From myths to memes

Transnational memory and Ukrainian social media

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Publication date
2017

Document Version
Final published version

License
Other

Citation for published version (APA):
Makhortykh, M. (2017). *From myths to memes: Transnational memory and Ukrainian social media*.

FROM MYTHS TO MEMES: TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY AND UKRAINIAN SOCIAL
MEDIA

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex

ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,

in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Aula der Universiteit

op woensdag 27 september 2017, te 11.00 uur

door Mykola Makhortykh

geboren te Kiev, Oekraïne

Promotiecommissie

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Ellen Rutten, and my co-supervisor, Sudha Rajagopalan, for their help in the course of my project. The intellectual support and inspiration provided by Ellen and Sudha during my stay in Amsterdam were really more than any doctoral student could hope to receive, and I am proud of having had the unique opportunity to work under their supervision and guidance.

I also would like to thank Ihab Saloul and Paul Koopman, who coordinated the work of the research schools I was honoured to belong to in the course of my PhD research. Without their support it would have been much harder to finish the project, and I am very grateful for their inspiring advice and invaluable assistance in all sorts of practical matters.

I also would like to express my gratitude to the members of my doctoral committee, Alexander Etkind, Rob van der Laarse, Julia Noordegraaf, Thomas Poell, and Arent van Nieukerken, for finding the time to read and comment on the manuscript.

Publications based on the research presented in this thesis

Chapter 2

Makhortykh, M. (2017). War Memories and Online Encyclopedias: Framing 30 June 1941 in Wikipedia. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* (accepted for publication).

Chapter 3

Makhortykh, M. (2017). Remediating the Past: YouTube and Second World War Memory in Ukraine and Russia. *Memory Studies* (accepted for publication).

Makhortykh, M. Articulating the Pain: Audiovisual Memories of the Lviv Pogrom of 1941 on YouTube (to be submitted).

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Introduction: Myths, memes, and media

On March 27, 2014, a few days after the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea, YouTube user adolfb1 published a video entitled "L'vovskij Pogrom 1941 Goda / Lvov Pogrom in 1941." The video shows a sequence of black-and-white photos taken in the Western Ukrainian city of L'viv, hours after it was captured by Nazis in June 1941. To the tune of a Yiddish soundtrack, the images show suffering people, being humiliated, beaten, and killed, by mostly civilian perpetrators, some of them allegedly belonging to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).[1]

The first comment appeared on April 27, 2014, a month after the video's publication. Left by user Kirill Vorotnikov, the comment calls for the remembrance of the guilt of Ukrainian collaborators of the Nazis, forever stained, in his words, by "the mark of Cain" (Vorotnikov, 2014). In the months that followed, dozens of new comments appeared, varying from expressions of sorrow and words of compassion to anti-Semitic insults and calls for the killing of Banderites (i.e. real or presumed supporters of Stepan Bandera, one of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders who cooperated with the Nazis). The most up-voted among these comments were ones which drew parallels between the suffering of 1941 and the contemporary, ongoing crisis sweeping Ukraine. One exemplary comment was left by user Anechka Sobol in 2015, who stated the following: "*oni sejchas tozhe samoe i na Donbasse s russkimi provernut' hoteli, tol'ko poluchili po rogam. Komu to eshhe neponjatno, chto proizoshlo v Odesse vtorogo maja?*" [they wanted to do the same with Russians on the Donbas, but their plans were screwed. Anyone still wondering what really happened in Odessa on May 2?][2] The number of views and comments of the pogrom video mushroomed: in less than two years since its publication, the video reached one hundred thousand hits; at the time of writing of this introduction, the video and its related comments had climbed firmly to the top of search queries regarding the L'viv pogrom of 1941.

The phenomenon of the pogrom video and its related comments fits a pattern of ambiguous transnational interactions – sometimes labeled as "memory wars" (Blacker & Etkind, 2013, p. 8) – which constitute a distinct feature of the multi-layered mnemonic landscape in post-socialist states. Defined as conflicts over contrasting interpretations of a contentious past, Eastern European memory wars usually focus on the traumatic experiences of the 20th century and revolve in particular around the

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[1] For more information on the photos of the L'viv pogrom used in the production of the video, as well as the discussion on the perpetrators' identities, see works by Kruglov (2003), Himka (2011), Rossoliński-Liebe (2011; 2013), Ryabenko (2013), and Struve (2015).

[2] The comment refers to another product of the interactions between war memories and digital culture in post-socialist states, namely the Khatyn of Odessa meme. The meme refers to the tragedy which took place in Odessa on May 2, 2014, when clashes between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters left dozens of people dead and wounded. The majority of deaths occurred among pro-Russian protesters, who were caught in the burning House of Unions; a few hours later members of several pro-Russian social media communities started referring to the tragedy as a continuation of the genocidal politics of the Third Reich. In doing so they compared the events of Odessa to the mass murder in the Belarusian village of Khatyn during the Second World War, when dozens of villagers were burned alive by the Nazis.

region which Timothy Snyder (2010) has labeled the "bloodlands": that part of Europe caught between two totalitarian regimes – the Nazi and the Soviet. Among the numerous other historical traumas which have swept this landscape, the Second World War occupies a special place, standing out as an important factor of identity-building in the region and a source of recurrent historical controversies.

Unsurprisingly, thus, Second World War memories remain the subject of heated public debates both in Ukraine and its neighboring countries, particularly Russia and Poland. When it comes to the above-mentioned OUN, for instance, some historians (Kas'yanov, 2003; Kulchytsky, 2005; Organizatsiia, 2005) have praised the organization for its struggle for the liberation of Ukrainian lands from Soviet and Polish rule and for the restoration of an independent Ukrainian state; others (Altman, 2002; Duykov, 2010; Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011) have criticized the OUN for its engagement in anti-Semitic and anti-Polish retaliations, as well as for its collaboration with Nazi Germany. These dichotomies continue to fuel academic and political debates both within and beyond Ukraine; however, while a number of studies examine the role of the OUN in the Second World War, along with other contentious memories of the conflict in Ukrainian memory politics (Hrynevych, 2005; Marples 2007; Portnov, 2010; Rudling, 2006, 2011; Rossoliński-Liebe, 2014), the matter of the interaction between these memories and digital technology remains, to this day, understudied.

The central question of the current work is thus as follows: what happens with Second World War memories – such as the ones of the L'viv pogrom – in post-socialist countries, with the advent of digitization? To answer this question, the study looks into various instances of digital remembrance – such as the above mentioned YouTube video produced by adolfb1 – and draws upon existing memory and media scholarship to investigate how contentious war memories are performed in post-socialist digital spaces. While doing so, the study also aims to investigate how different social media platforms such as YouTube or VKontakte (commonly abbreviated as VK)[3] affect the ways in which Second World War memories are performed online, and how different communities of web users deal with historical controversies, particularly at a time of ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

1.1. Myths and memes

In contemporary Ukraine, Second World War memories such as the wartime role and activities of the OUN, including the organization's involvement in the Holocaust, constitute not only a controversial piece of cultural memory, but also an important element in digital culture. For instance, Lurkomor'e ("Banderovec," n.d.), an online encyclopedia of web folklore, lists Banderites – a common

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[3] VKontakte is a SNS (social networking site) founded in 2007 by Pavel Durov. Modeled after Facebook, the platform attracted huge popularity in post-socialist countries and currently remains the most popular SNS in the region (for a visual representation of the most popular SNS in different parts of the world, see the World Social Network Map made by Vincenco Consenza (2016)).

denomination for OUN members – among the most influential and widespread internet memes in the Russophone segment of the internet (also known as Runet).

The concept of meme, originally introduced in the field of cultural studies by Richard Dawkins (1976), has risen significantly in popularity with the dissemination of Web 2.0 technology, becoming a popular term employed by internet users to describe an idea which spreads online as "a written text, image, or some other unit of cultural stuff" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007, p. 202). While the majority of existing works on internet memes (Burgess, 2008; Bauckhage, 2011; Davidson, 2012) consider them predominantly from humor- and entertainment-centric perspectives, Limor Shifman, in a recent (2014) study, argues that these groupings of digital content units are actually used to communicate political and cultural identities; Shifman's argument is supported in several works which examine the use of internet memes in post-socialist digital spaces (Radchenko, 2013; Makhortykh, 2015).

According to Lurkomor'e, the Banderites meme refers to members of all anti-Soviet nationalistic movements from Ukraine, including ones established before 1939 (such as the OUN) and in the years of the Second World War (such as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army[4]). Following the established patterns of Soviet historiography of the Second World War (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2014, p. 378), the Banderites meme also serves as the epitome of the betrayal of the Soviet Motherland, which originated from a traditional Soviet view of the OUN and the UPA as allies of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. However, since the beginning, in 2013, of political and then military upheavals in Ukraine, collectively coming to be known as the Ukraine crisis, the term Banderites has acquired an additional meaning, generally describing people with pro-Ukrainian views. Together with a number of derivative memes – *zhydobanderovtsy* [Jewish Banderites] and *tsynitchnyi bandera* [a cynical Bandera], for instance – the Banderites meme was emphatically popularized in online spheres during the crisis. Circulating across social networking sites, this and other pieces of digital memory content found resonance both in current political agendas and Second World War mythology, in Ukraine as well as in other post-socialist countries.

This instance of the online remembrance of a specific Second World War entity thus demonstrates the complexities involved when transnational war memories interact with social media in the post-socialist space. The significant degree of politicization of the past and its frequent appropriation for political infighting define the highly contentious memory landscape in countries like Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. Often, this appropriation of past is inextricably linked with the persistence of contradictory memory narratives both on the regional and national level – another defining characteristic of post-socialist 'memoryscapes.' Contrary to optimistic claims about the

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[4] A common abbreviation for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is UPA, which refers to the formation's title in Ukrainian (*Ukrainska povstanska armiia*), Russian (U*krainskaja povstancheskaja armija*), and Polish (*Ukraińska Powstańcza Armia*).

extraterritoriality of digital space[5], political, cultural, and also mnemonic differences find their way into social media, often fostering violence, both online and offline (Kuntsman, 2010a; Kuntsman & Stein, 2015). Consequently, instead of serving as a de-nationalized ground for discussion, where contradictions of the past might be overcome through dialogue, digital media users from post-socialist countries usually turn these platforms into yet another battlefield for memory wars, where "alternative histories thrive and multifarious memories compete for hegemony" (Rutten & Zvereva, 2013, p. 1).

By exploring how Second World War memory and social media interact in Ukraine, this study aims to theorize the ways in which cultural memory and digital technology relate today. In the pages that follow, I pose a number of questions related to this interaction in the contentious context of the Ukrainian mnemonic landscape. Central among these questions are the following: In which ways do digital memory genres and Second World War memories shape each other in Ukraine? How do individuals interact with war memories on social media platforms, and are there any common patterns guiding these interactions? And, finally, how do war memories and digital media affect the ongoing conflict in Ukraine – and how are they, in turn, affected by it?

In order to delve into these questions, I build on and benefit from existing research in the ways which will be outlined further in this introduction. By relying on theoretical concepts pertaining both to memory studies (i.e. transnational and digital memory) and media studies (i.e. internet memes and flame wars), the study uses qualitative web content analysis (McMillan, 2000; Herring, 2010) to examine how Second World War memory is remediated, through a selection of three social media platforms: Wikipedia, YouTube, and VKontakte. Each of these platforms will be introduced in separate chapters, along with the specific methods of data collection and analysis used for extracting information about how digital media are used in the performance of Second World War memory in Ukraine.

1.2. Transnational vs. digital memory

Some are calling ours a "post-digital" age (Berry and Dieter, 2015) – pointing to a growing disenchantment with the digital information systems which have come to saturate everyday life to an unprecedented degree. It is in any case self-evident that the intensification of globalizing processes has led to profound changes in many different areas of human life. One of the areas which has experienced a significant impact from globalization has been the domain which we call cultural memory – that is, in the broad understanding of the term suggested by Astrid Erll (2008, p. 2), the amalgamation of different ways in which present and past interplay with each other in different socio-cultural contexts.[6]

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[5] This cyber-utopian line of thought was particularly common at the beginning of the 2000s, when a number of authors proposed to draw a clear distinction between offline and online spaces. See, for instance, works by Spiegel (2000) and Baumann (2000).

[6] Though I will refrain from reiterating existing scholarship on as popular a field of scholarly inquiry as memory studies, I

Growing global mobility and intensifying migratory movements (Assmann & Conrad, 2011, p. 2), the development of regional integration projects and the magnification of transnational capitalist relations (de Cesari & Rigney, 2014, p. 2), the increasing speed and decreasing costs of media production and circulation (Hoskins, 2009, p. 28) are just a few of the factors which influence the production and consumption of cultural memories in the world today. Together, these factors bring fundamental changes to the ways individuals and communities interact with their past. This change has everything to do with the ways in which the past is performed on a new global scale: unlike in earlier periods, when memory production unfolded mostly within the boundaries of national and/or cultural communities, today it is "impossible to understand trajectories of memory outside a global frame of reference" (Assmann & Conrad, 2011, p. 2).

The "global" shift influenced not only memories *per se*, but also the field of memory studies – and, in fact, the field of humanities in general, which has become increasingly permeated with what Ulrich Beck has called a "cosmopolitan outlook" (2006, p. 3). Since the beginning of the 2000s, the focus within memory studies has been gradually switching from the collective memory of nations to globalized memory narratives. The origins of this paradigmatic change can be traced back to the works of historians Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, who, in 2002, signaled the forming of a new, "cosmopolitan" memory. Using as example the memory of the Holocaust, Levy and Sznaider point to an ongoing transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures which transcend "national and ethnic boundaries" (2002, p. 88). In the years that followed, the concept of memory existing beyond national boundaries was further developed by cultural historians Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (2011). Assmann and Conrad point to the increasing affirmation of global memory narratives which cross national boundaries and exist beyond their frameworks. On a similar line of thought, cultural historian Astrid Erll discusses the formation of transcultural memories which unfold across and beyond cultures by circulating "among social, medial, and semantic dimension" (2011, p. 15). This idea of the circulation of memory was further developed in a work by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, who identify four dimensions of memory mobility: transcultural, transgenerational, transmedial, and transdisciplinary (2016, p. 2).

This study certainly benefits from the insights Erll and others have provided, but it is especially indebted to the conceptual framework provided by de Cesari and Rigney and their study on

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must nevertheless point out the following works which are central to my understanding of the concept of cultural memory: Maurice Halbwachs (1992), Cathy Caruth (1995), Pierre Nora (1989; 2002), Marianne Hirsch (1997; 2012), Jan Assmann (1995; 2006), Aleida Assmann (2011; 2016), Astrid Erll (2008; 2011), Ronald Eyerman, Jeffrey Alexander, and Elizabeth Breese (2011), Jeffrey Alexander (2012). Furthermore, my take on the interconnection between memory and media also builds on works by the following scholars: Andreas Huyssen (2003), Jose van Dijck (2007), Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (2009), Motti Neyger, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg (2011), Joanne Garde-Hansen (2011), Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading (2009a).

transnational memory (2014). In contrast with the concepts of global and/or cosmopolitan memory, the idea of transnational memory is less teleological; furthermore, unlike the concept of transcultural memory, it does not revolve around the idea of fixed cultural boundaries, and does not presume an intrinsic tendency of culture to disseminate across these boundaries. Instead, de Cesari and Rigney argue that the concept of transnational memory differs from above mentioned concepts in light of its explicit recognition of "the dialectical role played by national borders" in memory practices (2014, p. 4), particularly relevant for Eastern Europe, with its long tradition of cross-border memory wars.[7] Furthermore, unlike the concept of cosmopolitan memory, which juxtaposes the limited and one-sided narratives of the pre-digital age with the pluralistic and extended narratives of the so-called Second Modernity (Beck, 2006) "based on the mutual recognition of the history of the 'Other'" (Levy and Sznaider, 2002, p. 103), transnational memory theory is more critical in its assessment of the current state of cultural memory as well as of the potential consequences of interactions between technology and memory.

Yet, despite a number of contradictions, all the above mentioned theories of memory agree on the necessity to acknowledge the growing impact of communication technology on the practice of remembrance. As John Sundholm (2011) points out in his essay on transnational memory, recognizing the increased mobility of mnemonic narratives across national borders through the development of communication technology is one of the core premises for understanding the ways in which individual and collective remembrance function today. De Cesari and Rigney argue that, today, the diffusion of online media ecologies opens up new possibilities for memory production and circulation, distinguished by low costs and high potential impact (2014, p. 12). Furthermore, as Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading note in their work on digital memories, the advent of communication technology challenges the passive approach to the passage of time and, instead, makes the production of past and present "active, subjective, organic, emotional, virtual and uncertain" (2009, p. 7). Digital technology does thus not only increase the rate of producing and sharing digital memorabilia – both by and for individuals and collectives – but also, presumably, renders the process of remembering more intense and multi-faceted by giving rise to new memory practices and discourses. The latter argument is particularly relevant for the current study, because it emphasizes the reciprocity between cultural memory and digital media, a feature which permeates the booming Ukrainian online landscape.

Yet, while it is hardly debatable that digitization has led to "a far greater intensive and extensive connectivity" (Hoskins, 2009, p. 40) between the forms, agents, and discourses of memory, the question of the impact of digital media on *transnational* remembrance is still a subject of fervid

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[7] For more information on Eastern European memory wars, see Blacker, Etkind, and Fedor (2013), Rutten, Fedor, and Zvereva (2013), Pakier and Wawrzyniak (2015).

discussion. The advent of social media serving as transnational platforms where adherents of different views of the past can meet and interact with one another, does, indeed, increase the mobility of memory narratives, as Sundholm notes (2011). However, the increased mobility of contentious memories does not necessarily imply an increased tolerance towards the Other narrative, nor does it lead to the inevitable formation of pluralist and mutually tolerant views of the past – which seems to be one of the core assumptions of the cosmopolitan memory theory (Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Trubina, 2010). Instead, as Rutten and Zvereva point out in their study of post-socialist digital memories, increased connectivity can lead not to transnational dialogue but rather to "discursive online combats" (2013, p. 1). These discursive confrontations are similar to the one which was briefly described at the start of this introduction: namely, the phenomenon of adherents of different narratives using digital technology for the aggressive propagation of selective mnemonic narratives. By testing these divergent perspectives against the empirical material of Ukrainian digital memory cultures, the study examines the relationship between transnational and digital memory in the context of Second World War memory, and questions the potential impact of technology on the future of war remembrance in the post-socialist space.

1.3. World War 2.0

In his study of the Crimean war of 1853–1856, Ulrich Keller (2001, p. 251) argues that since the middle of the 19th century wars and conflicts have been increasingly mediatized, their coverage becoming increasingly adapted for mass consumption. However, even though the mediatization of war is thus not a recent phenomenon, developments in communication technology have brought profound changes to the ways conflicts and wars are narrated, experienced and performed today – especially when compared to the pre-digital age (Kuntsman, 2010, p. 1). Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin argue that the connectivity brought by digital media renders the latter "the key modulator of security and insecurity" (2010, p. 2) by increasing awareness of remote conflicts and articulating the presence of immediate threats in a variety of formats, from video clips to blog posts. The consequences of such an oversupply of digital data relating to war and conflict are many, varying from the increased ability to document war atrocities, to the burgeoning use of digital representations of a conflict for veritable information warfare; together, these result in the transformation of "modes of witnessing, feeling and remembering violent and traumatic events" (Kuntsman, 2010, p. 2).

While a number of studies (Berengrer, 2006; Matheson & Stuart, 2010; Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010) examine how this transformation affects the remembrance of contemporary conflicts, significantly less research has been done on the remediation of *old* wars in *new* media. While works on the use of digital media for the remembrance of past conflicts have appeared in recent years (Drinot,

2011; Luyt, 2011, 2015; Jensen, 2012; Benzaquen, 2014; Pfanzelter, 2015), their number remains limited. Furthermore, they share an additional shortcoming: as Ellen Rutten and Vera Zvereva note (2013, p. 4), the majority of these studies pay only marginal attention to developments outside "the West" and, in particular, to developments in post-socialist countries.[8] Academic assessments of the interactions between digital media and contentious war memories in Eastern Europe are as of yet limited in number, in spite of the fact that the extensive presence of the past – as well as unresolved past traumas (Etkind, 2013) – constitutes one of the quintessential features of the region's digital landscape.

Academic assessments of digital memories of the Second World War in post-socialist countries such as Ukraine and Russia are subject to the same limitations. While a number of works point to the special importance of Second World War memories for collective identities in these regions (Snyder, 2010; Blacker, Etkind, & Fedor, 2013; Rutten, Fedor, & Zvereva, 2013), as of yet there are no studies which provide a comprehensive overview of the interactions between these war memories and digital media. Instead, the majority of existing works examine the mediation of Second World War memory in the context of a single digital platform, such as, for instance, Facebook (de Bruyn, 2010), LiveJournal (Morenkova, 2012; Lastouski, 2013), or Lurkomor'e (Makhortykh, 2015). The few studies which do engage in cross-media analyses of the topic do so only in article-length studies and for isolated cases, such as, for instance, the memory of Stepan Bandera (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014) or the celebration of Victory Day[9] (Nikiporets-Takigawa, 2013).

Furthermore, existing scholarship on digital memories in post-socialist countries tends to produce contrasting – and often contradictory – assessments of the interactions between digital technology and cultural memory. An example of what I would like to call a "feel-good" take on these interactions is offered by Elena Trubina (2010) in her study on Victory Day on the LiveJournal platform. Based on the analysis of a sample of Russian-language LiveJournal blogs, Trubina argues that digital media in post-socialist spaces facilitates the production of a cosmopolitan memory of the Second World War and challenges the one-sided mnemonic narratives of the Soviet era. In a similar study of Belarusian segments of LiveJournal, Aliaksey Lastouski concludes that "digital media there [in Belarus] is a realm of freedom" (2013, p. 170), where hegemonic strategies of Second World War commemoration can be challenged by alternative narratives. At the same time, Lastouski also points out that the latter narratives will not necessarily spread beyond the borders of a particular online

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[8] For a few notable exceptions see works by Kuntsman (2010a), Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), Rutten, Fedor, and Zvereva (2013).

[9] Victory Day is a public holiday in many post-socialist countries, including Ukraine and Russia. As already mentioned in the text, it marks the capitulation of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union in 1945 and is celebrated on May 9. After the Euromaidan revolution, however, the Ukrainian government decided to stop celebrating Victory Day and, instead, introduced a new public holiday on May 8, which is known as the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation.

community.

A more gloomy picture is offered in a study undertaken by media scholar Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa (2013) on the use of digital media in the context of the Victory Day clashes in L'viv in May 2011. She argues that social media not only perpetuate the official memory tropes of the mainstream media, but they also ignite disagreements among proponents of different versions of Second World War history. My own studies on Second World War memes (2015) and audiovisual memories on YouTube (2017) similarly suggest that, instead of challenging official war narratives, digital media often tend to reproduce preexisting memory tropes and propagate dissent between contrasting views of the past. While it is hardly questionable thus that digital media provide a transnational ground for debating issues related to contentious pasts, and are for this particularly valuable to post-socialist countries, with their long history of memory wars and the persistence of hegemonic historical narratives, observations made by Nikiporets-Takigawa and the ones deriving from my own research indicate that, in the case of Second World War memory, these debates are not always developing in a peaceful manner, nor do they necessarily lead to the formation of new, pluralist narratives of the past. In the chapters that follow, I reconsider these divergent perspectives on digital memory of the Second World War in post-socialist countries by examining, through a selection of popular social media platforms, how web users interact with Second World War memory narratives pertaining to Ukraine.

1.4. Social media in Ukraine

According to Kaplan and Heinlein, social media are internet-based applications which "build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0" (2010, p. 61) and are used for the production and dissemination of user-generated content. Unlike Web 1.0, "the pioneering and highly elitist medium" (Gerbaudo, 2015, p. 73), Web 2.0[10] includes a number of functionalities (e.g. Adobe Flash, RSS, and AJAX) which allow an ordinary web user to generate online content without significant time or effort expenditure and/or profound technological knowledge. Different social media platforms give preference to different types of content, varying from quasi-academic texts (Wikipedia) to microblog posts (Twitter) to music videos (YouTube) and virtual alter egos (World of Tanks).

While offline media, in particular television, remain predominant in the Ukrainian media environment, in recent years digital media have overtaken radio and print and currently represent the second most popular source of information in the country (Gallup, 2014). The rate of internet penetration in Ukraine is slightly lower than in other European countries: different sources evaluate it at between 43.4% ("Internet Users," 2015) and 50.9% (Gallup, 2014); a number of studies, however,

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[10] It is worth noting that both the term and the division between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 has recently attracted significant criticism (see, for instance, Anderson, 2006); the distinction, however, fits the purpose of research focused on user-generated content, especially in the post-socialist context.

point to a significant disproportion in the use of digital media among different age groups (Kulyk, 2013; Gallup, 2014). The digital divide in Ukrainian society thus remains significant: unlike senior-age Ukrainians, among whom only 12.1% use internet on a regular basis, 89% of Ukrainians aged between 15 and 24 are regular web users. While age remains the most influential factor in the digital divide, other factors, such as education level and individual income, also influence the dynamics of internet usage in the nation (Poushter, 2016). Furthermore, as Denis Zakharenko (2016) points out, the lack of financial incentives or support from the state discourages internet providers from offering their services to rural areas in Ukraine.

Social media thus constitute a powerful information outlet in Ukraine, although the audience of this outlet is rather skewed because of the digital divide I have just illustrated. Most internet – including social media – users in Ukraine tend to be young individuals who have attained comparatively high education and income levels; furthermore, the majority of them live in big cities, and not in rural areas. Consequently, one might choose to assume that the majority of users involved in the performance of Second World War memory in Ukrainian social media share rather similar profiles. Unfortunately, the format of the current study does not allow for an in-depth investigation of the variety of web users involved in online memory practices, but further research into the social profiles of individual users will be important for refining my findings.

According to a 2016 Alexa.com[11] rating ("Top Sites in Ukraine," n.d.), social media platforms, in particular VKontakte and YouTube, constitute the most popular web resources among Ukrainian users, along with search engines such as Google and Yandex. One important rationale for the increased use of such web resources, and in particular social media, among the younger groups of the Ukrainian population is the relative lack of state control over these platforms, as well as the limited scope of formal and informal censorship, especially when compared with traditional Ukrainian media outlets (Kulyk, 2013, p. 74). These factors not only allow internet users to investigate and discuss topics of interest, including contemporary politics to or war history, but they also contribute to pluralization in the public sphere. It is hardly debatable that the use of social media as a public space in Ukraine is subjected to similar limitations as in other parts of the world. This is significantly true in regards to what Jose van Dijck and Thomas Poell (2016) point out in their recent study on social media activism: the frequent misuse of digital technology by state authorities as well as the commercial orientation of the various platforms' architecture and user policies. However, despite those limitations, social media outlets such as VKontakte or YouTube still provide Ukrainians with opportunities to challenge

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[11] Alexa Internet is a subsidiary company of Amazon, and provides data and analytics of web traffic. Besides a number of commercial services, Alexa offers free access to data about the most visited internet sites, both on a global and individual country basis; consequently, Alexa data is often employed in academic studies which deal with web traffic - see, for instance, works by Adams and McCorkindale (2013), Sugimoto et al. (2013), Britt (2015), Messner and DiStaso (2015).

dominant discourses concerning past and present developments alike. Unsurprisingly, social media played an important role in recent protest campaigns in Ukraine, including the Orange Revolution (Kyj, 2006; Prytula, 2006; Lysenko & Desouza, 2010) and the Euromaidan protests (Szostek, 2014; Tucket et al., 2014; Onuch, 2015). The use of social media by activists during the Euromaidan protests led to the rapid growth of a Ukrainian audience for a number of social media outlets,[12] as these platforms became associated with regime change and civil empowerment.

However, as the Ukraine crisis continued to deteriorate after the overthrow of President Yanukovych and the installation of a new, pro-Western government, social media became increasingly associated not only with civil society and grassroots change, but also with information warfare and aggressive propaganda. Already in the course of the Euromaidan protests, Ukrainian social media were turned into contestation grounds, where pro- and anti-Maidan[13] advocates propagated their visions of the ongoing events. With the escalation of the crisis, social media, both in Ukraine and in Russia, morphed into a veritable battlefields, as both state-affiliated and independent groups pursued their own interpretations of the crisis, usually demonizing and dehumanizing the opposing side.[14] These social media subversions frequently involved manipulative uses of cultural memory, such as the above mentioned story of the Khatyn of Odessa, or the equalization of the annexation of Crimea and the Austrian Anschluss, further blurring the difference between "the presumed and the known" (Monaghan, 2015, p. 1) in the context of the crisis.

Because of these factors, social media in Ukraine remains "a crucial arena of the politics of national identity and historical memory" (Kulyk, 2013, p. 69). Yet, while interactions between social media and cultural memory in Ukraine play a significant role, these relations are not necessarily homogeneous. Instead, current scholarship on the Ukrainian social media landscape suggests that the latter is composed of different digital genres, characterized by complex dynamics of creation and consumption of media products, including ones related to war remembrance. Thus, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which Second World War memory and social media shape each other in Ukraine, the study explores how war memories interact with a selection of digital memory genres, which I will briefly discuss below.

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[12]   One of the most illustrative examples is Twitter, where, according to Yandex (2014) data, almost 55,000 new users from Ukraine registered in January 2014 alone, whereas before November 2013 the average number of monthly registrations was 6-7,000.

[13]   Up to now the majority of studies of social media use during the Euromaidan protests have focused on Maidan activists and sympathizers. For more information specifically on the online activity of anti-Maidan groups, see works by Kozachenko (2014), Tucket et al (2014), Gruzd and Tsyganova (2015).

[14]   For more information on the use of social media in the context of information warfare and propaganda during the Ukraine crisis, see works by Freeman (2014), Dougherty (2015), Makhortykh and Lyebyedyev (2015), Gaufman (2015), Makhortykh and Sydorova (2017).

1.5. Methodology

The theoretical insights discussed earlier serve as methodological cues, providing the study with the precise terminology and framework to analyze the interrelations between cultural memory and social media in Ukraine. Apart from these cues, the study relies on empirical data collected from the social media platforms most popular among Ukrainian internet users. The study combines those empirical data with transnational/digital memory theory to examine how Second World War memory interacts with a selection of popular digital genres.

According to Santini, Mehler and Sharoff (2010), the development of digital technology, in particular the formation of the Web 2.0 environment, which has dramatically facilitated the creation and dissemination of digital content, gave rise to novel textual forms known as "digital" or "web" genres. Although computer-mediated communication expert Susan Herring (2013) has rightly adopted a critical stance towards the usage of the term "digital genre," arguing that the type of content produced online is more dependent on the platform's architecture than on genre specificity, it nevertheless remains a useful concept, especially when used in the context of digital narratives studies. A number of scholars suggest that web genres are characterized by their volatility and "chameleon-like properties" (Giltrow & Stein, 2009, p. 9); however, as Katherine Hayles (2004, p. 68) points out, the medium has significant impact on the narratives produced online, as the latter are shaped by medium-specific constraints and opportunities alike. A similar claim is made by Dirk Uffelmann in the context of digital literature and digital remembrance: according to Uffelmann, despite their apparent fluidity, digital memory genres are distinguished by "technical conditions as well as rhetorical rules and cultural particularities" (2014, p. 17), thus allowing to identify and classify different kinds of mnemonic narratives which emerge online.

Borrowing from the insights of Hayles (2004) and Uffelmann (2014) on the medium specificity of digital genres, the current study focuses on three digital memory genres, each of which is closely associated with a particular social media platform: the digital encyclopedia (Wikipedia), the audiovisual tribute (YouTube), and the SNS (social networking site) post (VKontakte). There are a number of reasons for this choice: firstly, each of these genres is not only popular among Ukrainian web users, but also widely recognized as being influential in the context of existing digital memory scholarship.[15] Secondly, all above mentioned digital platforms provide a number of options for data collection which make their use for research both reliable and reproducible. Thirdly, the social media outlets listed also publish data about their users' interactions with their materials, which allows not only to examine

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[15] On Wikipedia see, for instance, the following works: Pentzold (2009), Ferron and Massa (2011; 2014), Luyt (2011), Jensen (2012), Dounaevsky (2013), Makhortykh (2015a). On YouTube see the following studies: Hilderbrand (2007), Drinot (2011), Jones and Gibson (2012), Knudsen and Stage (2013), Benzaquen (2014), Danilova (2014). On VKontakte: Zvereva (2011), Denisov (2013; 2015), Kulyk (2013).

mnemonic narratives produced in the context of a particular digital memory genre, but also to assess how influential these narratives are and/or in which ways users interact with them.

For the analysis of the representation of Second World War memory and users' interactions with mnemonic narratives online, the thesis relies primarily on qualitative content analysis, which until now remains the major methodological approach in the field of memory studies for the humanities and social sciences (Keightley, 2010; Keightley & Pickering, 2013). At the same time, the growing amount of digital tools which facilitate the collection and analysis of large volumes of textual and visual data opens new possibilities for the field, particularly in the assessment of user interaction with memory products. By combining descriptive statistics with some of these tools, particularly the ones provided by the Digital Methods initiative[16] at the University of Amsterdam – where the bulk of this analysis was crafted – the thesis attempts to quantify digital memory processes both in order to increase the reproducibility of the research, and to gain new insights in the way Second World War memory functions online.

Because of the significant differences between the digital genres and corresponding social media platforms chosen for examination, as well as the different modes of representation they allow for, each of the following chapters will include a section on the respective methodology of data collection and their analysis. Also, while some platforms (e.g. Wikipedia) allow for detailed chronological analysis and comparison, others (e.g. VKontakte) provide limited opportunities for collecting data from earlier periods; these and other limitations of the different social media platforms will be discussed in more detail in their respective chapters. Similarly, each chapter includes brief description of methodology used to analyze data, which is again related to differences in the way memory narratives are presented and interacted in the context of each platform.

It is worth noting here that the study builds mainly upon observations dating from September 2012 to March 2016, when the author implemented the research at the University of Amsterdam. The period of study also corresponds to the beginning of the political and cultural upheavals in Ukraine, which started in November 2013 and continue to this day. Not only have those upheavals affected the discourses which I am tracking in this study,[17] but they have also had a strong influence on social media practices in Ukraine; in the latter case, the changes varied from the rapid growth of audiences of those social media outlets which were involved in the mass protests in Ukraine (Yandex, 2014), to the development of new forms of activity and memes, such as the ones related to the Russian-Ukrainian

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[16] For more information, as well as a list of available tools, see the website of the Digital Methods initiative: https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/DmiAbout

[17] For more information on changes in memory politics in Ukraine as well as other countries of the region since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, and in particular with regards to Second World War memory, see works by Siddi (2016), Sweet (2016), Cohen (2016), van der Laarse (2016).

conflict (Wiggings, 2016).

