

Contents

President's Report	1
News of the field	2
Book Reviews	4
Inclusivity in Slavonic & East European Studies: Three Case Studies	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 December newsletter is 14 November 2022.

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 British Association
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President's Report

As I write this editorial, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been ongoing for 148 days. With each day, the human cost increases, the destruction of life and livelihoods continues, and the dehumanisation of the Ukrainian people reaches new heights in Russian state propaganda.



It is difficult to remain hopeful as Russia's violent assault on Ukraine becomes not only protracted, but increasingly recedes from the headlines. It is therefore more important than ever that our academic community continues to provide expert analysis on the war and keeps organising support for our Ukrainian colleagues and their families.

In my last editorial, written a few weeks into the war, I reported on a number of BASEES initiatives in support of our Ukrainian colleagues and students. I am pleased to inform you that our two major initiatives, a 'Scholars at Risk' fellowship programme launched with the Royal Historical Society (and later joined by several other learned associations) and a hardship fund for displaced postgraduate students in the UK, have been successfully launched. In May, we awarded fellowships to seven Ukrainian scholars unable to continue their work at their home universities. It was really heartening to receive so many creative, generous applications from departments across the university sector in the UK and Europe. In each case, the fellowship has been matched by a host university which will also provide the scholars with accommodation for themselves and their dependents, an academic mentor, office and library use, and opportunities to collaborate with departmental specialists. Initially planned to provide refuge for at least three months, all fellows secured match funding to extend the duration to at least six months; some are tenable for a full year. Four 'general history' fellowships — supported by the RHS, the Past & Present Society, and the BASEES/RHS fundraiser — will be held by Ukrainian researchers based at the University of Sheffield, Roehampton University, the University of the West of England, and at

the University of Bremen, Germany. The German History Society fellowship will support a scholar of the German past at the University of Aberdeen; another fellowship in the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, will be funded by the Ecclesiastical History Society. The seventh fellowship, held by a scholar at the Centre for Russian, Soviet, Central and East European Studies, University of St Andrews, is funded by BASEES. The growth of this scheme since its launch by BASEES and the RHS back in March is a credit to the academic community. Learned associations, scholars, and universities in the UK and beyond have come together to show active solidarity with Ukrainian colleagues. Both the fellowship scheme and the hardship fund were supported through donations by our members, and I would like to thank everyone who contributed for their generosity. These fellowships will make a real difference to those scholars at risk and their dependents.

The war has unsurprisingly dominated the SEES scholarly discourse and has lent urgency to demands for the decentralisation and decolonisation of how we study of the former 'communist bloc'. Dr Olesya Khromeychuk's challenging, sobering, and inspiring keynote at the BASEES 2022 conference, 'Where is Ukraine on the mental map of the academic community?', helped to instigate a much broader discussion around how Russo-centric and imperialist views have shaped and dominated the study of the region, and is already being seen as a paradigm shifting intervention in our field. I would encourage everyone who hasn't yet benefited from Olesya's lecture to watch it on our [Youtube Channel](#), or read her article, '[Where is Ukraine?](#)'. >>

Correction

Issue 34 named Jelena Golubovic as winner of the Postgraduate Prize for her article "To Me, You Are Not a Serb": Ethnicity, Ambiguity and Anxiety in Post-War Sarajevo', *Ethnicities* 20.3 (2020), pp. 544-563. She was, in fact, winner of the Article Prize. Our apologies for the confusion.

**BASEES 2023
annual conference,
Glasgow, Scotland.
Submit your paper
and panel proposals
at: [basees
conference.org](http://baseesconference.org)**

>> Olesya's lecture underlined the need not just for reflection, but for action. BASEES is aware not just of its responsibilities in supporting this work, but our need to address our own shortcomings, and our responsibility to promote brilliant work in our field that challenges dominant analytical frameworks, approaches, and mindsets. The current series of BASEES Talks events, organised by the [BASEES Eurasian Regions Study Group](#), the brilliant podcast series by the BASEES Study Group for Minority History ('[Eastern Europe's Minorities in a Century of Change](#)'), and, of course, the BASEES 2023 annual conference, due to be held at the University of Glasgow on 31 March-2 April 2023 (for further details, see the CFP on page 3), all provide platforms to continue this essential work.

