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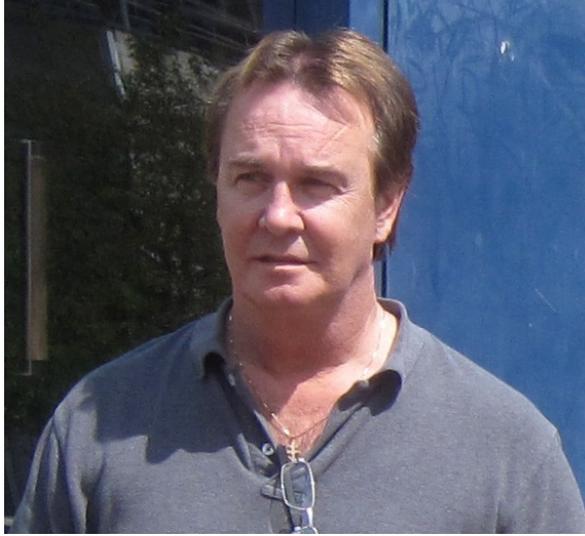
mecca in Virlana Tkacz and Irena Makaryk's *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), and her "Yiddish Theater in Soviet Ukraine: A Re-evaluation of Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in the Arts" was published in *Ab Imperio* 2011.3 (December 2011).

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Gary H. Toops (1954–2013)*

Gary Howard Toops died, after a long illness, on 14 October 2013 in Wichita Falls, Kansas, USA. Gary was a Slavic linguist, a very good Slavic linguist. He was an American but had strong ties to Canada. He was born in 1954 in Virginia but came to Canada to do his B.A. at McGill University. From McGill Gary went to Yale for his Ph.D., writing his dissertation under the guidance of the eminent Slavist Alexander Schenker. After Yale he went on to study in Leningrad, Moscow, and Petrozavodsk.

Gary's Ph.D. dissertation "The Expression of Grammatical Causativity in Slavic" was defended in 1985 and the title indicates a subject, viz. "causativity" which was to interest Gary throughout his career. He wrote many articles on this topic, covering all the Slavic languages and even venturing beyond to Lithuanian and German. Besides "causativity" another area of research for Gary was "secondary imperfectivization" in Slavic and his 1998 article "The Scope of 'Secondary' Imperfectivization in Bulgarian, Russian, and Upper Sorbian" is a model of clarity and precision. However, Gary's abiding passion throughout the years was Sorbian, mainly Upper Sorbian, although Lower Sorbian was not neglected. These Slavic languages, spoken on the western periphery of the Slavic world, are not well known and little studied but, amazingly, Canada can lay some claim to two of the very few experts in this field, viz. Gary Toops and Gunter

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Schaarschmidt. Gary was a frequent visitor to Sorbian lands and participated often in the Sorbian seminars in Budyšin (Bautzen). The crowning glory of Gary's Sorbian work was his 1996 translation of Heinz Schuster-Šewc's *Gramatika hornjo-serbskeje rěče* [Grammar of the Upper Sorbian Language], making this masterpiece available to the Anglosphere for the first time.

Gary's work was published in many of the world's major Slavic and linguistic journals, for example, *Language*, *Journal of Slavic Linguistics*, *Slavonic and East European Review*, *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*. He contributed many articles and reviews to *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes* and acted as book review editor for language and linguistics of this journal from 2006 to 2011.

Gary took up a position as Professor of Russian at Wichita State University in Kansas in 1989 and remained there for the rest of career. He was a well respected member of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures and served as a Faculty Senator on a number of occasions, most recently for the academic year 2012–2013.

Canadian Slavic linguistics was well served by Gary Toops. We shall miss him.

John Dingley, *York University / University of Victoria*

Serhy Yekelchyk

Thinking Through Ukrainian Cinema¹

Surprisingly, there has never been an English-language history of Ukrainian cinema, a major national school within Soviet cinema best known for Oleksandr Dovzhenko's interwar masterpieces and the "poetic school" of the 1960s, but which in fact includes a far greater number of significant and controversial films. In showcasing recent research on Ukrainian cinema, this special issue prepares the ground for such surveys. Much like the 2009 special issue of *KinoKultura* on Ukrainian cinema, edited by Vitaly Chernetsky,² our collection documents growing Western interest in Ukrainian cinema, as well as the field's move beyond its two best-studied periods, the 1920s and the 1960s.

There are several books in English on the most famous Ukrainian film director, Dovzhenko, including George O. Liber's recent biography and Bohdan Y. Nebesio's series of articles on the Ukrainian film industry of the 1920s, which help put Dovzhenko's oeuvre in a larger context.³ The sixties in Ukraine are finally receiving a comprehensive treatment in English, in Joshua First's monograph.⁴ What the articles in this special issue demonstrate, however, is the enduring continuity of cultural tropes and major themes in Ukrainian cinema. In addition to Dovzhenko's poetic tradition, they include an engagement with the national past and working with (or subverting) ethnographic cultural models.

¹ I would like to thank the editor of the *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes*, Dr. Heather Coleman, for welcoming the proposal of this special issue and all the work she and her staff have done on the articles. The expert advice of Assistant Editor, Dr. Svitlana Krysz, on a number of editorial and formatting issues is particularly appreciated. On behalf of the special issue's participants, I would like to thank Marta D. Olynyk, who edited several articles by non-native speakers and translated one paper from Ukrainian. My work on the preparation of this special issue was supported, in part, by an Internal Research Grant from the University of Victoria.

² *KinoKultura*, Special Issue 9 (December 2009): <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/ukrainian.shtml>> (Accessed 10 June 2014).

³ See George O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2008); Bohdan Y. Nebesio, "The Theoretical Past of Cinema: Introducing Ukrainian Film Theory of the 1920s," *Film Criticism* 20.1–2 (1995–1996): 67–77; "Competition from Ukraine: VUFKU and the Soviet Film Industry in the 1920s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 29.2 (2009): 159–180; "Panfuturists and the Ukrainian Film Culture of the 1920s," *KinoKultura*, Special Issue 9 (December 2009): <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/nebesio.shtml>> (Accessed 10 June 2014).

⁴ Joshua First, *Ukrainian Cinema: Belonging and Identity During the Soviet Thaw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

What should be included in Ukrainian cinema, and why, is a complex issue. In Soviet times the two major Ukraine-based film studios produced, on average, something like a quarter of all motion pictures made in the Soviet Union, but many of these had nothing to do with Ukraine and did not involve ethnic Ukrainian directors and actors. At the same time, some ethnic Ukrainians became major film directors in Russia (Grigorii Chukhrai, Sergei Bondarchuk, Larisa Shepitko), while non-Ukrainian directors often became inseparably associated with Ukrainian cinema (Sergei Paradzhanov, Kira Muratova, Roman Balaian). Dovzhenko, the greatest name in Ukrainian cinema, also worked in Moscow late in his career. Given the constant circulation of directors and actors among Soviet film studios and the often random mechanism of film script selection, which Soviet-era films, then, should be included in Ukrainian cinema?

The answer has to be both inclusive and specific: all films made in Ukraine constitute part of the national cinematic tradition, but the Soviet authorities also supported the development of a Ukrainian “national school” as an important attribute of nation building in the Ukrainian republic.⁵ Originally defined by Ukrainian topics or settings (historical and contemporary) and some connection to peasant culture, the Ukrainian national school quickly developed common aesthetic traits in the form of a romantic, or “poetic,” vision first articulated in the 1920s and reaffirmed in the 1960s. The “Ukrainian school” can thus include the work of non-Ukrainian directors contributing to this tradition, as well as those who went on to directorial careers elsewhere, while still demonstrating their formative “Ukrainian” influence. In contrast, other films made in Ukraine can be discussed as part of the all-Soviet context in which Ukrainian cinema developed.

It is also true that the poetic school’s canonization as a Ukrainian cinema tradition could have a stifling effect on the cinema of independent Ukraine, developing as it has in the age of cultural globalization.⁶ However, the near-collapse of the national film industry in the period of funding “drought” from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s represented a far greater challenge. During the last decade, when Ukrainian cinema has shown hopeful signs of revival, younger filmmakers have often challenged the stereotypes traditionally defining the “Ukrainian school” and attempted to undermine or redefine it from within.

⁵ The first part of my answer is somewhat similar to the approach taken by Vitaly Chernetsky in his excellent introduction to the special issue of *KinoKultura* on Ukrainian cinema, which he edited; he acknowledges applying to film the method proposed in my *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). See Vitaly Chernetsky, “Defining and Exploring Ukrainian Cinema,” *KinoKultura*, Special Issue 9 (December 2009): <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/introduction.shtml>> (Accessed 10 June 2014).

⁶ Bohdan Y. Nebesio, “Questionable Foundations for a National Cinema: Ukrainian Poetic Cinema of the 1960s,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes* 41.1–2 (2000): 35–46.

Just as Ukrainian cinema is increasingly trying to address universal issues in modern cinematic language, research on Ukrainian film history is developing as a legitimate and even popular subfield in Western academia. This special issue brings together contributions from a veteran Ukrainian film critic and a group of younger academics teaching in North America, some of them of Ukrainian background and others not. Such internationalization of Ukrainian film studies is a hopeful sign for the profession in the same way that recent international festival honours for younger Ukrainian filmmakers are for the revival of native film production in Ukraine. At the same time, the success with Ukrainian audiences of Mykhailo Illienko's *ToiKhtoProishovKriz'Vohon'* [Firecrosser, 2011] has shown their longing for a national cinema. This film became the first Ukrainian movie in a decade to be entered in the Academy Awards competition and receive mass distribution in Ukraine.⁷

The contributions to this special issue cover a wide range of topics. Larysa Briukhovets'ka's essay is concerned with defining the Dovzhenko tradition and tracing its revival in a new form during the mid-to-late 1960s. Mayhill Fowler explains why the prominent Ukrainian theatre director of the 1920s, Les' Kurbas, did not make it big in film. Elena Baraban shows how World War II films fit into the "romantic" cinema of Ihor Savchenko. Joshua First sorts out the often ambiguous policies pursued by the Kyiv Film Studio in the 1960s. Olga Pressitch examines how dubbing into Russian changed the meaning of satire in a popular Ukrainian comedy film from the early 1960s. Vitaly Chernetsky studies a 1973 historical movie as both the high point of the "sixties" Ukrainian cinema and part of a worldwide trend of grand historical costume dramas. Maryna Romanets analyzes a controversial post-Soviet Ukrainian historical film through the prism of post-colonial theory. Finally, Volha Isakava demonstrates how horror films in post-Soviet Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus offer another way of coming to terms with the Soviet past.

⁷ Serhy Yekelchuk, "Memory Wars on the Silver Screen: Ukraine and Russia Look Back at the Second World War," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies* 5.2 (2013): 4–13.

On the Ukrainian Cinematic Tradition, the Dovzhenko Film Studio, and Ivan Mykolaichuk

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the Ukrainian cinematic tradition as established by Oleksandr Dovzhenko in the 1920s and 1930s and revived at the Kyiv Film Studio during the short-lived renaissance of Ukrainian cinema between 1964 and 1972. The author focuses on the three figures that led national cinema out of its provincial dead end: the film directors Volodymyr Denysenko and Sergei Paradzhanov, and the actor Ivan Mykolaichuk. The author discusses their films *Son* [The Dream, 1964] and *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, 1964] as best representing the turn from theatrical adaptations of literary classics to their creative cinematic rethinking. Mykolaichuk's acting style matched this new trend perfectly because he was a carrier of the folk tradition that the two directors were seeking to harness for new ways of artistic expression.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article aborde la tradition cinématographique ukrainienne établie par Oleksandr Dovzhenko dans les années 20 et 30 et ranimée au Studio Kyiv Film durant la courte renaissance du cinéma ukrainien entre 1964 et 1972. L'auteur aborde trois figures qui ont mené le cinéma national à outrepasser l'impasse provinciale dans laquelle il se trouvait : les cinéastes Volodymyr Denysenko et Sergei Paradjanov, et l'acteur Ivan Mykolaichuk. L'auteur examine les films *Le rêve* (1964) et *Les Chevaux de feu* (1964) comme représentations du passage entre l'adaptation théâtrale des classiques de la littérature et la réinterprétation cinématographique. Le style de jeu de Mykolaichuk correspond parfaitement à cette nouvelle tendance parce qu'il jouait le rôle de porteur d'une tradition populaire que les deux cinéastes tentaient d'exploiter à des fins d'expressions artistiques inédites.

Research on national cinematic traditions may seem irrelevant, in as much as the production of films is based on the technical recreation and reproduction of reality. Thus, film is an international cultural phenomenon in which there are more common features than not; hence there would seem to be little sense in speaking about the cinematic traditions of individual countries. However, thanks to the works of its most renowned representatives, cinematography has gained the right to be called an art, therefore becoming a cultural product with national rootedness. In terms of creativity, cinematography is in no way inferior to the other arts, and thus one can speak not only of the recreation of reality but also of the creation of an artistic reality that may constitute part of the cultural construction of a modern nation. Compared to the other arts, the dynamic and changeable art of cinematography has not existed for very long, and cinematic traditions often do not have a chance to form or become entrenched. Cinema is

constantly acquiring new features thanks to technical advances and as a result of changes in artistic values. This mutability may be illustrated by an example from French cinema in the late 1950s, when “New Wave” directors and film critics mercilessly criticized their predecessors. Of course, there were exceptions—for example, the renowned and influential French film critic and film theorist, André Bazin, who held the films of his predecessor, Jean Renoir, in high esteem.

Owing to these circumstances, traditions either on a global scale or situated within the confines of a single country’s cinematography have been poorly researched. Nevertheless, this topic is a fruitful one and it may be studied on two planes: within the confines of cinematography itself and in the space of the culture in which it is being created. It is also impossible to ignore the interplay between cinema and other artistic and social practices or the system of connections among many cultural factors that determine the contours of cinematography, particularly those that nourish cinema: theatre, music, philosophy, anthropology, literature, and folk art. In the early stages of the history of cinematography researchers were engaged in establishing how it differs from, say, a performance recorded on film, as well as in researching and determining its uniqueness. Today, when no one doubts that cinematography is an independent/sovereign art and that it has already reached the peak of its popularity, the task of defining its place in historical time and understanding the traditions on which cinematography may be based is gaining urgency. This is particularly important with respect to the cinema of Ukraine, which has produced world-class exemplars (Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Sergei Paradzhanov, Leonid Osyka, Iurii Illienko, and Ivan Mykolaichuk) yet today is experiencing arguably the worst period in its entire history.

Defining a national cinematic tradition is not easy. The casual viewer does not necessarily perceive the films of the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman as part of Sweden’s cultural heritage, although the fact that he continued the creative legacy of Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller is widely recognized by film historians, just as they acknowledge his influence on the further development of Swedish cinema. The traditions of Ukrainian cinema were laid by Oleksandr Dovzhenko, and much has been written about this in histories and monographs devoted to the cinema of Ukraine, even though there is very little information on how, exactly, these traditions manifested in the creative practice of later Ukrainian film directors.¹ Here I will summarize the features of the

¹ See, in particular, Karlo Lidzani [Carlo Lizzani] and Massimo Mida, “Choho navchaie Dovzhenko,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko: Zbirnyk spohadiv i statei pro myttsia*, edited by O. Babyshkin (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury URSS, 1959) 221–226; Inessa Razmashkina, “Vplyv Dovzhenka na svitovyi kinoprotses,” *Kino-Teatr* 2 (2005): 31–33; Serhii Trymbach, “Transformatsii natsional'noi mifolohii: O. Dovzhenko ta kinoshistdesiatnyky,” in *Ukrains'ke kino vid 1960-kh do s'ohodni: Problema vyzhyvannia: Zbirnyk naukovykh statei*, edited by L. Briukhovets'ka (Kyiv: V-vo “Zadruha,” 2010) 9–19.

Dovzhenko tradition that are scattered throughout various texts. Naturally, they all contain numerous affirmations of how Dovzhenko created his own world, uniting fellow thinkers in the process, as well as to the uniqueness of the Ukrainian filmmaker's imagery and structural use of genres. (In the view of the Italian critic Roberto Manetti, the sureness of Dovzhenko's creative language is evident in the simplicity—and paucity—of his artistic devices.)² Various sources also note the philosophical nature of his creativity, linked to the transcendence of the boundaries of his time and his embrace of universal values. (Analyzing the movement image in Dovzhenko's films, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze writes that for Dovzhenko the earth is “the true inventory of time, that is the whole which changes, and by which changing perspective, constantly gives real beings that infinite space which enables them to touch the most distant past and the depth of the future simultaneously....”)³ Last but not least, film historians have remarked on the national character of Dovzhenko's oeuvre, which is manifested through its connection to a specific Ukrainian worldview and art.

In order to grasp the importance of Dovzhenko's traditions and to marvel at how robust and fruitful they are, considering their short-lived renaissance in the period between 1964 and 1972, let us recall that from the late 1920s to the late 1950s, that is, practically throughout the entire thirty-year period of Stalinist totalitarianism, the Ukrainian film industry was inexorably brought to the brink of ruin: between 1937 and 1953 only a handful of films was released every year, while between 1938 and 1944 the Kyiv Film Studio did not release a single one. Owing to the russification of Ukrainian cinematography, there were also great losses in the creative sphere: national cadres were repressed and the Kyiv Film Studio was turned into a workplace populated by Russian screenwriters, directors, and actors.

