Introduction

In April 2007, during the 'Sites of Memory' seminar organized by the Krzyżowa Foundation,[1] I had an opportunity to view a documentary created by Georg Restle and Andreas Maus titled *Volunteers in Stalin's Gulag: Young Germans Restore a Russian Corrective Labour Camp*.[2] The film relates the story of a group of young German people who spend the summer working on the reconstruction of the wooden fencing surrounding the Perm-36 camp, the only open-air museum in the Russian Federation composed of Gulag buildings. The documentary shows how arduous the work is, yet the motivation to complete it remains strong. The young Germans are aware of the crimes the Third Reich committed during the Second World War, yet believe, at the same time, that the manner in which modern Germans have taken responsibility for the sins of their forebears by creating sites memorializing their forebears' victims is the correct method for working through the past. They realize that this process has only just begun in Russia, so they treat this kind of physical labour as a kind of mission – a way of demonstrating that such actions are important and necessary.

At one point, the young people discover that a former Perm-36 camp guard called Ivan Kukushkin is working at the museum. This discovery provokes general consternation. The young Germans refuse to work beside the ex-guard, who appears in their eyes to be a Russian SS functionary. The following day, Sergey Kovalev, a former dissident and Perm-36 prisoner commanding respect and authority, comes to meet the young people. The young people confide to him how outraged they feel at the existing situation. But instead of agreeing with them, Kovalev flies into a rage, making it very clear that Ivan Kukushkin is a decent person, and the Germans have no right to judge him. The young people were certainly not expecting such a reaction. The conversation breaks off and everyone silently retires without reaching any common consensus. The following day, the young people bid a tepid farewell to Kovalev, who returns to Moscow. They continue working on the fence's reconstruction, even though they no longer see any sense in what they are doing.

I decided to begin my reflections on Gulag memory by evoking the contents of this documentary to underline that this book deals with issues that may seem at first sight to be obvious but are in fact anything but that. I attempt in this book to establish why actors involved in Gulag memory have constructed their own memory in one way rather than another. My goal was to understand the 'assumptions made by people when they organise their worlds in the ways that they do' (Macdonald 2013: 2). I tried to establish why images over the past have assumed one particular form to

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

the exclusion of others. I also examine what this form expresses and consider – inspired by Barbara Szacka, a pioneer of memory research in Poland – what social function it performs (Szacka 2003). Consequently, I am interested in the process whereby memory of the Gulag is formed, and, in particular, how it was formed during one specific period, the end of the eighties, when it assumed a particularly intensive form operating on many levels.

In this book, I therefore refrain from reflecting on the extent to which what has been remembered accords with what actually happened. In any case, this would be an extremely challenging task for a number of reasons.

Firstly, historians have failed to reach any consensus over the years as to the scale of the repressions, their social meaning and the manner in which they should be investigated. A prime example of this is the lively debate that flared up at the end of the nineties between Robert Conquest, John Keep and Stephen Wheatcroft in the journal *Europe-Asia Studies* (Conquest 1997, 1999; Keep 1999; Wheatcroft 1999, 2000; cf. Ellman 2002). The first history publications to comprehensively describe the functioning of the Gulag system on the basis of archival documents did not appear until the beginning of the twenty-first century (Ivanova 2000; Ivanova 2006; Khlevnyuk 2004). It was also the time of publication of the first collections of archival documents (Artizov, Kosakovsky and Naumov 2004; Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopov 2002; Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk 2003; Edelman, Zavadskaya, Lavinskaya 1999; Shostakovsky 2001). Even today, scholars are yet to reach a consensus on whether the Gulag was performing a genocidal role (Naimark 2010; Supady 2001) or whether it was merely a poorly functioning penal system whose primary aim was the re-education of society (Barnes 2011).

Secondly, the particularity of Gulag memory primarily resides in the fact that it is shaped by the literature and memoirs of witnesses (Etkind 2013; Sherbakova 2015). The work that played the largest role in this process is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (see Brunet 1981: 216; Reeves 2015: 184). From the moment of its publication, this book became the source that was primarily responsible for shaping comprehension of the Gulag, even though the author himself wrote that it was not a work of history, but rather an attempt at 'literary enquiry' based on witnesses' memoirs that had reached him second or third hand. A very good example of *The Gulag Archipelago* (1974) being used to describe history is Anne Applebaum's book *Gulag: A History* (2003), in which the author treats archival documents and passages from Solzhenitsyn's work or Varlam Shalamov's short stories (1994) and Eugenia Ginzburg's *Into the Whirlwind* (2002 [1967]) as equally valid historical sources.