1.6. Case studies: The seizure of L'viv and the Battle of Kyiv

In order to understand Ukrainian online memory discourse, it is important to examine the relations between the historical events and the myths which have risen around them, on the one hand, and digital narratives and internet memes on the other. For this purpose, in my analysis I zoom in on two episodes of the Second World War which not only continue to spawn memory events across the Ukrainian mnemonic landscape, but are also extensively remediated in Ukrainian social media. Because of the complex nature of both historical episodes, which has led to numerous controversies in regards to their interpretation in Ukraine and the neighboring regions, the study does not aim to provide a deep discussion of the historical background, settling instead for a brief historical introduction to aid the reader, which is presented below.

On June 30, 1941, eight days after the start of the German-Soviet war, German troops entered L'viv, the largest city of Western Ukraine, which had belonged to the Republic of Poland before it was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939. One of the first German units to enter the city was the Nachtigall [Nightingale] battalion, composed of soldiers of ethnic Ukrainian origins. Nachtigall was founded in the spring of 1941, along with the Roland battalion: both were the result of cooperation between the OUN and the Wehrmacht and Abwehr (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011, p. 91–92). Upon entering L'viv, the Nachtigall battalion established control over several strategic elements of the city's infrastructure, including the local radio station and the prisons. In the prisons, Nachtigall soldiers discovered mutilated corpses of political prisoners – mostly Ukrainians, but also Poles and Jews (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2013, p. 221) – murdered by the NKVD, the Soviet law enforcement agency, in the first days following the outbreak of the war.[18]

The discovery of the corpses in the L'viv prisons incited a wave of violent actions against local Jews, encouraged by the Germans and the OUN[19] (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011, p. 101). The first anti-Jewish actions started already on June 30; however, as Kai Struve (2015, p. 304) notes, these were mostly isolated acts of violence. Jews began to be taken from their homes and sent to the city prisons, where they were forced to exhume and clean the bodies of the NKVD's victims. Many of them were beaten, and some even killed during these acts of violence. The Ukrainian militia, established on the morning of June 30 itself, was responsible for the majority of these anti-Jewish actions; however, some acts of violence also involved German soldiers and local policemen, as well as the occasional civilians

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[18] For more information on the NKVD mass killings in the L'viv prisons see works by Bogdan Musial (2000) and Kai Struve (2015).

[19] According to a number of authors (Dyukov, 2010; Lower, 2011), the anti-Jewish stance of the OUN can be explained by several factors, including the conflation of Jews with the Soviet crimes in Ukraine, uneven socio-economic relations between different ethnic groups, and prewar anti-semitic prejudices.

(Struve, 2015, p. 306).

The most violent phase of the pogrom began on the morning of July 1, when the violence took on "a more ritualized form" (Himka, 2011, p. 212), adopting the typical form of other anti-Jewish actions perpetrated in other parts of Nazi-occupied Europe. Jews were forced to clean streets and prison yards, being abused and beaten by the crowd as they worked. Men and women alike underwent maltreatment and humiliation; in addition, many women were stripped naked and exposed and, in some cases, raped. In a number of cases Jews were also forced to participate in anti-Communist spectacles, which included mock marches and mock praises to Stalin (Himka, 2011, p. 214–215). As on the previous day, members of the Ukrainian militia actively participated in the pogrom, along with Ukrainian and Polish civilians (Himka, 2011, p. 235–236). According to Struve (2015, p. 354–366), a number of German units were also involved in the pogrom, including members of the Nachtigall battalion and Einsatzgruppe C.

The worst acts of violence, however, occurred in the prison courtyards, where Jews were forced to exhume bodies of NKVD victims. Most of the forced workers were brutally beaten by German soldiers and Ukrainian militiamen, and some of them were stabbed to death or shot while working (Struve, 2015, p. 307–137). The majority of deaths occurred at the Brygidki prison, where several dozens of people were killed. Similar events also took place in two other L'viv prisons, on the Lontskoho and Zamarstyniv streets, though the death tolls there were lower than at Brygidki (Struve, 2015, p. 323). It is hard to assess the total number of victims, but existing estimates vary from 4.000 to 7.000 killed (Mick, 2003); Struve (2015, p. 377), however, argues that these high numbers result from the summing of both the mass killings on July 5 and of another pogrom on July 25–26; in reality, the actual number of victims of the pogrom on June 30–July 1 was lower, not exceeding perhaps a few hundred killed.

Against the backdrop of anti-Jewish retaliations, Nachtigall soldiers, together with a group of OUN members led by Yaroslav Stetsko, proclaimed the restoration of the Ukrainian independent state, which allied itself with Germany in the war against the Soviet Union. The ceremony was attended by Iosyf Slipyi, who represented the Greek Catholic church, and two German officers, Wilhelm Ernst zu Eikern and Hans Koch (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011, pp. 96–97). The proclamation of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state took place on the evening of June 30, 1941, thus the legislative document also came to be known as the Act of June the 30th. Later on the same day, the restoration of the Ukrainian state was announced from the L'viv radio station which had been occupied by the Nachtigall battalion (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011, p. 97).

The proclamation was followed by the establishment of the State Administration of Ukraine, the OUN government led by Stetsko. Within a few days, the State Administration began to coordinate

relations with Germany and its allies; contemporarily, as Rossoliński-Liebe (2011, p. 100) has noted, Stetsko's government was actively discussing plans for the annihilation of the non-Ukrainian population in the nation. The Germans, however, did not welcome the idea of Ukrainian statehood, thus Stetsko's government turned out to be rather short-lived: within a few days the Germans disbanded the State Administration and arrested the leaders of OUN, Stetsko and Bandera. Both were released in the second half of July, but then arrested again in the autumn of 1941, and thereafter sent to German concentration camps along with other members of the OUN (Rossoliński-Liebe, 2011, p. 106).

Two and a half years later, Soviet troops approached Kyiv – the former capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) – during the Chernigov–Poltava Strategic Offensive Operation which took place between August 26 and September 30, 1943. This operation served as prelude to the massive military campaign of the Red Army in the autumn of 1943, known as the Battle for the Dnieper; the main goal of the campaign was to breach the Panther–Wotan defensive line of the German army on the territory of Ukraine by crossing the river Dnieper. One of the intentions of the Soviet high command was also to re-capture Kyiv: the restoration of Soviet control over the Ukrainian capital was particularly important for strengthening Stalin's positions in the negotiations with the Allies in the upcoming Tehran conference (Gorelov & Grutsyk, 2013, p. 20).

On September 29 the task to capture the city was assigned to the armies of the Voronezh front – re-named the 1st Ukrainian front on October 20 – led by Nikolai Vatutin. In the beginning of October 1943, Soviet units managed to capture a number of bridgeheads on the German-controlled right bank of the Dnieper near Kyiv; the largest of those bridgeheads were the Lyutezh and the Dymer bridgeheads, north of the city, and the Bukrin bridgehead to the south. In the weeks that followed, Soviet units attempted several offensive operations aimed at seizing the city. Two major operations took place at the Bukrin bridgehead on October 12–15 and October 21–23; another took place at the Lyutezh and Dymer bridgeheads on October 11–17 (Gorelov & Grutsyk, 2013, p. 20). However, none of those operations were successful, due to heavy resistance from the German troops and the difficult landscape, which impeded the use of tanks; Soviet losses were particularly high at the Bukrin bridgehead, originally envisioned as a primary bridgehead for capturing Kyiv.

The unsuccessful October operations led the Soviet High Command to reject the initial plan of taking Kyiv from the Bukrin bridgehead. Instead, Vatutin ordered to relocate the 3rd Guards Tank Army, commanded by Pavel Rybalko, to the Lyutezh bridgehead. The successful relocation of Soviet forces allowed the Red Army to covertly amass a large force to the north of Kyiv; the subsequent offensive began from there on November 3. This operation was preceded by another attack from the Bukrin bridgehead on November 1–2, aimed at concealing the movements of the Soviet forces and convincing the German command that the Red Army still expected to capture the city from the south;

according to Korol (2003), this distracting maneuver orchestrated by Vatutin once again resulted in huge losses among Soviet ranks.

The rapid advancement of Soviet troops from the Lyutezh bridgehead proved to be unexpected for the German command. With the aid of strong artillery and aerial support, the Red Army was able to breach German defenses to the north of Kyiv and quickly advance into the suburbs of the city. On November 4, the first Soviet units entered the Svyatoshyn district of Kyiv; on the following day, Soviet troops, including the 1st Czechoslovak Independent Brigade led by Ludvik Svoboda, started advancing into the center of Kyiv. On the morning of November 6 – the anniversary of the October Revolution and the most important state holiday in the Soviet Union – Soviet tanks reached the center of Kyiv and recaptured the Ukrainian capital.

The successful actions of the Red Army during the Battle for the Dnieper had profound consequences on the further course of the war on the Eastern Front. The liberation of Kyiv, in particular, had great symbolic and ideological significance, and was used to the fullest by Soviet propaganda. The propaganda, however, omitted the high losses suffered by the Red Army, estimations of which vary from 133 thousand (Gorelov & Grutsyk, 2013, p. 31) to 270 thousand (Levitas, 2012), or even 380 thousand (Ginda, 2010) dead and wounded. These numbers, as well as the reasons behind them, were ignored by the official historiography during the Soviet period (Lysenko, 2013). Today, however, a number of Ukrainian scholars argue that the high death toll was a consequence of the Soviet High Command's intent to liberate Kyiv for the anniversary date of the October Revolution (Korol, 2005, p. 22), which spurred the massive mobilization of Ukrainian men who were often sent to battle unprepared and – according to a few testimonies – insufficiently armed (Koval, 1999, p. 95–96).

These two episodes of the Second World War have a number of things in common, despite being two years apart. Both of them figure as prominent milestones in the conflict, exerting a profound influence on the course of the war in Ukraine; and both remain a source of controversy both in Ukraine and in other post-socialist countries. The Germans' negative reaction to the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state and the forced disbandment of Stetsko's government resulted in the activation of underground activities in Ukraine and subsequent anti-German military actions by the UIA (Gogun, 2004). The capture of Kyiv by the Red Army not only had considerable ideological meaning, but it also marked the destabilization of the German front which allowed for the rapid Soviet advancement in 1944 and ensuing retreat of German troops from Ukraine.[20]

The capture of Kyiv and the seizing of L'viv thus not only share the status of important episodes in the history of the war: both also relate ambiguously to the schemata of liberation and occupation

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[20] This point of view was shared by both Soviet and German commanders – among them Konev (1972), Zhukov (2002) and Manstein (1999).

which underpin classical Soviet mythology about the war. In the frame of this myth, the events of June 30, 1941 were interpreted as the beginning of the Nazi occupation of L'viv, while November 6, 1943 was celebrated as the Day of the Liberation of Kyiv. This black-and-white narrative of the past avoided any nuances[21] in order to align itself with the myth of the Great Patriotic War, which would later be instrumental in the creation of a common public identity in the Soviet Union and Ukraine (Hrynevych, 2005).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the memory of both events was to be once again instrumentalized in national and regional identity politics. In L'viv, the re-assessment of Second World War memory played a considerable role in the process of the de-Sovietization of the city and of Western Ukraine (Portnov & Portnova, 2010); conversely, in the capital, the annual Soviet-style commemoration of the Day of Liberation of Kyiv continued to support the myth of the Great Patriotic War. On the national level, a blend of Soviet and nationalistic war narratives was regularly employed in political rhetoric; different liberation-and-occupation schemes were foregrounded, depending on the current political situation (Zaitsev, 2010).

In all cases, processes of remembering were complemented by strategies of forgetting. In the case of L'viv, the democratization of memory implied restoring the suppressed memory of opponents of the Soviet regime – whose own controversial activities, however, were often whitewashed (Himka, 2011a; Rudling, 2011). In the case of Kyiv, the survival of Soviet-style memory traditions interfered with the integration of less than positive memories about the liberation into the pool of Ukrainian collective memory (Korol, 2003).

Both episodes, then, share several features, and figure as prominent subjects in the discussions about the past which have been taking place on an international level and especially in the post-Soviet space. The Battle of Kyiv is one of several problematic issues in Ukrainian-Russian memory relations: in particular, references to the cruel mobilization of the Ukrainian population to fight in the Battle have been proliferating in Ukrainian media (Ginda, 2010; Patryliak, 2013; Solodko, 2013). The accusations against the Soviet command and its cynical intent to take the city on the anniversary of the October Revolution, untroubled by the certainty of the heavy losses this would entail (Losev, 2013), have been fiercely dismissed, most clamorously in the latest book of the current Russian Minister of Culture, as anti-Russian fantasies (Medinskiy, 2011, p. 401–402). The same has been true for the narrative of the capture of L'viv and related controversies: in particular, the above mentioned anti-Jewish actions

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[21] The historical narrative is, naturally, more layered than this black-and-white image suggests: in 1941 many people in Western Ukraine viewed Germans as liberators, and the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state addressed the German army as an ally in ending the Moscow occupation. Similarly, modern Ukrainian media sometimes treat November 6, 1943 as the date of the restoration of Soviet occupation - see, for instance, Borovik (2013) and Losev (2013). This lack of a consistent interpretation illustrates the tragedy of a population caught between two totalitarian regimes, neither of which could hardly be considered a liberator.

(Himka, 2011; Ryabenko, 2013) and the mass killings of the Polish intelligentsia after the seizure of the city (Albert, 2004; Kuliński, 2011; Kipriani, 2011; Bolyanovskiy, 2011), perpetrated also by Ukrainian nationalists – the same independence fighters who had proclaimed the restoration of the Ukrainian state on June 30, 1941.

All these factors have contributed to my decision to select these two episodes for my research. The historical significance of the capture of Kyiv and the seizure of L'viv implies that digital content related to both episodes of the Second World War would maintain a strong presence across the social media platforms selected for this study. The intense instrumentalization of such war memories in building national and regional identities in Ukraine and other post-socialist countries allowed me to trace how changes in the dynamics of war remembrance in Ukraine's public sphere are reflected in the virtual space. Last but not least, the numerous controversies surrounding both episodes present their own sets of challenges to the different digital media platforms' policies, whether it be the neutrality policy of Wikipedia, YouTube's community guidelines, or user policies in VKontakte.

1.7. In conclusion

In this introduction I have briefly outlined the theoretical background of my research, which combines insights from the field of memory studies and of media studies. I have also aimed to demonstrate the role of this study in filling a lacuna in existing scholarship, both in terms of the under-investigated impact of digitization on memories of old conflicts, and of the complex interplay between social media and cultural memory in post-socialist states. In order to achieve the aims of this research, I will use web content analysis to examine how the memory of the two episodes of the Second World War are remediated on three major social media platforms in Ukraine.

In the first chapter of this study, I will explore how the Second World War is represented in Wikipedia, currently the world's largest online encyclopedia. For this purpose, I will scrutinize how the articles in the Ukrainian, Russian, and English versions of Wikipedia represent the two events – the declaration of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state in 1941 and the Battle of Kyiv of 1943. I will subsequently examine how representations of both episodes have been received by Wikipedia users; in doing so, I will explore both non-verbal (views and edits) and verbal (comments) types of user interactions with the Wikipedia articles.

In the second chapter, I will examine audiovisual representations of the Battle of Kyiv and of the L'viv pogrom on YouTube. By investigating different audiovisual genres used for remembering both episodes of the Second World War, I will question how digital technology is used for producing video tributes to contentious episodes in Ukrainian history. I will then investigate different forms of feedback (i.e. likes, dislikes, views, and comments) which YouTube users have provided, exploring thus how

Ukrainophone and Russophone users interact, respectively, with these audiovisual representations of the Second World War and how YouTube's aggressive comment culture interacts with war remembrance.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the phenomenon of so-called "social network memory" (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading, 2009, p. 6) and the ways it interacts with cultural memory of the Second World War in Ukraine. For this purpose, I will investigate how memories of the Battle of Kyiv and of the L'viv pogrom are remediated in two different VKontakte communities. The first of these communities – "*Slava OUN-UPA i Vsim Borcjam za Volju Ukrajiny!*" [Glory to the OUN-UPA and All Fighters for the Freedom of Ukraine!] – unites apologists of the nationalistic version of Ukrainian history, whereas the other – "*Protiv OUN-UPA i Prochih Posobnikov Fashizma!*" [Against the OUN-UPA and Other Fascist Collaborators!] – is popular among users with pro-Soviet views on the past. Besides examining how both historical episodes are represented in these two communities, respectively, I will also scrutinize the opportunities social networking sites provide for interacting with contentions of the past and how these interactions differ from the ones found on Wikipedia and YouTube.

Based on observations made in these three chapters, the conclusions section will discuss the ways in which contentious episodes of the Ukrainian past are represented and interacted with on these transnational online platforms. In so doing, I will put to the test existing assumptions about the interplay between digital media and war memories, and raise questions about the future of Second World War memory in post-socialist countries in the context of the growing digitization of personal and public spheres.

Wikipedia and Second World War memory

In a 2006 essay, Roy Rosenzweig claimed that the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, launched in 2001, had the potential to become "the largest work of online historical writing" as well as "the most widely read work of digital history" (2006, p. 119). Since then, the size of Wikipedia has increased significantly – from 1 million articles in 2006 to 5 million in 2016 (in its English version only) – and its popularity among web users continues to grow. The encyclopedia's extensive scope and accessibility turned out to be particularly appealing for history learners, who increasingly use Wikipedia as a reference for judging other historical sources, including traditional encyclopedias such as the Encyclopedia Britannica (Nyirubugara, 2011, p. 140). Consequently, less than a decade after its foundation, Wikipedia has become a major educational resource, the use of which has been discussed and studied in various educational contexts including the US (Lim, 2009; Head and Eisenberg, 2010), the UK (Margaryan, Littlejohn & Vojt, 2011), Norway (Blikstad-Balas, 2015), and China (Shen, Cheung & Lee, 2013).

While the influence of Wikipedia on education, and in particular on history teaching, is widely recognized, its exact impact on remembering and learning about contentious pasts remains under-investigated. Existing assessments of Wikipedia's role as a "global memory place" (Pentzold, 2009) vary in their opinions on the issue. A number of studies argue that the platform can be viewed as a transnational space which facilitates the production of a fundamentally pluralistic historical knowledge (Hardy, 2007), or as a digital forum which sustains consensus-building vis-à-vis contentious pasts (Dounaevsky, 2013). Yet others theorize the site as an online platform which enforces hegemonic memory narratives (Luyt, 2011), as a controversy-diffusing device (Borra et al., 2015), or even as a mnemonic battleground on which different views of the past come to clash (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012).

According to 2016 Alexa.com data ("Top Sites in Ukraine," n.d.), Wikipedia is the 10th most popular internet resource in Ukraine; furthermore, a number of works (Zhyviuk, 2012; Chirkov, 2014) point to the growing use of Wikipedia by Ukrainian students at various educational levels. Currently, the Ukrainian version of encyclopedia consists of more than 630 thousand articles, which makes it the 16th largest Wikipedia language edition. However, Hale (2014), in his study of multilingual Wikipedia editors (i.e., editors who contribute to several language versions of the encyclopedia at once) points out that Ukrainian users also actively contribute to the Russian Wikipedia, which is almost twice as large as the Ukrainian one and currently stands as the 6th largest version of Wikipedia. Existing studies (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014; Dounaevsky, 2013) also suggest that these cross-language contributions between different language versions seem particularly significant in the pages dedicated to

matters of Ukrainian history, including the Second World War[22].

I will thus investigate how Wikipedia is used by Ukrainophone and Russophone users for remediating Second World War memory, in the examples of the episodes of the seizure of L'viv in 1941 and the capture of Kyiv in 1943, and how they are represented in the Ukrainian, Russian, and English versions of the encyclopedia. The chapter starts by providing a review of the literature concerning Wikipedia and collective memory, and in particular the remembrance of past conflicts. It then describes the research methodology used for examining how the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv are framed in Wikipedia, and in which ways the encyclopedia's users interact with these digital narratives. It is followed by an overview of the findings, starting from the comparative analysis of the L'viv and Kyiv frames found in the Russian, Ukrainian, and English versions of encyclopedia. It then continues with an examination of the different ways in which Wikipedia users interact with these historical frames, including both passive and active manners of interaction. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of the influence of Wikipedia on Second World War remembrance in Ukraine.

2.1. Literature review

Wikipedia is a free-access, multilingual online encyclopedia, and the 7th most visited site in the world according to another Alexa.com rating from 2016 ("The Top 500," n.d.). The reasons for Wikipedia's popularity – only in August 2016 it attracted 15.69 billion views ("Wikipedia Report Card," n.d.) – are many. Among them are the extensive scope of subjects, the ability to access Wikipedia's materials freely and without any subscription fees, and the existence of numerous language versions, which allow users to access data in their native language. Furthermore, the rate of Wikipedia's growth is incomparable with traditional encyclopedias: only in the English version of the encyclopedia hundreds of new articles are added every day ("Wikipedia: Statistics," n.d.), allowing Wikipedia, as the site itself claims, to document the latest developments "within minutes, rather than months or years" ("Wikipedia: About," n.d.).

All these reasons contribute to the significant popularity of Wikipedia among internet users, including students of various educational levels, who also constitute the target audience for the majority of existing studies on the use of the encyclopedia. According to a study by Sook Lim (2009, p. 2194), 39 per cent of college students frequently use Wikipedia for educational purposes. Another study by

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[22] For instance, in the study of Wikipedia articles dedicated to the figure of Stepan Bandera, it was found that more than half of the anonymous edits to the article in Russian Wikipedia were made from Ukrainian IPs (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014, p. 33). Similarly, Dounaevsky, in her survey of memory wars on Wikipedia, notes the large-scale presence of Ukrainian editors in the Russian Wikipedia, producing "the second highest number of edits by country" (2013, p. 133).

Alison Head and Michael Eisenberg (2010) suggests that an even higher number (52 per cent) of students use Wikipedia for course-related research, even though their instructors advise against doing so. The reasons for such a persistence are examined in several surveys, which indicate that students not only perceive Wikipedia as an accessible and comprehensible resource (Head and Eisenberg, 2010), but also see it as a source of relatively trustworthy, even if not always entirely accurate, information (Shen, Cheung, & Lee, 2013, p. 514).

While the growing educational use of Wikipedia by internet users is widely recognized, the consequences of this phenomenon are still being debated by educators and scholars. Neil Waters (2007), for instance, argues that Wikipedia is rather susceptible to its authors' personal opinions and, thus, should not be considered a reliable source of information, especially in academic contexts. Similarly, Knight and Pryke (2012) point to a number of reasons for the controversy among educators surrounding Wikipedia use, including the widespread use of the encyclopedia for plagiarism and the use of unreliable information which is wrongfully cited by students as coming from authoritative sources. By contrast, Infeld and Adams (2013, p. 456) argue that through the use of Wikipedia students can "become more engaged with real-world issues," whereas Piotr Konieczny (2012) suggests that the use of Wikipedia is important for developing digital literacy among students.

Wikipedia influences not only the way the past is taught, but also the way it is remembered. According to Christian Pentzold, the production of Wikipedia articles and the parallel discussions of their content on the encyclopedia's "Talk" pages can be viewed as "a discursive construction of the past" (2009, p. 264). In Pentzold's view, the process of constructing the past through Wikipedia involves a transition between fluid communicative memory and static cultural memory. A number of studies connect Wikipedia to collective memory theory by examining the interactions between the encyclopedia and alternative historical accounts (Luyt & Tan, 2010; Luyt, 2011), its impact on biography writing (Callahan & Herring, 2011; Petkova, 2012), and the use of Wikipedia for commemorating wars (Jensen, 2012; Luyt, 2015; Luyt, 2015a; Pfanzelter, 2015), revolutions (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Ferron & Massa, 2011a), and terrorist attacks (Pentzold, 2009; Ferron & Massa, 2014). The majority of these studies, however, tend to focus on Western European and American memories, and only a few, article-length exceptions explore how Wikipedia is used for dealing with the past in post-socialist countries.[23]

The question of Wikipedia's influence on collective remembrance – and, conversely, of collective memory performances on Wikipedia itself – remains debated among scholars in the field of memory studies. One of the more prominent subjects of these debates is the neutrality of historical

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[23] See, for instance, works by Musyezdov (2009), Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), Dounaevsky (2013), Chirkov (2014), Fredheim, Howanitz, and Makhortykh (2014).

interpretations propagated through the encyclopedia, as well as the consistency – or lack thereof – of these interpretations across different language versions. Wikipedia declares its commitment to the neutral point of view (NPOV) policy, which calls for "representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without bias, all of the significant views that have been published by reliable sources on a topic" ("Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View," n.d.). However, a number of studies (Rogers & Sendijarevic 2012; Luyt, 2013; Massa & Scrinzi, 2013) question the efficiency of the NPOV policy, arguing that Wikipedia's interpretation of the past is not neutral and, instead, tends either to enforce predominant views in Western historiography (Luyt, 2011) or sustain conflicting historical visions originating from national historiographies (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012). By examining how the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv are represented and interacted with on Wikipedia, and whether or not these interactions are affected by recent events in Ukraine, including the Euromaidan protests and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, this chapter places the contrasting assessments of the encyclopedia's role against the backdrop of contentious memories in Eastern Europe.

2.2. Methodology

In order to investigate how Wikipedia is used for representing the two episodes of the Second World War in Ukraine, I examined six different articles which deal with the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv. In the case of L'viv, I used articles on the seizure of L'viv by Germans and the subsequent proclamation of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state,[24] whereas for the Kyiv case I examined articles on the Kyiv offensive operation which led to the capture of the city by the Red Army. Both for the Kyiv and L'viv articles I examined three different language versions of Wikipedia – Ukrainian, Russian, and English; such a selection stems from the complex patterns of interaction between Ukrainian and Russian versions of Wikipedia in Ukraine which have been noted in earlier studies (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014; Dounaevsky, 2013) as well as the unique position of the English version of the encyclopedia, which serves as a global memory platform and hosts the most diverse community of editors (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012).

For the implementation of my analysis, I used versions of all six articles as retrieved on May 10, 2012; the collected data was then updated on December 1, 2015. I started by comparing the ways both historical episodes are framed in different language versions of Wikipedia. Similarly to earlier studies (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Božović, Bošković, & Trifunović, 2014; Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014) on the representation of historical events on Wikipedia, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the encyclopedia's articles, rather than using more quantitative methods, such as

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[24] Such a choice of articles for the seizure of L'viv was related to the lack of an article about the L'viv pogrom in the Ukrainian Wikipedia; consequently, unlike the other two chapters which focus on the representation of L'viv pogrom in Ukrainian social media, this chapter considers different aspects of the same historical episode.

issue-mapping:[25] This choice owes to my interest in the thematic differences in the way both historical episodes are represented in different language versions. Because of the significant amount of data collected, I focused on selected components of the articles which are common across all three language versions: titles, tables of content, images, intra-Wikipedia links, and categories. These components are not only concise enough to be easily compared, but they also provide a brief summary of the article's content (titles, images, references), clarify the structure of the article's narrative (table of contents), and reveal the article's position in the larger Wikipedia structure (categories and intra-Wikipedia links).

Having compared the different framing patterns used for representing the two historical episodes, I then explored how the encyclopedia's users interact with those patterns. I started by using Wikipedia statistics in order to obtain data about the different forms of user interactions with the articles' contents. While the majority of earlier studies (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Keegan, Gergle, & Contractor 2011; Kaltenbrunner & Laniado, 2012) rely mostly on passive forms of user interaction (i.e. views), I also considered active forms of interaction, such as edits and comments on the articles' "Talk" pages. Based on these data, I compared the dynamics of interactions with the Kyiv and L'viv articles in different language versions in order to identify both regular (e.g. anniversary dates or commemorative practices) and irregular (e.g. regime changes or international conflicts) factors which influence interactions with Second World War memory on Wikipedia.

2.3. Findings

2.3.1. Representation

Although, formally, Wikipedia articles provide encyclopedic representations of history, these analytical texts retain narrative qualities, putting forward particular constellations of events, characters, and images. In this sense, Wikipedia articles can be viewed just like lemmas in print encyclopedias which, in turn, can be considered as Wikipedia's tendency towards what Nathan Jurgenson has labeled as "obsession with the offline" (2012), i.e. a widespread tendency to hark back to established cultural formats pre-dating the mass distribution of digital technology. The analysis of Wikipedia articles shows structural variations between them, which illustrate diverse framing strategies towards each of the historical episodes which editors have agreed upon. Below, I investigate how these strategies shape the historical interpretations of the L'viv and Kyiv events, propagated through different national/language Wikipedia versions. For this purpose, I examined those key sections of the Kyiv and L'viv articles which provide a brief summary of the article's narrative (titles, images, references), demonstrate how this narrative is structured (tables of contents), and point to how it is integrated into the larger

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[25] For more information on the use of issue-mapping techniques for the analysis of Wikipedia, see works by Borra et al. (2014) and Niederer (2016).

Wikipedia structure (categories, intra-Wikipedia links).

Titles. All Wikipedia articles have a title which describes the main subject of that article and distinguishes one article from another ("Wikipedia: Article Titles," n.d.). According to Wikipedia guidelines, no two articles can have the same name. Usually, the title for an article is chosen according to how the article's subject is referred to in other reliable sources.[26] It would seem reasonable to assume that different language versions of Wikipedia would use the same name for articles on the same subject: however, as also in an earlier study of the memory of the Srebrenica massacre in Wikipedia conducted by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), a comparison of the respective titles for the L'viv and Kyiv articles – translated into English – pointed to the existence of significant variations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The titles of articles in different language versions of Wikipedia

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Kyiv	*Kievskaja nastupatel'naja operacija* [Kyiv offensive operation]	*Bytva za Kyiv* (1943) [Battle for Kyiv (1943)]	Battle of Kiev (1943)
L'viv	*Akt provozglashenija Ukrainskogo gosudarstva* [Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state]	*Akt vidnovlennja Ukrajinsjkoji Derzhavy* [Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state]	Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941[27]

In the case of L'viv, all three articles referenced the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state, but only one of them – the Ukrainian one – used that particular formulation in the article title. The title of the Russian article, for instance, was "Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state" – instead of "Act of Restoration." The original version of the Act, in fact, proclaimed the *restoration* of the Ukrainian state, implying its previous existence, and also referred to "the Ukrainian People's Republic"[28] and "Western Ukrainian People's Republic" – two state formations which fell during the Ukrainian Civil War (Subtelny, 1988). An attempt to change the title to "Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state" ignited a fierce editing war in 2011, which resulted in the change of the earlier article's title "Act of June the 30th, 1941" which omitted any references to the Ukrainian statehood, to "Act of Declaration of the

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[26] The concept of reliable source is one of the central criteria which define what kind of data can or can not appear in Wikipedia. According to the encyclopedia's definition, reliable sources "may be published materials with a reliable publication process, authors who are regarded as authoritative in relation to the subject, or both" ("Wikipedia: Identifying Reliable Sources," n.d.). Usually, the category of reliable sources includes the ones produced by academic institutions and/or news organizations, but there can be a number of exceptions to this rule, depending on the article's subject.

[27] It is worth noting that the title of the article in the English Wikipedia experienced a number of changes since its creation in 2006. The article's original title was "Proclamation of Ukrainian Independence," then in 2008 it was changed to "Proclamation of Ukrainian statehood, 1941," and in 2009 it was renamed as "Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941." The article held this title until 2015, when it was renamed "Declaration of Ukrainian State Act." However, as in the case of the other articles, the title presented in the table is the one the article had at the time of the original data collection.

[28] Commonly abbreviated as UNR, according to its title in Ukrainian (*Ukrainska Narodna Respublika*).

Ukrainian state." The new wording of the Russian article continued to avoid references to the historical background of Ukrainian statehood, as the word "restoration" in the original title emphasized.

The title of the English article was somewhat in-between the Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedia versions, referring to the event as "Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941" ("Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941," n.d.). To a certain extent, this formulation was in line with the Russian article title, describing the events of June 30 as a declaration – not a restoration – of the Ukrainian state; at the same time the title addressed the issue of independence rather than that of statehood. Consequently, this particular title causes potential confusion, both from the point of view of historical reference – given that the formula "Declaration of Ukrainian independence" is usually employed in relation to the events of 1991 – and in interpreting the historical meaning of the event: the claim of "independence" in relation to the events of 1941 is probably too strong, considering the circumstances of the Act's proclamation. The former problem was addressed in the name of article by adding "1941," thus allowing to distinguish it from the Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian Independence of 1991. The latter point, however, presumed a certain interpretation of events, which was avoided in the more ambiguous titles of the other two articles, as well as in the post-2015 English version, all of which referred to the restoration of the Ukrainian statehood, rather than to a Ukrainian independence.

In the case of Kyiv, the Ukrainian and English articles used the title "Battle for Kyiv," the informal name for the Kyiv offensive operation which took place between November 3 and 13, 1943, and which resulted in the capture of the city on November 6. The official name – "Kyiv offensive operation" – was used for the Russian version of the article, whereas in the other two languages the informal name was preferred, with the additional indicator of "1943" used to distinguish it from the article about the Battle of Kyiv of 1941.

While distinctions between the Kyiv articles seemed to be less significant than in the case of the L'viv articles, the presence of disagreements between Wikipedia versions on such a basic level as the articles' titles can be viewed as an indication of the considerable differences in the representations of particular episodes of the past. Similar to observations made by Rogers and Sendijarevic in their study of the Srebrenica massacre remembrance on Wikipedia (2012), these differences appear to be influenced by the persistence of contrasting historical interpretations of many episodes of the Second World War in Ukrainian and Russian national historiographies, in particular the ones involving activities of Ukrainian anti-Soviet groups such as the OUN and the UPA. In the next several sections I examine other prominent elements of the articles, in order to assess whether these variations in naming lead to substantial differences in representation of the two historical episodes, and whether they can be traced to differences between dominant war narratives in Ukraine and Russia, respectively.

Table of contents. The tables of contents in Wikipedia consist of article headings which clarify and

better organize that article's content ("Wikipedia: Writing Better Articles," n.d.). As discussed above, analyzing an article's table of contents can provide useful insights on the differences in presenting material between various language versions. Each heading points to a particular topic which is discussed in the article: therefore, the table of contents of a Wikipedia article can be used as a source of semantic information, which is of particular interest for cross-cultural research; as Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012) demonstrate in their study of contentious memories of the Balkan wars, this information can be particularly useful for investigating differences in representation of the same event across different language versions of the encyclopedia.

A comparison of the different tables of contents for the Kyiv articles showed that the Ukrainian and Russian versions have a similar structure, consisting of three parts: an introduction/background of the battle, how it played out, and the battle's aftermath. The English article, instead, elaborated on the course of the battle by dividing it into several stages – the first attempt to capture Kyiv, the Rauss counterattacks, the final stage of the second attempt, etc. – and assigned independent sections for each of these stages. Unlike the other articles, which described the whole course of the battle in a single section, the structure of the English article implied that the seizure of Kyiv witnessed many stages, and that Soviet troops required several attempts to achieve their goal. In comparison with the other articles, the English one also took a larger scope: it was the only article which described, under the "Battle of Kyiv" title, several operations which took place between the second half of November and December; these operations were explored separately in other versions of the encyclopedia.