The last BASEES conference in Cambridge also saw the first in-person Annual General Meeting since the start of the pandemic. The meeting approved several proposals that came out of our Strategic Review, including the introduction of a new membership level: from 1 January 2023, we are introducing a 'PGR+2' membership tier, which will allow postgraduate research students to join at a reduced rate and retain that status for two years after graduation. The AGM also elected

both a new Secretary and the next BASEES President: Dr Olena Palko (Birkbeck / University of Basel), author of the brilliant study *Making Ukraine Soviet: Literature and Cultural Politics under Lenin and Stalin* (Bloomsbury, 2020) and co-organiser of the BASEES Study Group on Minority Histories, was elected the new BASEES Secretary and has now taken over from Dr George Gilbert. I am also delighted to announce that Professor Katharine Hodgson, an internationally renowned expert on Russian and Soviet poetry at the University of Exeter, has been elected to succeed me as President. Katharine's most recent book, *Poetic Canons, Cultural Memory and Russian National Identity after 1991* (Peter Lang, 2020) co-authored with Alexandra Smith, was the winner of the Alexander Nove Prize for 2020, and provides an absorbing analysis of the shifting canon of Russia's twentieth-century poetry and what it reveals about Russian identity formation in the twenty-first century. Katherine will be taking over from me at the BASEES 2023 conference in Glasgow, our first ever annual conference in Scotland. I hope to see many BASEES members and friends there: please send us your paper and panel proposals at www.baseesconference.org!

Matthias Neumann

News of the field

CFP: BASEES 2023 Annual Conference, University of Glasgow, 31 March-2 April 2023

BASEES invites proposals for panels, roundtables and papers for its 2023 annual conference. We plan to hold BASEES 2023 in-person from 31 March-2 April at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, a leading international centre for the [study of Central and Eastern Europe](#) and home to the journal *Europe-Asia Studies*. The conference will also welcome remote attendees.

The deadline for paper and panel/roundtable proposals is **Friday 30 September 2022**. To propose a panel or paper, you will need to fill in the electronic proposal form on this [website](#). The submission platform will open soon. We welcome paper, panel and roundtable proposals in the following areas: Politics; History; Sociology and Geography; Film and Media, Languages and Linguistics; Literatures and Cultures; and Economics.

In the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, we particularly welcome proposals that help to push forward the work to decentralise and decolonise the study of the former 'communist bloc' of the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. We also especially welcome participation by postgraduate research students and early career scholars.

We welcome remote paper presentations and panels including remote attendees. If you wish to attend remotely, please indicate this when submitting your proposal. Please note that we cannot accept fully remote panels. The chair of a panel (who can also be one of the presenters) must attend the conference in-person to lead the session and facilitate the Q&A.

BASEES is dedicated to providing a harassment-free conference experience for everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, nationality, citizenship, race, or religion. We do not tolerate harassment of participants or staff in any form.

Child policy: BASEES is committed to enabling members with young children who cannot make alternative arrangements to bring them to the conference. [Click here](#) to view the BASEES 2023 Child Policy. Attendees who are members of BASEES or are joining BASEES and require assistance with childcare during the conference may apply for financial support. If your application is accepted, you will be provided a small grant towards the costs of childcare during BASEES 2023 to support your participation in the conference. To apply for support, please complete the application form on the homepage of the website linked above.

Queer(ing) Russia: Academia and Activism in Dialogue

On Monday 30 May, a hybrid workshop took place at St John's College, Oxford, bringing together around thirty scholars and activists from Russia, the UK, >>

News of the field

>> Europe, and North America to discuss “Queer(ing) Russia: Academia and Activism in Dialogue”. The workshop featured three panels. The first panel explored the state of LGBT(QIA+) activism in and, especially after the war in Ukraine, beyond Russia. The second panel queered the boundaries between scholarly and activist work, and the third panel showcased cutting-edge academic work on queer Russian literature, history, and culture by graduate students and early career researchers. The workshop was particularly pertinent in three regards. First, it allowed activists to set an agenda for queer scholars working on the region, prompting them to consider some of the key concerns of activist groups that cooperate with academics.

