



## Issue 12: Digital Mnemonics

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## Issue 12: Digital Mnemonics – Towards a New Research Agenda in Slavonic Studies

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EDITORIAL

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*The issue was guest-edited by Alexander Etkind (European University Institute, Florence) and Dirk Uffelmann (University of Passau) in collaboration with the Digital Icons editorial team who prepared the book review section of the issue.*

The special issue aims to explore how cultural memory – a subject of much productive research in recent decades – is going online. Transposing Jay Winter's famous concept, the World Wide Web features a 'memory boom online'. These essays focus on online memory in several Slavonic languages – Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian – which, taken together, constitute a large part of the rapidly developing internet of Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia. Though politically, various parts of this vast area are moving increasingly farther away from each other culturally, mnemonically and especially electronically, they are all interconnected. In the virtual space of the internet, different Slavonic areas and cultures, from Siberia to the Balkans, interact more profoundly than they do in the 'real world' of economics and politics. Different Slavonic countries, as well as various communities within these countries, are engaged in 'memory wars', which debate, from different or even antagonistic perspectives, such historical subjects as memories of the two world wars, the socialist past, the Soviet terror and the post-socialist ordeals.

A growing body of research literature has been addressing post-socialist memory wars. Our double purpose is to investigate the current state of Slavonic online memories and to establish a new methodology of internet research that could be applied to this part of the virtual world and, possibly, to its other parts as well. We call this emerging methodology 'digital mnemonics'. In pursuit of these two goals, we organised the Spring School *Digital Mnemonics in Slavonic Studies* (March 2013), which was generously supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. Envisaging new standards for the study of digital memory and the communication genres of the World Wide Web, we combine the traditional, interpretative

methods of the humanities, such as narrative and genre analysis, with the quantitative approaches that are based on computer linguistics and internet statistics, including a big data approach. Relying on the diverse knowledge of its participants, the Spring School gained insights into the digital representations and political conflicts of cultural memories in East Central Europe and Russia.

The internet has produced new, historically unprecedented methods of representing human subjectivity. Memory is part of this great game. Visual, verbal, musical, positional and other aspects of these methods emulate and document the complexity of the modern life-world. The new technical methods of representing data – transmodal platforms such as *Facebook* or *YouTube*, visual networks such as *Instagram*, blog systems such as *Twitter* and *LiveJournal* and myriad specialised technologies compete in representing modern subjectivity in its rich and minute details. These digital methods change the pace and complexity of communication; they also change the depth and breadth of memory.

We distinguish between three types of ‘memory formations’: *sites of memory*, *memory events* and *memory models*. Since Pierre Nora’s large-scale study of French memory, it has become common practice to analyse public memory via *sites of memory* – monuments, memorials and museums. Yet digital technologies have largely de-territorialised cultural memory. Modern memory is generally structured by time rather than space. Its temporal units are *memory events*, which we define as acts of revisiting the past that create ruptures with its established cultural meanings. Memory events unfold in many cultural genres: from funerals to historical debates, from museum openings to court proceedings, from the erection or destruction of a monument to the launch of a website. These events are simultaneously acts and products of memory. They have their authors and agents – initiators and enthusiasts of memory – who lead the production of these collective events in ways that are not much different from those that film directors use to make films.

Memory also has its promoters, as surely as it has its censors and foes. As Dirk Uffelmann illustrates in his essay, cultural memory shapes interdependent constellations with various cultural genres, which retain memories of their own and therefore are concurrently able to express and produce important artistic, cultural and political memories. Unfolding in various genres and often combining them, memory events are secondary to the historical events that they interpret, usually taking place years or even decades later. Sometimes, a memory event attains the significance of a historical event, therefore blurring the distinction between the two. But there are important differences: historical events tend to be singular, while memory events rarely are. Memory events tend to repeat themselves in new, creative, but recognizable forms, which circulate in cultural space and reverberate in time.

Memory is always about complex, dynamic interrelations between the past and the present. If memory events happen in the present and change public understanding of the historical past, their counterpart is *memory models*, which borrow ideas, stories and images from the past and apply them to the political present. In post-socialist Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia, the political present has often been fluid, uncertain and possibly dangerous. It is easier and clearer, sometimes even more comfortable, to interpret new historical events by analogy with a chosen past, or even with its obsessive repetition. There are many examples of how this works. The Russians who were arrested for their participation in the protest rallies

of 2012 compared their persecution to Stalinist terror, and the hash-tag, ‘remember 1937’ [#помни37], during these arrests became one of the most popular hash-tags on *Twitter* worldwide.

Memory events and memory models have been used by all participants in revolutionary transformations, friends and foes alike. During the Ukrainian revolution of 2013-2014, its Russian enemies consistently called the Ukrainian activists ‘the Banderists’, as if they were instructed by the Ukrainian nationalist activist Stepan Bandera, who had died many decades earlier. The use and abuse of this memory model has been the subject of a sophisticated quantitative study by Rolf Fredheim, Gernot Howanitz and Mykola Makhortykh. This research appears highly relevant now that the Ukrainian revolution has been largely accomplished (even though the study was designed and completed well before the Russian counter-revolutionaries consistently misinterpreted the revolutionary events on Maidan Square in Kyiv in terms of their chosen ‘Banderist’ memory model).

The current deterioration of political relations between the Western world and Russia has been characterised as ‘The New Cold War’, the subject of Elizaveta Gaufman and Katarzyna Walasek’s essay in this cluster. After the 2010 crash of the Polish presidential airplane on its way to mourn the victims of the Katyn massacre, some mourners talked about ‘Katyn 2’. In another effort to conceptualise and operationalise this new area of studies, Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović and Aleksandar Bošković present here a study of memory models that the arrest of Ratko Mladić actualised online in various cultural genres of the internet, from analytical blogs to video-clips and satirical cartoons. Finally, in the essay by Hanna Stähle and Mariëlle Wijermars on the blog by the Russian political activist Aleksei Naval’nyi, we see an all-important political dilemma of memory unfolding into a complex, methodologically ground-breaking study: are memory models true and relevant for political activism in an oppressive society, or does the excessive use of the past distract the political protest from its current, necessarily present-ist objectives?

As these and many other examples demonstrate, truthfulness, defined here as historical validity, is just one of the criteria that operate within the sphere of memory. A memory formation may be powerful though untrue; it may be true and irrelevant; or true and relevant, but still ignored because of its repetitiveness. Both memory events and memory models operate within relevant communities and change how these communities remember, imagine and talk about the past. They are performative acts, and can be understood in the light of Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action and Eric Hobsbawm’s concept of invented tradition: their performative quality is directed towards designing a community’s past.

The impact of a memory formation on a community depends on its *truth claims* – on whether the community perceives it as generating a true account of the past; on its *originality claims* – on whether the community perceives it as new and different from the accepted version of the past; and on its *relevance claims* – on whether the community perceives the changing vision of the past as central to its identity. Complex relations that need more research and theorizing connect these three components – truth, originality and relevance – though their synergies are usually evident. While relevance derives from the perceived truth and originality, we know how many documents in historical archives are authentic but irrelevant. In many uncertain cases, relevance and originality dictate questions about truth. Though

cultural memory can sometimes be activated by texts that do not claim truth, such as fictional novels or films, public judgment on historical truth largely defines the reception of these texts, particularly when they are perceived as game-changing and identity-relevant.

Researching this new, broad and challenging subject of scholarship, the participants of the Spring School *Digital Mnemonics in Slavonic Studies* formed cross-cultural, multidisciplinary groups which defined their thematic focuses. They explored these themes across such digital genres as social networks (e.g. *Facebook*), blogs (e.g. *LiveJournal*), video hosting services (e.g. *YouTube*), news services (online-newspapers, TV-channels, etc.), as well as bottom-up (NGO) and top-down (governmental) sites. Each team tested quantitative methods in application to the chosen memory site, memory event, or memory model. Above all, we encouraged the participants to initiate cooperation beyond national or disciplinary borders at a very early stage of their research. Digital representations of the turning points of 20th century history such as the Holodomor in Ukraine, Katyn in Poland, or the Cold War in Russia, served as the primary subjects of these studies. This pedagogical approach allowed the participants to formulate, prove or disprove their own innovative hypotheses, which address developments, asymmetries and disruptions in cultural representations of the past on the World Wide Web. In addition, the participants' work allowed them to explore new vistas of qualitative and quantitative analysis of digital memory. The Spring School acquainted young academics with advanced knowledge important for the further development of research on digital memory cultures – a promising and rapidly developing field of academic interest.

The special cluster *Digital Mnemonics* would not have been possible without the preceding Spring School. We are grateful to all those who contributed to this school – our co-organiser Polly Jones (Oxford); the visiting lecturers Julie Fedor (Melbourne), Galina Niki-porets-Takigawa (Cambridge) and Ellen Rutten (Amsterdam); Andrew Hoskins (Glasgow), Adi Kunstman (Manchester) and Vera Zvereva (Edinburgh) who joined in via Skype; as well as the 14 participants and the organisational team, comprised of Katharina Kühn, Madlene Hagemann and Elisabeth Stadler (all Passau). We would also like to thank Elizabeth Moore (Cambridge) for her linguistic editing of the articles and Tatiana Klepikova (Passau) for checking all the quotations and bibliographies. The final thanks go to the Editors of *Digital Icons* who supported the preparation of this special issue including the production of the book review section.

*Alexander Etkind, Dirk Uffelmann*  
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# The Issue of Genre in Digital Memory: What Literary Studies Can Offer to Internet and Memory Culture Research

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**Abstract:** This paper addresses the differing impacts of interactive online genres on the construction of historical memories. It explores various communication genres of the internet (social media, blogs such as *LiveJournal*, comments on *YouTube* or news portals), especially the form of communication they require, the way this form of communication interferes with memory culture and how it influences its various representations. The main focus is on the trifecta of technology, interactive genre and memory.

I argue that generic aspects, as outlined by Mikhail Bakhtin and further developed in a pragmatist key by Carolyn Miller and others, can contribute considerable insight to Digital Memory Studies. Only an integrated approach to genre, which encompasses technical conditions as well as rhetorical rules and cultural particularities, can help us understand how memory emerges and changes online.

**Keywords:** online genres; digitally born genres; speech genres; Bakhtin; interactivity; memory; genre memory; blogs; temporality; cultural relativity

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In 2004, John M. Swales, one of the canonical authors of genre studies, acknowledged: “[...] technological effects on genre – and genreification – are simultaneously overt and insidious.” (Swales 2004: 6). Inverting the logical order of Swales’ argument, I argue in this paper that the notion of genre is critical to the study of digital memory.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper takes inspiration from two research seminars. The first was conducted jointly by the Universities of Munich (Philipp Bürger, Martin Schulze Wessel) and Passau (myself) in 2011/12. The participants, PhD students and postgraduates from the Honours Master’s Programme in East European Studies (Elitestudiengang ‘Osteuropastudien’), explored competing memories of communism in selected Eastern European and Eurasian internet communities (Bürger et al. 2013). The second was the Spring School *Digital Mnemonics in Slavonic Studies* (Etkind et al. 2013; see also the editorial and the other contributions to this special issue of *Digital Icons*). The present article is intended as a specific kind of methodological introduction to the following case studies.

The argumentation begins with a double introduction: in the first part my point of departure will be Bakhtin's proto-theory of genre memory, while in the second part, I will move from offline genre theory to online genres.

The rationale for the double introduction is my observation that the triangle of genre, internet and memory has not yet been comprehensively addressed. The existing research falls into two separate research discourses, one devoted to digital genres, the other to digital memory. There has been very little research, however, on online *genres* of memory, at least when it comes to memory elements in the macro-genre of interactive hypertext,<sup>2</sup> including research in East European Studies.<sup>3</sup>

Investigating the triangle of genre, internet and memory demands an interdisciplinary approach from three fields – 1) Literary Studies (genre theory), 2) Media Studies (Internet Studies) and 3) history (memory culture). I will arrive at a non-comprehensive list of ten dimensions that ought to be taken into account when exploring the relevance of online genres in shaping memory content, in particular with regard to East European online memory cultures.

### Genres of/as memory

I take Mikhail Bakhtin's proto-theories of genre memory and speech genres as the point of departure for my exploration of online genres of memory because Bakhtin – in an offline context – tied together genre and memory more radically than any other twentieth-century literary theorist. The *locus classicus* for the discussion of genre *as* (an institution of) *memory* is the chapter 'Characteristics of Genre and Composition in Dostoevsky's Works',<sup>4</sup> added to the second edition of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky in 1963 (Bakhtin 2002: 115-202, 1984: 101-180). Bakhtin ascribes to genre its own 'memory': 'A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development.'<sup>5</sup> (Bakhtin 2002: 120, 1984: 106, emphasis in the original).

Since the criterion for the selection of online genres of memory is interactivity, Bakhtin's key concept of dialogism inevitably offers support for this research angle: 'Genres are the central mechanisms of dialogue.' (Olick 1999: 384). Relying on dialogicity, Bakhtin's works on genre are also seminal for the inclusion of low-brow genres of everyday communication in this research agenda.

<sup>2</sup> The volume of research devoted to memory-related types of sites is growing rapidly: Sumner 2004; Meyer and Leggewie 2004; Dornik 2004; Zierold 2006; Meyer 2009; Schmidt 2011; Bothe 2012.

<sup>3</sup> A microscopic focus, rather than a macro-generic approach, also applies to the outcomes of the seminal *Web Wars* project, with its focus on Eastern Europe (see the contributions to Rutten, Fedor and Zvereva 2013); to Trubina's exploration of 'Past Wars in the Russian Blogosphere' (2010), to Zvereva's reading of *Vkontakte* groups devoted to Soviet history (2011) and to Strukov and Howanitz's investigation of historical imaginations in online games (both from 2012).

<sup>4</sup> 'Zhanrovye i suzhetno-kompozitsionnye osobennosti proizvedenii Dostoevskogo'.

<sup>5</sup> 'Zhanr zhivet nastoiashchim, no vseгда pomnit svoe proshloe, svoe nachalo. Zhanr – predstavitel' tvorcheskoi pamiati v protsesse literaturnogo razvitiia.'

The pragmatic keyword *vyskazyvanie* [utterance] is the basis for Bakhtin's late essay 'Speech Genres' [Problema rechevykh zhanrov] from *The Aesthetics of Verbal Art* [Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva, 1979]. The category of utterance is not only central to the various 'generic subcategories of speech'<sup>6</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 162; 1986: 63), but also ties together the 'single-word everyday rejoinder and the multivolume novel'<sup>7</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 160, 1986: 61). Spontaneous oral and artistically arranged scriptural communications can therefore be addressed from the standpoint of having been formed by 'primary (simple) and secondary (complex) speech genres'<sup>8</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 161, 1986: 61). According to Bakhtin, the latter 'absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres'<sup>9</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 161, 1986: 62). In the context of the internet, the mechanism of the absorption and embedding of other genres is laid bare via hyperlinks.

Bakhtin's attempts at a theory of genre anticipated the pragmatic turn in genre studies of the 1980s and 1990s. Under the pseudonym Pavel Medvedev, in *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* [Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii, 1928], he voted for a 'sociology of genre'<sup>10</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 183, 1985: 135). Genres provide human beings with instruments for performative action in a social context: 'Every significant genre is a complex system of means and methods for the conscious control and finalization of reality.'<sup>11</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 181, 1985: 133). Bakhtin demands acknowledgement of the 'conditions of performance and perception'<sup>12</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 177, 1985: 131) not only in highbrow literature, but also in

[...] the whole range of everyday uses of language. [...] The primary 'small everyday genres' are the speaking styles determined by social situations. [...] Bakhtin thus breaks down a barrier between public and private (or between political and non-political) genres. (Thompson 1984: 36)

The observation of the generic nature of everyday communication, which is determined by 'social situations', will obviously be even more relevant for the "'de facto" genres' (Miller 1984: 155) of online communication, with their semi-oral, semi-scriptural nature.

Bakhtin scholars from the field of literary theory have argued that Bakhtin was more interested in 'transformation' and the 'renewal of genre' (Thompson 1984: 32, 35), whereas sociologists of memory such as Jeffrey K. Olick state that, according to Bakhtin, 'images of the past are path-dependent' (Olick 1999: 382). For Olick, acts of commemoration recall previous acts of commemoration and thus enter into a dialogical relationship with them. He writes that certain 'kinds' of utterances experience 'historical accretions' through '[...] 'genre contact' – the sharing of a common 'way of seeing' between texts' (Olick 1999: 383, cf. Ivanov 1974: 315). Olick's extension of Bakhtin's definition of genre memory reads as fol-

<sup>6</sup> 'zhanrov[y]e raznovidnost[i] rechi'.

<sup>7</sup> 'odnoslovnnye bytovye repliki i mnogotomnyi khudozhestvennyi roman'.

<sup>8</sup> 'pervichny[e] (prostye) i vtorichny[e] (slozhny[e]) rechevy[e] zhanr[y]'.

<sup>9</sup> '[...] vbiraiut v sebja i pererabatyvaiut razlichnye pervichnye (prostye) zhanry.'

<sup>10</sup> 'sotsiologi[ia] zhanra'.

<sup>11</sup> 'Kazhdyi zhanr, esli eto deistvitel'no khudozhestvennyi zhanr, est' slozhnaia sistema sredstv i sposobov ponimaiushchego ovladeniia i zaversheniia deistvitel'nosti.'

<sup>12</sup> 'opredelennye usloviia ispolneniia i vospriiatiiia'.

lows: ‘I extend Bakhtin’s ‘genre’ concept to identify historically accrued ‘types’ of utterances of a somewhat different order: patterns of speaking structured as a set of conventions against which or within which those utterances are produced and read.’ (Olick 1999: 384).

When discussing the mnemonic conservatism of genre on the one hand, and the transformation of genres on the other, scholars implicitly address the classical philosophical problem of man’s freedom or determination. Are genres made by man’s action, or do genres predetermine his/her actions? Bakhtin clearly sees the necessity of the subordination of man to his communicative means: ‘The artist must learn to see reality with the eyes of the genre.’<sup>13</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 182, 1985: 134). There is no way to escape from genre: ‘We speak only in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable *typical forms of construction of the whole*.’<sup>14</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 180, 1986: 78, emphasis in the original). The inevitable subordination to genre rules is due to the preponderance of cultural heritage for every newborn human being: ‘We are given these speech genres in almost the same way that we are given our native language.’<sup>15</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 181, 1986: 78). Bakhtin’s strongest claim concerns the internal rules of a chosen genre: ‘The chosen genre predetermines [*podskazyvaet*] for us their type and their compositional links.’<sup>16</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 184, 1986: 81). Genres do not, of course, actively repress human freedom. They only function as mandatory through an individual’s adjustment to social norms: ‘Therefore, genre is the aggregate of the means of collective orientation in reality, with the orientation towards finalization.’<sup>17</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 183, 1985: 135).

This last quote hints at the problematic category of totality that Bakhtin attaches to his genre concept in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*: ‘Genre is the typical totality of the artistic utterance, and a vital totality, a finished and resolved whole. The problem of finalization [*zavershenie*] is one of the most important problems of genre theory (Medvedev 1928: 175, 1985: 129).<sup>18</sup> This finalisation, however, is not all-encompassing, but rather relative to each particular genre (Medvedev 1928: 176, 1985: 130). Even if Bakhtin clarifies that ‘[f]inalization should not be confused with ending’<sup>19</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 176, 1985: 130), his claim of finalisability is at odds with the factual openness of many online genres (see below): chat threads are virtually infinite, and what others earlier regarded as final, the administrator of a thread can refine or even remove later.

Despite his outdated predilection for ‘finalisation’, Bakhtin acknowledges the possibility of genre change. It is ‘generally possible to re-accentuate genres’<sup>20</sup> (Bakhtin 1996: 182, 1986: 79) and to change the ‘entire repertoire’: ‘The wealth and diversity of speech genres

<sup>13</sup> ‘Khudozhnik dolzhen nauchit’sia videt’ deistvitel’nost’ glazami zhanra.’

<sup>14</sup> ‘My govorim tol’ko opredelennymi rechevymi zhanrami, to est’ vse nashi vyskazyvaniia obladaiut opredelennymi i otnostitel’no ustoichivymi tipicheskimi formami postroeniia tselogo.’

<sup>15</sup> ‘Eti rechevye zhanry dany nam pochti tak zhe, kak nam dan rodnoi iazyk, [...]’

<sup>16</sup> ‘Izbrannyi zhanr podskazyvaet nam ikh tipy i ikh kompozitsionnye sviazi.’

<sup>17</sup> ‘Zhanr, takim obrazom, est’ sovokupnost’ sposobov kollektivnoi orientatsii v deistvitel’nosti, s ustanovkoi na zavershenie.’

<sup>18</sup> ‘Zhanr est’ tipicheskoe tseloe khudozhestvennogo vyskazyvaniia, pritom sushchestvennoe tseloe, tseloe zavershennoe i razreshennoe. Problema zaversheniia – odna iz sushchestvennykh problem teorii zhanra.’

<sup>19</sup> ‘Zavershenie voobshche nel’zia putat’ s okonchaniem.’

<sup>20</sup> ‘pereaktsentuatsiia zhanrov’.

are boundless because [...] each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex.’ (Bakhtin 1996: 159, 1986: 60).<sup>21</sup>

Again, memory is part of the process: no new genre can emerge from nothing: ‘A new genre is made from genres at hand; with every genre a regrouping of already prepared elements takes place.’<sup>22</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 190, 1985: 140). This observation will be most relevant for the description of ‘emergent cybergenres’ (Shepherd and Watters 1998: 3), which develop from older offline genres.

### Digital genre theory

What is the justification for investigating a novel phenomenon such as online memories, drawing on the rather traditional notion of genre, apart from the compatibility of Bakhtin’s proto-theory of the memory of speech genres with online communication? Why is it worth re-opening the Pandora’s box of hundreds of years of genre theory in order to describe indisputably new phenomena such as Social Network Sites, community blogs, chat rooms etc., as proposed in recent edited volumes by Giltrow and Stein (2009), Mehler et al. (2010) and Neiger et al. (2011) – from a technological perspective – and by Nünning et al. (2011) – with regard to narrative genres?

This question is far from trivial, since alternative terms such as *form*, *style*, *discourse*, *medium*, *platform* and *technology* are to be found in research literature. Whereas the broadest of these six notions, *form* (Schröter 2004: 397), lacks the prescriptive dimension inherent in genre, the notoriously vague concept of *style* (Paech 1998: 18) is confined to the linguistic dimension and thus only one part of genre (cf. Giltrow and Stein 2009: 3). *Style* also presupposes a rather monologic mode of communication, while new internet genres are characterised by interaction. *Discourse* (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 23) pays tribute to the dialogical nature of online interaction but neglects technology; at the other end of the spectrum, the use of *medium* (Schmidt 2012: 315; Rutten et al. 2013: passim), *technology* (Miller and Shepherd 2009: 283; Puschmann 2010: 51) or *platform* for a particular sort of communication on the internet is too exclusively material (Crowston and Williams 1997: 1) and ignores the multimedia nature of this technical innovation, which allows traditional media to converge (Jenkins 2006) in a ‘transmedia world’ (Perryman 2008: 37).

All the aforementioned terms are relevant as well, but focusing on what I call genre is important because it allows for a certain perspective on the rhetorical *rules* implicitly adopted by users of media platforms. Jill Walker Rettberg proposed a similar Solomonic solution by distinguishing different perspectives when it comes to the web genre of blogs:

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Bogatstvo i raznoobrazie rechevykh zhanrov neobozrимо, potomu chto neischerpaemy vozmozhnosti raznoobraznoi chelovecheskoi deiatel’nosti i potomu chto v kazhdoi sfere deiatel’nosti vyrabatyvaetsia tselyi repertuar rechevykh zhanrov, differentsiruiushchiisia i rastushchii po mere razvitiia i uslozhneniia dannoi sfery.’

<sup>22</sup> ‘Novyi zhanr sostavliaetsia iz nalichnykh zhanrov; vnutri kazhdogo zhanra zavershaiutsia peregruppirovki gotovykh elementov.’

If we see blogs as a medium, then the formal definitions are sufficient. These are the material limitations [the technological infrastructure] of blogs. [...] However, if we see blogs as a genre [...], then our definition should include mention of the typical style and content that lets us at a glance say ‘that’s not a blog’ when we see an online newspaper. (Walker Rettberg 2008: 20-21)

The term *genre* is obviously burdened with a long prehistory and suffers from an outdated universalistic understanding of genres as ‘natural forms’<sup>23</sup> (Goethe; cf. Hempfer 1973: 30), generic archetypes (Frye 1973: 246) or “‘eternal’ tendencies”<sup>24</sup> (which Bakhtin [2002: 120, 1984: 106], with good reason, places within quotation marks). Electronic media are clearly not an ‘eternal’ human capacity but a new, historically contingent invention. The universalistic approach to genre neglects the materiality of media and is therefore incapable of clarifying the peculiar features of online communication.

The universalistic approach was countered by nominalists in genre theory (Beneditto Croce and others), who denied any kind of general regularities beyond the singular phenomenon. This epistemological scepticism might be fruitful when interpreting ‘great’ works of literature, but it leads to apophaticism if applied to the ‘big data’ resources of the internet. With the internet, we face the challenge of combining qualitative analysis with new dimensions of quantity.

If Literary Studies are to contribute to Internet Studies in the field of genre theory, an intermediate epistemological foundation is indispensable. This can be found in conceptualism and constructivism, which ascribe a social reality to general terms that they comprehend as abstractions *post res*. In my view the most promising option is a pragmatist approach to genres that differentiates between genres according to the applied speech situation(s), in the sense of Bakhtin and also of Austin and Searle (see Hempfer 1973: 160-164). Carolyn Miller’s pragmatist definition from 1984 has become something of a research consensus (Giltrow and Stein 2009, 4): she proposed defining ‘genre as social action’ (Miller 1984: 164), stressing the ‘connection between genre and recurrent situation’ (Miller 1984: 151). This gave rise to a pragmatic approach towards genre that Erickson called ‘situated genre theory’ (Erickson 2000). In my view, approaching genres as means of social actions in no way precludes the productivity of various philological concepts as well. Literary studies can, demonstrated here, both contribute its expertise to Internet Studies and profit from expanding into the growing domain of computer-mediated communication, among other ways, by offering the notion of genre.

Another helpful contribution of Literary Studies can be correcting two not unproblematic assumptions in situated genre theory: function and intention. Whereas it is indisputable that genres must be socially accepted in order to have an impact (Crowston and Williams 1997: 3), the concrete social function ascribed to a genre can either be determined only in very general terms (such as ‘connectivity’, Pogačar 2009: 25; Hoskins 2011: 272), or one must acknowledge that they vary not only between individuals and cultures but also depending on content (consider, for example, community blogs on cuisine and genocide). Miller is certain-

<sup>23</sup> ‘Naturformen’.

<sup>24</sup> “‘vekovechnye’ tendentsii’.

ly right that genre provides ‘a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence’ (Miller 1984: 163), but the sender’s actual intention, reincorporated into genre theory by Swales (Swales 1999: 43-58), remains out of the reach of any textual analysis, just as it was out of reach for offline Literary Studies.

Even if situated genre theory tries to rehabilitate some of the most conventional terms of literary theory, it does not even remotely hark back to Aristotle or Lomonosov, whose genre typologies were rooted in totally different social contexts. This suppression of the theoretical tradition does not preclude my observation that not only digitised formerly offline writing, but also a large proportion of originally online writing, displays strong features of conventional offline genres (easily discernible, for example, when texts are too long for a screen page). Similar ‘reproduced genres’, which ‘moved intact to the Web’ (Crowston and Williams 1997: 1-2), are not the topic of my investigation. In terms of Shepherd and Watters’ typology, I am interested only in ‘emergent cybergenres’ and digitally born ‘spontaneous cybergenres’<sup>25</sup> which, for this purpose, I define as genuine online genres, for which the existence of a back channel and interactivity are the *conditio sine qua non*. Given this precondition, I see no need to make a terminological decision for just one of the existing synonyms: *digital genres*, *cybergenres*, *online genres*, *web genres* etc. (cf. Santini et al. 2010: 6). What this article does not aim to do is ultimately solve the prevalent lack of agreement in research literature on an unanimous definition of digital genre.

The limitation to interactive genres is important, however, because it has major consequences for the communicative relationship between sender and receiver: if the receiver can easily and immediately engage in a discussion with the sender, his active role goes beyond what Reader-Response Criticism, from Roman Ingarden to Wolfgang Iser and Hans-Robert Jauss, attributed to the reader. Not only does a sender anticipate his receivers’ reactions, a multitude of prosumers co-author a cybergeneric product. The term *prosumer*, coined by Toffler in the context of pre- and post-modern economics (Toffler 1980: 53-61, 282-305), serves as a foundation stone for theories of computer-mediated communication (Knieper et al. 2011: 51).

The conversational and collective nature of online production, achieved by a multitude of prosumers, calls into question the conventional tacit presuppositions of high quality in print literature. As Pogačar argues, digital memory studies theory must react to the collective authorship with a ‘connectivity turn’ which pays tribute to what he calls the communicative ‘re-tribalisation’ (Pogačar 2009: 25) of society.

From the perspective of Literary Studies, this implies a re-folklorisation that takes place through genres of online interaction. On the other hand, aspects that have attracted the attention of Literary Studies for centuries, such as dialogicity, explicit and implicit genre rules, pseudo- and anonymity or censorship, return under new circumstances in predesigned and moderated online genres. Here the genuinely literary topic of genre analysis meets with the recent adoption of the notion of genre in the social sciences (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998: 1) and media studies (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 120).

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Novel cybergenres [...] may be completely new genres, not based on any genre existing previously in another medium, or they may be based on genres originally replicated in the new medium but which have evolved so far from the original that they are classed as being new genres.’ (Shepherd and Watters 1998: 3).

When importing the double focus on regulatory rules and social interaction into media studies, genre theory can help to bridge the extreme positions of media determinism or media marginality and provide a more nuanced response to McLuhan's canonical assertion that 'The medium is the message' (McLuhan 1995: 7). Patrick Rössler may well be right when he observes that this dictum appears to be attractive to research when a medium is still new:

They [the objects of research] concern the form of online communication rather than its content, and it is reasonable that, in the early stages of the social development of certain modes of communication, such aspects seem interesting. [...] Such descriptive goals of research recede into the background when a media offer is no longer new. Then the medium is no longer the message. The reconstruction of practices of communication is less relevant than the reconstruction of the meaning of the communicated content, in which its media character is often secondary.<sup>26</sup> (Rössler 2010: 36)

This opinion comes from a scholar of Communication Studies, not a representative of Literary Studies. As a literary scholar I cannot subscribe to either the secondary nature of form or in any clear-cut distinction between form and content. There is an astonishingly broad consensus in Literary Studies about the interrelation of content and form: for example, summing up the findings of Russian Formalism in 1925, Boris Eikhenbaum spoke of the 'content-ness of form'.<sup>27</sup>

The Formalists [...] freed themselves from the traditional correlation of form and content and from the traditional idea of form as an envelope, a vessel into which one pours a liquid [the content]. [...] The notion of form here acquires a new meaning; it is no longer an envelope but a complete thing, something concrete, dynamic, self-contained, and without a correlative of any kind.<sup>28</sup> (Eikhenbaum 1927: 125, 2005: 872-873)

This understanding of formed content is shared even by Bakhtin, whose criticism of formalism could otherwise hardly have been more severe: 'There is no formless content and there is not contentless form.'<sup>29</sup> (Medvedev 1928: 190, 1985: 140). An Austrian student of Russian Formalism, Aage Hansen-Löve, took a step further when he defined "'form" as an active and transformative principle'<sup>30</sup> (Hansen-Löve 1977: 189-190). Going down a different path, Amy

<sup>26</sup> 'Sie [die Untersuchungsgegenstände] beziehen sich eher auf die Form von Online-Kommunikation als auf deren Inhalt, und es ist nachvollziehbar, dass solche Aspekte in einer frühen Phase der gesellschaftlichen Etablierung von Kommunikationsmodi interessant scheinen. [...] Solche deskriptiven Untersuchungsziele treten, sobald ein Medienangebot nicht mehr "neu" ist, eher in den Hintergrund: Das Medium ist dann eben nicht mehr die Botschaft. Es geht weniger um die Rekonstruktion von Kommunikationspraxen, sondern vielmehr um die Rekonstruktion von Sinn- und Bedeutungsgehalten der Kommunikate, für die deren medialer Charakter häufig sekundär ist.'

<sup>27</sup> 'soderzhatel'nost' formy'.

<sup>28</sup> '[...] formalisty osvobozhdali sebja ot traditsionnoi sootnositel'nosti "forma – sodержanie" i ot ponimaniia formy kak obolochki – kak sosuda, v kotoryi nalivaetsia zhidkost' (soderzhanie). [...] Poniatie "formy" iavilos' v novom znachenii – ne kak obolochka, a kak polnota, kak nechto konkretno-dinamicheskoe, sodержatel'noe samo po sebe, vne vsiakikh sootnositel'nostei.'

<sup>29</sup> 'Net neofornlennogo sodержaniia i net bessoderzhatel'noi formy.'

<sup>30</sup> "'Form" als aktiv-transformierendes Prinzip'.

Devitt, a theoretician of internet genres, arrived at a comparable understanding of genre form as dynamically shaping ‘content’ (cf. Devitt 2009: 34).

This integration of (syntactic) form and (semantic) content may pave the way for the incorporation of a third dimension – the (material) medium. In 2005, Askehave and Nielsen conceded the ‘controversial’ status of their ‘claim [...] that it may be necessary to incorporate the notion of “medium” into the notion of “genre”’ (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 121). And indeed, their own adoption of Swales’ ‘three-level genre model’:

- (1) *communicative purpose*; realised by
- (2) *move structure*; realised by
- (3) *rhetorical strategies* (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 122),

betrays the belated inclusion of the electronic medium. The authors admit that the ‘conventionalised internal structure’ of genre is in no way autonomous from the technical infrastructure, whose ‘media properties influence both the purpose and form of web-mediated genres and should therefore be included in the genre identification’ (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 122, 128). Even if I subscribe to their general postulate, I do not agree with Askehave and Nielsen when they assert that an additional media dimension can simply be mechanically added by distinguishing between two modes of action for the recipient, a ‘reading mode’ and a ‘navigating mode’ (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 127) of ‘hyper-reading’ (Sosnoski 1999: 135-136). In my view, hyper-using is the only mode both of production and reception for digitally-born genres, and from the very beginning, it was shaped by the technical structure of the particular internet genre. The ‘third-party to interaction: the technological design of forms, formats and functions’ (Giltrow and Stein 2009: 22), shapes the purposes that can be realised by its users. Thus medium and genre cannot be divided under the present electronic ‘discourse network 2000’ [‘Aufschreibesystem 2000’] (Nünning and Rupp 2012: 11). The technical preconditions ‘both enable and limit’ (Devitt 2009: 45) internet genres.

In conclusion, individual purposes and the predefined trajectories that guide a user through the medium are also both shaped by the technical possibilities and by the rhetorical genre rules for disposition and elocution (forming the content). My proposal of an amended scheme therefore comprises four levels, with feedback between all levels:

- (1) *technical infrastructure*; enabling and shaped by
- (2) *communicative purpose*; enabling and shaped by
- (3) *move structure*; enabling and shaped by
- (4) *rhetorical strategies*.

All four levels – with some limitations concerning level (1) – are joint products of the prosumers, who realise and adapt their expectations in the course of their prosumption performance (cf. Dillon and Gushrowski 2000). Thomas Erickson’s definition from 2000 provides the most convincing formulation so far to describe the aforementioned interconnected dimensions:

*A genre is a patterning of communication created by a combination of the individual, social and technical forces implicit in a recurring communicative situation. A genre structures communication by creating shared expectations about the form and content of the interaction, thus easing the burden of production and interpretation. (Erickson 2000, emphasis in the original)*

This general definition is not very precise on the level of rhetoric and syntax, so I will have to refine it from a Literary Studies perspective and formulate a host of specific tasks for genre-based analysis in the CMC context. I see five such tasks:

- (1) to determine the moment at which a novel model of online communication becomes accepted, implicitly prescriptive and thus generic;
- (2) to establish a (necessarily non-comprehensive) ‘genre repertoire’ (Orlikowski and Yates 1994) both of ‘emergent’ and ‘spontaneous’ genres of online interaction;
- (3) to track the way in which technology and recurrent forms of communicative usage co-produce formed content in a particular genre;
- (4) to describe the rhetorical rules for communicative behaviour in an online genre, both through tacit ‘implicit structuring’ (Yates et al. 1999: 98-100) and (less often in informal internet communities) through explicit meta-genre discussions;<sup>31</sup> and
- (5) to conceptualise accepted sequences of continuous communications<sup>32</sup> in a genre and of links to other genres (Swales’ ‘genre chain’<sup>33</sup>).

The crucial question, which can be answered only after these five tasks have been addressed, is: do the interconnected restrictions and rules on the level of technology, explicit social control and implicit structuring of communicative form amount to ‘genre effects’ (Olick 1999: 384) that determine content?

### **Message types favoured by online genres of memory**

All these questions concern genres of online communication in general and are not confined to genres of online memory. The narrower problem, which I will investigate further, is: do genres of online memory carry their own memory in Bakhtin’s sense, partially determining the way they are used? Or, to formulate this question more defensively: do certain online genres favour specific forms of memory content? This cannot be answered *in toto* but only with regard to certain dimensions that we can deduct from technical infrastructure, implicit rhetoric rules and actual dynamics of usage. I propose a tentative, non-comprehensive list of features of online genres of memory:

<sup>31</sup> For user-centred empirical research on web genre terms, see Crowston et al. 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Niklas Luhmann’s ‘Anschlusskommunikationen’ and: ‘[...] recognizing that a communication is of a particular genre may suggest the form expected for the reply.’ (Crowston 2010: 6).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Swales 2004: 18-20.

a. *Conversational nature*: Memory purposes are not so easy to detect in the genre ecology of the internet, because there are not many specific, exclusive genres or sub-genres of memory. Memory topics and memory associations tend instead to be found in various multi-content genres of online communication. This implies both a quantitative challenge, because of the potential ubiquity and sheer mass that Andrew Hoskins describes as the ‘post-scarcity memorial-media boom’ (Hoskins 2011: 270), and a qualitative one that the researcher faces according to Merrin:

Traditional media studies studied broadcast content. This was material produced for mass, public consumption, being created for particular reasons, being designed for mass comprehensibility and meaning and possessing prestige and potential cultural significance as an expression of a major productive outlet and its creative staff. In contrast much of our personal, user or peer-produced content is often intended for private or limited consumption, having different modes of meaning, comprehensibility and relevance. [...] This is a challenge for contemporary media studies: how do you study the ordinariness, incomprehensibility, banality or offensiveness of personal media production. (Merrin 2010)

As argued earlier, omitting non-internet specific genres that do not or only barely imply interactivity and hypertextuality may be justified, but conversational triviality is not a reason for exclusion because ‘[...] the CMC system may be viewed as an ecology of conversational genres’ (Erickson 2000), defined by the availability of the back channel and – more traditionally speaking – dialogue or polylogue (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 19). This means a limitation on the scope of research into genuinely dialogic genres such as SNS, chat rooms, forums and a subtype of blogs that, even if it starts with a monologue, receives a dialogical appendix by allowing comments.<sup>34</sup> The latter subtype makes it clear that technical infrastructure and genre are two different things: depending on the usage of (the same) *LiveJournal* infrastructure for monologic j-blogs or, alternatively, for community blogs, two different genres emerge.<sup>35</sup>

The original conversational purpose of much online memory poses an additional practical problem for research – the problem of the accessibility of material intended solely for a group of like-minded members of an SNS. The degree of any material’s accessibility is, however, also relevant to correctly evaluating such material, once the researcher has obtained access to it. Content is shaped according to the audience. For whom was the material originally designed? Can registered members contribute themselves or is the material read-only? Can non-members read or even contribute in some form?

