**A Quick Review of Recurring Representations of the Effects of War in Contemporary Russian Poetry**

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Deformed memory, trauma, fear and death have shaped the poetry of Ewgenia Suslowa and Stanislav Lvovsky and the poetry of other contemporary Russian poets, as I shall here briefly discuss.

In Suslowa’s *eight rooms for the war*, section 1, the bird symbol – which is also used in Natalia Azarova’s *Me, an Ailuroedus* – is used in several violent descriptions: Dead birds, without feathers, with twisted necks, mauled birds, birds in coffins. Swans are part of an interesting constellation: “Which memory brought them to the knife line – their near death trembling, like a down feather, that rises from a children’s bed at night.”

Here, the memory is responsible for the slaughtering of the swans and their trembling is compared to a down feather rising from a children’s bed at night. This simile connects memory to death and to children, in a possible allusion to the trauma that extends to affect the younger generation, who didn’t witness the war.

In the same poem, the dilemma of documenting history is refered to in: “facts distorted by force”. The trouble of reconstructing memory is implied in the expression “My small brain ashes”. Reconstructing memory is also a topic present Rostislaw Amelin’s: “the day of my birth, I don’t remember […] I don’t remember my very first word” and the lyrical I lists what they do and do not remember.

In Denis Larionov’s poem *To all of those going down*, he also tackles the dilemma of memory: “draped in memory of two, three masterful cases of death”. Interestingly, the image of burning is employed in this poem, like in Suslowa’s “brain ashes”, only here the whole self is affected: “Someone burnt out completely and was curmpled up from the inside”. Self-alienation and deformed perception are strongly present in Denis Larionov’s poems starting with the reference to an undefined “someone” and in the poem that followed *What the mouth thinks, nobody knows:* “Extreme / shift in registers of feelings” and in:“Everything / was simply alienation, - and still such a strong term The body,/ distorted”. The crisis of the formation of a new self, after witnessing or remembering a massacre is the topic of the 11th section of Suslowa’s *Eight Rooms for the War*: “The murdering burst yesterday / out in the eye, like a face / detaches from a memory, / to a symbol of one’s self. This is also the topic of Sergej Timofejev’s poem “here comes a human”.

An interesting connection is drawn in the 4th section of Suslowa’s poem: A poet is called “someone who slits the forehead open to strip the protective membrane and see the text, the spots, where the light falls down between the bodies of those whose bodies were thrown into a transporter, Chechens – “ And this whole description is compared to the act described in the second verse: “We have even turned the sea around, away from us” and probably also a simile to “going out of Eden”. (Reference to Paradise and to symbols from Paradise, like the apple tree were was also made in the poem of Alexej Parschtschikow). Here, a reference is made to a particular massacre and the dilemma of the difficulty of writing about it is evoked here. A contrast between the spots, searched by the poet, where light falls down, and between the darkness of the dream or of that transporter is a further expression of the dilemma of articulating and self-expression.