

## Contents

President's Report	1
BASEES R&D funding awards	2
New Books	2 & 3
Inclusivity in Slavonic & East European Studies	4
Book Review	5

## Editorial information

Please send any news, comments, or contributions to the editor, Ben Phillips (B.G.Phillips@exeter.ac.uk)

Deadline for submissions for the April newsletter is 17 March 2023.

Extracts may be reproduced with the permission of BASEES.

## Stay in touch

 British Association  
for Slavonic and  
East European Studies

 @BASEES

[www.basees.org](http://www.basees.org)

## President's Report

**I want to start this editorial by expressing my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Philippa Hetherington, a much-loved member of our community who passed away earlier this month after a long struggle with illness.**



Philippa was a pathbreaking scholar of Russian and Caucasian history whose renowned work on migration and trafficking will continue to shape the field, and a tireless advocate and effective campaigner for cancer patients. She will be sorely missed.

As I write, we are nearing the first anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Despite advances made by Ukrainian forces in recent months, there is little prospect of this war ending soon. The human toll is growing each day, exacerbated by the arrival of winter. Russia's strategy of targeting critical civilian infrastructure through drone attacks and rockets, terrorising the Ukrainian people, is both a sign of the failure of its military campaign and further evidence of the criminality of the regime. Yet the

impact of the war is now also being felt among broader swathes of the Russian population, much of which, prior to the recent mobilisation, has avoided looking at what has been taking place in Ukraine.

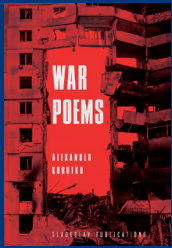
This war is a hot war, and the challenges it raises for conducting research, fieldwork, and collaborations with colleagues in Ukraine and Russia become more pronounced by the day. I have been approached by numerous colleagues (from ECRs to senior researchers) with questions about how we should engage with Russian colleagues and their institutions, and how we should undertake fieldwork in the region. These are difficult issues that raise important ethical and moral questions. What is the most supportive way to collaborate with colleagues in Ukraine right now? Is it appropriate to travel to Russia for archival research while the war is going on, or ethical to employ Russian colleagues as research assistants through intermediaries to do this research for us? Universities are reluctant to pay for research assistants in Russia because of fears that doing so will break the sanction regime, but there is a wider ethical and moral dimension here. Is it right to continue doing fieldwork in the region while drones deliver bombs almost every morning across Ukraine? Are we willing to endanger Russian colleagues by asking them to undertake work for foreign academics in a climate of growing repression? In recent weeks, I have heard of cases where Russian colleagues have asked for their names to be removed from publications related to collaborative projects for exactly these reasons.

For some members of our community, undertaking fieldwork in conflict and war zones is at the heart of their research. >>



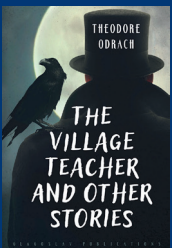
## New Books

### New titles from Glagoslav Publications



*War Poems* by  
Alexander Korotko,  
trans. Andrew  
Sheppard  
(August 2022)

Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February 2022, author and poet Alexander Korotko began to set down as poetry the turbulent responses evoked on the emotional, philosophical and simply human levels by the resulting war. Thus, we read in the 88 poems in this volume (completed in just under 100 days) of the seemingly endless wail of sirens; of sheltering in cellars and tunnels; of the celebrated Ukrainian steppe, churned by tanks; the dead – “our killed, have become our Saviour Angels”; and whole poems devoted to Irpin and Mariupol as the atrocities there and elsewhere became known. Korotko is not without compassion for the Russian soldier – “Russian soldier, what did you forget in my land? We had grief enough without you.” – and the soldier’s mother when she receives his dead body as “cargo 200”. Neither does he conceal his frustration with Ukraine’s allies – “we pay the West for help with blood, but the West makes no haste to deliver.” A trilingual edition.



*The Village Teacher and Other Stories*  
by Theodore  
Odrach, trans.  
Erma Odrach  
(July 2022)

The twenty-two stories in

this collection, set mostly in Eastern Europe during World War Two, depict a world fraught with conflict and chaos. Theodore Odrach is witness to the horrors that surround him, and as both an investigative journalist and a skilful storyteller, using humor and irony, he guides us through his remarkable narratives. His writing style is clean and spare, yet at the same time compelling and complex. There is no short supply of triumph and catastrophe, courage and cowardice, good and evil, as they impact the lives of ordinary people.