This prompted scholars to reflect on whether and how they may inadvertently objectify the Russian LGBT community, and to think through ways of avoiding objectification. Second and relatedly, the workshop allowed participants to reflect on their own positionality and identity, both to understand better their relationship with and investment in the Russian LGBT community, and also to reflect on and better articulate the unique and enriching perspectives queer scholars bring to the study of Russia. Third, the workshop prioritised perspectives often marginalised in our field, especially decolonial, trans, and bi perspectives. The event was organised by Nick Mayhew (University of Oxford), supported by Connor Doak (University of Bristol) and Margarita Vaysman (University of St Andrews). The organisers wish to thank BASEES for supporting this event, and to all the speakers and participants for making it such a success.

Nick Mayhew
St John's College, Oxford

CfP: Annual Conference of the Study Group on the Russian Revolution

The 48th Conference of the Study Group on the Russian Revolution will take place from **6-8 January 2023** at the **University of Southampton, UK**.

The Study Group was established in 1973 and aims to promote new approaches to the study of the Russian Revolution (1880-1932). Affiliated to the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), the Study Group possesses a truly international

membership. The Study Group and its annual conferences boast strong representation from scholars based in the UK, EU, the USA and Russia.

We invite individual papers or full panel proposals on any aspect of the history of the Russian Empire, revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union from 1880-1932, and welcome a variety of (inter)disciplinary perspectives.

In the context of Putin's abuse of history in the rhetoric of Russia's war in Ukraine, and because our conference falls within days of the centenary of the creation of the USSR in December 1922, this year's theme is **'Brotherhood of Nations? Centenary Perspectives on the Creation of the USSR.'** We hope to organize one or more sessions that aim to de-colonise the history of the 'Russian' revolution by inviting submissions on the peripheries of the Russian Empire/Soviet Union or the 'nationalities question' (especially, but not exclusively, its Ukrainian dimensions). We also hope to invite two keynote speakers with specialisms in Ukrainian history in this period.

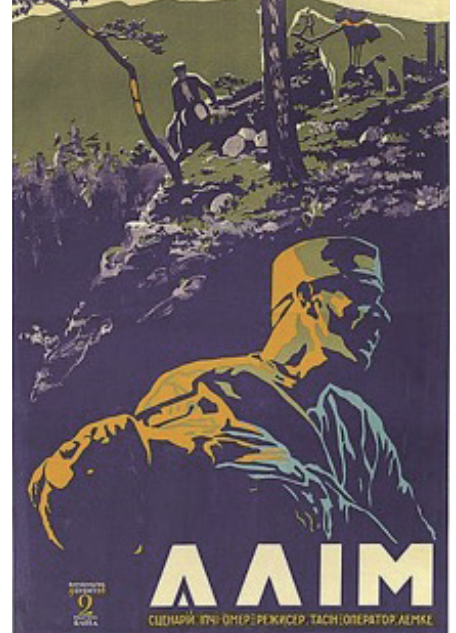
The conference languages are English and Russian. All those interested in attending and/or presenting papers should contact the organiser, Dr George Gilbert, at g.gilbert@soton.ac.uk, and Dr Lara Douds, Secretary of the SGRR at lara.douds@northumbria.ac.uk.

Paper proposals should consist of a short abstract of c. 300 words, as well as the contact details and institutional affiliation of the author(s). The call for papers will close on **31 August 2022**. Papers will need to be submitted in December to allow for pre-circulation amongst the group before the conference.

Postgraduates presenting papers at the Study Group may be eligible to apply for a subsidy of some of the conference costs if they are unable to obtain other funding.

Soviet Minorities on Screen: Cultural Aspects of Soviet Propaganda

On 29 April, members of the public were invited to attend a rare screening of the early Soviet Ukrainian silent adventure film, *Alim* (1926). The event took place at Birkbeck, University of London as part of a joint collaboration between the BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH)



and the Birkbeck Institute of the Moving Image, who kindly offered us the use of their on-site cinema for the early evening showing.

Written by the renowned Ukrainian author Mykola Bazhan and released in 1926, the film is based on a Crimean Tartar folk legend, originally adapted for stage by the playwright Ümer İpçi, and depicts the heroic exploits of the titular Alim, a nineteenth-century outlaw who emerged as a Robin Hood-esque figure among the Crimean peasantry in a quintessential tale of robbing the rich (in this case corrupt officials, exploitative business owners and the Imperial Russian nobility) to give to the poor. Shot in a style deliberately evoking contemporary Hollywood Westerns, *Alim* garnered considerable popularity among the cinema-going Soviet public following its release. It also proved to be one of the first Soviet films to receive considerable international recognition after screenings in Paris and Berlin.