However, it is worth mentioning that despite similarities in structuring the narrative, the Russian and the Ukrainian versions did not necessarily feature the same content; instead, my observations showed that each article allotted its own particular significance to each section. For instance, the section about the battle's background in the Russian Wikipedia emphasized the deep entrenchment of the German troops, while the introductory section of the Ukrainian article talked about the numerical superiority of the Red Army vis-à-vis the weakened German forces. Differences of this kind abounded: the Russian article, for example, was the only one which discussed in detail the numbers of losses incurred by the German side, while the Ukrainian article alone noted that German forces burned down parts of city before their retreat.

In contrast to the Kyiv articles, which all had a similar structure, the L'viv articles employed different ways of organizing their contents, similarly to what Rogers and Sendijarevic found (2012). Similarly to the Srebrenica case, where the organization of the material showed significant variations between different language versions, the table of contents of the L'viv articles pointed to profound differences in the way the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state was represented and interpreted. The structure of the Russian article, for instance, emphasizes inconsistencies in the Act of Restoration

by hinting, in several sections, to existing controversies which describe different versions of the Act; a similar strategy, as Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012, p. 38) have shown, was used in the Serbian article on the Srebrenica massacre, to undermine the validity of claims about the genocidal nature of events in Srebrenica made by other Wikipedia language versions. The Ukrainian article about the Act, however, ignored these controversies entirely: instead, it depicted the reactions of other significant parties such as the Germans, Ukrainian church officials, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, etc. to the proclamation of the Act, but without overtly questioning the consistency or legitimacy of the Act itself.

Even sections bearing the same title in different language versions of the L'viv article provided Wikipedia readers with different information and, in some cases, these distinctions were striking. Both the Russian and English articles, for instance, included sections titled "Background": the content, however, differed significantly. The Russian article described the period of 1939–1941 and paid special attention to the notion of collaboration between Ukrainian nationalists and the Nazi regime. It did not include, however, any references to earlier Ukrainian state formations – such as the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1921) or the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (1918–1919) – and omitted discussing the historical continuity of the Ukrainian state. Instead, the Russian article clearly embedded the Act of Restoration into the context of the Second World War, and reinforced the interpretation of the Act as a *proclamation,* implying the establishment of a *new* entity rather than a *restoration* of the Ukrainian state. The English article's section describing the background of the Act's declaration chose its departure point from the aftermath of the First World War. It also failed to mention earlier Ukrainian state formations, but referred, instead, to the division of Ukrainian territory among different states in the interwar period, and noted the existence of Ukrainian nationalist organizations, which "for various reasons" ("Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941," n.d.) were more active in Western Ukraine.

A brief comparison of the tables of contents of these different Wikipedia articles points to the presence of significant differences, both in the way information is structured, and the implicit meaning behind the divisions into particular sections. The articles were often structured in a different way; however, my analysis demonstrated that even article sections bearing the same name could contain different – and often divergent – interpretations of the events. For instance, different versions either emphasized the heroism of Red Army soldiers or diminished Soviet accomplishments, pointed out the massive collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazi regime or ignored this subject altogether. This observation implies that, as in the case of Srebrenica massacre (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012), Wikipedia articles on the Second World War often provide different interpretations of the same event depending on the language version – an important evidence of cultural distinctions which do not subside in spite of Wikipedia policies of neutrality and consensus-building.

Intra-Wikipedia links. Internal links constitute an important feature of Wikipedia: they put different Wikipedia articles in relation to each other, thus establishing the encyclopedia as "an interconnected whole" ("Wikipedia: Manual of Style/Linking," n.d.). According to the Wikipedia's Manual of Style (n.d.), internal links are used to improve user understanding of an article's material: in order to achieve this goal, Wikipedia users hyperlinks to connect important concepts which are mentioned in an article (e.g., a certain date, or location, or personality) to other articles dedicated to these concepts. By following these hyperlinks, Wikipedia users can navigate to pages containing additional information on specific terms, useful references, or any other material which enhances the user's understanding of the information provided in the original article.

An internal link consists of a single piece of hyperlinked text – it can be a single word or a brief combination of words – which leads to a different Wikipedia article; consequently, the intra-Wikipedia link can be viewed as a highly-focused representation of the language which describes a particular issue (Adafre & Rijke, 2006). In this sense internal links are of particular interest for studying cultural differences, in the ways the same concept is represented in different language versions of Wikipedia. The study of these differences – also known as sub-concept diversities – was recently introduced in the work by Hecht and Gergle (2010), who argued that the collective body of internal Wikipedia links can be viewed as a more or less complete, language-independent summary of an article's text. Therefore, the analysis of internal links can be used to assess how representations of a certain concept – or a historical episode, as in the case of the current study – differ across language version of Wikipedia.

Table 2 shows the coefficients of concept similarity – e.g., the percentage of links which lead to the same Wikipedia pages in two different language versions of the encyclopedia – among the various Kyiv and L'viv articles.[29] A high concept similarity indicates that two articles share similar sets of hyperlinked intra-Wikipedia elements, i.e. links to Wikipedia articles on the same personalities, geographical locations or historical events. Low coefficients suggest that editors of different versions of Wikipedia have diverging opinions of what can be viewed as relevant information for the same historical event; the presence of such differences points to the absence of a common view on the past among editors who produce the different versions of the encyclopedia.

Table 2. Coefficients of concept similarity among Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L'viv)

	Kyiv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Russian	1	0.64	0.45
Ukrainian	0.64	1	0.53

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[29] The coefficients were counted with the help of Manypedia – a free software tool created by Paolo Massa and Federico Scrinzi. The tool is accessible online (http://www.manypedia.com/).

	Russian	L'viv articles Ukrainian	English
English	0.45	0.53	1
Russian	1	0.43	0.27
Ukrainian	0.43	1	0.2
English	0.27	0.2	1

In comparison with the average coefficient of concept similarity 0.41 calculated by Hecht and Gergle (2010, p. 297) on the basis of a large, random sample of Wikipedia articles, the degree of concept similarity among Second World War articles was slightly larger across the Kyiv articles – 0.45 on average – but considerably lower across the L'viv articles – 0.29 on average. This observation suggests that the degree of concept similarity – i.e. shared internal links between two articles – decreases in the case of more conflictual subjects, even though, as stated previously, this runs in contradiction with the platform's basic premise of neutral representation of information. It is worth mentioning that in both cases the largest degree of concept similarity is present between those encyclopedia versions which are compiled in the closest languages – Ukrainian and Russian – which can also point to the influence of the linguistic factor. On the other hand, however, it is possible to argue that users of Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedia have more in common – including a long period of co-existence as part of the Soviet Union; such a similarity of cultural context, as Heyles (1999) points out in her work on the interplay between digital technology and literature, can be seen as implying larger similarities in the ways users from both countries view and employ digital technology for the production of Wikipedia texts.

In order to assess the underlying conditions for the existence of similarities and differences, I have moved the analysis of intra-Wikipedia links unto a more qualitative level, and scraped internal links from the texts of the L'viv and Kyiv articles. I have organized these data into several categories – e.g. "Personalities," "Organizations and political entities," "Geography," "Abstract concepts," etc. – to simplify their comparison; then, I excluded those intra-Wikipedia links which were present in several Wikipedia articles, focusing instead on those hypertext elements which were used only in one language version of the same topic. The assumption remains that the analysis of these language-specific internal links can provide valuable information about cross-cultural differences among different Wikipedia versions.

The comparison of unique intra-Wikipedia links, as shown in Tables 3 and 4, indicated that low overlap coefficients are not caused by random factors: instead, they can be attributed to the existence of deeply divergent views on particular episodes from the history of the Second World War. For instance, among all the L'viv articles only the Russian one included a considerable number of hyperlinks to German personalities – featuring, for instance, the head of German intelligence, Wilhelm

Kanaris, the head of the Brandenburg battalion, Erwin von Lahousen, and Reich Minister for the Eastern Territories Alfred Rosenberg. In contrast, other articles paid greater attention to Ukrainian personalities: the English article emphasized the role of interwar Ukrainian intellectuals and leaders of earlier Ukrainian state formations, while the Ukrainian one included information about a younger generation of Ukrainian nationalists involved in the activities of the OUN in the Second World War.

Table 3. Language-specific intra-Wikipedia links (L'viv articles)

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Personalities (German)	Wilhelm Franz Kanaris, Erwin von Lahousen, Franz Halder, Adolf Hitler, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Alfred Rosenberg	Gans Koch	
Personalities (Ukrainian)	Richard Yaryi, Vasiliy Bandera, Oleksa Bandera	Taras Bulba-Borovets	Kost Levitsky, Yevhen Konovalets, Volodymyr Horbovy, Vasyl Kuk, Markian Panchyshyn, Vsevolod Petriv, Mykola Lebed
Personalities (Other)	Stalin		
Organizations and political entities (Ukrainian)	Druzhuny Ukrainiskih Natsionalistov, OUN(m)	Government of UNR in exile, Ukrainian liberation movement, Ukrainian National Council	Sich Riflemen, Ukrainian Military Organization, Ukrainian National Committee, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Organizations and political entities (German)	Supreme command of land armies (Wehrmacht), Abwehr, Roland, Brandenburg-800	Wermacht, Gestapo	
Organizations political entities (other)	Ukrainian state (1941)	ZUNR, Ukraine	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Second Polish Republic, Czechoslovakia
Abstract concepts	Ukrainian language	Occupation, batallion, tower, mitropolit	Concentration camps, Ukrainian nationalism, Ukrainian national anthem
Time	1939, 1940, 1944, September the 9th, February the 10th	July the 5th, November the 25th, October the 23rd	
Historical events	Polish campaing of RRKA (1939)	Nurnberg process	World War I

The categories presented in the table above point to the presence of a number of semantic differences in the ways the seizure of L'viv is represented across different versions of Wikipedia. Other categories of hypertext further contribute to specific ways of representing the past, which each article uses in regard to the Second World War episode in question: for instance, the Russian L'viv article contained hyperlinks to articles about German intelligence units – such as the Roland and Brandenburg battalions – while the English article connected to the page on Sich Riflemen – a Ukrainian military unit which fought in the First World War against the Russian Empire and played an important role during the Ukrainian Civil War.

Similar differences were found in the case of the Kyiv articles: geographical categories and abstract concepts are of particular interest in this case. Of all the articles, only the Russian and Ukrainian ones contained hyperlinks to articles about the Bukrin and Lyutezh bridgeheads, the two iconic landmarks which became symbols of heroism in Soviet historiography about the Second World War (see, for instance, Utkin (1967), Moskalenko (1984), Shaposhnikov (1988)). Both these articles were also connected to pages dedicated to bridgeheads in general: this added significant emphasis to that element of the event in both Ukrainian and Russian memories vis-à-vis the Battle of Kyiv. However, unlike the Russian article, the Ukrainian one also included hyperlinks to articles on such topics as "killed in action" and "missing in action": these were, apparently, not considered highly relevant in the Russian article. This difference may reflect the tendency, mentioned above, of contemporary Ukrainian historiography to emphasize the heavy human losses incurred during the capture of Kyiv, in opposition to the glorification of the battle endorsed during the Soviet period (see, for example, Koval (1999), Korol (2003; 2005), Ginda (2010)).

Table 4. Language-specific intra-Wikipedia links (Kyiv articles)

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Personalities (German)			Walther Nehring, Adolf Hitler, Erhard Raus, Georg Jauer
Personalities (other)		Ludovik Svoboda	
Personalities (Soviet)			Ivan Konev, Pavel Rybalko

Organizations and political entities (German)			XLVIII Panzer Corps, 1st Panzer Division (Wehrmacht), 7th Panzer Division (Wehrmacht), 2nd Parachute Division (Germany)
Organizations political entities (Soviet)	1st Ukrainian Front, Stavka, Voronezh Front, Soviet Red Army, Soviet Union, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 38th Army (Soviet Union), 5th Guards Tank Army, 60th Army (Soviet Union), 1st Guard Cavalry Corps, 13th Army (Soviet Union)	Soviet Red Army, 1st Ukrainian Front, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 40th Army (Soviet Union), 27th Army (Soviet Union), Stavka, Stavka reserves, 2nd Air Army (Soviet Union)	Soviet Red Army, Soviet Union, 1st Ukrainian Front, Stavka, Voronezh Front, Central Front (Soviet Union), 2nd Ukrainian Front, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 40th Army (Soviet Union), 27th Army (Soviet Union), 1st Guards Tank Army (Soviet Union), 18th Army (Soviet Union)
Geography	Northern Ukraine, Kyiv oblast, Zhitomir oblast, Glebovka, Yasnogorodka, Pusha-Voditsa, Vasilkiv, Narovlya, Elsk, Ovruch, Fastovets	Ukraine, Lyutezh, Vyshgorod, Mozir, Chenyakhiv	Berdychiv, Brusilov, Kursk
Abstract concepts		Colonel, killed in action, missed in action	
Time	October the 24th, November the 1st, November the 3rd, November the 4th, November the 5th, November the 6th, November the 7th, November the 13th		
Historical events	Great Patriotic War, Battle for Dnieper		World War II
Other			Home of the Underdogs

The variations listed above are just a few of the differences between representations of the same event in Wikipedia. These observations are intended to supplement the quantitative assessment of concept similarities across different articles and indicate that results of overlaps in coefficients – both in the cases of the L'viv and the Kyiv articles – can be explained in cultural terms. The higher coefficient between the Russian and Ukrainian articles on Kyiv emphasizes a common recognition of significant aspects of the battle, the commemoration of which was deeply embedded in Soviet-era Second World

War memory practices. However, in all other cases, the examination of internal links indicates considerable differences between Wikipedia language versions.

Images. In her work on visual images and memory of 9/11, Kari Anden-Papadopoulus (2003, p. 101) notes that the pictorial turn[30] in today's culture increasingly affects the way traumatic memories are represented. This "iconomania" to which media theorist W.J.T. Mitchell refers in one of his 2015 lectures, can be viewed as an overwhelming fascination with digital imagery, embodied in an "effort to create a total image of a situation or a body of knowledge" (Vesters, 2015), or, in other words, a common tendency to represent reality – including the past – through various visual forms. Unsurprisingly, images represent one of the most common types of media used in Wikipedia articles and constitute a considerable percentage of the Wikipedia Commons' storage, which by 2016 included around 30 million media files ("Wikimedia Commons," n.d.). According to the rules of the encyclopedia, editors can use only images provided under free license or produced by Wikipedia users. Existing studies show that the majority of contributors create images for Wikipedia themselves (Viegas, 2007). This principle works well in the case of articles about geography, nature and even biology, but things become complicated when dealing with historical articles – especially about non-Western history.

Images from the Kyiv and L'viv articles were not numerous and presented little variety. Many were recurrent across several articles: for instance, the photo of the printed copy of the Act published in 1941 in one of Western Ukrainian newspapers was found in Ukrainian, Russian, and English Wikipedias. The same was true for the image of the commemorative coin made for the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Kyiv, which appeared in all three articles[31]. Similarly, the image of Soviet troops marching across Khreshchatyk, one of central streets of Kyiv, was used both in the English and Russian Wikipedia versions, whereas the image of the memorial desk dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Ukrainian state in L'viv was used in both the Ukrainian and the Russian articles on L'viv.

At the same time, it is worth noting that despite the use of the same images, different Wikipedia versions still employed them differently. For instance, the size of the above mentioned image of the memorial desk, in the Russian Wikipedia, was smaller, and it appeared in the very beginning of the article. By contrast, in the Ukrainian Wikipedia a larger version of the same image was used, closer to the end of the article, sided by a text citing the criticism of the Act by Taras Bulba-Borovets, one of the leaders of Ukraine's nationalist movement; such a positioning can be viewed as an attempt to provide a positive contrast to the latter criticism, thus balancing the two different points of view. Furthermore,

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[30] For more information about the pictorial – or iconic – turn in culture and culture studies see works by Mitchell (1994; 2005; 2015), Burda & Maar (2004), Moxey (2008), Boehm and Mitchell (2009), Curtis (2010), Burda (2011).

[31] The situation changed in 2015, when the image was removed from the English Wikipedia page and remained only in Ukrainian and Russian versions.

the attribution of this image varied significantly between the Russian and the Ukrainian Wikipedia versions: while the latter described the image as the "memorial plaque for the 50th anniversary of the Act's proclamation" ("Akt Vidnovlennja," n.d.), the former, Russian article referred to it as the "memorial plaque for the so-called 'restoration' of the Ukrainian state, opened on June 30, 1991" ("Akt Provozglashenija," n.d.).

Of particular interest for my study are those images which appeared only in one particular version of Wikipedia. These were not numerous and mainly originated from the different L'viv articles. The English article, for instance, featured an image of the State Seal of the Government of the Ukrainian state in 1941; such a choice fostered a feeling of authenticity, which contributed to the encyclopedic style of writing used in the English article. By contrast, the Russian article included the image of an OUN banner from the Western Ukrainian city Zhovkva, which proclaimed the following according to the image's attribution: "*Slava Gitleru! Slava Bandere! Da zdravstvuet nezavisimaja Ukrainskaja sobornaja Derzhava! Da zdravstvuet Vozhd' St. Bandera! Slava Gitleru! Slava nepobedimym nemeckim i ukrainskim vooruzhjonnym silam! Slava Bandere!*" [Glory to Hitler! Glory to Bandera! Hail the independent and conciliar Ukrainian state! Hail Leader Stepan Bandera! Glory to Hitler! Glory to the invincible German and Ukrainian military forces! Glory to Bandera!] ("Akt Provozglashenija," n.d.). Another image from the Russian Wikipedia showed civilians in traditional Ukrainian garments, marching in front of German officers and greeting them with Nazi salutes; the caption to the image stated that it shows celebrations in Buchach in honor of the Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state.

A similarly selective choice of visuals – albeit with a different emphasis – was also found in the Ukrainian article on L'viv, which featured several unique images. One of them, attributed as "*Ljviv'jany v ochikuvanni progholoshennja Aktu vidnovlennja derzhavnosti, 30 chervnja 1941 roku*" [People of L'viv anticipating the declaration of the Act of restoration of the Ukrainian state, June 30, 1941], showed an excited civilian crowd with one or two soldiers, who could have been of either German or Ukrainian origin. Another image from the same article showed the copy of a letter from Andrey Sheptytsky, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, welcoming the restoration of the Ukrainian state. Both images served the same purposes: first, they emphasized public support for the Act's declaration, and, second, they suggested that the declaration was an act of will of the Ukrainian people, to a certain degree clearing it from the stain of collaborationism.

Another interesting example of the use of visuals was found in the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia. Unlike the English and Russian versions, which used the image of Soviet soldiers marching across the liberated city, the Ukrainian article was the only one to feature the image of Soviet troops before the battle. The black-and-white photo showed Soviet soldiers building rafts to cross the Dnieper; a wooden sign displaying the words "*Daesh' Kiev!*" [For Kyiv!] in the background provided the

context for the image. Unlike the visuals used in the other two versions, this image from the Ukrainian article showed exhausted-looking men, photographed in the midst of combat preparations, thus instilling a sense of uncertainty in the reader and directing attention to the less glorious aspects of the Battle of Kyiv.

While it can be argued that the use of imagery in all these cases contributed to a feeling of authenticity which, as we will see in the following chapters, constitutes an important element of Second World War remembrance on social media, the combination of these particular photos with their particular captions seemed to promote interpretations of events which differed across language versions. Images of festive crowds of Ukrainians welcoming Hitler and greeting German officers in the Russian Wikipedia page hinted to massive collaborationism in the country, strengthening the notion of the Ukrainian betrayal of their fellow Soviet citizens. By contrast, the Ukrainian Wikipedia stressed the hardships of the war suffered by Soviet soldiers. These examples thus show that images in Wikipedia can be used for different purposes: in some cases they can make an article feel more "academic," but in the other cases, or even at the same time, they can be used in an attempt to impose a certain interpretation of events which often clashes with that of other language versions.

Categories. An important source of lexical and semantic information in Wikipedia is represented by the categories into which Wikipedia articles are classified (Zesch et al., 2007). According to Wikipedia's own definition, "[t]he central goal of the category system is to provide navigational links to all Wikipedia pages in a hierarchy of categories which readers…can browse and quickly find sets of pages on topics that are defined by those characteristics" ("Wikipedia: Categorization," n.d.). Wikipedia categories allow for the grouping of existing articles into thematic sets, on the basis of the essential characteristics of the articles' subjects: the amount of categories used for describing a particular article may vary, but it should not exceed 200 for any one article. In short, categories are used as semantic tags inside Wikipedia and, therefore, their comparison can provide a perspective on the differences in semantics pertaining to a particular event or personality across various language versions.

While there exists an impressive body of literature dealing with the analysis of these Wikipedia categories (see, for instance, works by Voss (2006), Nastase and Strube (2008), Medelyan, Milne, Legg, and Witten (2009), Kittur, Chi, and Suh (2009)), this analysis has rarely been deployed for cross-cultural studies, and if so, only marginally.[32] However, I suggest that a cross-cultural research of Wikipedia can benefit from the study of these categories: in particular, those which are used to define the same event, as well as their differences across versions. The Wikipedia category system can be viewed as a form of collaborative thesaurus tagging (Voss, 2006): unlike tagging geared towards classifying different types of

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[32] See, for instance, the study by Božović, Bošković and Trifunović (2014) on Wikipedia and the memory of Ratko Mladić, a Bosnian Serb general and active participant in the Balkan wars; also Fredheim, Howanitz, and Makhortykh (2014) on the digital remembrance of Stepan Bandera.

content throughout platforms, where each user can create his or her own tags for a particular page, in Wikipedia these tags are chosen from an existing thesaurus of categories defined by the Wikipedia community. Therefore, comparisons of sets of categories used to classify a particular topic can contribute to understanding existing differences between the semantic categories used by different language communities in order to explore a particular subject – in this case, episodes of the Second World War.

In order to facilitate my analysis I have grouped the existing categories into two sets, based on their semantics, as shown in Table 5. The first set – temporal indicators – includes categories related to the chronological framing of the event in question. The second set – thematic indicators – includes those categories related to the actual description of the event: these are usually the major focus of cross-cultural studies of Wikipedia in the context of memory studies (Božović, Bošković & Trifunović, 2014; Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014). This division allows to differentiate between categories which are of lesser importance for subject exploration (based on the assumption that differences in the use of time categories only marginally affect representations of the Second World War in the two cases I am examining) and more semantically relevant, thematic categories, of particular interest for cross-cultural analysis.

Table 5. Categories in Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L'viv)

	Kyiv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Temporal indicators	Year 1943 in USSR, November 1943, Conflicts of 1943	Conflicts of 1943	Conflicts in 1943, 1943 in the Soviet Union, 1943 in Ukraine
Thematic indicators	Kyiv operation (1943), Great Patriotic War operations, Battles in Ukraine, History of Kyiv	Eastern European theater of WWII, Battle for Dnieper, Operations and battles of Soviet-German war, Battles for Kyiv, Battles in Ukraine, Battles in USSR, German battles, Soviet battles	Battles and operations of the Soviet–German War, Battles of World War II involving Germany, Battles involving the Soviet Union, Battles and operations of World War II involving Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakia–Soviet Union relations
	L'viv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English

Temporal indicators	History of Ukraine 1917–1991	1941, History of Ukraine 1917–1991	1941 in Ukraine
Thematic indicators	Collaborationism in WWII, Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian state (1941)	Stepan Bandera, Constitutional law, OUN, Ukrainian national liberation movement, Declarations of independence	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Political history of Ukraine, Ukrainian Declaration of Independence

The examination of thematic categories points to a number of differences between the Russian, English and Ukrainian versions. The Russian article was the only one to use the category "Great Patriotic War" in classifying the Kyiv article: this affective definition, which, as we saw in the introduction to this study, is steeped in Soviet war mythology, was much less neutral than the "Soviet-German War" category used in the Ukrainian and English articles. A similar tendency to use Soviet-style categorizations was found in the L'viv article from the Russian Wikipedia: again, this language version was the only one to classify the events of June 30 as an instance of collaboration – much as they were interpreted in Soviet historiography of the Second World War (see, for instance, Cherednichenko, 1970; Danilenko, 1972; Maslovskiy, 1978).

While categories in the Russian Wikipedia articles indicated a clear inclination towards Soviet historiographic tropes, the categories employed in the Ukrainian articles tended to take the opposite position. Of all three L'viv articles, only the Ukrainian one classified the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state as an element of Ukrainian constitutional law. Furthermore, the Ukrainian Wikipedia was the only version to suggest a connection between the events of June 30 and the Ukrainian national liberation movement; both the Ukrainian and English Wikipedia classified the Act as a declaration of independence. These particular interpretations of the events of June 30 again find their roots in existing war historiography, but – unlike that of the Russian article – this historiographical leaning descends from anti-Soviet, pro-nationalistic narratives on the history of Ukraine (see, for example, works by Kuk (2006) and Serhiichyk (2001; 2002)).

In contrast to the Russian and Ukrainian articles, the English ones usually tended to avoid either of the two stances and used less affectively biased categories. The English version of the Kyiv article attempted to give due recognition to all the parties involved in the battle: besides the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, which were naturally mentioned in the other articles, it added Czechoslovakia, by referring to Ludvik Svoboda's brigade, which participated in the Battle of Kyiv on the Soviet side. Similarly, the English article on the seizure of L'viv was classified as being related to Ukrainian political history as

well as directly to that of the OUN; neither of those categories imposed any specific interpretation of the event *per se*. At the same time, the last category used in the English article on the Act of Restoration – "Ukrainian Declaration of Independence" – suggested a specific interpretation of the event, the one imposed by the article's title in the English Wikipedia.

Similarly to the study of Wikipedia and memory of the Balkan wars conducted by Božović, Bošković and Trifunović, my observations indicate that the way in which Wikipedia categories are used opens up a space for "clear political stances and rhetorical manipulation" (2014, p. 86). The extent of such rhetorical manipulations varies among different Wikipedia versions; however, in one form or another it is present in all language versions. The differences between language versions are particularly significant in the case of the L'viv articles: depending on the version, the declaration of the Act is presented as an act of collaborationism (Russian Wiki), an important milestone for the national liberation movement (Ukrainian Wiki), or a step towards Ukrainian independence (English Wiki).

References. References – also known as citations – constitute an important component of Wikipedia, not limited to the identification of the sources on which a particular article is based ("Wikipedia: Citing sources," n.d.). The role of references in Wikipedia is in fact manifold: they allow an article to be verifiable, identify the encyclopedic relevance of an article, and support the editor's arguments in discussing the article's contents (Sundin, 2011, p. 25–28). For these reasons a number of studies (Devgan, Powe, Blakey, & Makary, 2007; Clauson, Polen, Boulos, & Dzenowagis, 2008; Stankus & Spiegel, 2010; Haigh, 2011; Wilson & Likens, 2015) have examined the role of references in Wikipedia, including those pertaining to articles of a historiographical nature (Rector, 2008; Luyt & Tan, 2010; Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012).

Along with suggestions for further reading which are appended to some articles, references provide users with hyperlinks to external sources, connecting Wikipedia with other parts of the World Wide Web. Unlike intra-Wikipedia links, which, as we have seen, establish connections *inside* the encyclopedia, references are thus used to establish connections with *external* resources. Existing studies on Wikipedia frequently assess these sources so as to evaluate the quality of information provided in the encyclopedia (see, for example, works by Devgan, Powe, Blakey, & Makary (2007); Clauson, Polen, Boulos, & Dzenowagis (2008); Haigh (2011)). In this study, however, I focused on how often articles on the same subject – but from different language versions of Wikipedia – referenced the same sources. A high percentage of cross-referencing among articles would support the argument of transnational representations of memory in Wikipedia, while a lack of such connections, would, instead, indicate that editors use different and potentially conflicting external sources, a practice which runs counter to Wikipedia's declared ideal of reflecting a global consensus.

Similarly to the observations made by Luyt and Tan (2010) on the basis of a large sample of

historical articles on Wikipedia, the majority of references in the articles I analyzed referred to internet sources. Thus, in order to evaluate how frequent cross-referencing was among the chosen articles I decided to focus on hyperlinked references both on the page and on the host levels. For this I used the digital tool Link Ripper and compared the resulting lists of URLs using the Triangulation tool.[33] The comparison showed that six articles from the study sample used altogether 23 unique links, originating from 19 unique hosts.[34] The largest amount of references for the L'viv articles was found in the Russian Wikipedia – 11 out of 14 unique links; the same was true for the Kyiv articles, where the majority of unique links – 5 out of 9 – originated from the Russian article.

One striking result of the comparison of references used in the L'viv and Kyiv articles was the total absence of shared links. While to a certain degree it can be explained by the lack of references in some of the articles examined (for instance, the English L'viv and the Ukrainian Kyiv articles did not include external references at all), the examination of links used suggests that the choice of references reflects the same fundamental distinctions between Wikipedia versions which were mentioned above. For instance, the Russian L'viv article was the only one to reference materials of the Holocaust History Project[35] in the context of the Act of the Restoration; such a choice of reference was another evidence of the tendency in Russian Wikipedia to view the Ukrainian nationalistic movement through the prism of collaboration with Nazi, as well as to emphasize the involvement of Ukrainian nationalists in Nazi atrocities. By contrast, the Ukrainian L'viv article referred to the web page of the L'viv State Archive, where the scanned version of the Act was located ("Akt Vidnovlennya Derzhavnoi Nezalezhnosti Ukrainy," n.d.); by doing so, the article emphasized the importance of the document together with its recognition in the context of Ukrainian statehood.

Only two articles – the Ukrainian and the Russian articles on L'viv – referred to a common resource: a website of ZUSTRICH, the Ukrainian organization for newly-arrived immigrants in Canada. However, both articles referred to different sources provided on the website: the Ukrainian article linked to the book by Taras Bulba-Borovets (1981), which was focused on the struggle for independence during the Second World War. By contrast, the Russian article referred to the works by Knysh (1960) and Rebet (1964) on the confrontations within the OUN in 1940–1941 and the collaboration with Germany; such a choice of sources articulated differences in interpreting the Act,

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[33] Both tools were designed by the Digital Methods Initiative of the University of Amsterdam and available in free access (https://www.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase)

[34] When calculating these numbers I considered only external links, and excluded hyperlinks to different Wikipedia services like WikiData, MediaWiki or CreativeCommons.

[35] The Holocaust History Project is a US-based non-profit organization which established a free online archive of documents, photographs, and recordings related to the Holocaust. Among the declared purposes of the organization was to foster knowledge about the Holocaust and counter Holocaust denial. Originally, the archive was available at the following address: http://holocaust-history.org/; however, currently it is available through the Internet Archives digital library (https://web.archive.org/web/20150801181752/http://holocaust-history.org/).

which was considered as an important milestone on the road to independence in the case of Ukrainian Wikipedia, and as an example of collaboration between Ukrainian nationalists and Nazi in the case of Russian Wikipedia.

These findings align with observations made by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012, pp. 41–43) in their study of the representations of the Srebrenica massacre in Wikipedia, according to which articles from different language versions mostly referred to unique external resources. The lack of cross-referencing indicates that editors from different versions of Wikipedia do not generally use common resources when writing articles on the same subject. In some cases intersections occur – at least on the host level – but these are of a limited nature and tend to constitute only a small portion of the references. While this can be explained by several factors, including Wikipedia's policy of encouraging references in the same language as the article (Luyt & Tan, 2010), the comparison of unique references as well as published works referred to in the articles points to the presence of what can be viewed as a source bias, articulating a certain historical interpretation. For instance, the Ukrainian article about the seizure of L'viv mostly refers to sources which unilaterally support the declaration of the Act and interpret it in the frame of the nationalistic narrative of the Second World War. A similar – if less apologetic – stance is observed in the English article, which mainly refers to works by Ukrainian emigre historians, works which are often characterized by antagonism towards the Soviet Union. By contrast, the Russian article includes a wide range of sources, both pro-nationalistic and pro-Soviet.

Together with the analysis of other elements of Wikipedia articles, the study of references in the Kyiv and L'viv articles indicated considerable cultural differences between language versions. Almost all of them provided their own interpretation of the same episodes of the Second World War, and these differ significantly from each other. The differences were particularly pronounced in the case of the L'viv articles, which provided a wide range of interpretations across versions: from the glorification of the event in the Ukrainian Wikipedia, to the accusations of Ukrainian collaborationism in the Russian Wikipedia. While the existence of such divergences in views of the past is well-recognized in public memories of post-socialist states, their transfer to digital space – and, particularly, to Wikipedia – compels us to question the validity of claims about the transformation of conflicted memories into cosmopolitan discourses of the past through digital media (Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Trubina, 2010; Dounaevsky, 2013). At the same time, however, by allowing the co-existence of such divergent narratives in the same public space and facilitating their comparison and discussion, Wikipedia can be viewed as a platform which does facilitate, to some extent, the transnational remembrance of historical events in the post-socialist space.

2.3.2. Interaction

In this section I examined another important aspect of remembering the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv online: the ways Wikipedia users interact with the digital representations of both events within the encyclopedia. In line with earlier studies on user interactions with Wikipedia narratives, I considered both non-verbal (i.e. view counts of the encyclopedia's pages) (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Keegan, Gergle, & Contractor, 2011; Kaltenbrunner & Laniado, 2012) and verbal forms of interaction (i.e. editors' comments and discussions on "Talk" pages) (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Božović, Bošković, & Trifunović, 2014; Luyt, 2015). In doing so, I attempted to measure not only how popular individual articles on the Second World War were, but also what – if any – were the common sources of controversies between Wikipedia editors and users.[36] Furthermore, I examined whether Wikipedia users' interest vis-à-vis certain subjects associated with the Second World War changed through time, and whether or not these changes could be related to recent developments in Ukraine, such as the Euromaidan protests and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

General dynamics. As already mentioned earlier, view counts, edits and discussion posts are the main indicators of user activity in Wikipedia. The amount of views (also known as pageview statistics) indicates how frequently a particular article of Wikipedia has been viewed by internet users. As Andreas Kaltenbrunner and David Laniado (2012) show in their study of Wikipedia discussions, articles with a large number of views are often those which deal with subjects of popular interest – for instance media platforms, celebrities and films[37] – or refer to events which are currently trending in offline media as well. It is also assumed that more frequently viewed articles also receive more edits – though this assumption does not hold true in all cases ("Wikipedia: Pageview Statistics," n.d.).

Viewing an article is usually considered a passive contribution, as opposed to editing or posting on a discussion page. While such an assumption can be somewhat misleading[38], a number of studies suggest that edits and posts often have higher interpretative value compared to page views (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2015). Editing is the most basic feature of Wikipedia, and, arguably, the most important one. The term covers a wide range of user activities: from correcting mistakes to making useful additions and improving articles in numerous other ways ("Wikipedia: Tutorial/Editing," n.d.). Each edit should be followed by an edit summary – an explanation behind the user's intervention – which is particularly important when the user reverts previous edits or deletes parts of an article's text

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[36] For more information on controversy mapping in Wikipedia see works by Borra et al. (2014; 2015). For examples of qualitative studies of the ways historical controversies are dealt with in Wikipedia in the context of contentious war memories see works by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012) and Kaprans (2015; 2016).

[37]   See, for instance, the list of most visited Wikipedia pages for 2012 ("Most viewed articles," n.d.).