Thus, starting in 1954, the Ukrainian film industry had to be rebuilt from scratch, and a search was launched for screenwriters, directors, and people working in related cinematographic professions. Directors and actors were found in the theatre, and writers set about producing film scripts, but the situation with creative ideas was much more difficult. As the pace of film production picked up, the heads of Ukrainian film studios, striving for a balance between their creative ambitions, ideological reliability, and box-office success, gravitated primarily toward the latter; hence the preference for light, popular genres, such as melodramas like *Dolia Maryny* [Maryna's Fate, 1954] or comedies like *Pershyi parubok* [The First Fellow, 1958]; *Za dvoma zaitsiamy* [Chasing Two

² Roberto Manetti, “Tvorchi pohliady Oleksandra Dovzhenka,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko* 227.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1985) 38–39.

Hares, 1961]. Eventually, the Moscow-based Soviet political leadership began to grant more artistic freedom for the drafting of thematic plans, and the Kyiv Film Studio began to acquire an increasingly Ukrainian face. This process took place thanks to several screen adaptations of performances of the classic literary repertoire by the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre in Kyiv, such as *Nazar Stodolia* [1954]; *Sto tysiach* [A Hundred Thousand, 1958]; *Svatannia na Honcharivtsi* [Matchmaking at Honcharivka, 1958], and the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka Theatre in Chernivtsi (*Zemlia* [Earth, 1955]), as well as the adaptation of other Ukrainian classics by Ivan Franko and Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi and contemporary works by Oles' Honchar, Mykhailo Stel'makh, and Iurii Dol'd-Mykhailyk. In 1956 even the Odesa Film Studio, which specialized in industrial and detective genres, released a *portmanteau* of two short films based on two short stories by Kotsiubyns'kyi titled “Koni ne vynni” [The Horses Are Not to Blame] and “Pe-koptior” [On the Stove]. This gravitation toward theatre and literature stemmed from a lack of national film cadres, which were simply not being trained in Ukraine at the time (the film institute that had functioned in the 1930s was closed down). After Stalin’s brutal critique of Dovzhenko’s screenplay *Ukraina v ohni* [Ukraine in Flames] in 1944, the director was banned from working in Ukraine. In 1951 the Ukrainian director Ihor Savchenko, toward the end of his life, made *Taras Shevchenko*, a biographical film about the life of Ukraine’s national poet. The work on this biography of a key Ukrainian figure required extraordinary efforts to avoid the violation of numerous Soviet ideological taboos. After Dovzhenko’s death the Kyiv Film Studio was renamed in honour of the late director, but many people realized that the films being produced there did not justify this name change. What is worse, this state of affairs became stabilized. Hence it was necessary to introduce radical changes which would ensure that Ukrainianness did not act as a brake on the development of the republic’s film industry and which would lead the national cinema out of its provincial dead-end, help usher it onto the European scene and, finally, rise to the level of Dovzhenko’s magnificent cinematic masterpieces.

Long-awaited change finally arrived in 1964–1965, thanks to two directors from the Dovzhenko Film Studio, Volodymyr Denysenko and Paradzhanov.⁴ Denysenko was an informal pupil of Dovzhenko’s: while still a schoolboy, he was introduced to the great director by his mother, who worked at one of Kyiv’s hospitals with Dovzhenko’s sister Pavlyna (Polina). The director took the

⁴ The distinguished Ukrainian literary critic Ivan Dziuba reacted swiftly to the release of *Son* [The Dream] and *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors], calling it a significant event. In a Russian-language article entitled “Den' poiska” [The Day for Searching], published in the Moscow journal *Iskusstvo kino*, Dziuba argued convincingly that qualitative changes were taking place in Ukrainian cinematography. See Ivan Dziuba, “Den' poiska,” *Iskusstvo kino* 5 (1965): 73–82.

talented young boy under his care and Denysenko enrolled in the Kyiv Theatre Institute. Dovzhenko later hired him to work on his film *Poem of the Sea*, which, unfortunately, was not completed in Dovzhenko's lifetime. Paradzhanov, meanwhile, completed his studies at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow under the tutelage of Savchenko. Together with some fellow graduates he moved to Kyiv, where he became fascinated by Ukrainian culture and struck up a friendship with the distinguished cameraman Danylo Demuts'kyi, who had filmed Dovzhenko's masterpieces in the late 1920s. Clearly, both of these directors associated themselves more or less with Dovzhenko's traditions and were familiar with the master director's self-exigency in his creative quests. Both already had a few films under their belt, but their cinematic efforts differed little from what was being produced at the Kyiv Film Studio.

At this juncture, Ukrainian literature helped foster their directorial successes. As the hero of his film, Denysenko chose Taras Shevchenko, while Paradzhanov based his film on a famous novel by Kotsiubyns'kyi. The two directors had two different personalities and they came from different backgrounds: Denysenko was born in Medvyn, a village in the Kyiv region, while Paradzhanov, of Armenian parentage, was born in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. Their education and life paths could not have been more dissimilar. However, they had one thing in common: both of them were well acquainted with Soviet prisons; Denysenko had been imprisoned during the Stalinist period and Paradzhanov was jailed under Brezhnev. Although they had different directorial styles, they were bound together by one, arguably the most important, circumstance: to a significant degree each of them achieved success thanks to the distinguished Ukrainian actor Mykolaichuk, who had played the leading role in their films. Mykolaichuk was truly a momentous discovery in the cinema of Ukraine; indeed, he was its shining star. Despite his youth, he was fully able to safeguard Ukrainian cinema's artistic stability, at least for the duration of its "golden age" (1964–1972). It was precisely during this period of creative freedom that he was able to take the fullest advantage of artistic liberty and, together with his like-minded colleagues, to bring to fruition a considerable number of projects, including Illienko's daring film *Bilyi ptakh z chornoii oznakoiu* [White Bird with a Black Mark, 1970], into which Mykolaichuk, as a co-screenwriter, introduced many personal details from his own life.

Interestingly, both Denysenko and Paradzhanov had initially intended to cast other actors in their films—Russian ones, in fact—but fate intervened and they ended up choosing Mykolaichuk, a third-year student at the time. The newcomer simply amazed the prizewinning Ukrainian cameraman Illienko, who during Mykolaichuk's screen tests witnessed the wonder of seeing something awe-inspiring taking shape before his very eyes. He was also stunned by the young actor's supreme professionalism. The fledgling actor had already

graduated from the Chernivtsi Music College and the theatre studio at the Olha Kobylians'ka Theatre (also located in Chernivtsi), and had completed two years at the studio run by the talented pedagogue Viktor Ivchenko. Ivchenko, too, had entered cinema via the theatre, but he was profoundly aware of the need for film education, and he eventually became one of the founders of the Film Department at the Kyiv Institute of Theatrical Arts, where Mykolaichuk was among the first students to be admitted.

As we can see, intersecting Mykolaichuk's life and career were two lines that defined the character of Ukrainian cinema at the time, which may be tentatively called "theatrical" and "cinematographic." The theatrical line was represented by a significant number of directors who had become professional theatre directors or actors; in Denysenko's case, he was both an actor and a director. And even though these directors knew that cinema has its own specific features, which they were in the process of mastering, their films were nonetheless reminiscent of filmed performances; a typical example is the famous play by Ukraine's premier female writer Lesia Ukrainka, *Lisova pisnia* [Forest Song], which Ivchenko filmed in 1961. However, in the early 1960s many professionals with diplomas from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow flocked to the Kyiv Film Studio, among them Osyka, Vadym and Iurii Illienko, Rolan Serhiienko, Mykhailo Bielikov, Valerii Kvas, and Suren Shakhbazian, who thought in cinematic categories and were not only familiar with the latest innovations in foreign cinematography but had also mastered them. Changing professions became a notable trend and several cameramen switched to film directing, eventually achieving considerable success.

Mykolaichuk became a kind of link connecting the past decade of Ukrainian cinema, with its penchant for the Ukrainian literary classics, both prose works and plays, which had never disappeared from theatre stages, with the next phase which, without breaking with literature, would confirm the departure from literature even in film adaptations of literary works, and in which the triumph of a new trend in directing would be consolidated. Denysenko, in particular, like his teacher Dovzhenko, believed that cinema was an independent art, and he preferred to write his own screenplays or in collaboration with a co-writer, as in the case of his biographical film about Taras Shevchenko, *Son* [The Dream, 1964]. Furthermore, his films were weighed down by the style that had been forged in the film studio during the "literature-centric" period and which was far removed from the *avant-garde* and the expressionistic quests of the early Dovzhenko, whose lessons were being mastered more in Western Europe than in Ukraine. In his earlier film *Roman i Francheska* [Roman and Francheska, 1960], Denysenko had cast the popular Soviet Ukrainian actress Liudmyla Hurchenko, and as part of his strategy for achieving directorial success he used the obligatory element of lyrical songs to create hummable soundtrack themes; on this film he worked with the young songwriter Oleksandr Bilash.

The Dream is conceptually linked with the works of Shevchenko, who wrote four poems with this title. This was a semantic key, borrowed from the great bard, for interpreting not just nineteenth-century reality but also the period in which Denysenko was living. The oneiric form was determined by the need to break through the curtain of tsarist censorship, even though ultimately this did not save this great nineteenth-century Ukrainian poet from the brutal reprisals of the punitive organs of the Russian Empire. But neither the device of a dream nor the workings of the imagination were able to conceal the sarcasm and anger of the poet tearing the masks off those who dripped with “silver and gold”—the dream was altogether too realistic and familiar, and the mighty of the world do not forgive poets who speak such truths about them. In Denysenko’s film Ivan Mykolaichuk plays the role of a multi-dimensional Shevchenko: Shevchenko the serf, Shevchenko the thinker, Shevchenko the artist and poet, and Shevchenko the rebel. This multi-dimensionality is connected with the scale of the personality of the very character.

The screenplay also contributed to this striking polyphony by means of profoundly mastered historical material that revealed Shevchenko’s time, effective dialogue and internal monologues, and the natural accretion of rebellious, poetic lines taken from real-life situations of injustice and oppression. To everything else, the film’s creators added the inner life, the life of the hero’s consciousness and imagination, which are invisible yet equally crucial to creativity and to destiny itself, to wit, the dialogue with Shevchenko’s forefathers and the polemic with those who shed their blood for their native land. How the Ukrainian people ended up in the bonds of slavery after all those bloody battles and wars for their liberation is the painful question to which Shevchenko the poet and thinker seeks an answer. The hero of Denysenko’s film not only sees his ancestors but easily enters the tragic space of Ukrainian history, which is smelted into powerful lines of poetry. To a significant degree Denysenko’s film achieved success thanks to Mykolaichuk’s prodigious talent and naturalness. “Unlamented wholly by my own/In exile I shall die, in grief uncheered”—the intonation with which the actor pronounces these two lines from this well-known poetic masterpiece penetrates the awareness of the viewer, who believes that these words are being created before his very eyes. There is no excess of pathos, no self-aggrandizement; the actor plays a living, breathing person. He is simultaneously both himself and Shevchenko. In Denysenko’s film the traditions of Ukrainian culture and philosophical thought acquire living flesh and enter the viewers’ consciousness, restoring feelings of national dignity to them.

Paradzhanov, who had the good fortune to discover Kotsiubyns'kyi’s novel *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, 1911; film version 1964] and to acquaint himself with the splendid landscape of the Carpathian Mountains, was also afforded the chance to echo Dovzhenko’s remark that “the

presence of scenery in film pleases me very much.”⁵ And if one adds scenery to the folk art of the Hutsuls, the Ukrainian mountain people of the Carpathians, who fascinated Paradzhanov and whose culture was well known to the director, then it becomes instantly clear that Dovzhenko’s traditions were not only being adopted but also developed and deepened. Mykolaichuk, a native of Ukraine’s fabled Bukovyna region, was the carrier of the artistic and cultural traditions of his land, which was replete with the most diverse artistic crafts, musical folklore, and performing arts. His professional training, handsome exterior, and innate talent combined to produce a phenomenally charismatic actor.

Mykolaichuk was also supremely aware of the need to safeguard Ukrainian folk traditions, and he considered cinematography an art that could easily connect with them. It is to this that he devoted his short life, starring in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*; *Annychka* (1968); *Kaminnyi khrest* [The Stone Cross, 1968]; *White Bird with a Black Mark*; *Propala hramota* [The Lost Letter, 1972], and *Babylon XX* (1979). He was also *cultivating* traditions when he composed the musical arrangement for three of these films and wrote several screenplays that were not filmed in his lifetime: *Kaminna dusha* [The Stone Soul, 1989], based on a romantic novelette about the Hutsuls by Hnat Khotkevych, *Nebylytsi pro Ivana* [Fables About Ivan, 1990] and *Ostriv sliz* [Island of Tears], which was never filmed.

Mykolaichuk also instilled a love of Ukrainian folk art in his colleagues. As Osyka recalled,

Mykolaichuk knew how to create a carnivalesque atmosphere on shoots. Cinematographers know that it is not easy to endure a lengthy shoot and to avoid losing the creative tone. We shot *Zakhar Berkut* (1971) at the Serechnii Veretsky Pass in the wintertime, when there were hardly any people around. Actors were coming and going, as is customary, and every arrival and leave-taking was transformed into a small performance, where there were no viewers because one way or another everyone was a part of it. The apotheosis was Mykolaichuk and Kost' Stepankov’s beautiful rendition of the folk song “Ikhav kozak za Dunai” [The Cossack Rode Beyond the Danube]. To be more precise, they were soloists and at the same time choir conductors, directors, magicians, shamans—whatever you like [...] The closer the end of the shooting the smaller the choir became, until Ivan and Stepankov were the only two left, but this in no way affected the flawlessness of their singing, that special magnetism that they sought and radiated.⁶

In 1980, a year after Mykolaichuk wrote, directed, and starred in *Babylon XX*, he spoke with the Russian film specialist Valerii Fomin. When the conversation turned to folk traditions and their prospects for surviving the

⁵ Zhorzh Sadul' [Georges Sadoul], “Dovzhenko,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko* 212.

⁶ Leonid Osyka, “Bylytsi pro Ivana,” in *Bilyi ptakh z chornoïu oznakoiu: Ivan Mykolaichuk: Spohady, interv"iu, stsenarii*, edited by M. Mykolaichuk (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1991) 133–134.

effects of urbanization, Mykolaichuk said, “Is it necessary to take some sort of special care in order to save traditional culture? I think not. You have to save the soul of the people, the soul of one’s nation. All the greatest values reside in the heart of the people. If we safeguard spiritual health, then its traditional culture will not be lost [...] The inevitable course of existence leads us away from many traditional values. But I believe that we will definitely return to them.”⁷

In order for everything—Paradzhanov’s resourceful directing, the professional aerobatics of his chief cameraman Illienko, art director Heorhii Iakutovych’s extensive knowledge of pictorial art and visual beauty, and Myroslav Skoryk’s folklore-rich musical score—to merge into an organic whole in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, and in order for this canon-shattering film to achieve world-class status without imitating any existing examples and by proposing its own original cinematographic reality and real life at one and the same time, an actor like Mykolaichuk was just the answer: he was both a carrier and an admirer of Ukrainian folk traditions. He did not need to study them in museums or through literature, as his perception of the world was already formed by the traditional culture of the Carpathians.

Amidst the variety of imagistic forms in both these films it is easy to spot the gravitation toward the poetic form of expression as well as a penchant for creating universal and solid characters, like Uncle Ivan, a slave-like servant, who says: “I sold and will sell,” or Engelhardt and Prekhtel in *The Dream*, who characterized the reality of their time, as well as the contemporary reality, that is, as something that is eternal and unchanging. This is not at all surprising if we remember that Shevchenko was a poet of genius, while Kotsiubyns'kyi was a poetic genius in the genre of prose. Neither *The Dream* nor *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* is limited to a romantic interpretation of concrete historical facts. The lyrical approach in them is linked with analytical thinking and psychological depth. For such a combination to emerge in the images of the main characters, their equivalent—in the person of the performer of those roles—was called for. And that person was Mykolaichuk.

Mykolaichuk was a supremely gifted actor. In *The Lost Letter*, adapted from a short story by Nikolai Gogol' / Mykola Hohol', he proved himself once again, this time as a superb comedic actor, who knew how to be natural within the folk carnival element and how to create allusions to contemporary life, while evoking the most diverse associations. While treating the classics with respect, he belonged to a circle of cinematographers who stood far from literalism, who valued cinema for its dynamism, and who were capable of creating a paradox: they distanced themselves from primary literary sources in order to draw closer to them.

⁷ Valerii Fomin, “A poky budut' sny...,” *Kino-Teatr* 1 (1997): 37.

Mykolaichuk did not absolutize his poetics. On the contrary, he was always different from film to film, and in his thirty-seven roles he never once repeated himself. He often found that scripts were too constricting for him and did not allow much room to spread his wings. At those times his literary talent came to the rescue, and his imagination came to be embodied in the film script. To be sure, writing film scripts was not an accidental occupation for him but an entirely normal one. He shared Dovzhenko's conviction that a director must be the author of his own films, not an interpreter of other people's ideas. This conviction led naturally to writing the screenplays for *White Bird with a Black Mark*; *Na poklony!* [Take a Bow, 1973] (the film was eventually released as *Mriiaty i zhyty* [To Dream and Live, 1974]); *Fables about Ivan* and *Island of Tears*.