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<sup>34</sup> This tension was described by Laurie McNeill: ‘This pairing of genre and medium, [...] seems troubling, if not paradoxical: after all, the diary is a centuries-old practice associated with the spiritual, the therapeutic, and the strictly private, while the Internet, home of the “New Media,” has been celebrated for its publicity and accessibility.’ (McNeill 2005: 1).

<sup>35</sup> A different meaning of ‘memory blog’ can be found in Herring et al. 2004: 10, where it is defined as a blog ‘in which the author keeps track of information for later use’, another dominant focus of digital memory studies, but one which is devoted to future memorisation, not to the past (cf. also the chapter ‘Meme Genres’ in Shifman 2014: 99-118).

b. *Embeddedness*: What struck scholars trained in offline genre theory was the multifunctionality (Miller and Shepherd 2009), ‘the low degree of conventionalization of form-function relationships’ (Giltrow and Stein 2009: 11) and the openness of online genres to other generic elements (Devitt speaks of ‘computer-mediated inter-genre-ality’, 2009: 45). Blogs, the favourite of digital genre theorists, have been seen as a ‘bridge’ between multimedia documents and text-based communication (Herring et al. 2004: 2). But ‘embedded genres’ (Crowston and Williams 1997: 8) have spread to other genres such as video websites, where the interactive hypertext also appears as a dialogic appendix. In some cases there are limitations to the accepted quantity of external links – the limits concerning the size of uploaded pictures, videos or audio files. Both excessive and insufficient use of external links can be regarded as a violation of the implicit rules of a web genre (Santini et al. 2010: 12).

The inverse setting is embedment not of some other material *in* the message but *of* the message in the technical infrastructure of the platform used. Researchers must explore whether the user’s individual messages are supported by additional semi-verbal, pre-designed ‘messages’ such as ‘my current mood’, ‘my interests’ or *Facebook*’s ‘like’ function. As José van Dijck points out, the weblog architecture for social connection lifts the social dimension onto the level of infrastructure. The same can be said about genre and the technical infrastructure that sends semantically standardised ‘messages’ (van Dijck 2007: 66).

This observation makes clear that an in-depth analysis of a web genre must look into subgenres. I deliberately mix the terminological register proposed by Santini’s et al. (macro- and microgenres; 2010: 12) and Lindemann and Littig’s (‘super-genre level’; 2012: 218) when speaking of the *macro-genre* of interactive hypertext, *genres* such as blogs and *sub-genres* such as community blogs. This choice is made in order to avoid the undesirable axiological implications of *super* and to clarify that the ‘sub-type’ (Grieve et al. 2010: 304) *sub-genre* must in no way be small in size, as is suggested by the prefix *micro*.

c. *Topicality or occasionality of memory content*: Due to the dynamic development of the internet, it is impossible to definitely and exhaustively systematise all generic and sub-generic combinations and sorts of embedment of interactivity, hypertextuality and multimediality which can contain memory elements. A gradual distinction, however, can be made on the basis of content: I propose to distinguish between (the less frequent) topicalised memory sites (for example *Facebook* groups devoted to historical figures such as Iosif Stalin or Mikhail Gorbachev or historical events such as Chernobyl’ or the Holodomor) and (the infinite number of) sites with occasional memory appendices.<sup>36</sup> The latter category has recently been fostered by the technological structure of ‘[n]etwork-driven genres (e.g., social network sites, microblogging) [...] because people follow the conversations in the context of individuals, not topical threads’ (boyd et al. 2010: 1).

To what degree occasional memory elements (cf. Zvereva 2011: 4-5) are tolerated is again partially determined by the ‘hard facts’ behind digital genres: are we dealing with an open genre, or is registration or even personal invitation needed in order to access a site and/or to have writing rights? Are the users required to appear with their real names or are

<sup>36</sup> Where a historical political leader might be mentioned just once in a contemporary sports context, which thus accidentally serves as a ‘potential occasion of memory’ [‘potenzieller Erinnerungsanlass’] (Zierold 2006: 161).

they allowed to hide their identity behind nicknames and avatars? Anonymity and virtual personality transformation (cf. Nünning and Rupp 2012: 12) are clearly of key importance for the observation of political correctness, on the one hand, or the inclusion of hate speech in online interaction, on the other. If Knieper, Wolf and Tonndorf are right to assume that, with the co-authorship of prosumers, ‘subjective factors such as emotions, opinions, everyday rationality and foreknowledge play a role’<sup>37</sup> (Knieper et al. 2011: 51-52), the topicality and/or emotionality of discussions in a cybergenre are a dimension that should be explored when studying ‘memory-making from below’ (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 6). What is novel in the context of computer-mediated communication is the opportunity to easily access the non-professional memory discourse of ordinary users, which comfortably outweighs academic historiography on the Web (Zvereva 2011: 2).

d. *Length of communicative acts*: Distinctions can also be made when it comes to the syntax that explicitly or implicitly structures memory-related communications in a web genre. The length of a communicative act online can be strictly limited, as is the case with *Twitter*, or virtually unlimited. Excessive graphomania, however, is likely to be punished either by the moderator of a website or the community. Rather, short interjections are the most likely form of occasional memory elements in web genres. As Vera Zvereva emphasises: ‘[...] “completeness” is not the ideal of community members [of *Vkontakte*]. [...] Fragmentation turns into the main mode of presentation of facts, thoughts and emotions’ (Zvereva 2011: 5).

e. *(Self-)censorship*: The majority of forums, chats and comments do not produce a single, discrete, polished and finished text. In the case of instant messaging, the use of the correction opportunity in one’s own contributions (see van Dijck 2007: 64-65) is less relevant than the role of the administrator or moderator, who can censor entries or refrain from doing so. Censorship that takes place retrospectively is the strongest interference in a conversation’s continuity, posing a challenge for researchers’ close reading because the intervention is not always marked and traceable.

f. *Temporal discontinuity within genres*: This leads us to what one might regard as the major difference between offline and online genres: temporal discontinuity and temporality in general. *Discussions of online genres must be sensitive to the factor of the time over which a computer-mediated interaction evolves*. Even without interference from censorship, online conversations may be highly discontinuous. Focused discussions of a memory topic are often short and interrupted, or even ended by digressions from the topic (Kulyk 2013). An interruption can either remain without consequences when ignored by the other participants, destroy a discussion by making others fall silent, or kidnap the thread by transforming a hitherto topicalised thread into a flame-war (Moor et al. 2010). This transformation, however, can also be punished by the moderator taking down the thread, or can end up in a hostile takeover.

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Der Prosument wird nicht von klassischen Rollenbildern und Auswahlkriterien bestimmt, die in professionalisierten Medienunternehmen etabliert sind. Vielmehr spielen subjektive Faktoren wie Emotionen, Meinungen, Alltagsrationalität oder Vorwissen eine Rolle.’

What interests me in the context of genre analysis is whether digressions and interruptions of semantic lines are capable of changing the genre. In order to answer this question I propose to refine Swales' term 'genre chain' by adding the concept of *sub-genre chain*. Whereas many interactive genres are constituted by genre chains, such as news to comments or video to comments, here the communicative dynamics *within* one particular genre such as a comment thread alters the sub-genre. This is the case, for example, if an occasional memory blog discussion is 'hitch-hiked' by flammers or even 'kidnapped' by a flame-war.

Further research is needed in order to describe flaming (or in the Russian context *kholivar* [холивaр]<sup>38</sup>) as a sub-genre and to conceptualise the 'hinge' between two sub-genres, such as topicalised discussion and flame-war. We cannot stick to the agnosticism advocated by Sosnoski ('Unlike the print environment where the structure of an essay or a speech would be expected to follow a particular pattern, Web pages bear only some resemblances to each other.'; Sosnoski 1990: 140), but must instead tackle the task of describing patterns of sub-genre changes, including the time vector into online genre theory.

g. *Temporal discontinuity between genres*: On the macro-level, discontinuities not only in sub-genres but also in genres must be reflected. As was the case with older offline genres, web genres can 'expire' after a certain time. Santini et al. argue that new web genres tend to (partially) replace older ones. If they are to be believed, the older genre of the personal home page, the first favourite of online genre theorists (Dillen and Gushrowski 2000), is already threatened by SNS in its very existence (Santini et al. 2010: 13).

This even more drastically affects former offline genres, which were transferred to the internet, or some of their features, such as narrative schemes. Several structures of offline narratives seem to be preserved in emergent cybergenres. According to Andrew Hoskins, implicit structuring on a literary level is in operation in the application of narrative schemes (Hoskins 2009b: 36-38), which lends plausibility to an online memory discourse as well. It is, however, an open question whether traditional literary schemes will over time be repressed either by the 'media templates' of media such as TV or radio, or if these will be altered once again by less professional bottom-up schemes (Hoskins 2009b: 40-41). The genre ecology of the internet is undergoing a continuous transition.

h. *Opinion dynamics*: Apart from accelerated progress in technical infrastructure, the creative potential from below is of key importance for genre change. With these bottom-up processes, canonical problems of Communication and Journalism Studies are addressed, for example when it comes to explorations of opinion dynamics. Amy Devitt's 'inter-genre-ality' is at stake when explorations of online memory draw on findings concerning the news cycle, which, according to Jure Leskovec, Lars Backstrom and Jon Kleinberg, implies certain temporal regularities in the relationship between different online genres such as news and blogs: '[...] a typical lag of 2.5 hours between the peaks of attention to a phrase in the news media

<sup>38</sup> I owe thanks to Lisa Gaufman, whose question on this subject, posed in Freising in March 2013, led me to reflect on the problem of whether *kholivar* is a separate genre. See the 'New Cold War' article in this special issue.

and in blogs respectively, with divergent behaviour around the overall peak and a ‘heartbeat’-like pattern in the handoff between news and blogs’ (Leskovec et al. 2009: 209).

In the case of many online genres (for example the comment threads on *YouTube* or *Flickr*), consensus is not a goal at all, in stark contrast to Jürgen Habermas’ normative discourse ethics (Habermas 1995). The absence of this normative goal supports the philosopher’s doubts concerning the capacity of the internet to integrate (Habermas 2008). There are, however, examples of the successful use of the *genus deliberativum* online (such as *Wikipedia*). Moreover, Habermas’ fragmentation hypothesis must also be corrected with regard to ‘local’ homogenisation effects, which create an ‘illusion of privacy’<sup>39</sup> (Howanitz 2014):

Due to the fragmented public sphere on the web, people often turn to specific platforms of communication which represent and publish one-sided opinions. The users regard this opinion as the only correct one because it is shared by all the others in the community. Other opinions are uttered only rarely or are confronted with flames and bullying. [...] The distribution of opinions appears differently to each sub-audience. There is not one single public sphere in the web anymore, but many parallel partial public spheres.<sup>40</sup> (Knieper et al. 2011: 53)

According to Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s ‘Schweigespirale’ [spiral of silence] (Noelle-Neumann 1980: 18), opinions that do not please the particular ‘sub-audience’ will, over time, vanish in the ‘Darwinian ecology of digital memory’ (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 9). But Noelle-Neumann’s findings, made in a West German offline context in the 1970s, are not directly applicable to the media ecology of certain internet communities (cf. Neill 2009: 36). Volodymyr Kulyk, for example, observed the coexistence of conflicting threads in Ukrainian web communities with a memory focus (Kulyk 2013). Even more fundamental is Zvereva’s observation concerning the ‘confrontational character’ of *Vkontakte* groups devoted to Soviet history:

All discussions are pragmatic within the online groups: an event does not exist and is not formulated by itself but only in opposition to those who hold different opinions. Documents surface when they can be used to defeat an adversary. Memories are collected when it is necessary to prove one’s case. In other words, any given historical event presented in “V Kontakte” usually implies its opposition; all statements imply opponents and memories – a figure of contraposition. (Zvereva 2011: 2-3)

<sup>39</sup> ‘Illusion von Privatheit’.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Durch die fragmentierte Netzöffentlichkeit wenden sich Menschen häufig spezifischen Kommunikationsplattformen zu, welche einseitige Meinungen vertreten und veröffentlichen. Den Nutzern erscheint diese Meinung als einzig richtige, da sie von allen anderen in der Community geteilt wird. Andere Meinungen werden nur selten geäußert oder mit Flames und Bullying beantwortet. [...] Meinungsverteilungen erscheinen in jedem Subpublikum anders. Es gibt im Netz nicht mehr die eine Öffentlichkeit, sondern mehrere parallel existierende Teilöffentlichkeiten.’

Bruce Etling, Karina Aleksanian, John Kelly, Robert Faris, John Palfrey and Urs Gasser confirm this when maintaining that ‘ideological homophilia’<sup>41</sup> (Etling et al. 2010: 24) is rather untypical for Russian blog sites:

Within the central core, Russian bloggers are less isolated in ‘echo chambers’, in the circle of equally-minded bloggers, than is usually the case in some of the other blogospheres which we investigated.<sup>42</sup> (Etling et al. 2010: 23)

This intercultural difference makes it clear that none of the culturally confined observations can be generalised. The only factor that introduces certain predictability is whether ‘[...] administrators limit the membership in their groups to prevent abuse by ideologically hostile or simply irresponsible people’ (Kulyk 2013: 77). Apart from this, the divergent patterns in opinion dynamics illustrate the need for an international turn in Internet Studies (Goggin and McLelland 2008).

i. *Cultural relativity*: Theorists of offline genres have on many occasions stressed the cultural and historical relativity of genres in general (Gymnich and Neumann 2007: 38-45). Analogous research for online genres is still nascent. Elena Trubina demonstrated that certain genres, such as community blogs, are especially popular in some cultures, such as the Runet culture (Trubina 2010: 64). The Cyrillic online cultures also seem to be much more conducive to community or group blogs, which, if one is to believe Jack Grieve, Douglas Biber, Erig Friginal and Tatiana Nekrasova, are ‘relatively rare’ (Grieve et al. 2010: 305). This diagnosis must obviously be limited to Western Internet cultures. In contrast, in the post-Soviet space ‘hybrids of social networks’<sup>43</sup> (Etling et al. 2010: 17) are more popular.

With regard to more subtly differing genre ecologies in various internet cultures, one must, however, acknowledge the fact that the impact of culture on technology is rather indirect: it goes through modes of generic actualisation of technical infrastructures. We can, therefore, say that genre is the decisive mediator in what Mizuko Ito calls the ‘heterogeneous co-constitution of technology across a transnational stage’ (Ito 2005: 7) and Jill Walker Rettberg the ‘*co-construction*, [...] the mutual dependencies between technology and culture’ (Walker Rettberg 2008: 53, emphasis in the original). *It is genre as a mediator between technology and culture that justifies the vital necessity of a Cultural Studies expertise for interdisciplinary Internet Studies.*

j. *Genre tolerance*: Cultural relativism should, however, not be exaggerated. The world-wide use of globalised platforms produces certain homogenisation effects. The differences between varieties of the same genre in distant internet cultures are arguably smaller than those between distinct genres in the same culture. Regardless of a particular culture, rude conversa-

<sup>41</sup> ‘ideologicheskaja gomofilija’.

<sup>42</sup> ‘V ramkakh etogo tsentral’nogo iadra russkoiazychnye bloggery menee izolivorany vnutri “echo kamer”, v krugu svoikh edinomyshlennikov-bloggerov, kak eto obychno proiskhodit v nekotorykh drugikh blogosferakh, kotorye my izuchali.’

<sup>43</sup> ‘gibridy sotsial’nykh setei’.

tion and emotionality are significantly more likely on *YouTube* than on *Wikipedia* or news sites. Different genres also have different sub-genre chains, which means that the likelihood of topicalised discussions being ‘kidnapped’ by flammers can vary.

This statistical observation, on the other hand, leads us to the limits of genre theory: whether a memory topic will develop in a conflict-prone or a homogenising direction cannot be predicted by genre determination and can be only partially predicted by cultural background knowledge.

## Conclusions

Summing up, one can say that generic aspects, as outlined by Mikhail Bakhtin and further developed in a pragmatist key by Carolyn Miller and others, can contribute considerable insight to Digital Memory Studies. Only an integrated approach to genre, which encompasses technical conditions as well as rhetorical rules and cultural particularities, can help us to understand how memory emerges and changes online. Memory content on the internet is therefore certainly neither medium- nor genre-determined, but is rather co-shaped by different online genres that function as *mediators* in what Hoskins calls ‘a “co-evolution” of memory and technology’ (Hoskins 2009a: 96).

This study could only provide the general theoretical framework for future detailed research into particular genres and genres cultures, and could not include four desiderata: 1) We have not analysed meta-genre discussions encapsulated in memory websites (see McNeill 2009: 149); 2) We have not had the capacity to conduct experimental research into non-linear hyper-reading, where we could have observed which links a user follows and how this singular hyper-reading path shapes the memory content ‘prosumed’ by a particular user; 3) We could not devote attention to the growing importance of visual content and transmodality in online genres. We must therefore leave it for further research to explore the mnemonic implications of the intermedial constellations between visual and scriptural elements; 4) Within the limits of this article, we have obviously not even superficially outlined what should eventually emerge as a new, more comprehensive discipline of Internet Studies, which draws on the wide range of both philological and technological competences: Digital Rhetoric. This paradigm deserves and demands joint research effort in the future.

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# Scraping the Monumental: Stepan Bandera through the Lens of Quantitative Memory Studies

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**Abstract:** In this article we use the example of Stepan Bandera to demonstrate the effectiveness of web-scraping methods as a tool to explore how people interact with memory content online. Using data from *Wikipedia*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*, we analyse the traces left by users interested in Stepan Bandera and assess how these differ between Ukraine, Russia and Poland. Applying data mining and content analysis to data traditionally analysed from a purely qualitative perspective, we show how Polish content about Bandera follows completely different patterns in comparison to Ukrainian and Russian debates. Our tools, made available online, also include attempts at analysing video content.

**Keywords:** Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, memory studies, data mining, content analysis, digital humanities, Eastern Europe

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Who is Stepan Bandera? The answer – as often happens with controversial historical figures – depends on whom you ask. Bandera, a leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement during the Second World War, was already controversial during his lifetime. In the Soviet Union he was branded as a Nazi collaborator; Ukrainian émigrés praised him as a fearless independence fighter.<sup>1</sup> The existing scholarship features a variety of interpretations: from Nazi collaborator, terrorist and instigator of ethnic cleansings to national hero, fearless resistance leader and martyr<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, it is hard to disagree with David Marples, who argued that the name of ‘Bandera’ provokes an emotional reaction simply by its utterance (Marples 2006: 555). In this paper we show that Marples’ assertion is supported not only by

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<sup>1</sup> We collected the data for this study mostly in March and April 2013. Therefore, we could not take the recent developments in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia – Euromaidan and the annexation of the Crimea peninsula – into account. It is quite likely that online activity related to Stepan Bandera has shifted since last year.

<sup>2</sup> To mention some influential works: Hordasevych (2001); Prus (2004); Marples (2009); Balyns’kyi, Amar and Hrytsak (2010).

offline controversies – including international demarches, desecration of monuments and heated public debates – but also by online debates across various social media platforms.

This article provides a toolkit that demonstrates how data mining and content analysis may be applied to content traditionally analysed from a purely qualitative perspective. As a field, Memory Studies has been relatively slow to embrace quantitative methods. Researchers have employed quantitative methods to trace the number of existing texts about a subject at various junctures but while this tool can identify levels of interest, these same researchers struggle to unpack the meaning of these interest levels without laboriously studying individual texts. While this article says little new about Stepan Bandera, digital methods, or memory studies individually, it does demonstrate that a lens combining the three can be focused and adapted to answer questions about how ideas are discussed online.

To conduct this study, we employed web-scraping techniques to harvest user-generated online data about Stepan Bandera. By scraping not just content, but also user patterns, time series analyses can be applied to determine when specific groups interact with a subject. Analysing *YouTube* data both sheds lights on the content of videos and indicates how and when users post and watch them. Finally, *YouTube* comments created by users who communicate in a particular language can be treated as a single text, which allows diverging interests to be mapped in broad brush strokes.

In 2009, as Ukrainian nationalists passed through Poland during a Bandera march to Munich, the location of Bandera's grave, the Polish *Wikipedia* page about Stepan Bandera exploded into life, with the average daily number of visits growing from roughly 50 to 800. Since then, Polish interest in Bandera, as expressed through *Wikipedia* page views, has consistently been at least twice the level prior to 2009, even when controlling for increased internet usage<sup>3</sup>. The period of increased interest coincided not only with concrete action undertaken by Bandera's Ukrainian supporters, but also with a period of increased Polish awareness of the Volhynia massacre. On 27 October 2012, the day before the Ukrainian parliamentary elections, Polish social media sites again came to life, as a virulently aggressive rap video, rated as 18+ on *YouTube*, spelled out the connections between Volhynia, Bandera, atrocities committed against Polish citizens in the east and the present Ukrainian political climate. We detected no analogous upsurge in Russian user-generated content on *YouTube* in 2009, and the number of users accessing the Russian language *Wikipedia* page was stable and moderate also in 2012. The topics of Bandera and Volhynia again flared up during the 70th anniversary of the massacre in July 2013, when the Polish Sejm declared the Volhynia massacres to be 'ethnic cleansing bearing the hallmarks of genocide'. Unsurprisingly, *Wikipedia* interest in Poland grew again. Ukrainian and Russian interest, on the other hand, dropped at these junctures. This brief introductory example hints at how the Ukrainian-Russian debate about Bandera is disconnected from the narrative about Volhynia in the Polish-language section of the internet. It further suggests how *Wikipedia* and *YouTube* are used differently and

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout we have used adjusted values relative to the percentage of the population with internet access. Average growth rates were estimated based on World Bank data: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2/countries?display=graph>, (accessed 19 November 2013). Adjustment is important, because otherwise it looks like all trends are increasing, when in reality the trajectory is unsurprising due to a growing number of internet users.

the complex ways offline actions may be accompanied by an online reaction. These reactions are sporadic, but when they occur they leave a substantial trace.

Alexander Etkind describes how memory mediated online is contextualised and made meaningful through memory models, where simple analogies are drawn between the past and the present (Etkind 2013). In online interactions, the interplay between memory events and memory models is mediated by internet prosumers who through their consumption of memory help to spread it: *YouTube* videos with more views and likes, especially within a short time frame, are more likely to go viral, thus breaking out of a restricted online community, to reach a larger part of the population. Prosumers, or memory users, select from available memory models when promoting particular news stories on *Twitter*, creating ‘demotivators’<sup>4</sup> in Photoshop, or even releasing video content on *YouTube*. In all these categories a distinction may be made between content re-appropriation and creation: in the former, offline content is selected, possibly edited or contextualised and spread online. Examples include television documentaries, newspaper articles, etc. This content is edited by users who decide how to frame it: within a tweet, with a particular interpretation, or with a given title on *YouTube*. In user-created content, evocative visual symbols are accompanied by a narrative linking the past to the present.

Usage patterns may be discerned by aggregating information about when videos were accessed, when *Wikipedia* edits took place and when users tweeted about Bandera. Patterns of activity are generally predictable, as memories are often invoked in cycles, for instance every year at anniversaries, or coinciding with the political calendar (Fredheim 2013a). Disproportionate increases at these critical junctures point to the viral spread of information, caused by either offline or online commemorative activities. Similarly, large jumps in online activity occurring between these junctures point to possible ruptures in the memory narrative caused by memory events. Memory events are ‘a re-discovery of the past that creates a rupture with its accepted cultural meaning [...] [and therefore] secondary to the historical events they interpret, usually taking place many years or decades later’ (Etkind 2010: 4).

Online social network platforms constrain the type of activity that is possible. Different platforms impose various constraints, but considerable similarities exist across networks. These may be explained by the special dynamics of online genres.<sup>5</sup> On *Facebook*, for instance, users operate under their offline identity and, typically, interact with people they have previously met in person. Both factors are to a lesser degree true for *Twitter*: many users link their *Twitter* profile to their offline identity, but this is by no means compulsory and it is also easier to ‘follow’ strangers. While users (often mistakenly) assume *Facebook* is private, tweets are explicitly public. Tweeted content is linked to other users through retweets<sup>6</sup>, direct messages and hashtags. The use of these social hyperlinks creates loose communities of *Twitter* users. On *YouTube*, in contrast, no such communities exist, as content is equally available to all users, assuming that language does not form a barrier. Online interactions are usually brief; the blog-post essay is the exception rather than the rule, and on *Twitter*, *YouTube* and *Wikipedia* discussions, complex questions of historical truth are frequently re-

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<sup>4</sup> This image genre, especially popular in Eastern Europe, juxtaposes an image and a cynical or ironic statement.

<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive discussion of online genres by Dirk Uffelmann is part of this issue of *Digital Icons*.

<sup>6</sup> Retweeting allows *Twitter* users to forward and repost tweets.

duced to simple repeatable patterns, drawing heavily on memory models, analogies and symbolism, as epitomised by iconic images of Stepan Bandera, national emblems and flags etc., which are remediated in user-generated content. By making these patterns the subject of our study, we aim to expose how people refer to Stepan Bandera online. Just as this symbolism may be discerned by quantifying textual patterns, it may also be accessed by automated genre detection, e.g. by distinguishing user-created slide-shows and filmed content. By using keyword analysis, the disproportionate presence of these symbols within different online genres and language communities may be identified and contrasted with those of other communities, as well as with the usually more politically correct text agreed upon by *Wikipedia* editors.

The processes involved in collecting, aggregating and quantifying time series and textual and visual data are complex and are discussed elsewhere. Throughout this article we attempted to avoid highlighting ‘medium specific features’ of the data and ‘data centrism’ by relegating technical details and the minutiae of evidence to footnotes and external links (Marres 2013). As one main goal of this article is to demonstrate which data are available across different online platforms and how this data can be further processed, we made both data and the scripts used to create our evidence available for download, meaning that anyone can reproduce our findings,<sup>7</sup> or adapt our methods to other topics.

This article is divided into six sections. First, we formulate our hypotheses. In the following three sections we describe the scraping process in detail for each of the three online platforms: *Wikipedia*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*. In the fifth section we discuss our findings. Finally, in the concluding section, we check the validity of our hypotheses.

## Hypotheses

- We hypothesised that the language barrier between Western Slavic Polish on the one hand, and Eastern Slavic Russian and Ukrainian on the other, is substantial. We therefore expected to see Poland as a special case in every regard.
- We hypothesised that language trumps location. In other words, we hypothesised that the possibility of a conflict concerning Bandera’s personality is higher between speakers of Russian and Ukrainian, rather than between people living in Russia and people living in Ukraine.
- We ventured that Poles and Russians would create the most hostile or negative content about Bandera.
- We expected predictable patterns of interest that coincide with annual anniversaries and Ukrainian political elections. We expected that these patterns would be similar across various online media and genres.

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<sup>7</sup> The scripts and data used may be downloaded from <https://github.com/ghowa/bandera-scripts> (accessed 1 December 2014).

## Bandera on Wikipedia

*Wikipedia* is the most popular online encyclopaedia, with its vast number of articles composed by internet users. In the context of our analysis, the process of writing and reading *Wikipedia* articles is of as much interest as their content. This platform allowed us to compare how the different language versions of the Stepan Bandera article relate to each other. Our analysis was based on the Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and English versions<sup>8</sup> and employed three main approaches: a close reading and a distant reading<sup>9</sup> of the articles as well as some thoughts about the articles' editors. We relied on the statistical data which is available on the *Wikipedia* website. In Figure 1, we plot the number of page views over time. Relative to the size of the Internet population, the Ukrainian page has seen the largest number of visits. Generally, Polish and Russian interest is remarkably consistent, but two differences are notable: both in 2009/10 and in 2012/13 the Polish and Russian trajectories diverged strongly: Russian interest was focused squarely on the 'Bandera marches' and the Ukrainian legislation, according to which Bandera was proclaimed a hero of Ukraine. In 2010, Poles also read *Wikipedia* at the time of the Ukrainian elections. However, it was mainly users of the Polish *Wikipedia* who read about Bandera on 8 August 2009 when Ukrainians cycling Bandera's route to Munich were stopped at the Polish border and denied access to Poland,<sup>10</sup> or during the 70-year commemorations of the Volhynia massacre in July 2013. First and foremost, Ukrainian interest has been highly predictable: every year in January at the time of Bandera's birthday, there was an upsurge in interest. This pattern, however, is not matched by Polish or Russian internet users (see Figure 1).

### *Close reading Wikipedia*

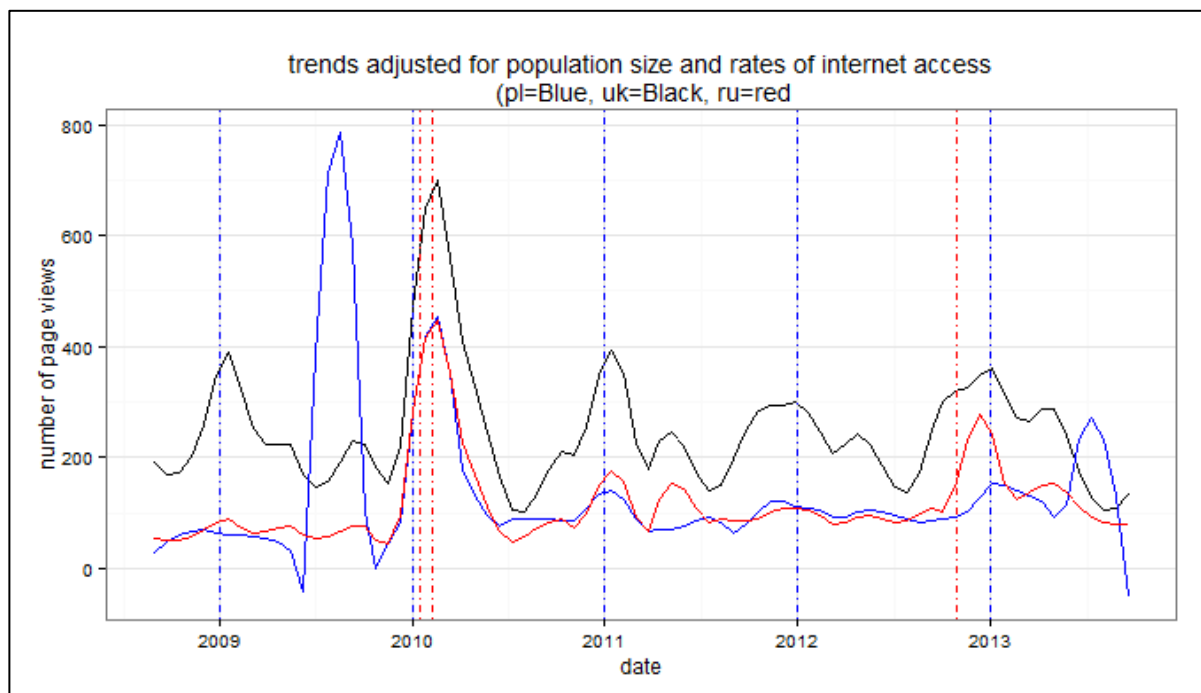
Applying close reading to large corpora of multilingual data is difficult, due to both the quantity and quality of data. One possible solution is to read only selected parts of articles, which are common to all language versions. This strategy is applicable to *Wikipedia* articles, because the different language versions are built on a common default template, which includes a lead section, a body section and standard appendices. Lead sections are especially interesting for a close reading, because they are rather short and function as a brief summary for the whole article. They also include so-called 'Persondata' templates, a box holding the most relevant information such as name, date of birth, citizenship, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бандера,\\_Степан\\_Андреевич](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бандера,_Степан_Андреевич), [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бандера\\_Степан\\_Андрійович](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бандера_Степан_Андрійович), [http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan\\_Bandera](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan\\_Bandera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera) (all accessed 29 March 2013). English *Wikipedia* is listed here because English is the lingua franca of Internet communication and is therefore often employed by users of different nationalities, including Eastern Europeans. Consequently, the English version of the encyclopedia can be used as a neutral ground by Polish, Russian and Ukrainian users, where local discussions can be revived and brought to the attention of the Anglophone Internet audience.

<sup>9</sup> Franco Moretti coined the term 'distant reading' to propose a quantitative approach to literature 'where distance [...] is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems' (Moretti 2000: 57, italics original).

<sup>10</sup> [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6907784,Szlaban\\_na\\_rajd\\_Bandery.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6907784,Szlaban_na_rajd_Bandery.html) (accessed 19 November 2013).

**Figure 1.** *Wikipedia* page views of the Russian, Ukrainian and Polish Bandera articles

Source: Rolf Fredheim

A division between English/Ukrainian articles about Bandera on the one hand, and Russian/Polish ones on the other, was immediately clear. While all four lead sections characterised Bandera as a political activist and representative of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, only the Ukrainian article described him as a ‘prominent’ figure. The Russian and Polish pieces, on the other hand, emphasised connections between Bandera’s views and fascist movements. This observation regarding division found further support in the description of Bandera’s historical role in the (attempted) proclamation of an independent Ukraine on 30 June 1941, which is stressed in the Ukrainian and English versions. The Polish and Russian articles, in contrast, emphasised Bandera’s involvement in a series of ‘terrorist acts’ (Russian article) and his involvement in the Volhynia massacre of Poles (Polish article).

The differences were also present in the Persondata template. All four articles used the same picture of Stepan Bandera and agreed on the basic details – date of birth, date of death, etc. Other aspects were less harmonious. For instance, the Ukrainian Persondata section deliberately mentioned that Bandera was born on the territory of contemporary Ukraine and was a Ukrainian by nationality. It also displayed the red-black flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrains’ka Povstans’ka Armiia, UPA) and noted that Bandera was the first head of the Revolutionary Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists. The English section provided a similar representation, stating the allegiances of Bandera to Ukraine and UPA through the use of miniature blue-yellow and red-black flags and describing his nationality as Ukrainian. The Russian Persondata section mentioned Bandera’s Ukrainian nationality and stressed that he was born on the territory of contemporary Ukraine, but added that he had Polish citizenship. The Persondata for the Polish article was the simplest of all four sections and did not

include any information other than the dates of birth and death. This observation suggests that the image of Bandera in the Polish *Wikipedia* is the least contested among all three versions of the encyclopaedia.

A third important source of information in this regard is reflected in the categories by which *Wikipedia* articles are classified. According to *Wikipedia*'s definition, '[...] [t]he central goal of the category system is to provide navigational links to all Wikipedia pages in a hierarchy of *categories* which readers [...] can browse and quickly find sets of pages on topics that are defined by those characteristics.' (Wikipedia 2013, italics original). Categories provide the semantic context of an article inside the particular language version; therefore, their comparison can provide a basic perspective on the semantic differences among different articles (Voss 2006). In order to facilitate an analysis we grouped categories based on their subject matter. These metacategories were: biographical data (place/date of birth and death), life activities (education/activities/hobbies), circumstances of death, commemoration (posthumous awards/landmarks) and related concepts (general notions/general associations). While all four articles shared the same metacategories,<sup>11</sup> there were a number of important semantic differences on the level of single metacategories. The 'Life Activities' metacategory was of particular interest in this case: all four articles categorised Stepan Bandera as a nationalist politician; however, the Polish article identified him as a collaborator with the Third Reich while the English article listed Stepan Bandera among Ukrainian anti-Communists, as does the Ukrainian article. It is interesting to note that the Polish text was keen to distance Bandera from anti-Communism – a stance that is predominantly positive in Polish political rhetoric. Together these differences point to the fact that instead of a presumably neutral point of view, *Wikipedia* offers a 'linguistic point of view' (Massa and Scrinzi 2013) which varies from one language version of the encyclopaedia to another.

### *Distant reading Wikipedia*

In order to compare the results of the close reading of the lead sections of articles with the main text from the body sections, we computed the word frequencies of the articles. The method used here is also used below for *YouTube* comments and *Twitter* data, and it is therefore described in brief only once. We translated Ukrainian, Russian and Polish text with Google Translator to facilitate the comparison between the different language versions and removed very common words using a list of stop words. The use of Google Translator is appropriate in this case, because, although imperfect, our results can be replicated. Certainly, there were a number of inaccuracies, e.g. incorrect interpretation of specific terms and names – for instance, the surname *Bandera* was sometimes translated from Polish as 'flag'. The results were clear, though: whereas both the Ukrainian and English texts included terms such as 'hero', 'honorary' and 'citizen', those terms were quite simply absent in the Russian and Polish versions. Instead, the Polish and Russian articles placed greater emphasis on words such as 'arrest', 'death', 'murder', 'concentration' and 'camp'. The fact that these negative terms were mostly absent from the English and Ukrainian texts might indicate that they con-

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<sup>11</sup> The only exception to this rule is the Polish article which does not include any 'related concepts'.

veyed a more positive interpretation of Stepan Bandera. The English version paid less attention to Bandera's death, preferring to highlight how the historical figure is remembered. This was reflected through the frequency of terms such as 'monument', 'street' and 'museum'. In this way, Stepan Bandera is presented as a timeless symbol that is still relevant today. This stance resonates with the popular Bandera-related meme 'Heroi ne vmyraiut' ['Heroes never die'].

Use of the tool *Textviz* confirmed that many of the differences exhibited in the main articles were statistically significant.<sup>12</sup> Of the four corpora, the Ukrainian used the word 'hero' most frequently. In comparison with the other articles, it also indicated that the greatest emphasis on posthumous commemoration of Stepan Bandera is in contemporary Ukraine – particularly, the awarding of the title of Hero of Ukraine. This is evident in the use of such words as 'title', 'administration', 'president' and 'decision'. While the English discussion also paid considerable attention to the contemporary commemoration practices, more often it used words such as 'monument' or 'street', which were related to different sorts of practices. Furthermore, the Russian and Polish corpora differed from the Ukrainian view on Bandera's personality. The Polish article emphasised such words as 'OUN' (the English equivalent of 'UPA') and 'arrest', but also 'kill' and 'L'viv'.

Another approach towards our distant reading of *Wikipedia* articles was to scrape the electronic sources cited in the individual *Wikipedia* articles, i.e. all outgoing links. Those references represent an important part of a *Wikipedia* article, as they support the main arguments. Our findings indicated significant intersections between the Russian and Ukrainian versions, which had 17 sources in common. The Russian and Polish articles shared only one common source, and there were four common sources between the Ukrainian and Polish versions. Only two links were featured in all three articles, namely those linking to MediaWiki and to the Simon Wiesenthal Center. The Polish narrative about Bandera thus immediately stands in contrast to the Ukrainian and Russian ones, which share a considerable number of sources and, therefore, are more likely to represent at least two interpretations of Bandera's personality (namely, Ukrainian and Russian) in the same article.

### *Behind the scenes: about the editors*

*Wikipedia* articles are written collaboratively by Internet users, so we explored who makes the edits, and in particular, where they are located. As the *Wikipedia* privacy policy prohibits tracing the geographical location of registered editors, we were able to access this kind of data only for anonymous users. We applied a series of utilities made available by the University of Amsterdam's Digital Methods Initiative to access *Wikipedia* data. The *Wikipedia Edits Scraper* tool allowed us to gather data about registered and anonymous editors – namely the nicknames of the former and the IP addresses of the latter – and to compare these data for

<sup>12</sup> *TextViz*, a bit like a Word Cloud, plots the most frequently seen words. The strength of *TextViz* is that it plots not just frequency, but statistically significant differences between texts, and thus uses space in a meaningful way. See: <http://quantifyingmemory.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/textviz.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

three *Wikipedia* articles.<sup>13</sup> All in all, the Russian version had 471 different editors (271 anonymous), the Ukrainian 144 (33 anonymous) and the Polish 98 (58 anonymous).<sup>14</sup> The Russian and Ukrainian version shared 16 common editors, the Polish and Ukrainian 1, and the Russian and Polish 2. Again there was a clear pattern – very few people working on the Ukrainian or Russian site contributed to the Polish debate about Bandera.

After this initial comparison we used the *WikiTrip* tool in order to visualise the geographical location of an article's editors.<sup>15</sup> The results of this analysis indicated essential differences between the anonymous editing of the Polish article, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian and Russian articles on the other. Of all three articles, only the Polish text indicated a clear correlation between the language version of the *Wikipedia* article and the geographical location of editors. Of all edits of the Polish article, 88.37% were made from Poland. The Ukrainian article received the majority of its anonymous edits from Ukraine (46.59%), though there were several edits from the Russian Federation (3.07%), the United States (13.84%) and Poland (6.17%). The Russian *Wikipedia* article indicated the largest anonymous activity from Ukraine (54.57%) with the Russian Federation (37.5%) in second place and a few edits from the United States (1.82%), Kazakhstan (0.6%) and few other countries. The Russian article contained no anonymous edits from Poland.

