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**REMEMBERING IN PUBLIC:
ON THE AFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HISTORY***

Collective memory is not what historians say about the past. ... Professional history matters, to be sure, but only to a small population. Collective remembrance is a set of acts which go beyond the limits of the professionals. These acts may draw from professional history, but they do not depend on it.

Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, “Setting the Framework” (1999).¹

In general, any genuine democracy strives naturally towards popular festivals. Democracy presupposes the free life of the masses. In order for the masses to make themselves felt, they must outwardly manifest themselves, and this is possible only when,

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¹ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan. *Setting the Framework* // J. Winter and E. Sivan (Eds.). *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, 1999. P. 8.

to use Robespierre's phrase, they are their own spectacle. ... This celebration should be organized just as anything else in the world that has a tendency to produce a profound aesthetic impression.

Anatoly Lunacharskii, "On Popular Festivals" (1920).²

In November 2011, Red Square in Moscow hosted a military parade. As a form of "social choreography"³ that weaves rhythm, spectacle, and politics together, this genre of mass entertainment has become a somewhat standard feature of Soviet and post-Soviet popular culture. The 2011 parade, while sharing the performative language of previous decades, offered a new important dimension. Staged on November 7, the parade had nothing to do with the (ninety-fourth) anniversary of the October Revolution. Instead, it referenced a very different event: on November 7, 1941, a similar military spectacle took place in Moscow. Back then, with the German troops not far away from the capital, the parade was supposed to be a sign of Soviet resilience: many participants in the original event marched directly from Red Square to the front line. In 2011, reporting about the "memorial parade," Russian TV channels did not miss an opportunity to emphasize that the idea of the original event was, apparently, conceived by Joseph Stalin himself. Emboldened by Soviet meteorologists who predicted that a blizzard on November 7, 1941, would prevent German aviation from conducting air strikes on Moscow, Stalin even ordered the removal (for the duration of the parade) of the camouflage fabric that masked the Kremlin stars and Lenin's Tomb.⁴

Seventy years later, the "memorial parade" was a very different kind of sign. It was less about the Soviet ability to resist, and more about demonstrating a link, a direct connection with the past that is not available anymore. An exercise in historical reconstruction, the 2011 event relied heavily on historical props used to provoke a sense of authentic connection with the

² Anatoly Lunacharskii. *On Popular Festivals (1920)* // *Street Art of the Revolution: Festivals and Celebrations in Russia 1918–1933* / Ed. by Vladimir Tolstoy, Irina Bibikova, Catherine Cooke. London, 1990. P. 124.

³ Andrew Hewitt. *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*. Durham, 2005.

⁴ For media reports, see, for example, the coverage of the TV Channel One (*Pervyi Kanal*): Oleg Shishkin. "Bolee 6 tysiach chelovek priniali uchastie v marshe v chest' godovshchiny parada 1941 goda v Moskve," November 7, 2011, 6:02 p.m. // <http://www.1tv.ru/news/social/190301>.

past: columns of participants were dressed in the uniform of the 1940s, and the military equipment of the period – from blimps to tanks – went through the square, too.⁵



Fig. 1. Old props of the main war. Moscow, Red Square, November 7, 2011.

This foregrounding of historical connectivity that binds different generations together was amplified in yet another important way. Throughout the early part of the parade, a huge screen on the building across from Lenin’s Tomb broadcast the documentary footage of the 1941 historical march on the square. This mimetic transposition of the past into the present reached its dramatic peak at the moment when the war chronicle on screen and live performance onstage merged in a single chain of uniformed bodies. When the documentary was showing the rows of soldiers passing through Red Square, the bottom part of the screen began slowly rising, and the march of cinematic soldiers was continued by similarly dressed extras, presenting a visually unbroken flow of time. It looked as if the embodied history had come alive, pouring directly from the archive onto the street.⁶

⁵ On the triangulation of authenticity, public spectacles, and nationalism see Gordana Uzelac. *National Ceremonies: The Pursuit of Authenticity // Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 2010. Vol. 33. No. 10. Pp. 1718-1736.

⁶ See video: November 7, 2011, Memorial Parade in Moscow // www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MSh7cDub-k.





Fig. 2. An unbroken flow of time: the 2011 memorial parade in Moscow, November 7, 2011.

This performative patriotism reveals two important features that I want to examine in this essay. First, as the parade shows, memorialization in general and remembrance in particular are perceived here not so much as an activity aimed at adapting/adopting historical legacy to the formats and conventions of a new period but rather as “a repetition of perceptual activity.”⁷ Remembrance here is an act of reenacting. Or, to be more precise, it is an act of the (literal) embodying of symbolic and behavioral forms inherited from the past. To put it somewhat differently, this type of remembrance utilizes reenactment as a symbolic form and a protocol of interaction that make possible an experience of verisimilitude by translating the past into “a real space with real objects and people”.⁸

⁷ André Green. Repetition, Difference, Replication: A Re-reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1970) // André Green. *Diachrony in Psychoanalysis*. London, 2003. P. 82.

⁸ Inke Arns and Gabriele Horn. *History Will Repeat Itself. Strategien des Reenactment in der zeitgenössischen (Medien-) Kunst und Performance*. Frankfurt a. M., 2007. P. 9. As quoted in Annette Vowinckel. *Past Futures: From Re-enactment to the Simulation of History in Computer Games* // *Historical Social Research*. 2009. Vol. 34. No. 2. Pp. 322-332. 272

The second important feature has to do with the way enactive remembering of the past is linked with the present. In her study of the Peace Day parades of July 1919 in Ireland, Nuala C. Johnson usefully points out that this translation of history into spectacle (or, rather, performance) collapses time into space, providing a framework “not only for understanding remembrance, but also for the public enactment of forgetfulness.”⁹ Indeed, the performative denial of temporal distance is a peculiar form of historical mediation.¹⁰ As the merge of the celluloid and real bodies demonstrated, mediation here is practiced as a dual process of connecting and censoring. By bringing the two separate time frames together, this chronographic suturing, this temporal montage of two autonomous time frames (past and present), simultaneously leaves out all traces of historical, political, or, for instance, ideological incommensurability of the two periods. The *formal* semblance of bodies and objects is presented as an indication of a more profound – *substantive* – similarity.



Fig. 3. Chronographic suturing: linking different time frames together. The 2011 memorial parade in Moscow, November 7, 2011. A shot-screen of the broadcast by RT-channel.

⁹ Nuala C. Johnson. The Spectacle of Memory: Ireland’s Remembrance of the Great War, 1919 // *Journal of Historical Geography*. 1999. Vol. 25. No. 1. P. 38.

¹⁰ For more on mediation and public rituals, see Helke Karge. Mediated Remembrance: Local Practices of Remembering the Second World War in Tito’s Yugoslavia // *European Review of History – Revue européenne d’histoire*. 2009. Vol. 16. No. 1. Pp. 49-62.

I suggest that the historical reenactments and reproductions of Soviet war history exemplified so well by the 2011 parade might be less inspired by a striving toward historical veracity of the *story*, and instead more influenced by a search for synchronized *collective emotions*. I will treat these acts of public remembrance as performative rituals (rather than instances of “memory work”). That is to say, I will approach them as “multileveled” and “laminated” forms of public iterations that are capable, as Victor Turner put it, “of creative modification on all or any of its levels. . . . As a “*model for*” ritual can anticipate, even generate change; as a “*model of,*” it may inscribe order in the minds, hearts, and wills of participants.”¹¹ Largely sharing Turner’s view of the performative ritual, I want to modify it by emphasizing that the “ordering” work of the ritual – usually achieved through the *narrative* structuring – is done now mainly through the *emotional* encoding. As a result, affective experience associated with institutionalized forms works “to schematize understandings about historical events in terms of their significance for the self.”¹² I will call these practices of the active evoking of sensorial responses *affective management of history*: memory and perception are treated as synonymous here. Facts and events of the past are not registered for their historical significance; they are emotionally relived and reenacted (*perezhivaiutsia*).¹³ Information for the sake of information is of little relevance in this case. What is paramount, is the ability of historical images, sounds, or objects to reveal/sustain a certain emotional charge. Tangible traces of the past are used as material pretexts to produce an affective cartography of history that was not experienced firsthand.