Regrettably, Mykolaichuk never had a chance to develop as a director: he managed to make only two films, even though he had plans to make many more. His life was cut short, too soon: like his hero Shevchenko, he lived until the age of forty-six. This circumstance reveals another tradition, one that is enduring, unfortunately: geniuses leave us much too soon, at the very moment when their creative forces are in full bloom. Yet, during the brief period when Mykolaichuk worked at the Dovzhenko Film Studio as an actor, film director, and screenwriter, he affirmed the existence and vitality of the Ukrainian cinematic tradition.

Translated from Ukrainian by Marta D. Olynyk

Elena V. Baraban

Filming a Stalinist War Epic in Ukraine: Ihor Savchenko's *The Third Strike*

ABSTRACT: The article examines the production history of Ihor Savchenko's film *Tretii udar* [The Third Strike, 1948], a World War II epic and the most significant project of the Kyiv Film Studio in the first post-war years. Using the example of *The Third Strike*, the author demonstrates how Stalinist cinema as an institution influenced Soviet film directors' thematic and ideological choices as well as their style. Specifically, the supervision of such projects by the USSR's political centre served to integrate Ukrainian film makers into Soviet cinema by fostering Soviet versions of the country's political and social history and by preventing Ukrainian film makers from pursuing stylistic practices that might have become foundational to Ukrainian cinema. Filming a Stalinist war epic in postwar Ukraine was especially difficult in view of the Soviet struggle against Ukrainian nationalism. By featuring soldiers of different nationalities, *The Third Strike* underscored the idea of the "fraternal friendship of the Soviet peoples" during the war, which became a canonical element in Soviet depictions of the war. In this way, Ukrainian artists ingratiated themselves with the Soviet authorities and proved their loyalty to Russia.

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article analyse l'historique de la production du film *Le troisième coup* (1948) d'Ihor Savtchenko, épopée de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et le projet le plus important du Studio Kyiv Film pendant les premières années après la guerre. En prenant exemple sur *Le troisième coup*, l'auteur montre comment le cinéma stalinien comme institution influença les choix de thématiques et d'idéologies, autant que le style des réalisateurs soviétiques. En particulier, la supervision de tels projets par le centre politique de l'URSS servait à intégrer les réalisateurs ukrainiens dans le cinéma soviétique en encourageant des versions soviétiques de l'histoire politique et sociale du pays et en empêchant la quête des réalisateurs ukrainiens de pratiques stylistiques qui auraient pu devenir fondatrices d'un cinéma ukrainien. Filmer une épopée staliniste sur la guerre dans l'Ukraine après la guerre était tout particulièrement difficile à cause de la lutte soviétique contre le nationalisme ukrainien. En ayant pour vedettes des soldats de différentes nationalités, *Le troisième coup* souligne le concept d'« amitié fraternelle entre les peuples soviétiques » pendant la guerre, ce qui devint un élément canonique des descriptions soviétiques de la guerre. De cette façon, les artistes ukrainiens s'insinuaient dans les bonnes grâces des autorités soviétiques et prouvaient leur fidélité à la Russie.

IHOR SAVCHENKO AS A FILM ARTIST

Ihor Savchenko was a major Ukrainian film director, who experimented boldly with film genres and techniques to create some of the most innovative and stylistically accomplished Soviet films. Raised in Vinnytsia, Ukraine and educated in Leningrad, he worked as a theatre director before turning to cinema.

In 1934 he directed *Garmon'* [Accordion], the first Soviet musical comedy.¹ Its screen life was cut short after party leaders criticized the film.² After *Sluchainaia vstrecha* [A Chance Encounter, 1936], Savchenko's second comedy, followed suit,³ he turned to the genre of drama. His *Duma pro kozaka Golotu* [The Ballad of Cossack Golota, 1938], which was one of the first Soviet films for children,⁴ romanticized Ukrainians' support for the Red Army during the Civil War. Recognizing *Golota* as a work of major talent, Oleksandr Dovzhenko, who was then the artistic director of the Kyiv Film Studio, invited Savchenko to join his team and work together on creating Ukrainian cinema, with its own style and its own cadres.⁵ In Kyiv, Savchenko directed *Vsadniki* [The Horsemen, 1939],⁶ another romantic tale about the Civil War in Ukraine. The release of the historical epic *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi* (1941)⁷ confirmed that dynamic depictions of large-scale historical events and epic characters, blended together with poetic sensitivity in a richly metaphorical, rhythmic narrative would be recognized as Savchenko's authorial signature in cinema.

Focusing on Ukraine's alliance with Russia against the Poles in the seventeenth century, *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi* was supposed to facilitate the process of integration into the Soviet Union of recently "liberated" Western Ukraine, following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Commissioned by the state, the romantic epic about Khmel'nyts'kyi was nonetheless far from being a mediocre and contrived portrayal of the past. On the contrary, it turned out to be a masterpiece of historical film.⁸ It rightfully enjoyed enormous success and

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¹ The genre flourished with films by Grigorii Aleksandrov and Ivan Pyr'ev.

² Stalin described *Garmon'* as trash (*drian'*). See "A driani podobno *Garmon'* bol'she ne stavite?" *Zapiski besed B. Z. Shumiatskogo s I. V. Stalinyim posle kinoprosmotrov. 1934 g.*, *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 61 (2002): 281–346.

³ Tatiana Savchenko, "O samom dorogom," in *Igor' Savchenko—Sbornik statei i vospominanii*, edited by N. I. Luchina and T. T. Derevianko (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1980): 94–97; 96.

⁴ Rostyslav Iurenev, "Igor' Andreevich Savchenko," in *Igor' Savchenko* 3–16; 8. The film was based on the 1934 edition of Arkadii Gaidar's short story "R.V.S."

⁵ For further discussion, see Sulamif Tsybul'nik, "Vozvrashchenie v molodost'," in *Igor' Savchenko* 101–108; 102.

⁶ The film is a screen adaptation of Iurii Ianovs'kyi's 1935 eponymous novel.

⁷ The film was awarded the Stalin Prize, First Class in 1942.

⁸ Starting in the 1930s, the Communist party supported the production of a number of

solidified Savchenko's reputation as Ukraine's major film director after Dovzhenko.⁹

When the Great Patriotic War¹⁰ broke out, Kyiv Film Studio was evacuated to Ashkhabad, Turkmen SSR. In Ashkhabad Savchenko, who had replaced Dovzhenko as the studios' artistic director in 1940, combined administrative work with making films. He directed *Partizany v stepiakh Ukrainy* [Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe, 1942] and several short films for the Fighting Film Collections.¹¹ During the war Savchenko also completed an extremely challenging project at Mosfil'm: *Ivan Nikulin—russkii matros* [The Russian Sailor Ivan Nikulin, 1944], the first Soviet tri-colour film.¹² With the party's grip over the arts tightening during the period of *Zhdanovshchina*,¹³ Savchenko's first post-war film, *Starinnyi vodevil'* [Old-time Vaudeville, 1946],¹⁴ was harshly criticized for failing to meet the ideological standards of Soviet art. Savchenko regained his reputation after the release of *Tretii udar* [The Third Strike, 1948],¹⁵ the first feature documentary (*khudozhestvenno-dokumental'nyi*) film to depict the Red Army's liberation of southern Ukraine

historical epic films to foster the Stalinist revision of Russia's imperial history and promote patriotic ideals. Some creators of these costume dramas did not choose the topics themselves but were assigned this work (for example *Minin and Pozharskii* (1939), co-directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Mikhail Doller; and *Admiral Nakhimov* (1946), also directed by Pudovkin). For detailed discussion of how Pudovkin struggled with these films, see E. Gromov, *Kinooperator Anatolii Golovnia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980) 117–121).

⁹ During the production of *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*, Dovzhenko and Savchenko quarrelled and were no longer on speaking terms, which was detrimental to the idealistic project of creating Ukrainian national cinema. However, it is difficult to compare Dovzhenko and Savchenko, as the former began his career in cinema as a director of silent films (recognized as his major works), while the latter started in sound films. Dovzhenko had a long career in cinema, whereas Savchenko died in 1950 at the age of forty-four before completing his ninth full-length feature film.

¹⁰ The official Soviet name of the German-Soviet war.

¹¹ Released in 1941–1942, the twelve Fighting Film Collections consisted of between two and five short feature and documentary films each, and their goal was to strengthen the population's morale in the most difficult years of the war.

¹² *The Russian Sailor Ivan Nikulin* was created when there was practically no technical support for colour film production. During the discussion of this film, Ivan Pyr'ev noted that since *The Accordion* "Savchenko has always shown boldness in his creative work." RGALI f. 2456, op. 1, d. 958, l. 37.

¹³ Named after party secretary Andrei Zhdanov, *Zhdanovshchina* was a cultural policy of the Soviet Union in the late 1940s which called for stricter government control over art.

¹⁴ The film premiered on 1 July 1947.

¹⁵ After *Old-Time Vaudeville*, Savchenko was demoted to the rank of a film director of the second category and was reinstated into the ranks of the "highest" category only after the completion of *The Third Strike*. See RGALI f. 192, op. 1, d. 16, l. 2–3.

from the Nazis in 1943–1944 and to glorify Stalin as a brilliant military strategist. Savchenko died in 1950, before completing his ninth film, a cinematic biography of Ukraine's national poet Taras Shevchenko.¹⁶

The variety of themes, genres, and techniques featured in Savchenko's work suggests that his films were shaped more by a desire for innovation than stylistic continuity. Indeed, it is impossible to trace a signature philosophical or stylistic approach in all or most of his films.¹⁷ This circumstance explains in part why, despite the quality of his works and his role as one of Kyiv Film Studio's leading directors (as well as a beloved¹⁸ mentor at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), of many prominent future film directors of the 1950s–1980s),¹⁹ Savchenko is little known outside Ukraine and Russia. For a very different reason, Savchenko's work is also rarely discussed in recent studies of Ukrainian national cinema.²⁰ Inspired by Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 and following a general post-colonial approach to re-examining Ukraine's cultural history, such studies have focused on only a small number of Soviet-era films.²¹ Some of these date back to the 1920s–early 1930s, that is, before Soviet cinema was centralized and fell under the party's close supervision. Other films represent Ukraine's poetic cinema of the 1960s–1970s, especially works that were (or could be) considered controversial within Soviet culture.²²

¹⁶ The film was based on Savchenko's original script. After his death, his disciples Vladimir Naumov and Aleksandr Alov completed the film in 1951. For a detailed discussion of the history of this production, see Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 137–142.

¹⁷ In my discussion of Savchenko's work, I deliberately avoid the concept of *auteur* as this concept was developed in the 1950s, after Savchenko's death, in specific reference to the French New Wave. See Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 565–580.

¹⁸ The All-Union Institute of Cinema in Moscow, where Savchenko worked from 1946 until his death in 1950.

¹⁹ Including Sergei Paradzhanov, Vladimir Naumov, Aleksandr Alov, Marlen Khutsiev, and Nikolai Figurovskii.

²⁰ Mykola Shkudria, for example, describes Savchenko as primarily a Russian artist of Jewish origin. Significantly, he omits *The Third Strike* among Savchenko's films. See Mykola Shkudria, *Henii naivnyshchoi proby* (Kyiv: Univer, 2005) 379.

²¹ For example, the films of Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Leonid Osyka, Serhii Paradzhanov, and Iurii Illienko: *Zvenyhora*, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, *Stone Cross*, and *Zakhar Berkut*, respectively. A strong ethnographic component characterizes most of these depictions of Ukraine's past.

²² To be sure, Dovzhenko was regarded as a film director who championed Ukrainian national cinema even in the 1940s. (See, for example, the discussion of *Rus'fil'm* in Valerii Fomin, *Kino na voine: dokumenty i svidetel'stva* (Moscow: Materik, 2005) 531–

Unlike film directors of the politically and socially very different post-Stalinist era, who viewed their art as a medium for communicating messages of ideological subversion, Savchenko turned out to be a poor example of the artist's resistance to Soviet power. Rather, he embraced the role of an artist in the service of the state early in life²³ and produced films well attuned to propaganda purposes, including those that reinforced the Soviet discourse of brotherly friendship between Ukrainians and Russians. Because, on the one hand, Savchenko's films cannot be dismissed as mediocre and, on the other, Savchenko remained loyal to the Soviet ideological artistic project, his work provides valuable material for a study of Stalin-era cinema as *an institution*. More specifically, when examining Savchenko's work in relation to Ukrainian cinema *distinct* from (or within) Soviet cinema, one should consider not only the relatively straightforward issue of thematic and ideological choices (or lack thereof) but also factors that influence a film director's decisions regarding style. Therefore, I will examine *The Third Strike*, the last film Savchenko completed himself and the most significant project of Kyiv Film Studio in the first post-war years. The purpose of this study is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the extent of the Soviet government's interventions in cinema and the relationship between the country's political centre and the republics in the second half of the 1940s. Even though *The Third Strike* is not Savchenko's best work, my choice of this film for examining Ukrainian cinema during High Stalinism is not accidental. The question that underlies my examination is why, given that Savchenko could have continued to evolve as a film artist after the war, *The Third Strike* generally failed artistically compared to his pre-war films. My analysis demonstrates *how* Stalin-era cinema as an institution served to integrate Ukrainian filmmakers into Soviet cinema by fostering Soviet versions of the country's political and social history and by preventing Ukrainian filmmakers from sustaining stylistic practices that might have become foundational to Ukrainian cinema.

THE THIRD STRIKE: A NEED FOR A WAR MYTH

The Soviet press began to spark potential viewers' interest in *The Third Strike* almost nine months before its April 1948 release, during the celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the liberation of Crimea.²⁴ Screenings of the film were

555. Dovzhenko's most famous works, however, date back to the late 1920s and early 1930s, whereas those produced in the period when cinema became a Stalinist institution par excellence are either viewed as his weaker films or are praised for the elements of the director's concealed subversion of the dominant ideology.

²³ Describing his work as a theatre director, Savchenko wrote that his theatre was "Komsomol agitprop." See "Savchenko," in *Kak ia stal rezhisserom* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1946) 255. On Savchenko's politically engaged films, see also Aleksandr Makovskii, "Kino vverkh nogami," in *Igor' Savchenko* 78; 80.

²⁴ Vladimir Kozhevnikov, "Tretii udar," *Kultura i zhizn'* 31 July 1947; RGALI f. 192, op.

accompanied by historical exhibits (set up in the lobbies of movie theatres), meetings of the film crew with viewers, and group discussions of the film.²⁵ Millions of people saw *The Third Strike*: In the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, it premiered on 29 April 1948 and by 3 May 1948 more than 100,000 people had watched the film.²⁶ Considering the fact that the population of Kyiv was then approximately 700,000, one can assert that most adults and teenagers²⁷ had seen the film by the end of May 1948. Overwhelmingly positive reviews of this “monumental” work of art²⁸ appeared in all central and many local newspapers and magazines across the Soviet Union.²⁹ The film won Savchenko the Stalin

1, d. 94, l. 1. Less than a month later, *Literaturnaia gazeta* also published an article on the script for *The Third Strike*, calling it an “historical drama” about the liberation of southern Ukraine. See M. Galaktionov, “Nemerknushchaia slava,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* 23 August 1947. Targeting a younger audience, *Moskovskii komsomolets* reported in October 1947 that in August, Savchenko began filming scenes of the crossing of Lake Sivash and battles in the Crimean city of Armiansk. The article explained the strategic importance of these battles and stressed the film’s authenticity: “Many infantry soldiers, sappers, artillery soldiers, and pontoon platoons that are now helping to film *The Third Strike*, crossed the Sivash themselves in the fall of 1943; storming the Turkish Wall and liberating Sevastopol’.” See V. Dneprov, “Tretii udar: Na s'emkakh fil'ma,” *Moskovskii komsomolets* 30 October 1947. In addition to central newspapers, local newspapers, including those in Siberia and the Far East, reported on the production of *The Third Strike* (See, for example, *Buriatsko-Mongol'skaia pravda* 16 November 1947).

²⁵ An editorial devoted to the celebration of Stalin’s seventieth anniversary listed *The Third Strike* among the best Soviet films to depict the main stages of Soviet history. See the unsigned article “Nash rodnoi Stalin,” *Iskusstvo kino* 6 (1949): 1–3.

²⁶ On 1–2 May 1948 alone, 50,000 people saw the film in Kyiv. See the unsigned article, “Bol'shoi uspek fil'ma ‘Tretii udar,’” *Pravda Ukrainy* 3 May 1948.

²⁷ Some Komsomol newspapers had prepared their readers for the release of *The Third Strike* by reporting on the film’s production months before it was completed. Following the film’s release, some reviews targeted teenaged viewers. See, for example, the unsigned review “Tretii udar,” *Pionerskaia pravda* 7 May 1948.

²⁸ B. Iudin, “Blestiashchaia stranitsa istorii,” *Trud* 14 May 1948.

