Best Book in Slavic/Eastern European/Eurasian Studies

Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2011)

In her outstanding second monograph, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2011), Karen Petrone has performed an act of incredible historical reconnaissance and recovery, a veritable conjuring trick! At least two generations of scholars have argued that unlike in Western Europe, where the memory of World War I played a significant role in creating both an unified public memory and a modern ironic consciousness, in Russia the experiences of 1917, Civil War, Stalinism and the World War II effaced both the commemoration as well as remembrance of the war. In this wide ranging study based on the careful scrutiny and brilliant analysis of a wide array of sources that include forgotten memoirs, novels, autobiographies, films, visual propaganda, historical monuments, and artifacts, Petrone demonstrates that that the war time experiences of millions of men and women were not suppressed and erased, instead they found expression in unorthodox ways and in multiple cultural products such as films, novels and memoirs. Unable to create a unified mythic memory of a just war, veterans took recourse to a variety of cultural practices to remember both the heroism and the shame of war time conduct that included cruelty to non-combatants and ethnic minorities on a massive scale. As Petrone shows, these complex private memories and the hitherto unknown discourses that were generated about the Great War formed a backdrop to the efforts of the Soviet state to create legitimating myths about heroism, gender norms, and patriotism in preparation for the next war. Petrone has not only recovered a forgotten terrain for historical scholarship, but the resuscitation of comparative material from the Russian war theater will interject new thinking about the legacy of World War I in Western Europe. As the Russian state struggles to create an appropriate official memory for the World War I in the centennial celebrations of 2014, the publication of Petrone’s monograph marks an important intervention into the current political debates in post-Soviet Russia. The AWSS Committee is very proud to award the Heldt Prize in the category of Best Book in Slavic/Eastern European/Eurasian Studies.