The next step was to implement a sentiment analysis test on the collections of comments from these discussion pages. This approach was based on checking individually whether a word is present in a list of 4,000 adjectives classified as negative according to the word polarity dictionary used by Hu (2004). The fact that the texts were translated by machine means that errors are significant as typos and swear words remain unidentified. *A priori*, we expected the English language texts to appear the most negative, given that no translation is needed; conversely we expected the Ukrainian ones to appear the most balanced, given that Google translates Ukrainian by proxy of Russian. Across the board, nearly 1 in 20 words were identified as negative by the algorithm. A close reading of some comments suggested that this was a very conservative estimate. The differences between the languages were, according to a two-sample binomial proportion test,<sup>16</sup> 50-60% likely to be significant. Most significant was the suggestion that the Polish comments were more negative than the Ukrainian or Russian ones, but a probability of 60% was too low to accept this conclusion. Rather than revealing difference, the test highlighted how consistent the tone of debate was across languages.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolWikipediaEditsScraperAndIPLocalizer> (accessed 19 November 2013).

<sup>14</sup> The lesser number of anonymous editors in the case of Ukrainian *Wikipedia* can be explained by the fact that a considerable number of Ukrainian users use Russian *Wikipedia* instead and, consequently, contribute more to the development of the latter project.

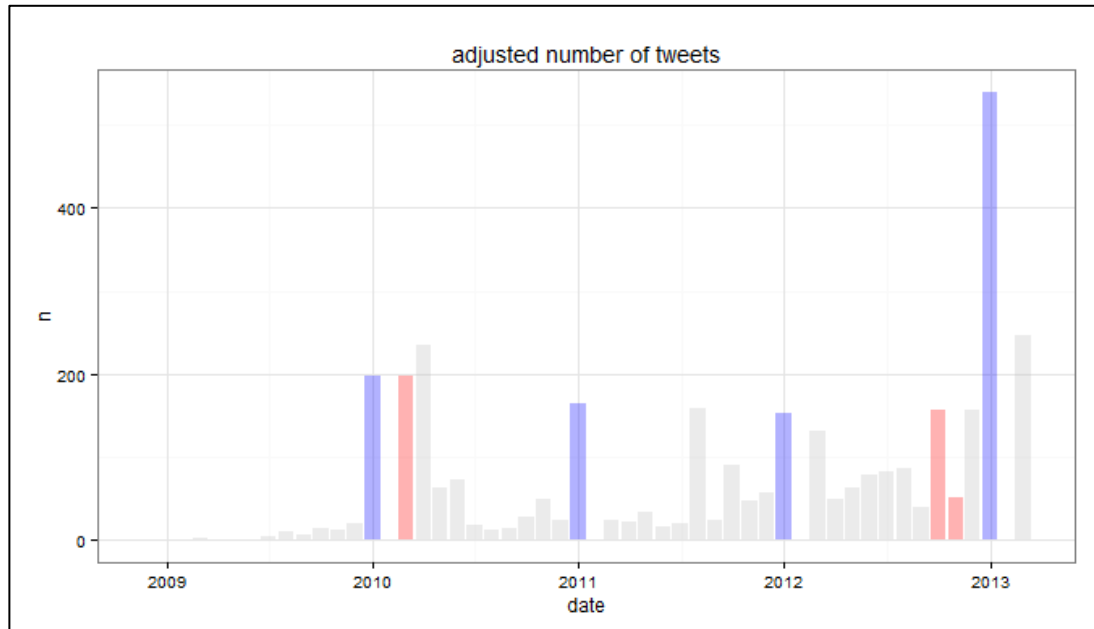
<sup>15</sup> <http://sonetlab.fbk.eu/wikitrip/> (accessed 19 November 2013).

<sup>16</sup> The test is used to evaluate whether two results are equally probable, as in a coin toss. 'Binomial' here means we are testing a binary distinction such as presence or absence, rather than measurement on a scale.

## Bandera on *Twitter*

While *Wikipedia* involves a large number of users, the number of actual contributors is very small. A better indication of perception may be found by accessing *Twitter* data, where individuals can freely express their views on any subject of their choice. Freedom of expression together with the less elitist stance of the platform – *Twitter* accepts all kinds of contributions in contrast to the strict semi-academic guidelines in *Wikipedia* – encourages involvement from a wider audience. Consequently, while *Wikipedia* presents the work of a few contributors to a wide audience, *Twitter* allows for massive engagement both on the producing and receiving ends. *Twitter* data is available online, though it is made available through a restrictive API. Alternatively, the Yandex search engine archive of tweets offers a deeper record of tweets about Bandera than that offered through the *Twitter* API. Although this approach allows time series comparisons, it is problematic in that the archive is partial and made based on nontransparent archiving principles. Yandex appears to collect Ukrainian and Russian tweets equally, but stores few or no Polish tweets. A comparison of Yandex’s record to a complete scrape of *Twitter* for March 2013 revealed that Yandex archived about 50% of all tweets and favoured ‘reputable’ sources. Most of the tweets, roughly two in three, were in Russian.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 2.** Tweets per month



Source: Rolf Fredheim

<sup>17</sup> This was done using the *cldr* implementation of Google Chrome’s language detection algorithm: <http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/cldr/index.html>. For details consult the R scripts at <https://github.com/ghowa/bandera-scripts> (accessed 1 December 2014).

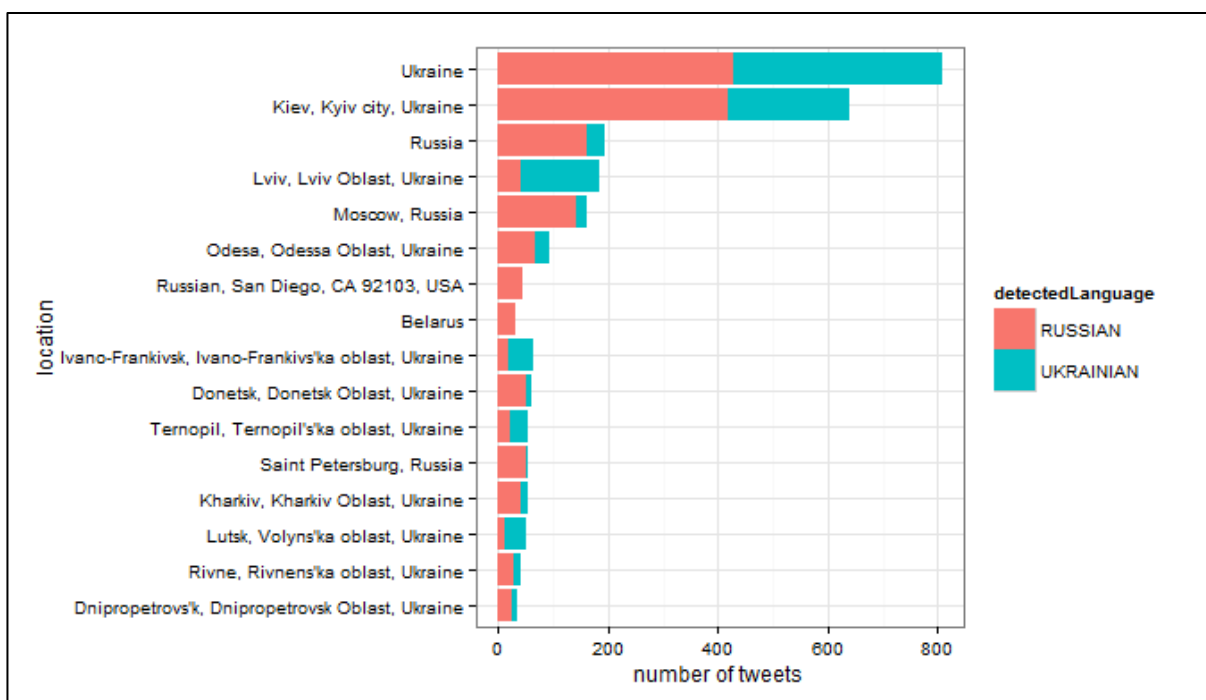
### Distribution over time

Tweets, much more than *Wikipedia* page views, were clustered around predictable key junctures such as elections (red) and annual commemorations (blue). The plot above illustrates that every year in December/January, near the time of Bandera's birthday, the Twittersphere came to life. Both in 2010 and in 2012, election campaigns were accompanied by an increase in *Twitter* activity. The sharp increase in 2013 was probably due to the nature of the archive: some recent 'low-quality' tweets were only briefly included in the data. With the exception of early 2013, which may be an anomaly, overall *Twitter* use appeared reasonably constant.

### Where do the tweets come from?

Out of almost 15,000 tweets 5,500 contained Geolocation data, and of these, over 4,000 were in Ukraine and 1,150 in Russia. These were self-declared locations and liable to misinformation. Locations such as 'the solar system' or 'USSR' are humorous and easily weeded out; more problematic was misinformation, but the sample of 5,500 users was large enough to mean that the number of users misreporting their location as Kyiv rather than Tambov is probably insignificant. While two thirds of tweets were in Russian, roughly four times more tweets originated from Ukraine than from Russia. Within Ukraine, the data revealed an east-west divide with the disproportionate absence of the central and southern regions (with the notable exception of Kyiv), but in no city is one or the other language monolithic:

**Figure 3.** Tweets by language and location



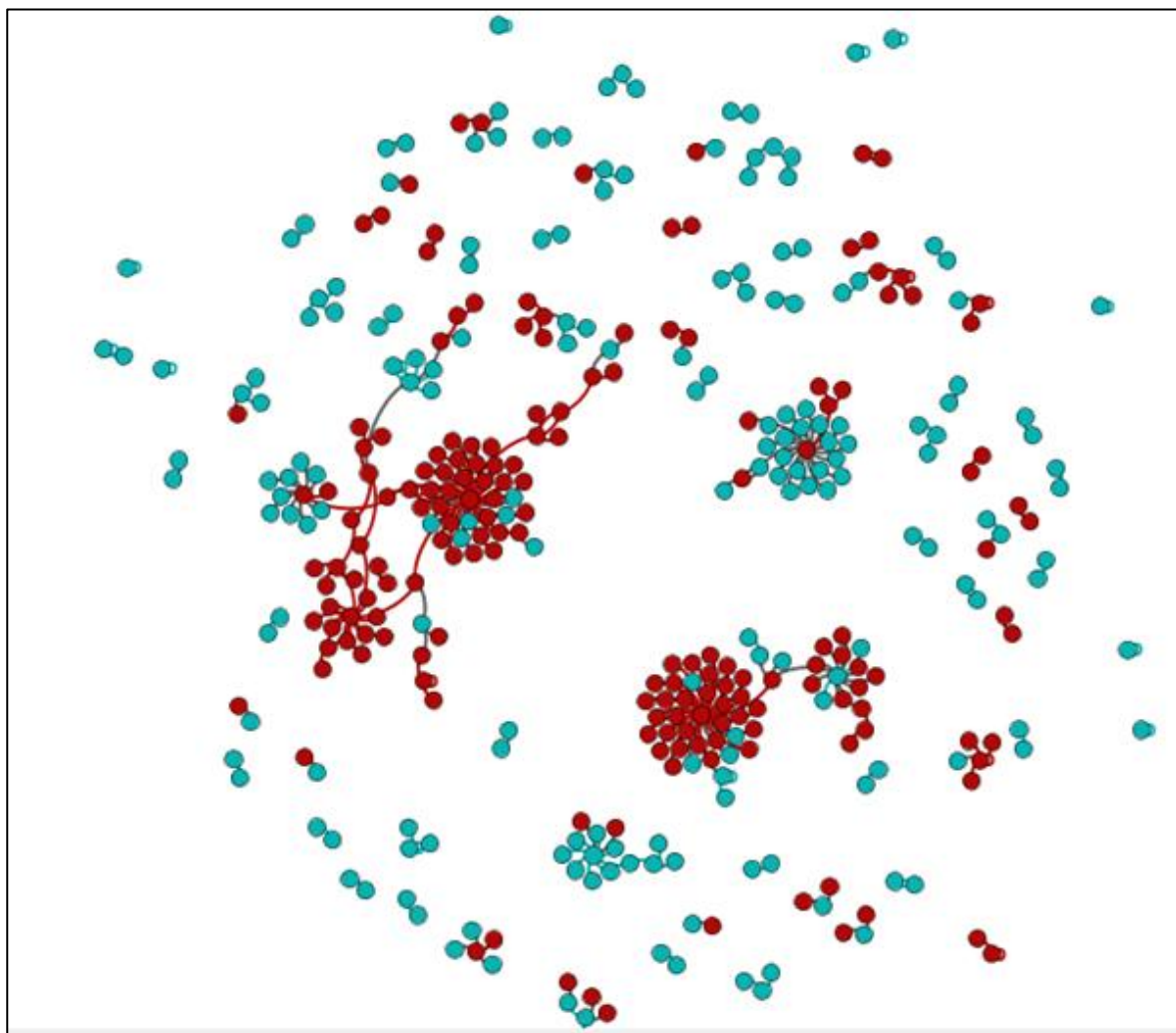
Source: Rolf Fredheim

### *Twitter interactions*

To inspect interactions between *Twitter* users, we took retweets and direct messages to represent interactions between users. We also removed all silent *Twitter* users, that is, users who received tweets, but did not themselves speak about Bandera. We then mapped these connections with the popular software Gephi to reveal patterns of interactions. Although the largest in number, Russian language users had relatively few links with other *Twitter* users interested in Bandera.

The map of the twittersphere reveals considerable isolation, especially for Russian language users (blue):

**Figure 4.** Connections between *Twitter* users (blue: Russian, red: Ukrainian)



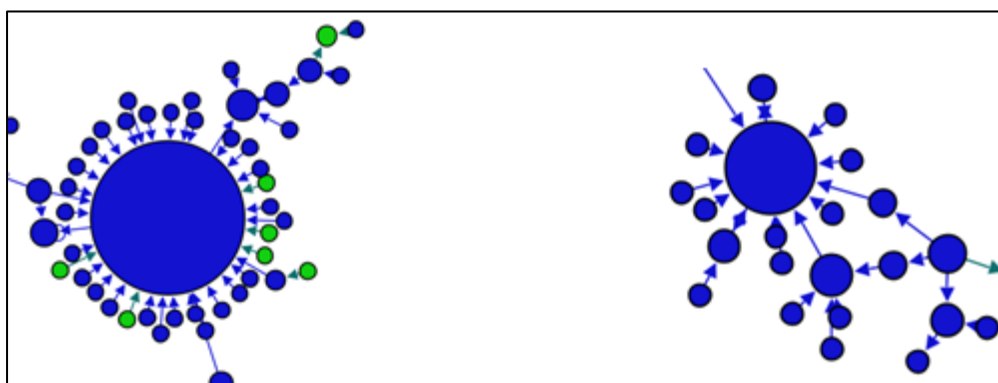
*Source:* Rolf Fredheim

There were some exceptions, notably the substantial blue cluster in the centre of the visualisation. When using Geolocation rather than detected language to subdivide the tweets, all the major clusters appeared to originate geographically in Ukraine, suggesting that Russians out-

side Ukraine may tweet about Bandera, but do not actively and systematically engage in the main debates.

In the *Twitter* data, there were two main types of content: promotion of other online material, most commonly online newspaper articles or videos and direct interaction between users discussing Bandera. The former category was in much greater evidence in our research, pointing to the dependence of *Twitter* activity on other information sources and, in particular, mainstream media. Such a pattern was already observed in studies concerning the use of *Twitter* during political campaigns (Bruns 2010; Larsson and Moe 2012). The majority of nodes were media sources, which in part reflects Yandex's archiving policy, but also the particular way in which the *Twitter* platform is used. There was a surprising lack of interaction between users. The largest single node was formed around the online newspaper *Ukrains'ka Pravda*. Most of the links with this source were retweets, as users promoted the content for wider circulation.

**Figure 5.** User clusters centred around a news source and around an individual



Source: Rolf Fredheim

There was little or no interaction surrounding Bandera between users who retweeted the same text. Much more interaction was observable around secondary hubs. Valentyn Desiatnyk (@10nyk) – a self-styled ‘Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist’ formed the centre of a purely Ukrainian language group. A second large Ukrainian language cluster was formed around the journalist Olena Bilozirs’ka and the Ukrainian language channel TSN. There was, additionally, a small cluster around Natalia Vitrenko, the leader of the pro-Russian Ukrainian Progressive Socialist Party. This cluster is apparently located in Ukraine, but is entirely Russian speaking and generally hostile:

Stoiat', bandery! Velodirizhabel'naia eskadril'ia PSPU vyletaet spasat' slavianskoe edinstvo! Prekratim #warinrussia, razviazannuiu NATOGestapo! [Stop, Banderas! The Bicycle-Blimp Squadron of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine is flying out to save Slavic unity! Let's stop the #warinrussia, unleashed by the NATOGestapo!] (@Kondratenberg 2011)

This lack of interaction, even amongst the most ardent activists, points to *Twitter* being used more for dissemination of information than for engaging in debate. This observation supports findings from earlier studies, which argued that *Twitter* is more commonly used as a news dissemination resource than as a social networking platform (Kwak et al. 2010).

We also identified a series of key users, who appeared to function as bridges between Ukrainian and Russian speaking clusters. For instance, within the giant cluster (above) the individuals @bihanskyy, @arhe\_dmitriy and @elf\_ira fulfilled such roles. These are individuals, apparently with relatively moderate views and equally comfortable using either language. @bihanskyy lives in L'viv and studied in Chemnitz. He tweets in both Russian and Ukrainian, though Ukrainian appears to be his preferred language. In contrast, @arhe\_dmitriy works for an online bookshop; his preferred language appears to be Russian. Finally, @elf\_ira lives in Kyiv and tweets in both languages. None of these individuals are obviously 'memory warriors', and it appears that, by and large, *Twitter* does not reflect offline conflicts about Stepan Bandera. When there is debate on *Twitter*, it is often about the validity of the sources, but within the data as selected by Yandex there are few hostile exchanges and relatively sparse interaction beyond exchanging links.

### **Bandera on YouTube**

*YouTube* is without doubt the most successful video platform on the Internet. It was founded in 2005 and proved to be an instant success. Just one year later, it was purchased by *Google* (Snickars/Vonderau 2009: 9). According to statistics published by *YouTube* on its website, it has more than 1 billion users each month who watch roughly 6 billion hours/month of video as of 20 November 2013. Every minute, 100 hours of videos are uploaded. Whereas it started as an American website, nowadays 80% of its traffic stems from other countries (YouTube 2013). So although there are national competitors, e.g. *Rutube* in Russia (Gornyxh 2009), *YouTube* nonetheless remains the most popular video platform worldwide. Therefore, it is perfectly suited for our analysis of cross-country, cross-media coverage of Stepan Bandera.

For our basic corpus, we selected both the first 100 videos returning for the search string 'stepan bandera' and those returned for its Cyrillic equivalent 'степан бандера'. This allowed us to identify three principal starting points for a quantitative analysis of these 200 videos. First of all, for most *YouTube* videos there was statistical information available, by means of which we gained a first insight into *YouTube* usage concerning Stepan Bandera. The second step was to scrape all comments from the selected 200 videos and attempt a distant reading by means of statistical analysis. By doing so we were able to learn about the discussions triggered by these videos and language used in these discussions. Third, we implemented tools to 'distant watch' the videos, i.e. to get to know them without actually watching them. Since as of yet, quantitative methods have generally been applied to written texts, this last approach was an innovation for quantitative memory studies.

### Statistics

According to media scholars Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, *YouTube* is not so much about social networking and community as about data:

YouTube presents videos in conjunction with viewer statistics, not detailed user profiles. As a matter of fact, “users” are by definition reducible to quantified traces of actual usage. With views, clicks, comments and ratings counted, user behavior becomes a byproduct of all the informational transactions taking place on the site, and raw data constantly gets fed back into the YouTube machinery. (Snickars/Vonderau 2009: 16)

Apparently, there is an abundance of statistical data available for each video stored on *YouTube*'s servers. Only the original uploader can access this data directly (Google 2013). A tiny subset of this data, however, is available on each video's *YouTube* page. Although the original uploader can turn off the display of more elaborate statistics, two numbers are always available: overall view count and numbers of comments. Our first step was therefore to scrape this information and create a table of the ten most watched and the ten most discussed Bandera Videos (Tables 1 and 2). Video language and type were determined manually.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 1.** Ten most watched Bandera videos (as of 18 September 2013)

	<i>Title</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Lang</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Views</i>
1	Tesak o Kavkaztsakh [Tesak about Caucasians]	youtu.be/MsCwHJzRyAk	ru	TV	224687
2	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn'. 1 chast' [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life: Part 1]	youtu.be/4usnbTmSamQ	ru	TV	82269
3	Tribute to Stepan Bandera	youtu.be/pEhJVq5amKs	en	slide	69104
4	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn'. 3-8 [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life: Parts 3-8]	youtu.be/_tInhcfLNd0	ru	TV	26254
5	Marsh 'Stepan Bandera' [March 'Stepan Bandera']	youtu.be/ZMCRkHxOnAU	ru	slide	25555
6	Stepan Bandera na kresach 2/3 [Stepan Bandera in the Kresy 2/3]	youtu.be/JnwuwJH9iTs	pl	TV	23507
7	Between Hitler and Stalin: Ukraine in World War II	youtu.be/mMB5on311Ug	en	TV	23079
8	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn'. 6-8 [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life. 6-8]	youtu.be/SqjpeXVQIr4	ru	TV	17759
9	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn'. 1-8 [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life. 1-8]	youtu.be/9tBxdj_Cu-E	ru	TV	16361
10	Neizvestnye bitvy Rossii 2 (Gimry 1832 g.) [Unknown Battles of Russia 2. (Gimry 1832)]	youtu.be/zspDt4h3h9M	ru	TV	16294

<sup>18</sup> More information about video languages and types can be found in the subsequent section 'Distant Watching'.

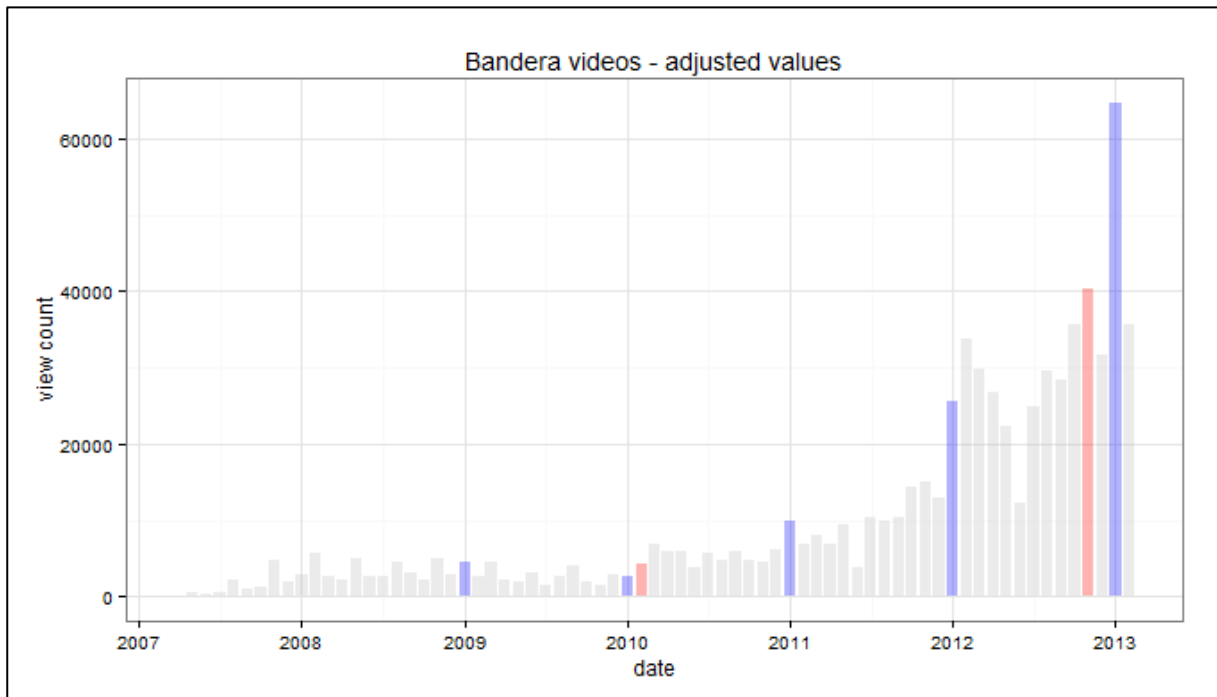
**Table 2.** Ten most discussed Bandera videos (as of 18 September 2013)

	<i>Title</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Lang</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Comm.</i>
1	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn' 1 [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life. 1]	youtu.be/4usnbTmSamQ	ru	TV	1088
2	Tesak o Kavkaztsakh [Tesak about Caucasians]	youtu.be/MsCwHJzRyAk	ru	TV	846
3	Fakel'noe shestvie v den' rozhdeniia Bandery ['Torchlight Procession on the Birthday of Bandera']	youtu.be/G2eONYmKXUY	ru	TV	584
4	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn' 3-8 [Stepan Bandera. Declassified Life. 3-8]	youtu.be/_tInhcfLNd0	ru	TV	365
5	Stepan Bandera. Rassekrechennaia zhizn' 2 [Stepan Bandera: Declassified Life. 2]	youtu.be/uwzIt6HyKN8	ru	TV	290
6	Stepan Bandera na kresach 2/3 [Stepan Bandera in the Kresy 2/3]	youtu.be/JnwuwJH9iTs	pl	TV	273
7	Stepan Bandera – heroi? [Stepan Bandera – A Hero?]	youtu.be/d5DzL6RCnTE	ua	TV	238
8	Stepan Bandera heroi Ukrainy [Stepan Bandera – Hero of Ukraine]	youtu.be/VWp2k15lxXQ	ua	slide	228
9	Karat Napalm Grupa – Pod Krwawą Bandera [Karat Napalm Group – Under the Bloody Flag]	youtu.be/2-5hi9QLPJw	pl	slide	223
10	Stepan Bandera na kresach 1/3 [Stepan Bandera in the Kresy 1/3]	youtu.be/ALx69iEZ80Q	pl	TV	187

The most watched video in our corpus, ‘Tesak o Kavkaztsakh’ [‘Tesak about Caucasians’], had nothing to do with Bandera, but instead was focused on immigrants from the Caucasus in Russia and was therefore removed from all subsequent statistics.<sup>19</sup> Generally, both lists are dominated by clips remediated from (Russian) TV, but some user-generated content can be found as well, in the form of various slide shows. After these first insights, we decided to access the more elaborate statistics for those videos whose original uploaders have not deactivated this function. Due to a recent change in the *YouTube* website, the scraping of extended statistics features has become rather complicated. Therefore all of the following statistics are based on the data scraped up until 29 April 2013. All in all, eight of the 200 videos had their statistics disabled. As mentioned above, we also removed the ‘Tesak’ clip. For the remaining 191 videos, we have scraped the view counts and upload dates over time (see Figures 6 and 7).

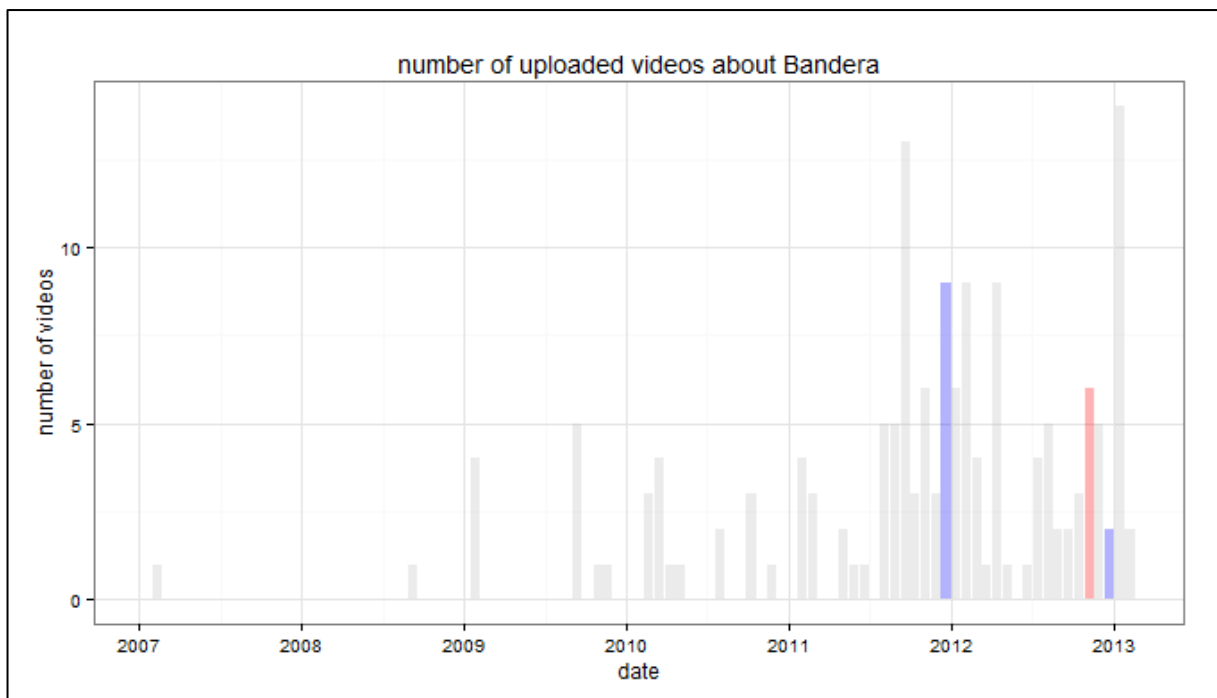
<sup>19</sup> It seems that YouTube included this video in the results because a user named ‘Stepan Bandera’ commented on it: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsCwHJzRyAk&lc=XxeCC8J7zyp7H3nMUEiS7qGRGZnctmom8-GLxHZ8vU4> (accessed 19 November 2013). This ‘false positive’ underlines the fact that YouTube acts as a type of ‘bottleneck’ (Eijk 2009).

**Figure 6.** Number of Bandera videos watched



Source: Rolf Fredheim

**Figure 7.** Number of Bandera videos uploaded



Source: Rolf Fredheim

In general, Bandera-related activity on *YouTube* seems to be rising in terms of both videos uploaded and watched. This impression may be deceptive, because the *YouTube* search-ranking will tend to prioritise more recent content, which may consequently be deemed more relevant. Nonetheless, some distinct patterns emerge from the plots: Bandera's birthday on 1 January regularly caused some extra activity, especially in 2009 – his 100th birthday – and onwards. One exception to this rule is 2010, where the proclamation of Bandera as a Ukrainian national hero on 22 January completely overshadows Bandera's birthday. This political decision also seems to have had a certain impact on overall *YouTube* usage: since 2010, Bandera videos have been uploaded on a more regular basis. The parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 28 October 2012 also coincide with an activity spike. It seems as if *YouTube* use has a more lasting memory potential; although the largest number of videos was uploaded in 2012, interest was much higher in 2013. Consequently, much of the interest in Bandera in 2013 was generated by old content – new material had often not yet been added. This demonstrates that since 2012, *YouTube* has been actively used for content about Bandera and that dissemination of the content has become more effective. This observation points to a steady growth of interest in Bandera's personality, coinciding with the memory politics of former President Viktor Yushchenko. Online activity may serve as an important indicator of the ongoing memory processes in Ukrainian society – even while on the official level the nationalist narrative of the Second World War becomes to a certain degree marginalised (Solod'ko 2013).

### *Comments*

*YouTube* activity is not limited to watching and uploading videos. Another vital part is commenting on them. Hence, we scraped the comments for the 159 videos in our data set for which commenting was enabled, ran language detection and split these into language groups. This corpus represented the aggregate data of all Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and English comments from a large (though not exhaustive) sample of *YouTube* videos. We then used a stemming algorithm and a stop word list to reduce duplicate terms and remove words unlikely to be significant. Finally, each of the language pairs were contrasted and the differences between the two visualised (see Figures 8-10). In these plots, words in dark blue are overrepresented to a statistically significant degree (probability calculated at the 0.95 confidence interval). The visualisations make clear which memory models and narratives are most common across national groups.

The main differences between Ukrainian and Russian language comments (Figure 8) can be reduced to a Russian-Ukrainian dichotomy: 'Russian' and 'Ukrainian' are overrepresented in Russian texts, along with an emphasis on the problematic history of relations between Bandera and the Third Reich ('German'). On the Ukrainian side there is a stronger focus on UPA and Bandera as a hero ('hero', 'UPA'). Most interestingly, the sparsity of significant differences shows that most ideas are present in both language groups. When contrasting either Polish and Ukrainian or Polish and Russian comments, no such balance can be found.



Figure 9 illustrates Polish-Ukrainian differences. In contrast to the Russian-Ukrainian case, here some associations are strongly overrepresented – especially in the Polish comments (from 70 to 100%). The Polish narrative is clearly centred around the Volhynia massacre, which is closely associated with such terms as ‘criminal’, ‘children’ and ‘murder’. Both Nazi and communist references such as ‘Hitler’, ‘Nazi’, ‘Jew’, ‘Stalin’, ‘Soviet’, etc. feature more in Ukrainian comments. Stepan Bandera figures more strongly on the Ukrainian side, while UPA is a major actor in Polish comments. Such terms as ‘Polish’, ‘Poland’ and ‘Pole’ are almost exclusively present in Polish texts, demonstrating the degree to which the Ukrainian commentators fail to acknowledge the Polish narrative about the past and/or the role of Bandera in Polish history.

One might expect a degree of similarity between the Russian and Polish arguments about Bandera, but in fact, the Polish and Russian texts exhibit the starkest differences (Figure 10). Again, the argument about UPA, Volhynia and Poles is virtually absent on the Russian side, which is surprising given that the Russian comments are so numerous (85,000 words). The Russian texts overemphasise Bandera’s role in Ukrainian independence, while both Nazi and Communist connections are overrepresented. The hypothesis that Russian texts would exhibit a greater focus on Bandera as a Nazi collaborator is confirmed, but the hypothesis that Poles would emphasise the Communist connection remains unsubstantiated.

### *‘Distant watching’*

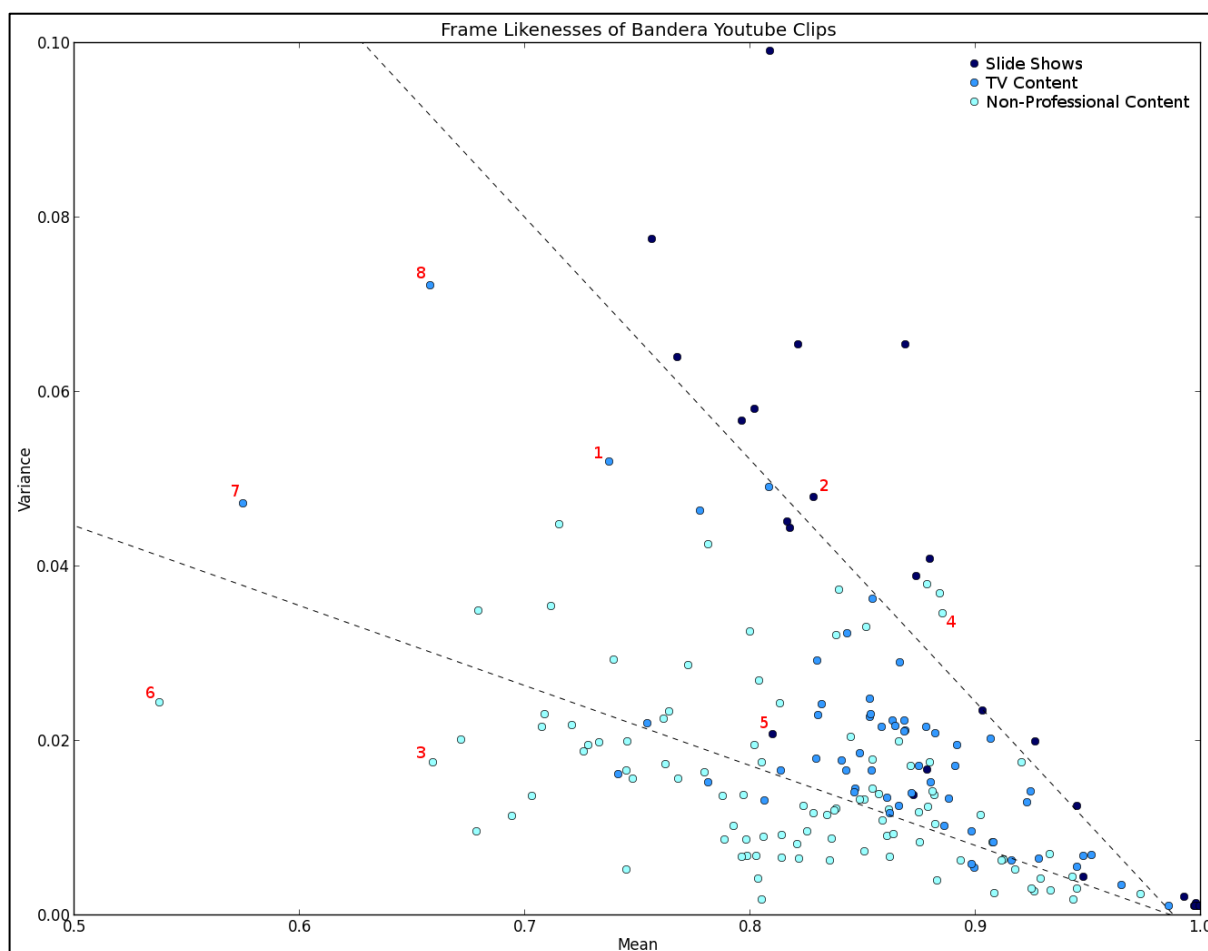
Having learned the basic dynamics of uploading and viewing the videos as well as commenting on them, we need to find out more about the videos themselves. As they last for dozens of hours, it seems reasonable to automatically categorise them in a meaningful way – even more so as the ‘distant watching’ scripts can now be reused for other research questions related to *YouTube*. Our approach towards categorizing *YouTube* videos was to perform a rudimentary genre analysis on them. In our top ten lists (Tables 1 and 2) we can identify two basic genres: remediated TV content such as the Russian documentary ‘Tainy razvedki’ [Secrets of the Secret Service] (RusOsetia 8.3.2013, marked with ‘1’ in Figures 11 and 12) and user-generated videos. User-generated content usually consists of slide shows with music, where each image is shown for several seconds (e.g. CiemnaStrefa 26.10.2012, marked with ‘2’). Thus, the differences between the individual frames of the video are rather small, with abrupt changes in between. On the other hand, the differences between individual frames are higher for TV content, but altogether more continuous. By means of measuring the distances between individual frames, we implement automated genre detection.<sup>20</sup> This automatic attribution helps us to further study the details and dynamics of the different *YouTube* genres we have identified.

We extracted the videos’ frames with a frequency of one frame per second. Thus, from a one-minute video we received 60 individual frames. We then computed the differences for subsequent frames and plotted them using the mean value of the frame differences on the x-

<sup>20</sup> Automatic genre detection for online content was proposed by Mehler, Sharoff and Santini (2010), although they focussed mostly on written texts.

axis and their variance on the y-axis. Afterwards we manually defined the video genres. In most cases, video title and description held enough information to quickly assess the genre, in other cases it was necessary to actually take a glimpse of the video. During this process a third video genre could be detected: non-professional videos filmed using consumer cameras or smartphones (e.g. Stepan Bandera 25.8.2011, marked with '3'). The resulting plot can be found in Figure 11.