²⁹ See, for example, Colonel V. Rudnits'kii, “Tretii udar,” *Kul'tura i zhizn'* 30 April 1948; N. Khodza, “Tretii udar,” *Leningradskaia pravda* 28 April 1948; “Tretii udar,” *Volga* (Astrakhan') 30 April 1948; S. Zavalkov, “Tretii udar,” *L'ovskaia pravda* 29 April 1948; S. Borin and V. Levinson, “Tretii udar,” *Udmurtskaia pravda* (Izhevsk) 30 April 1948; Vadim Kozhevnikov, “Tretii udar,” *Pravda* 3 May 1948; L. Pavlov, “Tretii udar,” *Severnyi rabochii* (Iaroslavl') 4 May 1948; S. Iudkevich, “Tretii udar,” *Kommunar* (Tula) 5 May 1948; V. Manion, “Tretii udar,” *Pskovskaia pravda* 7 May 1948; A. Dorokhin, “Tretii udar,” *Gudok* 7 May 1948; A. Krivitskii, “Tretii udar,” *Krasnaia zvezda* 7 May 1948; K. Korolev, “Tretii udar,” *Krasnaia Mordoviia* (Saransk) 8 May 1948; Grigorii Ivanov, “Tretii udar,” *Kommuna* (Voronezh) 8 May 1948; A. Sokolov, “Tretii udar,” *Sovetskaia Estoniia* 9 May 1948; “Tretii udar,” *Kommunar* (Rogachevo) 9 May 1948; Major N. Loginov, “Tretii udar,” *Pravda severa* (Arkhangel'sk) 9 May 1948; G. Tsvetkov, “Tretii udar,” *Znamia* (Kaluga) 9 May 1948; A. Vorontsov, “Tretii udar,” *Kaliningradskaia pravda* 9 May 1948; Unsigned, “‘Tretii udar’: Novyi uspek

Prize, Second Class in 1949 and a number of other awards at international film festivals.³⁰

The film's storyline alternates between the front line in the south and the Kremlin. As General Tolbukhin's army (the Fourth Ukrainian Front) enters Northern Taurida in October 1943, Stalin outlines his strategic plan. The Soviet victory in Crimea, he explains, is politically important, for it would weaken Germany's influence on its allies: Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey (the latter is depicted in the film as Germany's secret ally). Stalin orders Tolbukhin's troops to cease attacking German fortifications, which are described in the film (in the spirit of the Cold War) as being stronger than the Atlantic Wall in Normandy. While Tolbukhin's troops have besieged the Nazis in Crimea, other units of the Red Army strike in Odesa and liberate parts of southern Ukraine. By spring 1944, when Tolbukhin renews his attack in Crimea, the Nazis surrender quickly. Overall, *The Third Strike* was meant to explain to viewers the significance of Soviet victories, depict the superiority of the Soviet strategic command over that of the enemy,³¹ underscore the country's moral and material might, and emphasize the Soviet people's unprecedented ability and readiness for heroism and their loyalty to Lenin and Stalin.³² The film was also supposed to instil respect and admiration for the Red Army and its commanders, particularly Stalin, "the architect of Soviet victories."³³

The film's combat scenes, praised by critics and viewers alike for their accurate depiction of the war³⁴ (the storming of the Turkish Wall, the crossing of Sivash Lake,³⁵ and the battle for Sapun-gora Ridge in Sevastopol'³⁶), are framed as examples of victories achieved with minimal casualties, which, in the words of Army General Zakharov, was exactly what Stalin ordered.³⁷ The need to represent Stalin and his commanders as strategists who above all wished to

sovetskogo kinoiskusstva," *Shcherbakovskaia pravda* 9 May 1948; Iu. Solov'ev, "Tretii udar," *Stalinskoe znamia* (Riazan') 9 May 1948; K. Kozlov and G. Palkin, "Velikaia epopeia russkoi slavy," *Zvezda Altaia* (Gorno-Altaiisk) 29 May 1948.

³⁰ Among these were the prize for best film script at the Mariánské Lázně Film Festival (1948) and the Grand Prix at the Zlín International Film Festival (1948).

³¹ V. Zhdan, "Vazhneishaia tema sovetskogo kinoiskusstva," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1948): 6.

³² Vladimir Kozhevnikov, "Tretii udar," *Kul'tura i zhizn'* 31 July 1947. See also RGALI f. 192, op. 1, d. 94, l. 1.

³³ N. N. "Tretii udar," *Put' k pobede* (Mytishchi) 29 April 1948.

³⁴ G. Ostromukhov, "Govoriat zritel'i (obsuzhdenie fil'ma v rabochem klube Moskovskogo podshipnikovogo zavoda im. Kaganovicha 7 May 1948)," *Trud* 14 May 1948.

³⁵ A. Solov'ev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," *Iskusstvo kino* 4 (1949): 17–20; 18.

³⁶ A. Borshchagovskii, "Rozhdenie novogo," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* 1 May 1948.

³⁷ Army General G. Zakharov, "Vypolniaia prikaz Stalina," *Vostochno-sibirskaia pravda* (Irkutsk) 9 May 1948.

win a military battle with minimal casualties played a crucial role in the selection of the Crimean operation as the topic for a war film to be produced in Ukraine. In comparison to the numerous strategic and operational disasters that took place during the war (including the surrender of Kyiv in 1941 and its recapture in 1943), the liberation of southern Ukraine and Crimea were favourable topics for a narrative that was designed to glorify the Red Army and its commanders. The film underscores the point that, whereas it took the Nazis 250 days to occupy Crimea at a cost of thousands of casualties, it took the Red Army only a few weeks to liberate Crimea.³⁸ Zakharov, the film's most involved military consultant and also a character in the film, explained how, thanks to Tolbukhin's meticulous planning of the operation³⁹ as well as the troops' rigorous training, casualties among the Guards under Zakharov's command stood at 260 Soviet soldiers versus more than 7,000 Germans at the end of one crucial day of combat for the Turkish Wall. Equally brilliant, Zakharov wrote, were other Soviet military operations in Crimea, including the recapture of Sevastopol', where for every fallen Soviet soldier there were thirty to forty German fatalities.⁴⁰

It would be simplistic to view productions such as *The Third Strike* as films that were imposed on post-war audiences, which no one enjoyed but nonetheless had to watch, unlike the truly popular "trophy movies"⁴¹ (at times comprising more than 60 percent of Soviet movie theatre releases in 1945–1952). In the absence of academic or popular accounts of the overall course of the war (wartime newspaper articles could not fulfill this task), *The Third Strike* (which, along with glorifying military commanders, was also a tribute to ordinary soldiers) generated genuine interest as one of the first mass-produced cinematic explanations of how important battles against Hitler were won.⁴² Typically, after

³⁸ This point was repeated in many reviews. See, for example, A. Lopin, "Tretii udar," *Shcherbakovskaia pravda* 11 May 1948.

³⁹ Savchenko relied on Zakharov's description of Tolbukhin. See RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 12.

⁴⁰ In his review of the film, Zakharov claimed that the breakthrough at the Perekop Isthmus was an exemplary military operation that could serve as a role model for training troops to win with minimal casualties. See Zakharov, "Vypolniaia prikaz Stalina."

⁴¹ Western films that were brought to the Soviet Union from Germany in 1945.

⁴² Instructive in this regard is the following example of the population's post-war interest in the history of the war. On 31 July 1947 *Kul'tura i zhizn'*, a Moscow-based newspaper, published an article about an illegal reproduction of a map titled "The Course of the Great Patriotic War: The Red Army's Offensives in 1941–1945." The map in question was created by two professors of the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow and was sold through the Book-Selling Association of State Publishers (KOGIZ), the central supplier of all academic libraries. Seeing how many people stopped to look at the map displayed in KOGIZ's windows and inquired if they could buy it, its creators organized its illegal reproduction and sale. In 1946–1947, 765 maps were produced. Representatives of

the film's release, viewers asked for still more depictions of the war. Some reviews pointed out that the film had failed to portray the role of political commissars and officers who had commanded smaller military units, such as battalions and companies.⁴³ Other viewers complained that the film did not show the importance of Soviet partisans and the underground in Crimea, or the contribution of women to the war effort,⁴⁴ or the roles of the Separate Coast Army (attacking at Kerch), the Navy, and the Air Force in liberating Crimea.⁴⁵ In response to such criticisms, Savchenko explained that it was impossible to fit everything into a two-hour film and that many upcoming movies would depict these aspects of the war effort.⁴⁶ It is impossible to say whether the public's desire to learn more about the course of the war was inspired by war mythology, but it is clear that this desire was exploited by the Communist party, whose supervision of projects such as *The Third Strike* contributed significantly to the formation of a canonical mythological narrative of the Great Patriotic War.

THE PITFALLS OF FILMING A STALINIST WAR EPIC

Stalin and his top Red Army commanders began to be profiled as great military strategists after the victory at Stalingrad.⁴⁷ Stalin publicly described the Red Army's efforts to liberate the Soviet Union from the Nazi invaders as a co-ordinated series of ten military "strikes" for the first time on 6 November 1944.⁴⁸ It took about a year and a half for party leaders to devise a plan to produce a series of epic films that would recount these ten victorious strikes and chart the overall course of the war. These narratives were to combine the

various state institutions, including libraries, schools, and colleges, spent about 2 million rubles on these maps, each copy costing between 1,500 and 5,000 rubles. What is of particular interest in this story is not so much the inefficiency of state publishers, which could have manufactured several thousand copies of this map within two or three months at a cost of 15 rubles per copy, or the two Soviet professors' dream of a free market, but the public's curiosity about the history of the war. See M. Shcherbakov and V. Seliverstov, "Predpriimchivye izdateli," *Kul'tura i zhizn'* 31 July 1947.

⁴³ E. Pavlov, "Tretii udar: Novyi fil'm Kievskoi kinostudii," *Pravda Ukrainy* 18 April 1948.

⁴⁴ Given the post-war demographics, it may be suggested that most of the film's audience consisted of teenagers, women, and the elderly. *The Third Strike* showed almost no women, even in episodic roles.

⁴⁵ Colonel E. Boltin, "Tretii udar," *Krasnyi flot* 30 April 1948.

⁴⁶ Igor' Savchenko, "Nachalo bol'shoi raboty," *Trud* 14 May 1948.

⁴⁷ Following the liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine in April 1944, Zhukov, Vasilevskii, and Stalin became the first three recipients of the Soviet Union's highest military award, the Order of Victory, established in November 1943.

⁴⁸ Stalin addressed a meeting of the Moscow Council of People's Deputies on the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Great October Revolution. See M. Belobokov and O. Evgeniev, "Tretii udar," *Prizyv* (Vladimir) 9 May 1948.

emotional power of a feature film with the authenticity of a documentary.⁴⁹ Following the project's approval by the Central Committee, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR (17 June 1946) announced the start of work on the scripts of these feature documentary (*khudozhestvenno-dokumental'nye*) films.⁵⁰ The scriptwriters and film directors of the first films were selected soon afterwards. On 19 August 1946 Savchenko told his colleagues at a meeting at Kyiv Film Studio that he was about to begin work on a new film, admitting that he feared the task because there was still no script and because only two films, Mikhail Chiaureli's *Kliatva* [The Oath, 1945] and Fridrikh Ermler's *Velikii perelom* [The Great Turning Point, 1946] had set any precedent for the project.⁵¹

At the time no one knew anything about the new genre.⁵² Savchenko's mention of fear, however, was more than an expression of his awareness of the new project's challenges. In the context of the Soviet authorities' crackdown on "Ukrainian nationalism," fear was a sentiment familiar to many Ukrainian artists and politicians. Savchenko's colleagues remembered well how two years earlier Dovzhenko was "cut into pieces"⁵³ and accused of Ukrainian nationalism for his depiction of the war in *Ukraina v ohni* [Ukraine in Flames, 1943]. Following the infamous discussion of Dovzhenko's script first in Moscow⁵⁴ and then in Kyiv,⁵⁵ Ukraine's party and artistic elite (initially supportive of *Ukraine in Flames*) quickly dissociated themselves from Dovzhenko. The message from Moscow was clear: ethnically and locally specific depictions of wartime tragedy were unacceptable. Savchenko's mention of Chiaureli's *The Oath* and Ermler's *The Great Turning Point* as the only films that could serve as models for *The Third Strike* indicates that this message had been understood. *The Third Strike* would not be a film about the specifically Ukrainian experience of the war. Rather, the assignment to produce *The Third Strike* was perceived in Kyiv as a chance for Ukrainian artists to rehabilitate themselves by creating a narrative that would contribute to the discourse of the Soviet peoples' wartime unity and prove Ukrainian intellectuals' loyalty to Russia. The task of making *The Third Strike* a success became even more urgent when, a few weeks after Savchenko's presentation of his new film project at the Kyiv Film Studio, the newspapers *Kul'tura i zhizn'* [Culture and Life] and *Literaturnaia gazeta* [Literary Gazette]

⁴⁹ The key characteristics of the new film genre were described in Solov'ev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," 19.

⁵⁰ RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 468 (February–December 1946), l. 158.

⁵¹ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 15 (19 August 1946), l. 10.

⁵² Solov'ev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," 17.

⁵³ "Oleksandr Dovzhenko: 'V Kremle menia razrubili na kuski [...],' " in Fomin 381–394.

⁵⁴ In late January–early February 1944.

⁵⁵ At a meeting of the Ukrainian Writers' Union on 12 March 1944.

published the Central Committee's resolution banning the second part of Leonid Lukov's film *Bol'shaia zhizn'* [Big Life] because it "incorrectly" depicted the postwar Donbas region of eastern Ukraine as insufficiently modernized.⁵⁶ One can only speculate that the assignment to *The Third Strike* of Mikhail Kirillov, the cameraman of Lukov's banned film, increased the anxiety of those who were to work on *The Third Strike*.

Thus, from the very start, the artistic freedom of *The Third Strike*'s creators was even more limited than usual for the cinema of High Stalinism. Indeed, the party's struggle against Ukrainian nationalism, Savchenko's personal interest in regaining his reputation at a time when his *Old-Time Vaudeville* was about to be subjected to harsh criticism, Kirillov's interest in making his latest project a success, early deadlines for completing the film, and the supervision of this film production by the military and the party all played a role in shaping *The Third Strike*. Furthermore, since this movie was slated to become part of a film series touted as an enormous chronicle of the war, the image of the liberation of southern Ukraine and Crimea depicted in *The Third Strike* was designed to be logically linked to preceding strategic operations as well as to those that would follow. It was thus expected that *The Third Strike* would refer to the Battle of Stalingrad, partially depict the second strike (the struggle for Kerch and the liberation of Odesa),⁵⁷ and refer to subsequent military operations that became possible thanks to the successful liberation of southern Ukraine and Crimea. The challenges that scriptwriters faced in meeting the party's expectations were so severe that of the four commissioned scripts,⁵⁸ only two, Nikolai Virta's *The Battle of Stalingrad* and Arkadii Perventsev's *The Third Strike*, were ever completed and filmed.⁵⁹ Of these, *The Battle of Stalingrad*, directed by Vladimir Petrov, was considered more of a priority. Because it depicted the turning point

⁵⁶ The resolution was signed 4 September 1946 and published in Moscow and Kyiv on 10 September 1946 and 14 September 1946, respectively. Incidentally, Lukov's film, also set in Ukraine, was a sequel to the film created at the Kyiv Film Studio.

⁵⁷ Army General Antonov recommended that the depiction of these operations be included in the film script. See RGALI f. 1992. op. 1, d. 95 (24 January 1947), l. 1.

⁵⁸ Some critics include Mikhail Chiaureli's *The Fall of Berlin* (1949) among these feature documentary films. See, for example, Solov'ev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," 18 and I. Bol'shakov, "Sovetskaia kinematografiia v novom godu," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1952): 13. I treat *The Fall of Berlin* separately, however, as Chiaureli enjoyed special status within Stalinist cinema. As on several earlier projects, he collaborated with the writer Petr Pavlenko on *The Fall*'s script and was not rushed in his work, nor did he follow the general guidelines for feature documentary films. Unlike Savchenko, Chiaureli was in charge of the casting for his film and, as was also the case with his earlier films, he invited Mikhail Gelovani to play the role of Stalin.

⁵⁹ The script for *The Defence of Leningrad* was never completed. For more detailed discussion, see Solov'ev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," 17–18. Virta's *Tainaia voina: Piatyi udar* [Secret War: The Fifth Strike], which he worked on after completing *The Battle of Stalingrad*, was never filmed.

of the war and took place in the city that bore Stalin's name, Petrov's film was regarded as ideologically more significant than *The Third Strike*. Therefore, Perventsev and Savchenko were to co-ordinate their work with Virta and Petrov. Even though Perventsev finished his script before Virta completed his and even though *The Third Strike* went into production before Petrov's film, it was Savchenko and not Petrov who had to read the script of the other film in order to ensure that *The Third Strike* did not repeat scenes from *The Battle of Stalingrad*.⁶⁰

The requirement to co-ordinate his work with work on *The Battle of Stalingrad* was the kiss of death for Savchenko's directing style.⁶¹ Petrov's aesthetic preferences differed crucially from Savchenko's. Before becoming a film director, Petrov was an actor, who had worked mostly in theatre. Most of the films he directed later were screen adaptations of plays.⁶² Petrov criticized the "formalists," such as Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg,⁶³ and unlike them (and, one may add, also unlike Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Savchenko⁶⁴), Petrov valued actors above all. He claimed that the individual's inner world could be shown "only thanks to the actor's skills, and not [through] a combination of montage and other elements of cinematic techniques."⁶⁵ He welcomed acting that was typical of theatre, with its slow, well-enunciated

⁶⁰ The Artistic Council of the Kyiv Film Studio discussed Savchenko's production script for *The Third Strike* in May 1947, when Virta's literary script for *The Battle of Stalingrad* was broadcasted on the radio. The Council recommended cutting the scene with Stalin in *The Third Strike* because there was a similar scene in Virta's script. RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 2.