More books on next page >>

>> Most of us, however, have a choice - undoubtedly with potential pitfalls for our own research agenda - about how we want to conduct our scholarly work in these times. As so often, this is a grey area, and different colleagues have come up with different answers to the questions I posed above. That said, there are some clear red lines to which BASEES has committed since the 24th of February. In line with FCDO policy, BASEES is clear that all institutional collaborations with Russian universities must cease for the time being: most of these institutions, we should not forget, are led by rectors who signed the shameful letter reiterating historic distortions to justify the war. By extension, we should also not participate in events sponsored by these institutions, given the risk that the presence of a Western academic will be used for propaganda purposes and interpreted as support for Russia’s war on Ukraine.

However, this does not mean we should also sever all personal connections with colleagues in Russia. On the contrary, it is our firm policy, also supported by the UK government, to keep these connections and channels open. I know from personal experience that colleagues at Russian institutions are under pressure to cut ties with Western scholarly networks and re-orientate their academic collaboration towards Asia. We all know many Russian academics who support neither the regime nor the war, and some who openly oppose it. Many are trying to maintain the classroom as a place where Russian

students can be taught to think critically and be exposed to scholarly work that implicitly challenges the omnipresent propaganda as well as the state’s falsification and weaponization of history. It is important that we support these colleagues without endangering them.

Back in the UK, the focus of work with our Ukrainian colleagues is now on the creation of lasting institutional links against the backdrop of continuing wartime hardship. At my institution, the University of East Anglia (UEA), I am currently leading on establishing a partnership with the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (PNU) under the **UK-Ukraine University Twinning Initiative**. The direct personal relations I have developed with colleagues in Ivano-Frankivsk have brought the realities of war much closer to me. Meetings have frequently (and of late increasingly) been cancelled because of power cuts, Ukrainian colleagues have shared their stories of personal hardship, and, at times, been visibly distressed by the sheer concern for family members who are under attack in other parts of the country or are being sent off to the front. One often feels speechless staring into a webcam, powerless to say anything that could offer some comfort or help. This war won’t be over by Christmas. We must stand firm in supporting our Ukrainian friends.

**Matthias Neumann**

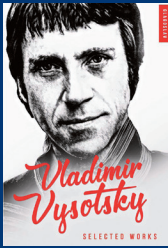
## BASEES R&D funding awards

**To expand the scope of my PhD project, *Polskość in Britain*, I have recently conducted three fieldwork trips supported by a BASEES R&D grant. The first of these trips took me to the Archives of Polish Emigration at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in May 2022.**

The highlight of this trip was the *Wiadomości* archive, a collection of issues of the cultural weekly magazine, published in Poland between 1924 and 1944, and then again in London between 1946 and 1981. I focused on the issues published between the arrival of the Polish military and government-in-exile in Britain in 1940 and 1956. This material provided valuable insights into the priorities and discourse

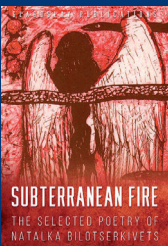
within the Polish exile community in Britain at the time. They are particularly valuable in terms of establishing a periodisation of political discourse, with editorials related to the role of the exile community in preserving the interwar ideal of Polish identity confined to the immediate post-war years. The Polish elections of 1947 impacted the myth of return within the exile community: by 1956, *Wiadomości’s* current affairs and literature supplements had merged, and political editorials that explored the interplay between the exile community and the homeland were no longer published with regularity.

The Archives of Polish Emigration are also home to the individual archives of many prominent émigré writers. Especially useful was the correspondence of Jadwiga Harasowska, whose publication, *The Voice of Poland*, was published in >>

New titles from  
Glagoslav Publications

***Vladimir Vysotsky:  
Selected Works***,  
trans. John Farndon,  
Olga Nakston  
(May 2022)

Amongst people of the former USSR, legendary singer, songwriter and poet Vladimir Vysotsky (1938-1980) is loved and admired like no other. A recent survey placed him as the most important cultural figure of the twentieth century, and some say he is the greatest Russian poet since Pushkin; others talk of him as the Russian Bob Dylan, or Jacques Brel. His songs championed the underdog, and even today, forty years after his death at a tragically young age, people in countries as far apart as Bulgaria and Kazakhstan weep at the mere mention of his name. Yet remarkably this is the first landmark collection of his lyrics and poetry in English. This bilingual volume gives a chance to enjoy Vysotsky's works both in English and Russian, just by flipping the print book over.



