

Memory & Trauma Working Group Working Group Witnessing Virtual Work-in-Progress Sessions, Fall 2023

Join us at

Scholars share current work-in-progress in the fields of Memory Studies and trauma Studies (Memory Studies Association), with discussion and helpful insights to follow. All are welcome.

November 13. 2023 at 10:00 am EST (7:00 am in Kamloops!)

Presenters: Dr. Anastasia Felcher and Dr. Tetiana Grebeniuk

Anastasia Felcher (Memory & Trauma WG): Language of Trauma in Soviet Jewish Samizdat

Abstract:

The presentation addresses the cultural afterlife of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union as it appeared in the pages of uncensored publications, books, magazines and petitions - the so-called Jewish samizdat. The aim is to show the political and memorial functions of coming to terms with the traumatic past on the pages of banned texts on Jewish subjects. Non-conformist political and cultural-literary works of Jewish samizdat were unsystematically produced throughout the country in the late 1960s to late 1980s. These texts, distributed through unofficial channels, supported the Jewish struggle to emigrate from the Soviet Union, but also transmitted the trauma of the Holocaust, though mobilized for political purposes. This research is an attempt to understand the interplay between uncensored media, Jewish nationalism and Holocaust remembrance under the restrictive conditions of Soviet state policy, memory politics and the cult of victory during World War II.

Bio:

Dr. Anastasia Felcher is a historian, cultural heritage specialist, and an archivist, with expertise and a particular interest in the cultural history of borderlands in East-Central Europe and minority histories. Her doctoral dissertation (IMT Alti Studi Lucca, 2016) focused on politics of Jewish heritage and memory of the Holocaust in the newly independent states after 1989/91. Since 2020, she has served as the archivist for the Slavic collection at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at the Central European University in Budapest, where she curated Slavic, Jewish and Samizdat archival collections. During her research fellowship at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (2022-23), she researched Soviet Jewish samizdat as memory media and worked on her book "Jewish Heritage In Transition". Since 2022, she also teaches at the Cultural Heritage Program (CHSP) at CEU in Vienna.

Tetiana Grebeniuk (WG Witnessing): "Soviet Propaganda Techniques in the Focus of the Contemporary Ukrainian Cinema".

Abstract:

One of the defining features of contemporary Ukrainian cinema is an attempt to find the roots of present-day societal issues in the historical past. The most popular and debated films of the last years, introduce the ideas of influence of historical memory on contemporary events and need for working through the historical traumas and mistakes to get rid of their load. These ideas are represented, for instance, in films "The Guide" (2013) by Oles Sanin, "Haytarma" (2013) by Akhtem Seitablayev, "Censored" (2019) by Roman Brovko etc. In the context of current Russia's war against Ukraine the problem of falsehood of Soviet reality, represented in the films under discussion, deserves special attention, since typical Soviet tolerance for falsehood and willingness to accept a distorted picture of reality can be viewed as the necessary prerequisites for shaping of the contemporary Russians' worldview, and, consequently, as a philosophical and ideological premises of the contemporary war. In the analyzed works, narrators' memories contain propagandist narratives and symbols as the background of significant events or situations. Often, incompatibility of a propagandist picture with universal human values is shown as the characters' traumagenic experience. The aim of this talk is to analyze representation in contemporary Ukrainian cinema of communist propaganda techniques that was applied to Ukrainians in the "Era of Stagnation" as a period immediately preceding the gaining of national independence by Ukraine.

Bio:

Tetiana Grebeniuk is a Doctor of Philology, Professor of the Department of Cultural Studies and Ukrainian Studies of Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, Ukraine; Visiting Professor at Warsaw University. During June-August 2023 she was a research fellow at the University of Potsdam (the project "European Times – A Transregional Approach to the Societies of Central and Eastern Europe (EUTIM)"). In June and July 2023 she delivered the seminar course "Identity Contestations in Soviet Ukraine: A Look Through the Prism of Contemporary Cinema and Fiction" to the graduate students at Potsdam University. Delivers guest lectures in Ukrainian literature and culture at Ukrainian and European universities. Doctor of Philological Sciences (specialties literary theory and Ukrainian literature). Tetiana Grebeniuk is a member of editorial boards and manuscript reviewer of 2 scholarly journals. The list of her publications encompasses 130 works, including the monograph "Event in the System of Contemporary Ukrainian Fiction: Morphology, Semiotics, Reception", chapters in collective monographs, scholarly articles, reviews etc. Her research area includes contemporary Ukrainian literature and art culture; identity, memory and trauma studies, and postcolonial studies.

Our next work-in-progress session will take place **December 13, 9 am EST.**