**Figure 11.** Frame differences of the 200 *YouTube* clips, coloured according to their genre



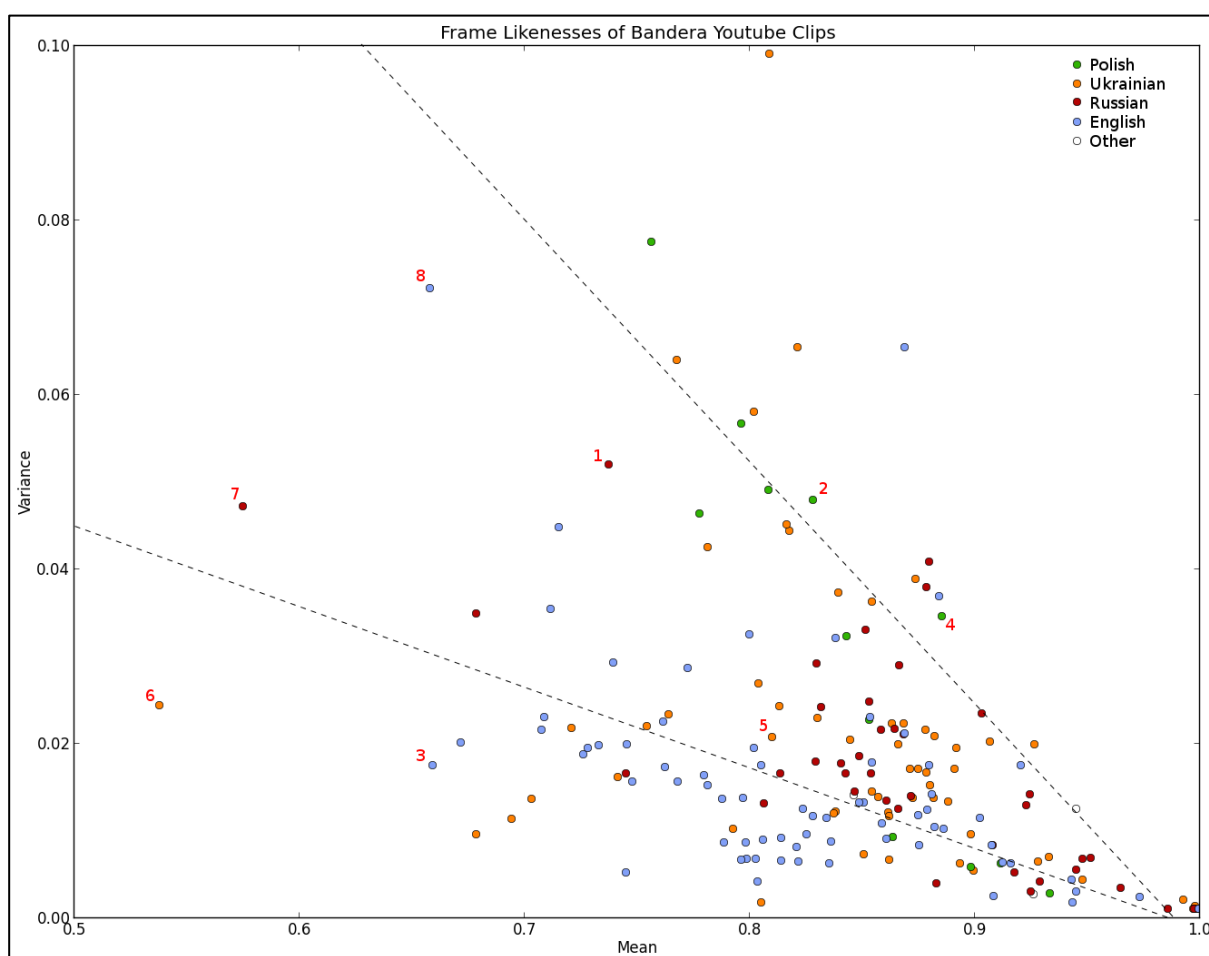
Source: Gernot Howanitz

Although the three genres overlap, a certain order is recognizable. Slide shows are mostly located in the top right corner of the plot. Some very static life action videos are also to be found here (warsztatyTV 8.11.2012, marked with '4'). On the other end of the spectrum are non-professional videos (bottom left). They are defined by constant slight frame changes with few to no cuts. As soon as there are cuts, those private videos can get mixed up with TV content, mostly located in the center of the plot. A few slide shows are also to be found in this region, especially when visual effects such as rotation and panning are used (rurytch 28.1.2010, marked with '5'). In order to ease interpretation, we manually insert two helper lines into the plot to separate the three main genres. The graphic now allows us to select indi-

vidual videos for a closer, in-depth analysis. This partitioning is not specific to Bandera videos but can be applied to other research questions as well. Thus, manual attribution of videos to their respective genres is rendered unnecessary for future projects.

Next we combined this crude genre distinction with language detection. The language of a video was determined based on its title and description retrieved from *YouTube*. In roughly 75% of the cases, this approach worked without problems; the languages of the remaining 25% had to be determined manually. The result of this effort is displayed in Figure 12, again with the genre borders manually inserted.

**Figure 12.** Frame differences of 200 *YouTube* clips, coloured according to their language



Source: Gernot Howanitz

According to this plot, slide shows seem to be mostly in Ukrainian and Polish. This genre is the most basic way to create a video. TV content is mainly Russian and Ukrainian, with mostly documentaries (RusOsetia 8.3.2013, '1') and a few news clips (RT Russian 1.1.2013, '7'; AFP 2.1.2013, '8'). English predominates in non-professional videos, which can be attributed to a large Ukrainian community that is based in San Francisco and documents its activities under the *YouTube* username 'Stepan Bandera' (e.g. Stepan Bandera 25.8.2011, '3').

This automatic assessment of video genres did not tell us much about content, although it could to a certain extent identify similar videos. For example, the three leftmost videos, marked with ‘6’ through ‘8’, all covered a torchlight procession in Kyiv on 1 January 2013. Video 6 was an example of a non-professional account of the event (Aronets’ 1.1.2013), whereas video 7 and 8 were news clips from *Russia Today* (RT Russian 1.1.2013, ‘7’) and *Agence France-Presse* (AFP 2.1.2013, ‘8’).<sup>21</sup> This example shows how the graphics produced by the ‘distant watching’ scripts point our attention to videos we would not have watched otherwise. Moreover, they allow us to trace the relationships between individual videos.

## Analysis

Throughout this study, we observed that the majority of the Bandera material was produced in the Russian language, but geographically in Ukraine. This may be explained by Bandera’s image in Ukraine, where he is perceived less as a historical personality and more as the source of conflicting historical narratives in the Russian-speaking East and Ukrainian-speaking West (Portnov 2014). Three times as many *YouTube* comments and twice as many tweets were in Russian, while the Russian language *Wikipedia* page about Bandera was three times as long as the Ukrainian one and the underlying discussion was six times as long. Does this suggest that the Russians care most about Bandera, perhaps because he figures as an easily identifiable villain? Any such interpretation is rapidly refuted by examining the origin of online interactions. Across all three media we observed that activity was strongly concentrated in Ukraine. Does this suggest that Bandera is contested as part of a national Ukrainian debate, one that moreover is conducted primarily in Russian?

This appears to be true, but only to a degree. When we examined the expressed attitudes towards Bandera, we found surprisingly little difference, not just between Russian and Ukrainian, but all the languages within the online platforms. In a series of statistical tests, we recognised virtually no difference between the proportion of negative words used in different language versions of the *Wikipedia* article about Bandera, the discussion page, or indeed on *YouTube*. Only on *Twitter* did Russian speakers use significantly more negative language than did Ukrainians. Interestingly, however, we were able to detect sharp divisions between different social media platforms: *Wikipedia* discussions were the most moderate while *YouTube* comments emerged as twice as negative. These patterns were consistent also for Polish and English.

In this instance it appears that genre and different usage patterns were remarkably consistent across languages. *YouTube* comments were equally marked by diatribes and vulgarities for every language examined. *Twitter*, in contrast, was used to disseminate information.

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<sup>21</sup> One further possible step to automatically identify video content would be to use image recognition algorithms to locate common images of Stepan Bandera or symbols such as the Nazi swastika, the Soviet hammer and sickle, and the Ukrainian coat of arms within the extracted video frames. Thus, one would know if a video is indeed about Bandera, and could also identify the different historical contexts in which he is presented. Unfortunately, image recognition is a very complicated task that would have gone beyond the scope of this article.

Most *Wikipedia* content was neutral in tone, but pointed to other resources that might be notably less so.

While expressions appear conditioned more by the social platforms employed by users, the large quantity of Russian language material points to Russian material as a site of conflict. This is not surprising, given that, within the former states of the Soviet Union, Russian often works as a lingua franca and that Ukrainian speakers are more willing to use Russian than Russian speakers are to use Ukrainian. Assuming that conflict is more likely in fora available to people holding opposing views, we expected to see a higher incidence of othering, or ‘us-them’ polarisation in Russian texts.<sup>22</sup> This, however, was not the case. When exploring *YouTube* comments and comparing Ukrainian and Russian language statements, we saw that actually, those written in Ukrainian more often used strong othering language. In this regard, it is worth noting the role played by English language resources, which are also accessible equally to all language groups. Across the board, English content was the most negative; this was especially true for *YouTube*, where English was also the most polarised. Though Russian and English both figured as linguae francae, the former proved the most moderate, while the latter saw the greatest hostility and polarisation. What explains this difference?

English *YouTube* comments were probably the most aggressive because this was the main site where speakers of different languages interact. In addition, English language resources appeared to be the only sites where the Polish and Ukrainian narratives met. While comments on English language content were the most aggressive, it is Polish and to a lesser degree Ukrainian content that was the most antagonistic. In this regard, our findings contradicted Volodymyr Kulyk’s, who concluded that ‘[...] the inherently transnational Internet communication undermines the national framework for the production of identity’ (Kulyk 2013: 79). The plot of genre distribution in *YouTube* videos showed that most user-generated content about Bandera was in the Polish or Ukrainian language, while Russian videos tended to be clips from television, reposted to *YouTube*.

Ukrainian-Russian debates tended to revolve around interpretations of Bandera’s historical role, while Polish debates focused on the alleged genocide conducted by Ukrainian nationalists, associated with Bandera, against the Polish population in former Polish territories. Not only did Russians and Ukrainians rarely engage with this Polish argument online, it was also virtually the only aspect of Bandera debated in Polish comments. The most popular video was a TVP documentary about hardships faced by Poles living in eastern Ukraine and Stepan Bandera’s role in the Volhynia massacre, while the second most popular video, released on 26 October 2012, immediately prior to the Ukrainian parliamentary elections and promoted on Facebook, was a rap called ‘Pod Krwawą Bandera’ [‘Under the Bloody Flag’]. It tells the story of Bandera and the Volhynia massacre in a slideshow format, featuring provocative imagery of dead children and highly inflammatory lyrics.

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the underlying rationale and technical explanation, see Fredheim (2013b).

## Conclusions

### *Patterns of (non-)interaction*

One might expect that Poland would figure as a distinct case in the Stepan Bandera case study, but the extent to which Polish voices failed to interact with Ukrainian and Russian ones online is striking. Though evidence from the *Twitter* data was lacking in this regard, the *Wikipedia* edits revealed that while the Ukrainian and Russian pages contained a large number of international edits and contributions to discussions, the Polish page was edited almost exclusively by users writing in Polish and located within Poland. Associated with this was a sharp difference in focus between the Polish debates and the Russian-Ukrainian debates, where the former focused almost exclusively on the massacre of Poles while the latter overlooked it. The only exception was the small number of English language videos on *YouTube*, which saw the most aggressive and polarising rhetoric.

In general, location appeared to trump language: that is, those using Russian in Ukraine were much more engaged in debates about Bandera than those using Russian in Russia. The Russian *Wikipedia* entry about Bandera, for instance, was edited mainly by users located in Ukraine. On *Twitter*, Russian users in general, but especially outside Ukraine, were relatively isolated. On *YouTube*, however, Russian language content was the most popular and the site of most debate, generally centred on interpretations offered by documentaries, or assessments of the Bandera marches.

Sentiment analysis of user responses showed greater differences between genres than between language groups. However, in terms of *YouTube* video content, Russian language resources were the least overtly hostile, while Polish resources were the most hostile, even though we hypothesised the opposite.

*Twitter* activity was sparked most by both Bandera's birthday and the Ukrainian elections. For *Wikipedia*, this pattern was similar, but with a certain amount of continuous baseline activity. *YouTube* usage was somewhat different: cyclical events were of less importance, but dates were sometimes targeted by video creators (e.g. 'Pod Krwawą Bandera'). While *Wikipedia* interest tended to be stable, with less extreme peaks of interest in recent years, the number of *YouTube* views seemed to grow exponentially. *Twitter* usage also appeared to be relatively stable. The data therefore suggests that video content is ever more frequently used in the debate about Bandera.

### *The value and pitfalls of distant reading and watching*

The idea of using statistical methods to get an overview of online activity about Stepan Bandera proved to be tremendously helpful, but also extremely labour-intensive. We were able to adapt various 'distant' techniques in order to work with all of the three platforms in question: *Wikipedia*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*. Of course, the difficulty of obtaining statistics varied greatly. The easiest approach was to use statistics generated by the websites themselves: view counts, upload counts, page views, etc. However, the platforms often change the amount of data accessible and also limit access to this data through various means.

Compared to simply scraping statistical data, it was more challenging to ‘distant read’ texts. We had to overcome various problems, e.g. translating the texts to make them comparable or filtering common words that only add noise. Fortunately, many recent research projects focus on ‘distant reading’ texts, and so they can be used with only slight adaptation. In general, the ‘distant reading’ strategy is not as dependent on a platform’s ‘good will’: if a text is accessible on the Internet, it can be analysed.

It should not be a surprise that ‘distant watching’ proved to be the most difficult. Videos are very complex to handle and it takes significant computation time and storage space to extract statistical information from them. The most productive approach was to calculate image likeness. This way, sharp cuts can be identified that point to genre. We envisioned an actual assessment of video content by means of applying image detection algorithms on individual frames. Although identifying specific symbols or photographs within videos worked occasionally, error rates were too high for this approach to be useful in this study. Nonetheless, videos are an important means of online activity and creativity and deserve attention from the quantitative side, regardless of difficulty. Our ‘distant watching’ approach can be regarded as a first step in this direction.

While this article concentrates on the technical aspects of studying cultural memory online and glosses over ‘classic’ approaches to researching cultural memory, we hope we have shown which statistical approaches towards online platforms might be fruitful, which tools exist and how they can be combined to form the lenses of quantitative memory studies. Without doubt, further research is necessary to fully reconcile traditional theories of cultural memory with quantitative methods. We hope that this study and our data will contribute to the foundation of such a practice.

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# The New Cold War on the Football Field: .ru vs .pl

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**Abstract:** Russian-Polish relations have had a tumultuous history. Since the advent of the so-called ‘New Cold War’ heralded by Vladimir Putin in his 2007 Munich speech, the two countries have ended up on opposite sides. The New Cold War is fought not only on the governmental level. It is also found in history books, athletic competitions and other events where Poles and Russians can express their post-socialist identities and allegiances. For the most part, the ‘New Cold War’ is a battle for memory. In this paper, we offer a transnational Polish-Russian perspective on one of the memory wars fought in the post-socialist spaces. We propose to analyse how Polish-Russian antagonistic relations translate into online and offline conflicts during and in the aftermath of the UEFA Cup 2012, using big data analysis of new media, notably of *YouTube* and word-frequency software to identify the main themes of online discussions.

**Keywords:** New Cold War, Russia, Poland, memory war, YouTube, history, Katyn, gender

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A famous anecdote from the Yalta conference of February 1945 describes a conversation between Stalin and Churchill about borders in Eastern Europe. In an ultimate attempt to persuade Stalin, Churchill exclaimed that Lwów had never been a Russian city. ‘But Warsaw was’, answered Stalin. This conversation at the dawn of the Cold War is one of many examples that illustrate the complicated nature of Russian-Polish relations.

Russia and Poland share a history that encompasses multiple periods of rivalry and war between Muscovy and the Rzeczpospolita: the Polish invasions during the Time of Troubles at the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century; the annexation of parts of Poland during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; the Polish struggle for independence culminating in the 1919-1920 war with the Bolshevik State; the Soviet invasion after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact; the Katyn massacre of 1940; and Soviet domination over Poland during the Cold War. These events left scars on Russian and Polish collective memories that surfaced when both post-Soviet Russia and independent Poland struggled to find and assert their new identities.

After the end of the Cold War, Russia lost its influence over the formerly Soviet-dominated geopolitical space. Poland denounced its time ‘under Soviet occupation’ and joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004 – an act that the Russian authorities deemed hostile. When Russian President Vladimir Putin lashed out at the US during the Munich Security Conference in 2007, arguing that the US had ‘overstepped its national borders in every way, [imposing its] policies on other nations. The force’s dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction’ (Putin 2007), analysts spoke of a ‘New Cold War’ (Sakwa 2008; Mankoff 2009; Lucas 2008). The Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg noted that Putin’s speech was a clear sign that NATO should definitely expand towards the East (RFERL 2007). Polish officials saw in this speech the revelation of Russia’s ‘true face’ (Wprost, 2007).

The ‘New Cold War’ is, among other things, a battle for memory. Both the Polish and the Russian government approach their relations in terms inherited from their historical past – and their populations follow suit. If, for many Russians, the Soviet period was a time of glory, for Poles it was a time of humiliation and suffering. In Russia, the Polish interpretation of the entire socialist period as ‘the Soviet occupation’ is often considered revisionist or even pro-Nazi: the battle for memory becomes a battle for identity.

For Poland, the battle for national identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union was a painful process. In many cases it was connected with the so-called ‘reckoning with the past’ [rozliczenie się z przeszłością], which remains unfinished. President Lech Kaczyński started a broad discussion about anti-communist resistance in Poland and the fate of its ‘cursed soldiers’ (Wiatr 2007). Thanks to his efforts, the first of March was declared a ‘Day of Remembrance’ and is particularly intended as a tribute to the underground anti-communist soldiers – [Narodowy Dzień Pamięci ‘Żołnierzy Wyklętych’] (Wieliczka-Szarkowa 2013).

Identity politics is no less important in Russia. The new Russian identity builds on a combination of pre-revolutionary and Soviet grandeur (Etkind 2013). The Russian national anthem has been replaced with the Soviet Union anthem including updated lyrics by the same S. Mikhalkov who wrote its first version; Polish attempts to criticize the Soviet Union are met with fierce reactions from the Russian Foreign Ministry. However, as communism does not play a pivotal role in the new Russian identity it needs to be supplemented with other ‘moments of glory’. In an attempt to change the more than 70-year old tradition of celebrating the October Revolution, the Russian authorities heralded in 2005 a ‘Day of People’s Unity’, commemorating the expulsion of Polish-Lithuanian forces from Moscow in 1612. This is but one example of the Russian-Polish history-ridden confrontation, which affects even seemingly innocuous activities such as football games.

The 2012 UEFA Cup, which took place in Poland and Ukraine, presented another demonstration of this reciprocal nationalist *ressentiment*. For Russia and Poland, the Cup culminated in a football match that pitted the two teams against each other on Russia’s Independence Day. The match ended in violent clashes between the respective football fans. Various networks extensively filmed the clashes prior to, during and after the game. Media coverage preceding the Cup was politically and historically charged, particularly in Poland. Manifestations of open animosity were abundant: swearing, denigration, metaphors pregnant

with lewd sexual innuendo and obscenities littered the online field. Reaching a fever pitch, offline clashes spilled over into online fights.

In this paper, we offer a transnational Polish-Russian study of this incident of memory war that has been fought in the post-socialist space. We explore how Polish-Russian antagonisms in the international arena translate into online and offline conflicts, thereby putting memory construction at stake. As a unit of analysis, we have chosen memory models – Polish and Russian cultural constructions that conflate modern events with historical references, in which both sides draw parallels between Russian-Polish history and contemporary events.

### Theoretical and methodological framework

In our paper we regard the UEFA cup as a memory event for its participants and employ the concept of a memory model (Etkind 2013), in which contemporary subjects comprehend the political present by drawing analogies to the historical past. In this process, the digital public sphere renegotiates and remediates both the past and the present (Rutten et al 2013). Various online media, technologies, and platforms play different roles in this process. As Andrew Hoskins pointed out:

[...] the construction of memory in everyday life is ‘imbricated’ not only in digital recording technologies and media but also in the standards and classifications resulting from their growth that inevitably and often invisibly regulate our sociotechnical practices. (Hoskins 2009: 95)

On the Russian segment of the Internet, antagonistic political clashes with historical and religious undertones have been termed ‘Holy war’, or *kholivar* (холливар). It is a specific, digitally-born pattern of phatic communication, i.e. that type of communication whose only function is to perform social tasks, as opposed to conveying information (Malinowski 1923; Waugh 1980). As Vera Zvereva has observed, ‘Holywars’ – protracted arguments where neither side intends to alter their viewpoint – are extremely common in the Russian digital media and blogosphere (Zvereva 2012). *Kholivar* even has its own entry in *Lurkmore*, the Russian encyclopaedia of internet memes (Lurkmore 2013). *Holivar* debates focus on themes that are connected to identity. There are a certain number of comments that clearly fit under Roman Jakobson’s definition of ‘phatic’ with primitive exclamations such as ‘Go Russia!’ or ‘Go Poland!’ However, the more significant body of ‘holy war’ comments that we analysed has identity-building components (cf. Morenkova-Perrier 2012; Rutten et al. 2013).

Focusing on *YouTube*, we selected the most frequently viewed videos about the clashes in Warsaw on 12 June 2012. We have chosen *YouTube* because of its popularity and accessibility, which allows for big data analysis. Due to thousands of comments to the videos, we scraped the data using Python code and processed them via word-frequency software – wordle.net – to reveal the most frequently used words. The audience’s reaction is operationalized by quantitative analysis of the key terms, which are followed by qualitative discourse analysis. For this purpose, we created word clouds (www.wordle.net) out of the comments to

*YouTube* videos. Wordle.net processes the plain text of the webpages and uses the number of times a word appears in a text to determine its relative size, omitting so-called ‘stop words’ (frequently-used, but unimportant words such as ‘the’, ‘and’ or ‘but’ and their analogues in Russian and Polish). Historically meaningful concepts are analysed in their context in order to determine whether their connotations are positive or negative.

Our analysis of visuals is based on an offshoot of semiotics – iconography and iconology (Panofsky 1955), where iconographic analysis is aimed at discerning who is depicted and why he/she is depicted in a particular way. This method can be applied not only to art, as Erwin Panofsky suggested in his works (Hasenmueller 1978), but also to the analysis of contemporary ‘icons’ and artistic objects (Holly 1984: 87; Warburg 1939). As Warburg notes, ‘[a picture] becomes a hieroglyph, not meant simply as a picture to look at but rather as something to be read – an intermediate stage between image and sign’ (Warburg 1939: 279). Thus, the images that we analyse in our paper are interpreted through their iconographic meaning and the particular context within which they are presented.

Moreover, visuals are an extremely important part of memory construction. As Johnson notes, ‘rather than turning to narrative, memory often figures the past with the immediacy of images’ (Johnson 2012, 4), especially with their psychological evocation, which Warburg called *Pathosformel*, i.e. educing pathos. The images that we are looking at are all invested with the ‘pathos formula’ that helps them remain in the European ‘picture memory’. In Efal’s words,

The ‘Pathos Formula’, which expresses this traumatic encounter between man and the world, is a result of a visual fixation, the source of which is a process of mimicry of some of the bearable (biomorphic) qualities of the threatening force, that then becomes petrified and fixed as an image’. (Efal 2007: 221)

Warburg’s pathos formula for image memory is especially visible in the context of the present analysis: the images that usually make it to the identity narratives are the ones that have a significant traumatic component: wars, occupation and humiliation. Thus, image memory at least in its European context is a sequence of often violent, harrowing visuals that are re-interpreted and re-cycled in an identity construction process often bent on re-living and re-inventing the traumas of the past.

### **The Polish-Russian memory war**

Ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Poland and Russia have experienced numerous ups and downs in their relationship (Tsygankov 2012). The antagonism in the international arena over anti-missile systems or Polish support for the Orange Revolution in Ukraine spills over into arguments over the ‘correct version’ of history. The Polish government uses commemorations and anniversaries to bring up the Soviet invasion of 1939 and the Katyn massacre. The Russian government accuses Poland of being aggressive, nationalist and ungrateful for having been liberated from the Nazi yoke (Cheremushkin 2003). Thus, Polish-Russian debates often become memory events, where either or both countries revise historical events

and inscribe them into the contemporary debate. If during the Cold War Poland, *nolens volens*, was on Russia's side, in the New Cold War, Poland and Russia see each other as adversaries.

The 2008 Russian-Georgian war seemed to confirm Polish fears of Russian expansionism in the post-Soviet space. The Polish President Lech Kaczyński compared the diplomatic impasse around the war with the appeasement of Hitler (Nagorski 2008) – a memory model that infuriates Russian officials and is sure to elicit a very stern reaction from Russia. The Polish President went so far as to compare Russian aggression in Georgia to the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, and the subsequent inclusion of Poland into the Soviet bloc. Moreover, Kaczyński stressed that Poland hoped to ensure 'that Americans do not become indifferent to any attempts to include Poland in Russia's sphere of influence' (Nagorski 2008). Consequently, the Polish leadership re-interpreted a distant war as a memory event, reviving the image of an aggressive, colonizing Russia.

Another memory event was created out of the catastrophe on 10 April 2010, when the Polish Presidential airplane crashed near the city of Smolensk in Western Russia, killing all 96 people on board, including president Lech Kaczyński, his wife Maria Kaczyńska, several high-ranking Polish governmental officials, and relatives of the Katyn massacre victims. They were flying from Warsaw to attend the 70th anniversary of the massacre. The catastrophe united Polish society in mourning, but also divided public opinion. Although the Russian and Polish investigators concluded, in separate official inquiries, that poor visibility and human error were the causes of the crash, alternative stories and conspiracy theories emerged. Several Polish politicians accused the Kremlin of pumping artificial fog over the runway or causing an explosion on board. Although the majority of Poles did not share these theories, such rumours increased the level of mutual distrust between Poland and Russia. This tragic event also resulted in a wave of media responses that connected the Smolensk crash with the Katyn massacre and amplified memories of troubled Polish-Russian relations (Etkind et al. 2012; de Bruyn 2013). In the end, the Smolensk crash prompted conciliatory gestures from both President Putin and Prime Minister Tusk – that is, until the 2012 Euro Cup.

Most East European countries feel uneasy about their Soviet bloc history. In 2011, the Polish Constitutional Court amended legal regulations that banned 'fascist, communist or other totalitarian symbols'. It remains legal to use these symbols only in relation to artistic, educational or scientific pursuits (Polska Agencja Prasowa 2012). Nevertheless, before the 2012 UEFA Cup, Polish officials recommended to football fans that they not bring Soviet symbols to Poland: 'A vot izobrazhenie serpa i molota priravnivaetsia v Pol'she k fashistskoi simvolike i zapreshcheno zakonom' ['The hammer and sickle symbol is an equivalent of Fascist symbols and is banned by law in Poland'], Interfax reported quoting Poland's vice-ambassador to Russia, Jarosław Książek ('Varshava razreshit "serp i molot"' 2012). But he added: 'k maikam s nadpis'iu "SSSR" nikto pridirat'sia ne budet.' [(...) nobody will take issue with t-shirts with the inscription "USSR"] The Russian fans sported exactly this kind of Soviet paraphernalia. Comparisons of the Soviet Union with Fascism or Nazi Germany caused an outcry both in Russia's governing circles (MID RF 2009), and, according to our findings, also among the general (internet) public.

## Politics and sports

Since antiquity, sport and politics have made a successful pair. In modern times, the prime example of ideology mingling with sports is the competitions organised by the Third Reich, especially the Berlin Olympics of 1936 (Walters 2006), where athletic victory was considered an integral part of racial superiority. Equally interesting are the relations between politics and sport during the Cold War. Tensions developed on two levels – between the communist and capitalist blocks on the one hand, and among different representatives of each on the other. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Czech hockey victory over the USSR in 1969 was celebrated throughout the country as a moral achievement as well. When Poland was close to rebellion in 1980, Władysław Kozakiewicz was booed at the Olympic Games in Moscow after he set a new world record; in response, he showed the Soviet audience an offensive gesture, which is now called ‘gest Kozakiewicza’ [the Kozakiewicz gesture] (Szerszunowicz 2008).

As Tomlinson and Young note (2006: 3), ‘the Olympics and the World Cup as media events have continued to stimulate fierce competition among nations for the right to stage such events and to fuel discourses and narratives of international competition and national rivalry.’ Combining sport, politics and mass culture, such events revivify old grievances and produce new identity constructions (Smith and Schaffer 2000). Even though it is often argued that the international nature of these events is ‘a bulwark against ignorance, chauvinism, and war’ (MacAloon 1981: 263), large sporting events have not failed to spark outbursts of violence and xenophobia (Blacker 2012; Peucker 2009). For football fandom the concept of ‘narrative identity’ is particularly relevant, since football teams and clubs produce polysemic texts, which allow supporters to construct their own individual narratives (Crawford 2008).

The UEFA Cup 2012 did not avoid the pitfalls associated with mass sporting events. The controversy began with the feminist group ‘FEMEN’ demonstrating against human trafficking in Ukraine. FEMEN members referred to the drastic increase in forced prostitution during sport competitions and the male chauvinistic ethos associated with them (‘Femen vs Euro2012’ 2011). There was also a threat of the Cup’s boycott by European leaders because of Ukraine’s human rights record and former prime minister Iuliia Tymoshenko’s arrest (Harding 2012). This controversy before the UEFA cup provoked a micro-battle in a larger memory war. Polish pre-emptive protests against the use of Soviet insignia during the Cup were met with an opposite reaction from Russians. This was an example of ‘self-inflicted’ identity construction, which internalises the hostile discourse about the Other. Even though Russians do not routinely wave Soviet flags or wear fur-hats, this is a common stereotypical image of Russians. In this instance, the Russians attending the event appropriated their pejorative portrayal and amplified it, with disastrous consequences.

Before the Polish-Russian match, a Polish politician from the party ‘Law and Justice’ [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS], Marek Suski, said that the feelings of Polish fans were fully justified, because they resulted from historical events. The Polish fans’ behaviour, he explained, stemmed from the temptation to punish Russians for the Bolshevik invasion of 1939, the Katyn massacre of 1940 – which, in his opinion, aimed exterminating the Poles – and the plane crash in Smolensk of 2010 (Suski 2012).

**Image 1.** Banner unfolded by Russian fans during the Euro 2012 football game in Warsaw on 12 June 2012



Source: Public domain

**Image 2.** Screenshot from the movie '300' that is frequently employed in caricatures



Source: Zack Snyder's '300'

The controversy surrounding Soviet insignia goaded Russian fans. Many waved USSR flags; others wore T-Shirts or fur-hats with red stars, the hammer and sickle or Soviet flags. The game in Warsaw was scheduled for 12 June, Russia's Independence Day, which many Russian fans decided to commemorate with a march through Warsaw. Moreover, the game took place in a new National Stadium (Stadion Narodowy), as opposed to the old and ill-reputed Stadion Dziesięciolecia that used to be the venue for communist meetings and festivities. Like many other football fans around the world, Russian supporters are infamous for their violent behaviour. Clashes between fans of different football clubs have made headlines in the Russian press, and the violent Manezhnaia Square riots in Moscow in 2011, with an almost 10,000 strong rally, were also in part organized by the football-fan network (Hutchings and Tolz 2011) after one of the fan club activists was killed in a street fight.

During the Russian-Polish game, Russian fans unfurled a giant banner with a picture of a red-coloured medieval Russian knight in armour with a sword and an inscription in English 'This is Russia' (see Image 1 above). The fact that Russian fans chose a medieval knight could be a consequence of the 2005 Unity Day celebrations, which commemorated the defeat of the Polish enemy by Russian knights in 1612. The construction of a new Russian identity that combines both medieval and Soviet history is obvious here. While the inscription is in English, the red colour makes a reference to the Soviet era (red flag, Red Scare). Even though the banner is red, blue, and white like the current Russian flag, the main figure is still red, which could be an allusion to the Soviet past and the period of Communist rule in Poland, which is regarded as Soviet colonisation. The pre-modern armour evokes the Time of Troubles, when Russians drove the Polish army from Muscovy. The poster is a double entendre simultaneously referring to two historical periods when Russians subjugated Poles. By alluding to an ancient Russian victory over the Poles irrelevant to the contemporary events but well-understood by all, this poster presented an aggressive provocation.

Russian football fans identified the knight in the poster as Dmitrii Pozharskii, the head of the Russian army that drove the Polish-Lithuanian forces out of Muscovy in 1612. Thus, this image depicted Poland as already defeated, a common way of 'trash talking' before a competition. The banner was also based on a widespread 'This is Sparta!' meme that parodies the scene from the 2006 motion picture '300' (see Image 2 above), in which the main protagonist, Leonidas, King of Sparta, declines peace with the Persians by shouting at the Persian Messenger 'This is Sparta!' and kicking him into a well (the caption itself is not from the same scene however). This scene from the movie can be considered an identity construction event: not only does Leonidas overpower his enemy, he also shapes the identity of his people.

In Poland, images of the EURO 2012 and the Polish-Russian match frequently reference Soviet-Polish relations. For instance, Image 3 below depicts Polish football players with sabres and army uniforms from the Polish-Soviet War (February 1919 – March 1921), which ended in a Polish victory. This particular picture also refers to the deeply-rooted romantic World War II myth of the Polish cavalry attacking enemy tanks with sabres. It is worth mentioning that those myths were recently re-examined in the highly controversial Polish-Lithuanian historical film directed by Paweł Chochlew, *Tajemnica Westerplatte* [*The Secret of Westerplatte*].

**Image 3.** Photomontage ‘Lance do boju, szable w dłoń! Rosjanina goń, goń, goń!’ [‘Lances for the battle, sabers in hand, Chase the Russian, chase, chase, chase!’]) from the newspaper ‘Gwizdek24’



Source: [www.gwizdek24.pl](http://www.gwizdek24.pl), published online 11 June 2012 (accessed 13 September 2013)

**Image 4.** Photomontage from the Polish newspaper Super Express, 11 June 2012



Source: Super Express, 11 June 2013. <http://m.se.pl/multimedia/galeria/87792/na-moskala/> (accessed 13 September 2013)

This picture's caption is a well-known reference to *Żurawiejka* – a two-line couplet, used by cavalry regiments of the Polish Army and popular during the Polish-Soviet War and in the interwar period. Some historians trace the Polish *Żurawiejka* back to the 'Uhlan March', written in 1863, during the January Uprising. The original text of *Żurawiejka* from the 1920s reads: 'Lance do boju, szable w dłoń: Bolszewika goń, goń, goń' ['Lances for the battle, sabres in hand,/ Chase the Bolshevik, chase, chase, chase']. In the above image, the author changed only one word, replacing 'Bolshevik' with 'Russian' (Odziemkowski 1996; Kaczmarek 2010; Brzoza 2011).

The next picture of Polish football players depicted as flying hussars (the cavalry of the first Polish army), conflates Polish prowess on the football field with military victories on the battlefield.

The game finished 1:1, but what happened inside the stadium was only the beginning. That evening, clashes between Russian and Polish supporters left 11 people injured. Both Polish and Russian Football Unions were fined for the behaviour of their fans. In the following sections, we analyse the 'holy wars' provoked online by *YouTube* videos that depicted the clashes between Russian and Polish fans.

### Transnational resonance

A 'Video of brutal clashes between Russian & Polish fans in Warsaw' (Russia Today 2012) was published online on *YouTube* by the Kremlin-backed *Russia Today* and targeted an international audience. As of 25 of March 2013, the video had 1,709,749 views and almost 9,889 comments from all over the world. In the video, one can see several violent clashes, most notably a person in a black jacket attacking a Russian fan with a Russian flag, as well as physical confrontations with the police. During these clashes, the popular Russian military song 'Katiusha' blares in the background – another memory model that connects Russia's Soviet days of glory (in this case, the Great Patriotic War) with modern times. Quantitative analysis of the comments revealed several discussion threads with history-laden discourses (see fig. 1).

Apart from Polish and English curses, there are multiple references to Soviet times with keywords such as 'Soviet' and 'USSR' that usually included accusations of repression and further criticism. Pro-Russian commentaries were also in English, but Russian-language comments were not statistically significant.

There was also a lengthy discussion in various languages about the comparison between Soviet and Nazi insignias – a clear overflow from the 'offline' debate that took place before the Euro 2012. The words 'Germany' and 'Germans' were also used frequently. Looking at these words in context, it becomes clear that most commentators are referring to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Thus, this debate can be placed within the on-going European memory war over the ethics of equating Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Russian officials have invariably met this thesis with strong objections, and the resulting discussion is reflected in the comments responding to the *YouTube* video.



## The Russian reaction

The ‘This is Russia’ banner and the clashes before and after the game provoked much digital reaction. With a Cyrillic title, the same video appeared as ‘Draka mezhdu pol’skimi i rossiiskimi fanatami v Pol’she’ [Clashes between Polish and Russian fans in Poland] (RT Russian 2012, 12 June), which, as of 25 March 2013, had 544,297 views and 4,913 comments. Figure 2 displays a word cloud generated after scraping the comments to the video.

An interesting feature of the comments is their transnational dynamics. Even though the majority of the discussion took place in Russian, there are statistically significant English, Polish and (less so) Ukrainian language components, which reveal a predominant anti-Russian content (e.g. the Cyrillic word ‘кацап’ (katsap) – a derogatory reference to Russians in Ukraine and some other countries). Given the controversy surrounding the status of the Russian language in Ukraine, the explicit use of derogatory Ukrainian terms towards Russians is especially important. In this case, language acts as a tool of identity construction, emphasizing the independence of Ukraine even from the Russian language.

Apart from multi-lingual Russian-Polish-Ukrainian swearing, there are many references to Stalin and the USSR and denigrating comments that imply a subordinate position of Poland in regard to Russia. This war of words spilled across borders, with Ukrainian commentators siding with Polish ones in their opposition to Russian behaviour. Frequently used words such as ‘СССР’ [USSR], and ‘история’ [history] are just a fraction of other historical references to ‘красная кацапская чума’ [red katsap plague] and murdered Polish officers (Katyn). At the same time, Russian-language commentators insulting Polish fans make few references to history: most of their hate speech is just obscene. Occasional commentators also mock the plane crash at Smolensk and remind other commentators that Poland was previously under Soviet dominance.

Domestically, discussions of Russian identity involve a memory war, which is often similar to the polemics surrounding the ‘This is Russia’ banner. People who prefer not to overlook gruesome pages in the Soviet Union’s history are often called ‘либерасты’ (a pejorative conflation of ‘liberal’ and ‘pederast’) – those who allegedly ‘brought Russia to its knees’ or ‘broke up the Soviet Union’ – while those emphasizing Russia’s glorious past are often seen as patriots, not least by the Russian authorities (Etkind 2013).

## The Polish reaction

We have selected a video of the Russian-Polish clashes titled ‘Zamieszki w Warszawie przed meczem Euro 2012 Polska – Rosja’ [‘Riots in Warsaw before the Euro 2012 match Poland – Russia’] (KibicPolskiPL 2012) posted on 12 June 2012, which gathered 386,120 views and 2,392 comments as of 25 March 2013. Among the most popular vocabulary are ‘kurwa’ (a vulgar Polish word equivalent to ‘whore’) and ‘jebać’ – (‘to fuck’). In addition to offensive insults, we noted the specially coined ‘СССРадам’ – a portmanteau that begins with the abbreviation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (СССР) in Cyrillic, while the last Cyrillic letter of the word, ‘Р’, is also the Latin letter for the word ‘Padam’, which means ‘col-

lapse' or 'fall down'. This is a clear reference to the collapse of the Soviet Union. 'Roman' is a direct reference to Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) – a Polish politician, statesman, chief ideologue and co-founder of the authoritarian right-wing political party Endecja – National Democracy. His views are associated with a strong anti-German sentiment and anti-Semitism, a shared penchant in the comments to the video.

