

## Editor's Introduction

ERIN ALPERT, OLGA KLIMOVA AND ELISE THORSEN  
EDITORS

The notion of memory plays an important role in the production, dissemination, transformation, and annihilation of cultural traditions and cultural forms. Memory can shape the way cultures and individuals perceive their past and which part of it can be adopted for the future. It can also function as a medium of censorship, by focusing on and “remembering” some cultural events and artifacts, and erasing, changing, or distorting others. Cultural memory is not only preserved in objects and crystallized historical events, but also changes these entities through the perception of these objects by different agents of culture. The category of “*lieu de mémoire*” (the site of memory), introduced by French historian Pierre Nora, is productive for explaining the origin of cultural memory. Sites of memory include objects, places, concepts, and practices that are chosen to be remembered and are constituted as the “real,” authentic ones, belonging to the past. Memory is integrated into literary texts, personal memoirs and diaries, paintings, traditions, rituals, monuments, architectural structures, and other products of human culture in order to recall the past.

Among the most important question in memory studies is the correlation between the individual and collective ways of remembering political, economic, social, and cultural events. Many authors of the *Studies in Slavic Cultures VIII* try to define what connects individual and group memories, and what establishes their connection to the ruling ideology. They also trace the shifts in memory construction in accordance with changes in political and ideological climate in the country. In many cultural texts, the memories of both private and communal past intermingle; however individual memory may have more chances to break through ideological constraints.

In different cultures and during different historical periods memory has established different connections between the past, present and future. One of the objectives of *SISC VIII* is to study the mechanisms and motivations for memory creation in Slavic cultures. Some authors try to answer questions about ways of remembering historical-cultural events and the individual experiences of dealing

with traumatic or unexpected events by creating different cultural artifacts and texts.

One of the questions that interests some of the authors of this issue is what constitutes Soviet memory and Soviet past, and how they are reconstructed in works of the cultural elite or common people. The ultimate goal of many post-socialist countries is reestablishing the past after the period of cultural and political turmoil. Thus, in her article, “Future Ruins: Time, Memory, and History in the Work of Komar and Melamid,” Allison Leigh-Perlman argues that shared “Soviet” memories of two artists, Komar and Melamid, became an organizing and uniting source for joint cultural production. The task of both artists, described by Leigh-Perlman, consists of “liberating” repressed cultural memory and creating their present by re-working the Soviet artifacts.

Rossen Djagalov’s article—“*Pamiat’* vs. *Memorial*: Rasputin, Aitmatov and the Search for Soviet Memory”—also focuses on reconstructing the “Soviet” memory by two other individual cultural producers, the “village prose” writers Valentin Rasputin and Chingiz Aitmatov.

David Weber’s article, “Changing Sacredness and Historical Memory of Moscow’s Red Square,” is dedicated to the exploration of the importance and “sacredness” of Soviet “*loci memoriae*.” In his article, Weber closely studies the shifts in meaning of Lenin’s Mausoleum and Red Square in Russian culture.

The authors of the two other articles included in this collection turn their attention to the study of memory in non-Soviet cultures. Audra Yoder’s article, “Myth and Memory in Russian Tea Culture,” follows the history of tea culture in Russia from the seventeenth century through twentieth century. As sites of memory, Yoder chooses works by nineteenth-century Russian writers and personal memoirs of the twentieth century, both by outsiders and insiders of Russian culture.

In her article, “Historical Memory in Post-Communist Poland: Warsaw’s Monuments after 1989,” Katrin Van Cant analyzes sites of memory in their relation to the communist past, like Leigh-Perlman, Djagalov, and Weber. However, she brings a new focus into the discussion of memory construction by addressing the meaning of memorials built in Poland after 1989.

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ALTERNATIVE CULTURE is the theme of *SISC*'s ninth issue. The editors welcome submissions of graduate-student work investigating drama, film, linguistics, music, or any other aspect of the topic in relation to Slavic culture.