In publications relating to the repressions and Gulag memory, there is clearly a preponderance of works based on ex-prisoners' testimonies that describe how the system of repression functioned by showing the traumatic experiences of the people who passed through it. Although these are primarily based on memoirs (Figes 2007; Hellbeck 2006; Jones 2008; Owsiany 2000; Toker 2000), some make use of oral histories (Gheith and Jolluck 2011; Skultans 1998). Another group of publications

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

is composed of detailed case studies demonstrating the social consequences of the repressions and their influence on the lives and deaths of selected social groups (Adler 2002; Kuntsman 2009; Viola 2007; Werth 2007). There are some works presenting the origins of the Gulag (Jakobson 1993) or describing the specific nature of inmates' lives at a particular camp (Gullotta 2018), but there is an increasing prevalence of works devoted to transformations in social perception of the Soviet past (Fitzpatrick 2005; Koposov 2011; Malinova 2015; Paperno 2009; Yurchak 2006), including transformations in the meanings of selected elements of the system of repression (Fedor 2011). Other works demonstrate the social consequences of the mass experiencing of terror (Etkind 2013; Figes 2014; Gessat-Anstett 2007; Merridale 2000; Ulturgasheva 2015), analyse what was left after the Gulag (Anstett and Jurgenson 2009; Chuykina 2015; Ulturgasheva 2012; Von Weikersthal and Thaidigsmann 2016) and explain what it entailed (Anstett 2011; Barnes 2011).

This book contributes to the area of study dedicated to transformations in perception of the Gulag in post-Soviet society and the traces it has left in the cultural landscape. Like many researchers, I believe that certain meaningful statements did in fact appear as early as Khrushchev's Thaw, when the prisoner rehabilitation process began (Adler 1993, 2012: 327–38; Cohen 2011; Dobson 2006, 2009; Elie 2010; Etkind 2013; Sherbakova 1998: 235–45; Smith 1996). However, it is not until the end of the eighties that we can meaningfully speak of the creation of a new discursive situation, and, above all, about attempts being undertaken to create what Young (1993) would term the 'texture of Gulag memory'. Consequently, it is the late eighties period that I have chosen to investigate in this book, a time when the first monuments, museums, exhibitions, commemorative events and memory rituals that are the primary focus of my analysis first appeared. I am interested in how these first memory projects came into being, why the actors engaged in this process favoured some forms of commemoration over others and what meanings they were ascribing to them.

As I was conducting research at sites that had physically contained Soviet labour camps, or *lagers*, during various historical periods, Maurice Halbwachs's work *Legendary Topography of the Gospel in the Holy Land* (1941; published in English in 1992) proved to be of assistance when it came to establishing the process whereby Gulag memory is formed. The conclusions drawn by Halbwachs's work seem to be particularly important for this book, so I would like to briefly outline them here. Halbwachs's critical analysis of various kinds of written sources such as pilgrimage and travel memoirs, but also academic works devoted to the Holy Land, leads him to argue that Jerusalem's space began to be transformed by Christians in accordance with their religious perceptions long after the occurrence of events of crucial importance for Christianity. Consequently, sacred places do not so much commemorate facts supported by historical testimonies as the beliefs that formed around them, most of which relate to the supernatural deeds of Christ around which Christian dogmas were created. Halbwachs demonstrates that the meanings conferred on Christianity's holy sites are derived from the past, especially from Jewish memories that continue to