[38] As Espen Aarseth (1997) argues in her study of cybertexts, the hypertextuality which is one of the intrinsic features of Wikipedia pages does not only enhance the consumption of the text in question, but also makes it more complicated. Consequently, compared with printed encyclopedias, Wikipedia requires a non-trivial effort on the part of readers to traverse its articles.

("Help: Edit Summary," n.d.).

The basic assumption behind Wikipedia's editing culture is the following: each edit has to add to or correct an existing article in such a way that the articles constantly improve over time (Swarts, 2009). However, the process of editing does not always go smoothly: sometimes editors have opposing opinions on what should be called a "good" article on a particular topic, which results in so-called "edit wars" ("Wikipedia: Edit Warring," n.d.). Sometimes, these edit wars are resolved through discussion on the "Talk" pages, but in other cases the so-called power editors – i.e. editors who have proven to adhere to Wikipedia standards and are responsible for their promotion and enforcement (Rogers, 2013, p. 170) – are compelled to intervene.[39]

Similarly to edits, discussion posts are viewed as an active contribution to Wikipedia (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2015). Posts are usually produced by editors, who communicate with each other through "Talk," or discussion, pages. The "Talk" pages are intended to facilitate communication among editors who want to discuss certain changes to an article ("Wikipedia: Talk Page Guidelines," n.d.). Large amounts of posts can serve as an indicator of controversies related to the article in question – in particular, disagreement among editors on references or on the neutrality of other editors ("Wikipedia: A Researcher's Guide to Discussion Pages," n.d.).

As Table 6 demonstrates, different versions of Wikipedia showed different dynamics of interaction. While the English and Russian articles contained relatively large amounts of edits compared to the articles in Ukrainian, these did not always result in a larger amounts of views. The same was true when comparing the number of edits and posts on the discussion pages: for instance, the Russian article on L'viv was edited more often, but discussed less frequently than the English one. A discussion page was absent for the Ukrainian article of Kyiv and, in general, both Ukrainian articles witnessed the least amounts of edits. However, the lack of editing did not diminish the amount of attention received: for instance, the Ukrainian article on L'viv was the most frequently visited of all three articles on the topic.

Table 6. Numerical summaries of user interactions with Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L'viv)

	Kyiv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Views	94 350	51 000	202 625
Edits	92	56	280
Posts	4	0	33

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[39] For an example of edit wars resolutions in the case of contentious pasts see works by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), Dounaevsky (2013), and Kaprans (2015).

L'viv articles			
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Views	57 838	95 007	55 673
Edits	133	125	312
Posts	3	5	78

In contrast to Wikipedia articles about recent traumatic events such as mass protests (Ferron & Massa, 2011) or terrorist attacks (Pentzold, 2009), the examination of articles about the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv indicated a limited amount of active participation on the part of internet users, especially when compared with viewing activity. In some cases – such as the Ukrainian L'viv article – the level of so-called "passive" involvement (i.e. views) was rather high, though it did not translate into active participation such as editing or discussing. This observation falls outside of Pentzold's (2009) framework of cultural memory formation, which was applied to earlier studies of Wikipedia representation of the London bombings and the Arab Spring (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Ferron & Massa, 2011a): according to his framework, Wikipedia facilitates the transmission of communicative memory into stable cultural representations by allowing the encyclopedia's editors to actively discuss and share their views on the past through discussion and edit pages, with the final result of producing a stable narrative of the past.

One possible explanation for these distinctions between representation of more recent (i.e. the Arab Spring) and less recent (i.e. the Second World War) events on Wikipedia is the lack of real-time memorialization in the latter cases. Unlike memories of recent events, which are converted into Wikipedia articles "within minutes" ("Wikipedia: About," 2016) of their occurrence, Second World War memories in Wikipedia do not appear spontaneously, but are documented according to existing secondary sources. In the case of the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv, the transition between communicative and cultural memory which, according to Pentzold (2009), occurs on Wikipedia, has already taken place; this, however, does not mean that various online communities will interpret it the same way. The lack of discussion and minimal amount of edits in the Ukrainian Wikipedia articles may be taken as an indicator of an existing consensus on these particular episodes of the past, originating from a greater familiarity with the history of the Second World War in Ukraine. The opposite situation can be found in the English Wikipedia, where users are less familiar – and less burdened – with that particular past and, therefore, perhaps, feel freer to explore and discuss it.

The modes of interaction involved in Second World War memory practices on Wikipedia differ from those observed in the context of more recent traumatic events. Unlike iconic episodes of our time – such as 9/11 or the demonstrations on Tahrir square – which are still discussed and explored on a

regular basis, in attempts to comprehend and localize them in the contemporary context, events of the Second World War are invoked by Wikipedia users at specific moments in time. More often then not, memories of the Second World War remain outside of that domain which Aleida Assmann (2011) labeled as "functional memory" – a set of active and identity-shaping recollections of past – but, rather, belong to the realm of storage memory, which is activated during certain times of year, or in reaction to some prominent event. At those particular moments, memory about prominent Second World War episodes is experienced in a passive – almost ceremonial – way, which rarely involves active participation in the form, for instance, of editing or discussing the past.

Patterns of interaction. In this section I review data on both passive and active forms of user interaction with Wikipedia articles, in order to identify regular (e.g. anniversary dates or commemorative practices) and irregular (e.g. regime changes or international conflicts) factors which influence interactions with Second World War memory on Wikipedia. For this purpose, I examined the annual dynamics of users' interactions with Wikipedia articles on a month-to-month basis, and looked for correlations with anniversary months: May/June for the L'viv articles and May/November for the Kyiv articles. Of all three indicators, only view counts provide enough information for the analysis of dynamics on a day-to-day basis, so I used them to check if an increase in these articles' views corresponds to exact anniversary dates: June 30 (the German seizure of L'viv) for the L'viv articles, November 6 (the Red Army's capture of Kyiv) for the Kyiv articles, and May 8–9 (Victory Day in Western/Eastern Europe) for both of these.

Tables 7 and 8 show that passive forms of interaction (i.e., viewing a particular article) were closely correlated with anniversary dates. Peaks of views occurred during anniversary months in all Kyiv articles and two of the L'viv articles – the Ukrainian and the English ones. In some cases these peaks were significant, such as, for instance, in November 2011, when the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia witnessed more than 800 views, constituting 28% of its total views for that year. Day-to-day examination, however, suggests that anniversary dates and monthly peaks of views did not necessarily coincide. Both the Russian and Ukrainian articles on Kyiv show a relation between monthly peaks and the anniversary date in November, but only the Russian article experienced the largest amount of views on the anniversary dates in May. The peaks of views for the L'viv articles did not correlate with the anniversary dates in May, but such correlations were present for the month of June in the case of the Ukrainian article.

Table 7. Anniversary dynamics for Wikipedia views (Kyiv articles)

Year	Date of peak		Date of supposed anniversary		Number of views during peak		Number of views per supposed anniversary		Average number of views	
	English Wikipedia									
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2008	05.05	11.11	08.05	06.11	70	89	48	61	51	52
2009	20.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	205	89	69	86	70	56
2010	09.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	92	130	65	101	67	72
2011	13.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	92	130	71	130	63	79
2012	15.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	156	109	99	96	87	74
2013	09.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	103	304	82	304	81	93
2014	09.05	04.11	08.05	06.11	130	141	111	136	95	76
2015	02.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	153	111	106	111	78	68
	Russian Wikipedia									
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2010	23.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	23	175	-	175	16	21
2011	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	66	242	66	242	21	22
2012	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	60	179	60	179	22	41
2013	29.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	379	1980	320	1980	98	294
2014	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	250	940	250	940	90	136
2015	05.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	173	842	164	842	89	136
	Ukrainian Wikipedia									
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2010	-	06.11	-	06.11	-	17	-	17	-	6
2011	10.05	13.11	09.05	06.11	13	66	9	43	6	26
2012	31.05	05.11	09.05	06.11	140	83	48	82	23	32
2013	09.05	04.11	09.05	06.11	71	1582	71	1125	28	225
2014	14.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	95	195	58	195	41	51
2015	21.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	131	171	73	171	56	50

These distinctions in the ways users interact with Wikipedia indicate the varying degrees of significance of certain memories among users of different language versions of the encyclopedia. Russian Wikipedia users were the only ones who clearly identified the Battle for Kyiv as an integral part of the Great Victory – celebrated on May 9 – and consider it an event of substantial importance, as shown by the repeated peaks of views on the anniversary dates. The same pattern of interaction was observed in the Ukrainian L'viv article, which is visited in massive numbers on the anniversary date, June 30. Both cases can be viewed as evidence of online acts of memory, which are repeated regularly every year.

Table 8. Anniversary dynamics for Wikipedia views (L'viv articles)

Year	Date of peak		Date of supposed anniversary		Number of views during peak		Number of views per supposed anniversary		Average number of views	
English Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2008	09.05	18.06	08.05	30.06	15	36	5	4	7	12
2009	13.05	11.06	08.05	30.06	15	25	7	8	6	7
2010	15.05	04.06	08.05	30.06	19	17	11	9	8	7
2011	18.05	30.06	08.05	30.06	32	77	11	77	16	18
2012	30.05	11.06	08.05	30.06	97	43	26	30	21	40
2013	23.05	06.06	08.05	30.06	41	29	26	2	19	17
2014	05.05	30.06	08.05	30.06	101	62	69	62	58	35
2015	27.05	01.06	08.05	30.06	35	27	34	22	24	16
Russian Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2010	08.05	05.06	09.05	30.06	60	15	24	8	14	5
2011	10.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	88	105	66	105	32	19
2012	13.05	01.06	09.05	30.06	20	48	12	28	11	11
2013	10.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	59	117	36	117	25	24
2014	09.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	117	88	117	88	63	40
2015	04.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	101	69	55	69	40	20
Ukrainian Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2008	09.05	12.06	09.05	30.06	11	7	11	2	4	3
2009	27.05	16.05	09.05	30.06	17	57	5	12	8	11
2010	01.05	04.06	09.05	30.06	13	9	10	5	7	4
2011	31.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	39	58	9	58	13	16
2012	07.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	20	19	7	19	11	11
2013	21.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	82	316	54	316	48	62
2014	12.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	77	202	42	202	47	45
2015	20.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	101	324	39	324	48	50

Anniversaries, however, were not the only factor influencing interactions of Wikipedia users with Second World War memories. The data on article views pointed to the influence of external factors, in particular ones related to memory politics in Ukraine. Illustrative of this influence was the dramatic increase in the number of views of the L'viv articles in the Ukrainian and English versions of Wikipedia after the granting of the title of Hero of Ukraine to Stepan Bandera, in January 2010. Until that time, both articles had received much less attention, and the peaks of their viewing occurred at the end of summer/beginning of autumn – fact which allows us to suspect that many users had confused the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state in June 1941 with the Declaration of Ukrainian Independence in August 1991. However, the controversial decision made by then President of Ukraine Victor

Yushchenko to grant Bandera the title of Hero, was followed by a growth in users' interest in the Ukrainian and English articles about the past event, establishing distinct peaks of views during the anniversary date in June.

Another example of the influence of external factors on patterns of user interaction with Wikipedia was found in the Kyiv articles, which experienced a significant increase in the number of views in November 2013, on occasion of the 70th anniversary of the city's capture by the Red Army. This change was particularly illustrative in the case of the Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedias, where the average number of views for the anniversary month of November increased seven-fold compared to the previous year. Such a change was related to the public celebrations of the anniversary both in Ukraine and Russia, which were extensively covered by mainstream media in both countries; by contrast, the lack of attention towards the event in Anglophone mainstream media can explain the lack of significant changes in user interaction patterns in the English Kyiv article.

In contrast to view counts, active forms of interaction – i.e. edits and comments – seemed to be less dependent on anniversary dates, showing, rather, numerous peaks at different times of the year in all three language versions of Wikipedia. This was particularly true for discussion posts: because of the small amount of user contributions to discussion pages, which were completely absent for the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia, the available data were too limited to connect increases in comments on the articles' content with any particular event. The second active form of interactions – edits – provided a bit more information: regular increases of edits in the Kyiv articles were observed in November for all three Wikipedia versions – Russian, Ukrainian and English. Similar peaks were found in the editing of the L'viv articles in May, though in this case only for the Russian and English versions.

The limited nature of active contributions to the Kyiv and L'viv articles differentiates them from Wikipedia pages which deal with more recent traumatic events. Unlike articles about 9/11 or the London bombings (Pentzold, 2009), Wikipedia pages dealing with the two episodes of the Second World War experienced more erratic trends of active contributions from the side of Wikipedia editors. These active contributions fit only to a limited extent into the framework of anniversary dates: as opposed to view counts, edits and posts are less predictable and arguably less motivated by the proximity to the anniversary date of the event.

However, the analysis of active interactions within Wikipedia frames can be of particular interest when dealing with the processes *opposite* to commemoration. My study suggests that Wikipedia can be subjected not only to processes of deliberate remembrance, but also of deliberate forgetting – the process which Andreas Huyssen labeled as "cultural amnesia" (1995). According to Huyssen, memory and amnesia should always be considered together, as both phenomena are constantly present in different spheres of human life, including politics and culture; Huyssen (1995, p. 9) also argues that

technological advancement, in particular the development of communication technology, has a profound impact on how the past is remembered, and forgotten, today[40].

In the case of Wikipedia, the dialectics of remembrance and forgetting can be traced by looking not only for interactions with memory narratives which are present on the platform, but also for ones which are absent. For instance, of all six articles, only the L'viv article in the Russian Wikipedia had not experienced view increase during the anniversary months. Unlike the Ukrainian and English articles, which, after 2010, experienced peaks of annual – and, in some cases, monthly – activity around their anniversaries, the Russian article did not indicate such a change. Instead, it continued to follow its own dynamics of commemoration, which differed from what can be assumed to be the regular Wikipedia pattern.

One possible explanation for this divergent pattern can be drawn from the work of memory expert Paul Connerton on the different kinds of collective forgetting (2008). Of all seven types of forgetting, one particular kind – forgetting as a "humiliated silence" – is of particular interest for my study. Connerton describes this as a mass silence, and a "widespread pattern of behavior in civil society" (2008, p. 67). Two western European examples of such mass silence caused by collective shame are the memory of the bombings of German cities towards the end of the Second World War, and Western European societies' lack of acknowledgment of the mutilated veterans from the First World War. The seizure of L'viv can also be viewed as fitting such a pattern: unlike the Ukrainian discourse on the June 30 events, which emphasizes the heroic – even martyr-like – restoration of the Ukrainian state, the Russian interpretation of that particular episode focuses on other aspects of the story.

The sense of betrayal from the side of a "brotherly nation" is also present in the Soviet/Russian narration of the June 30 events, emphasizing that only traitors could ally with the Nazi regime at such a fateful hour of struggle against foreign aggression (see, for instance, Maslovskiy (1991), Chyev (2006), Dyukov (2007)). That feeling coincides with the memory of the humiliating defeats suffered in 1941, which caused incredible human and territorial losses: this subject had remained a taboo topic almost until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What was worse, the seizure of L'viv in 1941 became for Soviet Union not only a humiliating defeat, but also provided evidence of the crimes the Soviet authorities had committed in Western Ukrainian prisons (Musial, 2000).

Attempts to forget past humiliations result in specific dynamics of commemorative activities, which in this case differentiated the Russian article on the seizure of L'viv from the Ukrainian and English ones. In the case of the Russian article, an increase of views occurred in October: it can be

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[40] For more information on the phenomenon of cultural amnesia, see works by Bertman (2000), Young and Braziel (2007), Breyer (2007), Connerton (2008).

argued that these peaks corresponded to the celebration of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army days in Western Ukraine, which were extensively covered in Russian media, online and offline.

The analysis of different forms of interactions in Wikipedia indicates that in the case of the Second World War, viewings of articles' content are most likely to coincide with anniversary dates. The predominance of such passive interactions suggests that the framework used for previous research on memory dynamics in Wikipedia, whether in the context of the recent traumatic memories of the 2004 London bombings (Pentzold, 2009) or of the Arab spring (Ferron & Massa, 2011), is less suitable for those memories which have already experienced a transition from communicative to cultural memory, as is the case for the Second World War. The concept of storage memory – i.e. memory which stores currently nonfunctional cultural knowledge (Assmann 2011) – seems to be better applicable in that case, but its application in the study of Wikipedia memories may challenge the initial assumption about the universal and neutral nature of this form of remembrance. However, it also gives us an opportunity to question if any kind of universal memory can exist – or should one perhaps talk about Russian, English or Ukrainian universal memories?

Verbal interactions. In the last part of this chapter, I examined the contents of "Talk" pages associated with the articles on the two episodes. As it was already mentioned earlier, these pages offer "the ability to discuss articles and other issues with other Wikipedians" ("Wikipedia: Tutorial/Talk Pages," n.d.); consequently, the use of these pages often facilitates communication among editors who want to discuss changes to specific articles. In the context of Wikipedia articles related to contentious memories, as Dounaevsky (2013, p. 133) notes in her study of memory wars on Wikipedia, "Talk" pages provide "extremely rich source material" for examining online memory conflicts by providing opportunities to trace the course of each conflict in details, including individual contributions of Wikipedia users. Thus, in this section I attempted to investigate both which aspects of the events were viewed as particularly controversial by Wikipedia editors and how different editorial communities searched for consensus regarding contentious pasts.

As already noted in the earlier section, the amount of verbal interactions between Wikipedia users on the two events' pages was not found to be significant. Table 6, which summarizes data on user interaction with the articles in question, indicates that articles in the Russian and Ukrainian Wikipedias provoked less active discussions than the ones in the English Wikipedia. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the majority of verbal interactions occurred before the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in 2013: in the case of English article on L'viv, for instance, the period of the most active discussion was in 2008, whereas the Russian article on Kyiv was most actively discussed in November 2013, but a few weeks before the outbreak of the crisis, in relation to the 70th anniversary of the seizure of city by the Red Army.

The differences in consensus-building strategies employed in the different Wikipedia language versions can be illustrated in the ways editorial communities dealt with the main controversies related to the two historical episodes. In the case of the Kyiv articles in the Russian and English Wikipedias, these controversies were related to the counting of fatalities on both the Soviet and German sides. In the Russian article, a number of editors expressed dissatisfaction with the article's tally of fallen Soviet soldiers, which they considered too high: for instance, an anonymous editor who called himself Andrey left the following comment on December 3, 2012: "*Znachit, nemcy v bitve za Kiev poterjali 389 ubitymi? Bred sivoj kobyly, pardon. Kak vsegda, nashih zavyshaem, a ihnih zanizhaem... Chto zh oni proigrali-to?*" [So, that means the Germans lost 389 soldiers killed in the Battle for Kyiv? It is just nonsense, sorry. As always, we heighten our losses and decrease theirs...How did they lose then?] ("Obsuzhdenie: Kievskaja Nastupatel'naja Operacija," n.d.). Similarly, another user, D2306, criticized in a post from July 3, 2013, the use of German sources for estimating casualties on the German side, which, according to D2306, were much higher than the ones mentioned in the article "*Sushhestvujujut umniki, kotorye otkryli dlja sebja sajt s 10-dnevnimi raportami vermahta i vse, kopirujut vezde kak zheleznyj fakt. Proverit' teoriju s faktami oni ne udosuzhivajutsja. Ochevidnyj lag vo vremeni, kogda nemcy schitajut paru nedel' poteri, i ih pozzhe pisat', kogda kazalos' by uzhe boev net - jetimi 'jekspertami' ignoritsja*" [There are some smartasses who found a web site with 10-day casualty reports for Wermachts and now think that it is it, so they cite those reports everywhere as an ironclad fact. They do not care to compare their theories with actual facts. The obvious time lag, when Germans counted losses for a couple of weeks, and then listed these losses – even while the battle is over already – is ignored by these 'experts'] ("Obsuzhdenie: Kievskaja Nastupatel'naja Operacija," n.d.).

These kinds of emotional expressions found on the "Talk" page of the Russian article were contrasted by more reserved reactions in the respective section of the English article on the Battle of Kyiv. While there, too, the question of fatalities, as well as of the decisiveness of the battle, ignited discussions, these were framed differently. For instance, the user Counterstrike69 initiated a discussion on the matter by posting the following question on March 8, 2007: "Any ideas on the casualties on both side?" ("Talk: Battle of Kiev (1943)," n.d.). Such a formulation contrasted significantly with more affective statements by editors of the Russian version, who were more interested not in the number of casualties *per se*, but why the encyclopaedia presented Soviet fatalities as larger than those from the German side. Similarly, the discussion of the decisiveness of the battle initiated by the anonymous user Kurt, opened with a call for "civilized discussion" which should have been able to clarify whether or not the Battle for Kyiv should be referenced as a decisive combat operation ("Talk: Battle of Kiev (1943)," n.d.).

These differences in the way the same episode was approached in various Wikipedia versions had

immediate consequences for the interactions between editors. In the Russian article, the majority of comments left on the "Talk" page were strong statements leaving little space for discussion; consequently, instead of dialogue, the Russian "Talk" page mostly hosted a collection of isolated monologues. Under these circumstances, the idea of collaborative production of the past seems dubious; instead, the content of the article itself seemed to be more dependent on the decisions of a few editors who were not particularly interested in debating their views on the event with others. By contrast, the English "Talk" page actually hosted some discussions which included attempts to accommodate different points of view and reach a degree of consensus.

These observations were further supported by the examination of the comments for the L'viv articles. As in the case of Kyiv, various language versions tended to deal with the same controversial aspects; in the case of L'viv, it was mainly the title of the Act itself. Both in Ukrainian and Russian versions a number of comments referred to the restoration vs. declaration debate, which has been briefly noted in earlier sections. For instance, user Ragnarok left the following comment in the Ukrainian version on February 8, 2015: "*U dokumenti zh napysano – 'Akt progholoshhennja Ukrajinsjkoji Derzhavy.' Chomu stattja nazyvajetjsja 'Akt vidnovlennja Ukrajinsjkoji Derzhavy?' Stattja ne je istorychnoju. Ce ne skiljky vikistattja, a skiljky vikidzherela ta vikicytaty*" [The document states – 'The Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state.' Why is the article titled 'The Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state?' This article is not historical. It is not a Wiki article, but a Wiki source or Wiki citation] ("Obhovorennia:Akt Vidnovlennia Ukrainskoi Derzhavy," n.d.). In a similar manner, user Abarmot criticized the attempts to re-name the Russian article by referencing to the photo of the Act's original version which was published in a Western Ukrainian newspaper; according to Abarmot, it is "*...jasno vidno, chto ni o kakom 'vosstanovlenii' rechi ne idjot*" [...it is clearly visible that it is not possible to speak of any 'restoration'] ("Obsuzhdenie:Akt Provozglashenija Ukrainskogo Gosudarstva (1941)," n.d.).

Similar to the Russian Kyiv article, comments left to the Ukrainian and Russian L'viv articles tended to be rather harsh and left little space for acknowledging different interpretations. This monologue-style approach to discussion led to a lack of incentive to discuss historical matters; consequently, changes made to the articles seemed to be the result of individual decisions and not collaborative work. Again, these verbal interactions contrasted with the ones in the English article on L'viv, where discussions between editors were more strongly encouraged and, thus, developed in a more constructive manner. An example of such approach is the post by Greggerr from March 11, 2008, who initiated a discussion on the title of the English article: "When I first read the title I thought it would be about the events of 1990–91. I think the title needs to be more precise. It could be Proclamation of Ukrainian Statehood or Act of Proclamation of Ukrainian Statehood according to the actual name of the act. It should not be confused with Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine

and Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine" ("Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act," n.d.).

At the same time, not all debates in the English Wikipedia were as peaceful as the one just noted. An examination of the "Talk" page of the Act article in English pointed to the presence of a number of comments questioning the neutrality of the article and the historical accuracy of the information cited within it. The majority of those comments were left by the user Jo0doe[41], who condemned other editors for what he saw as "clear attempts to use WP as a Nazi collaborators propaganda" ("Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act," n.d.). In his attempts to "denazify" the article, Jo0doe engaged in an edit war with two other editors – Bandurist and Faustian – which resulted in both sides blaming the other for hoaxing and vandalism.

The way the edit wars ran their course in the English Wikipedia was rather different from the Ukrainian and Russian ones. Unlike the latter two versions, where users tended to present their arguments axiomatically and without references to the encyclopedia's rules, debates in the English Wikipedia involved frequent citations of Wikipedia's policies (commonly abbreviated as WPs), such as WP: NPOV, WP: RS, WP: ISNOT, and so on. An example of such quasi-academic debating style can be found in a comment left by Jo0doe on 5 September, 2008, in the debate with Faustian, in relation to discrepancies between different versions of the Act "[these discrepancies] hided trough WP:bad faith tactic applied for a long time and in many accuracies by user:Faustian in article UPA – by adding ref to not RS or not WP:V or book which does not exist or which never was at editor possession" ("Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act," n.d.)

Despite a more sophisticated code of conduct in the English Wikipedia, the debate about the seizure of L'viv quickly turned into interpersonal attacks. Both Faustian and Bandurist expressed doubts in their opponent's ability to contribute to the encyclopedia on the proper level by pointing out to "numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes" ("Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act," n.d.) committed by Jo0doe. In his own turn, Jo0doe argued that his opponents were using vandalism and selective quoting of historical sources to whitewash the OUN and "to pose Nazi temporary project as exceptional event and collaborators as a victims" ("Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act," n.d.). The obvious unwillingness of both sides to make concessions or revise their views led to the same result as in the case of English article in Srebrenica (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012, p. 36): the intervention of one of Wikipedia's power editors, who was able to calm the passions; however, the decisive end of the confrontation came with Jo0doe's ban for persistent disruption and tendentious editing ("Block log," n.d.).

The examination of comments on the "Talk" pages of the articles related to the two episodes

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[41] For more information on Jo0doe's activity in the context of history-writing on Wikipedia see works by Dounaevsky (2013) and Kaprans (2016).

indicates the limited use of Wikipedia's potential for transnational dialogue vis-à-vis contentious memories. Instead of engaging in discussion, users tended to produce their reactions to the Second World War events as monologues, usually presented axiomatically and often containing strong emotional judgments. Not only does this tendency leave little space for any actual exchange of opinions, but it also suggests that articles are often produced not as a result of collaborative history-writing as Dounaevsky (2013) suggested, but, instead, experience a disproportionate influence of certain users, who are not necessarily interested in cooperating with other editors. At the same time, the scope of memory appropriation in the context of the modern political situation and, especially, the Ukraine crisis, a process which was a rather strong feature in the case of YouTube and VKontakte, remained relatively low in the case of Wikipedia. This distinction can be traced back to the Wikipedia's status as a "knowledge site" that encourages less multilinearity in the way narratives are presented; while users still can circumvent it in a varous ways (e.g., by linking news pieces and initiating the discussion), I observed only a few such cases (mostly, in the context of the English L'viv article) in the course of my study. Consequently, the majority of discussions on Wikipedia focused on matters of historical accuracy and avoided drawing parallels between the past and the present to the same extent users of other social media platforms did.

2.4. Conclusions

My observations suggest that the ways in which the Second World War is represented in Wikipedia are largely driven by existing cultural constructs – first and foremost, specific national memories of the conflict. The presence of profound differences in the ways the Second World War is remembered in post-socialist states, in particular Ukraine and Russia, translates into rather divergent representations of the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv across different language versions of Wikipedia. The Russian Wikipedia, as we have seen, promotes an interpretation of the Second World War which is steeped in the narrative of the "Great Patriotic War"; by contrast, the Ukrainian and, to a certain extent, the English Wikipedia versions, rely on more revisionist trends in war historiography in their representations of the two events under study. These differences permeate Wikipedia narratives of the Second World War on different levels, varying from the articles' titles and visual images deployed in them, to intra-Wikipedia links and descriptive categories which bring different parts of the encyclopedia into an interconnected whole; together, these elements promote images of the past which demonstrate the existence of significant differences in the ways the Second World War is remembered in different parts of the post-socialist space.

Similarly, the patterns of interaction with the Wikipedia articles examined point to the complex interplay between public remembrance and digital media in post-socialist countries. The rise of interest

in Second World War narratives on Wikipedia coinciding with the anniversaries of the respective historical episodes can be viewed as further evidence that, in the post-digital age, the line between offline and online developments is increasingly blurred. While in the majority of cases Wikipedia activity seems to be reactive rather than proactive vis-à-vis developments in traditional media or in the offline public sphere, an analysis of user interactions with Wikipedia narratives points to the presence of processes which can be related to intra-platform dynamics. One particular example of those processes is represented in the collective amnesia phenomenon we have seen in the case of the Russian Wikipedia, where users try to forget the seizure of L'viv by Germans and the subsequent declaration of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state.

The chapter's findings suggests that different language versions of Wikipedia promote divergent views on the Second World War. These differences depend mostly on the way these events are interpreted by national historiographies, but some of them can be also attributed to personal preferences of Wikipedia's authors. Even though the encyclopedia explicitly positions itself as a platform for dialogue and consensus-building, my findings – similar to those of a number of other studies (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2013; Massa & Scrinzi, 2013) – question the assumption that Wikipedia's representation of history is neutral, and demonstrates that the encyclopedia provides, instead, a significant amount of opportunities for "clear political stances and rhetorical manipulation" (Božović, Bošković & Trifunović, 2014, p. 86). The examination of articles on the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv suggests that Wikipedia does not necessarily help to negotiate historical controversies related to the Second World War, and, in some cases, can even exacerbate them, by providing different views on a contentious past. At the same time, however, while the use of Wikipedia does not always lead to the formation of new, cosmopolitan narratives of the past, it does lead to a democratization of remembrance, by offering a public space in which different narratives can be compared and (potentially) discussed.

YouTube and Second World War memory

In her work on the use of photography to represent war, Susan Sontag argues that remembering conflicts is "not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture" (2003, p. 89). While this argument can be applied to nearly all of the conflicts which have taken place since the beginning of the mass distribution of photographic technology in the mid-19th century (Keller, 2001, p. 251), the Second World War occupies a special place among all these conflicts. According to David Bathrick, the employment of visuals – both in the form of static photographs and moving pictures – is an "absolutely integral" (2008, p. 1) practice in the representation and interpretation of the Second World War and the atrocities which took place in the course of it. Audiovisual materials have not only served as evidence documenting war crimes during and after the war, but have also allowed the post-war generations to witness the wartime horrors personally. The development of audiovisual technology in the '60s and the '70s thus became an integral part of the "memory boom" (Winter, 2000) which brought memory of Second World War, and in particular of the Holocaust, into North American and Western European mainstream societies (Hirsch, 2004, p. 4).

In their works on the use of visuals and war memories, Sontag and Bathrick mostly devote their attention to Western memories of the Second World War, but it is beyond doubt that similar processes of memory remediation have taken place in the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc. Here, the crystallisation of the Great Patriotic War narrative was also followed, in the '60s and '70s, by a rapid growth in the number of audio-visual testimonies of the Second World War, particularly in the form of war movies (Youngblood, 1996; Youngblood, 2010; Talaver, 2013). Since then, Second World War memory has become increasingly mediatised, both in Western and in Eastern Europe,[42] leading to the production of numerous films of various genres and the establishment of massive audiovisual collections of historical materials, which, combined, have resulted in "a globalisation of discourses" (Huyssen, 2003, p. 13) about the war.

The advent of digital technology and its development in recent decades has led to the replacement of analogue mass media by digital media as the main source of audiovisual memories. According to Hoskins (2009), this post-broadcast age[43] is characterised by an increased connectivity

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[42] The scholarship on the mediatization of Second World War memory is too extensive to name all the recent studies relevant to this subject matter; however, the following have been particularly relevant to this study: de Keghel (2005). Youngblood (2007), Noakes (2013), Lassila (2013), and Ramsay (2015).

[43] Also known as the post-network era, which, according to Lotz, is characterized by "the break from a dominant network-era experience in which viewers lacked much control over when and where to view" (2007, p. 15). A number of different factors influenced the transition from the broadcast to the post-broadcast state, including increased possibilities for amateur productions of audio-visual materials, new advertisement strategies, and the advancement of digital technology which changed existing patterns of consumption as well as distribution of content.

between forms, agents, and discourses of memory, leading to unprecedented opportunities for archiving and retrieving the past. However, the exact implications of this "democratisation of memory" (Haskins, 2007, p. 418) for the Second World War remembrance culture remain unclear, especially when it comes to post-socialist countries, where war memories are extremely politicized and controversial.

In order to investigate how digital media and audiovisual memories interact with one another in the context of a contentious European past, this chapter examines how the two episodes of the Second World War chosen for the study are remembered on YouTube. The YouTube platform's impact on the remembrance of past and present conflicts is increasingly recognized: not only is it the world's largest video-sharing platform, used by millions of users to publish and watch videos, but it also allows individuals to comment on what they watch. Such a combination turns the platform into a veritable "portal of cultural memory" (Hilderbrand, 2007, p. 54) which provides ordinary citizens with an opportunity to share their views on the past, by making and disseminating audiovisual memorabilia, and to express their agreement or disagreement with existing memory practices, by commenting upon others' creations. YouTube's strong emphasis on the audiovisual – and not simply visual – component of digital data also makes it particularly relevant for investigating the acoustic mode of remembrance, which, as Carolyn Birdsall (2016, p. 135) argues, until now remains a blind spot in academic scholarship. Combined with the significant popularity of YouTube in Ukraine,[44] these features render the platform a powerful outlet for the remediation of memories, including those related to the Second World War, in this particular post-socialist state.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature concerning YouTube and collective memory: here I devote special attention to studies which tackle not YouTube-based collective memory *per se*, but specifically commemorations of past conflicts on the platform. I will then go on to describe the research methodology employed to detect and analyze YouTube audiovisual tributes to the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv. There follows an overview of the findings, which opens with the discussion of different genres of audiovisual memories of the Second World War; these genres vary from self-produced requiems, mourning the suffering and glorifying the heroism of those involved in the event, to clips of TV shows which instrumentalize the past, and amateur recordings documenting public historical reenactments. It continues with an examination of the different ways YouTube users interact with these audiovisual testimonies, including both verbal and non-verbal ways of interacting. The chapter concludes that YouTube is frequently used for the propagation of nationalistic interpretations of the past in Ukraine and in Russia, but, at the same time, much like Wikipedia, it

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[44] According to Alexa.com data from 2016, YouTube is the third most popular website both in Ukraine ("Top sites in Ukraine," n.d.) and in Russia ("Top Sites in Russia," n.d.).

entertains the potential to democratize collective remembrance of the Second World War.