It is crucial that the main goal of this remembrance has little to do with the symbolization of war experience through contemporary idioms, or with translating this experience into new metaphors.¹⁴ It is equally unlikely that we are dealing here with an active search for an idiosyncratic language that would be able to capture today’s perceptions and visions of the Great

¹¹ Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York, 1982. P. 82.

¹² Geoffrey M. White. *Emotional Remembering: The Pragmatics of National Memory // Ethos*. 1999. Vol. 27. No. 4. P. 526.


¹³ In Russian “to relive” (*perezhivat*) means to outlast, to survive, and to experience, but also to go through an emotional state, to feel strongly about something.

¹⁴ Certainly, contemporary Russian culture provides a few examples of such interpretative strategies – suffice it to mention the animated film *Pervyi otriad* (First Squad, 2009) or the film *Svolochi* (The Scum, 2009). These attempts are, however, quite rare.

Patriotic War.¹⁵ The point of affective management of history is not to match a symbol with its content, possibly forgotten or even unknown. The goal is to link remembering people together, to provide them with social space and symbolic tools that could help to make such linkage tangible. Consequently, the war emerges as a primary symbolic context within which new symbolic exchanges and social connections become possible.¹⁶

By following these two phenomena – forms of memorialization realized in the process of embodiment (*enactive remembering*), and a desire for historical connectivity fulfilled through the act of memorial linking (*chronographic suturing*) – I will try to show in the article how these two kinds of mnemonic activity emerge as dominant ways of approaching and organizing the Soviet experience of the Great Patriotic War in postmillennial Russia. In my discussion, I will stay away from the current debates about the political use of memory in today’s Russia. The reason is partly methodological: my analysis is based on media discourses of the past decade. Television reports and radio programs are useful for tracing operative frameworks and symbolic rules, yet they provide very little for understanding strategies and tactics through which these institutionalized schemes are perceived, appropriated, or subverted. Limited and biased, these sources, nonetheless, have one important quality: aiming at a large audience, they translate the historical and social experience of the nation into idioms, narratives, and rituals that are accessible to the “masses.”

Given the nature of my materials, I am more concerned with piecing together disjointed forms of public remembrance in order to demonstrate a sizable mnemonic shift – from the playful retrofitting of the past in the late 1990s, with its aesthetics of ironic noninvolvement,¹⁷ to the obvious attempts to envision “history” as an assemblage of emotionally charged objects, undertaken during the past decade. This shift is not entirely new; its key features – ahistoricity and fascination with meaningful details of the

¹⁵ It is indicative that when in 2010 the Channel One announced a contest, the Spring of Victory (*Vesna pobedy*) for the best *new* song about the Great Patriotic War, the competition produced a disappointing array of musical clichés. See details at http://www.ltv.ru/sprojects_in_detail/si=5787. 

¹⁶ I developed this argument about communities of loss structured – among others – by the experience of war in my book *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia*. Ithaca, 2009.

¹⁷ I discuss this trend in my article “We’re Nostalgic But We’re Not Crazy”: Retrofitting the Past in Russia // *The Russian Review*. 2007. Vol. 66. No. 3. Pp. 451-482.

everyday – also emerged around 1996–1997.¹⁸ However, in the late 1990s, the fragmentation of the monolithic narrative of Soviet history was used mostly to uncover and recontextualize trends, personalities, or things buried by the overpoliticized discursive rubble of perestroika. Now, the same method of recontextualization and decomposition of the historical narrative is used to produce alternative genealogies and time lines. Instead of treating the products of this process as “false memories,” “memorial substitutes,” or some other form of dysfunctional memorialization, I want to highlight the processual component of this trend, its “how” rather than its “what.” By offering a close reading of public acts, forms, and rituals associated with remembering the Great Patriotic War, I follow Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan’s appeal to scholars of memory to avoid (whenever possible) “generalizations which simply cannot be true” and to foreground instead “the palpable, messy activity which produces collective remembrance.”¹⁹

Getting New Perceptions

With the picture of seamlessly sutured documentary soldiers of 1941 and live performers of 2011 in mind, I want to move a few years earlier, in 2008, when NTV, Russia’s major TV channel, organized “a special action,” dedicated to Victory Day. The action was enabled by a newly available database of personal files of soldiers who perished during the Great Patriotic War and its aftermath.²⁰ In 2007, following the president’s decree on “perpetuation of the memory of those who perished defending the Fatherland” (of January 22, 2006), the Ministry of Defense scanned and uploaded online more than 42,000 burial certificates of common graves that contained information about soldiers’ names, causes of deaths, and exact locations of their graves (13.7 million pages of archival documents).²¹

¹⁸ See my attempt to theorize this trend in *Totality Decomposed: Objectalizing Late Socialism in Post-Soviet Biochronicles* // *The Russian Review. Special Issue on Documentary Trends in Contemporary Russian Culture* / Ed. by Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky. 2010. Vol. 69. No.4. Pp. 638–669.

¹⁹ Winter and Sivan. *Setting the Framework*. Pp. 9, 10.

²⁰ See *Obobshchennyi komp’iuternyi bank dannykh, soderzhashchii informatsiiu o zashchitnikakh Otechestva, pogibshikh i propavshikh bez vesti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, a takzhe v poslevoennyi period* (OBD Memorial) // <http://www.obd-memorial.ru/html/index.html>.

²¹ See *Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 22 ianvaria 2006 goda No. 37 “Voprosy uvekovecheniia pamiati pogibshikh pri zashchite Otechestva”* // <http://document.kremlin.ru/doc.asp?ID=031991>; for the details about the online archive see the site of the database: <http://www.obd-memorial.ru/html/index.html>.

Using the database as their main resource, NTV helped several individuals to locate and visit the graves of their relatives who had been considered missing in action since the time of the war. Long before the holiday, NTV filmed a series of reports about the searches and visits and ran them for two weeks as a part of the channel's prime-time news show *Segodnia* (Today). Grigorii Grivennyi, an NTV correspondent who broke the news about the availability of the database in December 2007, described one of the individuals featured by NTV: "It turns out, that we now have three generations of people looking for their [perished relatives] (*ishchushchii v tret'em pokolenii*). First, his grandfather was looking for his own dad; then his dad was looking for his grandfather, and now he himself is looking for his great-grandfather. So, the overall timeframe of this search is sixty-two years."²²

Each report about relatives seeking relatives had the same formula. Starting with the moment when the individual was informed about the remains that the NTV crew located with the help of professional and amateur historians and *poiskoviki*,²³ the report traced all stages of the journey, following the individual on his/her way to the location of the grave, be it Poland, the Crimea, or the Russian North. The formulaic structure of the reports was easily overshadowed by the emotional effect of these images of relatives who were finally restoring the missing link in their family histories. What is more important for me is the overall ideological effect that such personalization of the schematic memory template produces: remembering here emerged as an experience of forging a highly individualized and very visceral connection with the war.

Introducing one of the reports, an anchor of the program *Segodnia* summed up the main message of the series: "We managed to help a few people who wrote to us. All these people belong to different age groups and different professions; they all have different worldviews. The Great Patriotic War is the only thing that brings them together."²⁴ Of course, this kind of unification around the Great Patriotic War is somewhat expected in post-Soviet Russia.²⁵ And yet, as with the military parade of 2011, the

²² "Telekompaniia NTV zavershaet pokaz tsikla reportazhei ko Dniu Pobedy", *Segodnia*, 09.05.2008 // <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/131849/>.

²³ *Poiskoviki* (singular – *poiskovik*) – comes from the Russian word *poisk*, search, and refers to people who (usually in their spare time) search for remains of soldiers who perished during the war at the front line, without being properly buried. After excavating and identifying (when possible) the remains, these groups organize proper burial rituals.

²⁴ Telekompaniia NTV zavershaet pokaz...