***Subterranean  
Fire*** by Natalka  
Bilotserkivets, ed.  
Michael M. Naydan  
(April 2022)

This collection comprises of works from different years. Natalka Bilotserkivets is a Ukrainian poet and translator. She was born in the village of Kuianivka near Sumy and was educated at Kyiv University. She married the critic Mykola Riabchuk and lives in Kyiv. She works as an editor for Ukrainian Culture magazine. Her first collection of poems *Ballad about the Invincibles* (Balada pro neskorenykh) was published in 1976, while she was still in university. She has also published the collections *The Underground Fire* (1984) and *November* (1989). The collections *Allergy* (1999) and *Central Hotel* (2004) were the winners of Book of the Month contests in 2000 and 2004 respectively.

## BASEES R&amp;D funding awards

>> English: her letters show her commitment to the promotion of cultural understanding between Polish exiles and local Scottish communities.

Understanding interactions between Polish exiles and their Scottish neighbours was also the focus of my fieldwork trips to Edinburgh and Glasgow in June 2022. In Edinburgh, I visited the University of Edinburgh's Special Collections, home to the archives of the Polski Wydział Lekarski (Polish School of Medicine), which include the personal documentation of both academic staff and students at the school. These records present a view of the diversity and dissonance of the exile community, a facet of Polish identity that is occasionally overlooked in the secondary literature. In Glasgow I visited the Mitchell Library and the Sikorski Memorial House. The former is home to the records of John J. Campbell, the Deputy-President of the Scottish-Polish Society. His personal correspondence reveals the network of organisations that facilitated the resettlement of Polish exiles in post-war Scotland, and shows how the anti-communist position adopted by many Polish exiles made the community a political football within post-war Britain.

The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland holds materials related to an exhibition held in 2016, titled *The Post-War Polish Community in Leicestershire*. This exhibition presented a collection of objects and documents that belonged to members of the Polish exile community who settled in Leicestershire. In addition, these archives include interviews with seven Poles who settled in Leicestershire. Topics covered included their experiences in transit, community life in Leicestershire, and their interactions with the local community.

These fieldwork trips provided insights into different aspects of the Polish exile community, highlighting the divergences within the émigré milieu created by gender, class and locality.

**Josef Butler**  
KCL

**In August 2022, the BASEES R&D fund provided £410 to support the transcription of focus groups in Ukrainian language conducted during the fieldwork component of Victoria Hudson's British Academy post-doctoral fellowship.**

The research project consists of a comparative study of Russian cultural and ideational influence – “soft power” – in Estonia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. In addition to examining the policy context, methods of communication with foreign audiences and the strategic narratives disseminated, the study also seeks to examine the audience's reception. It focuses on higher education students as a key audience, representing the next generation of leaders and a bellwether of future trends. The “attraction” of Russia's view of the world was evaluated by means of over 2000 valid survey returns from students at universities in ten cities across the case countries. Conducted in autumn/winter 2021/22, these surveys asked respondents to grade their (dis-) agreement with 58 statements reflecting Moscow's outlook on a range of cultural, value-oriented, foreign policy and socio-economic issues using a 5-point Likert scale. These quantitative findings were subsequently triangulated by 25 focus groups, which discuss the issues in depth and provide broader contextual information on the survey findings. The next stage will be to analyse this great volume of data.

The Ukraine data, in particular, offers fascinating if tragic insights into Ukrainian young people's views on Russia immediately prior to the outbreak of war. It will be interesting to see how the Ukrainian findings of this research compare to Victoria's PhD fieldwork on the same topic, conducted in 2011.

**Victoria Hudson**  
KCL

# Inclusivity in Slavonic & East European Studies

In the latest instalment of a continuing series, Serian Carlyle (UCL SSEES) speaks to scholars and activists working to diversify and decolonise the Slavic Studies field...



The Kharkiv and Przemyśl Project (KHARPP) is a grassroots initiative working both to support relief efforts in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, and Przemyśl, the Polish city at the centre of the refugee crisis. You can find out more about their work via their [website](#), follow them on [Instagram at @KHARPPProject](#), and [donate here](#).