**Figure 3.** Comments to the Youtube video 'Zamieszki w Warszawie przed meczem Euro 2012 Polska – Rosja' [Streetfights in Warsaw before the EuroCup match 2012 between Poland and Russia] (KibicPolskiPL 2012).



Source: Elizaveta Gaufman, Katarzyna Walasek

Among the less commonly encountered expressions are words such as: rosyjskie czerwone świnie [Russian red pigs], Bolszewicy [Bolsheviks], czerwoni [reds], czerwone zagrożenie [red threat], and Żydzi [Jews]. Users also express disappointment that there is no modern-day Piłsudski – a reference to the Polish-Russian War (1919-1921), or Napoleon – a reference to the French invasion of Russia in 1812. Thus, both historical figures are associated with fighting the Russians.

Polish football fans tend to demonstrate a very strong social and national bond. At most matches, fans display Polish flags and banners representing important people and events in Polish history, such as The Greater Poland [Wielkopolska] Uprising of 1918–1919, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and the cursed soldiers or crimes connected with Martial Law in Poland of 1981-1983<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is described in a documentary film called *Bunt stadionów* [Rebellion of the sports stadiums] (ISTFILM 2013).

**Image 5.** Górnik Walbrzych supporters in the memory of ‘cursed soldiers’, 1 March 2013



*Source:* Follow my Freedom Blog ‘01.03.2013 – Żołnierze wykłęci/Cursed Soldiers’ <http://followmyfreedom.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/1-03-2013-zolnierze-wyklecicursed-soldiers/> accessed 18 September 2013

**Images 6 and 7.** Left: Jan Matejko ‘Polonia – Rok 1863 (Zakuwana Polska)’ [‘Polonia – Year 1863 (Chained Poland)’], Right: Poster: ‘Czy chcecie dopuścić do tego, by tak się stało i z Waszymi kobietami i dziewczętami? Brońcie się wszystkimi siłami przed bolszewizmem!’ [‘Do you want this to happen to your children and girls? Protect them from Bolsheviks’], Poland (1921)



*Source:* Public domain and <http://tipolog.livejournal.com/51039.html> (accessed 13 September 2013)

In many cases, flags and banners at sport stadiums include anti-Semitic slogans. They are associated with anti-communist views, prominent among football supporters, and the idea of ‘Żydokomuna’ [‘Jewish Commune’, i.e. Jewish influence], which arose during the interwar period and blames Jews for introducing Communism in Poland. The idea is also related to the post-war period and accusations that Polish Jews cooperated with the Soviet regime (Shore 2005; Michlic 2006; Śpiewak, 2012).

### ‘Russia is a whore!’ and ‘Poles can suck it’

The fact that large sporting events are associated with a male chauvinist ethos was especially visible in our online material. Both Russian and Polish fans resort to gendered metaphors in their insults, which is, in itself, very common at a football match. In this case, however, it can be traced to historical traditions of Polish/Russian representations. In both cases, there is a notable shift in gendered representation of the self. After the partitions of Poland and especially after the anti-Russian insurrection of 1863, Polish patriots frequently used the motif of a woman victimized by invaders (Images 6 and 7).

In the 1920s, Russia was depicted by Polish state propaganda predominantly as a male barbarian trying to rape female Poland. In addition, the ‘Russian’ protagonist often displays ‘Semitic features’ (cf. Satjukow, Gries 2004), which reflects the popular Polish attitudes towards the Bolshevik Revolution and the alleged Jewish influence on it.

**Image 8 and 9.** WWII Poster ‘Motherland calls’ by Irakly Toidze and a photograph of Evge-nii Vuchetich’s sculpture commemorating the battle of Stalingrad



Source: <http://www.plakaty.ru/posters?cid=1&part=%2525D0&thumbs=1&id=40>, public domain

Anti-Semitic swearing is still present among the Polish commentators online, as we identified previously, but it no longer carries gender overtones.

In Russia, depicting the nation as a woman was also common (Cheauré 2002; Rutten 2010), e.g., during and after the Great Patriotic War when themes such as ‘Родина-Мать зовет [Motherland Calls]’ became popular in posters and sculptures (see above). According to some authors, these were ‘phallic woman’ representations (Sarlin 1963; Kennedy 2002), which featured an un-feminine image of a woman with a weapon and which suggested not victimization, but rather a ‘male’, ‘active’ role. Thus, in the current Russian identity discourse, Russia (as exemplified by the ‘This is Russia’ banner) is no longer associated with a female image. On the contrary, the female role is assigned to Russia’s adversaries.

In visuals related to the football match, however, neither Russia nor Poland is depicted in female form. Moreover, football fans of both countries strove to embody their countries in a militarized masculine form, exaggerated by means of phallic objects (sabres, swords etc.). In these football-connected manifestations of the so-called ‘New Cold War’, both sides are trying to feminize the opponent, while preserving male and active forms for themselves.

According to numerous studies (Dreizin, Priestly 1982; Zhel’vis 1997; Kon 2011), Russian curses have a potent gender aspect, suggesting master-slave relations. In these obscenities, the very sexual act proclaims dominance of males over females. Feminizing the other signifies the implied loss of virility of the Other (Mikhailin 2000). By sexually assaulting the opponent in the commentaries, the enunciators threaten the target group, which is rendered submissive through the proclaimed sexual action (Kon 2011; Zhel’vis 1997). For example, Russian-language commentaries feature obscene statements demanding that Poles perform oral sex on Russians.

Both sides of the debate tried to portray the Other as a female, which explains the extensive use of the term ‘kurwa’ in Polish and ‘bliad’ (‘whore’) in Russian, but in the Russian case the sexual metaphors were predominantly based on an active denigration of the opponent. Even ‘the Kozakiewicz gesture’ had a similar message: the sportsman showed the audience that he was in the masculine, superior position vis-a-vis the booing public. Even though gendered metaphors are ubiquitous in everyday speech and among fans during sporting events, the Polish and Russian usage seems significant and linked to memories of their military past. Moreover, the New Cold War context provided both Poles and Russians with the opportunity to rattle their (virtual) sabers in the quest to affirm their masculinity.

## Conclusion

The notion of a New Cold War seems not so far-fetched when one looks at Russian-Polish relations.<sup>2</sup> Foreign policy seeps into far-reaching areas like the football fields. The Polish-Russian game on 12 June 2012 in Warsaw illustrated the complicated relationship that these

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<sup>2</sup> This article was written in spring 2013 and could not take into consideration the events in Ukraine in winter 2013/14, which constitute a memory war on their own. Nevertheless, in the context of Polish-Russian relations we still argue that the term ‘New Cold War’ is appropriate, as both Russia and Poland were seen as members of opposing (military) blocs that took an opportunity to spill over their *ressentiment* on the football field

two peoples have with their common history. The UEFA Cup generated a ‘memory boom’ (cf. Winter 2006), not on an academic but on a popular level, which resulted in clashes and offensive behaviour that had hardly any relation to sport. The online clashes revealed patterns of behaviour similar to those observed offline: obscene language, insults, and references to the past are a logical continuation of the violence on the streets of Warsaw.

In order to analyse the memory event of the football game, we selected the most viewed *YouTube* video clips that featured the report of the clashes between Russian and Polish fans. As we scrutinized different audiences, we chose the most frequently viewed videos under Cyrillic, English and Polish headlines. We discovered that both Russian and Polish actors employ memory models, making references to the glorious periods of their respective histories related to war victories: in the Russian case it was the Time of Troubles (‘This is Russia’) and the Soviet period when Poland was under Soviet dominance, while in the Polish case the historic references included ‘flying hussars’ and the victorious 1919-1920 war with Bolshevik Russia. The iconographic analysis of the images used by both sides reveals that Russian memory models merge a medieval knight who defeated the Poles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with a hammer and a sickle on a fur-hat. Russian memory models deal mostly with historical references, while Polish models make clear connections not only with historical events, but also with the history of sport during the Cold War.

In general, we describe the patterns of communication under all three videos on the *YouTube* platform as ‘holy wars’. An overwhelming part of the digital material consists of multilingual, obscene and highly gendered language. This hate speech does not include a significant amount of ethnic stereotyping that was prevalent during the Russian-Polish war of 1919-1920, but mostly concentrates on the events of the more recent past relating to Russian-Polish antagonism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In all three videos, a statistically significant portion of the Ukrainian and Ukrainian-speaking audience side with the Polish perspective. The surprising result of our findings is the fact that even a transnational audience uses memory models for the ostensibly innocuous purposes of football fandom, making references to the Soviet past and to the alliance between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

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# The Arrest of Ratko Mladić Online: Tracing Memory Models across Digital Genres

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the digital rhetoric triggered by a ‘memory event’ – the May 26, 2011 arrest of Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladić, a fugitive convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague (ICTY) for war crimes in Bosnia. Surveying the verbal and visual rhetoric used across online genres and platforms to describe Mladić after his arrest, the authors focus on the most oppositional and historically fraught viewpoints: a dominant anti-Mladić narrative and the fierce, if fringe, pro-Mladić narrative that emerged in response.

Our primary goal is to examine a memory event captured and created by digital culture, and to map the emergent rhetorical models across an overview of digital genres by tracing cultural associations. The second level of research is comparative, as we find that the depiction and perhaps even understanding of Mladić’s arrest shifts according to genre, medium and platform. As we are studying a perpetually shifting digital terrain, our methods are experimental and heuristic; we hope our overview may suggest new directions for research to other scholars of digital rhetoric, historical memory models and the rise of twenty-first century nationalism.

**Keywords:** Ratko Mladić, arrest, memory models, digital genres, social media, nationalism.

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The arrest of Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladić on 26 May 2011 was at once a historical, media, and memory event.<sup>1</sup> Mass media worldwide and across the former Yugoslav spaces reported that ‘one of the world’s most wanted men’ had finally been apprehended by the Serbian police (‘As It Happened’ 2011). The elusive fugitive of nearly sixteen years, ‘wanted for the Srebrenica massacre of Bosnian Muslims’, was at last to be turned over to the Hague International Criminal Tribunal (‘Ratko Mladic Arrested’ 2011). Online, the news triggered wide-ranging responses across genres, media, and platforms: a series of secondary

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<sup>1</sup> We follow Alexander Etkind’s definition of a memory event as ‘a re-discovery of the past that creates a rupture with its accepted cultural meaning. Memory events are secondary to the historical events that they interpret, usually taking place many years or decades later’ (Etkind 2010: 4).

and tertiary rhetorical waves found expression in varied forms of digital culture. Certainly, the arrest provoked memories of the most recent 1990s Yugoslav wars and of the Srebrenica massacre, but it also appeared to trigger more distant cultural memories – most prominently from World War II.

Our research begins with a study of the verbal and visual rhetoric used to describe Ratko Mladić after his arrest. International and local sources depicted the same event as a triumph or a tragedy, and Mladić himself as a genocidal war criminal or a nationalist martyr. While mainstream Serbian news did not endorse the rhetoric of the extreme nationalist minority, for the sake of our study, we focus on the most oppositional and historically fraught viewpoints: a dominant anti-Mladić narrative and the fierce, if fringe, pro-Mladić narrative that emerged in response.

The digital rhetoric employed by each side in such memory wars follows traceable patterns.<sup>2</sup> ‘Western’ media and the mainstream of public opinion appear to interact regularly, transferring rhetorical comparisons and memory models back and forth across media and online sources. Meanwhile, a Serbian nationalist counter-culture finds space online to cast Mladić, and the ‘Serbian people’ by metonymic linkage, as a martyr hero in an ongoing anti-imperial struggle. Such rhetoric, in turn, garnered some international sympathy as an anti-Western hegemony stance; for example, we found expressions of solidarity on Russian online forums.<sup>3</sup>

Our project has no claims to access what Bosnians or Serbs ‘really think’, but is instead meant as an inquiry into how digital genres and platforms shape particular kinds of discussion, focusing on the historically comparative epithets, tropes and memes associated with Ratko Mladić after his arrest. We use this case study to explore how rhetoric works online, where it is produced and disseminated at exceptional speed; and where it is shaped by the limitations and potentialities of platforms, from the 140-character tweet to lengthy and carefully montaged *YouTube* videos.

We recognize that we are living in, as the authors of the recent volume *Digital Humanities* have put it, ‘one of those rare moments of opportunity for the humanities, not unlike the other great eras of cultural-historical transformation such as the shift from the scroll to the codex, the invention of moveable type, the encounter with the New World, and the Industrial Revolution’ (Burdick et al. 2012: vii). Our South Slavic case study provides not only linguistic and historical complexity, but also an insistent reminder of the ethical dimensions of humanistic scholarship in the digital age.

### Overview: Mladić’s layers

Our inquiry into the digital cultural production inspired and provoked by the arrest of Ratko Mladić (born 1942) uncovers the traces of multiple memory models on both sides of the

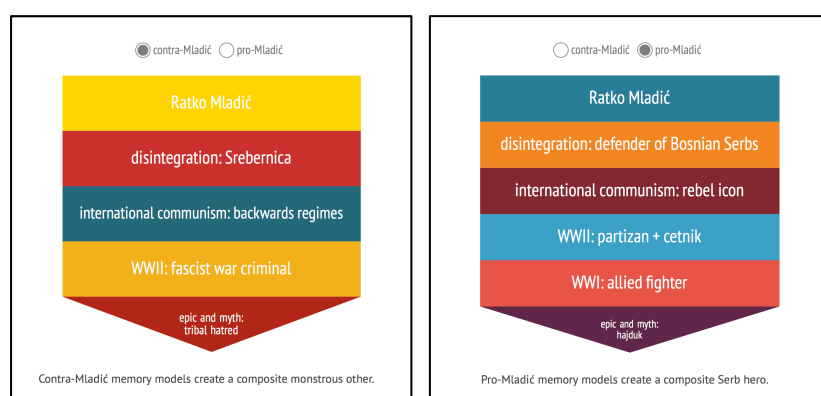
<sup>2</sup> We use the term ‘West’ with reservations and always implied quotations, but following the perceived divide central to so many of our sources.

<sup>3</sup> The materials collected for this study are primarily based on experimental collective research conducted in 2013.

Mladić ‘web war’ (Rutten, Fedor and Zvereva 2013). The most prominent, direct, and expected layers of memory discourse emphasize Mladić’s associations with Srebrenica and genocide. The next rhetorical move across many online genres is to make implicit or explicit comparisons with Nazi war criminals, relying on emotional associations with World War II and the Holocaust and thus, from the point of view of Western European or NATO forces, with the ultimate ‘just war’ of intervention. Another layer of memory discourse stresses the collapse of international communism, comparing the remnants of the former Yugoslavia with backwards ‘holdout’ regimes doomed by global progress towards democratic (neoliberal) peace. Still older layers reach to World War I; to nineteenth-century struggles for national independence; to cultural memories of Ottoman rule; or even to mythic times, stressing ancient (that is, primitive) ethnic or tribal hatreds as the motivation for the most recent and incomprehensible bloodshed in the Balkans.

The two competing Mladić narratives rely on corresponding tropes and images reflected in the media portrayals of Mladić after his arrest (as a fascist war criminal, a communist militant and a primitive non-European other) and finding new life online. What we call (necessarily reductively) the pro-Mladić rhetorical strategies turn to the very same historical models but invert the ethical positions: for example, it is not the Bosnian Serbs but rather their allied opponents who are ‘like’ fascists. In essence, Mladić-sympathetic sources respond with combative memory models to recast Mladić as a historical hero: the *partizan* (anti-German and anti-capitalist) incongruously hybridized with the *chetnik* (anti-Communist, monarchist, Christian Orthodox) of World War II. Though profoundly contradictory, the latter two memory models are recurrent components of the multi-layered re-imagining of Mladić as a Serbian national hero (see Griffiths 2003, Wood 2006, Ramet 2007, Anastasijevic 2008 and Bošković 2011). Other rhetorical moves cast Mladić as a rebel icon along the lines of Che Guevara, or even an epic *hajduk* (anti-Ottoman bandit-hero).

### Figures 1 and 2. Historical layers of memory

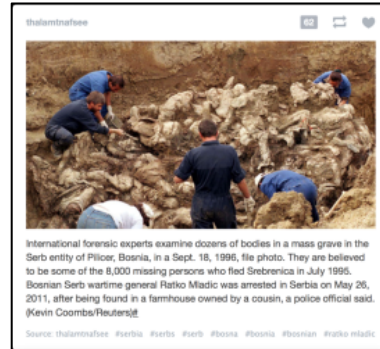


Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

The sheer number of competing cultural models suggests that Mladić’s arrest was a significant historical sense-making moment, marking the symbolic end of the Balkan wars, and thus an opportunity to summarize and shape a politically strategic narrative about the fall of communism and the future of Europe.

**Image 1. (Digital) Forensics**

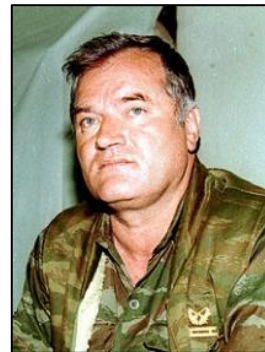
Source: <http://testament25.blogspot.de/2011/06/ratko-mladic-killing-3500-christians.html> (accessed 23 July 2014)

**Image 2. (Digital) Forensics**

Source: <http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/srebrenica-massacre> (accessed 26 March 2013)

**Image 3. Communist militant**

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/29/serb-nationalists-rally-for-ratko-mladic> (accessed 23 July 2014)

**Image 4. Communist militant**

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko\\_Mladić](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko_Mladić) (accessed 10 September 2013)

**Image 5. Partizan**

Source: Anderson 2011 (accessed 23 July 2014)

**Image 6. Chetnik**

Source: 'Clashes Erupt' 2011 (accessed 23 July 2014)

Like other memory events, Mladić’s arrest inspired reductive models – monstrous hybrids of past and present – that help professional and amateur cultural producers alike make sense of, and manipulate, a complex and contingent present. We liken the layering of cultural memories provoked by Mladić’s arrest to a palimpsest, sometimes digitally and sometimes bodily inscribed, and experience our own research as an archeological dig.

Moving from the recent to the distant past, the memory layers invoked by Mladić’s arrest begin with the Yugoslav civil war, and draw on Srebrenica as a site of mourning. From here, we excavate layers of the past in the visual and verbal rhetoric of digital cultural production, to find allusions to the downfall of international communist regimes.

The dominant anti-Mladić narrative next focuses on the international tribunal as a ‘new theater of historical remembrance’ (Winter 2006, 7). Pro-Mladić portrayals also view current events through the lens of World War II, but reverse the positions: they cast Mladić as a resistance soldier taking on a fascist European alliance. Visual and verbal rhetoric across genres, platforms, and media depicts Mladić sometimes as a communist *partizan*, more often a monarchist Christian Orthodox *chetnik*, and sometimes an unlikely and ahistorical hybrid combination of both.

Image 7. Twenty-first century hajduk



Source: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/140415/Hajduk-21-veka> (accessed 28 March 2013)

Image 8. Twenty-first century hajduk<sup>4</sup>



Source: <http://forum.senica.ru/index.php?showtopic=793&st=380#entry118075> (accessed 28 March 2013)

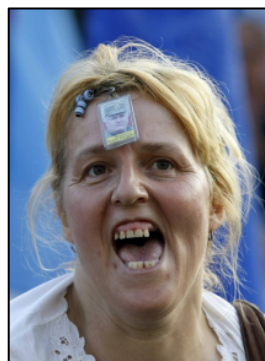
Digging deeper, we find earlier allusions to the *chetniks* as monarchist freedom fighters – who fought on the ‘correct’, Allied side in World War I before collaborating (or being cast by *partizans* as collaborating) with the occupying forces in World War II. Some sources even make of Mladić a *hajduk*, the anti-Ottoman bandit hero of Serbian oral epics.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The poem from Image 8 can also be found on ‘Srpski heroji’.

<sup>5</sup> Working in a higher-brow cultural sphere, the Bosnian-American writer Alexander Hemon repeated this rhetorical move in reverse in a 2008 article for the *New York Times*, where he suggested that Serbian anti-Ottoman epic poetry was partially to blame for contemporary ethnic hatreds (Hemon 2008: 205).

**Image 9.** ‘Ancient tribal hatreds’

Source: <http://ejc.net/magazine/article/photo-essay-mourning-and-reburials-mark-srebrenica-massacre-anniversary#.U8-j0rFTA85> (accessed 23 July 2014)

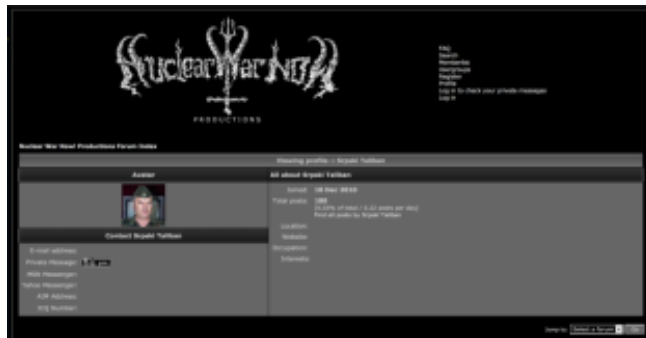
**Image 10.** ‘Ancient tribal hatreds’

Source: <http://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.de/2011/05/serbian-fascists-protest-ratko-mladics.html> (accessed 23 July 2014)

Next, the frequently reproduced and reposted images below depict Bosnian women mourning the victims of Srebrenica, and nationalist supporters at a pro-Mladić rally. Both images emphasize their female subjects as non-European Others, choosing to focus on older women whose clothing or appearance will seem most foreign to urban Western audiences. Relying on a form of Balkan Orientalism, such images readily lend themselves to narratives of ancient (primitive) ethnic hatreds in the Balkans.<sup>6</sup>

**Image 11.** ‘Serbian Taliban’

Source: <http://kasetomanija.wordpress.com/category/bosnia-herzegovina> (accessed 23 July 2014)

**Image 12.** ‘Serbian Taliban’

Source: <http://www.nwnprod.com> (accessed 28 March 2013)

Finally, it is worth mentioning a contemporary but utterly unexpected comparison that has emerged in more recent visual and verbal memes: mostly darkly humorous allusions to the ‘Serbian Taliban’, which suggest some sense of identification with radical Muslim resistance to American imperialism and late capitalist hegemony.

<sup>6</sup> See Bakić-Hayden 1995 and Todorova 1997.

The digital archeology sketched above finds historical models that promise to reveal to readers and audiences the ‘real’ Mladić: in the contested terrain of the former Yugoslavia both the victims and perpetrators of crime were hidden from the public eye, although sometimes in plain view, and ideologies underwent rapid reversal. The discourse around Mladić relies on metaphors of forensic identification; the language of doubles, shadows and avatars in turn is redoubled by online forms of communication. Identity is always in question, as Mladić himself was well aware, according to the reports of his arrest. The first words he spoke when arrested were to claim his own identity: ‘Ja sam Ratko Mladić’ [I am Ratko Mladić].<sup>7</sup>

### Sources and methods

Our sources predominantly draw from non-professional cultural producers, combining ‘born digital’ and remediated materials. While we are less interested in professional media coverage, the digital sources themselves borrow heavily from professional and offline sources. We begin with comparative readings of multi-author *Wikipedia* article entries, using a mix of close and distant reading; analyses of news forums as well as discussions on popular blogs; readings of photos and visual memes (rallies, uniforms); responses to Mladić arrest on the popular social media sites *Twitter* and *Facebook*; and close with one striking sample of audiovisual material found on *YouTube*. As we are studying an open system, a perpetually shifting digital terrain that employs very new platforms and genres with imperfect and limited tools, our methods are experimental and heuristic; our hope is that our overview and preliminary hypotheses may suggest new directions for research to other scholars of digital rhetoric, historical memory models, and the rise of twenty-first century nationalism.

Our methods are primarily and fundamentally qualitative. The goal is to examine a memory event that was captured and created by digital culture, and to map the emergent rhetorical models across an overview of digital genres by tracing cultural associations. The second level of research is comparative, as we find that the depiction and perhaps even understanding of Mladić’s arrest shifts according to genre, medium and platform.<sup>8</sup>

We began with an overview of the available sources, using narrower historical models as examples. Where there is enough material to do so, we concentrate on depictions of Mladić as linked to World War II – the most politically and emotionally charged comparison. The main narrative casts Mladić as a genocidal war criminal, finally extradited and eventually brought

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in news article on Mladić’s arrest, this admission was posted and re-posted, tweeted and re-tweeted across genres and platforms. See for example ‘Odmah priznao’ (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. ‘New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts’. (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 19). See also BBC journalist Paul Mason’s summary of the functions of the information tools used by contemporary activists in what he termed the ‘revolutions of 2009–2011’: ‘Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt – in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real-time *organization* and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome ‘newsgathering’ operations of the mainstream media. YouTube and the Twitter-linked photographic sites – Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic – are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shorteners like bit.ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter’ (Mason 2012: 75).

to international justice (the narrative typically includes the familiar difficulties of finding suitable punishment for a 70-year-old moral monster). The counter-narrative responds by re-fashioning Mladić from a World War II villain into a hero: an ageless *chetnik*, *partizan* or *hajduk*. Many tropes ‘translate’ and can be traced across multiple textual and visual genres; others thrive in longer-form genres only.<sup>9</sup> Working across multiple digital genres, members of our collaborative research team use digital tools, distant reading and quantitative analyses of large swaths of data for broader surveys of information across many producers. Finally, we return to qualitative and comparative critical analysis to contextualize our findings and formulate preliminary working hypotheses. Our approaches may thus be said to hover between digital humanities and digital social sciences; our focus throughout, however, remains on rhetoric.

### Findings by genre: *Wikipedia*

Our first case studies are the *Wikipedia* articles on Mladić in Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, English and Russian for international comparison. What changes across articles and languages? How do the articles refer to the events of World War II in particular? How do they change over time, or show evidence of interaction between writers and editors? Despite *Wikipedia*’s regulations for writing and editing articles, the representations of Mladić differ dramatically according to national cultures and traditions in the Balkan countries and in the English and Russian pages. The pages show collective discourse – in this case, multi-authored digital texts – taking shape in relation to key events in twentieth-century history: World War II, *partizan/chetnik/ustashe* traditions and confrontations, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and subsequent civil wars.

Even a preliminary reading of the *Wikipedia* entries on Mladić demonstrates significant variations in size, structure and the usage of external links and references. The Bosnian *Wikipedia* article is unexpectedly short and omits all details about Mladić prior to his military career during the 1990s. The Serbian and Russian articles are lengthy, covering Mladić’s early life, education, military career, role in the civil wars and subsequent downfall; they inform on the attempted arrests prior to 2011, his actual May 26 arrest, extradition to the ICTY, and the trial itself. The Bosnian and Croatian articles focus on recent Balkan history and on Mladić as a Serbian military commander. The Serbian and Russian articles thus appear to humanize Mladić by describing his entire life, in effect weakening his symbolic image as a war criminal. The Serbian article, in fact, does not pass *Wikipedia*’s regulations regarding sources, references and objectivity.

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<sup>9</sup> See Todorova 1997, Longinović 2011, Levi 2007 and Kujundžić 2008.

The articles in Serbian, English and Russian give different accounts of the death of Mladić's father in 1945 (the Bosnian *Wikipedia* article omits the story entirely):

- *Serbian*: ‘Оца Ратка Младића, Неђу (1909–1945), убиле су усташе у близини Иван седла.’<sup>10</sup> [‘The father of Ratko Mladic (1909–1945), Nedja, was killed by *ustashe* near Ivan-Sedlo’].<sup>11</sup>
- *English*: ‘Mladić's father was killed while leading a partisan attack on the home village of Ustaše leader Ante Pavelić in 1945’.<sup>12</sup>
- *Russian*: ‘Его отец, Неджа Младич командир партизанского отряда, погиб в бою с хорватскими усташами в 1945 году’. [‘His father, Nedzha Mladic, the commander of a partisan troupe, perished in a battle with Croatian *ustashe* in 1945’].<sup>13</sup>

The English article emphasizes the active participation of Mladić's father in World War II as a member of the Yugoslav *partizan* movement, as does the Russian article. The Serbian article, like the Russian article, includes the father's first name, but stresses the personal information and gives the location of his death, while obfuscating the fact that he died as an active soldier fighting on the side of the Communist movement. In the Serbian article, Mladić's father died not as a *partizan* soldier, but simply as Nedja, a Serb, at the hands of nameless *ustashe*. This personal emphasis indicates that twentieth-century political narratives are still used as a dominant memory discourse about shared local history; for example, the *chetnik* associations with Mladić elsewhere may have prompted the *Wikipedia* writers to obfuscate the fact that his father was actually a *partizan*.

Qualitative and quantitative comparative analyses across the six *Wikipedia* articles in Bosnian, Croatian, English, Russian, Serbian and Serbo-Croatian uncover further telling differences.<sup>14</sup> The Internet Archive *Wayback Machine*<sup>15</sup> accesses old snapshots, allowing us to compare articles and changes made in content, structure and categories over time.<sup>16</sup> One simple point of interest is the size and scope of the articles, before and after Mladić's arrest, and at the time of our study (the dates below refer to when these screenshots of individual pages were taken).

<sup>10</sup> We have chosen not to transliterate the Serbian Cyrillic throughout the article – as is customary in *Digital Icons* publications – as the different uses of Latin and Cyrillic alphabets are part of our argument.

<sup>11</sup> Source: [http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко\\_Младић](http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко_Младић) (accessed 29 March 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko\\_Mladić](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko_Mladić) (accessed 29 March 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Source: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Младич,\\_Ратко](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Младич,_Ратко) (accessed 29 March 2013).

<sup>14</sup> The URL addresses of these pages are, respectively: [http://bs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко\\_Младић](http://bs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко_Младић), [http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко\\_Младић](http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко_Младић), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko\\_Mladić](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratko_Mladić), [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Младич,\\_Ратко](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Младич,_Ратко), [http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко\\_Младић](http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко_Младић), [http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко\\_Младић](http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ратко_Младић) (accessed 30 March 2013).

<sup>15</sup> See <http://archive.org> (accessed 30 March 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Rogers's and Emina Sendjarevic's essay, ‘Neutral or National Point of View? A Comparison of Srebrenica Articles across *Wikipedia*'s Language Versions’ (2012) influenced our thinking about this topic and provided a partial guide for our own research.

**Table 1.** Word count of Mladić Wikipedia articles by date

Wiki resource	Pre-arrest page	Post-arrest page	26 March 2013
<b>Bosnian</b>	778 (April 9 2011)	843 (Sep 4 2011)	1,057
<b>Croatian</b>	530 (Sep 13 2006)	802 (Oct 12 2011)	1,005
<b>English</b>	3,102 (Aug 30 2010)	5,766 (Jun 7 2011)	5,457
<b>Russian</b>		2,388 (Sep 13 2011)	2,739
<b>Serbian</b>	2,576 (Apr 3 2011)	3,397 (Sep 12 2011)	3,221
<b>Serbo-Croatian</b>	296 (Sep 8 2008)	1,738 (Aug 10 2011)	2,376

Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

Both the English and Serbo-Croatian articles show significant changes in word number, although all articles grew in size after the news of the arrest was made public. The two longest articles, the English and the Serbian, had been cut down at the time of analysis (26 March 2013) by 309 and 176 words, respectively, while others expanded after the time of the arrest, most notably in the case of the Serbo-Croatian article. We conjecture that after the news of Mladić's arrest, both English and Serbian articles grew to include new information, while the texts continued to be edited in accordance with *Wikipedia* standards and policies.

Editors tag every *Wikipedia* article with categories conveying content. These categories vary in number and classification system across all Mladić articles, most dramatically between the English and Bosnian or Croatian versions. The majority have a separate category for Mladić's indictment for 'war crimes' and/or 'genocide' (in English), but not all: the Croatian article, interestingly, has no such category. The differences correspond fairly predictably to national interests: the Croatian article emphasizes Mladić's role in the war in Croatia ('Zapovjednici u srpsko-crnogorskoj agresiji na Hrvatsku' or 'The military commanders of Serbo-Montenegrin aggression on Croatia'); the Bosnian article speaks of his origins and biography connected with Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the Serbian article focuses on Mladić's Serbian ethnicity as well as his military biography (for instance categories like 'Генерали Војске Републике Српске', 'Српске војсковође' and 'Срби' [Generals of the Army of Republic Srpska, Serbian military commanders, Serbs]). The English and Russian articles emphasize his military career, but in very different ways: while the English article concentrates on the war in Bosnia and Croatia and Mladić's ICTY indictments, the Russian includes the numerous medals and honors awarded Mladić during his long career. Thus, even the relatively small differences between articles with claims to objective summary allow space for clear political stances and rhetorical manipulations – a Mladić guilty of crimes against humanity in the most recent genocidal European war; and a storied military commander Mladić with a long personal history of Serbian suffering.

**Table 2.** Occurrence of top 20 relevant words and phrases (excluding Cyrillic)

Bosnian	Croatian	English	Serbo-Croat	Combined
ratka mladi (12)	ratka mladi (8)	yugoslav people (16)	radio (6)	ratka mladi (20)
optu (8)	bih (7)	february (12)	mladost (5)	Yugoslav people (16)
beogradu (6)	beogradu (6)	srebrenica (12)	stana (5)	Knin (14)
srba (5)	knin (5)	january (12)	komandi druge (4)	february (12)
knin (5)	srba (5)	croatian war (11)	crne gore (4)	srebrenica (12)
vanjski (4)	vip ulaz (4)	bbc (10)	reference (4)	january (12)
u junu (4)	boris tadi (4)	in november (8)	un official (4)	Beogradu (12)
predmet ratko mladi (4)	ratko mladi (4)	second military district headquarters (8)	oca ratka mladi (4)	Pdf (12)
vojske rs. U (4)	jna i komandno- (4)	united states (8)	bia i mup upu (4)	jna u sarajevu (12)
jna u sarajevu (4)	operacije peru (4)	pdf (8)	vlade srbije (4)	croatian war (11)
vip ulaz (4)	milorad komadi (4)	main staff (8)	predmet ratko mladi (4)	bih (10)
komandanta vrhovnog (4)	republici srpskoj (4)	in july (8)	komandno- (4)	srba (10)
jna je (4)	hrvatske po mladi (4)	judge fouad riad (8)	bia otvorila (4)	bbc (10)
jna iz bosne (4)	jna u sarajevu (4)	daily telegraph (8)	jna stupa (4)	in november (8)
creative commons attribution (4)	pdf (4)	jna forces (8)	opn (4)	second military district headquarters (8)
vrs-a (4)	komandanta vrhovnog (4)	in june (8)	odeljenja (4)	indonesia (8)
reference (4)	vojske rs. U (4)	deputy commander (8)	komandu tre (4)	jawa (8)
jugoslavije (4)	vrs-a (4)	washington post (8)	creative commons attribution (4)	glavnog (8)
isto (3)	jna je (4)	december (8)	kov. u skoplje (4)	in july (8)
kao (3)	jna iz bosne (4)	european union (8)	bramerca beogradu (4)	washington post (8)

Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

**Table 3.** Wikipedia Edit Scraper and IP localizer (within two weeks of Mladić's arrest)

BS – 23 changes, BiH 1, Croatia 2, Germany 1
EN – 403 changes (209 changes in the 24 hours from the news)
<b>10:21</b> , 26 May 2011 94.195.48.12 (talk) . . (25,455 bytes) (+71) . . (→ <b>Indictment by the ICTY</b> )
<b>10:23</b> , 26 May 2011 Jdhowens90 (talk   contribs) . . (25,690 bytes) (+235) . . ( <b>Possible capture</b> )
... [4 various changes and updates]
<b>10:45</b> , 26 May 2011 Cruks (talk   contribs) m . . (25,934 bytes) (+122) . . ( <b>birth day correction</b> )
... [7 various changes and updates]
<b>11:03</b> , 26 May 2011 Samuel Salzman (talk   contribs) . . (26,352 bytes) (+187) . . (→ <b>Videos of Mladić: moving position of possible arrest</b> )
... [14 various changes and updates]
<b>11:39</b> , 26 May 2011 ClueBot NG (talk   contribs) m . . (26,814 bytes) (-7) . . ( <b>Reverting possible vandalism by 188.2.36.250 to version by X201. False positive? Report it.</b> Thanks, ClueBot NG. (436417)
Address: <b>[188.2.36.250 Pancevo Serbia RS 44.870820.6403]</b>

Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

Comparative word frequency analysis (excluding articles in Cyrillic script) suggests that, aside from the name Ratko Mladić, the most frequent terms are ‘Yugoslav People’s Army’, ‘Knin’ and ‘Srebrenica’, as expected. Srebrenica appears most frequently in the English article, while the Bosnian and Croatian texts focus on Knin (and subsequently on the war in Croatia). This observation suggests that the sources of these two articles are similar.

The internal editing of *Wikipedia* articles allows us to see how the editors affect the tone, particularly just after the breaking news of Mladić’s arrest in the media. Using two tools for analyzing *Wikipedia* articles, Edit Scraper and IP localizer, we find that the English article saw 403 changes in content in the two weeks following the arrest, 209 of which took place in the first 24 hours. Other articles were edited far fewer times, suggesting that the most politically contested terrain was the English language article, followed by the Serbian to a far lesser degree (23 changes in the same two weeks). Extrapolating from *Wikipedia* edit logs, we find that the English text changed 29 times in the course of one hour and 18 minutes. During that short stretch, other editors noticed and corrected the ‘vandalizing’ in the text. The revealed IP address shows that the computer used in the cyber attack was located in Serbia.

### Findings by genre: news fora commentary and blog posts

Online discussions in the commentary sections to news fora and blogs offer another rich source for analyzing the responses to Mladić’s arrest. After a survey of the most popular fora and blogs available through Google searches, we chose to focus on two popular sources with rich activity in the comments section: the Serbian news page b92.net, comments posted on the very day of Mladić’s arrest, and discussions from the Croatian forum.hr (posted between May 26, 2011 and June 5, 2011). We begin with b92.net, expecting commentators on the site to either share or strongly disagree with the station’s predominantly liberal politics. For the initial quantitative searches through the commentaries, we use the Issue Discovery Tool.

**Table 4.** Word Frequency b92.net

crime (zločin): 24
hero (heroj): 18
criminal (zločinac): 6
Youth Day (Dan mladosti): 4
genocide (genocid): 4
[ <a href="http://www.b92.net/info/komentari.php?nav_id=514604">http://www.b92.net/info/komentari.php?nav_id=514604</a> ]

Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

Looking at the most frequently used words and epithets in these blog discussions, we find that the term ‘genocide’ occurs far less frequently than ‘crime’ across the posts, and that, initially, the term ‘hero’ seems to outnumber ‘criminal’. Closer readings of these tagged passages,

however, reveal that the word ‘hero’ is mostly used ironically, with the dual purpose of not only discrediting Mladić, but also those who use such language in earnest. For example, the commentator Jabilondo writes: ‘I koji je to heroj? I koga je on branio? Pa još u Srebrenici?’ [‘What kind of hero is he? And who was he defending? And in Srebrenica of all places?’] (‘Uhapšen Ratko Mladić’ 2011). A less frequently used word here (but found in other platforms) is ‘butcher’, associated with a cluster of terms such as ‘ethnic cleansing’, ‘genocide’ and ‘*chetnik*’. Overall the discussion is critical of media coverage on both sides and is self-reflexive.

The unexpected repeated invocations of ‘Youth Day’ prompted us to look more closely at the tagged forum posts, only to find that the community of participants was interested in *when* the news of Mladić’s arrest occurred in Croatian and Serbian media, respectively. Commentators suspected that Mladić had probably been arrested on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, but that local politicians had refused to announce the arrest on a date that had had considerable political currency in the former socialist Yugoslavia. Since 25 May, Josip Broz Tito’s birthday, had been commemorated as ‘Youth Day’, the discovery and arrest of Mladić could not be ‘allowed’ to take place on that day: the competing narratives contradict and leave no room for one another. The symbolic erasure of the post-WWII Yugoslav holiday by the contemporary media spectacle of Serbian war crimes – of Tito by Mladić – would have been an undesirable implicit narrative for the local political structures. While further inquiry into Croatian and Serbian official media websites fails to confirm the bloggers’ and commentators’ suspicions about which media first aired the news or to prove a delay in the news of Mladić’s arrest, the online rumor remains of interest as it suggests the bloggers’ awareness of the two embattled narratives.