Bazhan's adaptation of İpçi's original play was produced by the famous All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration (VUFKU), widely known as the 'Ukrainian Hollywood'. From 1922 to 1930 this studio released some 140 films, among them pioneering works of avant-garde cinema such as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and Oleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930). Filmed on location in Crimea during the autumn and winter of 1925, *Alim* was itself an early example of the Soviet Union's 'indigenisation' (*korenizatsiia*) policy, which called for more popular cultural products drawing upon the country's non-Russian heritage.

However, the film was subsequently banned in 1937, as a consequence of growing Stalinist repression, with all original copies destroyed. Today, while VUFKU's high-profile productions continue to attract international interest and acclaim for their perceived historical value, much of the studio's output, especially that destroyed by the Soviet >>

News of the field

>> authorities, remains largely unknown, even in Ukraine and Russia. This version of *Alim*, itself based on a 1935 edit, was restored by the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Centre in Kyiv as part of ongoing conservation efforts, with a contemporary backing soundtrack composed by the popular Crimean Tatar folk and jazz guitarist Enver Izmaylov. This version premiered in 2014, as part of the 70th anniversary commemoration of the Soviet government's forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars.

The screening attracted considerable interest, prefaced by an introduction from SGMH co-organiser Dr Olena Palko

and a short lecture from Stefan Lacny, a PhD candidate currently studying early Soviet film at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics. The screening was followed by a Q&A in which both presenters responded to questions from the audience. The organisers wish to thank the Institute and Stefan for helping to make this event a success, and BASEES for supporting their efforts to acquire the license to screen this forgotten Soviet classic in the United Kingdom.

Samuel Foster
University of East Anglia,
SGMH co-organiser



Book Reviews

Rósa Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945-1959*. Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN 978-0-19-068146-3. £16.99.

What historians dubbed a U.S.-Soviet "marriage of convenience" during World War II quickly turned to divorce proceedings following the war's conclusion. Both governments and citizens struggled to comprehend their new relationship to their former allies. In *Enemy Number One*, Rósa Magnúsdóttir provides a masterful examination of the Soviets' perception of their capitalist foe from High Stalinism to Khrushchev's agenda of peaceful coexistence.

Magnúsdóttir divides her book into two sections. The first details the overwrought anti-intellectual campaign known as *zhdanovshchina* and examines how a conciliatory wartime meeting between soldiers on the Elbe River turned sour, with an onslaught of anti-American films and plays. Yet Magnúsdóttir notes the concept of 'dual America' that permeated the entirety of the post-war period; that is, Soviets made a distinction between the America espoused by the White House and that represented by ordinary citizens. Her analysis shows how consumed the Kremlin was by managing both domestic

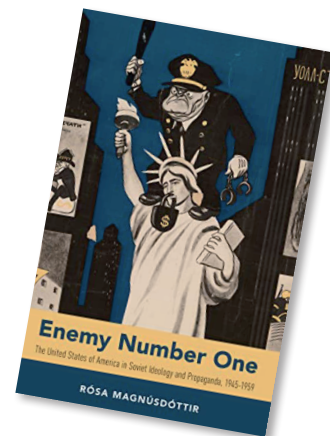
perception of America and countering the infiltration of capitalist culture. The second part examines Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence. His infamous "Secret Speech" denouncing Stalin and cultivating a cultural thaw later frosted over as members of the intelligentsia learned that the thaw was not all-inclusive. Much of Part Two focuses on Soviet responses to noted travellers' accounts and exhibitions. This is where Magnúsdóttir's analysis is at its strongest. Her intensive archival research highlights the complexities of Soviet reflections on Americanism. The influx of Western culture and Soviet exposure to America created a dilemma for the Kremlin as to how it could manage and counter foreign "corruption" by the United States (p. 153) while still fostering a relaxation in tensions.