⁶¹ *The Battle of Stalingrad*'s weak dramatic composition was criticized even in 1948–1949. See, for example, Soloviev, "Puti razvitiia zhanra," 19. Reinforcing the idea that Stalin knew everything about the military operation in Stalingrad, his character repeated the lines "of course," "it is clear," and "clearly" in each discussion of the battle. One scene shows Stalin as a clairvoyant, who, glancing at a map in his Kremlin study, "sees" another scene at Stalingrad. Throughout the film, combat episodes are framed as illustrations to points made by Stalin or announced by the voice-over (legendary Soviet announcer Iurii Levitan) from a giant chronicle of the Great Patriotic War.

⁶² Vladimir Petrov, "Vladimir Petrov," in *Kak ia stal rezhisserom* 172.

⁶³ Petrov 177.

⁶⁴ Savchenko admired experimental theatre and was fascinated by the avant-garde work of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Savchenko integrated—gradually and to a certain extent—some acting techniques of realist theatre into his work, but he always continued to advocate the idea of a complex "whole," comprised of composition, lighting, music, soundtrack, camera work, montage, and other purely cinematic techniques. See Mikhail Zharov, "Rezhisser—Akter—Uzy družhby," in *Igor' Savchenko* 40–57.

⁶⁵ Petrov 175–176. The result of Petrov's treatment of these elements as if they supplemented an actor's work was that the music and photography in *The Battle of Stalingrad*, even though they were excellent in and of themselves, were not well integrated within the various scenes.

speech,⁶⁶ and dreamed of making a film in which all of the actors would be from the Moscow Art Theatre.⁶⁷ The need for Savchenko to co-ordinate his film with Petrov's and the requirement that in his work he follow certain aesthetic decisions made originally by Petrov, explains why *The Third Strike* turned out to be a stylistically uneven film.

SUPERVISION OF THE PROJECT

The significance ascribed to *The Third Strike* can be gauged from the level of support its filmmakers had from the military and the Communist party. The film had a very generous budget.⁶⁸ Never before in the history of Soviet filmmaking had a film director been able to formally negotiate for the employment of an entire class of students from VGIK, to work as assistant film directors and actors. Released from the classroom for eight months, they learned the art of cinema as interns on *The Third Strike*.⁶⁹ To ensure the smooth progress of the project from beginning to end, Marshal Voroshilov issued a memo stating that the films *The Third Strike* and *The Battle of Stalingrad* were very important and that party and state institutions were to help filmmakers working on these projects.⁷⁰ The memo helped considerably, both during the preparation of the script and during film production.

Savchenko gratefully recalled that the military helped "tremendously" with the film script. Although the depicted events had taken place only a few years earlier, as of 1946–1947 no books about them had yet been written.⁷¹ "For twenty-five days," Savchenko explained, officers of the General Staff worked on reconstructing the course of events.⁷² Many dialogues in the film were based on ciphered cables. Marshal Vasilevskii, the headquarters (*Stavka*) representative of the Fourth Ukrainian Front during the liberation of Crimea, supervised the initial

⁶⁶ Starting in the late 1930s, the script was considered the most important part of making a film.

⁶⁷ Petrov 175–176.

⁶⁸ In August 1946 Savchenko was given carte blanche for any film-related expenses pertaining to trips or meeting film consultants (interviews with marshals in Moscow, veterans of the battle who resided elsewhere, locals who had witnessed the events of 1943–1944, and so forth). RGALI f. 1992, op.1, d. 15 (19 August 1946), l. 10.

⁶⁹ Probably in consultation with party authorities, Aleksandr Gorskii (Director of Kyiv Film Studio) and Anatolii Golovnia (president of VGIK) supported Savchenko's idea that his whole class be released from the Institute for an internship and be hired for the film. This experiment created a precedent for similar internships for VGIK students in the future. See Latif Faiziev, "Polnovodnaia reka," in *Igor' Savchenko* 31–34.

⁷⁰ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 17.

⁷¹ RGALI f. 92, op. 1, d. 97, l. 1.

⁷² RGALI f. 92, op. 1, d. 97, l. 1.

stage of script preparation.⁷³ Aside from top military commanders involved in the supervision of the project, generals and officers whose troops took part in the liberation of Crimea also gave their advice to Perventsev and Savchenko.⁷⁴ Additionally, in preparation for filming, Savchenko was given an opportunity to talk to almost all the Nazi commanders captured in Crimea in 1944.⁷⁵

In filming the epic scenes of the crossing of Sivash Lake, the storming of the Turkish Wall, and the battle for Sevastopol',⁷⁶ Savchenko used the actual troops of the Taurida Military District.⁷⁷ Ordinary citizens were equally excited about the project. In the Crimean town of Alushta, for instance, members of the Komsomol and the Communist party took part in scenes of *The Third Strike* without any financial compensation.⁷⁸ Less enthusiastic, one can speculate, were German POWs, who were asked to restore the Perekop Isthmus fortifications that had been used by the Nazis,⁷⁹ so that each shot in Savchenko's film would be authentic.⁸⁰

Army General Aleksei Antonov, a key figure in the General Headquarters during the war and a member of the *Stavka* in 1945,⁸¹ provided valuable feedback on the film script in January 1947. His recommendations concerned not only corrections to military terminology but also to the entire approach to representing Red Army commanders and the Nazis. While Antonov pointed out that Stalin's role in the operation had to be presented fully, he also criticized the depiction of the front and army commanders, who were portrayed in the script as if they mechanically executed orders from above and as if their methods of command were similar to battalion commanders. He recommended a fuller depiction of the role of Marshal Vasilevskii in the operation as well as Tolbukhin's creative work as the front's commander.⁸² Antonov also criticized the script's portrayal of "the strong and dangerous enemy" as if they were "circus clowns." In his opinion, scenes showing German soldiers performing

⁷³ Arkadii Perventsev, "Iskrometnyi talant," in *Igor' Savchenko* 85–90.

⁷⁴ RGALI f. 92, op. 1, d. 97, l. 1.

⁷⁵ Perventsev 88.

⁷⁶ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 16.

⁷⁷ Then under the command of Army General Zakharov.

⁷⁸ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 17.

⁷⁹ Iu. Kapralov, "Tretii udar," *Smena* 30 April 1948.

⁸⁰ Even a partial restoration of the Nazi defence line was a tremendous task, for it was densely interspersed with pillboxes and in some places it was thirty-five kilometres deep. See Colonel Bakanov, "Tretii udar," *Izvestiia* 6 May 1948.

⁸¹ Like Vasilevskii and Voroshilov, Antonov appears in several episodes. In 1943–1945 Antonov was one of Stalin's key military advisors. He was the only commander (of nineteen cavaliers) with the rank of general who was awarded the Order of Victory, the Soviet Union's highest military award.

⁸² RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 95 (24 January 1947), l. 2.

handstands would spark indignation among people “who had worked very hard in order to break a stubborn, cunning, and serious opponent in combat.”⁸³ Even though the idea of showing how the Germans performed handstands may be traced back to the Nazi general, Schörner, who, while in Soviet captivity, refused to speak to anyone and passed the time by practising handstands,⁸⁴ Antonov’s objections to presenting this behaviour in the film are important for understanding the aesthetics of the Stalinist war epic. The enemy could be mocked in movies aimed at raising people’s morale in 1941–1944. However, the task of glorifying the Red Army’s accomplishments after the war implied the depiction of a serious adversary. The triumph over a cruel and dangerous enemy would especially ennoble the victors. That said, even though Perventsev and Savchenko tried to follow Antonov’s recommendations in their work, in the film’s final cut German commanders (especially Schörner and Hitler) still looked like caricatures.

Antonov also suggested that Perventsev and Savchenko find a subtler way of presenting Turkey’s role in the Soviet-German struggle for Crimea. He recommended that the filmmakers consult the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this. It is unclear whether such a consultation ever took place. Regrettably, however, a scene in which Turkish diplomats express their country’s interests in Crimea and drink wine at General Erwin Jänecke’s reception as if they were non-Muslim became part of the film. Despite repeated criticisms of this scene during the film’s production, it also had its supporters, who believed that it helped demonstrate the political significance of the Red Army’s struggle.⁸⁵ This was a way of saying that the scene expressed the Soviet Union’s Cold War position.⁸⁶ The scene, unsurprisingly, was not well received in the West. French censors, for example, insisted that *The Third Strike* could be shown in France only if the scene with the Turks at Jänecke’s ball was cut.⁸⁷

Top-level support for the film was, however, a result of the party and the military’s efforts to control depictions of the war. If, at the start of work on the script, Savchenko may still have had some illusions about what he was free to

⁸³ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 95 (24 January 1947), l. 2.

⁸⁴ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 14. Schörner remained an unrepentant Nazi after the war.

⁸⁵ See the discussion of the production script in Kyiv: RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 2–6.

⁸⁶ This position was reflected in a number of Soviet war films made in the 1940s and 1950s (for example, Ermiler’s *The Great Turning Point*; Petrov’s *The Battle of Stalingrad*, Aleksandrov’s *Vstrecha na El’be* [The Meeting on the Elbe River, 1949]; Mikhail Romm’s *Sekretnaia missiia* [Secret Mission, 1950] and others).

⁸⁷ In 1950 a request to cut this scene was forwarded to Mikhail Suslov, Secretary of the Central Committee, who then asked Minister of Soviet Cinematography, Ivan Bolshakov to decide himself whether the cut could be made. See RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History) f. 17, op. 132, d. 429, l. 1–2.

do as an artist, by the time the draft of the script was submitted for review, all of his illusions had evaporated.⁸⁸ After the Artistic Council of the Ministry of Cinematography reviewed the scripts for *The Battle of Stalingrad* and *The Third Strike* in November 1946, Georgii Aleksandrov, head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation at the Central Committee, reported to Andrei Zhdanov on both scripts on 6 December 1946.⁸⁹ Perventsev's script was then forwarded for review to the military. On 24 January 1947 Antonov sent his feedback on *The Third Strike* to Mikhail Kalatozov, Deputy Minister of Cinematography of the USSR. Although Antonov's comments were helpful, his manner of communicating his recommendations reinforced the idea that Soviet artists were to serve the state and that the military controlled the way the army was to be depicted. The fact that Antonov wrote his comments on the official letterhead of the General Headquarters and forwarded them to Kalatozov instead of sending them to Perventsev and Savchenko demonstrated how the Stalinist hierarchy worked.⁹⁰ It underscored the idea that cinema was to serve the purpose defined from above, while responsibility for the successful completion of Stalinist war epics lay not so much with individual scriptwriters and film directors but, rather, with the entire Soviet film industry.

THE DEPICTION OF STALIN AND SOVIET COMMANDERS

The Third Strike features many fictional characters (mostly soldiers)⁹¹ and various Soviet and Nazi historical figures who appear under their real names. Military commanders were to be depicted with "tact and respect." This requirement presented a challenge for an artist who also wished to be creative in his depictions of the army. Having read the production script, Savchenko's colleagues noted that of all the Soviet marshals and generals they could only remember Stalin and Tolbukhin; other commanders were depersonalized,⁹² and it was impossible to tell one from the other.⁹³ This was a fair criticism: in *The Third Strike* historical figures on the Soviet side are static characters that appear in the dramaturgically weakest scenes, and the information they exchange is often meant for the viewer instead of being justified in terms of diegesis.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Perventsev recalled that during his and Savchenko's first visit to Marshal Vasilevskii, Savchenko was unimpressed with the marshal's office and remarked enthusiastically that in the film Vasilevskii's office would look much better. Vasilevskii took exception to his remark. See Perventsev 87–88.

⁸⁹ RGASPI f.17, op. 125, d. 468 (February–December 1946), l. 158. The report was sent on 6 December 1946.

⁹⁰ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 95, l. 1.

⁹¹ Several were played by Savchenko's VGIK students.

⁹² RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 4.

⁹³ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 8.

⁹⁴ RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 1.

These problems with dramaturgy were further exacerbated by the casting, acting, and photography. It seems ironic that in *The Third Strike* the most frequently featured Soviet generals and marshals are of stocky build. Moreover, they are mostly shown immobile (standing or sitting). Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between Tolbukhin and Vasilevskii, who often appear in the same shot together and look like heavy, “no-neck” figures barely capable of turning their heads to look at each other. The idea may have been to convey the impression of stability, reason, and sober analysis in order to distinguish Soviet commanders from impulsive Nazi generals. However, the abundance of eye-level medium shots and close-ups that barely show any background in scenes depicting Soviet commanders produced the effect of monotonous narration annoyingly similar to what one sees in the theatre and in television films.⁹⁵ By contrast, the Nazi commanders depicted in the film are mostly thin or fit; they speak faster, move a lot, and appear in a variety of locations.

Figure 1. Soviet military commanders, Army General Fedor Tolbukhin and Marshal Aleksandr Vasilevskii. *The Third Strike* (1948).⁹⁶



⁹⁵ For more on the art of photography, see Anatolii Golovnia, *O kinooperatorskom masterstve* (Moscow: VGIK, 1970) 26.

⁹⁶ Screen shot from *Tretii udar* [The Third Strike, 1948], directed by Ihor Savchenko, Kyiv Film Studio: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1npG43ngGDA>> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

Savchenko had no control over casting of the actors for certain roles. Since some of the characters were the same in both *The Third Strike* and *The Battle of Stalingrad* and because these films were to become part of a series of films, it was decided to use the same actors for military leaders who figured in both films. Aleksei Dikii played Stalin, Iurii Shumskii played the part of Marshal Vasilevskii, and Viktor Stanitsyn portrayed Tolbukhin. Savchenko had to offer Nikolai Bogoliubov the role of Marshal Voroshilov because Bogoliubov had already appeared in this role in three other Soviet films and was very familiar to film audiences.⁹⁷ There is no documentary evidence that Savchenko objected to the casting of any of these actors for their respective roles. However, there is enough circumstantial evidence to believe he could hardly have been pleased by the heavy presence of realist theatre actors, four of whom came from the Moscow Art Theatre (MKhAT). The point is not so much that for the lead roles in his previous films Savchenko had employed dramatic actors capable of creating dynamic, larger-than-life characters,⁹⁸ but that the actors whom Savchenko had to film in the roles of Soviet marshals and generals did not coordinate well with those he had chosen for other roles in *The Third Strike*.

There can hardly be any definitive answer as to why a Russian actor, with no actual resemblance to Stalin, instead of Georgian actor Mikhail Gelovani, who had played Stalin in several films and theatrical stage productions since 1938, was chosen for the role of Stalin in *The Third Strike* and *The Battle of Stalingrad*.⁹⁹ Choosing a Russian to play Stalin may have been linked to the aging dictator's desire to be depicted on screen without his Georgian accent. Such an explanation may seem viable if one takes into account Stalin's dislike (in comparison to other Bolshevik leaders) of public speaking and "embarrassment" because of his accent. However, a more important reason for choosing a Russian actor for the role of Stalin may be due to a change in the conceptualization of Soviet patriotism. At the end of the war, Stalin explicitly emphasized the leading role of the Russian nation, among other Soviet nations in general,¹⁰⁰ for winning the war against Nazism.¹⁰¹ It is hardly accidental that

⁹⁷ Bogoliubov also played Voroshilov in Mikhail Romm's *Lenin v 1918 godu* [Lenin in 1918, 1939], the Vasiliev brothers' *Oborona Tsaritsyna* [Defence of Tsaritsyn, 1942], and Leonid Lukov's *Aleksandr Parkhomenko* (1942).

⁹⁸ For example, Nikolai Mordvinov and Mikhail Zharov in *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*, Stepan Shkurat and Lev Sverdlin in *The Horsemen*, and Konstantin Nassonov, who played the commissar in *The Ballad of Cossack Golota*.

⁹⁹ After the release of *The Third Strike*, starting in fall 1948, Dikii also played the part of Stalin in the Moscow Maly Drama Theatre production of Perventsev's play *Iuzhnyi uzel* [The Southern Junction], which was based on Perventsev's script.

¹⁰⁰ For more details, see Evgenii Margolit, "Problema mnogoiazychiia v rannem sovetskom zvukovom kino (1930–1935)," in *Sovetskaia vlast' i media*, edited by Hans Gunter and Sabina Hansgen (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2006) 385–386.

¹⁰¹ On 24 May 1945, at a reception for military commanders at the Kremlin, Stalin

Mark Donskoi's *Nepokorennye* [The Unvanquished, 1945], a Kyiv Film Studio production depicting the wartime experience of a Ukrainian family, became a celebration of Russian (Soviet) national pride about the wartime victory. In *The Unvanquished*, which is clearly set in Ukraine, the characters (some of whom wear embroidered Ukrainian shirts and speak with a Ukrainian accent) never use the word "Ukrainian" and refer to their land and to themselves as "Russian," thus affirming Russian patriotism.¹⁰² Similarly, Petrov's *The Battle of Stalingrad* presents the victory at Stalingrad as a Russian victory and the giant war-chronicle shown during the narration of the film is lavishly decorated in the pseudo-folk Russian style.¹⁰³

The decision that Alexei Dikii would play Stalin in *The Battle of Stalingrad* (and, as a result, also in *The Third Strike*) was probably made by Petrov in consultation with the party leadership. A few years earlier Dikii had played Field Marshal Kutuzov in Petrov's award-winning *Kutuzov* (1944),¹⁰⁴ a screen adaptation of a play that had also starred Dikii. Reviews of *Kutuzov* invariably drew parallels between the Patriotic War of 1812 and the Great Patriotic War and also between Kutuzov's paternal attitude to his troops and Stalin's paternal care of the Red Army.¹⁰⁵ Dikii was awarded the Stalin Prize, First Class for this role (a clear indication that Stalin liked his work) and was then invited to play Admiral Nakhimov in Pudovkin's eponymous film. In *Admiral Nakhimov* (1946) Dikii created more of a symbolic representation of the distinguished naval commander during the Crimean War (1853–1856) than an historically accurate portrait of the man. For his portrayal of Nakhimov, Dikii was once again awarded the Stalin Prize, First Class. Both *Kutuzov* and *Admiral Nakhimov* reinforced Stalin's cult of personality by inviting comparisons between great leaders from Russia's past and Stalin.