3.1. Literature review

An impressive number of studies exists which examine the use of audiovisual materials in the context of Second World War remembrance. However, these focus mainly on the remediation of war memories from "old," "traditional" media, such as war movies (Hirsch, 2004; Youngblood, 2010; Gershenson, 2013), audiovisual testimonies (Langer, 1991; Simon, 1998; Shenker, 2015), and documentary films (Bolshakov, 1950; Hicks, 2012; Harris, 2015). In contrast, not much research has been done on strictly digital media and Second World War memory: a few article-length exceptions include works by de Bruyn (2010), Trubina (2010), and Gray (2014). Even fewer studies consider the audiovisual dimension of Second World War online memory; furthermore, the majority of these works focus on one particular aspect of Second World War memory, namely the remembrance of the Holocaust.[45] A number of reasons can be brought forth to explain such a delay in recognizing the growing impact of digital technology on Second World War memory, including the complexities associated with digital data collection and the analysis of multi-media memory; however, one particular reason, which may be significant in the case of memories related to mass atrocities, is the potential fear of "desacralising" (de Bruyn, 2010, p. 59) these traumatic narratives by considering them in the commodified environment of digital media, a context which is also often characterized by an aggressive communication culture.[46]

YouTube's impact on collective remembrance, though, is becoming increasingly acknowledged. According to Dirk Uffelmann (2014, p. 17), YouTube constitutes a distinct digital memory genre, characterised by the specific "technical conditions as well as rhetorical rules and cultural particularities" I have mentioned above: publishing and storing materials, as well as allowing for individual commentary. A number of studies (Bloom & Jonhston, 2010; Chau, 2010; Waldron, 2013) consider YouTube as an example of online participatory culture;[47] however, Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, in their extensive study of the platform (2009), provide a critical assessment of its participatory potential, showing that it can actually lead to the formalization of amateur productions, by propagating select patterns which become dominant when users are led to assume that these patterns will make their video clips more popular and successful.

While the criticism expressed by Burgess and Green should certainly be acknowledged, it is hardly questionable that YouTube's architecture provides ordinary web users with an opportunity to

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[45] See, for instance, the study by Anna Reading (2003) on the use of audiovisual technology for Holocaust commemorations and the work by Steve Jones and Paige Gibson (2012) on YouTube clips and Holocaust memory.

[46] Indeed, a number of existing studies consider digital media mainly in the context of Holocaust denial (Rock, 2001; Darnell, 2010).

[47] The concept of participatory culture was introduced by Henry Jenkins, who identified it as a culture which stimulates artistic expression and civic engagement by endorsing "creating and sharing creations" (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 5).

both share their view on the past, by disseminating audiovisual materials, and to express their agreement or disagreement with existing memory practices, by commenting upon others' creations. Consequently, as Knudsen and Stage argue, YouTube "enables the creation of a democratized memory practice" (2013, p. 432). Knudsen and Stage also argue that those opportunities are particularly important in the case of war memories, which are often defined by a small selection of dominant discourses geared towards promoting national unity, and under those conditions the possibility of expressing "public commemorative disagreement" (2013, p. 432) can be viewed as an example of YouTube's democratising impact on the remembrance of past conflicts.

The idea of YouTube's democratising potential in the context of cultural remembrance is further developed by Steve Jones and Paige Gibson (2012) in their study of the "Dancing Auschwitz" YouTube video series[48]. Based on their analysis of a video triptych made by Australian artist Jane Korman and her father – a Holocaust survivor – Jones and Gibson claim that digital media provide an unprecedented opportunity to construct and develop collective memories (2012, p. 127), including those dealing with the atrocities of the Second World War. Similarly to Levy and Sznaider, who argue that digital technologies facilitate new forms of memory which "span territorial and linguistic borders" (2002, p. 91), Jones and Gibson view YouTube as a means of transcending traditional modes of war remembrance. By opening new spaces for memory interaction, they argue, YouTube expands the limits of remembrance, both for individuals and collectives, and creates new commemorative experiences which are much less susceptible to local memory politics and official narratives.

In contrast to these optimistic suggestions, Natalia Danilova, in her study of virtual memorials to British fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan (2014), argues that the use of digital media, in particular YouTube, can foreclose public discussion of ethical dilemmas by sustaining the mainstream interpretation of a contentious past. Similarly, Stephanie Benzaquen, in her study of audiovisual representation of the Khmer Rouge atrocities (2014), gives an even more pessimistic assessment of the interactions between YouTube and traumatic memories. According to Benzaquen, the platform's entertainment-oriented environment and the aggressiveness of some of its users turns it from being an active outlet for political opinions and historical interpretations into "a battlefield in transnational politics" (2014, p. 805). Finally, Paulo Drinot, in his study of the interplay of memory of the War in the Pacific and YouTube, further dismantles the idea of the platform as an outlet of cosmopolitan memory, arguing that instead of facilitating the production of new global narratives of the past, YouTube more often than not serves as an outlet for "ultra-nationalism inflected by virulent racism" (2011, p. 381).

These divergent evaluations call for the critical assessment, undertaken in this chapter, of

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[48] Original videos are available on Jane Korman's website (http://www.janekormanart.com/janekormanart.com/16.Dancing_Auschwitz/16.Dancing_Auschwitz.html)

YouTube's impact on Second World War memory, and especially in Eastern Europe, where, as has been pointed out earlier, digital media play an essential role in performing the past. By examining how Ukrainophone and Russophone users interact with Second World War memories on YouTube, the chapter tests both the optimistic and pessimistic assumptions listed above, by questioning the purposes behind these interactions, as well as their potential consequences. While it is hardly debatable that YouTube can, in theory, enrich commemorative experiences and expand the limits of Second World War remembrance, the current study strives to understand to what extent the platform is actually used for this purpose in the Ukrainian context, and whether or not it (also) can give space to less tolerant, or even downright instrumental, views of the past.

3.2. Methodology

To collect data for the study, I used YouTube's native search engine to work my way through the platform's huge collection of audiovisual material. On March 4, 2015, I employed two different search queries – "ljvivsjkyj poghrom 1941" and "l'vovskij pogrom 1941" (in Ukrainian and Russian, respectively; both are translated as "the L'viv pogrom 1941") – to search for videos which could be relevant to the L'viv case study. The same process was repeated on March 12, 2015, when I used two other queries – "bytva za Kyjiv 1943" and "bitva za Kiev 1943" (in Ukrainian and Russian; both translated as "the Battle for Kyiv 1943") – to find videos which would be relevant to the Kyiv case study. In neither case were YouTube's filters applied for the search, in order to avoid any limitations on data collection.

Despite the significant amount of videos which were returned through the use of the above queries, not all of them were relevant for this study. For instance, of 343 videos returned at the use of the L'viv queries, only a few dozen appeared pertinent to this analysis. The remaining videos were mostly related to other pogroms which took place in Eastern Europe, either during the Second World War (e.g. the Jassy or the Berdichev pogroms) or at the beginning of the 20th century (e.g. the Odessa or the Kyiv pogroms), or else to the activities of Ukrainian nationalists (particularly the Ukrainian Insurgent Army); such a wide range of results shows both how rich the selection of historical materials available through the platform is,[49] and how challenging the process of data collection on YouTube, using the platform's native search engine, can be.

In order to identify the videos which would be relevant for the selected case studies, I examined

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[49] One particularly interesting content grouping was related to the so-called "L'viv pogroms" of 2014, a series of attacks on administrative buildings in L'viv on February 18-19, during anti-government protests. While this finding rests outside the scope of this study, it does demonstrate how the memory of the Second World War is appropriated in Ukraine and Russia – and it could thus very well serve as the subject of a separate study on the use of historical references during the Ukraine crisis.

their descriptions as provided on YouTube. In those cases when descriptions were absent, I examined the video's content in order to decide whether or not it should be included in the study. In the end, I identified 40 videos which were explicitly related to the L'viv pogrom, and 50 videos directly related to the Battle of Kyiv.

Similarly to earlier studies, some of which I have mentioned above, on YouTube and traumatic memories (Knudsen & Stage, 2013; Benzaquen, 2014; Harju, 2014), I used web content analysis to examine how the platform was used for audiovisual commemoration of the two episodes of the Second World War on two levels: that of representation (i.e. how the event itself is presented on YouTube) and that of interaction (i.e. how YouTube users interact with the audiovisual representations of the event). In order to examine the first level, I explored the content of the videos, along with their descriptions, in order to understand how the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv are presented online, and what audiovisual genres are used to encode Second World War memory in the Web 2.0 environment.

For investigating the second level – user interactions with the audiovisual tributes on YouTube – I looked at how Ukrainophone and Russophone users respectively receive these audiovisual memories, by examining the different forms of feedback provided on the YouTube platform. While the majority of studies on YouTube and memory (Drinot, 2011; Jones & Gibson, 2012; Knudsen & Stage, 2013) explore how users interact with each other and with the audiovisual memories verbally – i.e. through the system of YouTube comments – the platform does in fact also enable non-verbal interactions, namely through its view count and "like" or "dislike" options. In this study I thus took both verbal and non-verbal forms of interactions into consideration to investigate Russophone and Ukrainophone user experience in relation to the two episodes, and whether or not their reactions are dependent on the specific audiovisual genre employed to communicate these on YouTube.

3.3. Findings

3.3.1. Representation

This section examines the audiovisual representations of the two episodes of the Second World War found on YouTube. Using web content analysis, I identified five genres of audiovisual testimonies which were employed by YouTube users to represent the capture of L'viv and of the seizure of Kyiv: requiems, documentaries, historical records, amateur reports, and shows. The majority of these genres are not unique to YouTube or to digital media in general;[50] however, the use of these audiovisual genres in the context of digital memory of the Second World War and/or war remembrance on YouTube currently remains under-investigated. Below I will explore precisely how each of these genres is used

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[50] See, for instance, the discussion of the most popular audiovisual YouTube genres in the work of Burgess and Green (2009).

for the remembrance of the two episodes, starting with the digital-born genre of the requiem.

Requiems. Requiems rank among one of the most interesting genres in war commemoration on YouTube, given that they employ digital technology in a number of creative ways to produce tributes to the victims of war atrocities. As their name suggests, requiems are videos which deal with death and sorrow. Unlike other genres, which are characterized by a significant uniformity in the way they structure the representation of the past, requiems tend to be more diverse and personalized. While the choice of content varies significantly among videos which can be grouped in this genre, the majority feature historical photos and/or footage, as well as fragments of contemporary documentaries, together with some explanatory texts which provide brief historical notes to the video. Requiems are often accompanied by music, which, in the cases studied, varied from old songs in Yiddish and mournful instrumental compositions, to Soviet military marches, to Russian heavy metal.

The focus on the glorious actions of the Red Army in the course of the Battle of Kyiv was a feature common to three out of four of the requiem videos related to the capture of Kyiv in 1943.[51] The majority of visuals used for the tributes in this category showed Soviet soldiers in action, inexorably moving forward, whereas Germans were usually shown retreating, or dead. Similarly, the corollary explanatory texts described the battle as a brilliant operation, perfectly executed by Soviet troops, which led to significant gains on the Eastern Front. The subject of Soviet losses, however, was almost completely ignored, both visually and textually.[52] Neither photos nor footage showed dead Soviet soldiers, and the only exact figure cited in the requiems which pertained to the Red Army was the number of soldiers who were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union; this particular choice of numbers for citation was found in the 2012 requiem video entitled "Bitva za Dnipro Shidnij Val" [Battle for the Dnieper – the Eastern Wall] (v4itel, 2012). In contrast, the only reference to Soviet losses among all the requiem videos which I have analyzed was found in the video entitled "6 Nojabrja 1943 Goda. Osvobozhdenie Kieva" [November 6, 1943. The liberation of Kyiv] (RMHS, 2014); the requiem did not provide any concrete numbers, but claimed that less than 1% of the Red Army soldiers who fought in the battle were killed. These estimations contrast sharply with some of the contemporary evaluations, according to which Soviet fatalities varied from 240 thousand (37%) (Korol, 2003) to 380 thousand (56%) (Ginda, 2010).

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[51] Three requiems which promoted a heroic interpretation of the Battle of Kyiv were the following: "Velikaja Otechestvennaja Vojna – Bitva za Dnepr (1943–1944)" [The Great Patriotic War – the Battle for the Dnieper (1943-1944)] (Ivliev, 2011), "Bitva za Dnipro. Shidnij val" [Battle for the Dnieper. The Eastern Wall] (v4itel, 2012), and "6 Nojabrja 1943 Goda. Osvobozhdenie Kieva" [November 6, 1943. The liberation of Kyiv] (RMHS, 2014). It is worth noting that even in their titles these requiems relied on Soviet memory tropes such as "the Great Patriotic War" and "the liberation of Kyiv.

[52] It is worth reiterating that the question of Soviet war fatalities remains controversial even today. During the Soviet period, the issue of human losses on the Soviet side was silenced; while during the Perestroika era discussion on the matter was initiated both in public and academic spheres, the evaluations still vary widely, from 26 million (Krivosheev, 1993) to 43 million (Sokolov, 1996).

Similarly, almost all of the eight requiems I examined which dealt with the seizure of L'viv by the Germans in 1941 followed the same structure; however, unlike the above mentioned requiems, which focused on the heroism of Soviet soldiers, the structure of the L'viv requiem videos centred on the subject of suffering – and, in fact, in many of the videos, a gradual increase in the amount of suffering presented to the viewer can be witnessed. The 2012 video entitled "Horrific Images of the 1941 L'viv Pogrom in Ukraine" (Reynolds, 2012) can be viewed as a model example of this approach. The video starts by showing historical footage of Jews cleaning up bodies in the prison's courtyard, and being humiliated as they work; the degree of abuse, however, is relatively mild at this point. The video then moves on to images of beatings, mainly of Jewish men pursued by angry crowds. Then, it proceeds to scenes depicting women being beaten – first clothed, and successively naked. The last few seconds of the video are reserved for images of dead bodies, which are presented as the final stage of the L'viv pogrom, thus completing the traumatic escalation in the requiem's narration.

The structure of gradually intensifying scenes of suffering is followed not only by requiems on the L'viv pogrom, but also by similar YouTube videos on other pogroms which I have watched in the course of the data collection (e.g. the Jassy and the Zhitomir pogroms), even if many of those videos were produced in different languages. The same structure was found in the Ukrainian video dedicated to the political prisoners killed by the NKVD in the Lonsky prison; in this case, however, the parallel with the pogrom videos bears additional implications. The video bearing the title "Memorialjnyj Muzej 'Tjurma na Loncjkogho'" [Memorial Museum 'The Lonsky Prison'] (ninamity, 2011) borrowed similar footage of Jews being beaten by the crowds, but followed it with images of bodies of Ukrainians killed in the prison. It thus, arguably, not only ignored the issue of the pogrom altogether, but also, at the same time, equaled Jewish suffering with the suffering of Ukrainians. Similarly, another requiem to the Ukrainian victims of the NKVD titled "Ljviv 1941 Tjurma 'Bryghidky'" [L'viv 1941 the 'Brygidki' Prison] (Antimoskovla, 2009) used the same footage of Jews clearing the bodies from the prison courtyard, but referred to them as Ukrainian relatives of the victims, trying the recover the bodies of their loved ones.

In the two latter cases, the use of the same structure could be considered an instance of theft of suffering – one which originates from what Wilfred Jilge (2006) has termed the ongoing "competition of victims" in Ukrainian society. At the same time, it can be suggested that this focus on pain – or martyr-like heroism in the case of the Battle of Kyiv video clips – can instead be viewed as one of the quintessential features of the requiem genre. Such a specific articulation is not accidental: my observations suggest that, despite involving the most sophisticated use of digital technology among all audiovisual genres identified during my analysis, requiems seem to be rely significantly on existing, traditional patterns of media representations of the Second World War. In fact, even where the L'viv

and Kyiv requiems do vary in composition and emphasis, this variation can be explained by the different traditions of war representation upon which they build. The origins of the L'viv requiems can be traced back to the tradition of Holocaust movies, which look into the past and emphasize the deaths and suffering (Hirsch, 2004, p. 18), whereas the Kyiv requiems re-create tropes from Soviet war cinema, which interpreted the Second World War as "a grandiose triumph achieved through the heroism of the Soviet people" (Talaver, 2013, p. 20). Thus, it can be argued that both the L'viv and Kyiv requiems attempted to provide their own specific interpretation of war atrocities and to rationalise these events in the context of Second World War memory, though reviving and recycling the latter's more stereotypical representations in the process.

In order to achieve the desired effects, the requiems tend to create a story which follows a certain logic, one which explains to the viewer what happened – though, significantly, failing to account for *why* it happened. This logic often leads to simplifications, not only in the description of the event, but also in simplified judgements which amount to "speaking for the victims" (Wiesel, 1989). In the case of the L'viv requiems, a certain hierarchy of suffering is imposed on the viewer, a hierarchy which suggests that humiliation is not as bad as abuse, that the suffering of men is not as bad as the suffering of women, and that death is the ultimate consequence of what has been shown to the viewer. Similarly, the Kyiv requiems also propose a hierarchy of meanings: the Great Victory and the selfless service to the Motherland trump the importance of an individual life, and indeed the very notion of individual, personal suffering is almost entirely absent in the Kyiv requiems.

While such simplifications might seem almost inevitable, a few of the requiems examined in my study suggest that the use of digital technology can also provide alternatives to the traditional representations of the Second World War. Unlike the majority of the Kyiv requiem videos, which articulated a sense of triumph and joy, there was one video clip which attempted to problematize the dominant Soviet-style interpretation of the Battle Kyiv. This requiem, entitled "Bytva za Kyjiv u 1943 roci" [The Battle for Kyiv in 1943] (Didenko, 2013) departed from the established practices of requiem-making by focusing not on active, but on static memory. Instead of framing the event through historical photos or footage – the type of footage showing, for instance, soldiers on the move, and generally footage geared towards instilling a sense of action and excitement in the viewer – the video deliberately chose contemporary photos from the museum of the Battle of Kyiv at Novy-Petrivtsi and the neighboring monument to the Soviet soldiers who fell during the battle. By focusing on these post-battle images (museum stands and memorials) instead of combat images and footage, the video shifted the emphasis from the past to the present. In doing so, it attracted viewers' attention to subjects which were omitted in other tributes, including the importance of remembering not only the victory, but also the sacrifices made to attain it; however, it is worth noting that this video, too, fell short of openly

discussing Soviet fatalities in combat.

In the case of the L'viv requiems, established commemorative patterns were challenged by two videos in particular, both produced in 2011. The first bears the title "'Yanina Hesheles–Return' 2011" (hesedweb1, 2011), whereas the second was called "'Dva tango.' L'vov period okkupacii 1941–44. Holokost" ['Two tangos.' L'viv during the occupation 1941–44. The Holocaust] (Spasibo za Zhizn', 2011). The videos were made by the creative group "Pervaja Zapadnoukrainskaja evrejskaja kinostudija" [The First Western Ukrainian Jewish Film Studio], which is affiliated with the Hasem-Areh, the Ukrainian Jewish Charity Fund. The first video followed one Holocaust survivor, Yanina Hesheles, on her trip to contemporary L'viv, where she had lived during the Second World War. The video combined modern footage from L'viv with historical records of the city in the years of the war; the requiem also included several scenes in which actors revisit episodes from Hesheles' childhood. Similar techniques were used in the second video, which showed a series of photos related to the pre-Holocaust lives of Jews in L'viv, followed by images of the destruction inflicted by the Holocaust, and then a combination of photos from pre-war and contemporary L'viv, and scenes, again, reenacted in the present.

In contrast to the other requiem videos I have examined, the requiems produced by The First Western Ukrainian Jewish Film Studio were not focused entirely on the event in question – the L'viv pogrom. Instead, both "Yanina Hesheles–Return" and "Two tangos" tended to put the events of 1941 in L'viv in a larger perspective, by referring both to interwar and contemporary Jewish communities in the city. In doing so, these two requiems replaced the simplistic, linear model of suffering (humiliation → abuse → death) found in the other requiems associated with the L'viv pogrom, with a more complex cycle of life and death, in which the Holocaust was positioned not as the existential end of everything – the "black hole" (Levy, 2005) of history – but as one episode of a Jewish history in L'viv which continues to this day.

This focus on the present, albeit viewed through the prism of a painful past, is one of the features which unite these non-traditional requiems with another piece of Second World War memory on YouTube: the "Dancing Auschwitz" series (Jones & Gibson, 2012). Both used similar techniques for this purpose: the "Dancing Auschwitz" series showed three generations of the Korman family dancing at various Holocaust sites across Europe, whereas the "Two tangos" requiem animated historical black-and-white photos with live action performances by the studio's own members. In an analogous move, the "Battle for Kyiv in 1943" requiem used contemporary photos of memorials and battlefields in order to connect traumatic memories of the past to the present. While at times these requiems demonstrated what Burgess and Green called "a noticeable focus on video as technology, and on the showcasing of technique rather than of artistry" (2009, p. 52) – one example, for instance, is the "Yanina Hesheles–

Return" requiem, where the overuse of color filters and special animation effects looked rather artificial and produced at times a humorous effect which was probably not intended by the video's creators – it represents an approach to Second World War remembrance which does not reproduce established commemorative patterns, but rather offers an alternative to them, or even challenges those dominant memory narratives.

Records. Unlike the requiems commemorating both of the Second World War episodes selected for study, records were used only for representations of the L'viv pogrom. Similar to the requiems, the records used historical footage of the pogrom and of other events of June 1941; however, unlike the requiems, they did not provide any personal comments embedded in the video clip. Records are simply pieces of historical footage, uploaded onto YouTube without any additional interpolation from the video's uploader. Because of the limited availability of such original footage, there was little variety among the records: in the case of L'viv, the majority of them were based on two recordings – both made by Germans in 1941 – showing the pogrom. The first record was made in the prison courtyard and showed Jews clearing the bodies of Ukrainian prisoners, whereas another record used footage from the *Deutsche Wochenschau*[53] short film on the capture of L'viv. Besides displaying German troops entering the city and the destruction of Stalin busts, the film briefly shows Ukrainians beating Jews, after a significantly longer shot showing the victims of the NKVD massacre found in the prisons.

While the videos' creators did not add extra content to the records, there was still significant variety in their representations of the events of 1941 in L'viv. Firstly, the length of the records varied, depending on the personal preferences of the author of each clip. For instance, while the majority of records were based solely on the *Deutsche Wochenschau* film, in some cases, the beginning or the end of the footage was cut, resulting in a shorter duration of the record in question. Secondly, despite featuring the same historical record, different video clips were often titled differently: the above mentioned *Wochenschau* film appeared under several names, including "Lwow Lemberg 1941" [L'viv L'viv 1941] (kolodno, 2008) and "L'vov v ijule 1941 goda" [L'viv in July 1941] (andreistp, 2011).

The analysis of the records demonstrated that, similar to the requiems, this particular genre was also used by Ukrainophone and Russophone users to turn YouTube into an arena of competition between different narratives of suffering and victimhood. In the previous section I mentioned how several requiems to the Ukrainian victims of the NKVD instrumentalized evidence of Jewish suffering for the purpose of promoting the image of Ukrainian martyrdom; similarly, a number of records (in particular, the ones uploaded by Russophone users) employed the same strategy to emphasise the suffering of Jews and Poles in L'viv. One interesting case of this competitive strategy was represented

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[53] *Deutsche Wochenschau* [German Weekly Review] was a newsreel series released by Nazi authorities as part of the war propaganda campaign between 1940 and 1945.

by the video titled "Posle evrejskih i pol'skih pogromov vo L'vove 1941 g." [After the Jewish and Polish pogroms in L'viv in 1941] (Russkij Blok, 2015). The video was supplemented with a description, according to which the bodies shown lying on the streets are those of Polish and Jewish victims of Ukrainian nationalists. In contrast to the title, however, what the video actually shows is Jews gathering the bodies of Ukrainians killed by the NKVD on the prison courtyard.

The use of historical footage for the theft of suffering as well as the numerous instances of manipulation of the records' names and lengths were not the only problematic aspects of the representation of the capture of L'viv in this particular YouTube genre. It can be argued that the origins of the records render their use for the commemoration of mass atrocities associated with the L'viv event, and in particular the Holocaust, rather questionable: because the historical footage used for these records were produced by German soldiers – or even propagandists – they tend to present the events which followed the seizure of L'viv, in particular the pogrom, under a specific angle. This selective representation is especially controversial in the case of the *Deutsche Wochenschau* film, which in itself is a piece of German propaganda. The lack of proper attribution and/or description of such records on YouTube can make viewers interpret them not as propagandist videos, though, but as authentic pieces of historical evidence – which was in fact the goal Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda intended to achieve. This perspective is particularly problematic, considering the tendency of YouTube users to view historical records as documents, which, as Kaspe points out in her study of documentality in post-socialist states (2010), makes those materials appear more authentic and truthful to the uncritical viewer.

Documentaries. The extensive use of historical photos and footage was also common to the third genre of audiovisual representations of the Second World War found on YouTube: the documentary. This genre comprises non-fictional films which embody "a simulacrum of the perceptual experience of human existence" (Aitken, 2013, p. 2). Most of these films were produced for educational purposes and then uploaded to YouTube, either in their entirety or in fragments. As in the case of the records, such a selective uploading of traditional media content constitutes a recognized pattern of YouTube users' activity (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 41–42); furthermore, it can be viewed as a specific mode of cultural meaning making, one that John Hartley labeled as "redaction" (2008, p. 26). According to Hartley, redaction can be viewed as a format of production of new material based on editing of existing content (e.g., documentaries produced for TV broadcasts).

While all three genres – requiems, records, and documentaries – used historical material to illustrate their statements, documentaries – unlike the first two genres – usually supplemented these statements with contemporary content, such as commentaries from scholars and interviews with surviving eyewitnesses. Furthermore, unlike digital-born requiems, documentaries usually featured less

of the amateurish digital video-making techniques; such a difference can be attributed to their origins, as most of the documentaries were made for traditional rather than digital media and were not subjected to additional manipulation of their content (e.g., remixing), besides the redactions mentioned previously.

In contrast to the requiems, the majority of which had a similar structure and emphasis, the documentaries propagated different views on the Second World War, depending on their country of origin.[54] These differences reflect significant distinctions between national historiographies of the Second World War in post-socialist countries, in particular in Ukraine and Russia. In the case of the capture of Kyiv, the Russian documentaries usually reproduced the traditional Soviet view of the battle, which emphasized the successful implementation of the High Command's sophisticated strategy and the heroism of the Soviet soldiers. While some of them referred to the heavy Soviet losses, such references were limited to rather abstract statements (e.g., the one about the waters of Dnieper that turned red with the blood of Soviet soldiers) and avoided citing exact numbers. One example of such a narrative tactic can be found in the clip entitled "Osvobozhdenie Kieva ot nemecko-fashistskih zahvatchikov. S'emki 1943 goda" [The liberation of Kyiv from German-fascist invaders. The record of 1943] (RIA News, 2014). Similarly, while some Russian documentaries, such as the one titled "Osvobozhdenie Kieva" [The liberation of Kyiv] (Kovpak, 2013), mentioned that Kyiv was presumably taken in order to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution, others deliberately addressed this notion and explicitly dismissed it as fantasy.

In contrast, the Ukrainian documentaries unilaterally emphasized the significant losses sustained by the Red Army, ranging from 417 thousand to one million dead in battle. Many of the documentaries also accused the Soviet High Command of deliberately seeking to destroy the Ukrainian population by way of criminal field mobilizations, motivated also by the desire to capture the city in time for the anniversary of the October Revolution. The focus on suffering – both of mobilized Ukrainians and of Soviet soldiers *tout court* – was a common feature of the Ukrainian documentaries, often including visceral descriptions of the hardships experienced by Soviet soldiers during the battle.

Many of these descriptions, however, relied on controversial images (for instance the story about German machine-gunners who had to shoot down so many Soviet soldiers that they eventually went mad[55]) originating from individual war memoirs or works of adherents to revisionist views, such as

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[54] Unlike the requiems, which were often produced by anonymous YouTube users and, thus, were hard to attribute to a particular country, the documentaries uploaded on YouTube usually included information about their producers. Such information serves as a more reliable identifier than language, because, for instance, a number of Ukrainian documentaries were produced in Russian, not Ukrainian. One example of such a documentary is the clip titled "Bitva za Kiev – Dokumental'nyj fil'm – Inter" [Battle for Kyiv – The documentary – Inter] (Inter TV channel, 2013) which, despite its Russian title, was produced by the Ukrainian TV channel Inter.

[55] One of possible sources of this memory trope comes from the memoirs of Nikolai Nikulin, who describes the unsuccessful operations of the Red Army in 1942 on the Volkhov front (Pekarsh & Pernavskij, 2015). It has, however,

Victor Suvorov (2014) or Mark Solonin (2008). By employing these controversial images, the Ukrainian documentaries evoked that same tendency towards myth-making which was common in Russian documentaries; however, unlike the latter, which relied on memory tropes of Soviet war myths, the Ukrainian documentaries tended to refer to opposite tropes, those of a revisionist tendency. Some of the claims made in the Ukrainian documentaries sounded almost absurd – for instance, about Stalin's order to arm the forcibly mobilized Ukrainian men with halves of bricks[56] – but were presented by the documentaries' narrators as statements on par with those of authoritative scholars, whose comments on the Battle of Kyiv were also included in the documentaries.

Russian and Ukrainian documentaries on YouTube differed not only in the factual sense, but also in the way these facts were represented. The majority of the Russian documentaries studied relied on historical footage produced by Germans and Soviets on location, and on contemporary animation, stylized to resemble historical footage. Similar to the requiems, these documentaries were action-focused and brought the viewer into the thick of the Soviet offensive; at the same time, they usually omitted showing scenes of Red Army deaths, or dead bodies in general. In contrast, the Ukrainian documentaries showed a limited use of historical footage, the main focus lying, instead, on historical re-enactments, along with interviews with witnesses, thus making their approach more personal and focused on the present, instead of the past. The subject of death was also much more strongly present in the Ukrainian documentaries than in the Russian ones: the Ukrainian clips not only discussed it frequently, but also included gory images aimed at shocking and thus attracting the viewer's attention. Such a difference, again, can be explained by the reliance on different memory frameworks: the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War, with its taboo on the discussion of Soviet fatalities in the case of Russian documentaries, and the revisionist narrative of the Ukrainian ones, with their corollary nationalistic discourses on the victimhood of the Ukrainian people.

Similar distinctions were found in the case of documentaries on the capture of L'viv. While all the documentaries placed the blame for the pogrom on the Germans, who encouraged anti-Jewish retaliations after the bodies were discovered in L'viv prisons, their respective evaluations on the involvement of Ukrainians diverged significantly. For instance, the Russian documentary titled "Holokost Evreev v Ukraine – Vtoraja Mirovaja Vojna v Cvete" [The Jewish Holocaust in Ukraine – the Second World War in Colour] (Istorija Rossii, 2014) argued that Ukrainians were not only glad to meet German soldiers with "honey and bread," but that many of them were also active collaborators

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found its way into Ukrainian documentaries about the Battle of Kyiv, such as the one titled "Chernaja pehota. Dneprovsko-Kievskaja nastupatil'naja operacija Black infantry Kiev Dnieper-operation" [Black Infantry. Dnieper-Kyiv Offensive Operation] (taes28n2, 2012).

[56] Such a claim was made in the already mentioned Ukrainian documentary about the Battle of Kyiv titled "Black Infantry. Dnieper-Kyiv Offensive Operation" (taes28n2, 2012).

and perpetrators of the Holocaust. Similarly, a fragment of a 2001 Russian documentary titled "Cvety Vremen Okkupacii" [Flowers of the Occupation Period] (Grigor'ev, 2001), uploaded to YouTube in 2012 with the title "Period Okupacii Fashistami L'vova 1941–1944" [Period of Fascist Occupation of L'viv 1941–1944] (strubcinaorg, 2012) pointed to the active participation of Ukrainian crowds in the pogrom – though avoiding claims about the widespread collaboration of Ukrainians, unlike in the previously mentioned documentary.

A slightly different interpretation of the L'viv pogrom was provided in the English/Russian language documentary video entitled "N/S Part 06: The 1941 Pogrom in L'viv, Ukraine and Modern Antisemitism" (Reynolds, 2012a). This clip was made and uploaded on YouTube by Daniel Reynolds, also the creator of one of the L'viv-related requiems discussed earlier in this chapter. The documentary, which is part of a larger project by Reynolds called "Nazis/Skinheads: The Holocaust by Bullets and Modern Antisemitism in Ukraine," connects the pogrom to the NVKD killings of Ukrainian prisoners in L'viv, which is presented as the spark for the start of the pogrom, used by the Germans to ignite the rage of the Ukrainian crowd. At the same time, the documentary also draws parallels between pre-war and present-day antisemitism in L'viv, showing the large number of swastikas found on the walls of the city, and numerous cases of harassment of minorities on the streets.

In contrast to the English- and Russian-language documentaries, which mentioned the participation of Ukrainian civilians in the pogrom, the Ukrainian documentaries ignored this issue almost entirely. Instead, the majority of the Ukrainian documentaries put the most emphasis on the killing of Ukrainian prisoners by the NKVD before the L'viv pogrom. For instance, the Ukrainian documentary titled "LJVIV 1941r Palachi NKVD Lwow Lemberg NKVD Murder Western Ukraine" [L'VIV 1941 Murderers of NKVD Lwow Lemberg NKVD Murder Western Ukraine] (taes28n2, 2013)[57] discussed the brutal torture of prisoners at the hand of members of the NKVD, presenting shocking images of dead bodies with nails in their eyes and ears and thick layers of blood on the prison floors. Similarly, another Ukrainian documentary made in 2009, entitled "Suspiljno-Politychna Sytuacija u Ljvovi, Chervenj" [Social-Political Situation in L'viv, June 1941] (Terytoriia Teroru, 2014), began with another description of the NVKD killings in the L'viv prisons, followed by the discussion of the popular euphoria in response to the declaration of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state. The only time anti-Jewish reprisals were mentioned in the latter documentary was when a witness of the events in L'viv noted that it was hard to look at not only the Ukrainian patriots hanged by Germans, but also the Jews.

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[57] It is worth noting that the user known as taes28n2 was rather active in uploading audiovisual materials related both to the L'viv pogrom and to the seizure of Kyiv. The user did not provide any personal information about himself besides his country of residence – Ukraine – and his personal mission statement, according to which his purpose is to "call by name" ("taes28n2," n.d.) those responsible for the Soviet crimes in the Soviet period.

This greater emphasis on the suffering of Ukrainians, together with the deliberate ignoring of the event of the L'viv pogrom, was thus common to a majority of the Ukrainian documentaries examined. In fact, the only instance when the pogrom was mentioned explicitly was in relation to the discussion of the involvement of the Nachtigall battalion in anti-Jewish actions organised by Germans. For instance, the documentary, tellingly entitled "Nachtigall ta Shukhevych ne Robyly Poghromiv 1941 Roci – Nachtigall i Shuhevich ne Delali Pogromov 1941 g" [Nachtigall and Shukhevich Were not Involved in the Pogroms of 1941] (taes28n2, 2013a) claimed that the L'viv pogrom was a German provocation, and that the OUN leadership was not involved in it. Another documentary titled "Nimecjka Okupacija Ljvova" [German Occupation of L'viv] (Molfarius1, 2012), built on a fragment of a larger documentary cycle called "Ljviv: Khroniky Drevnjogho Mista" [L'viv: Chronicles of an Ancient City], also preferred to omit the issue altogether by opening the narration on the German occupation with the beginning of August 1941 – not June. Consequently, while the documentary did once mention the pogroms in L'viv, it did not go into any detail, moving immediately to the discussion of the L'viv ghetto set up by the Germans and citing instances of Ukrainians helping Jews.