## Tell us a bit about the KHARPP Project. How can people get involved?

KHARPP was formed by a group of British students and academics, all involved in Slavonic Studies in the UK, and all at that time based in Przemyśl, the epicentre of the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Nine months into the war, we maintain a volunteer base in Przemyśl, meeting and supporting those leaving Ukraine as refugees. We also operate within Ukraine, particularly in Kharkiv and the oblast, providing humanitarian aid to civilians who have stayed behind. This aid could be in the form of food, medicine, and hygiene products, or through the repairing of homes which have been damaged as a result of the conflict. We are always looking for more team members in Przemyśl, and anyone interested in joining us who speaks Ukrainian or Russian should email [volunteerprzemysl@kharpp.com](mailto:volunteerprzemysl@kharpp.com).

## In an ideal world, what would an inclusive and representative field look like for you?

Russia's war in Ukraine has made clear the need for a decolonised approach to

Slavonic Studies. This means centring and promoting the voices of oppressed and colonised people in the field, both present and historic, and recognising how imperialism and chauvinism has shaped much of the discourse around Slavonic Studies and the wider study of the post-Soviet space. An inclusive field would pay as much attention to queer, POC, and women's voices from the region as they would to white, heterosexual men's; as much attention would be paid to voices from Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and the Far East of Russia as is currently paid to those of Moscow and St Petersburg.

## What are some next steps that would help us in achieving that goal?

The central step to achieving this is the decolonisation of the curriculum. For example, in Russian language and translation classes, focus should be placed on Russian-speaking voices from outside Russia. By expanding the focus of the field beyond the imperial centre, it will necessarily become a less alienating and more inclusive space.

The Slavic and East European Maternal Studies (SEEMS) Network is an AHRC-funded network bringing together researchers in Maternal Studies with those from the BASEES field. It was founded by Professor Muireann Maguire, Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature at the University of Exeter, and Dr Eglė Kačkutė, Associate Professor in French/Francophone and Migration Studies at the University of Vilnius. As part of the project, they have organised two conferences, an exhibition on the history of motherhood, an exhibition on working mothers in Exeter, a reading group, and three public events. You can find out more about the network [here](#). If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please [contact Professor Maguire](#).

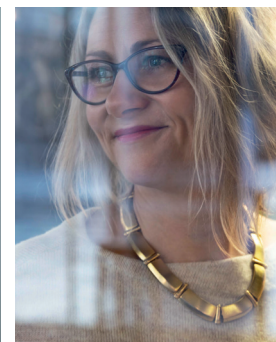
## Tell us about yourself and how SEEMS came into being.

MM: I have been working on a book about male-authored literary representations of pregnancy and childbirth for an embarrassingly long time. Eastern European-ists who work on Maternal Studies are often doubly isolated: first, within their own field, as it has been slow to welcome, much less integrate, Gender Studies; and second, within Gender Studies, which is dominated by scholars of Anglophone and Francophone culture. I therefore set up the SEEMS Network to make it easier for SEES scholars to connect and share research on Maternal Studies: in the short term (during the funded life of the network) through our conferences, and in the long term, through our mailing list.

EK: The SEEMS Network is Muireann's brilliant idea. Although I mostly work on literature in French, I came to Maternal or Motherhood Studies through literature in Lithuanian and still work in that field. I was thus delighted when Muireann invited me to join the Network. Since people working in the field of Eastern European Gender



Professor Muireann Maguire



Dr Eglė Kačkutė

and Maternal Studies do not share one language, the platform provided by SEEMS has a very important role to play in the development of the field, especially in terms of developing theoretical frameworks.

## Tell us a little about the next steps for the project.

MM: I'm excited about the immediate next step, which is an edited volume on maternal literature in Russia and Eastern Europe, i.e. texts about maternal experience/subjectivity and their cultural reception in different nations. It's >>

>> provisionally titled *White Ink, Red Flag: Expressing Maternity in Eastern European Literature* and it's currently under review with an Open Access publisher. Hopefully, this volume will be out next year (and free to download anywhere in the world). It contains academic essays on Eastern European maternal fictions by eight different scholars, plus eight different motherhood-related literary texts translated (for the first time!) from four different languages, including extracts from memoirs by Hungarian and Polish authors, and an introduction co-authored by Eglè and myself.