²⁵ For discussions about the role of the Great Patriotic War in post-millennium Russia see e.g. Boris Dubin. Rossiia nulevykh: politicheskaia kul'tura, istoricheskaia pamiat',

familiar language of the “solidarity produced by war” should not distract our attention from the rather different foundations on which the war remembrance is being organized today. In his commentary, Airat Shavaliev, one of the NTV correspondents, framed well the essence of this new form of affective community:

The history of the Great Patriotic War has become too anthologized. We all have been reading about it since our childhood. It lost its human touch. For us, it is already all too “historical” [*Ona uzhe poteriala nekuiu chelovechnost’*. *Ona dlia nas slishkom istoriia*]. But when you travel around the places where human remains still are... You know, *poiskoviki*, people who try to recover these remains, tell us that it would take up to two hundred years to rebury them. ... So [when you see all that] you get a totally different perception [*sovershenno drugoe oshchushchenie*] of the war.²⁶



Fig. 4. Recovering remains: Airat Shavaliev, an NTV correspondent, and a poiskovik. NTV, *Segodnia*, May 9, 2008.

povsednevnaia zhizn'. Moscow, 2011. Pp. 47-70; see also James Wertsch. The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory // *Ethos*. 2008. Vol. 36. No. 1. Pp. 120-135.

²⁶ Telekompaniia NTV zavershaet pokaz.

It is precisely this new perception of the war activated by the tangible remains that I find extremely indicative of the type of remembrance that is taking shape in Russia. Traditional historical formats are perceived as ontological and affective barriers, as screens that obfuscate rather than facilitate access to the past, as history that “lost its human touch.” As a result, the alternative is associated not with questioning/deconstructing the dominant narrative and representational strategies of symbolization of the war but with attempts to establish direct and perceptible connections with the military past – through authentic objects, human remains, or documentary footage. This striving for new perceptions and unmediated links to the war, however, comes with a price. Fragmented and objectified, recollections of the war become increasingly divorced from concrete historical contexts. The place of memory (*experienced* past) and history (*documented* past) is occupied by mnemonic objects and formations whose primary function is to amalgamate audiovisual representations with certain emotional states in order to renew the sense of the war and to produce a new kind of (affective) solidarity. As with the memorial parade of 2011, what is at stake here is a moment of generational linking, an experience of historical connectedness, and a process of suturing the temporal gap (of sixty-two or more years). The production of a new version of history is not entirely absent here but it is significantly bracketed off by a desire to use the past as a source of emotional experience. To show how this affective management of history is used to turn the masses into “their own spectacle,”²⁷ I want to examine another parade.

On May 9, 2010, Moscow went through a big – and long awaited – celebration: the city and the country marked the sixty-fifth anniversary of Victory Day. Always a major event, the holiday was especially formidable that year. News reports about the upcoming parade had been steadily drumming up the audience’s expectations. Dress rehearsals on Red Square were presented as important events. The night before the parade, many TV channels broadcast stories about heavy military equipment on Moscow’s streets (“tanks on Tverskaia street!”), which was supposed to be used during the parade.

In the end, the Moscow parade did become the largest parade in Russia’s history, presenting a mesmerizing version of Soviet-style militarism that became glitzy after a heavy injection of post-Soviet financial steroids. Providing a peculiar *mélange* of historical reconstructions and evidence of

²⁷ Lunacharskii. On Popular Festivals.

Russia's technological sophistication, the parade included more than 11,000 soldiers and officers. Three historical detachments dressed in the 1943 uniforms were followed by contemporary army divisions. Adding a flavor of cosmopolitan glamour, Russian troops were joined by foreign officers: France's Escadrille Normandie-Nieman, a regiment of Welsh Guards, a battalion from the United States, representatives of the Polish Armed Forces and several post-Soviet states.²⁸

The parade even included a peculiar sign of historical exoticism: the battalion from Turkmenistan was led by a horseman riding a direct descendant (a "grandson," as one news outlet put it)²⁹ of the stallion that Marshal Georgii Zhukov, commander of the very first Victory Parade in Moscow, rode on June 24, 1945, on Red Square.³⁰



Fig. 5. Generational connections: a Turkmen horseman riding a "grandson" of the stallion that Marshal Georgii Zhukov rode during the first Victory Parade in Moscow on June 24, 1945.

²⁸ For details, see: A Parade Celebrating the 65th Anniversary of Victory over Nazism Took Place on Red Square // <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/192>.

²⁹ V Moskve proshel parad Pobedy // Interfax, <http://interfax.ru/russia/txt.asp?id=136042>.

³⁰ For details see: Mariia Kolodina. Belyi kon' Pobedy (May 4, 2010) // http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=7&lang_id=ru&elem_id=16898&type=event&layout=print&sort=date_desc.

During the ceremony, 161 military vehicles crossed Red Square. And again, historical reincarnations – like the T-34 tank and the multiple rocket launcher *Katiusha*, which came to epitomize the Soviet weaponry of the World War II period – were followed by newest missile complexes. The movement on the ground was accompanied by a significant air show, too. Demonstrating the mighty precision of the Russian air forces were 127 airplanes, helicopters, and bombers, creating in the sky the number “65” and three-color streams of Russia’s state flag.³¹

The heavily orchestrated ceremony in the capital was amplified by one more example of large-scale patriotic choreography. Long before the parade, the Kremlin administration announced that the parade on Red Square should be perceived as *part* of a much larger event. The Moscow parade was supposed to signify a *new form* of ritual, a new form of *collective* national involvement: the first “all-Russia parade” (*obshcherossiiskii parad*). In practice, this meant that *simultaneously* with the Moscow parade, its lesser versions were scheduled to begin in seventeen other Russian cities. To ensure the effect of simultaneity and immediacy, the Kremlin provided the cities with large screens so that participants in the local parades could watch the broadcast of the president’s speech in their main city squares in real time.³²

Strikingly, this organized form of collective aesthetic experience proved to be quite successful. The highly managed celebration of the anniversary was televised live by Russia’s two most important channels, which attracted enormous attention. Shortly after the event, representatives of *Pervyi Kanal* (Channel One), Russia’s leading TV channel, proudly reported that the event was watched by 50 percent of the audience. As the channel’s press office informed, so far only one show had a higher rating: the contest *Eurovision-2009*, which had taken place in Moscow one year earlier (53.9 percent).³³

These attempts to synchronize – visually, bodily, and temporally – the enactment and perception of the main Russian ritual are important. The post-Soviet affective management of history presents an interesting departure from the forms of collective mobilization familiar from earlier periods of Russian history. The ideological framing does not disappear

³¹ For the video coverage see e.g.: Aleksandr Igorev. V Moskve proshel Parad Pobedy // Komsomol’skaia Pravda. 2008. May 9. <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24486/642769/>.

³² Vladimir Bogdanov. Marsh pobeditelei. 9 Maia vpervye proidet obshcherossiiskii Parad Pobedy // Rossiiskaia gazeta. 2009. December 23.

³³ Parad na Pervom kanale pochti dognal po populiarnosti final Evrovideniia // RIA Novosti. 2008. May 11. http://www.rian.ru/victory_news/20100511/233122574.html.

here, but when compared to the Soviet period, it is neither all pervasive nor particularly strong. Similarly, the physical production of human configurations (through marches, parades, dances, and other forms of bodily activity) takes place, but as a tribute to the tradition rather than as an effective tool of mobilization.

It is indicative, though, that as its material carrier this form of contemporary governmentality would rely on images, stories, and artifacts of the Soviet period: affective belonging *today* is produced through the repetition and/or reenactment of the past. The solution for the increasing perceptive and epistemological distance from the war is found in the restorative attempt to secure a direct linkage with the past, to forge a particular form of mediation – presented, say, by the grandson of a famous horse, by a restored tank, by discovered remains, or by some audiovisual artifacts of the period – that could bring the past closer.