Together, these observations point to one significant problem with the documentary genre which arises in the context of its use for Second World War remembrance on YouTube. The majority of the documentaries – especially the ones in Ukrainian and Russian – were originally produced for traditional media and with a (mostly) national audience in mind; consequently, even while clips of this genre were subjected to redaction – which can also be viewed as a form of production of new content – they still remained heavily dependent on their respective, national historiographies of the Second World War. Unlike the requiems, which demonstrated the potential to challenge established views on either of the two episodes in Ukraine, or at least to provide an alternative interpretation of the events in question, the majority of the documentaries were simply reiterating dominant historical discourses online. While even under these circumstances their presence on YouTube can be viewed as a part of that democratization of the post-socialist mnemonic landscape in Ukraine pointed out in previous sections, the phenomenon can also, at the same time, again be seen as another instance of propagation of hegemonic war narratives which facilitate appropriations of Second World War memory and the contemporary marginalization of alternative views on the past.

Shows. The appropriation of the past was also common to shows, another memory genre identified in my study. Much like documentaries, shows are pieces of audiovisual content produced for Ukrainian and Russian TV channels. However, in the case of shows, the content originated either from entertainment programmes or news reports. Unsurprisingly, these shows also tended to promote the dominant discourses on the Second World War upheld in mainstream Ukrainian and Russian societies, but in comparison with documentaries, they did so in an even less critical way. This less critical, and

more entertainment-focused, approach, as Vera Zvereva (2004) argues, is common to both Ukrainian and Russian journalistic shows, and sets them apart from the genre of academic documentaries, in spite of the fact that both are produced for largely the same TV channels. In some cases, these shows went as far as to propagate conspiracy theories based on non-historical sources, such as, for instance, blaming Jews for the Soviet repression and destruction of the Ukrainian nation.

One example of the divide between shows and documentaries was the video titled "Korchynsjkyj pro Babyn Jar: Khotilosj by Pochuty Vybachennja Jevrejiv Pered Ukrajincjamy" [Korchynsky on Babyn Jar: We Wish to Hear that Jews are Sorry for Ukrainians] (Yar Babyn, 2014). The video was a part of a popular 2011 Ukrainian television talk show featuring a speech by Dmytro Korchynsky, leader of the Ukrainian nationalistic organisation "Bratstvo." In a passionate 3-minute speech, Korchynsky touched on a number of topics, including the Jews' responsibility for the destruction of the Ukrainian people, the active participation of Jews in the German–Soviet war on the side of Germany, and, finally, he concludes that Jews must ask for forgiveness for the Holocaust. As a case for his arguments, Korchynsky used photos from the L'viv pogrom and claimed that while the pogrom did take place, existing evidence (again, in his view) shows that the victims were not Jewish, but Ukrainian.

Similar examples of memory appropriation can be found in shows which originated from news reports, in particular ones related to the annual celebration of the capture of Kyiv by the Red Army. For instance, the video titled "Bytva za Kyjiv – 'Kyjivsjkyj Kotel' Vlady || Anna Kibenok" [Battle for Kyiv – 'the Kyiv Encirclement' for the Government || Anna Kibenyuk] (TVi, 2012) was produced in 2012 for the Ukrainian TV channel TVi. In the video, journalist Anna Kibenyuk drew parallels between Ukraine's then ruling party – the Party of Regions – and the Nazis who occupied Kyiv, suggesting that the Party of Regions needed to be expelled in a new battle for the Ukrainian capital. In a similar manner, in a news clip entitled "Kiev Otmechaet 65-ju Godovshhinu Osvobozhdenija ot Fashistov" [Kyiv Celebrates the 65th Anniversary of Liberation from Fascism] which was originally produced for the Russian TV channel "Rossiya" in 2008, commentators complained about the nationalistic distortions of history in Ukraine, citing as evidence the absence of red flags or greetings in honor of the Red Army on the streets of Kyiv on the anniversary celebration.

Amateur reports. Unlike the previous audiovisual genres usually found for both cases studies, I was not able to locate any amateur reports related to the seizure of L'viv; instead, all videos of this particular genre were related to the Battle of Kyiv. Similar to the show genre, amateur reports dealt exclusively with present day content; however, in contrast to shows, which were produced by professional journalists for Ukrainian and Russian TV channels, amateur reports were videos made by ordinary people. Like requiems, amateur reports can be viewed as examples of "user-created content" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 42); yet, compared with videos of the requiem genre, which often saw

experimentation with video technology for the sake of self-expression, amateur reports were of a more mundane nature and usually consisted of short (40–60 seconds), often non-edited records made with the help of mobile devices and subsequently uploaded, unretouched, on YouTube.

A central feature of such amateur reports, which contrasted with the often obtrusive appropriation of memory of the Battle of Kyiv found in other YouTube genres, particularly in the shows, was the almost complete absence of commentaries in the recordings themselves. While this feature limits their interpretative value, the volume of such reports – found to be the most common type of audiovisual representation of the Battle of Kyiv on YouTube – points to their significant role in the remediation of Second World War memory, and are thus deserving of closer study.

The majority of amateur records I examined in the context of the Kyiv case dealt with the celebration of the city's liberation, emphasizing the importance of this event for Ukrainian and Russian users, who considered it significant enough to be filmed, uploaded, and shared online. The analysis of these amateur reports also indicated which aspects of offline commemoration attracted the greatest interest from those in the audience who had access to video-recording devices. One particular example of clips of this genre which was found on YouTube is the video titled "Rekonstrukcija Vozdushnogo Boja! Bitva za Dnepr!" [The Reenactment of Aerial Combat! The Battle for the Dnieper!] (Territorija video, 2013). This short video – lasting only 1:21 minutes – was recorded in Ukraine during the official celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Kyiv by the Red Army. Like the majority of other amateur reports, this video focused on the historical reenactment of the Soviet offensive on the Lyutezh bridgehead, and demonstrated the audience's special fascination with the use of authentic aircrafts from the Soviet and German military.

While the majority of the amateur reports examined showed scenes from historical reenactments, one specific group of these dealt with museums dedicated to the history of the Second World War. One example is the clip titled "Tajemnyci Rejkhu i RKKA v Muzeji" [The Secrets of the Reich and Red Army in the Museum] (novasichTV, 2011). The video was shot in the museum of the Battle of Kyiv in the village of Novy-Petrivtsi and showed several of the museum's expositions. Unlike the reenactment reports, this video – and museum reports in general – included vocal commentary from the video's producer, who, in this case, briefly described the items showcased; these commentaries, however, tended to be rather more descriptive in nature (e.g., "Here we can see photos" or "Look, German weapons!") and provided little information on the historical event the items were meant to represent.

The examination of this last genre concludes my review of the five audiovisual genres which are most employed by YouTube users in the context of Second World War remembrance. The findings of this section suggest that YouTube hosts different narratives which vary significantly in their interpretations of the two events. The platform's ability to accommodate divergent views on the past

and articulate a variety of emotions, ranging from grief to pride, supports earlier suggestions (Jones & Gibson, 2012; Knudsen & Stage, 2013) about YouTube's potential for the democratization of collective remembrance. The co-existence of contradictory narratives on the same platform, however, does not necessarily lead to the formation of a new cosmopolitan and pluralist view on contentious pasts, as some have argued. In contrast, my findings suggest that, as in the case of other historical wounds (Drinot, 2011), digital clips, especially those dedicated to the Battle of Kyiv, more often than not replicate national and nationalistic interpretations of particular episodes of the Second World War. Consequently, instead of viewing YouTube as the source of new digital forms of transnational remembrance, it seems more reasonable to consider it as a prism through which better to compare how the past is viewed in Ukraine and in Russia.

3.3.2. Interaction

This section examines how YouTube users interact with audiovisual memory of the Second World War in both verbal and non-verbal ways. It begins with the non-verbal forms of interaction: these include viewing, liking, or disliking the video in question. As Gerlitz and Helmond argue in their study on Facebook and the Like economy, the use of non-verbal metrics not only allows to "metrify and intensify user affect and engagement" (2013, p. 1361), but also strategically exposes those parameters to other users, evoking further interactions with specific materials. An example of this is the "rich get richer" principle: when digital content attracts a large number of likes – or other forms of user engagement, such as sharing and reposting – the item continues to attract even more likes, and the breadth of users' interactions increases exponentially. While these forms of feedback have perhaps less interpretative value than explicit comments, they exhibit general patterns of interaction as well as point to genre-dependent variations in the way users interact with the representations of the past. After examining non-verbal feedback patterns, the section moves on to the examination of verbal reactions, in the form of comments published under the YouTube videos; as has already been mentioned earlier in the methodology section, the analysis of YouTube comments constitutes the most frequently used tool to assess users' interactions with memory narratives present on the web platform (Drinot, 2011; Jones & Gibson, 2012; Knudsen & Stage, 2013).

Non-verbal interactions. Table 9 indicates that users' attention is distributed extremely unequally across the individual YouTube videos used to represent the Second World War. While the view count for some of the clips ran into the hundreds of thousands, other clips had been viewed only a few dozen times. The same inequality – albeit on a smaller scale – was found in the distribution of likes and dislikes: while the majority of videos were neither liked or disliked, or had received one or two likes, other videos provoked much stronger emotional reactions. While no statistical tests were done, all non-

verbal forms of feedback appear to be correlated – that is to say, videos with larger view counts tended to receive more likes/dislikes, as well as comments. Further research is still needed, however, in order to empirically prove or disprove this suggestion.

Table 9. User interactions with L'viv and Kyiv videos (by genre)

	Minimum	1st Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile	Maximum
Requiems					
Views	449	810	2 009.5	35 354.5	41 948
Likes	3	4.5	9	49	77
Dislikes	0	0.5	1	12	25
Comments	0	1	5	38.5	312
Records					
Views	54	238	1 344	4 266	82 688
Likes	0	1,5	8	11	65
Dislikes	0	0.5	1	2.5	23
Comments	0	5	4	10	522
Documentaries					
Views	49	596	1 049	8 121	159 621
Likes	0	1	11	41	258
Dislikes	0	0	0	9	99
Comments	0	0	2	11	167
Shows					
Views	95	148	241	400	519
Likes	2	2	2,5	3	3
Dislikes	0	0	0	1	2
Comments	0	0.5	1.5	2.5	3
Amateur reports					
Views	29	95.5	155.5	1 116	19 559
Likes	0	0	0	2	11
Dislikes	0	0	0	0	2
Comments	0	0	0	1	2

While the highly unequal reception of different clips is not surprising and, thus, cannot be viewed as a finding in itself, it is worth pondering why some of the clips attracted more attention than others.

While it is hard to explain this on the basis of YouTube data, a qualitative reading of the videos allowed me to consider several factors which might play a role in users' preferences. My observations suggest that the length of a video's presence on YouTube was not an influential factor: some of the most viewed videos were uploaded to YouTube in 2011/2012, but many others appeared around the same time, without incurring as many views. Instead, the choice of language seemed to be more relevant: the majority of the most frequently viewed videos used either English/German in their titles ("Lemberg 1941") or a mixture of languages ("L'vovskij Pogrom 1941 Goda / Lvov Pogrom in 1941"). This strategy allowed the videos's creators to attract not only Ukrainophone and Russophone, but also Anglophone or Germanophone users. Even though the latter would not necessarily have been able to understand the language spoken in the videos, they still experience the music or visuals therein, which would be especially true in the case of the comparatively language-free requiem genre.

The most important factor linked to the popularity of a given clip would in fact appear to be genre. Table 9 suggests that requiems and documentaries attracted significantly more user attention – both in terms of views and explicit responses – than amateur reports and shows. While there are many possible reasons for this kind of distribution of interest among genres, I would venture to suggest that one of them could be the more emotional and authentic commemorative experience provided by requiems and documentaries, which may result in a reverberation of affective states on and off YouTube.[58]

Unlike reports and shows relating the content to contemporary commemoration practices, which tended to provide brief – and usually quite arid – commentary on the two episodes, both the requiem and documentary types of videos were often affectively charged, as they shared a wide range of memorabilia with the viewer, varying from historical photos to interviews with eyewitnesses. They also made active use of sound, which, as has already been noted in the introduction to this chapter, constitutes an important feature of digital tributes on YouTube. The use of sounds, such as Soviet war marches in the requiems, or sad instrumental motifs in the Ukrainian documentaries, is another factor which mobilizes interest among viewers of clips of these two genres, who experience what Thompson and Biddle call "affective transmissions" (2013, p. 5). Unfortunately a more in-depth examination of the reasons behind the attractiveness of a particular genre for non-verbal interactions remains beyond the scope of the current research, though it is certainly deserving of a separate study.

Verbal interactions. Unlike non-verbal forms of interactions, which pointed to a number of differences in the reception of different genres of audiovisual tributes to the Second World War, content analysis of verbal interactions (i.e. comments left by viewers) indicated a much lower inter-

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[58] For more information about the interactions between digital media and affective states see works by Karatzogianni and Kuntsman (2012) and Massumi (2002).

genre variety. Instead, the majority of verbal responses, independently of the video's genre, expressed negative feelings, varying from anxiety to rage, whereas positive emotions were expressed quite rarely. The content analysis of the comments suggests that users' reactions to audiovisual representations of both episodes of the past mainly revolved around three subjects: the current political situation in Ukraine, the struggle for historical truth, and sympathy for the victims of the war (whomever these were perceived to be).

The translation of Second World War memory into the more recent context of crisis in Ukraine was a dominant subject in the comment sections of the Kyiv and L'viv videos ("*mnogie kadry gorjashhih hat, snjaty kak segodnja – letom 2014?*" [Many images of burning houses look completely like today – in summer 2014?] (xtyjlx, 2015)), sometimes directly framing the post-Euromaidan Ukrainian government as successors to Nazi Germany ("*S prazdnikom Kievljane! Svobodu Kievu i russkomu i ukrainskomu narodu ot majdano-gej-fashistov!*" [Greetings, Kyivites! Freedom to Kyiv and the Russian and Ukrainian peoples from Maidan's homosexual-fascists!] (Evgeny 161, 2015)). Many comments compared the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine to a military defeat ("*Kak zhe tak v 1943 godu pobedili a v 2014 godu sdali bez boja i komu?*" [How is it we won in 1943, but surrendered everything without a fight in 2014, and to whom?] (Peshhur, 2015)) and expressed the desire to reclaim what was lost ("*kak by ne prishlos' po novoj osvobozhdat'*" [Seems like we should liberate it again] (Evil Ufo, 2015)).

The second most common type of reaction revolved around the question of historical truth and the (in)adequacy of current commemorative practices related to the Second World War. Unlike comments of the first type, which were produced mainly by Russophone users, these reactions appeared to be distributed equally between Ukrainophone and Russophone viewers. Both categories of users were particularly active in responding to the interpretations provided in Ukrainian documentaries. While a number of users praised the revision of the traditional Soviet narrative on the Battle of Kyiv ("OSJ CE potribno pokazuvaty po TV na '9 maja,' a ne moskovsjku khrjenj*" [THIS should be shown on TV on 'May 9,' not the Muscovite shit] (OmyLeg, 2014)), others were slightly more critical ("*nu suka, pidor, s pervoj zhe frazy – pizdezh! davno zhe dokazano, chto Kiev brali ne special'no k 7-mu nojabrja, tak sovpalo... huesosy avtory, gandony liberasticheskie, rot vash ebal v porjadke ocheredi!*" [well you bitch, you fag, from the first sentence – you are fucking up! It has been proven already long ago, that they took Kyiv not especially for November the 7th, it just so happened…cocksucking authors, liberal condoms, get fucked in the mouth one by one!] (osjabender, 2015)). The majority of comments of this type promoted a particular interpretation of the Battle of Kyiv, either from a Ukrainian or Russian mainstream historiographical point of view; there were also a few reactions, however, which criticized the nationalistic tinting of the past in general (e.g. "*Vbros dlja ocherednogo razzhiganija nacional'noj problemy Rossijan i Ukraincev*" [Another provocation for igniting national strife between Russians and Ukrainians]

(Igor V, 2015)).

A special subcategory among these types of comments, pertaining to the L'viv videos, came in the form of reactions which to varying extents denied established narratives of the pogrom, either justifying the actions of the perpetrators, or suggesting that the pogrom – or even, according to some, the Holocaust itself – was in fact orchestrated by the Jews. The first strategy – justifying the perpetrators of the pogrom – involved emphasising the responsibility of Jews for alleged crimes, past (*"Zhydy vynyshhyly gholodomorom 8 miljjoniv ukrajinciv. Svit krughlyj, i nichogho tak prosto ne mynajetjsja"* [Jews killed 8 million Ukrainians with the Holodomor. The world is round, so the retribution is inevitable] (Andrij2012, 2013)) or contemporary *("Naihitrejshie pravil'nej, zabravshie sebe ch'i-to zaslugi i vystavivishie ih kak svoi, prichem idja po golovam, ubivaja vseh i vsja neugodnyh, schitaja sebja vysshej rasoj, a ostal'nyh grjaz'ju, v t.ch. i russkij narod! A vysshaja rasa - jeto nemcy, a evrei takie zhe araby kak i vo vsem arabskom mire, chernye, privykshie voevat', ubivat' i detej i starikov"* [They [Jews] are the most insidious ones, they usurp others' achievements and present them as their own, they step over others, they kill everyone whom they do not like, they behave like they are the master race and all others are just dirt, including the Russian people! But Germans are the master race, whereas Jews are just Arabs like other parts of the Arab world, dirty, always ready to fight, and kill children and elderly] (Russkij, 2014)). In contrast, the second strategy simply transferred the blame for the pogrom to the Jews, by referring to conspiracy theories ("*nevezhestvenen jeto ty) ibo holokost jeto evrejskoe zhertvoprinoshenie... talmud pochitaj tam pochishhe fashizma, shulhan oruh naprimer)))*" [It is you, who are illiterate)[59] The Holocaust is the Jewish sacrifice...read the Talmud, it is worse than fascism, Shulhan Oruh, for instance)))] (Schmeisser1488, 2013) . While many statements of this sort were expressed by both Ukrainophone and Russophone users, it is worth noting that Anglophone comments often revealed even larger degrees of anti-Semitic sentiment ("+1pen2books JEW LIER...you kill palestinians children with white phosphorus... LONG LIVE HEZBOLLAH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! LONG LIVE HITLER!!!!!!!" (mfnkmrs, 2014)); however, without a detailed study of user profiles it is hard to determine whether these comments were produced by actually Anglophone users or by Russophone/Ukrainophone users striving to reach larger audiences by commenting in English.

The last category of comments examined comprised those expressing sympathy for the victims of Second World War atrocities. Such reactions varied from calls to share the pain of the pogrom victims ("*Jeto i nasha BOL'!!!*" [It is also our PAIN!!!] (Wazari100, 2012)) to praise for the heroism of Soviet soldiers ("*Slava Krasnoj Armii! Dedam nizkij poklon*" [*Glory to the Red Army! A deep bow to grandfathers*] (Tima Tim, 2015)); it is worth noting, however, that such types of reactions were not very numerous. They thus remained barely noticeable against the backdrop of aggressive statements, many of a nationalistic

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[59]   Note: the ending parentheses designate smiles in Russophone social media language.

("*Ssykljavaja nacija, da i familija u nih na 'ko,' idite k lesu, pidarasy, ne brat'ja vy nam, predateli !!!!"* [A nation of cowards, whose surnames end in 'ko,' go to the forests, fags, you are not our brothers, but traitors!!!!] (Die, 2015)) and/or homophobic nature ("*pidorasty krasnopogonnye nenavizhu bljadi prihvostni ebanogo lysogo pidora i churki usatogo"* [Faggots with red epaulets, I hate you, you are the whores of the fucked bald fag [Lenin] and the mustached bastard [Stalin]] (theak1227, 2014)). As much as the resulting environment could in theory be identified as an "interactive commemorative space" (Knudsen & Stage, 2013, p. 420), the metaphor of Drinot, who likened comments on YouTube to "a nasty shouting match between anonymous posters" (2011, p. 371), seems to be more appropriate here. These observations also hold true for topics other than the Second World War: as Oegema et al. argue in their study of Dutch internet fora, online discussion spaces often serve as breeding grounds for feelings "that are at odds with mutual respect, mutual understanding, and democratic problem solving" (2008, p. 55).

My findings suggest that non-verbal interactions with audiovisual representations of the Second World War varied depending on the genre of the given video: requiems and documentaries provoked more emotional reactions and attracted more attention from YouTube users than shows and amateur reports. In contrast, verbal interactions showed little variety across genres, as the majority of comments expressed negative emotions, often in the form of aggressive statements addressed to the video makers or to other YouTube users. The predominance of such reactions – as well as the tendency for them to be framed in nationalistic and/or homophobic terms – problematizes the idea of using social media as a commemorative space.

While some users employ YouTube for what could be seen as attempts to overcome historical controversies by debating over a contentious past, others, as I have shown above, use the platform to appropriate the memory of, for instance, the Battle of Kyiv in order to frame the current Ukraine crisis and simultaneously dehumanize their opponents – real or perceived, physical, historical or virtual. Consequently, while it is hardly debatable that YouTube provides a variety of opportunities for interacting with different visions of the past, the fact remains that these interactions are frequently hostile and aggressive, thus achieving little progress in discussion. However, despite the aggressiveness of its environment, YouTube still remains a space in which Ukrainian and Russian internet users can discuss their contentious past and its relation with the present, which is a particularly valuable opportunity in the context of the ongoing crisis between two countries.

3.4. Conclusions

The findings of this chapter suggest that YouTube facilitates the remembrance of contentious pasts by opening up a new space for interaction – a space which is less limited by national borders than offline

commemorative spaces. While it might be overly simplistic to view the internet as a de-terriorialized and de-politicized space – particularly considering the well-documented tendency, which we have also seen above, of projecting national feelings into cyberspace (Kuntsman, 2009, p. 17) – YouTube proves itself able to accommodate different views of the past, allowing distinct historical narratives to be freely represented and shared online. In the case of the two episodes of the Second World War examined in this study, this results in a co-existence of Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian interpretations of the same event on the same digital platform. Even while these interpretations are not necessarily represented in equal proportions, the variety of digital tributes on YouTube to the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv contrasts positively with public memory practices which, as we have seen, tend to promote one-sided views of the events whilst ignoring alternative interpretations, both in Ukraine and in Russia. Consequently, my observations align with those made by Jones and Gibson, who argue that YouTube has a potential to enrich the remembrance experience by enabling "a cultural exchange of shared experience that more traditional forms of remembrance are unable to provide" (2012, p. 127).

At the same time, my findings suggest that the digital remediation of war memories does not necessarily lead to the formation of new cosmopolitan narratives of the past which might transcend "ethnic and national boundaries" (Levy & Sznaider, 2002, p. 88). Instead, even in the transnational space of digital media, memory of both historical episodes is predominantly represented in terms of national – and often nationalistic – interpretations of the Second World War, while the alternative versions garner comparatively little attention from most internet users. Similar to what has been observed in the Latin American context – where digital representations of historical traumas are also largely determined by local historiographies which portray these traumas in highly contradictory ways (Drinot, 2011) – Ukrainophone and Russophone users tend to employ YouTube not to challenge national narratives of the past, but to disseminate and propagate these same narratives online. While these users do interact with each other through the platform, these interactions are often limited to offensive comments which challenge opponents' views in an obnoxious way, impeding rather than stimulating discussions about the past. Consequently, instead of constructing new narratives about a contentious past, YouTube user interactions often merely reiterate established practices of war commemoration in Ukraine and Russia and, thus, contribute to their conservation.

Nevertheless, as much as YouTube discussions may be permeated by "user flaming and crassness" (Hess, 2009, p. 431), this does not necessarily invalidate the platform's potential for democratizing war remembrance. Despite the aggressive comment culture on YouTube, which at times turns the platform into a "battlefield in transnational politics" (Benzaquen, 2014, p. 805) often permeated by hate speech, it serves, at the same time, as a space where predominant discourses of the past can potentially be disputed and scrutinized. This opportunity for expressing public

commemorative disagreement with dominant memory narratives is particularly important for post-socialist countries, where war memories are often unconscionably politicized and regularly instrumentalized for collective mobilization. Under these circumstances, social media platforms such as YouTube can serve as a space for political and cultural self-expression, thus forming a vantage point for the comprehensive assessment of contentious pasts and the establishment of more pluralistic narratives of the Second World War in Ukraine and Russia.

VKontakte and Second World War memory

In a recent work on the interplay between digital technology and memory, Viktor Mayer-Schönberger argues that the rise of Web 2.0 services, in particular social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook or MySpace, have led to a suspension of "society's ability to forget" (2011, p. 4). While such a statement can be viewed as an oversimplification of technology's impact on collective remembrance – after all, a number of studies (Bertman, 2000; Brand, 2003; Osten, 2004; Fishman, 2006) state the opposite, arguing that instead of empowering society's ability to remember through digital media, technology brings about what is called "digital amnesia"[60] (Donk, 2009) – it is hardly questionable that SNSs transform the ways individuals and collectives interact with the past. This chapter discusses the impact of this transformation in the case of Second World War memory in post-socialist countries, by zooming in on how war memories are remediated in VKontakte, one of the most popular SNSs in the post-socialist space.

In the definition provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), SNSs are digital applications which allow users to connect by creating personal profiles and communicating with other users through messages or e-mails. One of the most important features of SNSs, however, is the unprecedented possibility to store and share content, be it others' or self-produced, comprising of many forms of memorabilia such as digital photos, private chat logs, voice messages, and video clips. As Garde-Hansen (2011, p. 72) argues, these qualities turn SNSs into veritable modern personal archives in which various memory practices are drawn together – from creating photo albums and disseminating photos across personal networks, to joining thematic communities and staying in touch with family members and friends. Consequently, SNSs play a quintessential role in the digital turn in remembrance, leading not only to the formation of "new hybrid public-personal digitised memory traces" (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, & Reading, 2009, p. 6), but also – in principle – rendering those compound digital memory forms more resilient in time and more resistant to erasure.

To date, the majority of studies examining the interactions between digital technology and memory consider how SNSs affect the performance of the past on an individual level.[61] Yet, similar to other elements of popular culture which determine how cultural memories are enacted, transmitted, and transformed (Plate & Smelik, 2013, p. 3), SNSs actually influence the performance of memory not only on the individual, but also on the collective level. According to Vera Zvereva, SNSs have come to

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[60] The concept of digital amnesia emphasizes the negative effects of the growing digitization of memory, both on the material level (e.g., the instability of digital data carriers which makes them vulnerable for accidental and deliberate erasure (Brand, 2003; Mason, 2015)) and the individual level (e.g., information overload and deterioration of personal memory which originates from increasing reliance on external/transactive memory (Sparrow, Liu, & Wegner, 2011)).

[61] See, for instance, works by Schutt (2008), Arthur (2009), Garde-Hansen (2009), van Dijck (2013).

form an essential space for the propagation of a sense of solidarity within communities, achieved through "communal recollection and mourning as well as ridiculing of opponents' versions of history and memory" (2011, p. 98); in line with this suggestion, SNSs such as Facebook or VKontakte can be viewed not only as personal archives, but also as platforms which sustain and separate collective identities and their preferences in articulating and, where applicable, appropriating the past.

While the digitization of remembrance is certainly to be viewed as a global phenomenon, the processes of construction and articulation of memories through SNSs have evolved with particular force in post-socialist countries. The reasons behind this uniqueness of the digital/mnemonic landscape in the post-socialist space can be traced back to a distinct feature of the latter's sociopolitical environment, mentioned briefly in the introduction: by and large, the active use of internet fora compensates for the lack of any significant influence of ordinary citizens in the offline public sphere. Ilya Kukulin (2013) argues that one of the direct consequences of this "semi-freedom" of civic participation is that social media become a space for social and cultural self-expression, which includes dealing with contentious pasts. Together with the disproportionate politicization of digital media in post-socialist states, it turns SNSs into public outlets for the articulation of collective identities and dominant discourses on the past, as well as challenges thereto, thus opening new venues for public interaction with the region's complex past (Rutten & Zvereva, 2013).

In order to investigate interactions between SNSs and contentious pasts in Ukraine, this chapter examines how the two episodes of the Second World War chosen for the purposes of this study are represented and discussed in VKontakte, which, as already mentioned, is the most popular social networking site in the post-socialist space. According to McDonald (2014), VKontakte shares a number of common features with its counterpart, Facebook, including functional elements, layout, and popularity; however, unlike Facebook, VKontakte is geared more towards entertainment, being used among other purposes for creating and sharing music- and video-playlists. Similarly to Facebook, VKontakte can be viewed as a memory database, where each user's personal page provides an insight into their life, making the platform "a collection of collections and collectives" (Garde-Hansen, 2009, p. 141). While VKontakte may lack some of the more sophisticated elements which have contributed to the "storytelling" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 200) turn in Facebook architecture development (such as, for instance, its addition of the Timeline function and the introduction of complex system of emoticons), VKontakte's own specific features, in particular an adaptable architecture, extensive collection of audiovisual materials, and – on a separate note – relatively limited platform-initiated censorship, result not only in the tendency of users to spend more time online compared to Facebook users (7 hours per day on average for VKontakte, compared with 1.2 hours for Facebook according to McDonald (2014)), but also create additional venues for articulating online identities and performing the past.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the existing scholarship concerning interrelations between SNSs (in particular VKontakte), and cultural memories (especially memories of past conflicts). It then describes the research methodology employed to locate and analyze recollections related to the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv in VKontakte communities. It is followed by an overview of the findings, starting with a discussion on the dynamics of memory articulation, followed by an examination of the narrative elements used for representing the past online, including images and narrative tropes. The chapter goes on to examine the different ways VKontakte users interact with Second World War memory on the platform, both verbally and non-verbally. It concludes with a summary of the findings, which, as will be shown, point to the frequent use of VKontakte to instrumentalize Second World War memory, and ends with a discussion of the interactions between the SNS and war memories which take place in Ukraine today.

4.1. Literature review

According to Hoskins, Garde-Hansen, and Reading, the development of digital technology has led to the rise of new forms of collective and individual remembrance; one of these forms they labeled "social network memory" (2009, p. 6). The new form of remembrance, as Hoskins and his colleagues argue, is characterized by a blurring of the line between private and public memories, as well as of that separating producers and consumers of memory (Hoskins, 2009, p. 92). A significant role in this transformation has been played by the advent of SNSs, which allow not only for increased connectivity between individual and collective entities, but also in themselves form a new medium for the performance of online identities, in which memories play an essential role.

Unsurprisingly, in the last decade a number of studies have examined how individual and collective memories are performed through SNSs.[62] A disproportionate number of these studies, however, focuses on just one platform: Facebook. This can of course be explained by the platform's status as the world's most popular SNS ("Most famous social network sites," n.d.). Furthermore, with a few notable exceptions (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014; Eiroa, 2014; Pfanzelter, 2015), the majority of existing studies on SNS and memory focus on the individual dimensions of remembrance, devoting particular attention to digital memorials to the deceased (Brubaker, Hayes & Dourish, 2013; McEwen & Scheaffer, 2013; Myles & Millerand, 2016) and personal archives (Garde-Hansen, 2009; Zhao et al., 2013).

Because of this platform and/or topical bias, the existing scholarship on the use of SNS for memory performance remains incomplete, especially when it comes to studying the impact of SNSs on

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[62] To name a few: Garde-Hansen (2009), Brubaker and Hayes (2011), Roberts (2012), McEwen and Scheaffer (2013), Gibbs et al (2015), Pfanzelter (2015), Kohn, Nansen, Arnold, and Meese (2016), Myles and Millerand (2016).

remembrance of war and conflict, for which there are thus divergent – and often contradictory – assessments. In a study of digital media and memory of the Spanish civil war, Eiroa (2014) argues that SNSs such as Facebook contribute to the actualization of war memories through the creation of dedicated online communities, where users share their common historical interests and communicate about the past. Similarly, in a study of Holocaust memory, Pfanzelter argues that online memorials created on Facebook stimulate user engagement with the past and evoke "performative and participatory empathy and identification" (2015, p. 265) with the victims of the Holocaust.

At the same time, Roberts, in a study of digital memorials to deceased individuals, points to a number of drawbacks inherent in the use of SNSs for commemoration, including the disruption of memory performative acts with "advertisements, inappropriate headings, decisions about access and deletion of comments" (2012, p. 61). Kaun and Stiernstedt (2014), in their study of Facebook-mediated commemoration of the DT64 (a Cold War-era youth radio station in the GDR) provide an even more critical assessment of the way the past is mediated through SNS. Their study suggest that SNSs can actually undermine narratives of the past rather than enhance or complete them, particularly when elements of the platform's architecture, such as Facebook's personalized information flow, intervene with "the collective and simultaneous experience and meaning production" (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014, p. 1165), interrupting users' perceptions of the past with unrelated information updates.

The studies mentioned above provide a number of helpful insights into the interplay between SNS and memory workings; however, as already mentioned before, these insights are mostly limited to the Western European and Northern American context. Within the scholarship which examines the use of SNSs, in particular Facebook, in the context of digital memory studies, only a few works consider the use of social networking platforms for memory performance in other parts of the world, such as post-socialist countries. Such an academic underrepresentation of the post-socialist digital space does not only impede an assessment of the region's unique digital/mnemonic landscape (Kuntsman, 2010), but also ignores the significance of digital technology for performing memory in the region (Rutten & Zvereva, 2013).

Thus the state of the scholarship on the topic is limited, and where present, assessments are often at odds with one another. For instance, in a study of the remediation of Yugoslav pop culture on Facebook, Pogacar praises the platform's influence on collective memories in former Yugoslavia, arguing that digital communities can not only revisit the contentious socialist past in the Balkan countries, but also work to "demistify the demonized past" (2016, p. 297). De Bruyn, in his study on the use of Facebook for Holocaust remembrance in Poland, also recognizes the potential of Facebook for dealing with contentious pasts; however, he also urges for an increased awareness of the "'mediatedness' of any articulation of cultural memory" (2010, p. 60), and, by the same token, of the

dependence of memory practices on specific elements of online culture and/or platform architecture. Finally, Paulsen, in his study of the remediation of memories of Holodomor in Ukraine (2013), points out that SNSs such as Twitter, for instance, are mostly employed as simply another outlet for memory appropriation, and an accentuation of the political distance between Ukraine and Russia.

The limited scholarship on the use of "Western" SNSs such as Facebook or Twitter for collective remembrance in post-socialist countries is still more attention than has been devoted to non-Western SNSs in the field of digital memory studies. While the absence of works on the interplay between cultural memory and regional SNS, such as Odnoklassniki[63] or VKontakte, can be attributed to a number of understandable factors, including the language barrier and complexities related to data collection, such a lack of scholarly attention remains problematic. In the case of Ukraine, VKontakte is not only the most popular SNS, with 27 million Ukrainian accounts, but it is also the most popular SNS among the younger generations, who constitute the most active internet users in the country (Yandex, 2014). Furthermore, despite the similarities between VKontakte and Facebook pointed out before, the architecture of the former has its own unique features, which – following the argument made by Hayles (2004) about the medium specificity of digital narratives – affect memory performances on the platform.