There are a few drawbacks to Magnúsdóttir's approach. She touches on the same topics (e.g. the Zarubin-Lacy Agreement of 1958, Khrushchev's 1959 visit to the U.S., etc.) in multiple chapters. Some topics would have benefited from more cohesive examination. For instance, although she touches on the popularity of *Tarzan* (pp. 81-82), she neglects to mention that it prompted eventual disdain. Muscovites' *Tarzan* war cries were said to be so piercing that they disturbed cows' production of milk on collective farms, resulting in an anti-propaganda campaign. The inclusion of such information would

have solidified Magnúsdóttir's analysis of the Soviet Union's struggles with Americanism. Although her examination of travelogues is well done, it is sometimes lacking in context; evidently her intended readership is therefore those with a working knowledge of post-war relations. In addition, even a cursory mention of the "dual Russia" espoused by America in the post-war period would have highlighted that the Soviet Union was not alone in its struggles with how to conceptualize and propagate its post-war foe.

Overall, Magnúsdóttir's analysis is a welcome – and long overdue – addition to the state of U.S.-Soviet relations in the immediate post-war period. Her archival findings regarding ordinary Soviet citizens' receptions are refreshing and noteworthy. *Enemy Number One* is a worthwhile resource for courses on U.S.-Soviet relations and for readers interested in furthering their understanding of Soviet propaganda.

Jennifer M. Hudson
The University of Texas at Dallas



Inclusivity in Slavonic & East European Studies: Three Case Studies

In the first of a series of interviews for the BASEES Newsletter, Serian Carlyle speaks to three early-career scholars working to diversify and decolonise the field...

BASEES have generously allowed me to run a short column for the newsletter this year, highlighting projects from across the field that are helping to ensure that it can be a more representative and inclusive space. Wherever possible I have chosen interviewees who are running projects that others can get involved in and our discussions focus on these projects rather than each subject's individual research. The inequities built into academia are well recorded. Racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, transphobia and colonialism have a visible and negative impact on universities. This can be seen in staff demographics. According to the HESA 20/21 data, only 11,395 academic staff reported having a disability; approximately 5% of respondents. For context, according to the Office for National Statistics, 20% of the working-age population is disabled. Of 23,000 university professors across the UK, only 155 are Black. Where people do manage to enter academia, injustices continue. Among the grievances that led to the ongoing UCU Four Fights dispute are the 17% racial pay gap and 9% disability pay gap experienced by university staff. These revelations are neither new nor surprising, nor do they do justice to the experience of those subjected to such inequalities.

The REECA field has, in many ways, continued as though this situation is unconnected to our work. Work to make our subject area more inclusive is not being conducted is, of course, under way, but is primarily led by individuals from marginalised groups and often

goes unrewarded and unrecognised. The failure of institutions to implement more structural changes has been highlighted by many Ukrainian scholars in the wake of the destruction of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. It is vital that work to diversify our research is supported at an institutional level and embedded into the structures of the field.

Last year, as Editor-in-Chief of *Slovo*, the postgraduate journal at SSEES, one of my key priorities was to embed inclusive practices into our work, including publishing a 'diversity statement' for the journal. However, when I went to look for relevant examples from other UK institutions, I found it difficult to find any. The effects of this silence are extremely damaging, both to individuals and to the field itself. We lose out on excellent scholars when we fail to provide information for students about what studying abroad might mean for their safety and wellbeing if they are from a racialised group, LGBTQIA+, or disabled. The lack of diversity on course reading lists is not representative of the breadth of scholarly discourse and limits the potential for students to learn. And while institutions continue to neglect research on countries other than Russia, our own research conclusions will remain limited.

We should not negate personal responsibility through focusing on institutions: certainly my own research, which focuses on the cinematic output of a Moscow-based Soviet film studio, is guilty of the above tendencies. We all

have to acknowledge our own complicity with exclusionary systems and practices, and this work, if we are to ensure that our communities are welcoming, inclusive, and equitable, has to be a priority for all of us. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge across BASEES. We can create better systems - together.

This series aims to highlight projects that we could all learn from and which I encourage you all to participate in, and to create a forum in which participants can express their hopes for what our field could look like and how we can get there together. It is a shared space for people to reflect upon and strive for a fairer approach to academia and our own domains of research, to share their work, and for others to discover projects that might offer inspiration. For myself, it has been a chance to find exciting people to quiz about their work. And so I will end by asking the same questions I posed to my interviewees:

In an ideal world, what would an inclusive and representative field look like for you? What are some next steps that would help us in achieving that goal?