**Table 5.** Word frequency forum.hr

Hague (Hag): 89

Srebrenica: 189

genocide (genocid): 86

Ante Gotovina: 206

[<http://www.forum.hr/printthread.php?t=646134&pp=60>]

Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

A word count overview of the Croatian forum.hr suggests that these forum posts focus on the topics of The Hague, the Srebrenica genocide (following the rhetorical choices of the news reports) but also of Ante Gotovina, the Croatian general on trial in The Hague at the time. A closer look reveals that bloggers commented on the fact that both arrests – of Mladić and of Gotovina – happened at times when European Union representatives were present in Belgrade. Thus, one interesting and unexpected element, particular to the genre of news fora commentary, is the focus on the chronology of Mladić’s arrest. We conjecture that this feature of forum commentary is shaped by the particular temporality of ‘news’. Overall, the news fora demonstrate the most self-aware uses of rhetoric, relying less on clear historical

parallels and questioning how information is presented and by whom; this difference in tone may reflect the relative education and sophistication of active participant news consumers.

### Findings by genre: visual images and memes

Visual memes circulate rapidly across a number of platforms; we also see interaction between offline and online sources in this genre especially, as photos of rallies become internet memes, only to become graffiti and t-shirts. Many of the most popular visual memes of Mladić after his arrest echo, often vaguely, memories and associations with a post-War Europe, shaping their portrayals of Mladić through backdrop and costume.

Image 13 shows Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić as ‘most wanted’ criminals. In 2002, when these posters were put up in the streets of Belgrade, the reward offered by the U.S. State Secretary for their arrest was \$5,000,000. Photos like the one above emphasize an occupation/post-war atmosphere in the streets of Belgrade and the ongoing international hunt for the hidden war criminals.

Image 14 shows the first page of the printed edition of the daily newspaper *Politika* on May 26, 2011. The strikingly simple headline, ‘Ratko Mladić arrested’, tops a visual juxtaposition of Mladić in the mid-1990s and Mladić on the day of his arrest. A smiling general in uniform (with recognizable Republika Srpska insignia on his hat) pairs with a much older, seemingly frightened man in civil clothing. The effect is complex: on the one hand, *Politika* seems to humanize the image of the Serbian general by showing his vulnerability and emphasizing the passage of time. On the other, the juxtaposition – even the repeated key motif of the front-billed hat – draws an equation sign between the two photographs. Once more, identification appears crucial: today’s victim is the same person as yesterday’s perpetrator. We suspect this is why the most popular photo of the arrested Mladić *had* to include a hat: the visually literate makers of the later image understood that, because of the earlier circulating memes of Mladić as a military leader, the hat had become part of the forensic process of identification.<sup>17</sup>

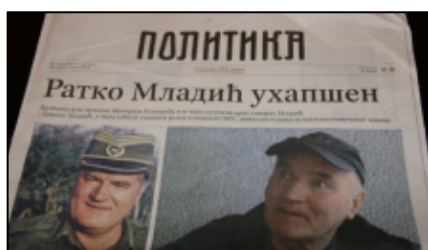
Image 15 shows a Belgrade graffiti scene: a spray-painted image celebrating Ratko Mladić by one anonymous graffiti artist has been ‘adjusted’ by another anonymous participant in the urban sphere. The adjustment turns the hero into a vampire, and reveals the processes of hero-ization and demonization as coexisting, competing and evolving in the same sites. In turn, all of these images, while originating offline, have been photographed and turned into memeproductive online content (Leskovec et al. 2009).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> An article from *Blic* online news demonstrates the importance of identification and self-identification to the new of the arrest (see ‘Odmah priznao’ 2011).

<sup>18</sup> According to Limor Shifman, meme is a ‘selfish’, ‘ambiguous’, ‘content’ and ‘viral’ (Shifman 2013) Web ‘einfache Form’ (Andre Jolles), with three important features: 1) it passes cultural information person to person yet gradually scales into a shared social phenomenon; 2) it is reproduced by various means of imitation (remix and mimicry), and 3) is diffused through competition and selection (Shifman 2013). Shifman further suggests treating people ‘not as vectors of cultural transmission, but as actors behind this process’ of diffusion.

**Images 13, 14, 15.** Ratko Mladić as World War II villain

Source: [http://media.salon.com/2011/05/whos\\_next\\_on\\_the\\_list.jpg](http://media.salon.com/2011/05/whos_next_on_the_list.jpg) (accessed 23 July 2014)



Source: <http://a-place-to-stand.blogspot.com/2011/05/ratko-mladic-arrested.html> (accessed 23 July 2014)



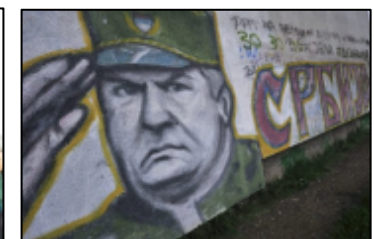
Source: <http://www.avaz.ba/vijesti/iz-minute-u-minutu/71755-u-beogradu-preradjen-mural-zlocinca-ratko-mladic-naslukan-kao-vampir.html> (accessed 15 September 2013)

**Images 16, 17, 18.** Mladić as World War II *partizan* and *chetnik*

Source: <http://www.owain-thomas.co.uk> (accessed 23 July 2014)



Source: <http://www.startbih.info/Novost.aspx?novostid=8450> (accessed 23 July 2014)



Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/26/ratko-mladic-war-crimes-suspect> (accessed 23 July 2014)

Image 16 shows online illustrator Owain Thomas's depiction of Mladić as a stylized Yugoslav People's Army soldier, nearly indistinguishable from heroic depictions of *partizan* resistance fighters following World War II. English-language text accompanies the image online: 'Ratko Mladić appears at the International Criminal Tribunal. Ex-Bosnian Serb army leader Mladić was arrested a week ago after going into hiding for the past 16 years and is charged with atrocities committed during the Bosnian war'. Thomas's popular stylized illustration and similar images hint that the international tribunal constituted not only judgment for Mladić, but also for Yugoslav socialism: it is as if the very uniform of the Yugoslav People's Army soldier has been placed on trial.

In image 17 we see Mladić in the same Yugoslav Army uniform and hat, embracing an orthodox priest. This particular image initially appeared in an online news article from Bosnia, to discredit the priest caught on camera with Mladić (Vasilije Kačavenda) by reminding readers and viewers of his role in the Yugoslav wars of dissolution. Linking the Yugoslav People's Army to the tragic events of the 1990s, here, as in the discussion on forum.hr, turns what positive associations the *partizan* or Youth Day may have had in Yugoslav cultural

memory into the very opposite – a transformation evidenced in the retouched graffiti (Image 18) as online.

### Image 19. Mladić as *chetnik* and martyr



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYeaAOudTE8&> (accessed 23 July 2014)

Finally, Image 19, pulled from a *YouTube* video, offers an entire iconostasis of new Serbian ‘martyrs’. Ratko Mladić, Radovan Karadžić, Draža Mihajlović (the leader of the *chetnik* movement during the German occupation in World War II) and Slobodan Milošević keep company with Orthodox Christian saints. The implications are clear; the English-language news clip from the *Russia Today* channel in turn presents this image as visual evidence of Serbian nationalism and support for Mladić and Karadžić.

### Findings by genre: social media

Social media platforms such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* offer very different forms of digital cultural content around current political events. Via *Twitter*, we find mainly factual responses to the news of Mladić’s arrest, and then a gradual drop-off in tweets about Mladić. A number of tweets seem suggestively linked to memory models, but only in very abridged form. On *Facebook*, we see many groups and pages devoted to Mladić, most created well after his arrest. We can collect and analyze the publically available information on these groups to deduce how many were pro-Mladić, how many contra-, when they were founded and the size of their respective memberships.

#### *Twitter*

Due to the number of tweets and the patterns observed (a rapid drop-off in international *Twitter* exchanges on the subject of Ratko Mladić; sporadic continued tweeting in Serbian Cyrillic but in inconclusively low numbers), we limit our research of the *Twitter* response to the day of Mladić’s arrest, May 26, 2011. We use *Twitter*’s search tools and limit the timeframe from May 25 to May 27. (This way, we also more or less ensure that the searches for Mladić return



When we repeat the same search using the Latin alphabet but with the diacritically marked version of Mladić's name, the *Twitter* search returns closer to 1000 tweets on the day of Mladić's arrest. In this case, we use the entire returned set of pulled tweets in *Voyant*. The results return the words 'uhapšen' and 'uhićen', Serbian/Bosnian and Croatian forms of the word 'arrested', respectively – confirming that most of these tweets were written in B/C/S. Somewhat less frequent but noticeably present in the B/C/S tweets are the media sources: the station B92 and its website, b92.net. Tadić, the last name of Serbia's then-president, Boris Tadić, also appears frequently, referring inevitably (as checked when we combed through the tweets in question) to the fact that Tadić had confirmed Mladić's arrest. Statistically, there are relatively few emotionally-marked epithets, either positive or negative (Figure 5).

The B/C/S diacritically marked tweets appeared earlier in the day than English-language tweet coverage, and as the chart below shows, Serbian and Bosnian-language tweeters responded earlier and faster than Croatian-language tweeters, though the two drop off and average out during the course of the day. (Following *Twitter*'s reverse chronological listing of tweets from newest to oldest, the charts read from most recent to earliest, left to right, Figure 6).

**Figure 5.** Word cloud of tweets (2)



**Figure 6.** English vs. B/C/S tweets



Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

Finally, we repeat the same search with the Serbian Cyrillic 'Младић'. There are surprisingly few tweets at all, numbering around fifty during the course of the day as revealed by *Twitter* search. This can be accounted for by two factors: the relative unpopularity of *Twitter* use in Serbia in 2011 (compared to the vastly more popular social media platforms of *Facebook* and *YouTube*); and the fact that Serbian social media users on *Twitter* are far more likely to tweet in the Latin alphabet.<sup>19</sup>

Working within this admittedly small data set, we nonetheless find telling results. After the expected names, dates, news, countries and the names and tags of those who tweeted, re-tweeted and circulated the news, the next most frequent word was 'херој' or hero. Another popular set of words were 'добродошли' or 'welcome' to the 'EU', reflecting the tweeters'

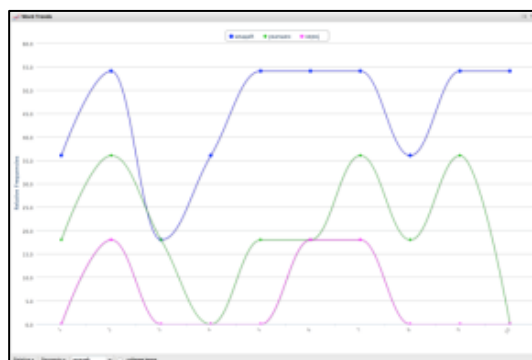
<sup>19</sup> Some users, given the nature of the platform, are also likely to be spam bots forwarding news articles automatically.

sentiments about the reasons for the arrest and the promise to deliver Mladić to international justice (Figure 7). One more *Voyant*-derived chart (Figure 8) shows the relative frequency of the terms ‘Младић’, ‘ухапшен’ [arrested] and ‘херој’. The word ‘hero’ recurred nearly as frequently as the word ‘arrested’, demonstrating that of those users who did choose to tweet the news of Mladić’s arrest in Serbian Cyrillic, nearly one-third included the epithet hero.

**Figure 7.** Word cloud of tweets (3)



**Figure 8.** Frequency of selected words



Source: Marijeta Božović, Bogdan Trifunović, Aleksandar Bošković

Reading sample tweets reveals the choices behind the figures above. Some popular English-language sources who tweeted about Mladić’s arrest used strong emotional tags and epithets, referring to him as the ‘butcher of Bosnia’ or the ‘war criminal and genocidal butcher’, as in the examples of @left\_the\_stars and @buffalopundit:

@left\_the\_stars\_26 May 11 Profile of career soldier Ratko #Mladic, who became ‘butcher of Bosnia’ <http://reut.rs/k1Z9s5> (@left\_the\_stars 2011)

@buffalopundit\_26 May 11 Ratko Mladić Apprehended?: Serbian and Croatian media are reporting that the war criminal and genocidal butcher ... <http://bit.ly/mvWf66> (@buffalopundit 2011)

While we find that *Twitter* as a social media platform and the 140-character digital genre of tweets do not allow for the layered memory-modeling of other online genres, such short tags and epithets fit overall associations with genocide and war crime.

Croatian tweeters used similar language, and reinforced tweeted news about the arrest with references to foreign and local news. For example, a tweet from @057info (an account linked to the Croatian radio channel 057) reads:

@057info\_26 May 11 Uhićen Ratko Mladić: Srpski mediji prenijeli su informaciju da je uhićen ratni zločinac i haški bjegunac Ratko Mladić. <http://bit.ly/jY2BAm> [Serbian media informs that the war criminal and Hague fugitive Ratko Mladić has been arrested.] (@057info 2011)

The tweet includes reported confirmation by ‘Serbian media’, a reference to Mladić as a fugitive from the international justice of The Hague, and includes a link to the online news source

of the Croatian station. Finally, the Serbian Cyrillic tweets depart dramatically from all the others. @dssarandjelovac reports Mladić's arrest with the preliminary qualifier:

@dssarandjelovac 26 May 11 Херој за једне, злочинац за друге: ухапшен Ратко Младић <http://nblo.gs/imye2> [Hero for some, war criminal for others: Ratko Mladic arrested.] (@dssarandjelovac 2011)

@ejmi\_\_ more dramatically attests: 'Сви смо ми Ратко Младић' ['We are all Ratko Mladić.'] (@ejmi 2011). Meanwhile, @MirkovicMilan in all capitals writes simply: 'СРПСКИ ХЕРОЈ РАТКО МЛАДИЋ!!!' ['Serbian Hero Ratko Mladić!!!'] (@MirkovicMilan 2011).

### Facebook

An overview of the responses to Mladić's arrest on *Facebook* reveals a number of pages, 'people' and groups devoted to the subject. We use *Facebook*'s search function and sort findings by hand, given the limited accessibility of this social platform's big data sets. Here, narrowly limiting temporal restrictions makes little sense: *Facebook* offers far fewer individual results than *Twitter*, and in many cases, it is impossible even to ascertain when 'closed groups' were started. For this platform and its subgenres, we rely on initial counting and sorting for a sense of the general discussion of Mladić and his arrest on *Facebook*, before zooming in on the most popular, striking or generically indicative examples.

### Images 20, 21, 22. Facebook search results



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/search/str/ratko%2520mladic/pages-named> (accessed 23 July 2014)<sup>20</sup>



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/search/str/ratko%2520mladic/users-named> (accessed 23 July 2014)



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/search/str/ratko%2520mladic/users-named> (accessed 23 July 2014)

Our *Facebook* search for 'Ratko Mladić' returns information in Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, showing that the *Facebook* search engine links the name in both alphabets. We confirm 156 individual results, with a great degree of certainty, to refer to the 'correct' Ratko Mladić and not to innocent and unfortunate namesakes. In most cases, information on the page, in the section 'About', or other signs quickly indicate relevant pages. Of the 156 results, 74 were

<sup>20</sup> Similar pages can be found by searching 'People named "ratko mladić"'.

registered ‘people’ on *Facebook*, often with job descriptions including ‘warfare’, professions like ‘government’, ‘official’, ‘politician’, ‘monarch’ and many absurd or black humor comparisons, such as ‘Chuck Norris’.

Images 20-22 are screenshots of our *Facebook* search results. The first shows the relative diversity of *Facebook* pages, people and groups devoted to Mladić; the second and third demonstrate the relative dearth of information or activity associated with most of the Mladić avatars in particular. Many of these pages, we conjecture, were used only once or twice before being effectively abandoned by the creators.

As *Facebook* lists the number of members for both open and closed groups, we see that many groups have relatively small numbers, ranging from tens to 100 or 150 members, with only one closed group ‘Ратко Младић Српски Херој’ [‘Ratko Mladić the Serbian Hero’] numbering 456. The next largest group, ‘Ratko Mladic srpski junak’, with 151 members, is fortunately open. The title translates exactly the same way, but is written in Latin script and uses the synonym ‘junak’ for hero. (The borrowed Latinate cognate ‘heroj’ proves far more popular across all media than the Slavic-rooted word ‘junak’, regardless of the nationalist and anti-Western sentiments expressed.) The images below offer some picture of the information available on these two closed and open pro-Mladić groups, as well as a comparatively large open group calling for Mladić’s immediate execution.

### Images 23, 24, 25. Facebook search results



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/230341470316728/>  
(accessed 23 July 2014)<sup>21</sup>



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/ratko.srpski.junak>  
(accessed 23 July 2014)<sup>22</sup>



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/235210699938824/>  
(accessed 23 July 2014)

Of the 26 groups, 4 open and 11 closed groups are pro-Mladić, whereas 6 open and 2 closed groups of much smaller size are anti-Mladić. Three are too comical, snide or absurd to attribute any political stance. In comparison, the community and political figure pages have only two results that show numerically significant views. The page that first reported the news of Mladić’s arrest and included ‘good day for BiH’ in the title had, unsurprisingly, 1654 ‘likes’. However, the wickedly comical ‘Ratko Mladić is now friends with Vojislav Šešelj and Radovan Karadžić’ page received even more ‘likes’, as many as 1795.

<sup>21</sup> The initial source, accessed 28 March 2013, has since closed.

<sup>22</sup> Initial source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/191194847687357> (accessed 28 March 2013; closed).

Finally a search across all the titles and available information (including location, profession and label) reveals that the only words repeated with any frequency were ‘heroj’ or ‘junak’ (on one occasion, ‘orao’ [‘eagle’]), appearing 11 times in page or group titles; whereas ‘war criminal’, ‘bloodshedder’ or simply ‘criminal’ appear only three times. Finally, the vast majority, if not nearly all of the pages, people and groups related to Mladić on *Facebook* were written in some form of B/C/S, and most often in the Latin variant.

### Images 26 and 27. Facebook search results



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ratko-Mladić-is-now-friends-with-Vojislav-Šešelj-and-Radovan-Karadžić/229018740447663> (accessed 23 July 2014)



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Uhapšen-Ratko-Mladić-Historijski-dan-za-BiH/168477309879658> (accessed 23 July 2014)

*Facebook* users who took the time to open Mladić pages or Mladić avatars seem to have done so for brief and limited usage, with the exception of one or two pages that conveyed information about the arrest – including a video clip of the actual arrest. *Facebook* offers more space for memory modeling than *Twitter*, but users did not go into the depth and detail of blog and forum commentators, *Wikipedia* page producers or as we shall see, *YouTube* video producers. We also find – by far – the most black humor here, including the use of historical parallels, which may speak to the way *Facebook* users relate to the platform.

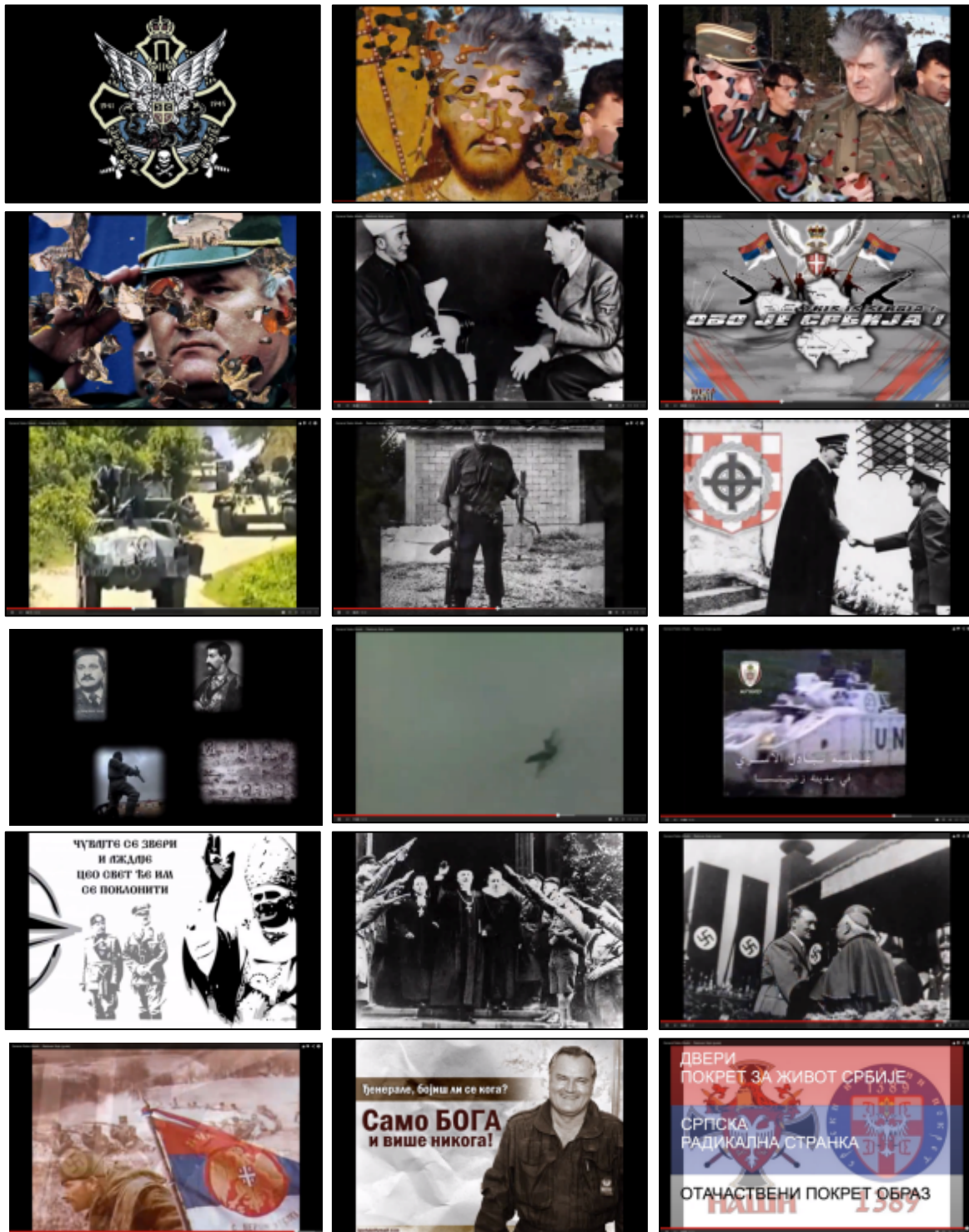
### Findings by genre: *YouTube*

We close with one final example from the social media platform *YouTube*. The audio-visual possibilities of the giant platform and its many genres (video and commentary) warrant separate study, but we selected one particular Serbian-language clip as a coda to our overview. This audio-visual depiction of Mladić as a composite Serb hero circles obsessively around the very darkest World War II imagery, creating shocking and drastic identity connotations. The time alone its producers must have spent on the project, uploaded in 2010, makes this *YouTube* clip stand apart from all of our earlier examples.

The clip, ‘General Ratko Mladić’, is in essence a 15:15-minute homemade music video of extreme Serbian nationalist sentiment. An original composition for the *gusle* performed by

Radovan Šojić plays over an extended slideshow of historical photographs and new clips, and the entire montage is dedicated to Mladić.

Images 28-45. Stills from ‘General Ratko Mladic – Radko Sojic (gusle)’



Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lsvad5gaq1A> (accessed 15 September 2013)

The *gusle* are the instrument of Serbia's (as well as Montenegro's and other local) epic oral tradition – the famous last remaining European oral epic so lovingly studied by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in the early and mid-twentieth century (see Milman Parry 2012). Here a 'newly composed epic' spans the entire history and territory of 'greater Serbia', telling of the various foes that threatened the Serbian people throughout its history, and of the heroes and martyrs who rose up against them.

The savvy cultural producers of this video have appropriated all of the historical tragedies experienced by the Serbian people (borders loosely defined) to forge a story of timeless and nearly universal oppression and militant local opposition. The recurring refrain speaks of both the Ottoman yoke and the fascist threat, metonymically linked to contemporary events and more local rivals (Bosnians, Croats) as well as their allies (Americans, Nato, the UN). Ratko Mladić is depicted as the ultimate composite hero, a Franken-Serb stitched together from all of the important historical memory models: anti-Ottoman *hajduk*, WWI *chetnik* hero, anti-Nazi World War II fighter (again incongruously combining Communist *partizan* and Royalist/Orthodox *chetnik* signifiers) and thus the ultimate synthesized hero needed in Serbia's most recent crisis. The man known to others as the 'butcher of Bosnia' here becomes a pious martyr for his people and for God.

As of September 15, 2013, the clip has been viewed 50,856 times and has 195 likes and only 10 dislikes. Top comments include declarations from poster BurekSaSirom1: 'И ја сам ђенералов јатак!' ['I too am the general's *yatak*' (helper, archaic)]. The user Kassadin TheRealOP adds praise of the guslar Radovan Šojić: 'Радоване брате свака ти је златна и на месту. Фукаре што га издадоше неће умањити херојска дела Народног хероја ђенерала Ратка Младића, живеће вечно као херој' ['Radovan, brother, every word of yours is golden and to the point. The *fukara* (scum) who betrayed him will not lessen the heroic deeds of the People's hero, General Ratko Mladic, he will live forever as a hero'.]

The authors of this paper find this video the most insidious example of digital rhetoric used for nationalist propaganda purposes across the Mladić digital cultural productions.

### Preliminary conclusions

While we can predict that an event like the arrest of Ratko Mladić inevitably triggers an avalanche of fraught online responses, the memory models employed by both mainstream discourse and the oppositional fringe offer a number of insights. What is at stake in these competing epithets, memes and tropes is the narrative of the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia – what will emerge as the dominant narrative, and who will determine it. History, as we know, is written by the victors; but what does that mean in the case of the former Yugoslavia, where so many have lost so much? The real stakes in the story of Yugoslavia's dissolution involve the future of Europe: the dominant narrative explanation of the recent Balkan wars has significant implications for the reunification narrative of Western and Eastern Europe, offering additional motivation for the many echoes of World War II in media and digital cultural responses to Mladić's arrest.

Our research experiment tries to serve two purposes: to think about this historical event from the perspective of digital rhetoric; and to offer a contextualizing overview or flightmap of the kind of work that might be done with digital genres. Our preliminary investigation uncovers multi-layered historical memory models and considerable differences in the ways these models are expressed across online genres; serious investigative work remains to be done within every genre.

All of the online genres that we examined bear traces of earlier media: digitally disclosed, in the case of the posted *hajduk* poem; or displaying offline and online genre hybridity, as in rhymed blog comments and tweeted puns. Regardless of origin, however, when transposed and remediated into certain new genres or platform, such as *Facebook*, blogs or *YouTube* commentary, digital cultural production begins to generate discourses all its own. Such discourses – whether enforcing a dominant, even hegemonic narrative or providing environments for sharing and proliferating extreme nationalist bitterness – urgently call for historically and theoretically informed scholarly attention.

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# Forget Memory: Aleksei Naval'nyi's *LiveJournal* and the Memory Discourse of the Protest Movement (2011-2012)

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**Abstract:** The article explores the online memory discourse of the Russian protest movement of 2011-2012 through an investigation of the *LiveJournal* blog of Aleksei Naval'nyi. Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, the article demonstrates that Naval'nyi refrains from employing memory models in his blog entries and responses to comments. In contrast to Naval'nyi's present-oriented agenda, numerous comments on his blog have a pronounced focus on memory. In this essay, we explore which memories are introduced, with what aim and how the users interact. Furthermore, the article discusses the possible involvement of bots and paid users.

**Keywords:** Naval'nyi, protest, cultural memory, memory models, *LiveJournal*, social media, internet, bots, Russia.

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When, in September 2011, Vladimir Putin nominated himself as the presidential candidate of the United Russia Party (Edinaia Rossiia), no one could have foreseen the political consequences of this reshuffle.<sup>1</sup> The unscrupulous handover of power, accompanied by systematic and widespread election fraud in the parliamentary elections of December 2011, led to a wave of mass protests. Aleksei Naval'nyi (born 1976), a trained lawyer, anti-corruption activist and popular blogger, emerged as an influential leader of the protest movement. He succeeded in mobilizing and consolidating the protest-minded Muscovites, inspiring thousands of volunteers nationwide to join his campaign, and he achieved notable results in the Moscow mayoral elections in September 2013. According to the official results announced by the Central election committee, he received 27.24 percent of votes cast (9 September 2013).

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Social media and the blogosphere have played a crucial role in organizing and mobilizing the protest movement (Schmidt 2012: 5). Journalists and scholars alike have rushed to comment on the link between the mass outpour of protest and the online media that spread videos and eyewitness reports about the electoral fraud. Scholars (Lonkila 2012) acknowledge the importance of social media for the Russian protest movement of 2011-2012 and discuss the role of online media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, in the protest movement (Radchenko et al 2012; Nikiporets-Takigawa 2013b). Indeed, the ‘Winter of discontent’ has ‘shifted the role of the internet – in the eyes of the public and its leaders – from a marginal arena for malcontents into an important source of political information and aggregation’ (Oates 2013: 186). However, the societal impact of digital communication is not limited to its facilitating role in political mobilization. The Internet, ‘[w]ith its speed, accessibility and accommodation of anonymity’ (Rutten 2010: 171), has ‘an undeniable impact on social organisation and the social imaginary that goes beyond struggles for civil rights and political freedom: digital media is fundamentally changing the way that societies are dealing with their history and cultural memory’ (Uffelman 2013: 125).

The present article seeks to increase insight into this important aspect of the Russian protest movement, namely its online *memory* discourse. Due to the very conversational and interactive nature of Web 2.0, we argue that digitally mediated memories demonstrate a multitude of forms and discourses. In addition to acknowledging this diversity, it is essential to differentiate between memory-related narratives and those online practices that refer to historical facts but do not amount to any commemorative practices that interest us here. The defining characteristic of memory-related content is that, through historical association or even historical analogy, an event or a figure from the past is used as an interpretative frame to describe, define and evaluate the present and the future. It is this implicit aim to comment on present-day circumstances, events and future developments through the prism of the past that sets memory models apart from casual references to historical events and persons, as well as from the contributions of most online amateur historians. As has become clear from our analysis, it is impossible to exclude non-memory-related content from quantitative searches and thereby gain insights into the actual memory discourse, without performing a qualitative assessment.

Several publications have already suggested that memory has played an important role in the online discourse surrounding the protest movement (Nikiporets-Takigawa 2012; Fedor & Nikiporets-Takigawa 2012a; 2012b). Indeed, online media that mobilize the participants are filled with memory material. Thematically, these references range from the Decembrists to 1917, Stalin to 1991, the Orange Revolution and the Arab Spring. It is remarkable in this respect that Aleksei Naval’nyi explicitly refrains from employing historical parallels. In an interview with Boris Akunin (Grigorii Chkhartishvili), Naval’nyi distanced himself from the use of history in the pursuit of political change:

Gitler i Stalin – dva glavnykh palacha russkogo naroda. Stalin kaznil, moril golodom i muchil moikh sootchestvennikov, lichno dlia menia zdes’ vse iasno. Odnako ia protiv togo, chtoby eto bylo “vechnym” voprosom i ne vizhu nikakogo smysla vo vsei etoi “destalinizatsii” i t.d. Ne ponimaiu, chto eto oznachaet v formate gosudarstvennoi politiki. [...] Nuzhno samostoiatel’no otvechat’ na vyzovy vremeni, a ne zhit’ beskonechnymi po-

liticheskimi alliuziiami. "Vopros Stalina" – eto vopros istoricheskoi nauki, a ne te-kushchei politiki. [Hitler and Stalin are two of the main hangmen of the Russian people. Stalin had my fellow-countrymen executed, starved to death and tortured, this is all very clear to me personally. However, I am against considering it an "eternal" question and I do not see the sense of all this "destalinization" and so on. I don't understand what this means within the context of state politics. [...] We have to answer the challenges of time independently, instead of re-living endless political allusions. The "Stalin question" is a question for historical sciences, not present-day politics]. (Naval'nyi, quoted in Akunin 2012)<sup>2</sup>

Naval'nyi's *LiveJournal* blog (<http://navalny.livejournal.com/>) provides interesting insights into the online memory discourse and its connection to the protest movement. The citation index of Medialogia indicates that, in 2012, Naval'nyi's blog was the most frequently cited in Russian mainstream media (2013). According to user ratings on *LiveJournal*, Naval'nyi is also the most popular blogger active on the Russian segment of this media platform (12.09.2013). The enormous number of comments that Naval'nyi receives on each blog entry,<sup>3</sup> affirms that his blog has become an important platform for political discussion. While the blog cannot be taken as representative of the protest movement as a whole, and acknowledging that a multitude of media and actors actively contributed to the debate, we consider this particular online platform one of the most influential. The entries that Naval'nyi posts on his *LiveJournal* blog appear to support his claim that he wishes to set a present-oriented political agenda, aimed at discussing actual political problems, rather than dwelling on the past. Using quantitative analysis, in this paper we test the hypothesis that Naval'nyi refrains from using memory models on his blog.

As the subsequent analysis will demonstrate, the users who populate Naval'nyi's blog actually *do* use memory models and therefore challenge the blogger's present and future-oriented online strategy. We take this discrepancy between the blog entries by Aleksei Naval'nyi and the comment threads as the starting point of discussion. While Naval'nyi's blog entries are worth studying in and of themselves, our main interest lies in the function of his blog as a platform for historically-engaged political discussion. Our goal is to analyse, by qualitative methods, at what point commenters introduce history, which memory models they employ, how these models relate to the original blog entry and how the introduction of memory influences the dynamics between users. By zooming-in on the discursive dynamics of a random sample of comment threads and analysing online content related to memory, we seek to gain insight into the role that memory has played within the broader context of the Russian protest movement and its online memory discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all translations are by the authors.

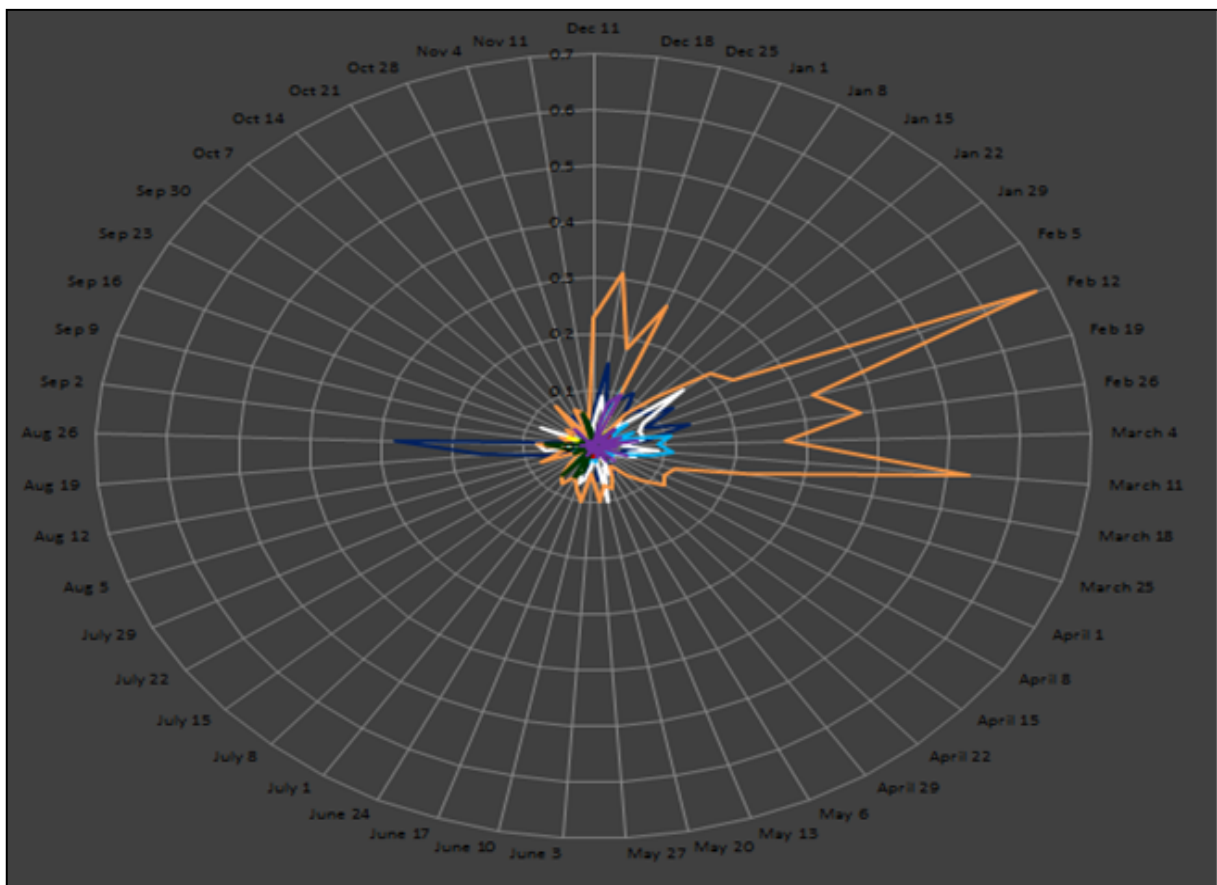
<sup>3</sup> For instance, in the period of December 2011 until May 2012 he received 219,752 comments on 172 blog entries.

## Methodology

To analyse Aleksei Naval'nyi's use of memory on his *LiveJournal* blog, we perform quantitative analysis using *Yandex Search for Blogs* by formulating a list of keywords that refer to historical events and political figures that have been regularly associated, both positively and negatively, with the protest movement. The parliamentary elections on 4 December 2011 are taken as the start of the protest movement. Our study covers a period of 18 months, from 4 December 2011 until 4 May 2013.

The analysis of the comments consists of two phases. The first phase again employs *Yandex Search for Blogs* to trace the frequency of the set of keywords from 4 December 2011 until 31 March 2012 on a weekly basis. As Figure 1 demonstrates, memory activity was at its peak in this period.

**Figure 1.** Frequency of references to historical events in the Russian blogosphere from 11 December 2011 until 11 November 2012.

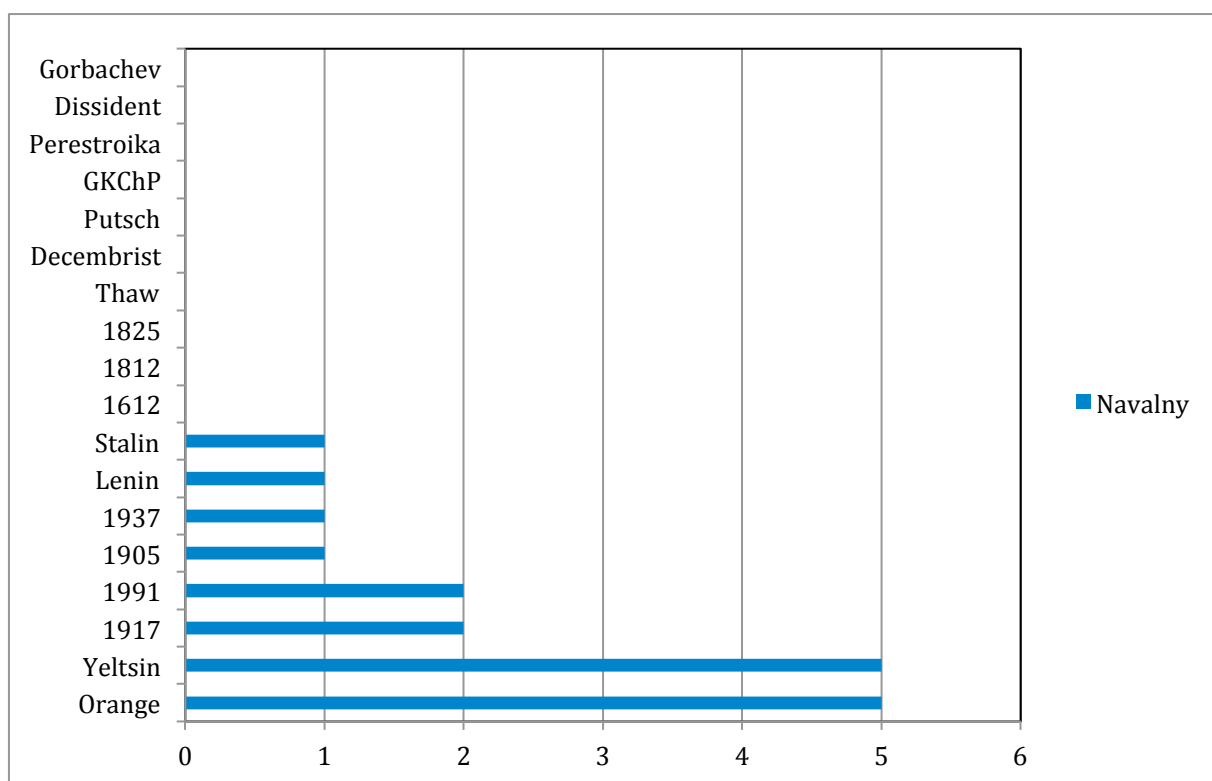


Source: Nikiporets-Takigawa (2013a)

The second stage of our research consists of discourse analysis of a random sample taken from comment threads containing one or more keywords. The qualitative analysis is aimed to identify at what point of the discussion memory models are introduced, which memories are employed, with what purpose and how other users respond.