As Volodymyr Kulyk argues in his study of mediated memory wars in Ukraine, VKontakte provides for "a more equal exchange of information and opinions" (2013, p. 77) than other social media platforms (e.g. LiveJournal or Wikipedia) because of lesser status difference between original posts and users' reactions to them. The relative equality between initial publications and reactions to them in VKontakte can be traced back both to the platform's architecture and its status as a more casual discussion space compared with the ones mentioned above; consequently, the threshold for active user engagement with materials dealing with past in VKontakte is lower than, for instance, in Wikipedia, where such an engagement requires, in principle, a proper knowledge of the platform's functionalities as well as of its community norms. One of the consequences of this lower participation threshold in VKontakte, noted by Kulyk (2013), is a higher level of contestation of memory performances, especially in online communities dedicated to controversial historical episodes.

The study of memory in VKontakte is particularly relevant as, according to Zvereva (2011, p. 98), the SNS constitutes a central platform for the discussion of the Soviet past, in particular the Stalinist period, among Ukrainian and Russian internet users. Unlike in the field of professional history, VKontakte allows for the construction of non-linear historical narratives, which are often influenced by family and collective memories; thus, it opens new venues for revisiting established historical narratives,

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[63] Odnoklassniki is another SNS which attracted significant popularity in post-socialist countries. Founded in 2006 by Albert Popkov, it was initially aimed at connecting former schoolmates and old friends; however, in the following years its scope increased, so currently Odnoklassniki is a major competitor of VKontakte in the region.

such as, for instance, that of the Great Patriotic War, as well as for sharing personal views on history both with proponents and opponents of a particular interpretation of the past. Denisov, in his study of social media and Second World War memory in Russia, similarly argues that SNSs such as VKontakte constitute "an essential means of establishment of the image of the Great Patriotic War in the collective memory of Russian people" (2015, p. 35). Among the factors which explain the growing role of digital technology, Denisov points to new representative techniques, which allow for both verbal and non-verbal communication in relation to the past. Examples of such techniques include the use of creolized texts – i.e. texts which are structured both with the help of verbal and non-verbal means (Maryshkina & Nesterik, 2015; Platonova, Tarasova, & Golubinskaya 2015) – as well as historical photos and video clips, including footage from online games such as Ground War: Tanks (Denisov, 2015, p. 32–33).

4.2. Methodology

For the implementation of the study of Second World War memory in VKontakte, I used data from two online communities. The first community is called "Slava OUN-UPA i Vsim Borcjam za Volju Ukrajiny!" [Glory to the OUN-UPA and All Fighters for the Freedom of Ukraine!] ("Slava OUN-UPA," n.d.). It was founded on February 8, 2008 and included 24 000 members at the time of data collection, on June 6, 2016. As the community's name suggests, it collects materials with strong pro-Ukrainian sentiments and is devoted to the glorification of Ukrainian independence fighters such as members of the OUN, soldiers of the UNR or the UPA. The second community is called "Protiv OUN-UPA i Prochih Posobnikov Fashizma!" [Against the OUN-UPA and Other Fascist Collaborators!]. This community was founded on December 22, 2007 and included 32 000 members at the time of data collection. This community expressed, instead, critical views on Ukrainian nationalistic movements, in particular the OUN and the UPA, which, according to the community's description, are steeped "in the context of European collaborationism and nationalism as it is" ("Protiv OUN-UPA," n.d.).

The data for this study was collected on June 6, 2016, using the VKontakte native search engine and inserting a selection of queries; the queries were first inserted in Ukrainian, and then in Russian. After testing a number of queries, I identified two for each language which returned the largest number of relevant results for the two communities described above. The queries were: "osvobozhdenie kieva" /"zviljnennja kyjeva" ("the liberation of Kyiv," in Russian and in Ukrainian) and "pogrom l'vov" /"poghrom ljviv" ("L'viv pogrom" again in Russian and Ukrainian). Together, the queries returned 70 posts for both communities: 41 were related to the capture of Kyiv, whereas 29 concerned the seizure of L'viv.

Similarly to existing studies of Facebook and VKontakte (de Bruyn, 2010; Zvereva, 2011;

Roberts, 2012; Pfanzelter, 2015), which rely on a close reading of historical materials published in a given SNS, I employed web content analysis in order to examine how the memory of the capture of Kyiv and of the seizure of L'viv is performed online. In order to facilitate the analysis, I structured the research in two parts: first, an investigation into how the two events are represented, followed by the examination of the different forms of user interactions with these representations of the past. In the study of the representations, I began by exploring the dynamics of articulation of the past in VKontakte, using data on the number of publications related to both historical episodes as a primary indicator of users' activity. Then, I examined the historical narratives which were constructed through the platform: because of the non-linear nature of these narratives, which has already been noted in earlier studies on SNSs and cultural memory (Zvereva, 2011; Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014), I focused on two specific aspects: visual images and narrative tropes.

To assess user reactions, I scrutinized the different forms of feedback the platform enables. While the majority of existing studies on SNS and remembrance (de Bruyn, 2010; Zvereva, 2011; Roberts, 2012), as we have seen, rely on the examination of verbal forms of interactions (i.e., users' comments), I have also employed descriptive statistics to examine both non-verbal (i.e., likes and reposts) and verbal (i.e. comments) forms of feedback. By doing so, I also achieved insight on what kind of materials attracted the most interest from VK users. I subsequently applied a close reading of users' verbal feedback – the comments – to understand what kind of discussions were sparked by the publication of historical materials, how these were structured, and recurring motifs within and across the discussions.

4.3. Findings

4.3.1. Representation

In this section I examine how internet users employed VKontakte to represent the two episodes of the Second World War which constitute the main focus of the current study: the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv. To do this I begin by exploring the dynamics of memory articulation on VKontakte. Then, I investigate the use of visual images for the representation of the two events. Finally, I discuss a selection of memory tropes which appeared in the context of the discussions on both events on VK.

Articulation dynamics. I began the analysis by exploring the dynamics of memory articulation in VKontakte, using data on publications from two online communities as an indicator of user activity. As Table 10 indicates, the peak of attention in VKontakte towards both historical events occurred in 2013, when the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was commemorated worldwide with jubilee parades, ceremonies, and a variety of other public events. Such an increase in SNS activity corresponds to observations made by Vera Zvereva (2011) and Galina Nikiporets-Takigawa (2013),

who, in their studies of the digital/mnemonic landscape of post-socialist countries, both argue that the articulation of collective memory through SNSs is determined by complex interactions between digital and non-digital developments.

Table 10. Dynamics of memory articulation in VKontakte

Year	Kyiv		L'viv	
	Pro-UPA	Anti-UPA	Pro-UPA	Anti-UPA
2016	0	4 (2)[64]	6	5
2015	0	8 (5)	0	1
2014	0	3 (1)	0	6 (2)
2013	2	17	2	5
2012	0	1	0	5 (4)
2011	0	2	0	4
2010	0	1	0	0
2009	0	1	0	0

Using a large set of data from popular Ukrainian and Russian SNSs, Nikiporets-Takigawa (2013) demonstrates how the celebration of Victory Day in 2010, which was marked by street clashes between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian groups in L'viv, translated into heated online debates on the role of Second World War memory in Ukraine and Russia. Similarly, the extensive mainstream media coverage of Victory Day in 2011 led to an intensification of memory performances in VKontakte. This took a variety of forms, including debates on family memories, publications of announcements about meetings with veterans, and sharing links to official declarations pronounced for the occasion (Zvereva, 2011, p. 99). Consequently, the peak of memory articulation in 2013 observed in my study can be viewed as a continuation of the earlier pattern, which reflects profound changes in how sociality is mediated and performed through digital technology (Berry & Dieter, 2015, p. 2). In the case of Second World War memory, this pattern was reflected in a complex interplay between online memory performance and public ceremonies, in particular a number of commemorative activities organized by Ukrainian and Russian authorities, which led to increased attention in both VKontakte communities towards the historical events in question.

The later decrease in attention in 2014 can be seen as another example of the increasing blurring

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[64] The numbers in brackets refer to the amount of posts related to the respective historical events (e.g., the Battle of Kyiv in 1943) as opposed to the total number of posts returned by the queries used, including the ones which adapted the "Kyiv liberation" and "L'viv pogrom" tropes to the Ukraine crisis (e.g. the "liberation" of Kyiv from the pro-Western government).

of "the historical distinction between the digital and the non-digital" (Berry & Dieter, 2015, p. 2). The deterioration of the political crisis in Ukraine, followed by the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has not only resulted in a de-actualization of Second World War memory, but also a reconsideration of the meaning behind the "liberation of Kyiv" and the "L'viv pogrom" tropes. According to Table 10, in 2014 the majority of messages in which these tropes were mentioned related not to the historical events themselves, but instead appropriated these historical references in the context of the ongoing Ukraine crisis. In the case of Kyiv, the "liberation of Kyiv" trope was used in reference to the installation of the new pro-Western government in Kyiv, which was framed as an ideological successor to Nazi Germany. By framing post-Euromaidan Ukrainian authorities as Nazi invaders, the posts called for a new liberation of Kyiv. Similarly, the "L'viv pogrom" trope was adapted for a series of attacks on governmental buildings in L'viv, which occurred in February 2014, also in the wake of Euromaidan protests.

As the Ukraine crisis, in particular the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, moved from the "hot" phase to the "cold" one, after the signing of the second package of Minsk agreements in February 2015, the scope of memory appropriation in the pro-Soviet community slowly decreased, even though it remained higher than at the beginning of the crisis. In the case of Kyiv we see a return to the patterns of memory articulation around anniversary dates which were observed previously, in the case of Wikipedia. If in 2014 only one out of four posts appeared around the anniversary of the capture of Kyiv by the Red Army (November 6), in 2015 three out of eight posts appeared on the same date. In the case of L'viv, however, the articulation of memory throughout the whole period of observation appeared to be less reliant on commemorative patterns, and more dependent on offline developments. One example of such situational articulation is presented in the increase of activity in spring 2016, which was sparked by a commemorative march dedicated to the Waffen SS division "Galicia" which took place in L'viv on April 28 ("Vo L'vove Proshel," 2016).

Images. In this section, I examined the use of visual images for the representation of Second World War in VKontakte. As was already pointed out in the previous chapters on Wikipedia and YouTube, the importance of the study of visuals in the context of war remembrance is confirmed by the extensive scholarship dedicated to the issue of framing of military conflicts, which points to visual images as essential elements in this process. For instance, Messaris and Abraham argue that because of the special qualities of visuals (indexicality, iconicity, and syntactic implicitness), the use of images is particularly effective for "framing and articulating ideological messages" (2011, p. 220). This argument is supported by Schwalbe and Dougherty (2015, p. 142), who, in their study on the use of images for framing the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon war, point out that visuals are not only processed more rapidly than texts, but they also produce an immediate emotional response. Similarly, Parry (2011, p. 1189) argues

that the use of visuals to frame a particular issue provides a higher degree of memorability and impact compared to the use of only verbal texts.

Similarly to what was seen in Wikipedia and YouTube, which both frequently relied on the use of visual elements for representing memory of the events, VKontakte users, too, frequently employed visual images in their framing of both historical episodes. 52 per cent of all posts related to the Battle of Kyiv included at least one image; in the case of the seizure of L'viv, the percentage was even higher, constituting 66 per cent of VKontakte content. Such a significant presence of visual content is also recognized by existing studies on VKontakte, in particular the ones which deal with recent political developments, such as anti-government protests in Russia in 2011–2012 (Sherstobitov & Bryanov, 2013) and the Crimean crisis (Bobryshova, 2016). Furthermore, as the following sections will show, VKontakte posts which included images provoked more intense interaction from internet users.

Both in the case of Kyiv and in the case of L'viv, the majority of visual images comprised black and white photos taken at the time the events in question took place. A similar choice of visuals was also observed in the case of Holocaust remembrance projects on Facebook, such as the Henio Zytomirski project, which used historical family photos to illustrate the pre-Holocaust life of Polish Jews (de Bruyn, 2010; Pfanzelter, 2015). In the case of both VKontakte/Facebook, Wikipedia and YouTube, where similar images were also found prevailing, the predominance of such digitized artifacts of the past can be interpreted as evidence of users' longing for historical authenticity, which is attached to such war memorabilia. In the case of Kyiv, the images usually showed Soviet soldiers and generals together with images of the newly liberated Kyiv. In the case of L'viv, the majority of images showed scenes from the pogrom, many of which were also featured in the videos found on YouTube.

While historical photos were the most common type of images both for pro-Ukrainian and pro-Soviet/Russian VKontakte communities, the exact choice of their subjects varied according to the community's historical and political affiliations. In the case of Kyiv, the "Against the OUN-UPA" community mostly used images associated with the Soviet High Command, in particular images of general Nikolai Vatutin and of the future general secretary Nikita Khrushchev. Both personalities enjoyed high public status in the Soviet times, and particularly in the later context of Second World War commemorations in Ukraine: both Vatutin and Khrushchev had headed the 1st Ukrainian Front, the group of Soviet armies which seized Kyiv from the Germans in 1943. While a few images also showed ordinary soldiers, the presence of images of Soviet military and/or political elites was disproportionately high. Such a choice can be viewed as a reflection of Soviet commemorative traditions, which, as we have seen, in the case of the Battle for Kyiv tended to focus on the genius of the Soviet High Command in the liberation of the Ukrainian capital, while mostly ignoring – or de-personalizing – the sacrifices of lower-ranking soldiers (Makhortykh, 2014).

By contrast, the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community employed only images of rank-and-file soldiers. Another difference was in the framing of the involvement of these soldiers in the Battle of Kyiv: unlike the "Against the OUN-UPA" community's images, which mostly portrayed Soviet soldiers celebrating victory on the streets of Kyiv after the battle, the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community concentrated attention on combat action itself, portraying Soviet soldiers moving, for instance, towards the banks of the river Dnieper. Such a difference in emphasis not only contrasted with the other community's focus on the positive aspects of military duty – which, as Susan Sontag (2003, p. 38) has pointed out, was until recently one of the preferred ways of representing war and conflict – but it also differed in its attention to the battle's painful course, rather than its glorious aftermath. In this manner, the images from the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community challenged the traditional Soviet narrative of the event much in the way that the Ukrainian documentaries on YouTube I have examined portrayed the battle through the prism of the suffering and martyrdom of the Ukrainians involved.

In the case of L'viv, the chosen historical images also focused on the leitmotif of suffering, which can be viewed as further evidence in favor of Sontag's (2003) argument on the growing emphasis on traumatic aspects of military conflicts in their contemporary representations; however, unlike the previous case, it was mostly present in materials published in the "Against the OUN-UPA" community, whereas the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community did not use visuals at all. Almost all the images present in the "Against the OUN-UPA" community posts were photos taken in the course of the pogrom, documenting the humiliation and suffering of L'viv's Jewish population. Special emphasis was laid on the iconic image of a battered, naked woman running from an angry crowd; the same image was used frequently in the YouTube videos discussed in the previous chapter. However, unlike the videos, which often, as I have showed, tried to impose on the viewer a certain hierarchy of suffering, by building a sequence of images which went from bad to worse in the course of a clip, VKontakte posts did not employ such sophisticated strategies in the use of visual elements.

While historical photos constituted the most common type of visual elements used in posts in both communities, a number of images produced in more recent years were also used. One common category of such images was comprised of digital photos taken during activities dedicated to Second World War commemorations, such as military parades or other such festive events; while these types of images were absent in the case of L'viv, a number of posts in the "Against the OUN-UPA" community included them in relation to the Battle for Kyiv. Not only did the use of such images place emphasis on the celebratory and communal nature of the event, but it also established a historical parallel with war-time photos depicting Soviet soldiers celebrating their victory. Another common category was represented by (de)motivational posters,[65] usually featuring calls for the liberation of Kyiv and/or

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[65]   A popular visual genre of web content, which usually comprises of Photoshopped images accompanied with a piece of

Ukraine and showing Russian national or imperial flags, as well as symbols associated with the unrecognized confederation of Novorossiya[66].

Tropes. The second element of Second World War memory representation in VKontakte which will be examined in this chapter is that of memory tropes. In her study on the remediation of the Soviet past in SNSs, Zvereva (2011, p. 99) argues that VKontakte users tend to be very selective in the way they approach the past: instead of taking into consideration different aspects of a particular historical episode and/or phenomenon, users tend to operate with a rather limited set of events, dates, and personalities. These recurring elements which appear in historical performances can be viewed as memory tropes (i.e. extensively used narrative devices), which characterize how a particular episode is represented online.

My observations concerning the representation of the two historical episodes I consider in this study coincide with Zvereva's claim about the selective use of tropes for remediating the past in SNS. In the case of the capture of Kyiv, I was able to identify four of the most prominent memory tropes, the majority of which can be traced back to the Great Patriotic War narrative of the Brezhnev period. One of these tropes surrounds the figure of Nikolai Vatutin, the Soviet general who led the 1st Ukrainian front which captured Kyiv in 1943. A large number of VKontakte posts referred to Vatutin's strategical genius as the main reason the Red Army was able to re-take the city from the Germans.

Such a significant focus on the contribution of a single Soviet commander, and, conversely, the downplaying or outright ignoring of the contribution and sacrifice of the rank-and-file is well in line with Soviet commemorative traditions (Korol, 2003; Makhortykh, 2014). The choice of focus on Vatutin can also be attributed to the circumstances of his death in 1944: this was caused by a wound received in the course of a skirmish with UPA soldiers in that year. While this fact was largely omitted from Soviet-era narratives,[67] the notion of the betrayal of a Soviet hero by Ukrainian nationalists, who allied themselves with the Nazis, also emerged regularly in posts related to the seizure of Kyiv. Thus the choice of this particular trope, with its emphasis on Ukrainian guilt and responsibility for the death of a Soviet hero, can be viewed as yet another instance of history appropriation for the sake of identity articulation which, as Zvereva (2011, p. 100) argues, is one of the common patterns of memory instrumentalization.

Another common trope here was that of liberation. The majority of VKontakte posts in the

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verbal text of inspirational or humorous nature.

[66] The proposed union of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), established by pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

[67] For instance, in the post-war biography of Vatutin, Mikhail Bragin dedicates only one sentence to the death of the general, claiming that his life was ended "by an enemy bullet" (1954, p. 227). Similarly, the Soviet encyclopedia of the Second World War does not go into the details of Vatutin's death, merely stating that he was seriously wounded in February and died a few weeks later (Kozlov, 1985, p. 122).

"Against the OUN-UPA" community referred to the event not as the seizure of Kyiv or the Battle of Kyiv, but as the *liberation* of Kyiv. Such a choice of formulation again reflects an established pattern of Soviet commemorative practice, which historically presented the capture of Kyiv as a liberation – both in the literal sense of the liberation of the city from the German army, and symbolically, the liberation of the heart of Ukraine.[68] It is also worth noting that this trope emphasizes the consequences of the battle, rather than the battle itself. This can be seen also in the large quantity of images depicting Soviet troops in the liberated city, and the simultaneous absence of images from before or during the battle, in contrast to the large number of such images appearing regularly on Wikipedia and YouTube. Similarly, the majority of posts discussed not the course of the Battle of Kyiv, but focused on celebrating the moment of liberation, thereby ignoring the less glorious aspects of the event: the high losses among Soviet soldiers and the mistakes of the Soviet High Command.

While these two memory tropes were particularly common in the "Against the OUN-UPA" community, it is worth noting that users from the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community, too, employed many similar tropes, albeit colored by a different meaning. For instance, one common trope used by opponents of the Soviet narrative of the seizure of Kyiv related to the figure of Georgy Zhukov. Zhukov, one of the most decorated Soviet commanders, coordinated the actions of the Soviet armies in Ukraine in the period preceding the capture of Kyiv; consequently, a number of VKontakte posts referred to the heavy losses incurred by the Red Army during the Battle of Kyiv either as evidence of Zhukov's incompetence, or of a conscious decision to eliminate as many Ukrainians in the Red Army ranks as possible. As in the case of Vatutin, who was presented as the sole mastermind behind the seizure of Kyiv, Zhukov was referred to as single-handedly responsible for the high human losses of the battle, particularly of Ukrainians. This trope, like the others explored previously, originated from Second World War historiography, but in this case from the revisionist side (Ginda, 2010). Similarly, a number of posts in the "Glory to the OUN-UPA" community employed the trope of occupation in their narrative of the event; much like in the case of Zhukov, this was in diametrical opposition to the liberation trope of the "Against the OUN-UPA" community, and, again, focused users' attention on the consequences of the Battle for Kyiv, rather than the battle itself.

The final trope found in connection to the capture of Kyiv was the EU-Nazi trope. Unlike earlier tropes, derived from either the Soviet or the revisionist narratives of the Second World War, this trope was a recent invention which appeared in the period following the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine. It was introduced by members of the anti-Maidan movement, who supported President Yanukovych in

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[68]   See, for instance, works by Voznenko and Utkin (1953), Bragin (1954), Telpukhovskiy (1966), which actively use this trope in their interpretation of the event. Furthermore, as Hrynevych (2005) notes in his study of Second World War memory in Ukraine, in the post-war period the trope of liberation was further popularized by establishing the annual celebration of the Kyiv liberation on November 6.

throughout the protests and denied the legitimacy of new pro-Western government, calling instead for closer relations with Russia.[69] The trope brought two concepts together: the Nazi occupation of Kyiv in the years of the Second World War and the so-called "occupation" of Kyiv by pro-Western protesters, followed by the installment of a pro-Western government. Such a combination facilitated the appropriation of the Second World War in the context of the Ukraine crisis and the later conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

In the case of L'viv, one of two most common tropes – mentioned already in the introduction and in the chapter dedicated to Wikipedia – revolved around the Nachtigall battalion. The battalion, composed of ethnic Ukrainians, took part in the seizure of L'viv in the ranks of the German army; consequently, a number of posts laid special emphasis on the involvement of the Nachtigall, turning the capture of L'viv by the Germans not just into one of the many Soviet defeats in the beginning of the war, but into an act of betrayal perpetrated by Ukrainian nationalists, or Ukrainians in general. The soldiers of the Nachtigall were also presented as the main orchestrators of the pogrom; in this way, other details related to the event, such as the mass murders of prisoners in L'viv prisons committed by the NKVD in the days preceding the capture of the city and their instrumentalization by the Nazis, were ignored. Similar to the Vatutin trope mentioned earlier, the choice of this particular interpretation can be viewed as "a marker of self-identification" (Zvereva, 2011, p. 100) used for identity articulation through the construction of the negative identity of opponents and the propagation of a binary opposition of Us vs. Them.

A second common trope used in the case of L'viv was that of Babyn Yar. This choice is unexpected for two reasons: firstly, the Babyn Yar massacres, which claimed the lives of dozens of thousands of victims, mostly Jews, were committed by the Nazis in Kyiv in the period between 1941 and 1943, and not in L'viv. Secondly, unlike tropes related to the seizure of Kyiv, which can be traced back to the Great Patriotic War narrative, the story of Babyn Yar was silenced in the Soviet time, as part of the Soviet campaign of marginalization of Holocaust memory (Rohdewald, 2008). Yet, in the case of VKontakte, references to the Babyn Yar massacre turned out to be a recurring element in posts dedicated to the seizure of L'viv. Not only was the L'viv pogrom presented as a prelude to the mass murders in Kyiv, but also the blame for the Babyn Yar killings was placed on the same party (i.e., Ukrainian nationalists in general and the Nachtigall battalion in particular). One example of the use of this trope was found in the 2015 post titled "Pravda o Predateljah. Kollaboracinizm vo Vtoroj Mirovoj i Velikoj Otechestvennoj Vojne" [The Truth about the Traitors. Collaborationism During the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War] ("Pravda o Predateljah," 2015): the post started by claiming

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[69]   For more information on the online activity of anti-Maidan activists as well as other examples of common tropes used by them see the work by Kozachenko (2014).

that many of the German units mistakenly related to Russian collaborationists were actually composed of Ukrainians; the post went on to mention (briefly) the Nachtigall battalion, and then listed a number of alleged crimes of Ukrainian nationalists who collaborated with Germans, which included the mass killings in Babyn Yar.

The selective use of tropes observed in the representations of the two episodes of the Second World War in VKontakte can be viewed as further evidence supporting Zvereva's claim about the fragmentary and non-linear nature of historical narratives existing on SNS (2011, p. 98). Unlike Wikipedia and YouTube, which provide coherent – albeit limited and often tendentious – narratives about the capture of Kyiv and the seizure of L'viv, VKontakte focuses on just a few aspects of both events. Consequently, instead of constructing an overarching narrative of the past, like in the case of the above mentioned platforms, VKontakte focuses users' attention on selected historical personalities or episodes, which are sometimes only partially connected with the events in question. Such a selective approach often conceals information considered either irrelevant or inappropriate in the context of the event representation; however, as Zvereva (2011. p. 111) notes, it also facilitates the activation of specific emotional reactions in relation to the event, such as anxiety, grief, or pride.

4.3.2. Interaction

After examining the ways in which Russian and Ukrainian users employed VKontakte for representing the two historical episodes of the Second World War, I explored the different forms of interaction with these representations fostered by the architecture of the SNS. Unlike YouTube, which allows four types of user feedback – views, comments, likes, and dislikes – VKontakte gives only three options: comments, likes, and reposts. Furthermore, the VKontakte search engine does not support the use of emoticons as a form of feedback, unlike Facebook's recent addition. Two types of VKontakte feedback – likes (i.e. the number of times users liked a particular post) and reposts (i.e. the number of times users shared a particular post through their own personal pages) – are non-verbal ones, which limits their interpretative value; the last type – comments – on the other hand, provides VKontakte users with an opportunity to express their opinions in the form of verbal commentary.

Non-verbal interactions. According to Table 11, which summarizes the statistics for different forms of interaction with Second World War representations in VKontakte, the distribution of users' attention between individual pieces of memory content was significantly skewed. The measurements of distribution, such as quartiles and median, indicate that the majority of memory content produced for VKontakte received scarce attention from users, while a few pieces of content attracted disproportionate amounts of interest. Such a pattern was present both in the case of materials related to the seizure of L'viv and the ones related to the capture of Kyiv; furthermore, in both cases, the skew

was particularly significant in the case of reposts and comments, while likes tended to be distributed more equally.

Table 11. User interactions with Second World War content in VKontakte (by episode)

	Minimum	Q1	Median	Q3	Maximum
Kyiv					
Reposts	0	0	0	0	12
Likes	0	0	2	8	30
Comments	0	0	0	3	33
L'viv					
Reposts	0	0	0	0	7
Likes	0	0	1	10	16
Comments	0	0	0	3	85

As in the case of the numerical measurements of activity on YouTube, it is difficult to identify the exact factors influencing the distribution of interest between different pieces of memory content. However, based on close examination of individual pieces and comparison with existing studies (Sherstobitov & Bryanov, 2013; Alekseeva, 2014; Morozova, 2015; Bobryshova, 2016), I was able to identify a few patterns which might explain some of the reasons behind the distributions shown in Table 11. Below, I will examine how different types of Second World War content produced in VKontakte interacted with the different forms of feedback the platform allows.

Among all three forms of feedback provided by VKontakte, comments currently remain the least investigated. While a number of studies of VKontakte (Alekseeva, 2014; Morozova, 2015; Bobryshova, 2016) consider comments as one of major form of interaction with digital narratives, almost none of these discuss in detail the reasons why some pieces of content receive more comments compared to others. For instance, Alexandra Alekseeva (2014) and Alexandra Bobryshova (2016), in their studies of VKontakte reactions to the Crimean referendum of 2014, point out that the topics which spawned the most comments were those which pertained to the latest political developments (e.g., the support campaign for the integration of Crimea into the Russian Federation) and to the establishment of antagonistic ideological constructions of Us vs. Them (e.g., by propagating the positive view of Russia as a home for Crimeans and presenting the West, including Ukraine, in a negative light); however, the topicality of content might not be the only factor to provoke intense interactions from VKontakte users.

Similar to observations made by Bobryshova (2016), in the case of Second World War memory,

the re-contextualisation and appropriation of the past in relation to recent political developments, in this case the Ukraine crisis, seemed to be one of the factors which initiated more extensive verbal interactions by VKontakte users. Another trend was related to the length of a given publication: both in the case of L'viv and in the case of Kyiv, the pieces of content which attracted the majority of comments were usually relatively long (at least 3 paragraphs) texts. The latter observation appears to run counter to the popular assumption that long texts usually experience worse reception than concise ones (Manjoo, 2013); however, in the case of Second World War discussions in VKontakte, long posts often attracted significant attention. This could be explained both in light of their relevance for the thematic communities, composed of members who are thoroughly interested in the subject, and of the presence of a larger amount of content which can come under discussion.

One example of such publications was a VKontakte post entitled "Glamorous Fascism" ("Glamurnyj Fashizm," 2016), which discusses the growing popularity of Adolf Hitler in the contemporary Western world. The post was constituted by a lengthy piece of writing – 41 paragraphs – followed by a photo of popular British actor Daniel Radcliffe sporting a haircut reminiscent of Adolf Hitler's iconic hairstyle. The long list of examples which allegedly demonstrate the rising cult of Hitler in the United States and Western Europe (e.g posts on social networking sites which greet users in occasion of Hitler's birthday, an Italian wine named after Hitler, pro-Hitler marches in Germany, etc.) ended with a lamentation of similarly growing pro-Hitler sentiments in contemporary Ukraine. According to the post author, the glorious Soviet past, when Ukrainians and Russians fought together and sacrificed their lives in the battle against fascism (quoting 650 thousand Soviet soldiers fallen in the Battle of Kyiv), is fading from collective memory, whilst the nationalist Azov regiment organizes mass demonstrations, and government officials attend opening exhibitions of works by Hitler.

The attachment of relevance to a historical episode in light of contemporary developments can also be traced in the case of the L'viv materials. The post which attracted the largest amount of comments in this case was entitled "The Glorification of Nazi Criminals in Ukraine" ("Chestvovanie Nacistskih Prestupnikov," 2016). It opened with the statement that Ukrainian nationalists were planning to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the foundation of the Waffen SS division "Galicia," and cited as reason for this decision the bloodthirstiness of Ukrainian right-wing organizations, whose members "completely betrayed their human nature and turned into aggressive mutants" ("Chestvovanie Nacistskih Prestupnikov," 2016). The post then provided a long discussion on the involvement of Ukrainian nationalists in Nazi crimes, accusing the Nachtigall battalion, led by Roman Shukhevich, of participating in the L'viv pogrom, which left, according to the post, approximately 7 thousand people dead. This post, too, concluded with references to the contemporary situation in Ukraine, claiming that Ukrainian nationalists were planning on bringing fifteen thousand fighters to Odessa on the eve of the

second anniversary of the mass murder in the House of Unions, orchestrated by neo-Nazis in 2014.

By contrast, the pieces of Second World War content in the two VKontakte communities to attract most of the likes were usually posts with little verbal text. A similar pattern was also observed by Bobryshova (2016) in her study of VKontakte reactions to the Crimean referendum of 2014: according to her study, posts with visual images (e.g., photos from the referendum, (de)motivational posters, and caricatures) attracted more likes and reposts than ones without. In the sample of posts I examined, elements of visual text were usually in the form of historical photos showing images from the pogrom in L'viv or from the capture of Kyiv. One example was a publication titled "We congratulate the heroic city of Kyiv on the 70th anniversary of the liberation!" ("Pozdravljaem Gorod-Geroj Kiev," 2013): the publication consisted of just three sentences of text, followed by a black and white photo depicting Soviet tanks rolling through Kyiv streets. Another publication which attracted significant amounts of likes contained even less text – just one sentence which attributed the images that followed as "crimes of Lithuanian and Ukrainian fascists" ("Na Redkih Trofejnyh Pljonkah Zapechatleny," 2016) – followed by a video montage of black and white photos of the L'viv pogrom.

The popularity of these two particular pieces of content can be viewed as more instances of the same tendency observed in the case of YouTube, where clips which presented the largest amounts of historical material (e.g. black and white photos or video records from historical archives) usually received the greatest amount of likes. Together, these observations can be viewed as evidence of the attractiveness of materials which provide users with a feeling of historical authenticity (though the attribution of these materials is often questionable, to say the least) and/or allow them to interact with visual images which they may view as artifacts from the past; however, such materials usually do not spark debates from the side of users in the way that lengthy publications which appropriate Second World War memory to comment on the ongoing Ukraine crisis do.

Verbal interactions. The analysis of comments to VKontakte posts which gave rise to discussions about the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv allowed me to identify several types of reactions towards these historical events. The first of these types corresponds to what Zvereva (2011, p. 106) identified as a commemorative reaction – quite simply, acknowledgments of the heroism of the fallen soldiers and expressions of admiration towards their sacrifices ("*Ja zhe na vse jeto govorju chto ja gorzhus' chto milliony ukraincev vmeste so vsem sovetskim narodom zashhitili stranu i pobedili vraga spasshi pri jetom milliony ljudej raznyh nacional'nostej*" [To all this I will just say that I am proud that millions of Ukrainians together with the whole Soviet nation defended their country and defeated the enemy thus saving millions of people of different nationalities] (Tverjozyj, 2012). Often, such comments included the use of commonly used memorial expressions, such as "Thanks for the Victory, Grandpa!"[70] For instance, one

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[70]   This phrase that was used during one Victory Day commemoration campaign in Russia became so popular that it was

user commented: "*kljuchevoe slovo – Mat' gorodov russkih, jetim vsjo skazanno! spasibo Dedu za Pobedu!*" [the key word is 'The Mother of Russian cities,' this is what is important! thank you, Grandpa, for the Victory!] (Alfjorov, 2012).

Such reactions, however, remained relatively infrequent and were found mostly only in the context of the capture of Kyiv by the Red Army; by contrast, a much more common type of reaction involved heated discussions between proponents and opponents of a particular historical interpretation of the event. These emotional exchanges on the matter of historical truth, which often took the form of veritable online discursive battles, or "web wars" (Rutten, Fedor, & Zvereva, 2013), were found both in the L'viv and in the Kyiv cases. As Alekseeva (2014) demonstrated in her study of VKontakte discussions of the Crimean crisis, the current Ukraine crisis, too, provoked a series of intense web wars between Ukrainian and Russian users; often, these discursive conflicts involved the appropriation of traumatic memories of the 20th century, including that of the Second World War.

Based on the analysis of user comments, I was able to identify a few common features of web wars in VKontakte which involved Second World War memory. Firstly, as was found to be the case in the discussions on the Crimean crisis (Alekseeva, 2014) the majority of comments were fierce interpersonal exchanges, often bringing into discussion the personal qualities of opponents ("*Ivan, Ivan, Suka banderovskaja, ja skoree nemca proshhu, chem vas predatelej!*" [Ivan, Ivan, Banderite bitch, I would sooner forgive a German, than you traitors!] (Boguslavskij, 2013)) and threats of violence ("*A vashykh ja bukvaljno vchora v Ternopoli na vozali i zamitj ne ghanjaly a vtoptaly v zemlju!!!!smilyvistju tam i ne pakhlo!!!*" [And your type, yesterday in Ternopil at the railway station, not only did I harass, but buried into the ground!!!! I did not smell any bravery there!!!] (Zelenyi, 2013). Unlike in Wikipedia, where historical discussions among users usually refrained from personal attacks – considered unacceptable in the context of the platform's quasi-academic code of conduct – VKontakte exchanges frequently overstepped the boundary between civil discussion and vitriolic arguments. The way memory was performed in VKontakte also differed significantly from observations on memory performance in other SNSs such as Facebook; according to several studies (Roberts, 2012; Pfanzelter, 2015), in the case of Facebook, the amount of hateful exchanges, be it in cases of individual and collective memory performance, remains relatively insignificant, which could be attributed both to specific differences in online culture, as well as Facebook administration's proactive stance of opposing hate speech on their platform.