In his short speech at the parade, Dmitry Medvedev underlined the importance of these retrospective inclinations. Pointing out that “this war turned us into a strong nation,” Medvedev added a line that epitomized the main message of the celebratory campaign: “Time is hugely powerful. But it is much weaker than human memory, the memory we all share.”³⁴ The dichotomy that Medvedev spells out – *temporality vs. remembering* – is not new, of course. But it reflects a very particular trend that has been taking shape in Russia. Juxtaposed to temporality, remembering is to become timeless. Called upon to create *forms of community* (rather than to deliver a particular knowledge about things past), it is evoked by memorizable scripts and routines. Since social solidarity and emotional communion are the main goals of such remembering, it is hardly surprising, then, that operations of *identification* (that is to say, operations of psychosymbolic equivalency established between different communities or events) and *acts of repetition* (i.e., reproductions of schemes) become the main mechanisms through which enactive remembering produces its binding effect. Synchronization of feelings reinforces identification; in turn, repetition of memorable scripts makes these identities recognizable: To be effective, the parade must be replicated in several different locations simultaneously, and the experience of co-presence must be reinforced by new media technologies.

³⁴ Vremia imeet ogromnuiu vlast'. No ono slabee chelovecheskoi pamiati, nashei s vami pamiati // <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/194>.

In his *Perspectives on Memory*, Hans Loewald, an American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, interprets “memorial activity” as, first of all, “a linking activity.” As he puts it,

By virtue of memory, our experiences become connectible, are woven into a context, and extended into a past and a future. ... To move from one eventful moment to the next without having lost the first one – so as to be able to link and match one with other – requires memorial activity. Without the mind’s activity of holding and rebuilding its impressions and its own acts, affects, perceptions, ideas, images, and fantasies, an activity in which present reality is organized by matching and comparing with what has been and what in anticipation, might be – without all this there would be for us neither past, nor present, nor future.³⁵

Memorial linking, not unlike speech, implies a double operation of *selecting* things, images, and affects of the past, on one hand, and *combining* them in the present, on the other.³⁶ Loewald’s approach takes for granted the temporal and narrative continuity that emerges in the process of such memorial linking. It is this linking that creates a particular “before,” a certain “now,” and a plausible “after.”³⁷ Remembering, then, is an act of filling up gaps in one’s own history and one’s own story.

But what happens when such a desire for a narrative continuity is abandoned or nonapparent? As Medvedev’s comment indicates, the temporal teleology, the temporal progression that remembering could have brought with it, might be overshadowed by a different kind of dynamic, in which the very act of *linking* becomes a goal in itself. I find this emphasis on “the capacity to join”³⁸ important, and to trace the roots of this mnemonic device I will make another detour – to the year 2005, when the previous major celebration of Victory Day took place. The 2005 anniversary campaign resulted in two major symbolic traditions that have been influencing the remembrance of the Great Patriotic War in Russia ever since.

³⁵ Hans S. Loewald. *Perspectives on Memory* (1972) // Hans S. Loewald. *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven, 1980. P. 149.

³⁶ Roman Jakobson made a similar point about the twofold character of language in his *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance* (see Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle. *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague, 1956).

³⁷ Loewald. *Perspectives on Memory*. P. 149.

³⁸ See W. R. Bion. *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New York, 1984. P. 52.

On April 14, 2005, RIA-Novosti, a major state-owned information agency, announced that together with a handful of other organizations it would be conducting a celebratory action called *Georgievskaja lentochka* (the St. George Ribbon).³⁹



Fig. 6. Inventing traditions: “Make St. George ribbon a symbol of your memory.” An official poster of the action. 2005.

The agency’s press release explained that the goal of the action was to give the Muscovites a chance

to mark (*oboznachit’*) their attitude toward the celebration of the great Victory, to mark their respect and gratitude toward veterans..., their feelings of pride and recognition of the colossal role that our country played in fighting global fascism (*mirovoi fashizm*) and in liberating Europe during the Second World War.⁴⁰

As the vehicle for such expressions of solidarity, the agency distributed ribbons with three black and four orange stripes (50 cm long and 3.5 cm wide), suggesting that they be attached to lapels, bags, or, for instance, car antennas. Supported by major Moscow firms and companies, the agency initially promised to give away 800,000 ribbons (for free).

The colors of the ribbon were not random. In fact, the agency replicated the palette of the St. George Award, which was first introduced in 1769 by Catherine the Great to recognize major military and civic achievements.

³⁹ Detailed information about the action and its participants is available on the site *Georgievskaja lentochka* (<http://gl.9may.ru>). The initial team of the action relied on administrative support of Moscow’s city Committee on Public Relations and the youth organization *Studencheskaia obshchina* (Student Commune).

⁴⁰ V Moskve nachnetsia aktsiia “Poviazhi Georgievskuiu lentochku” // RIA Novosti. 2005. April 14. <http://rian.ru/society/20050414/39666047.html>.

**THE ST. GEORGE RIBBON:
LINKING CENTURIES TOGETHER**



Fig. 7. St. George's Cross.



Fig. 8. The Soviet *Orden Slavy* (Order of Glory).



Fig. 9. Post-Soviet Order of St. George.

Since then, the award went through some modifications and gradually evolved into St. George's Cross (of several degrees), the highest award in imperial Russia.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the cross was banned; however, in 1943, in the middle of the Great Patriotic War, the award was revived. Using the color scheme of St. George's Cross, the Soviet government reintroduced it as *Orden Slavy*, Order of Glory (of three degrees).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the award went into oblivion until in 1992 Boris Yeltsin brought it back – now, as the original Order of St. George, which could be awarded for exceptional military heroism. The official status of the award, however, was specified only in 2000 (by Vladimir Putin), and the first set of awards would not be bestowed until 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev decorated several officers for the successful realization of the campaign “forcing Georgia to accept peace” in August 2008.⁴¹

⁴¹ Since the 2000 statute specified that the award was meant to celebrate military victories that followed the interventions of external enemies, Dmitry Medvedev had to amend the statute to include also those military operations on the “territories of other states” that were aimed at protecting or restoring international peace and security. The texts of both statutes are available here: Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 8 avgusta 2000 g. No. 1463. Statut Ordena Sviatogo Georgiia // <http://www.rg.ru/official/>

Natalia Loseva, a journalist of RIA-Novosti who seemed to author the idea of the ribbon, explained in an interview that the idea emerged “by chance” (*v kakoi-to mere sluchaino*). The visual memory of Soviet childhood (posters, postcards, holiday publications) played a certain role in this process, but the most important motivation seemed to be to counterbalance “the officialdom and inescapable pathetics” of the state celebration, as Loseva framed it.⁴² Nobody expected such a quick and overwhelming popularity of the ribbon; in fact, the team in charge of the action was totally overwhelmed with the scope of requests, and was unable to satisfy increasing demands.⁴³

This new symbol helpfully crystallizes a fundamental problem of remembrance in today’s Russia. The St. George Ribbon is indeed a mnemonic object that has little known history of its own but helps to manifest a certain link with history. It presents a very particular trajectory of remembering whose structure is fundamentally rooted in various operations of dedifferentiation, historical blurring, temporal amalgamation, and semantic ambiguity. The familiar sequential order of the linear narrative is replaced (or, at least, dominated) by the logic of palimpsest, which allows the retention of incompatible or contradictory meanings within one framework. The layered – “laminated” – history of the ribbon helps one to refrain from any resolute political or historical differentiation.⁴⁴ Memorial linking in this case produced neither symbolic linearity nor historical clarity. On the one hand, the ribbon’s colors did bring back memories of military signs and awards of the Great Patriotic War. Yet this familiarity was undercut by the very name of the ribbon, with its references to St. George (which was not really used in the Soviet context). The semiotics of the ribbon is made even more com-

doc/ykazi/1463_pril.shtm; Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 12 avgusta 2008 goda No. 1205 “O vnesenii izmenenii v nekotorye akty Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii o gosudarstvennykh nagradakh Rossiiskoi Federatsii” // <http://document.kremlin.ru/doc.asp?ID=47402&PSC=1&PT=3&Page=1>.