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

be associated with these sites, even though any material repositories of these memories have long since been removed (Halbwachs 1941: 184; cf. Bulle 2006; Sakaranaho 2011; Truc 2012). In other words, the current appearance of these sites has arisen from the adaption of this past heritage, while current beliefs are a material trace of ancient ones. What is more, the manner in which these sites are perceived is powerfully influenced by the actions of the groups of believers who become involved in the commemoration process (Halbwachs 1941: 205). Halbwachs's work offers important insights into the process whereby Gulag memory formed on the grounds of former camps, because it not only shows that commemorative processes often start to take shape many years after the historical events they commemorate actually took place, but also that there is no historical evidence that these sites are chosen because they are authentic. In the case of the Holy Land, sites of memory were simply places that were important for Jews, and in the case of Gulag memory, as will later become clear from such examples as the memorials to the first pioneers in Komi Republic, sites of memory were often associated with the Soviet heritage. Moreover, Halbwachs's conclusion that when the memory of some event is starting to be constructed, it is in fact memory actors and the commemorative actions they undertake that exert a crucial influence on the shape this memory eventually assumes, explains why I have concentrated so much in this book on memory actors and their projects.

Halbwachs makes it extremely clear that memory not only operates within a socially created framework but is also determined culturally and spatially: 'It would be very difficult to describe the event if one did not imagine the place' (quotation after Truc 2012: 148). However, as Jan Assmann – the German scholar of memory – points out, Halbwachs does not explain the workings of the process whereby communicative memory is transformed into cultural memory (Assmann 1995: 128), and hence how memory orally transmitted between members of a community is transformed into memory that is both constitutive of this community's identity and defines its attitude towards the past (Assmann 2008). This German Egyptologist has therefore chosen to focus his research on connective structure – that is, structures that bind society in the here and now and over time. They unite people, creating a symbolic world of meanings that enable the manner in which society constructs self-representations to be understood (Assmann 2008; J. Assmann 2011). Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory explains the process whereby meanings are transmitted and national identities created. As Assmann points out, the connectivity principle repeatedly causes actions to assume the form of certain patterns that are common components of a given culture (Assmann 2008). However, this scholar does not explain how the formation of meanings (or the conferral of a specific meaning) occurs or what place (if any) is occupied in cultural memory by the memory of marginalized groups and memory forcibly supplanted into oblivion, which can even threaten a given group's identity. Another German researcher, Aleida Assmann, partially addresses these issues. She is not interested in the memory of marginalized groups, but by analysing transformations in German social memory, she shows how memory of self-committed crimes against

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

Others can become a component of a group's memory (Assmann 2011a). However, the Gulag memory formation process cannot be understood without examining the actions of marginalized groups attempting to divorce themselves from the prevailing official narrative and recast their experience of the past as a new national narrative.

Foucault's conception of how discourses are shaped helped me to comprehend why some actions, rather than others, were undertaken by memory actors during the carnival of memory and thus to explain why Gulag memory began to be inscribed in the cultural landscape in one way rather than another. This conception shows how human communities are imbedded within semantic networks that possess their own internal structure (Geertz 1973).

Another useful Foucauldian concept is that of counter-history, which can be understood as a history of those who 'came out of the shadows' (Foucault 2003a: 70) – that is, those whose memory is not preserved in institutional information repositories. This is undoubtedly the kind of situation we are dealing with in the case of Gulag memory. Foucault writes that counter-history is a history of the Others, by which he means those thrust to the margins, the defeated – represented by women and sexual minorities, but also prisoners of the Gulag. This is not a history of continuity, possessing its own genealogy, but rather a history of intersection points, of rupture. Rather than extolling the irreproachable glory of the overlord, it focuses on the misfortunes of his ancestors – their disappointed aspirations, exile and slavery. As the history of the oppressed is not recorded in chronicles from the moment it starts to take shape, it draws from eschatological or mythical motifs that help to shape a discourse for it. This explains why Foucault also refers to counter-history as 'a biblical-style historical discourse' (Foucault 1972: 73). It is worth noting that Chakrabarty, when investigating 'histories from below', reflects on how the history of repressed groups can be described and how stories can be created about groups or classes that have left no sources behind. This scholar notes that quite often researchers, while attempting to respond to these questions, acknowledge the influence of supernatural forces on historical events (Chakrabarty 2000: 97–113).