The presence of such heated interpersonal exchanges is connected to another feature of VKontakte web wars, which Zvereva (2011) identified as the confrontational nature of memory

turned into an internet meme. The original meaning of the phrase is the expression of gratitude to the war-time Soviet generation by their grandchildren's generation; however, since then it has also acquired a sarcastic meaning, hinting at the lack of attention and support for Soviet veterans all the rest of the year outside the May 9 commemorations.

performances common among many post-socialist internet users. Often enough VKontakte users referred to history not for the sake of historical discussion in itself, but in order to accentuate distinctions between them and other users, as well as to strengthen feelings of solidarity within a particular community (*"Ivan, nu da, my zh ne priznaem banditov i gitlerovskih prisluzhnikov iz OUN-UPA gerojami, ne molimsja na Banderu i Shuhevicha i ne podderzhivaem OPG 'Svolota.' Ah da, eshhe my na move ne govorim"* [Ivan, well yes, we do not recognize bandits and Hitlerite servants from OUN-UPA as heroes, we do not pray to Bandera and Shukhevich, and we do not support the organized criminals from the 'Svolota' party. Oh, yes, we also do not speak Ukrainian language] (Buchmynsky, 2013)). These observations are also supported by findings from the study by Alekseeva (2014, p. 9), who argues that users often engage in discussions of VKontakte posts not for the sake of discussing actual content, but for the sake of articulating their own personal standpoints, on certain issues or in general.

Thirdly, web wars usually involved references to recent political developments. A substantial number of comments, for instance, referred to the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine in the context of Second World War memory (*Rebjata!, MOCHITE jetih suchek!!! soldaty VSU ne ponimajut za chto vojujut, no kogda pojmut – budet pozdno... Zhalko kazhduju chelovecheskuju zhizn', no real'nost' zhestoka. Russkie veliki i nepobedimy!!!* [Guys!, KILL these bitches!!! the soldiers of the Ukrainian army do not understand what they are fighting for, but when they get it – it will be too late...The loss of every human life is sad, but reality is cruel. Russians are great and unbeatable!!!] (Glyba, 2015). More than one commentator appropriated war memories to frame the Ukraine crisis as a continuation of the Second World War (*"Chuma, nedobili v 20 veke...pridjotsja dobivat' v 21-om!"* [The plague, which we did not finish off in the 20th century...seems like we should finally finish it off in the 21st!] (Kudrjashov, 2016)).

The degree of contestation between memory performances in VKontakte is thus significantly higher than in the context of other platforms, including those examined in earlier chapters. In many cases, VKontakte users seemed more interested in articulating their ideological differences through the prism of memories, rather than debating those memories or the events themselves, current or past; for this reason, VKontakte debates about the past were particularly susceptible to memory appropriation. At the same time it is worth noting that the format of the SNS seems to be more conducive to discussions: unlike Wikipedia and YouTube, where historical debates are more often than not turned into monologues, due to both the platforms' architectures and their respective communities' communication patterns, VKontakte hosted a number of dialogues on the Second World War: this can be viewed as further evidence of the platform's characteristic of supporting "a more equal exchange of information and opinions" (Kulyk, 2013, p. 77).

4.4. Conclusions

In this chapter I examined the ways in which Second World War memory is represented and interacted with in VKontakte, the most popular social networking site in the post-socialist space and in Ukraine and Russia in particular. I compared how two episodes of the Second World War are dealt with in two opposing VKontakte communities: "Glory to the OUN-UPA," and "Against the OUN-UPA." The comparison indicated that users from both communities employed different strategies for representing the past. These strategies were mostly defined by differences between historical narratives: for the latter community, "Against the OUN-UPA," the traditional, Soviet-era narrative of the Second World War, which remains the standard in contemporary Russia, prevailed; in the former, "Glory to the OUN-UPA," the revisionist, post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography had the most support. At the same time, patterns of interaction with the contentious past across both communities seemed to share a number features, including the longing towards historical authenticity, the actualization and appropriation of the past for the needs of present, and frequent engagement in online discursive combats.

One major distinction between VKontakte and the two other social media platforms which were examined in the previous chapters, is the lack of an overarching, contextualizing narrative of either of the two episodes. Unlike Wikipedia and YouTube, which tend to provide more complete – at least in principle – interpretations of historical events, the way of representing the past most commonly found on VKontakte is guided by what Zvereva has termed "net logic" (2011, p. 103). Zvereva identifies net logic as a dispersive format for historical discussions, by which debates begin and end suddenly, and can evolve simultaneously across several online communities – characteristics which make their study a rather complicated task. By this token, rather than providing a coherent image of the past, memory content in VKontakte is usually limited to "fragmentary links, inconsistent fast reactions to questions that are common for a particular group, and context advertisements" (Zvereva, 2011, p. 103). As a result, representations of the Second World War in VKontakte tend to be more selective and focus only on some aspects of the past, while effectively downplaying others.

My findings thus contradict observations made by Pogacar, who argues that SNSs provide opportunities for "effectively weaving together an unsolicited vision of the past" (2016, p. 297). Instead, in the case of VKontakte, it seems more appropriate to suggest that the platform is more suitable for contrasting selective visions of the past and provoking heated exchanges among their apologists. Furthermore, the less stable, more fluid ways memory functions in VKontakte communities make these visions particularly susceptible to offline political and cultural developments. At the same time, it also makes VKontakte more representative for the examination of ways in which the past is transformed according to the needs of the present, setting VK apart from the less fluid, more rigid memory narratives we have seen on other social media platforms.

Conclusions: Myths and memes in Ukrainian social media

On December 16, 2015, the VKontakte community "Against the OUN-UPA" published an announcement dedicated to the birthday of Nikolai Vatutin, one of the Soviet commanders who participated in the seizure of Kyiv by the Red Army in 1943. The announcement praised Vatutin as "the prominent Soviet military leader and the Hero of the Soviet Union" who took part "in the liberation of Kyiv and the right-bank Ukraine" ("16 Dekabrja," 2015). In keeping with guidelines for the successful promotion of VKontakte posts (Dementii, 2015), the announcement included a black-and-white photo showing Vatutin in Soviet military attire. This photo was taken in 1943, a year before Vatutin was to be mortally wounded in a skirmish between a small company of Soviet soldiers and a UPA unit in Central Ukraine.

A week later, on December 23, a VKontakte user from the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhia, Tim Dulov, left a comment to the post. The comment was rather brief and consisted of the following statement: "*Tochnee v okupacii.... 'Osvoboditel'*" [To be more precise – [he participated] not in the liberation [of Kyiv and the right-bank Ukraine], but in the occupation... 'Liberator'] (Dulov, 2015). The bitter irony of the comment contrasted not only with the admiring tone of the original post, but also with the established narrative of the Great Patriotic War, according to which the seizure of Kyiv was a decisive victory of the Soviet people over their enemy, as well as the liberation of the "immortal heart of Ukraine" (Shulzhenko & Tykhonenko, 2013, p. 4). The comment left by Dulov, instead, referred to the concept of two occupations – first by the Nazis, and then, once again, by the Soviets – which has become a predominant narrative in Ukrainian academia in the two decades following the proclamation of Ukrainian independence in 1991 (Hrynevych, 2005).

Yet, the consequences of Dulov's comment contrasting these two war narratives – of the Great Patriotic War vs. the two occupations – proved to be rather limited: a day after, another VKontakte user, Ekaterina Fomina, responded simply: "*Ty durak, hohol*" [You are an idiot, hohol[71]](Fomina, 2015). The discussion of the original post ended there, as neither Dulov nor Fomina appeared to be interested in exploring their differences or seek consensus in relation to the contentious Ukrainian war past. As in many of the other cases which were examined in this study, both users merely employed digital technology to one-sidedly declare their personal allegiances to existing war myths and transmit them online, often appropriating the past tragedies in the context of the ongoing Ukraine crisis, without seriously discussing them.

The "debate" about the role of Nikolai Vatutin in the context of Ukrainian history mentioned

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[71]   *Hohol* is a pejorative term used to refer to ethnic Ukrainians.

above is but one example of how complex interactions between cultural memory and social media in the contemporary post-socialist space are. Similarly to what Ellen Rutten and Vera Zvereva have noted in their study of web wars in post-socialist states, the past, in Ukrainian social media, is not only "as alive as the present" (2013, p. 5), but it is, also perhaps for this same reason, never neutral or unbiased. Instead, the remediation of traumatic memories of the 20th century, in particular of the Second World War, ignites fierce debates and emotional storms, which reflect the different – often highly divergent, at times irreconcilable – views on the past which constitute one of characteristics of the post-socialist mnemonic landscape.

The large presence of these affective interactions with the past in Ukrainian social media thus not only puts to the test existing assessments about the consequences of the growing digitization of contentious memories, but also compels us to question the meaning behind some fundamental concepts in the field of memory studies. Inflammatory memory exchanges such as the ones examined above leave little space for tolerance or mutual respect; consequently, they hardly contribute to the formation of new cosmopolitan narratives of the past which would "transcend cultural and ethnic borders" (Levy & Sznaider, 2002). At the same time, though, the possibility of engaging in such exchanges across transnational online spaces can in itself be viewed as evidence of the democratization of cultural remembrance of traumatic pasts, which, in the case of post-socialist countries, remains dominated by a few prevalent discourses and memory practices which, as Alexander Etkind argues, are still "inadequate" (2009, p. 182) in reflecting the feelings of trauma suffered by the population of the region.

At the same time, similarly to other forms of online activism – which, as Jose van Dijck and Thomas Poell (2016) point out, are often plagued by the misuse of digital technology – digital remembrance is subject to a number of limitations which can undermine, or at least render questionable, its democratizing potential. Some of these limitations, such as the commonness of verbal aggressions and the fragmentation of online narratives of the past, were already noted by various scholars (e.g. Kuntsman, 2010; Zvereva, 2011; Rutten & Zvereva, 2013); other limitations, such as the instrumentalization of the past both by individual and state actors, have become an increasingly present feature in the context of the Ukraine crisis. Together, these limitations prompt us to re-consider not only how democratic digital representations of the past in social media, and the interactions they give rise to, actually are, but also, fundamentally, what the word "democratic" may really mean in the context of cultural remembrance.

By examining these digital representations of the Second World War and the online exchanges around them, the study has sought a better understanding of the ways memory and technology relate in the post-socialist space and how both relate to, and are affected by, the current crisis in Ukraine. This

last section of the chapter revisits the results of the study, discussing the empirical findings of the thesis as well as the implications they carry in regards to digital memory theory. It then examines the potential limitations of the study and lists possibilities for further research. Finally, it concludes with a discussion on the perspectives of Second World War memory in Ukraine.

5.1. Empirical findings

This study was set up in response to a growing interest in the interactions between social media and cultural memory in post-socialist states (Kuntsman, 2010; Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Rutten, Fedor, & Zvereva, 2013) and acknowledges the significant changes the post-socialist mnemonic and media landscape have experienced since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in 2013. It examined how two episodes of the Second World War – the capture of L'viv by Germans in 1941 and the seizure of Kyiv by Soviets in 1943 – are represented and discussed by Ukrainian and Russian internet users on several major social media platforms, namely Wikipedia, YouTube, and VKontakte. The results suggest that each of these platforms hosts its own digital memory forms, determined both by the platforms' specific architecture and their respective community practices. These forms – or genres – of memory vary from quasi-academic, encyclopedic texts (Wikipedia) to audiovisual clips (YouTube) to non-linear, fragmentary reflections (VKontakte). Similarly, users' interaction with these narratives vary from non-verbal expressions of interest (e.g., views, reposts, likes, and dislikes) to verbal comments, which again range from organized discussions guided by an established code of conduct, in the case of Wikipedia, to emotional appeals to historical truth or personal attacks, in the case of VKontakte and YouTube.

At the same time, the study indicated a number of patterns which are common for memory workings across all three platforms. Firstly, in line with previous studies examining the use of social media for remembering recent traumatic events (Pentzold, 2009; Ferron & Massa, 2011), my observations indicated that the intensity of users' interactions with the past tends to increase around the anniversaries of their related historical events. In the case of Wikipedia, for instance, users tend to visit pages relating to the Battle of Kyiv on and around the anniversary of the city's capture in November; in a similar fashion, the number of views of the encyclopedia articles on the seizure of L'viv increased in June. In other cases, however, such increases of interaction intensity were related not only to the anniversaries, but also to other mediatized events associated with the history of the Second World War in general. One example of such an increase is the amount of VKontakte publications on the seizure of L'viv by Germans in anticipation of the organized march dedicated to the foundation of the Waffen SS division "Galicia."

Secondly, the representation of the Second World War on all three platforms is heavily influenced by a set of tropes which usually originate from mainstream media. The predominance of

such media markers was already noted by Vera Zvereva in her study of Soviet-era memories in VKontakte (Zvereva, 2011, p. 100); however, my findings point to the fact that her observations also ring true in the examination of other social media platforms such as YouTube and Wikipedia. Not only does such a dependence on existing tropes about a particular issue make digital memories subject to profound changes which follow changes in mainstream media discourse, but it also makes them significantly de-personalized. The reliance on media tropes leaves little space for sharing experiences which are not part of the established discourse, such as, for instance, witness accounts or family memories. While those memories still influence individuals' views on the past, they rarely appear explicitly on social media platforms, often being viewed as unreliable sources of information (in the case of Wikipedia) or knowledge too intimate to be shared in what is a rather aggressive environment (in VKontakte or YouTube).

Thirdly, all three cases observe various forms of appropriation of Second World War memory to the context of the current crisis in Ukraine. The scope, as well as the forms, of memory instrumentalization varies between platforms: for instance, in Wikipedia, it has caused a growing emphasize on the collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with Nazi Germany in Russian Wikipedia; in the case of YouTube this instrumentalization was reflected in the number of comments which drew parallels between the Second World War and the current conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The most blatant instances of appropriation, however, were found in the case of VKontakte, where a number of posts and comments appropriated memories of the German occupation of Kyiv to frame the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, drawing parallels to the "occupation" of the Ukrainian capital by the post-Euromaidan government. Consequently, both episodes featured as part of a new post-Euromaidan discourse on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; however, it is worth noting that the scope of their appropriation was significantly higher in pro-Russian online communities.

The growing appropriation of the Second World War was contrasted, however, by the decreasing focus on memories themselves in the unfolding of the Ukraine crisis. Before the Euromaidan protests, all three platforms hosted a number of online clashes surrounding historical interpretations of the seizure of Kyiv and the capture of L'viv in themselves. After 2013, the focus shifted from historical debates viewed through the prism of current politics, to political debates viewed through the prism of cultural memory. Such a change can be traced both in the content of online representations and interactions as well as in their dynamics. The study therefore argues that, in the course of the Ukraine crisis, the interest of Ukrainian social media users towards Second World War memory decreased, as the latter became increasingly used to represent and interpret the ongoing crisis.

5.2. Theoretical implications

The results of the study prompt for a more critical assessment of interactions between digital technology and cultural, as well as transnational, memory. Similar to the above mentioned work by Rutten and Zvereva (2013), which expresses concern over the reliance of current digital memory scholarship on observations made in the Western European and Northern American contexts, my analysis points to significant differences in the ways technology and the past interact with each other in the post-socialist online space. These differences rest in the intense appropriation of the past, especially Second World War memory, facilitated by the use of social media; while a number of studies have already pointed to the significant degree of instrumentalization of memory and technology by collective and individual actors in post-socialist states (Paulsen, 2013; Nikiporets-Takigawa, 2013), my study suggest that the scope of these processes has increased significantly in the context of the Ukraine crisis, in which both memory and media have turned out to be what Hoskins and O'Loughlin labeled as "the key modulators of security and insecurity today" (2010, p. 2).

This instrumental approach to the past which was found in Ukrainian social media does not only bring into question existing interpretations of the interactions between transnational memory and digital media (Levy & Sznaider, 2005; Assmann & Conrad, 2011; de Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Bond, Craps & Vermeulen, 2016), but also prompts for a more critical assessment of claims about the democratizing potential of social media in the sphere of collective remembrance (Haskins, 2009; Knudsen & Stage, 2013; Pfanzelter, 2015). While observations made in the current study support claims that the decreasing costs of media production and circulation which result from the advancement of digital technology and the rise of social media services can facilitate transnational interactions, including those relating to the past, it also indicates that these interactions do not necessarily result in the rise of "global" (Assmann & Conrad, 2011) or "cosmopolitan" (Levy & Sznaider, 2002) narratives.

Similarly, while social media provide an open space for multiple interpretations of the past as well as for the discussion of contentious memories, this space still can be – and often is – dominated by existing hegemonic discourses, the defenders of which manage to effectively silence their opponents through a variety of means, varying from Wikipedia editorial policies to hate speech in VKontakte. Consequently, many of the memory forms analyzed in this study can be viewed as transnational only in format (e.g. their existence in transnational space of digital media), but not in content, since the latter appears to rely mostly on mainstream interpretations from their respective national historiographies. The majority of memory interactions analyzed in the study seem to follow the logic of the mainstream media, and often reject outright any alternative views on historical issues, especially in regards to the Second World War, which continues to be the subject of heated political and academic debates in post-socialist states.

The dominance of hegemonic discourses, which usually take the form of a few, pervasive tropes, points to another important aspect of digital remembrance of the Second World War: its de-personalized nature. The majority of memory forms analyzed in this study lack a personal touch; instead, they are mostly framed in public terms, relying either on academic historiography (in the case of Wikipedia) or mainstream media (in the case of YouTube and VKontakte). While a few exceptions were found, their rarity contrasts not only with general claims about the increased potential for users' self-expression allowed by Web 2.0 technologies (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010), but also with corollary arguments from the field of memory studies which emphasize the growing personalization of remembrance fostered by digital technology (Hoskins, 2009).

My findings suggest that the homogenization of memory and simultaneous marginalization of "experiences and histories of particular individuals or collectives" (Bond, Craps, & Vermeulen, 2016, p. 4) should not be viewed merely as an outgrowth of national memory regimes; instead, these processes can also occur in transnational memory spaces such as social media. Here the homogenization can be caused by a number of reasons, including specific features of a given platform's architecture, which define what type of content can be produced and interacted with, and specific community practices, which determine what forms of representations are viewed as acceptable or popular and what kinds of interactions are allowed or tolerated.

Furthermore, the study calls for increased attention towards the reception of memory narratives online, as well as for an assessment of different forms of user interaction with these narratives. Up to now, the majority of works in the field of digital memory studies have focused on the representation of the past,[72] while the reception of these representations has remained under-investigated. In studies which do consider this reception aspect, the main emphasis is laid on verbal reactions, as occurs in studies of comments on YouTube (Drinot, 2011; Knudsen & Stage, 2013) or on VKontakte (Zvereva, 2011), whilst non-verbal forms of feedback, such as likes or views, usually remain ignored. However, the present study demonstrates that, despite the at times limited interpretative potential non-verbal forms of feedback provide, their study can be beneficial for understanding the ways in which users receive and react to different forms of digital memories. Not only does it thus acknowledge the growing role of non-verbal forms of feedback – an essential part of the so-called "like economy" (Gerlitz & Halmond, 2013) – but it also allows for the identification of patterns in reception of different memory narratives and formats.

This last point illustrates one more theoretical implication of the current study, which is the importance of recognizing the factors which determine how much internet users are interested in

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[72]   See, for instance, collections edited by Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading (2009a), Kuntsman (2010), and Rutten, Fedor, and Zvereva (2013).

particular pieces of digital memorabilia. This topic is closely related to the commodification of memory, which remains a rather under-investigated topic in contemporary memory studies (Sturken, 1997; Landsberg, 2004). While it is within reason to presume that some formats of digital memories attract more attention than others, the question of what the factors influencing these distinctions are remains open to debate. In the case of Second World War memories in Ukrainian social media, these factors appear to be the presentation of authentic – or non-digital – features of the past, such as black-and-white photos or digital copies of historical documents, together with an intensive appropriation of the past for the needs of the present; however, further research is required in order to account for a variety of factors which can influence how different forms of digital memories are received by internet users.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

The analysis provided in the thesis involved three of the social media platforms which were among those most used in Ukraine during the period of study; however, these three platforms constitute only a part of the complex Ukrainian social media landscape. While Wikipedia, YouTube, and VKontakte are among the ten most visited web resources in Ukraine ("Top Sites in Ukraine," n.d.), a number of other popular social media platforms, such as Odnoklassniki or Twitter, were not considered in this study. Future studies might examine the interactions between these platforms and Second World War memory, as well as draw comparisons between memory practices supported by those platforms and the ones analyzed in the current study.

The thesis also did not examine interactions between Second World War memory and "native" Ukrainian social media platforms, such as WeUa, UaModna, and Druzi. Such a decision was based both on the transnational focus of the research and the limited scope of popularity of the above mentioned platforms. For example, the most popular Ukrainian social networking site, Druzi, attracted only three hundred thousand users from Ukraine (Koval, 2015) compared with the thirty million users from Ukraine registered in VKontakte (Yandex, 2014). Still, the existence of these platforms indubitably opens up additional venues for future research on the topic.

Another limitation of the study concerns the size and selection of the research samples taken for analysis. In the majority of cases, the data were collected and processed manually; similarly, the reliance on qualitative methodology, such as close reading and digital content analysis, prompted the use of smaller data samples. Future studies might employ more advanced quantitative data analysis techniques, such as topic modeling, in order to gather a wider range of data and verify findings from the use of qualitative methods.

Finally, the results of the study can be influenced by the selection of search queries used for retrieving the data from the different social media platforms. One possible way of dealing with this

issue in the future would be the use of automatic data collection techniques, which would allow for a more extensive selection of queries, and a more complex examination of different aspects of a particular historical event in its online representation.

5.4. Conclusion

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine, in particular the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has had a profound influence on Second World War memory and how it is performed in Ukraine. Not only has it prompted a revision of the previous Second World War narrative, which was strongly affected by what was viewed as Russian aggression in Crimea and the Donbas, but it also intensified memory wars between Ukraine and its neighboring countries. Both in Ukraine and in Russia – as well as in the unrecognized People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk – references to the Second World War were utilized for legitimizing political and military conflicts as well as to frame the interpretations of the current crisis.

Social media has played a significant role in the process of memory appropriation. The connectivity of social media allows both for the easy retrieval of historical data and for its manipulation, opening new paths for the instrumentalization of the past according to the discursive needs of the present. At the same time, it provides a transnational platform where both past and present conflicts can be framed and re-framed, often in the course of online discursive battles; yet, my analysis suggests that these battles often are, in fact, simply monologues addressed to imagined contestants, as the adherents of different historical interpretations stay in their preferred communities or are not willing to engage in dialogue with their opponents. While in many cases this has resulted in the formation of mnemonic "filter bubbles" (Pariser, 2011), at the same time it has provided ordinary web users from Ukraine and Russia an opportunity to express their agreement – or disagreement – with dominant discourses of the past and present conflicts alike, thus leading to a pluralization of the public sphere in both countries.

Because of this pluralization, it would be rather simplistic to view interactions between social media and Second World War memory in Ukraine only through the prism of instrumentalization and propaganda. Instead, my observations indicate that digital technology has given rise to a variety of memory practices which develop in the transnational environment of social media. While appropriation of the past constituted an important element of many of these practices, many others were related to the present in less obvious ways. On VKontakte, discursive online battles, in which parallels between the current Ukrainian government and Nazi Germany were drawn, co-existed with posts celebrating the sacrifices of Soviet soldiers and annual commemorations of important Second World War anniversaries. In a similar fashion, the aggressive commentary culture on YouTube featured not only

instances of hate speech produced by Ukraino- and Russophonic users, but also expressions of sadness and empathy with the victims of the Second World War, and audiovisual tributes that provided alternative interpretations of existing war narratives.

These patterns of representation and interaction with the past in Ukrainian social media once again point to the complexity of ways in which memory and technology interact in our post-digital age. The study suggest that the plurality of opinions about the past which social media enables does not necessarily result in the erosion of "old totalizing memory cultures" (Fedor, 2013, p. 245), such as the Great Patriotic War narrative of the Soviet era; however, it does provide a space where existing discourses of the past can potentially be discussed, and alternative visions of the past can come to light. While in many cases social media helped to sustain or even reinforce the existence of hegemonic memory narratives by creating isolated memory communities and promoting aggressive communicative practices, my observations indicate than in some other cases it actually gave rise to new interpretations of the Second World War. Consequently, while Ukrainian social media are still used to reiterate hegemonic narratives, the current situation, in which different narratives co-exist on the same digital platform and can be interacted with equally, makes it difficult to disagree with Fedor (2013, p. 245), when she argues that, today, digital technology makes the control of a single historical narrative unfeasible, and we are hence witnessing a growing pluralization of cultural remembrance in the post-socialist space.

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Summary

From Myths to Memes: Transnational Memory and Ukrainian Social Media

The thesis examines what occurs with Second World War memories in post-socialist countries with the advent of digitization. For this purpose, it looks into various instances of digital remembrance associated with two episodes of the Second World War in Ukraine – the events surrounding the seizure of L'viv by Germans in 1941 and the capture of Kyiv by Soviets in 1943 – and draws upon existing memory and media scholarship to investigate how these contentious war memories are performed in post-socialist digital spaces. The study investigates how different social media platforms such as Wikipedia, YouTube, and VKontakte affect the ways Second World War memories are performed online, and how different communities of web users deal with historical controversies, particularly at a time of ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

In the introduction, the thesis briefly outlines the theoretical background of the research, which combines insights from the field of memory studies and of media studies. It also discusses its own role of filling a lacuna in existing scholarship, both in terms of the under-investigated impact of digitization on memories of old conflicts, and of the complex interplay between social media and cultural memory in the post-socialist space. It then explains the methodology of the research, in particular the use of qualitative web content analysis for analyzing contentious memories online, and provides historical reference to the two episodes of the Second World War which constitute the case studies for the research.

In the first chapter, the thesis explores how the Second World War is represented in Wikipedia, currently the world's largest online encyclopedia. It scrutinizes how the articles in the Ukrainian, Russian, and English versions of Wikipedia represent the two events – the declaration of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state in 1941 and the Battle of Kyiv of 1943. For this purpose, the thesis compares selected elements of the Wikipedia articles, such as those which provide a brief summary of the article's content (titles, images, references), clarify the structure of the article's narrative (table of contents), and reveal the article's position in the larger Wikipedia structure (categories and intra-Wikipedia links). It subsequently examines how representations of both episodes have been received by Wikipedia users; in doing so, the thesis explores both non-verbal (views and edits) and verbal (comments) types of user interactions with the Wikipedia articles.

In the second chapter, the thesis examines audiovisual representations of the Battle of Kyiv and of the L'viv pogrom on YouTube. By investigating different audiovisual genres (e.g. requiems, records, and amateur reports) used for remembering both episodes of the Second World War, it questions how

digital technology is used for producing video tributes to traumatic, contended episodes in Ukrainian history. It then investigates different forms of feedback (i.e. likes, dislikes, views, and comments) which YouTube users have provided, exploring thus how Ukrainophone and Russophone users interact, respectively, with these audiovisual representations and how an aggressive comment culture among some YouTube users' emerges in these practices of war remembrance.

In the third chapter, the thesis discusses the phenomenon of social network memory and the ways it interacts with contested memories of the Second World War in Ukraine. For this purpose, it investigates how memories of the Battle of Kyiv and of the L'viv pogrom are remediated in two different VKontakte communities. The first of these communities – "*Slava OUN-UPA i Vsim Borcjam za Volju Ukrajiny!*" [Glory to the OUN-UPA and All Fighters for the Freedom of Ukraine!] – unites apologists of the nationalistic version of Ukrainian history, whereas the other – "*Protiv OUN-UPA i Prochih Posobnikov Fashizma!*" [Against the OUN-UPA and Other Fascist Collaborators!] – is popular among users with pro-Soviet views on the past. Besides examining how both historical episodes are represented in these two communities, the thesis also scrutinizes the potential opportunities social networking sites provide for interacting with contentions of the past, and how these interactions differ from the ones found on Wikipedia and YouTube.

Finally, in the conclusions section, the thesis reviews the ways contentious episodes of the Ukrainian past are represented and interacted with on transnational online platforms. In so doing, it summarizes the empirical findings of the study and discusses their theoretical implications, including the ways the thesis puts to the test existing assumptions about the interplay between digital media and war memories, and raises questions about the future of Second World War memory in post-socialist countries in the context of the growing digitization of personal and public spheres. Finally, it outlines the limitations of the current study and provides suggestions for further research in the field of digital remembrance in post-socialist countries.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Van Mythen tot Memes: Transnationale Herinnering en Oekraïense Sociale Media

Dit betoog onderzoekt wat in postsocialistische landen in de sfeer van Tweede Wereldoorlogsherinneringen gebeurt met de opkomst van digitalisering. Met dit doel ziet het in in verschillende voorbeelden van digitale herinnering verbonden met twee episoden van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Oekraïne – de gebeurtenissen omstreeks het innemen van Lviv door de Duitsers in 1941 en het innemen van Kiev door de Sovjets in 1943 – en trekt op bestaande herinnerings- en mediawetenschap om te onderzoeken hoe deze omstredene oorlogsherinneringen vertaald worden in postsocialistische digitale ruimtes. De studie onderzoekt hoe verschillende sociale media platforms zoals Wikipedia, YouTube en VKontakte beïnvloeden de manieren waarop herinneringen aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog online worden uitgevoerd, en hoe verschillende gemeenschappen van web gebruikers omgaan met tegenstrijdige geschiedkundige vragen, in het bijzonder in een tijd van tegenwoordige conflictsituatie in Oekraïne.

In de inleiding schetst deze thesis in het kort de theoretische achtergrond van het onderzoek, dat inzichten van memory studies en mediawetenschap combineert. Ook wordt de rol van het proefschrift bij het vullen van een lacune in de bestaande wetenschap gediscussieerd – beide in termen van de weinig onderzochte invloed van digitalisering op herinneringen aan oude conflicten, en van de complexe samenspel tussen sociale media en culturele geheugen in de postsocialistische ruimte. Verder wordt de onderzoeksmethodologie uitgelegd, in het bijzonder het gebruik van kwalitatieve web-inhoudsanalyse om online omstredene herinneringen te analyseren, en verschaft de historische naslag aan de twee episoden van de Tweede Wereldoorlog, die de case studies voor het onderzoek vormen.

In het eerste hoofdstuk onderzoekt het betoog hoe de Tweede Wereldoorlog vertegenwoordigd is op Wikipedia, tegenwoordig de grootste online encyclopedie ter wereld. Het onderzoekt hoe de artikelen in de Oekraïense, Russische of Engelse versies van Wikipedia de twee gebeurtenissen voorstellen – de verklaring van de Akte van Herstel van de Oekraïense Staat in 1941 en de Strijd van Kiev in 1943. Voor dit doel, vergelijkt de uitgezochte elementen van de Wikipedia artikel, zoals die welke een korte samenvatting van de inhoud van het artikel geven (titels, afbeeldingen, verwijzingen), de structuur van de vertelling van het artikel verduidelijken (inhoudsopgave), en de positie van het artikel in de grotere Wikipedia structuur omhullen (categorieën en intra-Wikipedia weblinks). Vervolgens onderzoekt het hoe de representaties van beide gebeurtenissen ontvangen zijn door Wikipedia gebruikers; zodoende onderzoekt de thesis zowel niet-verbale (gezichtspunten en edits) als

verbale (commentaren) soorten van gebruikersinteracties met de Wikipedia artikelen.

In het tweede hoofdstuk bestudeert de dissertatie de audiovisuele afbeeldingen van de Slag van Kiev en van de Lviv pogrom op YouTube. Door het onderzoeken van verschillende audiovisuele genres (b.v. requiems, opnamen, en amateurreportages) die gebruikt worden voor het in herinnering brengen van beide episoden van de Tweede Wereldoorlog, vraagt het betoog na hoe digitale technologie gebruikt wordt voor de productie van videohommages omtrent traumatische, omstredene episoden in de Oekraïense geschiedenis. Dan onderzoekt het verschillende vormen van feedback welke YouTube gebruikers hebben verschaft (namelijk "likes," "dislikes," "views," en commentaar) op deze wijze onderzoekend hoe Oekraïens- en Russischsprekende gebruikers wisselwerken, onder elkaar en met deze audiovisuele afbeeldingen, en hoe tussen sommige YouTube gebruikers er een agressieve commentaarcultuur ontstaat in de uitoefeningen van oorlogsherdenking.

In het derde hoofdstuk, bespreekt het betoog het fenomeen van sociale netwerken geheugen en zijn wisselwerkingen met omstredene herinneringen van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Oekraïne. Met dat doel, onderzoekt het hoe herinneringen van de Strijd van Kiev en van de Lviv pogrom her-mediatiseerden zijn in twee verschillende VKontakte gemeenschappen. De eerste van deze gemeenschappen - "*Slava OUN-UPA i Vsim Borcjam za Volju Ukrajiny!*" [Gloria aan de OUN-UPA en alle strijders voor de vrijheid van Oekraïne!] – verenigt apologeten van de nationalistische versie van de Oekraïense geschiedenis, terwijl de andere – "*Protiv OUN-UPA i Prochih Posobnikov Fashizma!*" [Tegen OUN-UPA en andere fascistische collaborateurs!] populair is onder gebruikers die zich aan pro-sovjetische denkbeelden van het verleden houden. Naast het onderzoeken van hoe beide historische episoden voorgesteld worden in deze twee gemeenschappen, gaat het betoog diep op in de mogelijke gelegenheden die sociale netwerkingssites verschaffen voor wisselwerkingen met strijdpunten in het verleden, en hoe deze verschillen van degenen die op Wikipedia of YouTube worden gevonden.

Tenslotte, in de conclusies, herziet het betoog de manieren waarop omstredene episoden van het Oekraïense verleden worden voorgesteld en hoe er daarmee op transnationale online platformen wordt omgegaan. Zodoende worden de empirische ontdekkingen van de studie samengevat, en hun theoretische gevolgen besproken, inclusief de manieren waarop het betoog bestaande aannames over de wisselwerking tussen digitale media en oorlogsherinneringen op de proef stelt, en stelt vragen over de toekomst van Tweede Wereldoorlogsherinnering in postsocialistische landen ten aanzien van de toenemende digitalisering van de persoonlijke en openbare ruimten. Tenslotte geeft het betoog de begrenzingen van de studie weer en voorstellen verschaft voor verder onderzoek op het gebied van digitale herdenking in postsocialistische landen.