⁴² Natalia Loseva: ia byla v shoke ot togo, kak liudi poniali i priniali ideiu // CN.ru, May 9, 2007, <http://www.cn.ru/news/245451/>. About the authorship see the transcript of the online conference “Poviazhi Georgievskuiu lentochku”. Itogi i budushchee aktsii // RIA Novosti. May 13, 2005 (№ 44). <http://ria.ru/online/20050513/39979664.html>.

⁴³ For details see a video interview with Loseva: Natalia Loseva o “Georgievskoi lentochke” // http://youtu.be/Sn0zsjHD_7U.

⁴⁴ Lisa Heilbronn in her study of the Yellow Ribbon in the United States traces a similar tendency, describing the “polysemic” character of the ribbon that “did not become locked to a specific military use” during several decades of its existence. Lisa M. Heilbronn. *Yellow Ribbons and Remembrance: Mythic Symbols of the Gulf War* // *Sociological Inquiry*. 1994. Vol. 64. No. 2. P. 174.



plicated by the fact that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow's own official emblem has included a picture of St. George slaying a dragon.

The ribbon promised some meaning rather than revealing it; it indexed rather than signified. Its religious undertone did not go seamlessly with the Soviet war. At the same time, the symbolic link with prominent Russian and Soviet awards clashed with the easy availability of the ribbon in new Russia. Yet the precise genealogy of the award, as well as its exact symbolism, was not really important for the organizers. Accompanied by two main slogans "My grandpa's victory – is my victory!" (*Pobeda deda – moia pobeda!*) and "I remember it! I am proud of it!" (*Ia pomniu! Ia gorzhus'!*), the action was aimed at marking a sociosymbolic community that was united not so much by a shared experience as by a newly learned vocabulary of public gestures.⁴⁵

Within a very short period, the ribbon became, perhaps, the most successful post-Soviet symbol, used as a formal signification of the individual's connectedness. Semantic ambiguities of the ribbon, important as they are, did not affect its immense popularity. In April 2010, *Krasnaia zvezda*, the leading publication of the Russian Army, reported that since 2005, more than 50 million ribbons had been distributed throughout Russia and sixty other countries.⁴⁶

While not introducing any new meanings, the ribbon, nonetheless, started a set of new public practices. The production and distribution of the ribbon have become structured. However, given the ambiguity of its meaning, it is not surprising that the ribbon's social status has been constantly contested. Made possible because of corporate sponsorship of large companies, the ribbon, nonetheless, is claimed to be completely noncommercial, that is, *nonexchangeable*.⁴⁷ When some companies used the ribbon to promote

⁴⁵ The gesture was quickly borrowed by other groups and campaigns. The radio station Silver Rain (*Serebrianyi dozhd'*) ran a campaign White Ribbon (*Belaia lentochka*) on March 20–30, 2006, asking drivers to tie a white ribbon to their cars as a sign of protest against the obnoxious driving of the so-called governmental cars with the special blue signal on the top that entitles them to ignore basic traffic rules. See details here: Aktsiia "Belye lentochki" // <http://www.silver.ru/air/events/2006/4256>. In December 2011, a white ribbon was used again as a symbol of protest against the rigged elections to the Russian Duma. See details here: Mariia Vasil'eva. "Belaia lentochka": nedovol'nye vykhodiat iz seti na ulitsy // BBC Russian Service. December 8, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2011/12/111208_white_ribbon_russia.shtml; see also: <http://www.belayalenta.com>.

⁴⁶ *Ia pomniu! Ia gorzhus'!* // *Krasnaia zvezda*. 2010. April 24.

⁴⁷ In this respect, the St. George Ribbon is quite different from its American analogues, where the yellow ribbon started spontaneously as a sign of solidarity with American soldiers left behind in Vietnam, eventually expanded its scope and became a commercially

their goods and services – for instance, by attaching the ribbon to bottles of vodka – the organizers of the action went public, announcing that any attempts to associate the ribbon with any commercial activity would face strong moral condemnation. (The agency even published a special Code of the Ribbon of St. George, specifying dos and don'ts.)⁴⁸

Similarly, the public display of the ribbon offered new ways of self-expression. For instance, when in 2006 the St. George Ribbon campaign was extended to the rest of the country, the main St. Petersburg newspaper reported that the city's campaign had reached its culmination point when Mikhail Bobrov, an eighty-two-year-old war alpinist, climbed 100 meters – to the top of the spire of the Peter and Paul fortress – in order to tie a ribbon to the highest point.⁴⁹

What the ribbon could not do was to suggest any clear modality of its reading. Its significance was achieved mainly through its mechanical reproduction, dissemination, and exposure, not through its interpretation. Unable to produce or sustain a narrative of its own, the ribbon had to borrow someone else's narratives. The symbolic vacuity of the sign required a meaningful context. As a result, the St. George ribbon was used as a connecting link that strung together other people's stories.

The affective saturation of the new tradition is being done through a deployment of two main media – *Soviet war songs* and *personal stories* about World War II. In some cases, both media were combined. In others, they were used separately. What united them, however, was their ability to provide a narratable template that could be associated with the new symbol. Songs and stories acted as an affective interface that reoriented the audience's attention and perception. They suggested emotional frameworks

sold sign of solidarity with American troops abroad. (On the history of the yellow ribbon, see Lisa M. Heibronn. *Yellow Ribbons and Remembrance*; about recent usage of war-related ribbons in the United States, see, for example, Terry G. Lilley, Joel Best, Benigno E. Aguirre, Kathleen S. Lowney. *Magnetic Imagery: War-related Ribbons as Collective Display* // *Sociological Inquiry*. 2010. Vol. 80. No. 2. Pp. 313-321.) In a similar vein, the Pink Ribbon, invented in 1991 by Evelyn H. Lauder, a cosmetic heiress, and Alexandra Penny, a philanthropist, was aimed to signify breast cancer awareness, being a strictly commercial brand (Nancy T. Vineburgh. *The Power of the Pink Ribbon: Raising Awareness of the Mental Health Implications of Terrorism* // *Psychiatry*. 2004. Vol. 67. No. 2. Pp. 137-146). See also the history of commercialization of the Red Poppy in Great Britain: *The Royal British Legion: Poppy Appeal* // <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/support-us/poppy-appeal>.

⁴⁸ Kodeks aktsii // *Nasha Pobeda*, <http://gl.9may.ru/kodex/>.

⁴⁹ Pavel Smol'skii. *Gvardii pamiati* // *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 2006. May 11.

within which a new symbol of the old war could be if not internalized then, at least, made perceptible. I will discuss the role of songs in the process of remembrance at the end of the article, but here I want to comment briefly on the emergence of this medium.

Already at the very first introduction of the St. George Ribbon, the organizers announced that the action would have its grand finale at the traditional concert *Songs of Victory* in Victory Park in Moscow, where major contemporary rock and pop stars performed cover versions of Soviet war songs. Songs about the Great Patriotic War have become a major cultural device through which the commonality of war and loss is established in Russian society. In February 2010, preparing for the upcoming sixty-fifth anniversary of the victory, the Ministry of Mass Communication and the three major national telephone-service providers widely publicized their new project called “Hurray for the Victory!” (*Ura Pobede!*). Until May 9, 2010, every owner of a cell phone could dial “1945” and download (for free) one war song as a ringtone.⁵⁰ During the presentation of the project, Vasilii Lanovoi, a film star famous for his portrayal of Soviet officers in the 1960s–1970s, emphasized

The screenshot shows a website interface for the project "Ura Pobede! Pesni Pobedy v tvoem mobil'nom!". At the top, it says "УРА ПОБЕДЕ! ПЕСНИ ПОБЕДЫ В ТВОЕМ МОБИЛЬНОМ!" and "Единый бесплатный номер «1945»". Below this, there is a navigation menu with items like "Новости", "Об акции", "Живая книга памяти", "Этот день победы", "Мелодии", and "Мобильный репортаж". The main content area features a video player showing a close-up of an elderly man with a white beard and a young boy. To the right of the video is a section titled "Главная песня Победы" with a progress bar and a list of songs: "День Победы" (54.4% / 47357), "Прощание славянки" (34.4% / 17225), "Баллада" (14.9% / 13109), "Тыловая жизнь" (13.1% / 12244), and "Славь платочек" (4.1% / 3265). Below the video player, there are instructions: "Привнесите свои фото, видео и историю для Мобильного репортажа" and "Как установить/отключить мелодию на мобильный телефон".