Reviews of *The Third Strike* and *The Battle of Stalingrad* praised Dikii for choosing not to give a photographically correct image of Stalin, showing, instead, Stalin's *essential* qualities and portraying him as a spiritually attractive

declared that the Russian people played the most significant role among other nationalities of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazism. See J. V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1953) 203.

¹⁰² For a detailed discussion, see Elena Baraban, "Semeinyi krug: traktovka rodstva, evreev i voennoplennykh v stalinskom kino o voine," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2009): 473–497.

¹⁰³ See, for example, the first minute of the following video clip, *K/f "Stalingradskaia bitva" 1948–1949*, YouTube: < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0_qsxlaz2I > (Accessed 12 April 2014).

¹⁰⁴ In the first five days after the film's release, more than 300,000 filmgoers saw it in Moscow alone. See Iu. Zavadskii, "Tekhnika i vdokhnovenie," *Literatura i iskusstvo* 18 (1944).

¹⁰⁵ S. Golubov, "Kutuzov," *Izvestiia* 14 March 1944. See also E. Tarle, "Kutuzov," *Pravda* 14 March 1944; Oleg Leonidov, "Kutuzov," *Moskovskii bol'shevik* 19 March 1944; Vsevolod Vishnevskii, "Kutuzov," *Leningradskaia pravda* 26 March 1944.

person and a leader and thinker whose concerns were mankind's destiny.¹⁰⁶ Dikii wrote that he wanted to capture Stalin's unswerving will and readiness to fight for the final victory that would ensure mankind's well-being. As well, he wanted to convey Stalin's analytical powers, foresight, and humanity.¹⁰⁷ Judging by how generic these qualities are and given the actor's experience with playing Kutuzov and Nakhimov, it is safe to say that Dikii viewed his actor's task in depicting Stalin as the creation of a symbol of a great leader.¹⁰⁸

It is unlikely that Savchenko was pleased with Dikii's approach to depicting Stalin. Noteworthy here is that in April 1945, during a discussion of Pudovkin's first cut of *Admiral Nakhimov*, Savchenko said that a representation of a great commander such as Nakhimov must be romantic and that even secondary characters and minor details of the *mise-en-scène* must be used to romanticize a great leader's image.¹⁰⁹ Dikii, however, was not interested in romanticizing either Nakhimov or Stalin. His manner of playing Stalin lacked variation and was "cold," as though he was playing a "monument."¹¹⁰ This was especially noticeable in *The Third Strike*: Dikii "was 'frozen' and looked as if he was afraid to make a mistake, to do something wrong."¹¹¹ Specifically, Dikii paced Stalin's speech in the wrong way. Despite the actor's well-modulated voice with its pleasant lower pitch, Stalin's lines in the film progress jerkily, with certain words pronounced too quickly and others drawn out slowly; this conveys the distinct impression that the actor was ill at ease playing Stalin. The same jerkiness and awkwardness also marked Dikii's gestures. In some shots Stalin's hands look too soft, almost plump.

The problem of Dikii's acting in *The Third Strike* was compounded by Kirillov's cinematography, for he was not the best at filming interiors or Soviet commanders. In the film's opening scene, for example, Stalin's study appears to be almost cheerfully lit, with the result that too many details of its character and décor are seen, thus preventing the viewer from focusing on what is most

¹⁰⁶ I. Vinnichenko, "Tretii udar," *Komsomol'skaia pravda* 29 April 1948. Rostislav Iurenev praised Dikii's portrayal of Stalin more than Gelovani's. See R. Iurenev, "Obraz velikogo vozhdia," *Iskusstvo kino* 6 (1949): 4–8. See also M. Mariamov, "Stalinskaia nauka pobezhdat' (Obraz velikogo Stalina v fil'me 'Tretii udar')," *Pravda Ukrainy* 9 May 1948. Mariamov praised Dikii's work more than Gelovani's (in *Oath*).

¹⁰⁷ See A. D. Dikii's open letter (to viewers) about his work on the image of Stalin. RGALI f. 2376, op.1, d. 109, l. 1–1v.

¹⁰⁸ Some gestures that Dikii used in his portrayal of Admiral Nakhimov are repeated in *The Third Strike* and *The Battle of Stalingrad*.

¹⁰⁹ RGALI f. 2456, op. 1, d. 1034, l. 27–29.

¹¹⁰ RGALI f. 2453, op. 2, d. 167, l. 18. In response to his colleagues' criticism that Dikii depicted Stalin as a "cold" person, the actor admitted that it was his task to play "a monument."

¹¹¹ RGALI f. 2453, op. 2, d. 167, l. 18.

important in the scene. The fill light softens and diffuses the shadows,¹¹² making the image of Stalin inappropriately flattering for the situation. At the same time, the composition of the shot places Stalin behind Army General Antonov, thus making Stalin's figure appear smaller and farther removed from the camera. The eye-level shots of Stalin contribute to the general loss of expressiveness in the scene.¹¹³

Dikii as Stalin was found to be more convincing in Petrov's *The Battle of Stalingrad*.¹¹⁴ However, the "coldness" of the actor's portrayal of the Soviet leader and his decision to rely on the Moscow Art Theatre's acting traditions were a problem for Iurii Iekel'chyk, the main cameraman for *The Battle of Stalingrad*,¹¹⁵ whose artistic collaborations with such distinguished Ukrainian film directors as Oleksandr Dovzhenko (*Ivan and Shchors*) and Ihor Savchenko (*Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*) affirmed the reputation of Ukrainian film as poetic cinema.¹¹⁶ Unlike Dikii and Petrov,¹¹⁷ Iekel'chyk considered the art of cinema

¹¹² This type of lighting is frequently used when filming beautiful heroines.

¹¹³ The opening scene of *The Third Strike*, YouTube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1npG43ngGDA>> (Accessed 12 April 2014). The relevant part of the video clip is between 2:15–3:07. In comparison, Iurii Iekel'chyk, the main cameraman for *The Battle of Stalingrad*, does a much better job with the opening scene. The latter is similar to the opening scene in *The Third Strike*: Stalin discusses the situation on the front with Vasilevskii: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0_qsxlaz2I> (Accessed 12 April 2014). The relevant part of the video clip is between 3:56–7:27. The scene begins dramatically with a close-up of Stalin. To convey the character's authority and the idea of his "closeness" to the viewer, Stalin's figure is placed in the foreground as the largest object in each shot throughout the scene. Both Vasilevskii and Stalin are shot from a low angle in order to emphasize these figures' authority. Stalin's face, however, unlike Vasilevskii's, is never shown frontally and is almost always covered by a shadow, which produces the impression of enigma and drama. Low-key lighting intensifies this impression. Rather than showcasing a handsome actor (as was the case in *The Third Strike*), Iekel'chyk's cinematography helps to characterize the situation and to underscore the point that Vasilevskii and Stalin are discussing a very serious subject.

¹¹⁴ RGALI f. 2453, op. 2, d. 167, l. 18.

¹¹⁵ Dikii recalled that when he played Stalin in Petrov's film, Iekel'chyk gave him a hard time. See Aleksei Dikii, "Tvorcheskaia radost'," *Iskusstvo kino* 3 (1949): 23.

¹¹⁶ Iekel'chyk was a student of Oleksii Kaliuzhnyi, who had taught practically every Ukrainian cameraman who joined the profession in the 1920s and 1930s, and who were later described as "a unique generation" in Soviet cinema. Besides Iekel'chyk, this generation of Ukrainian cinematographers included Danylo Demuts'kyi, Oleksandr Lavryk, Mykola Topchii, Mykola Kul'chyt'skyi, Iakiv Kulish, Ivan Shekker, Volodymyr Okulich, and Oleksii Pankrat'iev. For more details, see Aleksandr Deriabin, "Nikolai Ushakov: Tri operatora," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 56 (2002): 160–161. Iekel'chyk also worked with Savchenko on two short films: *Levko* and *Kvartal No. 14* [Block No. 14].

¹¹⁷ The theatre-oriented Petrov had little use for Iekel'chyk's art. Iekel'chyk's shots in *The Battle of Stalingrad*, which could have been used to create excellent combat scenes, were used in a highly unsophisticated manner as illustrations of the points voiced over by Iurii

crucially different from the art of theatre.¹¹⁸ As the disagreement between Dikii and Iekel'chyk demonstrates, the decision to assign Iekel'chyk (described as the Soviet Union's second best cameraman, after Andrei Moskvin)¹¹⁹ to *The Battle of Stalingrad* was made with little consideration of style, either associated with specific national cinemas or particular film directors, cameramen or actors. Despite the administrators' efforts to select the best of the best for a particularly important project, the lack of any attention to style occasionally resulted in a disruption of aesthetic partnerships and undesirable aesthetic hybridization, rather than in a remarkable aesthetic accomplishment (as was the case with feature documentary films).

DEPICTING RED ARMY SOLDIERS

Savchenko enjoyed more artistic freedom in scenes involving fictional characters (mostly soldiers). These scenes show greater continuity with Savchenko's romantic monumentalism, typical of *Horsemen*, *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*, and *The Russian Sailor Ivan Nikulin*, and they are much more successful than his portrayals of marshals and generals. *The Third Strike* shows ordinary Red Army soldiers in many different situations and depicts them so vividly that viewers believed some of them really existed.¹²⁰ Befitting the aesthetics of romanticism in cinema, the soundtrack of *The Third Strike* is almost entirely comprised of excerpts from Petr Chaikovskii's symphonies and ballets. They are used in accompaniment to combat scenes and portrayals of ordinary soldiers. By contrast, whenever Stalin and other commanders (except Tolbukhin) appear on screen, Chaikovskii's romantic music is rarely heard. Owing to the casting decisions that were made for the film, camera work, and soundtrack, the film inadvertently contrasts Red Army commanders, who follow the battle from a distance, with rank-and-file Soviet soldiers, who bear the brunt of the ferocious fighting.

Levitan or "envisioned" by Stalin in his Kremlin study.

¹¹⁸ Iurii Iekel'chik, "Operator—kinodramaturgu i kinokritiku," *Iskusstvo kino* 4 (1949): 21–22.

¹¹⁹ Iakov Butovskii, "Iurii Iekel'chik," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 56 (2002): 194. Iekel'chyk created the aesthetically superb and exquisite "white on white shots" in Abram Room's *Stogii iunoshia* [The Serious Young Man, 1936]. For a detailed discussion, see Milena Michalski, "Promises Broken, Promise Fulfilled: The Critical Failings and Creative Success of Abram Room's *Stogii iunoshia*," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 82.4 (2004): 820–846; 841.

¹²⁰ Many viewers asked if Marine Chmyga (played by Mark Bernes), the central character in the soldier scenes, really existed, to which Savchenko replied that, although Chmyga was a fictional character, he could be historically justified. RGALI f. 1992, op. 1, d. 96, l. 12. Bernes fell in love with the project and proposed ways to develop his originally very modest part into one of the most memorable roles in the film. See Mark Bernes, "Syn naroda," *Trud* 14 May 1941.

Kirillov's camera work in *The Third Strike*'s combat scenes confirmed his reputation as "a poet of the camera."¹²¹ The dynamism of these scenes is achieved through complex changes of perspective during the battlefield scene: first, it is shot "from a bird's-eye perspective, and then [the camera] finds itself in the very thick of the fighting soldiers," thus giving the viewer the impression that he himself is taking part in the combat, crossing Sivash Lake or "attacking the enemy from a tank." This perspective is then followed once again by "a long shot" taking the viewer "over the Turkish Wall": "the camera glides over the battlefield" and then dives into its goal.¹²²

The fight for Sapun-gora Ridge in Sevastopol', the most impressive of the film's combat scenes, includes tracking shots and close-ups, alternating rapidly with general and panoramic shots. Many of these are taken from different angles.¹²³ In terms of its aesthetics, the episode reminds one of Aleksandr Deineka's most important wartime painting *Oborona Sevastopolia* [The Defence of Sevastopol', 1942].

Famous for his monumental multi-figure compositions, expressive images, and symbolism, Deineka was one of Savchenko's favourite artists.¹²⁴ *The Defence of Sevastopol'* depicts the fierce fighting "on the edge" between Soviet marines (symbolically dressed in white) and the Nazis, who are figures of darkness both literally and metaphorically. The contrast between good and evil is the structural principle of Deineka's painting. Similarly, the same contrast forms an aesthetic principle governing the depiction of the Red Army and the Nazis in Savchenko's film.

The film begins with the famous wartime song "Sviashchennaia voina" [The Sacred War], whose lyrics contrast the Soviet people, defenders of good, with the Nazis, who represent "the kingdom of darkness." In the film Nazi soldiers and generals are often shot with low-key lighting, as dark figures against a light background, which symbolically "block" the sunlight. The Nazis are often shown descending into their pillboxes or the semi-darkness of their trenches. In a few scenes the setting suggests that the Nazis resemble spiders.

¹²¹ Lev Kuleshov, "Operator Mikhail Kirillov," *Detfil'm* 12 December 1940. Kirillov was known for filming Boris Barnet's *Okraina* [The Borderland, 1933] and Lev Kuleshov's *Sibiriaki* [Siberians, 1940]. Kirillov's work on *The Third Strike* was praised by a number of people. See, for example, Kapralov, "Tretii udar," and Iu. Diakonov, *Vsegda v poiske: Iz opyta raboty zaslužennogo deiatelia iskusstv RSFSR operatora M. Kirillova* (Moscow: Biuro propagandy sovetskogo kinoiskusstva, 1970) 26.

¹²² Diakonov 26.

¹²³ Savchenko was an artist before he switched to cinema. In his first films he demonstrated an impeccable sense of dynamic composition, complex *mise-en-scène*, and artistic detail.

¹²⁴ Savchenko owned several works by Deineka. See Levan Shengeliia, "Vsegda s molodymi," in *Igor' Savchenko* 34. On Savchenko's passion for painting and especially for Deineka, see also Natan Rybak, "Vdokhnovenno i prosto," in *Igor' Savchenko* 90–91.

By contrast, Red Army soldiers are portrayed as figures of light, sometimes covered by white bandages, the symbol of their martyrdom. Whereas Deineka's painting dramatizes the most tragic moment in the history of the defence of Sevastopol', namely, when, despite their heroic resistance, Soviet marines are pushed back into the Black Sea, Savchenko's film captures the Red Army's triumph. As marine Chmyga places a red banner on top of Sapun-gora in Sevastopol', the Nazis board overcrowded boats and leave Crimea.

Figure 2. Marine Chmyga places the Soviet flag on the top of Sapun-gora.¹²⁵



CONCLUSION: SAVCHENKO, UKRAINIAN CINEMA, AND STALINISM

What does Savchenko's fate as an artist teach us about Ukrainian cinema during High Stalinism? While Soviet cinema in general suffered a dramatic decline in this period (1945–1953), Ukrainian filmmakers did not produce any films that could be recognized nationally and internationally as possessing certain paradigmatic features, such as those typical of the poetic cinema of earlier and later decades. As was the case with many other Soviet film directors, Savchenko's work was notable for its ideological and aesthetic concessions to Soviet authorities. This circumstance notwithstanding, his pre-war work was well attuned to the style of filmmaking in Ukraine. On *The Third Strike*, however, he had to compromise so heavily that little of his style survived. It is

¹²⁵ Screen shot from *Tretii udar* [The Third Strike, 1948], directed by Ihor Savchenko, Kyiv Film Studio: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1npG43ngGDA>> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

possible that if *The Third Strike* had been less significant, both politically and ideologically, its creators might have enjoyed a bit more artistic freedom. At the same time, the logistics of filming a war epic immediately following the Second World War were so complex that without the support of the military and the party, such a film would not have been made; this, in turn, meant that the military and the party had complete control over the project. In these circumstances, there was no room for purely aesthetic decisions: everything was politicized.

Unlike a number of Soviet films (including Savchenko's early films), *The Third Strike* did not transcend its propagandistic contours. The circumstances that determined its production prevented Savchenko from sustaining some of the stylistic practices that had previously placed him among leading Ukrainian film directors.¹²⁶ *The Third Strike* incorporates elements of two different aesthetics. Savchenko succeeded in expressing his artistic vision only in some (combat) scenes. *The Third Strike* clearly demonstrates that the cinema of High Stalinism as an institution destroyed, perhaps unintentionally, the creative alliances that once ensured the success of many Soviet films.¹²⁷ Instead of an intense creative alignment typical of *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*, for example, *The Third Strike* was a cinema of accommodation, which meant that Savchenko even had to put up with casting requests for some of the key roles in the film.