The counter-history concept would appear to be useful for explaining how Gulag memory is comprehended, because it shows that the Soviet 'sovereign power' discourse is a manifestation of the: 'revolutionary discourse of social struggles – the very discourse that derived so many of its elements from the old discourse of the race struggle – and articulating it with the management and the policing that ensure the hygiene of an orderly society' (Foucault 1972: 83). Foucault explained as follows:

> It is undoubtedly true that the Soviets, while having modified the regime of ownership and the state's role in the control of production, for the rest have simply transferred the techniques of administration and power implemented in Capitalist Europe of the 19th century. The types of morality, forms of aesthetics, disciplinary methods, everything that was effectively working in bourgeois society already around 1850 has moved en bloc into

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

> the Soviet regime . . . Just as the Soviets have used Taylorism and other methods of management experimented in the West, they have adopted our disciplinary techniques, adding to our arsenal another arm – party discipline. (after Plamper 2002: 262)

In other words, the French philosopher was arguing that Soviet discourse, rather than being – as the Soviet authorities asserted – a history of repressed marginalized groups emerging from the shadows, was merely a mutation of the old discourse of power. Clearly, the most pressing task for the new counter-histories finding their voice in the late eighties was to demonstrate that the Soviet discourse was only a falsehood, an illusion. Only then would their alternative interpretations of the past have any chance of forcing their way through to public consciousness.

Another of Foucault's theoretical insights that could aid comprehension of how Gulag memory functions is his assertion that no freshly appearing statement is completely new. It will also draw on a reservoir of previous statements that are already circulating in a specific culture, mutating and transforming themselves. Foucault refers to this place as the Archive (Foucault 1972; cf. Kharkhordin 1999). He does not investigate which rules govern a given statement, preferring instead to ask 'how is that one particular statement appeared rather than another?' (Foucault 1972: 27). He also emphasizes that seeking the origins of any discourse would be a fruitless task, as this would force scholars to continuously withdraw into the past to create the appearance in the discourse of constancy and continuity. As Foucault writes: 'Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs' (Foucault 1972: 25). He recommends that an arbitrary moment should be regarded as the beginning of any scholarly analysis and the first task for any scholar should be to investigate various discursive formations. This is exactly what Foucault did in *The Birth of the Clinic*. At the same time, he stressed that the period from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was exceptionally fertile for the appearance of new statements in various spheres of social life and these began to comprise a new medical discourse (2003b [1973]). There was such a period for Gulag memory too, in the late eighties, a time when many new discursive statements relating to the Gulag came into existence.

This was undoubtedly an important time of transformation for conceptions of the past (Davies 1997; Smith 2002). The political and social political changes that took place during this period were so sudden and unpredictable (Kotkin 2001) that they bore the hallmarks of cultural rupture and intersection. This begs the question of whether this was, to cite Lotman, a period of cultural 'explosion' involving the complete and unconditional destruction of the old and the apocalyptic birth of a new order (Lotman 2009: 172–74). It appears that this was not in fact the case. I have decided to utilize the term 'carnival of memory', first used by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* (1984), to explain what occurred during this period. I selected this term to emphasize that the attitude towards Gulag memory suddenly

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

reversed during this period. Previously, the history of the Gulag had been a taboo topic. Suddenly, this wall of silence was breached. Before this point, witnesses had kept silent, so it would have been difficult to find information on the Gulag, but now this suddenly began to appear in newspapers and on television, and witnesses began to speak. Some scholars perceive this period as a time of rediscovered memory. It could also be perceived as a distinctive kind of living memory (Traba 2003: 181). However, the term 'carnival' appears to be more apt to me.

A carnival is a time when a previously existing world is 'stood on its head', transforming into a world with reversed values (Bakhtin 1984). As the Russian scholar writes, the carnival was an officially approved time for 'catching one's breath' from the restrictions imposed on society, a moment of liberation from the prevailing system of governance, a period when norms and prohibitions were suspended. It is bound by laws of its own that are inflected by a carnivalesque sense of liberation, reversing the norms prevailing during official time. It is precisely here that I see a resemblance to the Gulag carnival of memory that proceeded in opposition to the existing order.