If you have a project that you would like to discuss, please contact me at serian.carlyle.14@ucl.ac.uk.

All views expressed are those of the individual and do not reflect their institutions' views, nor those of BASEES.

Serian Carlyle
UCL SSEES



Saffy Mirghani is a second year PhD candidate at UCL SSEES, supervised by Dr Sarah Young and Dr Xine Yao.

Saffy's PhD explores the influence of Dostoevskii's work on twentieth-century African-American writers, from the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Arts Movement. She is also Editor-in-Chief of *Slovo*, an interdisciplinary, postgraduate peer-reviewed academic journal managed and edited by students at UCL SSEES. *Slovo* General Editor, Margo Bondarchuk, also supported the development of this interview. Margo is doing an MA in History at SSEES.

Tell us about yourself and your work.

I am primarily a creative writer presently devoting myself to comparative literary research on two canons traditionally considered discretely from one another. Nonetheless, the Russian and African-American literary traditions, particularly the former's nineteenth-century landscape and the latter's rich life during the twentieth century, bear striking similarities. I have found the life and works of Dostoevskii to figure strongly >>

>> in the twentieth-century African-American literary consciousness. More specifically, the centrality of suffering, a pathological social malaise and the redemptive power of love as depicted in Dostoevskii's works all resonate deeply with African-American writers.

Tell us a little about the work *Slovo* has been doing to ensure it is an inclusive space.

This year at *Slovo*, we are fulfilling our EDI commitment by pursuing a string of new and exciting endeavours. Firstly, we are implementing criteria for publication that will encourage greater scholarly and critical focus beyond European Russia, which dominates Slavonic and East European studies, and will publish a special issue of the journal exclusively addressing marginalised or subaltern subjects in the literature. Secondly, we are in the process of organising a range of events in conjunction with other UCL-affiliated organisations, such as the Black Doctoral Student Network and the Sarah Parker Remond Centre's Race and Radicalisation PhD Group, in an effort to forge fruitful connections between traditionally disparate groups. At *Slovo*, we are keen that such initiatives serve to enrich the quality of scholarly investigation in the region.

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

The very term 'Slavic and East European Studies' embodies at the very denotative level of language the problem of exclusion observable in the field's intellectual production. Importantly, SSEES also specialises in Central and South-Eastern Europe, as well as Eurasia. I would like to see a shift whereby the centre of focus is expanded to incorporate marginalised or subaltern subjects, whether geographically, politically or ethnically speaking, so that there is ultimately no need to even designate them as such. Why should all subjects (whether or not they fall within the orbit of economically, politically or ethnically dominant groupings) not be of considerable interest to scholars? The intensification of the Russo-Ukrainian war in late February of this year, a humanitarian catastrophe, has naturally seen a greater focus on Ukraine in the field's intellectual production. Most regrettably, Ukraine's predicament itself constitutes an oppressed positionality at this time.

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

A fundamental change we could implement would be offering university courses on often-overlooked subjects or modalities of being, whether it be the history of Muslim women in post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia; Polish queer prose and poetry from the eighteenth century to the present; or marginalised WWII histories such as those of Romanian

child Holocaust survivors or the nearly 20,000 Jewish refugees who were hosted in Shanghai. Incidentally, these are some of the subjects which will be addressed in the articles and book reviews which will comprise the spring and autumn 2022 issues of *Slovo*! In this respect, it would be beneficial for other publications in the field to diversify the nature of their subject matter.

You can find more information about Saffy and Margo respectively [here](#) and (on LinkedIn) [here](#). Information about *Slovo* is [available here](#).



Dr Olena Palko is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Her research interests lie in the field of early Soviet cultural history and the interwar history of Eastern Europe. Her first book, *Making Ukraine Soviet. Literature and Cultural Politics under Lenin and Stalin* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020) was awarded the Prize for the Best Book in the field of Ukrainian history, politics, language, literature and culture (2019-20) from the American Association for Ukrainian Studies. She is also co-editor of the edited collection *Making Ukraine: Negotiating, Contesting, and Drawing Borders in Twentieth Century*, forthcoming from McGill Queens University Press in spring 2022. Olena is co-ordinator of a digital project, *Shadows of Empire: Contesting Territorial Imaginations and Borders in Modern Europe*, conducted at the University of St. Gallen, a co-convenor of the BASEES Study Group for Minority History, and hosts the podcast series 'Eastern Europe's Minorities in a Century of Change'.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I was born in Shepetivka, a small town in Ukraine that until 1939 lay on the border between Soviet Ukraine and the Second Polish Republic. My research to date has been informed by the experiences of diverse populations inhabiting this borderland zone. My PhD and later monograph examined the multi-faceted process of cultural sovietisation and the role of artists and art officials in "making Ukraine Soviet". Many artists of the 1920s became eagerly involved in the construction of socialism, particularly the creation of a unique Soviet Ukrainian culture. Their efforts eventually turned out to be disastrous both for them personally and the people they were