The extent of accommodation expected from the Ukrainian filmmakers who worked on *The Third Strike* may be linked to the post-war re-moulding of Ukrainian cinema. Filming a Stalinist war epic in post-war Ukraine was especially difficult in view of the Soviet struggle against Ukrainian nationalism. By featuring soldiers of different nationalities, *The Third Strike* underscored the idea of fraternal friendship of the Soviet peoples during the war, which became a canonical element in Soviet depictions of this global conflict. In this way, Ukrainian artists ingratiated themselves with Soviet authorities and proved their loyalty to Russia.

¹²⁶ Savchenko's *Golota*, *Horsemen*, *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi*, and even *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe* are much more coherent—dramaturgically, thematically, and, above all, stylistically—than *The Third Strike*.

¹²⁷ For example, Golovnia's camerawork for Pudovkin; Andrei Moskvin's work for Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg; Sergei Eisenstein's co-operation with Eduard Tisse; Danylo Demuts'kyi's and Iurii Iekel'chuk's collaboration with Oleksandr Dovzhenko and Ihor Savchenko.

Vitaly Chernetsky

The Pleasures and Problems of Leonid Osyka's *Zakhar Berkut*: Poetic Cinema and Its Limits*

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the aesthetic and sociopolitical contexts of *Zakhar Berkut*, a 1972 film by the Ukrainian director Leonid Osyka, one of the leading figures of Ukrainian poetic cinema. An ambitious adaptation of a canonical nineteenth-century historical novel by Ivan Franko, it was conceived as the first big-budget Ukrainian historical film since World War II. An unusual and controversial hybrid of poetic cinema techniques and mainstream filmmaking oriented towards a mass audience, it became the last work of Ukrainian poetic cinema released before a severe state-sponsored crackdown brought the heyday of this film school to an abrupt end.

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article examine le contexte sociopolitique et esthétique de *Zakhar Berkut*, un film de 1972 par Léonid Osyka, l'une tête dirigeante du cinéma poétique ukrainien. Adaptation ambitieuse du roman historique canonique d'Ivan Franko datant du 19^e siècle, ce long métrage fut conçu comme le premier film historique ukrainien à gros budget depuis la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Réalisation hybride controversée et peu commune, à mi-chemin entre les techniques du cinéma poétique et le cinéma traditionnel orienté vers un large public, *Zakhar Berkut* devint la dernière œuvre du cinéma poétique ukrainien, sortit avant les mesures de répression sévères gouvernementales qui sonnèrent le glas de cette école de cinéma à l'apogée de sa gloire.

Things were looking up for the young Ukrainian film director Leonid Osyka in the spring of 1970. At thirty years old, he had just directed *Kaminnyi khrest* [A Stone Cross], the film that many critics greeted as the second most important accomplishment of Ukrainian poetic cinema after Sergei Paradzhanov's *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors], the work that launched the movement. A few commentators (including the artist Heorhii Iakutovych, who worked on both these films¹) went even as far as asserting that *A Stone Cross*

* I would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful comments on this article. I am also grateful to the editorial team of the magazine *Kino-Teatr* (Kyiv, Ukraine) for help with the illustrations for this article.

¹ "When the film was completed, I felt that *A Stone Cross* was a greater accomplishment than *Shadows of the Forgotten Ancestors*, and I said so at the opening screening. In *Shadows* there were some moments that rubbed me the wrong way, while in *A Stone Cross* everything was in its proper place [...]" Unless otherwise specified, all translations in this article are mine. Iakutovych, reminiscences, included in Larysa Briukhovets'ka, ed. *Poetychne kino: Zaboronena shkola* (Kyiv: ArtEk/Kino-Teatr, 2001) 358–359. In a similar vein, the Russian critic Liudmila Donets called *Shadows* "well-dressed" (*nariadnyi*) and *A Stone Cross* "a desperate drama" (*otchaiannaia drama*). See Liudmila

was even a more accomplished work than *Shadows*. Now Osyka was entrusted with directing a new ambitious project; after the stark, somber, black-and-white world of *A Stone Cross*, a work of *arte povera* as it was truly filmed on a shoestring budget, he was now set to direct Ukraine's first big-budget historical extravaganza since Ihor Savchenko's 1941 *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi. Zakhar Berkut*, based on a Walter Scottian historical novel from 1882 by Ivan Franko (1856–1916), a key text in the canon of Ukrainian literature, was given the highest budget to date in the history of Ukrainian filmmaking, and was to be shot in lavish wide-screen colour and meant to be Ukraine's answer to spectacular historical epics ranging from Hollywood's *Ben-Hur* (1959, dir. William Wyler) and *Cleopatra* (1963, dir. Joseph Mankiewicz) to Poland's *Faraon* [The Pharaoh] (1966, dir. Jerzy Kawalerowicz) and Russia's *Voina i mir* [War and Peace] (1965–1967, dir. Sergei Bondarchuk).² The opportunity was without precedent; the pressure, immense.

How did a project of this magnitude get entrusted to such a young and relatively inexperienced director? This was a consequence of several factors. While Western academics are more familiar with Ukrainian cinema of the 1960s as an instance of aesthetic innovation associated with the poetic cinema movement and other related phenomena, such as the work of Kira Muratova, these films attracted relatively small domestic audiences (despite its critical acclaim, *Shadows*, upon its theatrical release in the USSR, was only seen by about 7 million viewers). Sometimes this was a consequence of obstructionist policies of those in charge of the distribution system (as, for instance, in the case of Muratova's *Korotkie vstrechi* [Brief Encounters]), but in general, the situation was similar to the dilemma of the 1920s, when the best, most innovative Soviet films did not perform well from the economic point of view.

This matter gained increasing importance in the USSR, since there, just like in the West, the film industry was by the 1960s in direct competition for viewers with the rising new medium of television. In this context, one other important accomplishment of Ukrainian film studios during the Thaw era was producing films that attracted large audiences at movie theatres. At first, such films were

Donets, "I trudno poverit', chto zhizn' korotka—'Vechnyi krest,'" *Iskusstvo kino* 11 (2003): <<http://www.kinoart.ru/ru/archive/2003/11/n11-article10>> (Accessed 17 March 2014). For more on this film, see Vitaly Chernetsky, "Visual Language and Identity Performance in Leonid Osyka's *A Stone Cross*: The Roots and the Uprooting," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2.3 (2008): 269–280.

² According to Joshua First's archival research, in this project Osyka "most strived to emulate [...] the work of Romanian director Sergiu Nicolaescu," known for the historical epics *Dacii* [The Dacians, 1967] and *Mihai Viteazul* [Michael the Brave, 1971], since they "offered comparable national origin myths emerging from the union of pre-national Carpathian tribes against invaders from the East." See Joshua First, "Scenes of Belonging: Cinema and the Nationality Question in Soviet Ukraine During the Long 1960s," Diss. (University of Michigan, 2008) 299.

made almost exclusively in Russian and frequently did not, in their content, focus on specifically Ukrainian themes. A good example can be provided by the films of Viktor Ivchenko, who came to cinema in 1953, after a long career in the theatre, and directed such blockbusters as *ChP* [An Extraordinary Event], the USSR's no. 1 box office hit of 1959 (47.5 million viewers), an adventure film about the capture of a Soviet tanker by the Kuomintang near Taiwan in 1954, and *Gadiuka* [The Viper, 1965], a Civil War drama based on a 1928 novella by Aleksei N. Tolstoi, attracting 34 million viewers. Yet even the commercial cinema was slowly but surely beginning to tackle Ukrainian-themed issues, as, for example, in the case of *Ivanna* (1959, also directed by Viktor Ivchenko), a pioneering example of a World War II drama set in Western Ukraine that, its heavy-handed ideological message notwithstanding, brought 30.23 million viewers to the theatres upon its release.

Therefore, given the international critical success of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* and the film's enormous influence on the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the younger generation of filmmakers, it is understandable that the republic's film industry leadership sought to put their creative energies to use for films that could generate crossover appeal for both intelligentsia and mass audiences. One clear example of this kind is *Annychka* (1968), the first full-length feature by Viktor Ivchenko's son Borys. A fascinating if imperfect "marriage" of mass and poetic cinema, this film has much to recommend it, and very importantly, it attracted respectable audience numbers as well (25.1 million).³ The success of this film, and of his next feature, *Olesia* (1970), a Russian-themed film based on a story by Aleksandr Kuprin, gave Ivchenko Jr. the possibility to create an ambitious poetic cinema work, *Propala hramota* [The Lost Dispatch]; sadly, though, by the time that film was completed, in 1973, Ukrainian poetic cinema, and Ukrainian culture in general, was under a concerted attack, with the relatively liberal leaders of both the Ukrainian Communist Party and the State Cinema Committee, Petro Shelest and Sviatoslav Ivanov respectively, dismissed from their positions, and Paradzhanov under arrest. Ivchenko Jr.'s best work thus joined the growing number of shelved films, and like many other directors, if at all allowed to work, he was forced to make lifeless, soulless films that are now painful to watch. In fact, Osyka's *Zakhar Berkut* became the last work of Ukrainian poetic cinema to be released before the 1972–1973 crackdown ground the movement to a halt.

The bans and shelvings, however, began much earlier. As is well known, after *Shadows*, Paradzhanov was unable to advance a single other project at the

³ For more on this film, see Vitaly Chernetsky, "Annychka's Anomaly: A Daughter's Rebellion in a 'Non-Soviet' Soviet War Film," *KinoKultura* special issue 9 (December 2009): <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/chernetsky.shtml>> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

Kyiv Studio beyond screen tests. Iurii Illienko, having served as the cameraman for *Shadows*, switched to directing himself, but both his first two features, *Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh* [A Well for the Thirsty, 1965] and *Vechir na Ivana Kupala* [St. John's Eve, 1968], while critically acclaimed, were shelved. Still, Illienko's skill and talent, undeniable at the time, allowed him to continue creative work.

Coming back to *Zakhar Berkut*, the first impulse that led to the launch of this film emanated from Iakutovych, the art director for *Shadows* and a consultant for *A Stone Cross*. An accomplished graphic artist, he was working on a series of engravings for a lavish illustrated edition of *Povest' vremennykh let* [The Tale of Bygone Years]. Impressed by the powerful imagery of several of its episodes, Iakutovych pitched the idea of creating a series of films on the history of Ukraine, from the Kyivan Rus' era onward, to Vasyl' Tsvirkunov, the director of the Kyiv Film Studio, and Ivanov, the head of the State Film Committee. Both were sympathetic to the idea, but to get the final go-ahead, turned to Petro Shelest, the Party boss for Ukraine. The latter, while approving of the general idea, proposed to start the cycle of historical films not with *Povest' vremennykh let* but with an adaptation of Ivan Franko's novella *Zakhar Berkut*. And thus, as it often happened in Soviet history, the Party boss thus provided the authorization and symbolic authorship for this work.

Initially, Illienko was tapped to direct the film, but just at that time he had begun working, jointly with the actor Ivan Mykolaichuk, on the script of what would become Illienko's big breakthrough as a director, *Bilyi ptakh z chornoiu oznakoiu* [The White Bird with a Black Mark, 1971]. The project was then offered to Sergei Bondarchuk who, basking in the success of *War and Peace*, came to Ukraine to explore the possibility of making a similar epic version of *Taras Bulba*.⁴ While that particular project did not receive the authorities' imprimatur, Bondarchuk was offered to direct *Zakhar Berkut* instead, and apparently considered it seriously. One can imagine how different a Bondarchuk adaptation would be from the one eventually directed by Osyka, and speculate whether this could have led to a certain Russian-Ukrainian cultural rapprochement, yet precisely at this point Bondarchuk received an offer too tempting to refuse: a joint Soviet-Italian production of *Waterloo*, eventually released 1970, starring Rod Steiger and Christopher Plummer, and with a cameo by Orson Welles. As Osyka had just provided, in *A Stone Cross*, an acclaimed adaptation of the work of another late nineteenth—early twentieth century Ukrainian writer, Vasyl' Stefanyk, there certainly were good reasons for him getting this new assignment.

⁴ Just as in the case of *War and Peace*, the project was conceived in part as an “answer” to a Hollywood film, in this case the notoriously loose 1962 adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's novella starring Yul Brynner and Tony Curtis.

Franko's text, however, presented challenges quite different from those of Stefanyk's darkly expressionist short stories. The undisputed leader of literary and intellectual life in the Austrian-ruled part of Ukraine for nearly half a century, Franko was only twenty-six in 1882, when he wrote this short novel as an entry for a contest announced by *Zoria*, the leading Ukrainian-language periodical of the time, "for a tale from our people's life, either present or past, focusing either on the intelligentsia or on the rural population."⁵ Completing the work after only a month and a half of intense effort, the writer won the contest; the novel was serialized in *Zoria* the following year, and Franko became one of the magazine's main contributors.

A democratic socialist in terms of his political views, Franko was strongly critical of organized religion, and in his aesthetics was close to the Polish school of "positivism"⁶ and skeptical of *fin-de-siècle* decadent art. *Zakhar Berkut*, very much a reflection of his aesthetic tastes and political views, is narrated in a relatively simple, straightforward fashion. Following the pattern that came to dominate historical fiction, the writer chose a specific time period (here 1241, when Mongol armies crossed the Carpathians on the way from Rus' to Hungary) and a specific location, the mountainous village of Tukhlia where, as legend has it, locals felled a large boulder into the valley, damming the river and causing a detachment of Mongol armies to drown. To keep the reader engaged, the author threw in a "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back" plot, where the star-crossed lovers are Myroslava, the daughter of Tuhar Vovk, a minor feudal who had just been granted the Tukhlia valley by Prince Danylo of Galicia, and Maksym, the son of Zakhar Berkut, the elder of the village commune.

⁵ See Fedir Dysak, "Ivan Franko v zhurnali *Zoria*," *Zbirnyk prats' kafedry ukrains'koi presy i Doslidnyts'koho tsentru istorii zakhidnoukrains'koi presy* 7 <http://www.franko.lviv.ua/faculty/jur/publications/zbirnyk07/Zbirnyk07_Dysak.htm> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

⁶ Not to be confused with positivism as a philosophical school; in the context of Polish cultural history this is, in essence, an alternative designation for realism.

Figure 1. Kostiantyn Stepankov as Tuhar Vovk and Ivan Havryliuk as Maksym Berkut in the bear hunt scene early in the film. (All images are courtesy of *Kino-Teatr*.)



Figure 2. Ivan Havryliuk as Maksym Berkut and Antonina Leftii as Myroslava in the love scene.



The plot hinges on the villagers' mistrust of the newcomer who tries to impose his rule upon them; their worries prove to be justified when Tuhar Vovk is revealed to be a secret collaborator of the Mongols. Finally, to the historical theme of the Mongol invasion and resistance, Franko added the clash between residual pagan beliefs of the Tukhlia villagers and the Christianity promoted by the ruling classes. The novel's ideological message is clearly articulated: the primordial communism of the villagers is a better, more moral way of life than the class-based society about to supplant it; the patriarchal utopia is being toppled by historical events, but one day its ideals will be appreciated again.

Far from being one of Franko's greatest literary accomplishments, the novel nevertheless catapulted the young author to prominence on the Ukrainian literary scene at the time of its original publication and remained popular with the readers, especially teenage boys, not so much for its ideological message but for its well-developed adventure plot and colourful descriptions. It was, in fact, the first successful Ukrainian-language historical adventure novel, arguably closer in spirit and style to the popular works of R. L. Stevenson or even H. Rider Haggard than to Sir Walter Scott. The text's ideological message, however, fit well within the new canon constructed during the Soviet era, and *Zakhar Berkut* became a cornerstone of secondary school literary curriculum in Ukraine—hence Shelest's suggestion that the text be used as the basis for a film.

Similarly to *A Stone Cross*, the script was entrusted to a prominent poet of the Thaw generation, although not to Ivan Drach, author of the previous film's script, but to his colleague Dmytro Pavlychko. Much of the rest of the team, though, was comprised of veterans of Osyka's previous film, including the cameraman, Valerii Kvas, the composer, Volodymyr Huba, the artistic consultant, Iakutovych, and many of the actors, including Kostiantyn Stepankov as Tuhar Vovk, Vasyl' Symchych as Zakhar Berkut, Antonina Leftii as Myroslava, and Boryslav Brondukov as Burunda, the commander of the Mongol army that gets trapped in the valley. As in *A Stone Cross*, Mykolaichuk, the leading actor of Ukrainian poetic cinema, appears here in a small but important role, as Berkut's older son, Liubomyr (a character absent in Franko's novel and written into the script specially for Mykolaichuk). The role of Maksym, the romantic lover, went to Ivan Havryliuk, a rising star who had debuted in *Annychka*.

Figure 3. Ivan Mykolaichuk, screen test for the role of Liubomyr Berkut.



Yet the plot and casting also presented novel challenges for Ukrainian filmmaking, as this was to be the first feature-length Ukrainian production fully set in the early Middle Ages (an episodic antecedent is the Roxana subplot in Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora*; according to historical records, a silent adaptation of *Zakhar Berkut* was produced in Soviet Ukraine in 1929, yet that film was never released and is believed to be lost; not even stills from it are available). Pavlychko's script reworked the narrative considerably; he toned down the

ideologized utopian presentation of the villagers' way of life, emphasizing instead the dramatic conflict and highlighting the personalities of principal characters. Still, the independent self-rule of the Tukhlia commune is contrasted to the violent, authoritarian world of the Mongols and the power struggles within the Rus' feudal elites. Some critics even attributed to the film's setting a message of dissident resistance, as the village lies on the very road used by Soviet troops on their way to Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Yet while the setting of the novel was clear, the cinematic adaptation presented a set of challenges that led to a series of bold, unexpected decisions by the director and the crew. First, few undisputed archeological records were available concerning the "look" of thirteen-century Carpathian villagers. Additionally, the area was well suited to filming some of the episodes, but the narrow forested Carpathian valleys did not seem to work well for the battle scenes. In an inspired if controversial decision, Osyka chose to shoot these and several other scenes in Kyrgyzstan, with the Pamir Mountains standing for the alpine meadows of the high Carpathians.