It is worth stressing that the reality that set in during the last phase of the USSR's existence was being perceived similarly throughout Central and Eastern Europe. As Padraic Kenney writes:

> A carnival . . . breaks down borders of all kinds. It forces a suspension of the usual rules in society, issuing a challenge to the existing order and reversing social and political hierarchies. And indeed, social movements in Central Europe in the second half of the 1980s appeared to disregard the fear that held so many others back, and to act almost with impunity. It didn't matter to them if the police detained participants in a demonstration, because that was part of the game, too . . . These new movements, instead, paid a great deal of attention to one another . . . This interaction is a central feature of the carnival story . . . These social movements also broke the rules of politics . . . Discarding the old politics, they broke free of the usual opposition sites: shop floor, church hall, national monument, underground text. In this revolution, opposition could take place anywhere, on almost any grounds. (Kenney 2003: 5)

The fundamental difference between the Gulag carnival and that of the Middle Ages is that it did not become a cyclical phenomenon. The period of social awakening that began to transform the system of governance was followed by the political, economic and ideological crisis of the nineties (Magun 2008: 62–88). Many people would subsequently compare this time to the Russian Revolution, treating it as a genuine social tragedy (Service 2003; Shtuden 1999: 197). It could be said that this was another era of 'cultural trauma', a concept Sztompka (2004) uses to describe periods in which traumatic changes on a macro level are translated into the world experienced by individuals on a day-to-day basis (Sztompka 2004).

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

This renewed need to focus on day-to-day life brought the carnival of Gulag memory to an end. Nevertheless, this period left a lasting impression on the manner in which Gulag memory subsequently functioned. This influence had two dimensions.

First, the reconstruction of the past that was completed at the time shaped that memory. As Halbwachs emphasizes, memory is shaped by language: 'We express our memories in words before we evoke them, so speech and the whole system of social conventions that are bound up with it enable us to recreate our past on every occasion [we so wish]' (Halbwachs 1969: 407). For Gulag memory, which long existed beyond the realms of social discourse, the carnival of memory created the space for shaping conventions that were to facilitate the comprehension of spoken memories and written memoirs. The Gulag memory frameworks shaped during this period continue to influence the manner in which this event is perceived today.

Secondly, the facts, sites and public figures that were the focus of discussions and press articles co-created what is currently understood as Gulag memory. In other words, they have assumed the status of symbolic markers. Memory often accumulates around objects and sites (Assmann 2011b; Doss 2008; Grider 2005; Truc 2012; Yates 1966; Young 1993) that are permeated by symbolic associations with past events, enabling collective memory to be preserved (Assmann 2011b; Grider 2005; Kapralski 2010; Misztal 2007: 385; Saryusz-Wolska 2011). During this period, statements became a social phenomenon, objects became historical proof, and rediscovered cemeteries became cultural heritage, so the need arose to situate all of these within the cultural landscape and protect them. It was felt that there was a particularly urgent need to create sites of memory that would protect Gulag memory and memory markers that would express it.

I allude in my work to the meaning of 'site of memory' proposed by Pierre Nora (1984–92, 1989; cf. Ricoeur 2004), even though my understanding of sites of memory and memory markers more closely resembles the definitions proposed by Robin Wagner-Pacifici or Jeffrey Olick. Unlike Pierre Nora, who perceives sites of memory as static space where the past flickers and endures (1989), these two authors perceive memory and sites of memory as a process undergoing dynamic change. Wagner-Pacifici writes:

> the memorial, the speech, and the museum are only provisionally congealed moments of the events themselves. While events do have both inchoative and terminative aspects, I would argue that they can never be determined to have ended once and for all. So, for example, I would argue that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum are part of the event of 9/11, one of its myriad shapes or forms. (Wagner-Pacifici 2016: 23)

Olick also views memory as a dynamic process, adding that it is a moment or act of remembering, a 'medium of our existence in time', which should be evaluated in terms of its authenticity rather than its accuracy (Olick 2014: 28).

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

Without a doubt, during the carnival of memory, Gulag memory became, for most memory actors, a medium of their existence in time. As they understood the meaning of this past differently from each other, they began shaping it in different ways and sought different forms to commemorate it. Their objective was not, however, to perform acts of commemoration for their own sake. They sought, instead, to create stable sites that would become permanent repositories of the past – sites where the communities of which they were members would store their 'souvenirs' and regard them as an inalienable part of their personalities (Nora 1989; cf. Szpociński 2003: 21, 2008). The distinguishing feature of these sites was not so much that memory of the repressions endured in them after their original *milieux de mémoire* (Nora's realms of memory) had been lost, but rather that these sites had to be (re)discovered, (re)created and revived, because there was no such memory left in them. There was a need to shape this memory and inscribe it into authentic historical sites – like the grounds of former camps and cemeteries – and other sites of memory such as museums, monuments, archives, Days of Remembrance and the Memorial Society, which was founded at this time to both protect and form memory of the repressions (Adler 1993; White 1995). My research mainly focused on sites of memory that had been created on the grounds of former Soviet lagers or other areas strongly linked semantically with this history. My main areas of interest were therefore memory markers, monuments, cemeteries and museums that were meant to convey the history of the Gulag. Below I briefly explain the manner of understanding these sites of memory that I have adopted in this book.

