvoid, Shkliar was accused of being anti-Russian and xenophobic. Shkliar subsequently turned down the prize, and the ultimate list of winners (there are several categories) did not include his name. Shkliar said he would not accept the award while the education Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk remains in power. Tabachnyk is known for his critical views of Ukrainian nationalism and his pro-Russian stance.

Another leading writer, Iurii Andrukhovych, has launched a campaign to gather funds for an alternative literary prize. Andrukhovych, who himself has been a sharp critic of Tabachnyk and the current regime’s cultural, educational and memory policies, has proposed raising 280,000 hryvnias, and has pledged the first 1,000 himself. He said: ‘This situation gives civil society a phenomenal chance to strike a blow against the authorities via non-violent, collective action’.

In response to accusations of anti-Russian sentiment, Shkliar told Ukraina Moloda that ‘Vasyl Herasymiuk [poet and former Shevchenko prize winner] said it best: “Anyone who thinks the novel is anti-Russian should go up to Sofia Square where they are filming White Guard and shouting ‘beat the Ukrainians!’”’ [Bei khokhlov!, khokhol is a derogatory term for Ukrainian]. Herasymiuk was referring to the Russian film of Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel White Guard that is currently being filmed in Kyiv, and which has caused some resentment among Ukrainians due to its anti-Ukrainian tone. Meanwhile Shkliar has
announced his intention to donate any funds resulting from Andrukhovych's campaign to filming his novel. Shkliar mentioned the potential involvement of Polish director Jerzy Hoffman, most famous for his adaptation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Ogniem i mieczem* (By Fire and Sword), which had a mixed reception in Ukraine, partly due to a perceived anti-Ukrainian bias.

The Shkliar affair sheds interesting light on the dynamics of memory discourse in Ukraine, demonstrating the importance of the interaction between producers of culture and politicians in the production of that discourse. Significantly in this instance, Shkliar's invocation of the memory of anti-Bolshevik resistance could lead to outright conflict between the cultural and political establishments in Ukraine, especially if the alternative literary prize is created. Given the largely pro-Ukrainian nature of the cultural establishment and the largely ambivalent or hostile attitude to Ukrainian national sentiment among the political elites, such a conflict is hardly surprising, and has already been simmering for some time. The mention of *White Guard* and the director of *By Fire and Sword* also suggests the competitive and comparative approach to such memories from all sides, and the use of canonical literary texts and their cinematic adaptations in this process. Meanwhile, the involvement of Russians on one side and Poles on the other side of the debate adds an interesting transnational dimension to the situation.

*Uilleam Blacker (Cambridge)*