

Call for Papers:

“Making Sense of Catastrophe: Postcolonial Approaches to Postsocialist Experiences”

Cambridge University, King’s College, 23 – 26 February 2012

Organisers: Alexander Etkind (University of Cambridge), Dirk Uffelmann (University of Passau)

Keynote Speaker: Michael Rothberg (University of Illinois)

www.memoryatwar.org

Moving from adolescence to adulthood, the postsocialist world is undergoing multi-directional transformations that would have seemed unbelievable twenty years ago. Bustling economic development combines with corruption, violence, and cynicism, which reign over the postsocialist space. Three causal schemes compete to explain this large-scale process. One derives the postsocialist present from the legacies of the Soviet past. Another ascribes responsibility to the global crisis of the traditional West. A third episteme draws on analogies and contrasts between postsocialist and postcolonial transformations, both of which have shaped the 21st century as we experience it.

Writing in 2001 from different hemispheres, David Chioni Moore called upon a “Global Postcolonial Critique” of the postsocialist world, while Alexander Etkind speculated about “internal colonization” in Russia’s past and present. Independently, the last decade has seen a booming development of Memory Studies, which has transferred its focus from its original subject of the aftermath of the Holocaust to broad conceptions of “cosmopolitan” (Daniel Levy, Nathan Sznajder) and “multi-directional” memory and “post-memory” (Marianne Hirsch), concepts that have been applied globally from Latin America to the Pacific.

With this workshop, we intend to consolidate a new research agenda that combines three independently developed fields, Postcolonial Studies, Postsocialist Studies, and Memory Studies, in their application to Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia. Is the terror in places like Katyn or Kolyma, as in Auschwitz, unrepresentable, or have art and history learned how to represent these events? How do we need to revise postcolonial categories such as orientalism, hegemony, or the subaltern when referring to places such as Belarus or Kazakhstan? How are people across the postsocialist world making sense of its serial

catastrophes? What does the memory of the past teach us about power and culture in the present and in the future?

We invite both theoretical and empirical contributions to these and related questions. We wish to establish a dialogue between experts who specialize in different parts of the planet. Interested scholars from the postcolonial and postsocialist worlds are equally welcome.

Proposals shall consist of an abstract of 300-500 words and a short CV. Please send your applications to Jill Gather <jg611@cam.ac.uk> by **1 October 2011**. Please also inform us if you wish help with financing your travel to Cambridge. We will provide participants with accommodation from 23 to 26 February 2012. The reimbursement for travel expenses will be negotiated on an individual basis.