Memory markers (e.g. crosses, commemorative plaques) and *monuments* are physical structures that are created to commemorate a particular event or person(s) (Etkind 2004a, 2004b; Williams 2007: 8; Young 1993: 4). By virtue of their form, they both express and co-shape collective memory (Koselleck 1997; Winter 2005). Monuments are *signa temporis* that reflect the social, political, state, national or universal values of the era in which they were erected (Grzesiuk-Olszewska 1995: 11–12; Doss 2008; Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2011; Winter 2005). They form a kind of narrative matrix, termed the 'texture of memory' by Young (1993: 1–15), which expresses the physical and metaphysical value of given texts, and their temporal and real dimension (Young 1993: XII). As Young stresses, the investigation of monuments involves the discovery of the meanings concealed within them and the interrogation of the processes that influence how they are understood. It is also important to establish their local context, because it is this that determines how a given work is defined (Young 1993: VIII).

In my view, *museums* are sites of memory that tend to construct history rather than commemorate it (Macdonald 1996, 1998; Williams 2007). Inspired by Macdonald's research (1996: 1–18), I have adopted her assumption that museums actively participate in the construction of a vision of the modern world. On the one hand, they are symbols by means of which society expresses itself and on the other they offer society an interpretation of reality – by proposing diverse classifications

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

that prescribe a particular order of things. It is therefore fair to claim that they are not only an inherent part of a given time and space, but also help to express a specific temporal and spatial order. Rather than simply existing within a given cultural context, they also help to form it (Bogumił, Moran and Harrowell 2015; Dias 1998; Kreamer 1992). When analysing history exhibitions, I aimed to determine which discourses influenced the shape of the narratives these exhibitions were presenting (Bogumił, Moran and Harrowell 2015; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). I also reflected on how individual exhibitions incorporated signs and symbols, either rooted in Russian culture or comparatively new, into their narratives. While doing this, I examined to what extent these exhibitions were making use of the meanings of these signs and symbols and to what extent they were transforming them by granting them new meanings. I regarded these transformations as being of prime importance, because as Lotman emphasizes, symbols are some of the most stable elements of cultural continuity. They fulfil an important role in the functioning of cultural memory, as they are capable of transmitting texts, narrative structures and other semiotic formations from one level of culture to another, in effect protecting culture from disintegration. They may also undergo transformation themselves, but this process is very slow, and in the case of primary symbols almost impossible (Lotman 1990: 103). Given the fact that the USSR produced many new symbols, many of which formed the nucleus of Soviet culture, I was intrigued by how new history exhibitions dealt with old symbols and told the story of the Gulag.

By contrast, I treat *former camp cemeteries* as closed texts of culture, because they no longer fulfil their original function (Kolbuszewski 1981: 29–36; 1995: 17–37). As Jacek Kolbuszewski writes, a cemetery's spatial layout, monuments and epitaphs express, in their role as markers, the consciousness of a specific community, its culture and system of values (Kolbuszewski 1985: 53). According to this viewpoint, camp cemeteries and the graves and memory markers they contain should be perceived as space organized according to the principles of the camp system's method of burying the dead. As Gulag history and culture were taboo topics for a long time, searching for prisoner burial sites became a priority and comprehending their space became a task of fundamental importance (Merridale 2003; Paperno 2001). This explains why memory actors undertook various kinds of commemorative tasks that would confer new meanings on the cemeteries by translating the Gulag 'transcript' into a language of symbols and meanings understandable to those alive today. My main aim was to establish the cultural meanings of these translations as well as the role performed by the symbols being used today and the memory markers erected in these cemeteries' grounds.