Fig. 10. Things Imbued with Feelings: Songs of Victory in your Mobile Phone! The Web site of the project “Hurray for the Victory!” May 2010 (<http://ura.9may.ru>).

the importance of the victory and its songs: “We need to make sure that time remains powerless when it comes to young people’s memory. We just cannot forget it: the best songs ever are still war songs; the best melodies ever – are war melodies.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ For the list of songs, see the Web site of the project “Pesni pobedy v tvoem mobil’nom” // Ura Pobede, <http://ura.9may.ru>.

⁵¹ “Bol’shaia troika” zapuskaet besplatnyi nomer “1945” // Ura Pobede, <http://ura.9may.ru/news/20100226/209544892.html>.

This overwhelming prominence of Soviet war songs is a relatively new phenomenon. During Brezhnev's stagnation the genre was hollowed out by the ideological industry, with its emphasis on the epic and the celebratory. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the genre went into a period of hibernation and was brought back to life around 1995 by a heavily orchestrated celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Victory Day. Since then the military and patriotic chanson has experienced an obvious upsurge. War songs are often played on radio and TV channels; new cover versions are frequently recorded by major Russian pop and classical stars.⁵² In many cities, there are annual festivals of war songs, as well as competitions for the best performance of these songs by school students. Alarmed by this cultural development in Yeltsin's Russia, some cultural critics defined it as a tendency to "mobilize" and "militarize" the musical genre.⁵³

In the new millennium and under new political leadership, the situation with war songs in Russia became more institutionalized, yet it hardly changed its overall message. In 2001, the Russian pop singer Oleg Gazmanov, known for his strong patriotic sentiments, started a project called *The Songs of Victory* (*Pesni pobedy*). Contemporary Russian stars were called upon to revitalize songs of the Soviet past. In an interview, Gazmanov explained the motivation behind the project:

There were two important moments for us. First, we wanted to make these songs sound totally contemporary ... Second, I wanted this project to be totally positive; this is why I picked not just any song that was performed during the war, but the songs of the victorious generation. This is why the word *Victory* is so prominent in the title of the project. These are not just war songs, but an artistic testimony (*svidetel'stvo*) of the great victory.⁵⁴

Since 2001, *The Songs of Victory* has become an annual event, televised live for the whole country.⁵⁵ The concert on May 9, 2005, was, perhaps, the biggest success of this project ever. As many newspapers reported, more

⁵² For instance, in 2003 Dmitry Khvorostovsky, a soloist at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, recorded a CD with Soviet songs of war under the title *Where Are You, my Brother?* (Delos 2003).

⁵³ See, for example, Aleksandr Shchuplov. *Idet mobilizatsiia pesni // Nezavisimaia gazeta*. 2001. January 20.

⁵⁴ Proekt "Pesni Pobedy" // <http://eskadron.narod.ru/news/09.05.2001.htm>.

⁵⁵ I discuss at length structural and cultural aspects of this and other examples of military chanson in my article *Emotional Blueprints: War Songs as an Affective Medium* // Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol (Eds.). *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*. DeKalb, 2011. Pp. 248-276.

than 1 million spectators attended *The Songs of Victory* staged in Victory Park (*Park Pobedy*) in Moscow.⁵⁶ That concert had a new important addition to its usual routine, though. Marking 1,418 days of the Great Patriotic War, the organizers produced a 1,418 meter-long St. George ribbon, asking the audience to write their commemorative messages on it.⁵⁷ As if making a metaphor real, the ribbon emerged as a screen (a palimpsestic writing pad of sorts) on which to display one's ideas and affects, associated with the war.

Mnemonic Formations as Objects of Affection

At least, in part, the popularity of the St. George Ribbon has to do with its materiality: while the symbolic meaning of the ribbon has yet to be crystallized, its tactile and visual specificity is hard to deny or ignore. In this section, I follow this lead by looking closely at the role of materiality in structuring public remembrances. As before, my next set of examples demonstrates new forms of textual and affective linking. Like the ribbon, these examples highlight the laminated and diffused perception of memory in contemporary Russia. Similarly to the earlier examples, the streamlining of history is not the main goal here: the projects that I will describe deliberately blur chronological continuity, mixing different biographies and time lines together. There is an important difference, however: the examples below take the individualistic impetus materialized by the ribbon much further, reframing the war itself as a part of the individual's *personal* experience. It was the ribbon's material substance taken together with its semantic vacancy that helped to precipitate this move.

In the spring of 2010, a few weeks before the anniversary of Victory Day, the state-owned TV channel Rossiia ran a series of short videos. No video lasted more than ninety seconds, and they all used the same narrative and video template. Each video began with black-and-white footage of the fall of Berlin, accompanied by a soundtrack with the familiar voice of the Soviet radio announcer Yuri Levitan, reading an official statement of the Soviet government about the "complete capitulation" of Germany on May 8, 1945. The camera, then, would cut away to a scene in a studio, where a famous Russian personality (dressed in a colorful outfit) would share his or her memories associated with the war. After that, the studio segment would fade into a black screen, on which the word *Vizhu* ("I see") would be trans-

⁵⁶ Alina Keshokova. *Pobednyi klich Gazmanova // Moskovskii komsomolets*. 2005. May 5.

⁵⁷ *Georgievskaiia lentochka – simvol edinieniia // Vecherniiaia Moskva*. 2005. May 13.

formed into the word *Zhivu* (“I live”), followed by the St. George Ribbon. Irina Rodnina (born in 1949), a famous figure skater who won three gold Olympic medals and ten world championships, recollected:

I remember, I asked my Mom one day: “How was it?” “All kinds of things happened” [she said], and suddenly she gets a piece of chiffon, a piece of black chiffon. I felt something at once, you know: “Mom, what is it?” And she said: “You know, when I was leaving for the war, I had this piece of fabric. And I put it in my backpack to take with me. And then there was that decree – to surrender Tula [the town], and we just dropped everything. And this fabric, I packed it and buried it in the ground (*zakopala*). I thought, I might come back, one never knows.” ...Tula did not surrender, you know. The regular troops did retreat but volunteer guards (*opolchentsy*) did not let Tula surrender. So, when they returned, she [got] this fabric back again.... You know, when you know stories like that, then... I do not know, how could I not have skated in this? How could I not win? I did skate in the dress [made out of this chiffon].



Fig. 11. Irina Rodnina: Objectifying the War. TV channel Rossiia, 2010.

Somewhat disjointed, this testimony contains a key element that I want to single out: remembrance is linked not just with some mental images or discourses, it is also grounded in some material evidence, in an object that can be repossessed. Acting as a metonym of the Great Patriotic War, the object,

then, provides a necessary point of entry into a personalized and affectively charged version of the nation's history. It is crucial that the material resilience of the object balances out a confused and confusing time line of Rodnina's history. Important details might be omitted, censored or simply forgotten, and yet the compromised diachrony of the story does not undermine its overall authenticity: the object of affection becomes a symbol of victory, a mythical talisman that protects Tula from surrender and helps to win the Olympics.

These visual testimonies were broadcast throughout the spring of 2010, presenting the memory of the war as the memory of particular things and everyday events, which, effectively, helped to bridge the temporal and experiential gap. As the testimony of Rodnina shows, remembrance is approached, again, as a form of sartorial and emotional identification with the past that was not experienced directly. The perceptual quality of this remembering shows why debates about the Great Patriotic War in Russia are so hard to contain within the framework of dispassionate factual discussions: remembering here is indeed a form of reenactment accompanied by emotional and bodily investment. Not rooted in any official narrative, stories like this one individualize the experience of war, representing it as a chain of personal affective states anchored by material props. The stylistic juxtaposition of the official, unchanging, and black-and-white Soviet chronicle, on one hand, and highly emotional, colored, and very idiosyncratic accounts, on the other, marginalize the dominant ("canned") historical narrative about the "capitulation" even more, turning the documentary into a visual and audio relic, into a history that has lost its human touch.