Before continuing with the results of the analysis, a few comments on the typical dynamics of *LiveJournal* and comment threads are in order. Due to the structure of *LiveJournal* users are likely to read only the first few comments. As time progresses and users continue to add comments, older comments are moved back. This can possibly limit the length of discussions. This also makes it both difficult and less relevant to consider the total corpus of comments on an entry as a whole. Rather, they should be seen as blocks of comments that are not necessarily interrelated. Actual threads of comments, on the other hand, are created by users who have responded to a comment, rather than to the blog entry, and should therefore be viewed integrally.

**Figure 2.** Total number of mentions of the memory keywords in blog entries and Naval'nyi's responses on comments from 4 December 2011 until 4 May 2013. Source of data: *Yandex Search for Blogs*. Data collected on 22 August 2013.



Source: Hanna Stähle, Mariëlle Wijermars

Interactivity is one of the main features of *LiveJournal* blogs. It is possible to respond to the blog entry itself, as well as to the comments of other users. This technical feature supports the appearance of parallel discourses in the comment threads that often lack a direct connection to the blog entry. The first comment tends to be an actual response to the blog entry, although there are exceptions. Subsequent responses to the comments can spontaneously introduce other topics. It is possible for a single comment thread to take place on multiple levels and involve complex interaction among several users; dialogues are very popular but trialogues and polilogues occur quite often as well. The complex and multi-layered structure

of comment threads reinforces the fragmentary nature that appears to characterize expressions of memory in interactive online media; where ‘[d]iscussions of historical events are scattered’ and ‘[t]here are many beginnings and sudden endings in the conversations’ about the past (Zvereva 2011: 4).

### Aleksei Naval’nyi and memory

To investigate the hypothesis that Naval’nyi refrains from using memory models in his blog entries and in his responses to comments, we have used *Yandex Search for Blogs*. Taking the parliamentary elections on 4 December 2011 as the start of the protest movement, we covered Naval’nyi’s blog entries and responses over a period of eighteen months. As Figure 2 indicates, the blogger indeed refers to past events sparingly. In a total of 1083 blog entries and responses (556 entries and 527 comments), Lenin, Stalin and the years 1905 and 1937 are mentioned once, 1917 and 1991 twice and Yeltsin and ‘orange’ both appear five times (see Figure 2).

If we take a closer look at the blog entries and responses in which the protest leader refers to the past, the majority of them are not memory related. For example, the following is a quotation from an English text Naval’nyi reposted:

The individual whose interests are involved on the other side of the material transactions that took place with Mr Tchigirinski and his companies is Mr Anatoly Kruglov. ***Between 1991 and 1998, Mr Kruglov was head of the Russian Federation’s State Customs Committee, and his family was involved in the ownership of a number of Russian customs terminals (which were privately owned, subject to state supervision).*** (Quoted in *navalny* 06.12.2012, bold and italics in the original)

Similar comments on (post-Soviet) history that should be seen as historical rather than memory-related concern Yeltsin. The following response by the blogger to a comment is a good example.

Neuzheli Varlamov na polnom ser’eze dumal, chto prosto tak, za krasivyi pricheson, stanet merom? [Did Varlamov seriously think he would become the mayor just because of his stylish haircut]. (*cadu3m* 03.05.2013)

Nu Putin prezidentom stal i bez pricheson. Ugovorili El’tsina i vse. [Well, Putin became president even without any “haircut”. They just convinced Yeltsin, that is all]. (*navalny* 03.05.2012)

Those historical references which are employed as memory models frequently turn out to be texts from other authors that the blogger has (re)posted and often are aimed at negatively portraying the protest movement. Consider, for instance, the following two fragments taken from a text by Ruslan Ustrakhanov that Naval’nyi posted on his blog.

“Ucheba” – ob’iasnenie dlia naivnykh. Kakoi mozhet byt’ ona v neskol’ko mesiatsev. *Dlia Naval’nogo poezdka v Soedinennye Shtaty – eto otriad posviashcheniia v klub “elitnykh” vragov Rossii.* Ego opekunom vystupaet Natsional’nyi demokraticeskii Institut SShA (‘NDI’). [...] ‘NDI’ – odin iz organizatorov i finansistov “oranzhevykh revoliutsii”. Tol’ko na Ukraine im bylo potracheno 2 mln. dollarov gorlopanam na Maidane v 2004-m [Only the naive will believe he’s been studying. What kind of studies can you do in just a few months. *For Navalny, the trip to the USA was a ceremony of initiation into the club of elite enemies of Russia.* It is controlled by the National Democratic Institute of the USA (“NDI”). [...] “NDI” was one of the organizers and financiers of the ‘Orange Revolutions’. In 2004, in Ukraine alone, they spent 2 million U.S. dollars on the screamers on Maidan [square]]. (Ruslan Ustrakhanov, quoted in Naval’nyi 20.08.2012, emphasis in the original)

Krushenie Rossiiskoi imperii v 1917 godu – rezul’tat podryvnoi deiatel’nosti Zapada, vnutrennego predatel’sstva i liberalizma vlasti. Te zhe prichiny priveli k raspadu Velikoi strany – Sovetskogo Soiuz. Reshitel’nost’ gosudarstva v zashchite svoei bezopasnosti i tselostnosti. Eto garantiia nepovtoreniia krupneishikh geopoliticheskikh katastrof XX-go veka. [The collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 was the result of the undermining activities of the West[ern countries], domestic betrayal and the liberalism of the authorities. The exact same causes led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Decisiveness of the state in defence of its security and integrity. That is the only guarantee against the repetition of the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century]. (Ruslan Ustrakhanov, quoted in Naval’nyi 20.08.2012)

From the discussion above we conclude that Naval’nyi uses historical references to key events in Russian history very sparingly: there are, in fact, only two such references. Furthermore, on the occasions that the blogger *does* refer to history, it is in a factual, historical way that does not function as a memory model. The occasions where historical references can be interpreted as memory models can be attributed to other authors whose texts Naval’nyi reposts to show the way in which he and the protest movement are portrayed.

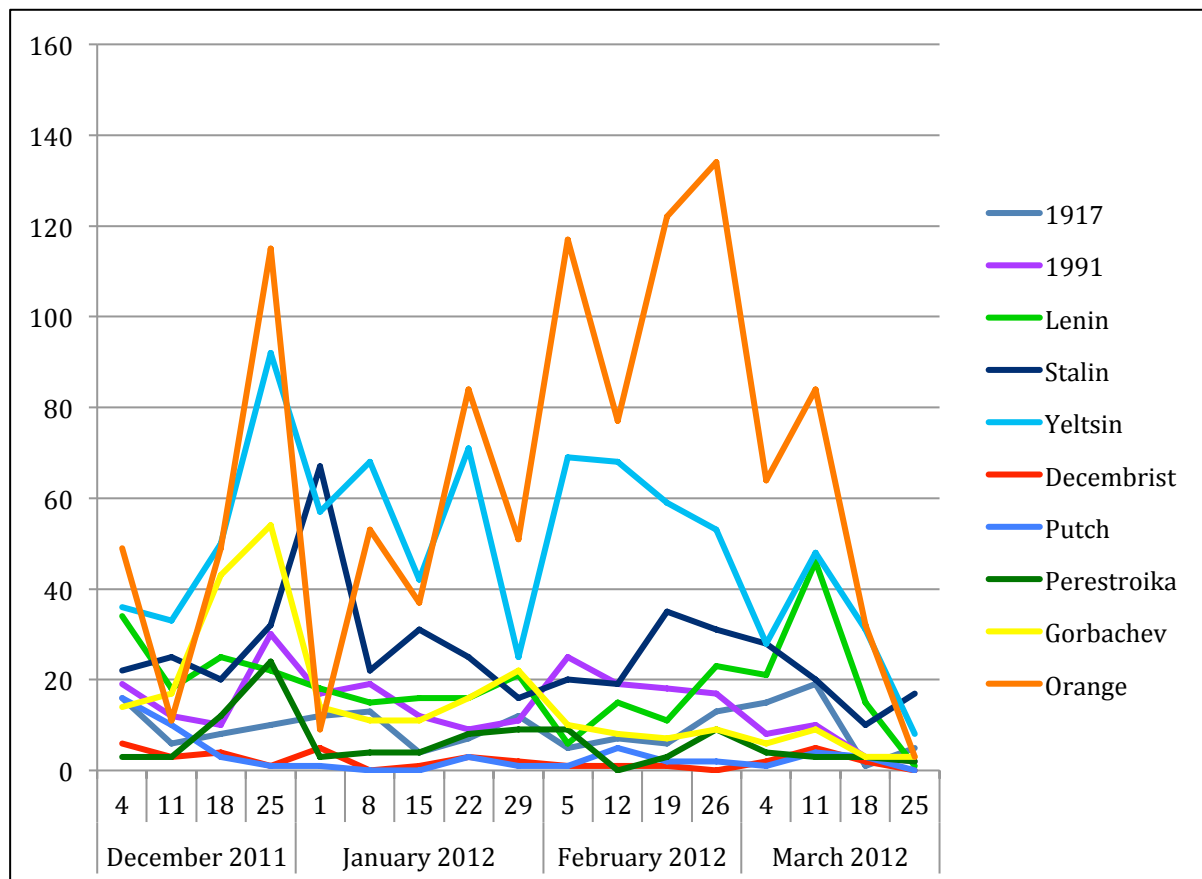
## Comment threads on Naval’nyi’s *LiveJournal*

### *First phase: quantitative analysis*

To analyse how frequently users employ cultural memory in the comments, we turn again to the *Yandex Search for Blogs*. The time frame for the comment search is limited to 4 December 2011 – 31 March 2012, the period in which, according to Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa, the memory activity in the blogosphere was most intense (Nikiporets-Takigawa 2013a). Figure 3 shows the developments of the ten most frequent memory keywords. Of the keywords that were excluded from the graph for clarity purposes, “1825” and “оттепель” [Thaw] were mentioned <10 times; “1612”, “1812”, “1905” < 20 times; “1937” and “ГКЧП” [GKChP]<sup>4</sup> <30 times; and “диссидент” [dissident] only 31 times.

<sup>4</sup> State of Emergency Committee.

**Figure 3.** Frequency of memory keywords from 4 December, 2011 until 31 March 2012. Source of data: *Yandex Search for Blogs*. Data collected on 3 September 2013.



Source: Hanna Stähle, Mariëlle Wijermars

As Figure 3 shows, the memory of the Orange Revolution (“оранжевая” [orange])<sup>5</sup> was most frequently used within the selected time frame, followed by “Ельцин” [Yeltsin] and, less frequently, “Сталин” [Stalin]. Other memory models associated with the end of the Soviet Union (“1991”, “путч” [putsch], “перестройка” [perestroika], “Горбачёв” [Gorbachev]) are much less frequently mentioned than “Ельцин” [Yeltsin]. Memories connected to the October Revolution (“1917”, “Ленин” [Lenin]) are less frequent than the references to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine or the figure of Yeltsin. References to the Decembrists (“декабрист”) show a peak at the beginning of December but ebb away afterwards. As the analysis of Naval’nyi’s blog entries and responses has shown, quantitative data on the frequency of historical references is likely to contain “noise”, references which, in fact, do not express a historical parallel or memory.

<sup>5</sup> The query ‘orange’ does not differentiate between actual references to the Orange Revolution and other, non-political uses of the word. While the specific context of the *LiveJournal* blog leads one to expect that the majority of occurrences are likely to be political in nature, rather than a casual denotation of colour, this possibility cannot be ruled out at this point.

*Second phase: qualitative analysis*

Our findings demonstrate that historical references are less likely to be introduced in comments to the blog entries than in comments responding to previous comments. In the case that a comment on a blog entry contains a historical reference, it tends to either focus on current political and contextual issues or involve a more personal statement. The ways in which historical references are introduced in comments responding to previous comments differ more widely. Extensive discussions of history tend to be rare. Its usage remains present-oriented and most of the occurrences could be described as a meme, insult, or rhetorical weapon. Users “play the memory card” to make a point, to insult other users, or to support their claims. The meme-like use of memory models is found more frequently in malignant comments, whose main goal is to assault the author of the original comment. Attempts to interpret the contemporary meaning of historical events rarely take place in the actual comment exchanges; they are more likely to be contained in larger comments that are structurally similar to a blog entry. Here, historical events are described at some length, although a single interpretation is almost universally followed throughout the comment. In such cases, a memory is explicitly linked to the present and often relates directly to the topic of Naval'nyi's blog entry as well. This pattern can be illustrated by the following comment written by ‘timofeev\_vyach’. The user responds to Naval'nyi's call for an effective information and communication campaign throughout the country. He proposes to improve the management and to found an official newspaper (timofeev\_vyach 16.03.2012). To stress his point, ‘timofeev\_vyach’ recalls Lenin: ‘U Lenina byla partiia-organizatsiia. A zachem ona emu, zhil by bez organizatsii: iz Shushenskogo vel by blog. Nichego by togda ne vyshlo.’ [‘Lenin had a well-organised party. What did he need it for? If he had not had an organization, only a blog would have come out of Shushenskoe.’<sup>6</sup> Nothing would have come of it.’] (ibid.). The comment evoked supportive responses from several users but none of them referred to a historical event or figure.

The frequency of references to Lenin is relatively constant throughout the first four months of the protest movement, with small peaks in the first week of December 2011 and the second week of March 2012. At the time of the first protest rallies, the combined memories of Lenin and 1917 appear to have served as a special kind of measuring bar by which to evaluate the success or failure of the protest movement. In this context, Naval'nyi is often compared to Lenin<sup>7</sup>, including detailed references to public speeches and political leadership qualities. Contrary to his present-oriented agenda, Naval'nyi becomes an *object* of precisely the kind of historical comparisons to which he explicitly refuses to resort. In these comments, both supporters and opponents of the protest leader structure their opinions about his performance around positive and negative associations with Lenin, as the examples below illustrate:

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<sup>6</sup> Name of the village where V.I. Lenin spent several years in exile.

<sup>7</sup> The use of memories related to Stalin appears to be of a different nature. Discussions on Stalin are less polarized and can be markedly nostalgic and patriotic. While the prevalence of mentions of Stalin demonstrates the strength of this cultural reference, the majority of these references actually lack connection with the contemporary issues at stake in the discussion. These can be better described as noise. Stalin appears to have become a byword for all things odious, an insult that puts an end to any discussion.

Naval'nyi – Lenin segodnia! [...]. Obrazets politika novogo pokoleniia, ran'she v Rossii tak tol'ko Vladimir Il'ich umel: nametil sebe tsel', deklariroval ee, propisal taktiku dostizheniia tseli, dobilsia realizatsii postavlennoi zadachi, podvel itogi, razobral oshibki taktiki. Nametil novye tseli. Naval'nogo v prezidenty! [Naval'nyi is the Lenin of today! [...]. He is an example of a new generation politician, in Russia only Vladimir Il'ich used to be like him: he set a goal, proclaimed it, outlined tactics for reaching the goal, achieved the realization of the assigned task, summarised the results, analysed mistakes in tactics. [Then] he set new goals. Naval'nyi for president!] (anest\_doc 05.12.2011)

Vystupil kruto. Ia v audiozapisi na mitinge v Pitere slushal, ochen' bylo pokhozhe na zapis' istoricheskoi rechi Lenina. Eto oshchushchenie eshche bol'she zakrepilos' slovami "Vsia vlast' narodu!". Miting prosto zataiv dykhanie slushal, a v kontse vzorvalsia. Nuzhno bylo videt' litsa mentov, kotorye do etogo byli neprobivaemymi – oni poniali, chto chto-to proizoshlo. [He gave a great speech. I listened to a recording of it at the rally in St Petersburg, it was very similar to the tape of the historical speech of Lenin. This feeling was strengthened even more by the words "All power to the people!" The rally listened, holding its breath, and then finally exploded. You should have seen the faces of the policemen, who had acted impenetrable up to that point – they understood that something [significant] had happened]. (denisbystrov 25.12.2011)

Da ne vyidet u nikh nichego. Naval'nomu daleko do Trotskogo, Lenina... Dazhe na besnovatogo fiurera ne tianet. Otvlekaet liudei ot deistvitel'no vazhnykh del. [Their actions will come to nothing. Naval'nyi is far from being like Trotskii, Lenin... He would not even make a possessed Führer. He distracts people from what is really important]. (lavr\_beria 30.12.2011)

By March 2012, positive comparisons of Naval'nyi with Lenin almost entirely disappear from the comments. The focus shifts towards interpreting the results of the protest rallies and reviewing what mistakes have been made. References to Lenin's revolutionary plan are now used to give Naval'nyi and other leading figures of the protest movement the advice to do their "homework": 'O! Aleksei, nakonets, prochel Lenina:) (o tom, chto dlia uspekha revoliutsii pervym delom nado brat' pochtu i telegraf, a potom uzhe iz Avrory palit')' ['Oh! Aleksei has finally read Lenin:] (the part that says that to make a revolution succeed, you first have to seize the post and the telegraph and only then start shooting from the Aurora).'] (razumovskaya\_n 13.03.2012)

If we take the reviewed period as a whole, two major uses of the image of Lenin emerge: He is either seen as an example of a great revolutionary, an efficient (if opportunistic) leader; or, as a foreign-sponsored villain who instigated revolutionary turmoil and, by extension, can be held responsible for the period of Soviet rule. As an "evil agent" of German/American/Jewish puppet masters, Lenin is part and parcel of the anti-Russian conspiracy; he is the German provocateur:

Naverno, vse v svoe vremia slyshali, chto zavarushka 1917 goda i to, chto ei predshestvovalo, delalos' s OCHEN' khoroshei finansovoi pomoshch'iu. I kak raz togda imenno "zagranitsa" aktivno pomogala Leninu i kompanii (v knizhках chitala, lol). [Everyone has probably heard that the turmoil of 1917 and the events which preceded it

were made possible by VERY good financial assistance. And back then, it was precisely the “foreign countries” who were actively helping Lenin and his supporters (or so I read in some books, lol)]. (alena\_antonova 02.02.2012)

The historical details of Lenin's activities, as well as his texts, are well known to many commenters who provide links to and quotations from his works. However knowledgeable the arguments may be, this use of Lenin entails little discussion and the total length of such comment threads rarely exceeds 1-3 comments. The following example is a comment on a blog entry and was not followed by a discussion afterwards: ‘Lidera real’nogo net, naselenie k peremenam ne gotovo. Chitajte klassiku: V.I. Lenina – net slozhivsheisia revoliutsionnoi situatsii.’ [‘There is no real leader, the population is not ready for change. Read the classics: V.I. Lenin – there is no revolutionary situation.’] (ramzes2002 04.12.2011)

In the course of our analysis, we identified the tendency of memory models to form close associations. The Lenin-1917 constellation is a part of the broader discussion about revolutions of the past and the lessons that are to be drawn from them in relation to the events of the Russian protest. In this discourse on revolution, Lenin and 1917 are the most frequently recurring terms. This suggests that the particular historical parallel is used as a memory model, a tool for thinking about the development of the protest movement. The broader and more symbolic use of 1917 is concerned with the question of whether and how the first months of protests can be compared to other historical moments when popular unrest threatened the authority of those in power. This discourse draws examples from both historical and contemporary events, such as the Decembrist uprising (which appears mainly in December 2011), the combination of years 1612/1812/2012, the French revolution, 1905, the February Revolution (as with the Decembrists, this memory peaked in the eponymous month), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Arab Spring. Apart from the Orange Revolution, which is discussed in more detail below, parallels with the revolutions of 1917 are most frequent. Most users' interpretations of the historical events can be traced to Soviet history textbooks:

Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 2012 ili fars cherez 95 let? Konechno nyneshniaia oppozitsiia v dekabre byla osharashena neozhidannym massovym protestom, kak i lenin, uznavshii v fevrale 1917 o revoliutsii iz zagranichnykh gazet. No cherez polgoda il'ich uzhe ne rasterialsia, a nyneshniaia oppozitsiia ne podgotovila na miting 4 fevralia dazhe manifest o sozdanii obshcherossiiskogo antikorrupsionnogo dvizheniia. Pora uzhe nazvat' istinnye tseli i zadachi oppozitsii. Prostoe vykrikivanie lozungov sil'no razocharuet massy. [The February revolution, 2012, or a farce 95 years later? Of course, the current opposition was surprised by the unforeseen mass protest in December, as was Lenin, who found out about the revolution from foreign newspapers in February 1917. But after a mere six months Il'ich [Lenin] did not lose his head, while the current opposition did not even prepare a manifest about the creation of an all-Russian anti-corruption movement for the rally on February 4. It is time to set real goals and tasks for the opposition. The [protest] masses will get very tired of the mere shouting of slogans]. (vrazumov 02.02.2012)

The remembrance of Yeltsin involves various associations with Russia's recent political history and recollections of users' personal experiences, both positive and negative. In this (post-)Soviet memory constellation, the memories of 1917, 1991 and Yeltsin interweave and

are used to make a point about the present, but moreover to contest the meaning of the Soviet experience and the Yeltsin years. In general, the memory of Yeltsin is employed in two distinct ways. On the one hand, his name is brought into connection with a range of historical events, such as perestroika, the August coup of 1991, the collapse of the USSR and the late 1990s. On the other hand, Yeltsin can be used as a rhetorical device of personification, such as in the following example: ‘[...] ia khochu SAM izbirat’ sebe prezidenta i predstavitelia v dume, a ne chto by eto delal kakoi to tam putin, el’tsin i prochie.’ [‘I want to choose FOR MYSELF who will be the president and the representative for the Duma and not have this decided by a Putin, Yeltsin or anybody else.’] (pharer 27.12.2011).

Negative remembrances of the 1990s prevail in the comment threads. Terms that are often associated with the events of 1991 are bloodshed, disease, catastrophe, disintegration of the USSR and other designations of general disorder. These emotionally charged references appear to reflect betrayed hopes and deep traumas connected to the events of the late 1980s and 1990s. To illustrate this, consider the following comment by user ‘vlad\_pulov’. Within the context of discussing the development of the protest movement, this user recalls the events of 1991 and describes them as chaos: ‘Prizvyv k sverzheniiu vlasti izbrannoi narodom – eto provotsirovanie khaosa. [...] Tolpa nichego reshat’ ne budet, my eto uzhe prokhodili v 1991-om.’ [‘Appeals to overthrow the power elected by the people are a provocation of chaos. [...] The crowd is not going to resolve anything, we already went through this in 1991.’] (vlad\_pulov 27.12.2011). As the examples above clearly show, recollections about the 1990s quite frequently do not contain detailed information. While the goal of these commenters evidently is to appeal to other users and create an emotional connection about a shared experience, they appear to assume that their experiences coincide to such an extent that brief, abstract statements are sufficient to achieve this.

With regard to the social network website *Vkontakte*, Vera Zvereva argues that “in [the] memory-related communities one can often find more form than content” and “*rhetorical signs of argumentation can mask [the] absence*” of *actual* argumentation (Zvereva 2011: 5. Emphasis added). While brevity can indeed signal a lack of content, it can at times also indicate the relevance of the utterance and the productivity of the memory model that underlies it; a reference that gains argumentative power through its ability to draw in content that is situated *outside* of the message. In many cases, a reference to Yeltsin is not connected to a particular event but, rather, is used as a figure of speech, as shorthand for the political instability and societal hardships of the 1990s. This is the case, for instance, in the following example: ‘Zhit’ stalo luchshe pri Putine, Naval’nyi=El’tsin’ [‘Life has improved under Putin, Naval’nyi = Yeltsin.’] (intermani 8.02.2012). This comment received one response written by ‘lesnoy\_volk’ that relates to both Putin and Yeltsin: ‘Logicheskaja oshibka. “Pri Putine” ne znachit “blagodaria Putinu”. Bolee-menee snosnoe suchestvovanie v krupnykh i chastichno srednykh gorodakh – za schet takikh tsen na neft’, o kotorykh p’iani El’tsin ne mog dazhe mechat’.’ [‘It’s a logical mistake. “Under Putin” does not mean “thanks to Putin”. More or less bearable existence in big cities and part of the medium-sized cities came about because of oil prices a drunk Yeltsin could never have dreamed of.’] (lesnoy\_volk 8.02.2012). While in the first comment the name of Yeltsin is used as a figure of speech, the mentioning of Yeltsin in the last comment questions the implied attribution of complete po-

litical control over the development of Russian society. By disconnecting the politician from the state of affairs, he also effectively refutes the symbolic function of Yeltsin's name.

In the state-endorsed political discourse the general disorder of the 1990s is frequently contrasted to the 2000s to indicate the stability and prosperity brought about by the Putin regime. The comparison of Yeltsin with Putin aiming to legitimize the latter's politics appears to be a widely used pattern of communication, in particular in anti-protest comments. Moreover, based on the close reading of our sample of comment threads, it has become clear that several statements should most likely be linked to activist pro-Kremlin users or even paid users. As was illustrated above, the negative memory discourse about the 1990s is shared by the majority of *LiveJournal* users on this particular blog. Such politically motivated comments can influence the balance of a discussion. The comment below exemplifies this kind of entry:

Strana "zabolela" v kontse 80-kh i eta "bolezni" konkretno "podkosila" nashu Rodinu v 1991 godu i chut' ne privela k letal'nogmu iskhodu k 2000 godu, a kogda ona nachala seichas ponemnogu vyzdoravlivat', a v nekotorykh sektorakh dazhe i vyzdorovala – vse te, kto etu stranu k etoi "bolezni" i privel, podniali paniku. [The country became "sick" in the late 80s and this "disease" knocked our motherland down in 1991 and nearly led to a fatal outcome in 2000. And when she gradually started to recover – and in some sectors has even recovered completely – the people who led this country to this "disease" raised panic]. (kaletin-ilya 26.12.2011)

#### *Paid users and bots*

Paid users usually write long personal messages and interact with other blog commenters by responding to their questions or adding facts. Moreover, paid users often take on a certain recognizable identity and act as, for example, an experienced teacher or a preoccupied mother who is taking care of her son who supports Naval'nyi. As a result of close reading, certain patterns of users start to emerge, such as the user with the username of 'Anton Uvarov', who portrays himself as a soldier and a patriot. Within a short period of time, Uvarov placed several comments that speak very negatively about Yeltsin and the 1990s and adhere to the pattern indicated earlier:

Tol'ko bratan poimi. Naval'nyi 2011 eto El'tsin 1991. Tot tozhe shturmoval... A kak zhi-los' v 90e nadeius' pomnish'... Ne popadis' na etu udochku... [Please, bro, understand. Naval'nyi of 2011 is Yeltsin of 1991. The latter also carried out an assault... I hope you remember how we lived in the 90s... Don't fall for this bait]. (Anton Uvarov 29.12.2011)

El'tsin tozhe v 93 godu prizyval idti na belyi dom. Teper' naval'nyi cherez 20 let prizyvaet idti na kreml'. Pomnish' kak pri El'tsine zhiilos'? [In '93 Yeltsin also called for an attack on the White House. Now, 20 years later, Naval'nyi is calling for an attack on the Kremlin. Do you remember how we lived under Yeltsin's rule?] (Anton Uvarov 28.12.2011)

‘Anton Uvarov’'s comments are typical of anti-protest-movement activities on the blog site of the protest leader, where it remains impossible to determine with any certainty whether these online activities are funded by government-supportive groups or simply personally motivated.

The meaning and contemporary relevance of the Soviet period are less contested than the Yeltsin heritage or the Putin present. The protest strategy is to attempt to see both Putin and Yeltsin as a continuation of a series of illegitimate regimes. The anti-protest comments, on the other hand, are more likely to connect Yeltsin with the Soviet past or simply portray the years he was in power as a nightmare. By stressing the negative aspects of life in Russia in the 1990s, they attempt to construct a clean break between the Yeltsin years and Putin's time in office.

Gore russkikh v tom, chto kogda vsekh zakhvatili vrasplokh “putchisty” v 1991-om, edinstvennye, kto ne byli zakhvacheny vrasplokh, kak potom okazalos’, byli amerikanskiye spetssluzhby. I oni bystrenko otpravili v Mosvku komandu so svoimi “spetsami” i bystrenko zarabotali s komandoi El'tsina-Chubaisa, chtoby vse organizovat' NA SVOI LAD – na pol'zu “elity” (sokrytoi ili polusokrytoi) SShA i VO VRED RUSSKOMU CHELOVEKU I ROSSIISKOI GOSUDARSTVENNOSTI. [...] Mezhdru prochim, Vy naverno uzhe zametili, chto v SShA ne ochen' khorosho ustroeno raspredelenie sil i administratsiia aktivov strany, t.e. v uscherb narodu. I imenno iz SShA v Rossiiu “napravili sovetchikov” [...]. Kak i togda, v 1917-om, otkuda poiavilos' vdruk vsem golovu vskruzhivshee poniatie ‘Sovety’? Tozhe – so storony, a ne ot pochvy... [The problem of the Russians is when everyone was taken unaware by the putschists in 1991, the only ones who weren't surprised, as it turned out later, were the American security services. And they quickly sent their “specialists” to Moscow [...] and quickly started working with the Yeltsin-Chubais-team in order to organize everything IN THEIR OWN WAY – to the benefit of the “elite” (concealed or half-concealed) of the USA and TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE AND RUSSIAN STATEHOOD. [...]. By the way, you may have already noticed, that the distribution of power and the administration of active assets are poorly arranged in the USA, i.e. at the expense of the people. But still It was the USA who “sent their sovetchiki [advisors]” [...]. Just like it happened in 1917 when the term “Soviets” suddenly infatuated everybody. This too did not come from the inside but from the outside...]. (Maria Ashot 08.02.2012)

In the comments posted on Naval'nyi's *LiveJournal* page many thousands of references to the Orange Revolution can be found. The quantitative part of the research indicated that usage of the term ‘orange’ was the most numerous within our selection of keywords, amounting to just over a thousand mentions within the selected four-month time period. This is consistent with the research results of Fedor and Nikiporets-Takigawa (2012a: 8), who found that ‘orange’ was one of the ‘dominant colours in the media coverage of the protests’ (ibid).

An in-depth analysis of bottom-up discussions and user interactions related to the Orange Revolution reveals substantial differences in the usage of digitally mediated memory practices. The comments range from detached observations to emotional remembrances of those who witnessed the mass protest rallies in Ukraine in 2004. More importantly, the term ‘orange’ is frequently found in the context of accusations, insults or hate speeches. The follow-

ing two comments illustrate how a reference to the Orange Revolution can serve as a framework for interpreting the protest movement and is used to discuss events and figures in the present, such as elections, protest rallies or political leaders, and to speculate on future developments in Russia.

[...] esli my vyidem i ne budem ukhodit' kak v svoe vremia na Maidane vlast' srazu predstavit eto kak oranzhevuiu revoliutsiiu v glazakh obshchestva i samoe strashnoe, chto one emu poverit i sootvestvenno otritsatel'no k etomu nachnet otnosit'sia [...]. [If we take to the streets and refuse to leave like [it happened] on Maidan [square], the authorities will immediately present it as an Orange Revolution in the eyes of the public and what's worse, society will believe them and correspondingly start to feel negatively about it]. (gradusof 27.12.2011)

Naval'nyi – real'nyi lider. Vozmozhno on sam k etomu ne gotov. [...] no k etomu vse idet. “Zvezdnoi bolezniiu” on vrode uzhe perebolel. “Oranzhevaia revoliutsiia” – ona narodu ne nuzhna. [Naval'nyi is a real leader. It is possible that he is not ready for this yet. [...] but everything leads to it. It seems he has already overcome his “superiority complex”. The people have no need for an “Orange Revolution”]. (electrosvyaz 29.12.2011)

The associations with the Orange Revolution that users express are generally negative, which might explain why Naval'nyi wishes to steer clear of associating himself with memory models and especially this one. There appears to be a consensus among users – both those who associate themselves with the protest movement and those who are critical of the protest rallies – that the Orange Revolution represents a dangerous political scenario that should not be repeated in Russia. The user ‘radiator\_asus’, for example, – who obviously was considering taking part in the protest rallies in December 2011 – points out his willingness to support the party in power in case of a development comparable to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine:

Ia protiv razvitiia sobytii v stile oranzhevykh revoliutsii i td, vse znaiut kto togda prikhodit k vlasti! Ia o tom chto esli miting budet krichat' idei tipa “putena v util’”, “sverzhenie vlasti” i td i tp, to ia obiazatel'no vystupliu na storone vlasti. [I am against a development of events comparable to the Orange Revolution and so on. Everyone knows who would come to power in that case! I mean that if they start yelling slogans at the protest rallies like ‘out with Putin’, ‘overthrow of power’ etcetera, I will be on the side of the party in power]. (radiator\_asus 09.12.2011)

The interpretation of the Orange Revolution as a seizure of power followed by injustice and corruption appears to be a commonly held image among the users commenting on Naval'nyi's *LiveJournal* blog. Moreover, this negative reading has been successfully transferred from the 2004 events in Ukraine to the current political situation in Russia. As the user ‘lozhkamyoada\_73’ comments, the main goal of the ‘orange’ demonstrations in Russia is to depose Putin and to disrupt the political order:

Oranzhevye nuzhny tol'ko chtoby svergnut' Putina i dezorganizovat' vlast', kotoruiu potom u oranzhevykh uvedut iz pod nosa, kak Lenin obvel Kerenskogo vokrug pal'tsa. [The

only purpose of the orange [demonstrations] is to overthrow Putin and destabilize the ruling power, [but] afterwards, state control will be taken from under the nose of the orange [protest leaders], just as Lenin had Kerenskii wrapped around his little finger]. (lozhkamyoda\_73 12.03.2012)

The 2004 protests in Ukraine are often related to the political and financial support of the American State Department and other (Western) countries and/or foreign institutions. In this way, the user 'lie1981' puts a sign of equality between the Orange Revolution and a revolution orchestrated from abroad: 'zhzhot kak vseгда. i proboltalsia taki. esli budet ne tak, budet oranzhevaia revoliutsiia, t.e. revoliutsiia delannaia iz za rubezha' ['He rules, as always. But he still let the cat out of the bag. If it doesn't go like this – there will be an Orange Revolution, a revolution orchestrated from abroad.'] (lie1981 28.01.2011).

References to the Orange Revolution tend to delegitimize the protest movement as a whole. This negative connotation corresponds with the official memory discourse on the Orange Revolution and demonstrates how deeply defamed and discredited the events that took place in Ukraine in 2004 are in Russian society. In this respect, it is not surprising that in numerous comments the Orange Revolution is linked to the events of 1991; those events are associated with negative and traumatic experiences and continue to shape the collective memory in Russia. The following comment by the user 'yurayu' illustrates this point:

Zadumaites' nad tem, chto bylo v 1991 godu. togda ne desiatki tysiach – sotni tysiach chelovek na mitingi sobiralis'. Za vse khoroshee protiv vsego plokhogo. I chem delo konchilos'? Razvalom strany pochemu-to. I seichas Vashi oranzhevye vozhd'i Vas vedut tuda zhe – k razvalu strany. [Think about what happened in 1991. Not tens of thousands, but hundreds of thousands of people gathered at demonstrations. In favour of everything that is good and against everything that is bad. And how did it all end? For some reason, with the collapse of the country. And now your orange leaders are leading you in the very same direction – towards the collapse of the country]. (yurayu 29.01.2012).

Incidentally, the revolutionary events of 1991 are not only compared with the Orange Revolution but even described as being 'orange': 'Nuzhno provodit' antioranzhevye mitingi, v tom smysle, chto seichas i est' vlast' prishedshaia v rezul'tate oranzhevoi revoliutsii 91-go.' ['We have to organize anti-orange rallies in the sense that the current political elite came into power as a result of the Orange Revolution of 1991.'] (dmitrin10 15.03.2012). Within the semantic set associated with the term 'orange', 1991 most frequently appeared in the comment threads on this blog site.

The negative and highly politicized memory of the Orange Revolution shared by a majority of users on Naval'nyi's blog site, whether they belong to the protest movement or not, may explain the widespread usage of the term 'orange' to attack and insult others. The large number of comments we indicated through the quantitative analysis often do not contain actual memory models. The fact that 'orange' refers to events in recent history means that the historical and memory dimensions can overlap (cf. Aleida and Jan Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory) and that the difference is less clear-cut. For instance, in the following example 'orange' is used as an insult, yet it contributes to the es-

establishment of two politically opposed groups: 'Perestroika-2 v deistvii. K chemu privela pervaiia perestroika? K razvalu SSSR. K chemu privedet vtoraia? K razvalu Rossii. Shel by ty nakhui, oranzhevyi mudak.' ['Perestroika-2 in action. Where did the first perestroika lead us? To the collapse of the USSR. Where will the second one lead us? To the breakup of Russia. Fuck you, orange creep.'] (dvostochnik 29.12.2011). We suspect that part of the hate speech and the insulting comments that use the term 'orange' can be traced to bots. Their automatically-generated contributions may have significantly influenced the peaks in the frequency of the word 'orange' indicated in Figure 3 above. As such comments are quite short and do not evoke any multi-level discussions typical for this blog site, the activity of paid bloggers is less probable within the context of the Orange Revolution. We can identify several abusive and aggressive comments containing the term 'orange' written by just one user/bot, using different formulations at different times. For example, the user who goes by the name 'kriwobokow' has contributed numerous provocative and insulting comments using the term 'orange':

Mrazi oranzhevye. Kak zhe vy dostali vsekh, svoim beshenym laem na Rossiuu so svoim pustomelei Nasral'nym. [Orange scum. Everybody is so fed up with you and your crazy barking at Russia with your twaddler Naval'nyi]. (kriwobokow 25.12.2011)

Vladimira Vladimirovicha [Putina] s novym godom!!! Vladimir Vladimirovich zhelaui vam uporstva i sil dlia konsolidatsii Rossii protiv obshchego vraga i ego piatoi oranzhevoi kolonny liberoidov vo glave s dutym oranzhevym bolvanchikom Naval'nym. [Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin], happy New Year!!! Vladimir Vladimirovich, I wish you persistence and strength in order to consolidate Russia [in the struggle] against the common enemy and its fifth, orange column of liberasts, headed by their blown-up orange idol Naval'nyi]. (kriwobokow 31.12.2011)

Such comments are usually not related in any way to the blog entry or to the comments of other users. If the 'orange' verbal abuse elicits a response from another user, the response remains unanswered by the user who wrote the initial abusive comment.