Memory markers, monuments, cemeteries and museums also interest me because all of them represent what may be termed unconventional histories (Domańska 2006) – that is, interpretations of history that allude to languages of description that are non-verbal. In fact, memory markers and monuments employ the language of art and search for an image equipped to present the inexpressible nature of the

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

Gulag reality and what it was like to experience this (Jedlińska 2001). Furthermore, cemeteries are a space for establishing meanings, a forum of negotiation between the past and present. Their contemporary space expresses what given local communities have understood from the history concealed within the cemetery and what they wish to preserve. By contrast, museums would appear to be texts operating on many levels that employ both verbal and non-verbal methods to construct a coherent historical narrative. I was therefore interested in how camp history is materialized in the ruins and relics that have out-survived it (Kranz 2002: 40) and what meanings and functions are being conferred on these sites today by virtue of the commemorative activities that are being undertaken there.

The notion of sites of memory is so broad in scope that it can even incorporate Days of Remembrance – that is, the ceremonies marking the history of the repressions that are organized every year on a particular date (30 October across the Russian Federation or 5 August in Sandarmokh). However, I have chosen in this book to refer to these holidays as *memory rituals* rather than sites of memory, because I wish to emphasize their performative aspect. When conceived as sites of memory, Days of Remembrance mainly comprise a date containing information about a historical event that took place on a given day. However, the symbolism of these dates is not my main area of interest. Inspired by Handelman (1990), who wrote that the essence of a ritual is expressed in the manner of its organization, I primarily focus on how Gulag memory is expressed through the choice of site and the commemorative actions that are undertaken there. Handelman also emphasizes that the manner in which a ritual is performed determines the meaning it, and the event to which it is dedicated, will gain within a given community. The term 'memory ritual' therefore more fully captures the meaning of the Days of Remembrance as well as more accurately explaining the set of specific symbolic activities performed to achieve their organizers' desired goal.

I refer to the people, institutions or organizations involved in the memorialization process as *memory actors.* I use the term *memory projects,* after Irwin-Zarecka, to refer to the aims and functions memory actors ascribe to the images of the past they create. In practice, these are planned and thought-through actions whose aim, often hidden, is to preserve certain elements of history for the future (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 8, 133). I therefore understand the notion of memory project to first and foremost incorporate the set of ideas (or assumptions) ascribed by their authors to the commemorative actions they undertake. I employ this term as a synonym of memory marker, monument or museum when I wish to emphasize the objectives memory actors have attributed to a project they are implementing.

Memory projects often operate on many levels, so I use the term *memory infrastructure* to collectively refer to monuments, memory markers or museums that are the outcome of activities undertaken for specific projects and share a common aim. This term has not been reserved to exclusively describe the outcomes of actions undertaken by a single memory actor, although I do often use it in this way. As Irwin-

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

Zarecka points out, memory infrastructures are various kinds of space, object and text that facilitate contact with the past (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 13). Consequently, I also use this term in this book to describe memory markers situated at a specific site that collectively delineate and shape a Gulag memory framework for that space.

However, the problem with memory, as Kontopodis (2009: 6) writes, is that: 'There is no past, no present and no future as such; the relation between the past, the present and the future is always made from some point of view and must be expressed or enacted for the past, the present or the future to emerge. There are multiple ways of performing pasts, presents and futures by way of interrelating them'. Memory of the Gulag and the transformation it is undergoing are a prime example of this. When I was travelling through Russia from 2006 to 2008, many years had already passed from the period I am calling the carnival of memory, a time when memory of the repressions was being publicly discussed, the first Days of Remembrance for Victims of the Repressions took place, the first memorials were erected, the first exhibitions devoted to Gulag history were opened and the memoirs of ex-prisoners were published. Nevertheless, the same memory actors who had actively participated in the events of the late eighties and early nineties were still engaged in work commemorating the victims of the repressions. It appeared that the situation of memory in Russia was stable and static. However, this turned out to be a false assumption. Over the last ten years, this situation has transformed again. In 2015, when an official state policy on the remembrance of political repressions was introduced, the generation of postmemory (by which I mean the second and third generations born after the Gulag but affected by a repressive past because it was transmitted to them through memoirs and pictures; see Hirsch 2008) became increasingly vocal, and new actors, such as the pro-Kremlin Sut Vremeni (Essence of Time) entered the arena.