Originally, this juxtaposition (or mutual reinforcement?) of the official Soviet chronicle with very personalized testimonies was pioneered in Russia in 2003–2004, when the radio station Echo of Moscow ran its project *One Day of War: Family Recollections of the Great Patriotic War*, produced by Aleksei Venediktov.⁵⁸ In these audio recordings, famous Russian and international personalities – from the writer Vasily Aksenov to the politician Grigory Yavlinsky – shared their memories of the Great Patriotic War or recollected stories about the war that they heard from their parents and grandparents. Each personal story was introduced as a part of the coverage of a particular day in the history of the war (e.g., "The 500th Day of the War"). Each story was preceded and followed by a brief news chronicle, in

⁵⁸ For a list of participants and audio files, see the Web site of the program: "'One Day of War' is family recollections by guests and listeners of the Echo of Moscow about the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. The author of the program — editor-in-chief of the Echo of Moscow Aleksei Venediktov" // www.echo.msk.ru/programs/warday/.

which the announcer dispassionately summarized the situation at the front line on that day sixty (or, say, fifty-eight) years earlier.

For instance, on March 2, 2005, the testimony of Galina Vishnevskaya, an opera singer, was introduced as a part of the installment about the 619th day of the war. A documentary account reported unemotionally by a male announcer informed the audience that exactly sixty-two years ago, on March 2, 1943, “our troops” captured the town Dmitriev-Lgovskii “after heavy fighting.” This news bulletin then faded into Vishnevskaya’s brief recollection:

I have a medal for defending Leningrad. I was fifteen when I got it. I was a member of antiaircraft defense in Kroonstad; and I am incredibly proud of this award.... I have a lot of other awards but this medal for the defense of Leningrad is the most dear to me. Recollections [of the war]... they have to do with the siege of Leningrad, 900 days that it lasted; with the deaths of my relatives. In my family, men and women died during the siege. I managed to survive, and for me the Victory Day, and the war, and the Russia at that time... when I recall it all, I recall that song, I think Aleksandrov wrote it, the song “Raise, the Great Country” (*Vstavai, strana ogromnaia*). Even now, when I recall this song, I struggle for breath (*u menia gorlo perekhvatyvaet*).⁵⁹

The testimony was flanked again by a news item that informed the audience about the success of Soviet aviation that destroyed more than 100 German cars with military equipment on that day.

As any good ritual, the project linked two calendars (the contemporary and the military), using personal narratives to suture sources from different historical periods. The war – or at least the war calendar – was incorporated in the informational flow of the daily life of the present: the official and the historic were merged with the personal. Initially, this informality of personal recollections was perceived by many as something unusual, and in 2004, the NTV channel together with Echo of Moscow, produced a visual version called *Rozhdenie pobedy* (The Birth of the Victory).⁶⁰ Also relying on personal recol-

⁵⁹ Den’ voiny: Galina Vishnevskaya, pevitsa // Echo of Moscow. 2005. March 2. <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/warday/3763/>.

⁶⁰ The overall inspiration for this project must have come from similar radio shows created by the BBC in the 1970s – with *The Long March of Everyman* as the paradigmatic example of the attempt to present history through stories and voices from below. For an example of the show listen to this excerpt: www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical/40thanniversary/ram/march_everyman1_ram. See also a text version of the show, *The Long March of Everyman* /



Ed. Theo Barker. London, 1974. Strikingly, as the authors of *The Long March* recollected, the inspiration for the show came from Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, with his appeal to do “a history of the ‘swarm life’ of society’s ‘unknown soldiers’” (The

lections, this media project used a very different framing strategy, however. Short oral testimonies of famous people were accompanied not by the official chronicle but by staged (“cinematic”) scenes from the first months of the Great Patriotic War. Plotlines of the staged episodes were often disconnected from actual testimonies. Yet it was not the overall narrative continuity that they were meant to provide. Unlike the official chronicle in the radio project, whose main function was to equate the personal recollection with the official document, the narrative function of the staged scenes in *The Birth of the Victory* was to add some visual dynamic, to produce a certain emotional (yet wordless) iconography, to create a particular affective mood within which videos of rather static testimonies could be perceived.⁶¹ The mélange of songs, cinema, and testimonies in *The Birth of Victory* marked an important development: *One Day of War* prepared by Echo of Moscow managed to remain within the limits of a historical project, trying to diversify the picture and perception of the Great Patriotic War. *The Birth of Victory* approached history as entertainment, adapting testimonies to the format of the spectacle. A montage of attractions of sorts, this cultural production followed closely the rule specified by Sergei Eisenstein in 1924. The main purpose of the artistic linking of autonomous or even disconnected elements was not to present a collection of facts; the goal of such carefully manufactured “juxtapositions and accumulations” was to “exercise a definite effect on the attention and emotions of the audience” in order to create desired “chains of associations that [we]re linked to a particular phenomenon in the mind” of spectators.⁶²

Throughout the year, NTV produced about 700 episodes (sixty seconds each), airing them three times a day during commercial breaks. For Victory Day on May 9, 2005, the channel reedited personal testimonies and staged scenes as a coherent film. To emphasize the affective message of the project, the film interweaved the already aired cinematic scenes and real testimonies with performances of war songs by contemporary stars in a studio. For instance, the testimony of Oleg Basilashvili (b. 1934), a famous Soviet actor, started as a voice-over that accompanied a staged episode with

Long March of Everyman. P. 295). For a discussion of this trend in contemporary popular culture, see Raphael Samuel. *Theatres of Memory. Vol. I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*. London, 1994. Pp. 191-193.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the project’s history, see a conversation with Elena Nemykh, a journalist from NTV and the author and director of the project *The Birth of the Victory: Pamiat’ o voine v sovremennykh rossiiskikh SMI // Neprikosnovennyi zapas*. 2005. No. 40-41. Pp. 353-368.

⁶² Sergei Eisenstein. *The Montage of Film Attractions // S. M. Eisenstein. Selected Works. Vol. I. Writings, 1922–1934 / Ed. and trans. Richard Taylor*. London, 1988. Pp. 40, 41.

officers in a smoky room discussing something around a war map. Eventually, the camera would move from these celluloid officers to a studio with Basilashvili, sitting in front of a film projector. The testimony would fade later into a performance of a famous war song *V zemlianke* (In a dugout),⁶³ by the singer Sergei Trofimov, known for his cycles of prison ballads.



Fig. 12. Objects of affection. Oleg Basilashvili: “This soldier protected me.” NTV, *Rozhdenie pobedy*, dir. Elena Nemykh, 2005.

Despite a very different framing, the testimonies about the war in *The Birth of the Victory* reflected the overall trend that I have been tracing so far: remembrance of the war is performed through creating tangible, material links that individualized the war, making a “larger” (epic) picture impossible. Basilashvili’s story is a good case in point. Speaking about his life in evacuation, the actor recalled:

My father was a commander of the military postal service (*voenno-polevaia pochta*). We put together a parcel with some food for him, and this parcel was sitting on the table, with a cover nearby... When we were leaving Moscow for evacuation, I took one tin soldier with me; I had a whole collection but I was not allowed to take them all, only one. So, when everybody left the room, I stuck this soldier right in the middle of the parcel. Then my mother came, she closed the box up, and

⁶³ The song was written by the poet Alexei Surkov and the composer Konstantin Listov in 1942.

the parcel was sent to the frontline. In 1945, in the summer, my father came home from the front line. And the first thing he did was this (and I had totally forgotten about it by then)... So, he took this soldier from his chest pocket. My dad came with lots of awards, with the major's shoulder mark, in shiny tall boots. Victorious! But he took this soldier out... And this soldier – I was totally amazed by this... When I sent it [to the front], it was painted green, with a red star, black boots. ... Now, it was absolutely silvery (*absolutno serebrianyi*). Worn-out (*vytertyi*). Only tin left. As if it was made from silver. [So, my dad said:] “This soldier protected me not only from death, but even from wounds!..