trying to 'sovietise'. However, the success of the Soviet Ukrainian culture had important international and propaganda considerations. Soviet Ukraine was meant to serve as an example for capitalist countries, especially Poland, of how to sponsor national culture and promote national differences. Foreign policy considerations are also in the centre of my current comparative research on minority experiences across the Polish-Soviet border. I question how the political rivalry between Warsaw and Moscow was reflected in the minority policies implemented within their borders by comparing the contrasting national policies implemented within the province of Volhynia, which was split in half by the 1921 Riga Peace Treaty.

To return to my hometown: in the interwar era it was a true Soviet outpost, a border town which enjoyed preferential treatment in its access to the state budget and a hub for cross-border smugglers. Thanks to its Polish community, the town also became central for the implementation of the Soviet minority experiment, a comprehensive account of which I aim to provide in my future research as an Assistant Professor at the University of Basel.

You have been organising a number of events and other projects highlighting Ukraine's history, which have obviously been particularly important given the full-scale Russian invasion and the devastation that it has caused. Can you tell us a little about this work?

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, historians of Ukraine have been forced into a public role. Vladimir Putin's manipulation of the past has made it vital for historians to speak on behalf of Ukraine, debunking myths and disinformation spread by Russia to justify its annexation of Crimea back in 2014 and its invasion of Ukraine most recently. Like my colleagues, I have been speaking and writing continuously about Ukraine since February. The most important task is to reach out to those who do not yet know about Ukraine or who rely on sources which reiterate the Russian perspective on the war, hence the development of the virtual course '*Discover Ukraine: History, Culture and its People*'. Organised by the BASEES Study Group for Minority History and intended for all those wishing to learn more about Ukraine, its past and its present, the course comprised eight lectures covering different aspects of Ukraine's history. It was designed to offer a scholarly overview of Ukraine's history, culture and identity, to show how diverse Ukraine's experience has been, and to demonstrate that no master narrative can encompass the complexity of Ukraine's past. It also served as a fundraising event for *Razom Emergency Response*, a great initiative that supports multiple projects in Ukraine. >>

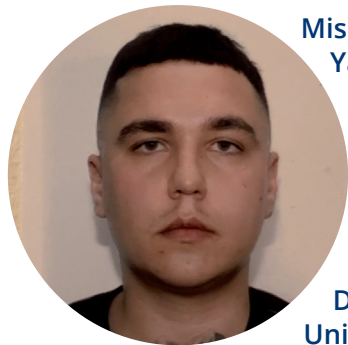
In an ideal world, what would an inclusive and representative field look like for you?

I look forward to the times when Ukrainian studies will occupy its rightful place within Eastern European studies. The major emphasis within Eastern European studies has always been on Russia, with research results often assumed to be applicable to Ukraine and Belarus. As such, scholars did not see it necessary to study the Ukrainian language, or even conduct research in Ukraine. Thus many experts on Russia have now turned to commenting on Ukraine, further spreading Russia-informed misconceptions of Ukraine and its identity. In an ideal world, Russian/Soviet studies should be de-centred, with more (or equal) attention paid to the so-called imperial peripheries, to other former Soviet republics, which would become subjects of scholarly enquiry in their own right.

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

To ensure Ukraine's subjectivity in the future, Ukrainian studies be supported as a separate branch of area studies. We need new and original research on Ukraine's history and culture, conducted by those working in our field: Ukrainian history, culture and literature should stop being the focus of the Ukrainian diaspora alone. This would mean securing the necessary funding to support Ukrainian studies programmes in universities, providing Ukrainian language training to students and developing collaborations with Ukrainian researchers and research centres in Ukraine. In a word, the most important step is to institutionalise Ukrainian studies.