This book describes the period preceding the strong revival in memory of the repressions that is currently so evident. I show how, in this liminal period, memory of the repressions was shaped – at a time when the state no longer made memory of the repressions a taboo topic, but had not yet become actively involved in shaping it – by people for whom this memory was important. Since a broader interpretative framework was yet to develop, they were forced to show their creativity and often took local history and the local experience of the repressions as a reference point. Both my detailed description of how the first monuments and exhibitions dedicated to the Soviet repressions came into being and my conversations, quoted in this book, with the people who created these projects demonstrate the symbolic value and social impact of memory markers, which many people today believe to be ill-equipped to preserve the memory of the repressions (Etkind 2004b, 2013; Sherbakova 2015: 119). This book also enables the reader to better comprehend the meanings of today's projects and memorialization activities. Many of the described institutions, such as the Local History Museums in Inta, Pechora and Magadan or the Ivan Panikarov Museum in Yagodnoye in the Kolyma region, developed their memory projects over a number of

Gulag Memories
The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past
Zuzanna Bogumił
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BogumilGulag

years based on their own concepts and the way the repression was expressed in their localities. Today, these institutions have become part of the Association of Museums of Memory created by the GULAG History Museum in Moscow and actively participate in the shaping of Gulag memory within the framework of the state policy on commemorating the political repressions.

To avoid misunderstandings, I should explain the terminology used in this publication. The terms 'memory of the Soviet repressions' and 'Gulag memory' are used interchangeably in this book in full awareness that these terms may be interpreted variously and are not strictly synonymous. Initially, my main focus of interest was the manner in which memory is shaped at authentic historical sites and in the grounds of former Soviet lagers. However, once I started conducting research and speaking with people, it turned out that, as Anne Applebaum wrote: '"Gulag" has come to mean the Soviet repressive system itself . . . the destruction of families, the years spent in exile, the early and unnecessary deaths' (2003). When I was conducting my research from 2006 to 2008, the term 'Gulag' had become very popular and memory actors used it readily during our conversations, even if I was asking a question about the repressions. Maybe this can be explained by the fact that this period followed the recent publication of Anna Applebaum's bestselling book *Gulag: A History* (2003; Russian edition 2006) and Tomasz Kizny's photograph album *Gulag* (2003; Russian edition 2007), both of which were widely discussed within the milieu of people involved in memorializing the repressions. I therefore decided to use both terms synonymously in this book, according to the meaning both words conveyed to memory actors of the time. I also hoped that if these terms were used interchangeably, my book would more authentically render the atmosphere of the period of working through the repressions that it describes.

Finally, the transliteration into English of Russian names, terms, places and textual sources, such as books and articles, was completed using Nevill Forbes's system of transliteration. Forbes's system was originally described in his classic primer *Russian Grammar* (1916: 12–13). It is not as phonetically precise as the Library of Congress system, but is often recommended to anglophone students of Russian and frequently used by experienced Russian–English translators due to its comparative legibility and accessibility to non-specialists. In a few cases, alternatives that do not conform to Forbes's system have come into general use or been adopted by convention. Such exceptions include anglicized versions (for example, Joseph, not Iosif; Stalin, and Felix, not Feliks, Dzerzhinsky) and specific preferences (for example, one Russian organization prefers to transliterate its name as Pokayanie, rather than Pokayaniye). The Christian names of Russian authors have been rendered according to the way their names are spelt in the titles of their publications, for example, Alexander Etkind and Eugenia Ginzburg, rather than Aleksand(e)r and Yevgeniya, respectively. This on occasion has led to an unavoidable lack of consistency between the spellings of Christian names shared by different people. The same applies to surnames, so Shcherbakova has been transliterated as Sherbakova.

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Notes

1. On 12 November 1989, the incumbent Polish prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, participated in a Holy Mass in Krzyżowa that constituted an important stage in the reconciliation process between the two nations. In 1990, the Krzyżowa Foundation for European Understanding was created to commemorate both this event and the Germans based at Krzyżowa (Germ. *Kreisau*), who resisted the Nazis during the Second World War. The Foundation organizes youth meetings, history seminars and conferences.
2. *Freiwillig in Stalins Gulag: Junge Deutsche restaurieren ein russisches Straflager.* A documentary film directed by Georg Restle and Andreas Maus, Köln: WDR (between 1998 and 2006).

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