**In an ideal world, what would an inclusive and representative field look like for you?**

**EK:** A truly inclusive and representative field would involve creating a space where research in each Slavic and Eastern European linguistic area could be shared and debated both in English and in that language. Translation is also key to this -

translations of key theoretical Maternal Studies texts into national languages and vice versa, translations of key texts originally written in national languages into English, would be very productive. Translations of key literary texts as well as creative non-fiction from national languages into English and from one national language to several others would also make the field more inclusive. Another aspect of this would be academic journals that should, in my view, be multilingual and feature all texts in the Slavic or other Eastern European language whatever it may be and in English translation or the other way around.

**What are some next steps that would help us in achieving that goal?**

**MM:** I'm considering applying to maintain the SEEMS network as a BASEES Study Group, which means it could sponsor at least one panel regularly at our annual conference (and thus stay relevant to developing research). I'm also very keen

to get other scholars, especially younger researchers, permanently involved with the network as co-administrators. I'm seeking funding to do more targeted work in studying and translating contemporary Eastern European maternal fictions. And meanwhile, I'd quite like to finish writing my book!

**EK:** On my end, I am applying for funding to publish an anthology of maternal fictions and research in Lithuanian that would establish Maternal Studies as a field of research in Lithuania and in Lithuanian as well. Furthermore, I use the Horizon 2020 funded MotherNet Network to make sure that the research networking set in motion by the AHRC funding continues and that both networks feed off each other.

*If you would like your work to feature in this series, please [contact Serian](#) directly.*

## Book Review

**Anton Weiss-Wendt and Nanci Adler (ed), *The Future of the Soviet Past: The Politics of History in Putin's Russia*. Indiana University Press. ISBN 9780253057594. £45.00**

What we remember about the past is contoured by what we forget. This is one of the key takeaways of Weiss-Wendt's and Adler's timely volume, which examines how the interpretation of Soviet history impacts Russian culture today. Stalin's legacy, as the most contested passage of the Soviet historical record, is important for the state to control, and the book focuses on the reconceptualization of this legacy. It shows how, after Stalin as a historical figure and Stalinism as an institution failed to become subjects of formal judgment and critical scrutiny in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, this missed opportunity for transitional justice led to a state-sponsored normalization and whitewashing of Communist crimes. Co-opted by the Putin regime, the memory of Stalin's repressions has been gradually rehabilitated and instrumentalized to serve state-building efforts.

This tendency, the authors argue, has resulted not only in a growing positive view of Stalin among the Russian public, but also a sort of selective amnesia

about the Stalinist years inasmuch as the achievements of that era (infrastructural development, eradication of illiteracy and, of course, the triumph over Nazism during World War II) are given more prominence than memories of the millions who were executed during the 1930s and suffered in the Gulag. However, the authors insist on nuance and are careful to emphasize that the pro-Stalin narrative is not monolithic: in some sense, the Russian leadership is a house divided against itself regarding the repurposing of Stalinism. For example, in 2017, Putin presided over the unveiling of the Wall of Grief monument, a monument dedicated to the victims of Stalinist repressions that 'conspicuously fails to address the issue of agency, as if Stalinism were a natural disaster'.

Since past crimes remain unconfessed in Russia, their perpetrators - even when victims are acknowledged - go free. Further complicating these ambiguities are what Ivan Kurilla's chapter calls 'grassroots memory initiatives', headed by local actors who are motivated by factors such as personal family histories and who assert their own claims to the nation's past. One such endeavour involves a group of Russian volunteers who find, identify, and memorialize the remains of soldiers from the Second World War; Johanna Dahlin turns an anthropological lens on how the members of the search units form powerful bonds with the fallen

soldiers and their families, thus inscribing their own experiences into the nation's war narrative.

Demonstrating the different ways memory is wielded in Putin's Russia and how both top-down and bottom-up forces contribute to the reconceptualization of the Stalinist era, the volume's authors engage topics including the victory cult of the Great Patriotic War and media emphasis on the pervasive threat of fascism, punitive memory laws and the dangers of 'patriotic education', repressive policies regarding the Gulag museum, the failure of a Polish-Russian historical commission to move past geopolitics, and the rise of state-sponsored civil society groups such as the nightmarish Night Wolves biker club. The anthology's eleven chapters, as well as the editors' introduction, range widely but remain tightly focused on the ongoing impact of 'entrenched Stalinism' and will be useful for those interested in how today's Russia is informed less by its history per se than by how that history is remembered. At times, the volume also prompts readers to consider whether it was possible to foresee the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine in the memory wars that preceded it.

**Sveta Yefimenko**  
**University of Exeter**