As was outlined in the previous sections, the close reading of comment threads called into question the authenticity of a considerable number of comments. We suspect that quite a large number of comments that fall within the selected time frame of our research can be attributed to bots, pro-Kremlin bloggers or paid users (see also Fedor & Nikiporets-Takigawa 2012b: 4). In recent years, the Kremlin has acknowledged the importance of online media and has sought to influence online discussions (Oates 2013: 101). While it was not the aim of this study to examine the political manipulation of the blog, this finding underlines the importance of combining quantitative research methods with qualitative analysis, in particular in the case of digital memory discourses. It remains difficult to differentiate between the diverse groups of users that are engaged in the manipulation of the online discourse on the protest leader's *LiveJournal* blog. As our research has shown, the topics of the Orange Revolution and the memory constellation of Yeltsin-1991 are more likely to be instrumentalised, whereas the more temporally distant memories, such as Lenin, are seldom the object of comments that seek political manipulation. Within the collected sample of comments, we can

see that references to the Orange Revolution are mainly employed by paid users or bots, in a very repetitive and simplistic way, while “memories” of the 1990s and Yeltsin are slightly more sophisticated and most probably traceable to paid users. Whether the last group is related to pro-Kremlin users, vehement supporters of the current regime or to politically engaged technologists remains an open question. While there are a number of bots that serve, for instance, commercial or spamming purposes and can be investigated automatically because of their repetitive communication patterns, bots involved in the political manipulation of online content tend to be more sophisticated (cf. Mowbray 2014). Detection with quantitative methods alone is unreliable and it is therefore difficult to quantify the spread and impact of those automatic or semiautomatic contributions. Further research is needed to respond to this challenge and to provide a more precise and detailed answer to the question of how to trace and contextualize such users and how to access ‘the meaning and influence, the authority and authenticity of digital texts’ (Fedor 2013: 239).

A second observation is that bots and paid users often become the object of meta-discussion themselves. This pattern of communication – the detection of bots and paid users – takes place in the large majority of comment threads, regardless of the topic that is being discussed. A typical “intervention” interaction goes as follows. At a given point, one user makes some kind of accusation against the supporters of Naval’nyi or puts forward some controversial idea and this sparks off an interaction among two or three users. A “normal” user replies to this by trying to prove that the previous comment was written by a paid user or bot. Let us illustrate this with the following comment thread. User ‘naval\_mudak’ makes an abusive statement by writing: ‘Eto zhe mitingovy el’tsin obraztsa nachala 90-kh! Vy el’tsina s gaidarom khotite? Esli net to za Putina! A inache vsem ot natsionalista-barana pridet PIZDETS!’ [‘This is like the Yeltsin of the rallies at the beginning of 1990s! Do you want Yeltsin and Gaidar? If not, then you should support Putin! Otherwise everybody will get FUCKED by this nationalist ram.’] (naval\_mudak 27.12.2011). The comment is followed by a response from user ‘hontoriel’, who suspects ‘naval\_mudak’ of being a bot: ‘Odna zapis’ v zhurnale, odin drug, iavno spetsial’no sozdanniy akkaunt (po nazvaniuu vidno)... Otkroite snachala lichiko, a to ved’ BOTOksoM pakhnet...’ [‘One blog entry in the diary, one friend, it’s obviously a specially created account (it’s clear from the username)... Show your face, it smells like BOTox.’] (hontoriel 27.12.2011).

Referring to user profiles on *LiveJournal* in order to distinguish authentic from non-authentic contributions appears to be a common way to detect bots and paid users. These user profiles contain relevant information on, for example, the date the account was created, the number of blog entries, friends, received and written comments, last updates and so on. In a very similar manner, a comment written by ‘soybk’ in which he alleges that ‘u naval’nogo sovsem krysha s’ekhala’ [‘Naval’nyi has lost his mind’] (soybk 23.03.2012) and ironically refers to him as ‘lider, mliat’ [‘a fucking “leader”’] (soybk 23.03.2012), evoked a response from two users. Both of them refer to the profile of ‘soybk’ and determine that he is a bot. ‘pavin\_au’ brings forward the following “evidence” from the user page: ‘soybk’'s account was created on 12 December 2011 and was last updated on 23 March 2012. The user has posted one blog entry, has sent 460 comments and received no replies (pavin\_au 23.03.2012). This is sufficient to draw a final conclusion: ‘Diagnoz – bot. Vam vse eshche

platiat za kommenty?' ['Diagnosis – bot. Do you still get paid for [writing] comments?'] (ibid.). The comment is endorsed by the next user, 'sukin\_sbln', who was also planning to quote the information from the user's profile (sukin\_sbln 23.03.2012).

Interestingly, the term "bot" loses most of its original meaning here. The term transcends the limits of referring to a non-human user who automatically generates messages and becomes synonymous to a troll, provocateur, paid user or pro-Kremlin blogger. Users come up with creative ways to designate the (suspected) specific background of the accused, such as, for example, 'edroboty' [United Russia bot], 'zaputinskii bot' [pro-Putin bot], 'Putinskii troll' [pro-Putin troll], 'kremliadskii bot' [pro-Kremlin bot], 'Nashist-troll' [Nashi's troll], 'bot-provokator' [bot-provocateur] and so on. Based on our observation, (non-human) bots are less numerous than paid users on this particular *LiveJournal* blog. It is only in the context of the Orange Revolution that bots outnumbered other non-authentic activities.

## Conclusion

This article has focused on the online memory discourse on Aleksei Naval'nyi's *LiveJournal* blog during the protest movement of 2011-2012 in Russia. The results of the quantitative analysis of the protest leader's blog entries and responses to comments, combined with the outcomes of the complementary qualitative analysis to assess whether historical references amount to memory models, support the claim that Aleksei Naval'nyi refrains from using memory models on his *LiveJournal* blog. Quantitative analysis of the comment threads has indicated that references to historical figures and events are widespread in the comments. The close reading and in-depth analysis of a random sample taken from the comments, however, has shown that a large number of these references are, in fact, not memory-related. Commenters tend to use memories and historical references in highly heterogeneous and present-oriented ways. The majority of memory keywords can better be described in terms of memes, insults, rhetorical weapons or noise. Meanwhile, discussions of current politics prevail in the comment threads and evolve through several layers of contributions and lively interactions among users.

The different memory topics turn out to be used in distinct ways and involve different dynamics between users. The remembrance of Lenin is relatively constant throughout the whole time period of the protest movement. Both positive and negative associations can be found in the comments. The combined memories of 1917 and Lenin are often set in relation to Naval'nyi as a political leader and to the revolutionary events of the protest movement. The remembrance of Yeltsin involves various associations and personal recollections of users. A negative portrayal of Yeltsin and the 1990s in general prevails in the comment threads. The most numerous historical references within the selected time frame of research concern the Orange Revolution. The comments that mention the Orange Revolution range from detached observations to emotional remembrances. Apart from this, the term 'orange' itself is frequently used in the context of accusations, insults or hate speeches. In numerous comments, the Orange Revolution is tied in with the events of 1991, associated with negative and traumatic experiences that continue to shape collective memory in Russia. These negative

associations shared by a majority of *LiveJournal* users on Naval'nyi's blog are often targets of political instrumentalisation and manipulation.

Based on the results of qualitative research, we suspect that a considerable number of comments can be attributed to bots and/or paid users. For that reason, there are grounds for questioning the authenticity of certain online memory peaks. This underlines the importance of combining quantitative research methods with qualitative analysis. Furthermore, the claim that the use of memory models is a common feature of the Russian protest movement proves to be inconsistent with the findings of our research, which demonstrated a lack of memory content in many cases, as well as a persistent focus on the present rather than on contesting the past.

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## Reviews

**From Central to Digital: Television in Russia**, co-edited by Vlad Strukov and Vera Zvereva. Voronezh: Voronezh State Pedagogical University Press, 2014, pp. 412. Language: Russian.

From the days of *perestroika* in the 1980s Russian television rapidly passed through several stages of evolution to catch up with the achievements of its partners in Europe and the U.S. The compilation of essays entitled *From Central to Digital: Television in Russia* provides readers with insights into the process of how Russian television is coping with the latest of the technological challenges: the switch from central to digital broadcasting. This collection covers almost all aspects of this process: from discursive description of the process of digitalization and technical details of archival information storage, to the experience of the practitioners who are pushing Russian television forward into the new age of digital media. The array of concepts and methodological models used by the contributors demonstrates that Russian television is not, by any means, a ‘propaganda machine’ (as suggested by some critics of Russian television), but a sophisticated and dynamic system which adopts cultural practices from both the domestic and the global agendas. The incremental shift into the digital era makes Russian television programming richer in technologies of audience attraction and allows individuals to participate in the television process through social networks, internet forums and mobile applications. Moreover, as demonstrated by the article on Russia Today (RT), the Russian international television channel, Russian television is not simply a recipient of global cultural trends and technologies. It is deeply and actively engaged in global television culture and is even able to shake it with peculiar promo campaigns. Although some authors of the compilation tend to downplay the topic of digitalization and focus on research into traditional television, the majority of articles pin down the essential issues of the aforementioned process.

The book opens with an introductory essay in which the co-editors, Vlad Strukov and Vera Zvereva, define the main problems facing the digitalization of Russian television and contextualize the topic within studies of Russian television both in Russian and Western historiography. The editors of this volume are well-positioned to pursue this goal, as both Strukov and Zvereva have, in the past, published insightful works on post-Soviet Russian television culture. The authors suggest that, rather than the synchronic and diachronic models previously used in scholarship on Russian television, in the digital era it should be studied using a dynamic model. This model identifies television as a vivid environment which im-

plements various cultural practices and transmits them through different technological platforms. Potentially, digitalized television is able to engage different audiences in the process of TV viewing and thus involve even those audiences who refused to watch TV in the 2000s (and chose the internet instead). However, the government's grip on the process of digitalization, which is carried out by decrees 'from the top', makes Russia a peculiar case, which reminds readers of the role that media plays in authoritarian regimes today. As the authors note, digital television in Russia today 'speaks the language of central television' (p. XXXXVII), thus alluding to practices that exclude dissent voices, which central television adopted in the 2000s.

Overall, the book is divided into four parts each addressing a number of issues connected with the digitalization of television in post-socialist society. The first part is devoted to the problems of transition to the digital era of broadcasting. This is the compilation's theoretical section, which introduces the main aspects of the digital stage in television's evolution, including the technical issue of data storage, and it analyzes Russian audience perceptions of the new, digital technologies. Here, a theoretical overview of digital television, written by Elena Vartanova, is complemented by Vera Zvereva's close look at how Russian society perceives innovation and how various social groups conceptualize it. Zvereva identifies four themes which have framed the debates around the digitalization of television in Russia. First, representatives of the government claim that digitalization helps overcome 'information inequality': it allows Russian citizens in all regions to watch the same channels and thus makes them equal to the Muscovites. Second, some internet users perceive the new changes to be yet another round of a power struggle between media managers, which undermines belief in the public benefit of the innovations. The third and fourth themes describe digitalization as an advantageous technology, which improves the day-to-day experience of TV viewing. The author concludes that, nevertheless, though some debate around digitalization is taking place, there is little discussion among experts and policy makers that explains to ordinary Russians why this innovation is necessary. In fact, it is this lack of debate that allows the state to use digitalization for its own purposes, turning a postmodern technology into yet another instrument of control over society, which is a characteristic of the modern, not the postmodern, state.

The second part of the volume is devoted to an analysis of audience in the digital era. It consists of three articles which deal with methods of audience measurement and particular cases of audience research in the digital era. While Sergei Davydov's essay describes various methods of audience measurement deployed in European countries and Russia, Natalya Sokolova's article on *GamelandTV*, the Russian thematic television channel for gamers, is central to this part of the compilation. An analysis of the channel's internet forum reveals how the audience perceived the content of the channel, and reacted to a rebranding which transformed it from a television channel for gamers into a channel for men, entitled *ManTV*. This contribution is a rare example of research into an audience drawn from the internet community of gamers, one that usually displays reluctance to traditional television viewing. The article shows how this audience contributed to the content of the channel and it challenges Henry Jenkins' argument that in the age of new media it is consumers who take control of the channel. Sokolova shows that despite protests over rebranding, the channel's man-

agement abandoned an existing and loyal audience of gamers for more profitable consumers of luxury adverts.

The third part describes various cultural languages utilized by Russian television in the digital era: from entertainment programmes devoted to business and success to pseudo documentary shows (mocumentaries). This part illustrates how Russian television culture is deeply involved in global cultural trends and utilises the opportunities provided by digital television to diversify the forms used for addressing different audiences. At the same time, Oksana Moroz' article on Russian mocumentaries and Vlad Strukov's article on *Russia Today* draw rather similar conclusions to Zvereva's analysis of the government's key role in the process of digitalization. On the one hand, the Kremlin's control over Russian television leads to the Russian audience being unreceptive to certain types of postmodernist content (like mocumentaries). Furthermore, due to strong political pressure on the media, especially during Putin's third presidential term, pioneers of mocumentaries have been limited in themes for their shows and enjoyed fairly unlimited freedom only on the internet. On the other hand, Russia's inclusion in the world of global media obliges state-aligned media, like RT, to make the most of the tools provided by the digital era to be successful. The latest concerns of U.S. officials over the activity of RT on social media prove that the Russian government clearly understands the advantages of digital media and utilizes their potential for its political purposes.<sup>1</sup>

The last part of the volume is made up of interviews with practitioners: media managers and experts who share their opinions on the peculiarities of the process of digitalization in Russia. Of particular value is the material which showcases the first-hand experience of people who implement digital television in Russia. The interviews with the head of the channel *Dozhd*, Natal'ia Sindeeva, and RT's manager, Kseniia Fedorova, in general, repeat the ideas which can be found in previous interviews conducted with Sindeeva, and those with RT's editor-in-chief, Margarita Simonyan. Still, interviews with the two media managers from Ekaterinburg, Oleg Rakovich, general producer of OTV, and Stanislav Kholkin, editor of ETV, present the process of digitalization in Russia from the regional perspective. This view 'from the regions' is particularly interesting as it rarely emerges in the scholarship.

What can be learnt from these interviews? On the one hand, media managers in the regions perceive digitalization positively as it offers further technical opportunities to engage with the audience. It is precisely ordinary viewers' access to content and their ability to express their opinion through various social media platforms that frames positive attitudes to the introduction of digital technologies in regional television. On the other hand, despite the positive assessment of these innovations, the interviews also demonstrate how problematic the advertising market in Russian regions is. *Dozhd*' is shown to have been an inspiration and role model for regional television channels at the beginning of the 2010s. However, financially, only those channels which are closely connected to the state budget are able to support themselves and survive the competition. Given the recent financial problems that *Dozhd*' has experienced, under pressure from cable operators and Duma deputies, it is unlikely that re-

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. intl broadcasting chiefs see RT as major challenge, ponder Russian-language TV news channel August 14 2014, [http://rt.com/news/180184-us-channel-russian-speakers/?utm\\_source=browser&utm\\_medium=application\\_chrome&utm\\_campaign=chrome](http://rt.com/news/180184-us-channel-russian-speakers/?utm_source=browser&utm_medium=application_chrome&utm_campaign=chrome) (accessed 29 August 2014).

gional television channels will be able to display sufficient independence to face off the regional administrations, despite the freedom provided by digital technologies.

Overall, this collection of essays provides an excellent record of changes in Russian television in the era of globalized digital television. The book is a timely and valuable contribution to the field of television studies in Russia: it identifies the main challenges to the development of television in Russia, demonstrates manifold methodological approaches to the study of the subject and defines potential research topics.

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## Reviews

**Samizdat, Tamizdat & Beyond: Transnational Media During and After Socialism**, by Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov. Berghahn Books, 2013, pp 378, £75; ISBN 0857455857. Language: English.

*Samizdat, Tamizdat & Beyond* is an edited volume of fourteen chapters divided chronologically, co-edited by Friederike Kind-Kovács (Regensburg University) and Jessie Labov (Ohio State University). The book fills an existing need for greater understanding of *samizdat* (self-publishing) and *tamizdat* (publishing elsewhere), as well as other forms of covert publishing (e.g., *magnitizdat*) and dissemination in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods, both pertaining to Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. The book offers three sections with chapters that discuss different legacies and contexts for *samizdat* and *tamizdat* pre-1989. The fourth section is devoted to more contemporary matters, considering digital publishing, the internet and radio. It steps out of the post-Soviet space to offer discussions of similar practices in China and the Middle East. The volume features chapters by prominent scholars across disciplines, countries and areas of research. This diversity offers a range of perspectives useful to a wide audience with interests in *samizdat* and *tamizdat* in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and spaces.



At the volume's outset, in Chapter One, Ann Komaromi asserts an alternative approach to *samizdat* and *tamizdat* that emphasizes interpretations 'other than those of outmoded political binaries or fixed Cold War narratives' (p. 27). The focus of Komaromi's chapter, Carl and Ellendea Proffer and Ardis Publishing, also provides unique insight into the Proffers' interactions with Vladimir Nabokov, which reveal his own acknowledgement of underground publishing of his own works in Soviet Russia. It was Ardis who published Nabokov's works in Russian in the U.S. Komaromi observes that 'Nabokov's writing bridged the modernist and contemporary eras in time, and Russia and America in space. As Nabokov's Russian-language publisher in the United States, Ardis made the leap from being a small publishing house resurrecting modernist literature to a vital enterprise working with contemporary Rus-

sian readers and writers' (p. 37). The subsequent history of Ardis is a fascinating web of authors, texts and even CIA operations that starts this collection on an intriguing path.

A nice contribution of this volume is the emphasis on several Slavic nations other than Russia. Eight of the chapters present discussions on *samizdat* and *tamizdat* that focus on nations in the Soviet sphere of influence other than Russia. Czechoslovakia and Poland are especially prominent. In the second chapter, 'The Baltic Connection: Transnational Samizdat Networks between Émigrés in Sweden and the Democratic Opposition in Poland', Lars Fredrik Stöker discusses Polish *samizdat* (in Polish, *drugi obiegi*, 'second circulation') and its success as the result of interaction beyond the Iron Curtain in Sweden. Chapter Three by Kind-Kovács discusses the role of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as co-conspirators in the dissemination of unauthorized literature in Soviet Russia, and also in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Poland. Chapter Twelve similarly considers radio broadcasting, but in late 1990s Yugoslavia, owing to a live broadcasting project between Belgrade and Vienna. This chapter by Daniel Gilfillan also points out the importance of the internet as a tool of communication during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. The fourth chapter, by Karolina Ziolo-Puzuk, discusses the central role of the Polish émigré journal *Kultura* in contributing to Polish political thought from the post-World War II era through the year 2000. For example, Ziolo-Puzuk attributes Polish support for Ukraine's Orange Revolution to the role played by *Kultura*. The seventh chapter by Agnes Arndt is also concerned with Poland in its discussion of the transfer of the principle of *civil society* between East and West that impacted Polish dissident thought. Christina Petruscu's chapter 'Free Conversations in an Occupied Country: Cultural Transfer, Social Networking, and Political Dissent in Romanian Tamizdat' discusses Romanian communism and the dissemination of nonconformity through the publication of journals such as *Dialog*, the assembling of dissident groups among Romanian intellectuals and the Romanian diaspora in the West. Muriel Blaive discusses Czechoslovakia's evolving historical narrative under Stalinism and behind the Iron Curtain between 1948 and 1968 in the volume's sixth chapter, and the tenth chapter by Alice Lovejoy, 'Video Knows No Borders', undertakes the unique topic of television and film produced via *samizdat* in Czechoslovakia.

Chapters Eight, Nine, and Eleven deal exclusively with Russia. Brian Horne's chapter, 'The Bards of Magnitizdat: An Aesthetic Political History of Russian Underground Recordings' discusses the role of *magnitizdat* (the illegal recording and distribution of recordings that criticize the Soviet Union) and particularly the legacy of songs produced through *magnitizdat* in the 1970s and 1980s, with special attention to the *bardovskaja pesnja* 'bard song', made popular by artists such as Vladimir Vysotsky. Chapter Nine, by Valentina Parisi, also discusses the 'Russian unofficial arts' in the 1970s and 1980s as indicated by the chapter title 'Writing About Apparently Nonexistent Art' (p. 190). Parisi's chapter discusses the role of a journal dedicated to visual arts, *A-Ja*, published in Paris in *tamizdat*. This journal, she writes, 'helped to spread Soviet unofficial art abroad so as to overcome the complete isolation in which nonconformist artists found themselves at the end of the 1970s' (p. 192). The journal *A-Ja*, according to Parisi, was distinctive in comparison to other journals published in *tamizdat* because of its 'unprecedented interest in conceptualizing socialist realism as the oppressive but inevitable background against which Soviet unofficial art arose and developed' (p.

199). Chapter Eleven, 'Postprintium? Digital Literary Samizdat on the Russian Internet' by Henrike Schmidt, offers a timely discussion of contemporary digital publishing among current Russian writers as a form of *samizdat*, despite their different contexts. State-imposed restrictions on internet use, blogging and significant limitations on the press in Putin's Russia are not altogether dissimilar from the contexts in which underground forms of publishing evolved. As Schmidt explains, 'Digital samizdat differs at first glance from its Soviet predecessor. Though as well excluded, for various political and aesthetical reasons, from the traditional publishing institutions, it nevertheless suffers neither comparable material constraints, nor the lack of a national or even worldwide audience. The media contexts of Soviet and digital samizdat are thus completely different' (p. 221). Citing contemporary poet and author Dmitrij Bykov, Schmidt claims also that digital self-publishing has the potential to publish work of lesser quality than that which emerged during the Soviet era (p. 226), and therefore, even *samizdat*, perplexing as it may seem, 'needs censorship, or at least a strong institutional force suppressing the freedom of expression' (p. 228). Schmidt's article is particularly compelling in light of recent events in Russia, such as the Pussy Riot arrests and proposed limitations on the internet that would require users to enter identifying information in order to gain access.

Two chapters at the end of the volume address regions outside of Eastern and Central Europe. Martin Hala's 'From Wallpapers to Blogs: Samizdat and Internet in China' provides a generally good overview of internet censorship in China, although the statistics at the beginning of the article are problematic since Hala uses numbers of internet users, rather than percentages to compare China and the U.S. Because China is the most populous nation on the planet, it will certainly have greater numbers of internet users. However, in percentages, half a billion users in China only represents 50 percent of the total population. In the U.S., it is estimated that 84 percent of the population uses the internet. Additionally, Hala seems to disregard the role of proxy servers outside of China as important access means, claiming 'Anybody who has ever used a proxy server knows that it can be a frustrating experience, since it slows the connection significantly' (p. 272). To this reviewer, this observation is out of place. In the context of *samizdat* or *tamizdat*, particularly in the Soviet context, publishing in these ways and/or getting access to these publications was certainly inconvenient. Inconvenience, however, did not impede access for those who truly wanted it. This chapter is also problematic in that it does not link clearly and consistently to Soviet or post-Soviet practices of *samizdat* or *tamizdat*. The overarching conclusion is that the internet and *samizdat* are the same thing because they 'create an alternative public space beyond direct reach of the state' (p. 278). While parallels may exist, the discussion leading to this conclusion is a bit too broad and possibly not entirely up-to-date. The final chapter in the volume, Barbara Falk's 'Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe' examines the contribution of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* to social change, in comparison to the role played by social media during the Arab Spring. Falk's chapter offers some interesting parallels between two regions of the world that otherwise are rarely compared to one another. They are part of what is, ultimately, a fairly politicized discussion on the topic.

Overall the chapters in this volume are probably most useful to Slavists, particularly those in humanistic areas of inquiry placed temporally in the latter half of the twentieth cen-

ture. Some articles, such as Ann Komaromi's piece on Ardis, Horne's chapter on bard songs and *magnitizdat*, or perhaps Schmidt's piece on self-publishing on the Russian internet might be appropriate for use in Russian literature courses focusing on the twentieth century to the present. Similarly, chapters from this volume could be very useful in courses in history, media studies and world literature. Researchers working on underground publishing during the Soviet era will find all of the chapters that focus on Russia, Eastern and Central Europe of great interest.

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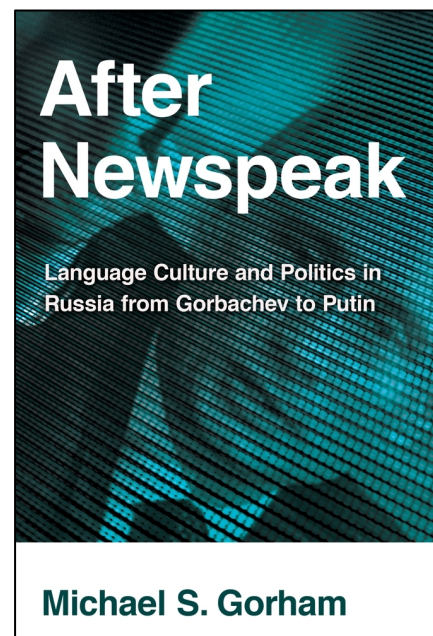


## Reviews

**After Newspeak: Language Culture and Politics in Russia from Gorbachev to Putin**, by Michael S. Gorham. Cornell University Press, 2014, pp 256, Paperback, GBP £15.58, ISBN: 978-0-8014-5262-8. Language: English

Michael Gorham's second book, *After Newspeak: Language Culture and Politics in Russia from Gorbachev to Putin*, explores the 'politics of language and the language of politics' (p. 191) in Russia (and beyond) since the great glasnost debates of the 1980s. This cultural history of the Russian language, while not necessarily a follow-up to his first monograph *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language Culture and the Politics of Voice in Early Soviet Russia* (2003), is certainly an appropriate and timely complement to his earlier work on the linguistic politics of Soviet Russia. While no one would argue the 'revolutionary' nature of language under the early Bolsheviks, Gorham, an Associate Professor of Russian at the University of Florida, makes a persuasive case that linguistic practices and 'speech culture' (p. 26) in the late Gorbachev era were equally iconoclastic, setting up the soon-to-be-independent Russian Federation for a politico-linguistic conflict in pitting 'purists' and 'patriots' against 'innovators' and 'reformers'. While the battle for control (or lack thereof) of the Russian idiom has not yet been definitively determined, Gorham's treatise provides the reader with a useful guidebook to understanding the issues, players and ideologies of this long-running clash of tongues.

As Gorham sets out in the preface, *After Newspeak* aims to excavate the myriad linkages between language, culture and politics in contemporary Russia. Not surprisingly, the book opens with an analysis of how Russians view language, with the author making compelling arguments that—like the French (and in contrast to Anglophones)—Russian attitudes toward language are not simply practical but also deeply philosophical and ideological. Throughout the text, Gorham consistently refers to pervasive societal fears about linguistic lawlessness and foreign contamination of the sacred Russian tongue, neatly linking such angst to larger issues of national identity in the post-Soviet era. He projects this discussion through the con-



ceptual lens of ‘language culture’ (p. 5), arguing that the history of the Russian language and the Russian state are deeply intertwined, and that one cannot understand one without the other. While Gorham contends that language ideologies are relatively ‘stable and deeply rooted’ (p. 16), instrumental orientations toward language are prone to change during times of social and political upheaval, thus making a cogent argument for analyzing the Russian language since 1985.

The text is divided into six chapters, each covering a particular period of political change in Russia. The opening chapter lays the groundwork by examining the peculiar speech culture of the Soviet regime, which was characterized by the ‘horribly clichéd and wooden language’ of the apparatchiks (p. 43). The second chapter explores the emergence of a new culture of linguistic freedom under *glasnost*, focusing on debates between the (often tight-lipped) forces of conservatism and the (ever loquacious) reformers. Gorham highlights Mikhail Gorbachev’s own disdain for the ‘deadening babble’ of Soviet newspeak (p. 49), while pointing out that those who broke the mold were often labeled demagogues by their critics. As we learn in Chapter Two, ‘Glasnost Unleashed’, the loosening of controls in the late Soviet period wrought a period of genuine free speech under Boris Yeltsin, but also a perceived ‘degradation’ of Russian. Chapter Three, entitled ‘Economics of Profanity’, neatly links the linguistic chaos to the economic maelstrom of privatization of the Russian economy. Gorham demonstrates how the new socio-economic-political milieu allowed the press to embrace its role as the Fourth Estate, just as the elements of *mat* (obscene language), *blatnaia muzyka* (criminal argot) and foreign loan words (e.g., *menedzher*, *imidzh* and *killer*) seeped into everyday speech, triggering increased fears about the pollution of the language. The subsequent chapter, ‘In Defense of the National Tongue’, investigates the backlash directed at the linguistic lawlessness of the 1990s, and the attempt to preserve the ‘essence’ of the Russian tongue (p. 110), focusing on the mavens of rhetorical purism, a civic revolt against ‘alien’ language intrusions, state policing of language and the emergence of a lucrative industry around speaking ‘proper Russian’.

After this point in the book, Gorham increasingly focuses on Vladimir Putin, and the singular role he played in shaping perceptions of spoken Russian since coming to office at the turn of the millennium. It is to the president’s role as ‘defender’ of the national tongue that Gorham dedicates his fifth (and strongest) chapter. This is quite paradoxical given Putin’s ‘colorful and at times crass turns of phrase’ (p.131), most notably his use of the slang ‘*mo-chit’ v sortire*’ (waste them in the toilet) in a diatribe against Chechen insurgents in 1999. However, Gorham demonstrates in Chapter Five, ‘Taking the Offensive’, that despite such excursions into the profane, Putin won accolades from the public for ‘expressing himself strongly’ (p. 136). While Gorham is critical of Putin’s overall public speaking style (describing it as mundane and technocratic), he frames Putin’s ability to engage his interlocutor as ‘masterful’ (p. 138). Mixing the rhetorical with the political, this chapter also details important changes in the situation of Russian as a vehicle for national power. Gorham details how, in the hands of the Kremlin’s ‘political technologists’, Russian became a powerful binding agent for national identity after Yeltsin. Just as Putin sought to reign in the press, oligarchs, criminals and terrorists, he pursued a language policy agenda aimed at stamping out linguistic lawlessness (*iazykovoi bespredel*), all the while promoting Russian beyond the

country's borders. The last full chapter turns to the internet or Runet, which—as Gorham argues—has proven to be a less-friendly platform for language purists. Gorham provides a stark comparison between in the 'made-for-TV' public relations events favored by Putin (discussed in detail in Chapter Five) and the chaotic free-for-all of the Russian web, where alternative voices make themselves heard despite repeated attempts at legislating away dissent, government-subsidized bloggers who 'fake' consensus online and the dropping a purported 'cyber-curtain' (p. 188) over Russian cyberspace. Perhaps this is why Putin so dislikes the internet (despite his claims that it is simply a cesspool of pornography).

Cogently organized and smartly written, *After Newspeak* makes frequent and effective use of a wealth of primary sources, including passages from Soviet-era televised debates, press reports, popular series on the Russian language, blogs and Twitter feeds. Gorham's use of folklore, literary references and linguistic analysis girds the narrative, proving surprisingly effective for a text which is—on the surface—about contemporary political culture. Gorham's employment of theory is similarly effective, particularly his application of the ideas of media-centric thinkers like Baudrillard and McLuhan; however, he never delves too deeply into the abstract, thus ensuring that his voice remains clarion throughout the text. Overall, the book makes a convincing argument that political upheaval necessarily changes the role that language plays in society, an assertion that is equally true whether one speaks of the Bolshevik Revolution or the transition from Soviet authoritarianism to 'managed democracy' in contemporary Russia. *After Newspeak* serves as a testament to the central role that language—perhaps the most important single manifestation of 'culture'—plays in the construction, maintenance and transformation of identity in the modern world. Delivering on the subtitle's promise 'Language Culture and Politics in Russia from Gorbachev to Putin', Gorham proves that 'language is politics', and that this is especially true in the Russian realm: Putin's very public support of the *Russky Mir* (Russian World) program (detailed in Chapter Four) being an important case in point. Similarly exemplary are his efforts to protect Russophones in the near abroad (a policy which has produced deadly geopolitical outcomes in Crimea and eastern Ukraine since early 2014).

The book does suffer from some minor weaknesses. Gorham's extended analysis of the importance of the 'anti-word' *politkorrektnost* at the beginning of the text may turn off the casual reader. Personally, I did not buy the argument that the fortunes of this particular word were emblematic of wider debates on language ideology and felt it distracted from the real story of Russian language politics. Surprising given the author's standing in the field, the chapter on the internet was also a bit discombobulating. While Gorham's previous work on the Russian language in virtual spaces is both authoritative and frequently cited, '“Cyber-Curtain” or Glasnost 2.0?' departed from the style of previous chapters, providing a hackneyed blow-by-blow of state action and civic response wherein the larger issues at stake seemed to fall by the wayside. Certainly, this can be excused as the situation is highly protean, and attempting to understand the totality of the internet's impact on the Russian language and culture at this point in time is like trying boil the sea. However, a more nuanced approach—particularly when it comes to what the internet actually *means* and *does* to the Russian language—would have served the reader better.

My main critique of the book is the absence of a discussion about the Kremlin's use of laws against 'extremism' to cow and even imprison its critics. These regulations differ markedly from legislation in European democracies like France and Germany, wherein written and/or spoken incitement of ethnic/sectarian violence (as well as other speech acts, such as Holocaust denial) are prohibited by law. However, in the Russian Federation, anti-extremism laws are a cudgel of those in power, and often used to target critics of the government, civil society advocates, missionaries and other activists, while rarely being applied to the genuinely extremist speech acts articulated by radical nationalists who support Putin. This new state of affairs eerily represents a latter-day form of Orwellian newspeak (an additional rationale for including such an exposition), and is no longer confined to Russia. Given the Kremlin's role as a paragon of managed democracy across post-Soviet Eurasia, this dubious tactic for weakening opposition voices has spread to Uzbekistan, Belarus and elsewhere, putting reporters and activists in the line of fire. A succinct analysis of such language-centric laws and their unpredictable enforcement would surely have benefited the reader.

Despite these criticisms, *After Newspeak* represents a major contribution to the discipline of language culture, not just in the field of Slavic Studies, but across multiple arenas of academic enquiry. Gorham's analysis of Russian speech culture as mechanism of politics will undoubtedly influence ongoing debates about the role of language in determining political culture in transitional societies, particularly his analysis of the economics surrounding Russian language culture in the early 2000s when 'talking about the nation promoted the nationalization of talk' (p. 105). *After Newspeak* is required reading for anyone researching language change, the power of language and/or linguistic politics in Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The book will also appeal to those seeking to better understand the unique qualities of the Russian language, particularly its relationship with the state and national identity over time. More generally, *After Newspeak* offers conceptual analyses and insights that will be welcomed by scholars and advanced undergraduates interested in cultural history, media studies and political communication.

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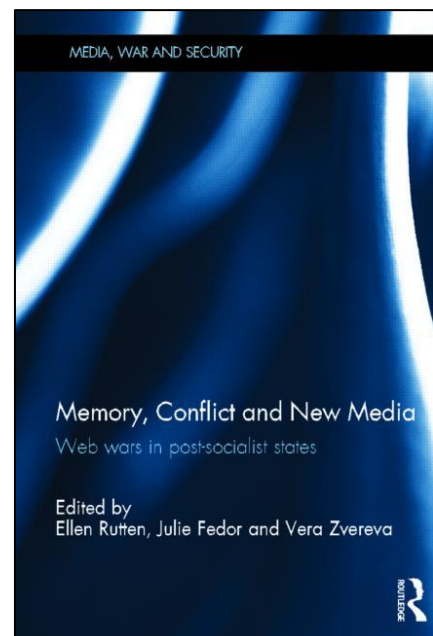
## Reviews

**Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States**, edited by Ellen Rутten, Julie Fedor and Vera Zvereva. Routledge, 2013, pp 288, Paperback, GBP £30.00, ISBN: 978-0-415-63921-7. Language: English

At the time of writing this review, the Ukraine is in the midst of a full-blown war. Not a digital one, but a real one – with tanks, troops, lies, deceit, foreign invasion, separatists, official soldiers and the attendant international attempts to negotiate peace. This war also includes sanctions against Russia, thought to be the culprit behind the secessionist motivations of the Eastern Ukraine region. Why is all this important to a review of memory and conflict in the context of new media? For the simple reason that the real-life conflict is also all about memory. When reading the accounts in this edited volume I am flabbergasted that nobody saw the war coming. In hindsight, it seems so obvious.

The objective of this edited collection is to explore how digitally mediated memory takes shape in post-socialist states. Against the backdrop of the conflict in Ukraine, it becomes especially evident that memories may be digitally mediated, but are never only digital. Nor are they fictive, just because they are negotiated in an online or digital environment. The digital allows memories to be shaped, stored or entirely transformed. In the case of post-socialist states, these memories are collective, helping to form national identities. They often evoke strong sentiments used to legitimise actions and discussion. The present volume provides an array of examples that thickly describe the use and power of memories, furthering our understanding of the important role of the digital within contestations around history, identity and the quest for legitimation. Such contestation takes place within a world that, for all its interconnectedness, clearly remains bound to space and territory.

*Memory, Conflict and New Media* is divided into three parts, each dealing with a particular aspect of memory: ‘Concepts of memory’; ‘Words of memory’; and ‘Images of memory’. Part One is comprised of five chapters that focus on how memories are presented and dealt with online. Most interesting are attempts by Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa as well as Alexan-



der Etkind to map memory with the aid of online tools such as Google's Ngram Viewer which employ statistical methods to excavate the hidden structures of memory through digitally stored sources. Other contributions discuss topics such as Romany memory or the Holodomor famine in Ukraine Twitter discourse. Chapter One, on Romany memory, is noteworthy for the way it deals with a culture that is not state bound, but indeed transnational.

Part Two of this collection revolves around the way the 'words of memory' become a topic of research and discussion – as key words, blog posts, Wiki-history entries or news stories. One telling example here is the way history and post-Soviet space are contested through the digital. H el ene Dounaevsky gives a compelling account of the Wiki edit wars on the entries of Russia and Ukraine in the nations' respective internet domains. Her piece illustrates that writing history can quite literally be conceived of as just that – writing one's own story. The edit wars on the Wikipedia entries show how historical knowledge is produced – how Wikipedia may be used as a laboratory in which the fluidity of digital content is a blessing, because it can be changed, and a threat for just that reason. Having read this article before the war in Ukraine began was unsettling, as if everything that appeared on the TV screen had been anticipated digitally. The chapter analysing news framing under conditions of conflict in the Russo-Georgian war provides yet another example of the uncanny prophetic dimension of the digital as a seismographic tool.

Part Three, 'Images of memory', begins with an article on the Crimean web war by Maria Pasholok. Here, she anticipates the actual 2013-2014 winter annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia. The described Crimean web war is fought with the use of digital maps – a means that was also used in pre-digital times to legitimise land claims and territorial belonging. Closing her argument, Pasholok compares the Crimea in this web war to non-space, as conceptualised by William Gibson. According to Gibson, cyberspace is a consensual hallucination – which is how Pasholok conceives of the Russian and Ukrainian segments of the internet in this web war. A common imaginary geography that did not remain quite so imaginary for one of the parties involved.

The section of the book on the 'images of memory' is intriguing to the extent that it highlights how images are used to portray memory or to fabricate new, alternative images and hence perceptions of the world or, more precisely, imaginary homelands or actual territories. Images become vital to memories, whether they come from computer games in which history is re-enacted and relived (Gernot Howanitz), or the plane crash of the Polish president Lech Kaczynski, forever embedded in the memory and digital media ecology surrounding Katyn (Dieter de Bruyn). Social media thus represent alternative forms of cultural memory, able to establish new readings of history, memory and the pasts long conserved within state doctrines.

The digital both confirms and challenges memories – this is what makes Julie Fedor conclude that post-socialist memories are not grim when viewed through the prism of digital media, but vibrant and heterogeneous. While I would partly agree with her conclusion that the book offers optimistic prognoses for the future, it remains to be seen what the digital can truly achieve, what alternatives it may provide and how memory once again becomes an actively contested area. Recent events have proven that web activity has real life consequences and does not have to be only virtual in nature. As Baudrillard pointed out long ago, 'the map

precedes the territory' – which in the case of the Crimean peninsula has quite literally become true.

Memory in post-socialist states, more than elsewhere in Europe, is a paradigmatic zone of contestation and a strong resource of national and ethnic mobilisation across existing state borders. The present volume assembles a set of brilliant contributions that I would consider crucial for scholars studying digital culture, ethnicity, and identity issues, or those concerned with how memory is used in new contexts and through new platforms. The authors and their articles have much to offer, both through their lucid examples, and their topical theoretical analyses which continually risk being reversed and superseded by events on the ground.

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