There are interesting narrative and semantic transformations in this story that keeps oscillating between a real commander and a tin soldier, between the tin painted green (camouflaged?) and the protective silver revealed underneath. These transformations show that the polyphony of mnemonic objects never gets resolved or properly channeled. At best, this multivocal picture of the war is creatively modified, arranging bits and pieces of experience in a way that makes sense. As with Rodnina's story about a piece of protective fabric, Basilashvili's testimony also links a certain sense of ontological and moral security with the materiality of the thing: it is a perceptible, charged object that does not betray even when all the words fail.⁶⁴

The decision to use songs as connective tissues in *The Birth of Victory* was hardly surprising. Functioning simultaneously as affective templates (“models for”) for generating emotional responses, the war songs also acted as emotional envelopes (“models of”) for documentary testimonies and staged scenes. Familiar tunes produced an effect of recognition, while a new generation of pop and rock stars added an effect of contemporaneity to the personal accounts that otherwise might have sounded rather archival. The resulting combination of oral histories, songs, and movies produced not so much a form of cultural competency as an experience of cultural intimacy, as the anthropologist Michael Hertzfeld called it – that is, a certain protocol of emotional interaction polished in the process of its constant reproduction.⁶⁵

In order to show how the polishing of emotional reactions becomes instrumentalized, I want to return – for the last time – to the Victory Day

⁶⁴ On charged objects and their relevance for memory studies, see Winter and Sivan's discussion of Aby Warburg's theory of social memory in: Winter and Sivan. *Setting Framework*. P. 21.

⁶⁵ Michael Herzfeld. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York, 1997.



Fig. 13-14. President Medvedev greets the audience of the *Songs of Victory* concert, Moscow, May 9, 2010. TV Channel Rossiia-24. Screenshots of videos (available here: <http://youtu.be/h5V8Kt6-dJQ>).



celebration that took place in May 2010. Apart from the parade, the program of festivities also included a major concert of war songs. Unlike in previous years, in 2010 the show was staged in Luzhniki, Moscow's major sport arena. It was aimed at a much younger audience, and along with a few older stars, it listed a somewhat different crop of performers popular among younger generations.

At the same time, the political importance of the concert was clearly elevated – for the first time the president of the country attended and greeted the audience.

A new format brought with it a new title. Following the overall striving toward remembering, the organizers replaced old *Songs of Victory*, with a new slogan (borrowed from a popular song): “And the rescued world still remembers...” (*I pomnit mir spasennyi...*). This slogan was programmatic rather than descriptive, though. From the beginning, attempts to appeal to the memory of a younger audience faced a clear dilemma: the lyrics of old war songs, a musical staple of several Soviet generations, were not exactly familiar to a new target group. As a result, ballads, marches, waltzes, and



Fig.15. A patriotic karaoke party: “And the rescued world still remembers...”. Moscow, May 9, 2010. Luzhniki. A screenshot of the broadcast by RTR-Planeta (Video available here: <http://youtu.be/lneuXL3lxYc>).



tangos performed during the concert were accompanied by a teleprompter screen that spelled out the lyrics, making the commonality of the singing experience possible. A patriotic concert became a major karaoke party, which was televised for the whole country. Close-up shots of singing (and often crying) people in the audience helped to increase a feeling of co-presence among the TV viewers. Remembering was turned into identificatory reproduction, as Loewald would have called it.⁶⁶

It is easy to dismiss this and similar forms of public remembrance as yet another example of state-sponsored cultural indoctrination. Enactive remembering and memorial linking are aimed here at creating an audience through forms of historical mediation that are not innocent; and a thin line separates the affective management of history from more traditional devices of sensorial manipulations. In some respect, this feeling of cultural intimacy induced by the state relies on old and proven mechanisms of sentimental education used around the world. For instance, Ryuzo Uchida, in a study of the so-called Ministry of Education songs used in primary schools in Japan after 1910 as a part of the mandatory musical training, indicates that songs manifested “the expressive, imaginary register of the sensibility of people who have lost the concrete grounds of their existence through the irruption into their lives of impersonal economic and technological powers.”⁶⁷ Similarly, in 1920, ten years after the introduction of a mandatory songs textbook in Japan, *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn'* (Artistic Life), a Russian journal, published an extensive proposal of the Section of Mass Performances and Spectacles of the Theatrical Department of the Commissariat for Education (NarKomPros) for the organization of the May Day festivities in Moscow in 1920. The vision of the Section was quite grandiose: “a magnificent drama” was supposed to use “the whole city” as its stage, with “the entire proletarian masses of Moscow” as the performers. Perhaps expecting that these plans might be trimmed by the reality on the ground, the editor accompanied this proposal with a comment: “The experience of such festivities, even if they are not completely successful, will nevertheless not be lost: it will accustom the masses to the concept of ‘collective action.’”⁶⁸

The methods of affective management of history that I describe in this essay were also born within the same set of circumstances and were aimed

⁶⁶ Loewald. Op. cit. P. 164.

⁶⁷ Ryuzo Uchida. Memory and the Transformation of Social Experience in Modern Japan: Rethinking the Song “Home” // Media, Culture, & Society. 1999. Vol. 21. 1999. P. 217.

⁶⁸ Street Art of the Revolution. Pp. 124, 126.

at producing a similar effect (shaping the sensibilities of people who have lost either “the concrete grounds of their existence” or a sense of history). There is a major distinction that differentiates current forms of enactive remembering and memorial linking, though. Unlike Russia in the 1920s



Fig. 16. Playing with historical signifiers: A flyer for a club party called *Thank You Granddad for the Victory*, 2012 (<http://i078.radikal.ru/1105/7b/bb4be44b8db4.jpg>).

or Japan in the 1910s, current attempts to use emotions politically provide imaginary and geographic space, as well as material props, for social interaction, while being spectacularly devoid of a meaningful context within which new social imaginaries could unfold and new social experience could be created. Mnemonic formations and affective objects offer symbolic containers and repeatable scripts but they cannot generate new content. Moreover, the solidarity that emerges in the process of this pragmatic utilization of symbolic forms of the past is rooted neither in the common experience nor in the shared knowledge of history. Indeed, these performative rituals might be able to transform, adapt, and negotiate available symbolic structures in unpredictable and uncontrollable ways; connective tissues might be able to unleash the individual and group’s “capacity to join.” And yet, without at least some ideas about the nature and goals of this affective solidarity produced by the spectacle, the linking activity will be hardly more than a state-sponsored play with signifiers: a costume parade against a screen with celluloid soldiers.

SUMMARY

Through a close reading of media reports and public rituals in 2005–2011, associated with the remembering of the Great Patriotic War, the essay traces a sizable mnemonic shift – from the playful retrofitting of the past in the late

1990s, with its aesthetics of ironic noninvolvement, to the obvious attempts to envision “history” as an assemblage of emotionally charged objects, undertaken during the past decade. Following two phenomena – forms of memorialization realized in the process of embodiment, and a desire for historical connectivity fulfilled through acts of memorial linking – the article shows how these two kinds of mnemonic activity emerge as dominant ways of approaching and organizing the Soviet experience of the Great Patriotic War in postmillennial Russia.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье Сергея Ушакина анализируются различные форматы обращения к теме Великой Отечественной войны в прессе и публичные коммеморативные ритуалы 2005–2011 гг. В центре внимания – мнемонический сдвиг с игровой “ретроизации” 1990-х гг., с присущей ей эстетикой иронической дистанцированности, на попытки представить “историю” как набор эмоционально заряженных объектов. В статье рассматриваются два феномена: формы коммеморации, реализующиеся через наделение объектов эмоциональным содержанием, и создание ощущения исторической преемственности посредством акта коммеморативного увязывания. Ушакин показывает, как эти типы мнемонической деятельности функционируют в качестве доминирующих способов восприятия и организации советского опыта Великой Отечественной войны в России 2000-х годов.