You can find more about Dr Palko [here](#).



Misha Yakovlev is a third-year PhD student at the Film and Television Department, University of Warwick.

Their PhD explores how the depictions of gender and sexuality in russian and post-soviet film and television (1986-2006) intersects with race and coloniality (n.b. russia and soviet are deliberately not capitalised in this interview, unless referring to the name of the discipline). Misha is supervised by Professor Karl

Schoonover and Professor Rachel Moseley. Since 2022, Misha is one of the curators at Scotland's first East European film festival, Samizdat. Since 2018, Misha has also been a member of the 'Queer' Asia Collective, where they co-organise and co-curate the annual 'Queer' Asia Film Festival, as well as organising events throughout the year with a particular focus on Caucasus, Central Asian and native/indigenous russian cinemas. Previously, Misha did an MA in Gender, Society and Representation at UCL, where their thesis (supervised by Dr Rachel Morley) used queer and decolonial theory to explore Leonid Gaidai's Thaw-era soviet comedy films.

Tell us about yourself and your work.

My PhD research uses queer decolonial theory to analyse the changes in the construction of gender and sexuality that took place in russian film and television during the so-called 'democratic transition'. Cliched narratives of transition often celebrate the emergence of liberal gender-sexual subjects on the russian screen after the end of soviet censorship: my aim is to problematize this narrative. My research excavates the persistence and intensification of Orientalist representations, as the often-overlooked basis for the construction of russian gender and sexuality, and traces the essentialist hetero-misogynistic underpinning of emergent representations of gender during this period.

What is 'Queer' Asia?

'Queer' Asia is a collective of early career researchers, doctoral researchers, and activists. We work in an entirely voluntary capacity to create a global platform for queer activists, artists, and academics from which to challenge dominant ideas, forms, and representations of gender and sexuality. We understand both 'queer' and Asia as productively unstable concepts, whose juxtaposition opens up new ways of imagining queerness and Asia alike. My involvement began in 2018 when I was invited by one of the founders to be a member of the film selection panel for the July 2019 Film Festival. Due to the pandemic, 'Queer' Asia was unable to hold its annual film festivals, instead switching to [various online activities](#). In July 2022, the festival returned (more information [available here](#)), and, together with Scarlett Ng, I had the honour of being director.

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

In terms of inclusivity and representation, the field suffers from two interconnected problems, both related to its history as a cram school for foreign policy professionals serving generally right-wing, racist Western governments. The first is an entrenched reluctance to engage

with contemporary critical theory, such as queer studies and disability studies, and even not so contemporary ones, like poststructuralism and decolonial theory. This issue arises from and perpetuates the second problem, which is the domination of our field by white Anglo-American men with a sprinkling of scholars from the region for 'authenticity'. These problems entrench essentialist approaches that treat the region(s) as self-evident and fixed, resulting in sub-par scholarship. A more inclusive and representative field would do justice to the internal diversity of states in the region and would be critical of the Cold War definition of 'East Europe and Russia', a definition that has for decades prevented researchers from making sense of cross-regional cultural flows (for example between Qırım and Turkey), erased whole regions, namely Central Asia and the Caucasus, and persisted in treating Russia as a homogenous white European nation-state. We need research that looks beyond the nation-state framework. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these issues have become inescapable.

Other problems, such as institutional inertia when it comes to teaching russian language, have been obvious for a while. Most Western scholars learnt russian in either Moscow or St Petersburg, i.e. studied an emphatically elite and white version of the language. This has created insidious blind spots on an institutional level. russian is a diverse and living language with multiple beautiful and important dialects, spoken anywhere from Bishkek to Odesa, as well as creole forms, like surzhik. By tethering our research to an exclusionary version of the language endorsed by the russian state, we inevitably perpetuate its imperialist 'russkii mir' agenda.

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

The first two steps I would suggest also relate to UK academia more broadly. These are the need to decolonise the institution, meaning a more transparent and democratic structure and hiring practices. A more inclusive and critical curriculum, with built-in compulsory modules in theory and methods from other academic departments and a shift away from outdated curricula towards critical cultural and sociological approaches, is also overdue. At the same time, I cannot help doubting whether Slavonic and East European programmes at most UK universities are willing to make, or capable of making, this change.

You can find out more about Misha's research [here](#).