We do not have a clear account as to the choice of Kyrgyzstan for portions of the film's production,⁷ but we can speculate that this was in part prompted by the need to cast the Mongol/Tatar characters for the film. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan, like Ukraine, was an important centre of cinematic innovation in the 1960s. Bolot Beishenaliev, the prominent Kyrgyz actor who had starred in Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovskii's *Pervyi uchitel'* [The First Teacher, 1965] and played a Tatar khan in Andrei Tarkovskii's *Andrei Rublev*, was tapped to play the leader of the Mongol army. The Beishenaliev link may explain the decision to explore Kyrgyzstan as a possible shooting location and the traces of *Andrei Rublev*'s influence detectable in *Zakhar Berkut*. Even if Tarkovskii's film, though completed in 1966, had not yet been released in the USSR, it is likely that Osyka and his colleagues could have seen it at a closed screening. *Rublev* provided the clearest and nearest precedent of depicting a Tatar siege of a Rus' town, and also of a clash of pagan and Christian spirituality. While Osyka's take on both themes is quite different from Tarkovskii's (in the Ukrainian film, pagan religiosity is highlighted, and Christianity downplayed; the siege of the town is depicted only briefly, and ends in a surrender by the Rus' prince in a futile attempt to avoid pillaging and slaughter), *Rublev*, although never explicitly mentioned in contemporaneous criticism, provided the closest

⁷ Joshua First suggests that one significant reason for shooting those scenes in Kyrgyzstan, "an area that resembles the Ukrainian Carpathians about as much as the Appalachians resemble the Rockies," was the lack of needed resources in Ukraine, as they had been commandeered by Bondarchuk who, ironically, was shooting battle scenes of his *Waterloo* in Transcarpathia. First 300.

and most identifiable point of comparison and contrast in dealing with these themes.

Needless to say, even such covert referencing of Tarkovskii's film, given its own difficult history, was a dangerous thing to do, but this was not the only way in which the film's production challenged the authorities. In fact, as reported by Ukrainian film scholars, the director and the studio bucked the pressure from KGB and employed several "ideologically unreliable" persons, including the historical consultant Mykhailo Braichevs'kyi, the linguistic consultant Hryhorii Khalymonenko, and the costume designer Liudmyla Semykina (the latter having just been expelled from the Artists' Union for her support of the dissident movement).⁸ Semykina's designs for *Zakhar Berkut*, which presented the peaceful inhabitants of Tukhlia as uncannily similar to modern hippies, can definitely be seen as a political gesture in their own right.

The pressure on the film's crew only intensified since right in the middle of its production, the Moscow journal *Iskusstvo kino* published, in the July 1970 issue, an article by Mikhail Bleiman titled "Arkhaisty ili novatory?"⁹ This text, regarded as one of the darkest episodes in Soviet film criticism, was an insidious "character assassination" of Ukrainian and Georgian poetic cinema masked as an intellectual critique, prefiguring the full-scale assault on this movement launched by the state authorities a few years later. In it, Osyka was specifically singled out for the harshest criticism side by side with Paradzhanov and Tengiz Abuladze. While it was certainly flattering for the young director to be discussed in one breath with these masters, the context of the discussion was truly sinister. Bleiman's article appeared under the rubric "Invitation to a Debate," but no responses daring to challenge its argument were allowed into print (a rebuttal by the prominent Ukrainian dissident intellectual Ivan Dziuba was eventually published in 1989). The situation was definitely becoming ominous.

Next to these ideological pressures, there were the purely logistical issues of new challenges for the young director, such as managing mass scenes with more than two thousand extras and a cavalry battalion. To Osyka's credit, those scenes have actually worked quite beautifully. Yet he was beginning to crack. As Iakutovych notes in his reminiscences, during the shooting of *Zakhar Berkut* Osyka developed a serious drinking problem and would frequently be too intoxicated to stand straight already by noontime. Only in rare instances when he had to come up with an improvised solution to a serious challenge (such as the filming of the town under siege at the historic Khotyn fortress on the

⁸ Lasysa Briukhovets'ka, "Adaptatsiia chy shturm literaturnoho Everestu? Tvory Ivana Franka v kino," *Kino-Teatr* 6 (2006): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=598> (Accessed 17 March 2014). See also Liudmyla Semykina's interview in *Uriadovyi Kur"ier* 11 January 2012: <<http://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/lyudmila-semikina-zahar-berkut-zapochatkuvav-moyu-/>> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

⁹ Mikhail Bleiman, "Arkhaisty ili novatory?" *Iskusstvo kino* 7 (1970): 55–76.

Dniester) would the director abstain from alcohol.¹⁰ The drinking problem eventually led to the dissolution of Osyka's marriage to the actress Leftii, the female lead of many of his films.

Work on *Zakhar Berkut* wrapped up in 1971, as the triumph of Illienko's *White Bird with a Black Mark* at the VII Moscow International Film Festival signaled a short-lived reprieve from the pressures on Ukrainian poetic cinema. As colleagues and critics saw the film at preliminary screenings, however, the reactions were mixed. Thus, shortly after the festival Paradzhanov was able to publish an article in *Sovetskii ekran* titled "An Ascent to Mastery,"¹¹ an extended review essay on three films: Illienko's *White Bird*, Osyka's *Zakhar Berkut*, and *Zhyva voda* [Life-giving Water] by Hryhorii Kokhan. While he has nothing but praise for Illienko's film, Paradzhanov's comments on *Zakhar Berkut* are more equivocal. He praises the director's bold choice of an ambitious project and the work of the entire ensemble of actors. Paradzhanov notes that some critics suggested that Stepankov's portrayal of traitorous Tuhar Vovk overshadows Symchych's quietly dignified presentation of the title character; however, he expresses his strong disagreement with this view, comparing Symchych's Zakhar to a character from classical Greek tragedies; he also praises Mykolaichuk's performance as Liubomyr, Zakhar's older son that serves as a foil to Maksym, the romantic lead.

¹⁰ See reminiscences by Iakutovych in Briukhovets'ka, ed., *Poetychne kino* 361.

¹¹ "Pod'em k masterstvu"; cited from the Ukrainian translation included in Briukhovets'ka, ed., *Poetychne kino* 129–133.

Figure 4. The Zakhar Berkut monument, erected in Tukhlia shortly after the release of the film and directly quoting the film's imagery (the title character is in the centre of the sculptural group).



Paradzhanov's comments on Havryliuk's Maksym and Leftii's Myroslava are more restrained but still positive. The elder director highlights Osyka's success in several key scenes that evidence his mastery of the poetic cinema medium, namely the opening (Maksym undergoing an initiation ritual to join the hunters), the film's dramatic finale, as mountains shift from shadow to sunlight, as it were discarding mourning clothes, and the depiction of Tuhar Vovk and his daughter fleeing from Tukhlia: two lonely riders in the middle of expansive landscape. At the same time, Paradzhanov also criticizes what he sees as the film's shortcomings, among them the "operatic theatricality" of the depiction of the Mongol camp and the overuse of schmaltzy, overly emotional music. But Paradzhanov is most damning of what he sees as Osyka's lapses from poetic cinema's metaphoricity into "pandering to the mundane" (*bytovizm*), notably in the film's sole love scene between Myroslava and Maksym. He also has some harsh words for the film's script, saying that it lacks philosophical depth.

A similarly mixed view of the film was offered by the critic Łucja Matulewicz who reviewed *Zakhar Berkut* for the Polish film magazine, *Ekran*.¹² Writing in the freer context of Poland and strongly sympathetic to Ukrainian poetic cinema, she highlights as the film's successes the general presentation of the contrast between the democratic self-rule of the Tukhlia villagers and the world of totalitarianism and dictatorship symbolized by the Mongol army. She compliments Osyka and the film's cameraman, Kvas, for the work's overall visual beauty and colour scheme, in particular the symbolic use of clear, light colours and an open horizon in the presentation of the villagers versus the predominance of somber, dark colours and claustrophobic construction of the frame in the scenes with the Mongols (both the indoor and the outdoor ones). Matulewicz singles out as one of film's great successes the episode depicting the villagers abandoning their homes for the forest in preparation for fighting the Mongols, with movement of people within landscape powerfully presented in terms of both rhythm and colour.

Still, while she admits that in several of the film's scenes one senses "the breath of great art," Matulewicz faults the director for frequently resorting to excessively privileging the narrative *fabula*, "banal illustrativity," poor psychological motivation, and lack of the sensitivity characteristic of *A Stone Cross*. These criticisms notwithstanding, she closes her review by arguing that the film is still an overall success, especially in the context of Ukrainian cinema that lacked an established tradition of "grand historical spectacles with artistic ambitions," and predicts that the film should do well at the box office.

This somewhat harsh if well-intentioned criticism, sadly, became largely beside the point soon after the film's theatrical release on 3 April 1972. The very month when Matulewicz's review was published, a major debacle struck Ukrainian cinema, when Muratova's film *Dolgie provody* [The Long Farewell] was singled out for a witch-hunt reminiscent of the worst days of Stalinism. Weeks later, Ivanov was dismissed from his position as head of Ukraine's State Cinema Committee (*Derzhkino*), and the crackdown on Ukrainian film industry reached unprecedented proportions. *Zakhar Berkut* had a respectable theatrical run (especially in Western Ukraine); it participated in the fifth VKF (*Vsesoiuznyi kinofestival'*), which in 1972 travelled to Tbilisi, a location more than sympathetic to Ukrainian poetic cinema. At the festival, *Zakhar Berkut* received a special prize "for the affirmation on the screen of the traditions of heroic folk epics" ("*za utverzhdenie na ekrane traditsii narodnogo geroicheskogo eposa*"); Mykolaichuk also received a special diploma for his acting.¹³ Similarly to other poetic cinema films, it was also actively marketed to

¹² Łucja Matulewicz, "Zachar Berkut," *Ekran* 8 (20 February 1972); quoted from the Ukrainian translation, included in Briukhovets'ka, ed., *Poetychne kino* 127–128.

¹³ See "Ivan Mykolaichuk," *Entsiklopediia otechestvennogo kino*: <<http://russian>

the Ukrainian diaspora in the US and Canada. The film was screened in 1973 at the film festival in Poitiers, France, but overall remained largely unknown to Western film audiences and scholars. As the crushing of Ukrainian poetic cinema school reached its apogee, *Zakhar Berkut*, together with Illienko's *The White Bird with a Black Mark*, was pulled by the Soviet Union's film export agency, Sovetskospil'm, from international distribution in September 1974.¹⁴

Turning back to *Zakhar Berkut* from the vantage point of today, historians of Ukrainian cinema tend to emphasize its dramatic fate as the last poetic cinema film to be released before the crackdown. The pressure under which the director and his team found themselves seems at times debilitating. Several scenes strike a false note both in the overall presentation and in acting. On the other hand, the film also contains some truly insightful, at times even prophetic, scenes, as well as stunning moments of visual beauty (even if, as Joshua First argues, this investment in visuality was only sanctioned "as a means to cash on what authorities in Goskino saw as a successful model through which Hollywood recouped its profits after the late-1950s and early-1960s losses"¹⁵); it is here that the enduring pleasures of this ambitious if imperfect work can be found. One of the best instances of such combination of memorable visuals and a challenging political message occurs when Stepankov as Tuhar Vovk tries to persuade the prince of the town, left unnamed in the film and shot at the Khotyn fortress, to surrender to the Mongols without struggle and thus save lives, albeit by losing face. This scene, in my opinion, openly invites a dissident reading.

Overall, in its awkward oil-and-water mix of poetic cinema with an "easily comprehensible" narrative, *Zakhar Berkut* largely repeats the tragic fate of Dovzhenko's 1932 film *Ivan*: a hybrid film where the director tried to salvage at least a portion of his ideals while under intense pressure to adapt to new circumstances. Additionally, both these films not only signal the inherent limitations of such an impossible choice, but also convey a prescient "swan song" message of hope. In *Ivan*, it was to be found in the celebrated opening scene depicting the still untamed, unsubmerged Dnieper rapids; in *Zakhar Berkut*, catharsis and hope are brought in the film's closing shots, as the wooden shackles of captive Maksym lead him to become the sole survivor of the debacle in the Tukhlia valley, floating on the smooth surface of the newly created lake, and the camera shifts to present the mountains discarding their mourning, in the image that so amazed Osyka's senior colleague and mentor, Paradzhanov. In the midst of the darkening political and social climate, the film's ending became an emblematic message to future generations.

cinema.ru/names/name1309/> (Accessed 17 March 2014).

¹⁴ See First 301.

¹⁵ First 299.

Joshua J. First

Dovzhenko Studio in the 1960s: Between the Politics of the Auteur and the Politics of Nationality

ABSTRACT: This article examines the aesthetics and politics of filmmaking in Soviet Ukraine in the 1960s as a lens through which to view the mechanisms of defining and representing national difference in Thaw-era Soviet culture. Management at Dovzhenko Studio in Kyiv during this time gave a green light to young filmmakers to explore a modernist and ethnographic poetic by reasoning that such a style was rooted in the traditions of Ukrainian national cinema, the founder of which was the studio's namesake, Oleksandr Dovzhenko. While always controversial, director-auteurs such as Sergei Paradzhanov, Iurii Illienko, and Leonid Osyka consistently justified their works of "poetic cinema" on the basis of fulfilling the studio's explicit goal to represent Ukraine through "traditional" means. Kyiv filmmakers, however, found their freedom curtailed not solely by central authorities concerned with ideological problems, but also by a film industry increasingly concerned with its ability to make a profit. Today in Ukraine, the legacy of so-called poetic cinema is fraught with accusations of elitism as the purveyors of cultural memory try to uncover a more popular history of Ukrainian cinema.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article examine l'esthétique et le politique dans la production cinématographique en Ukraine soviétique durant les années 60, tout en servant de toile de fond à l'étude du mécanisme définissant et représentant les différences nationales dans la culture soviétique du « dégel ». Durant cette période, les gestionnaires du studio Dovjenko à Kyiv ont donné feu vert à de jeunes réalisateurs, les laissant explorer une poétique moderniste et ethnographique. Ce style, croyaient-ils, prenait sa source dans une tradition du cinéma national ukrainien se basant sur les idées d'Oleksandr Dovjenko, dont le studio porte le nom. Certains auteurs réalisateurs controversés tels Sergeï Paradjanov, Yourii Illienko, et Léonid Osyka innocentaient leurs travaux comme "cinéma poétique" afin de répondre aux demandes du studio de représenter l'Ukraine à travers une dimension "traditionnelle". Toutefois, les cinéastes de Kyiv trouvèrent leur liberté réduite non pas uniquement à cause des autorités centrales s'inquiétant de problèmes idéologiques, mais aussi à cause de l'industrie cinématographique concernée par la rentabilité des œuvres. Aujourd'hui en Ukraine, l'héritage du cinéma poétique se voit accusé d'élitisme et les représentants de mémoire culturelle espèrent découvrir une histoire du cinéma ukrainien plus populaire.

Over twenty years after Ukraine gained its independence, it is not a stretch to argue that the golden age of Ukrainian cinema occurred in fact during the Soviet era. The 1960s, in particular, figure prominently in contemporary narratives of national cinema in Ukraine. Almost every issue of *Kino Teatr* (one of two magazines published in Kyiv that print serious film criticism) contains an article

celebrating the *auteurs* of the 1960s¹ and authors like Bohdan Nebesio have criticized Ukrainian cinema's "retrospective mode," which "hindered its development in the 1990s."² Unlike French, German, or Italian cinema in the 1960s, there are not even that many Ukrainian *auteurs* to celebrate in the first place. In fact, the canonical story of Ukrainian cinema is often limited to only five directors (Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Sergei Paradzhanov, Iurii Illienko, Leonid Osyka, Ivan Mykolaichuk and perhaps a few others). However, the conflation of the *auteur* with the production of national cinema in Soviet Ukraine managed to generate significant conflict in the 1960s, not only issues between stylistic principles and the persistent need of Ukrainian filmmakers to fend off accusations of "bourgeois nationalism," but with the very desire and ability of individuals to represent something akin to national character.

Dovzhenko Studio's managing director Vasyl' Tsvirkunov and the chairman of Derzhkino, the Ukrainian Committee on Cinematography, Sviatoslav Ivanov embarked on a deliberate project to transform Kyiv's relatively insignificant film studio into one of the cornerstones of Ukrainian culture in the 1960s. Under Stalin, and into the early 1960s, national cinema in Ukraine conjured images of fat peasants in embroidered shirts, droopy moustaches and Cossack-style hair locks, presented in the stereotypical genres of musical comedies and historical costume dramas. While folklore and history remained essential for Ukrainian cinema throughout the 1960s and after, Dovzhenko Studio's leadership, along with its staff of directors and screenwriters, sought to bring their outmoded cultural institution in line with contemporary notions of personal authorship and modernist techniques. This task involved combining an *auteurist* agenda with qualitative notions of Ukrainian national cinema, without upsetting the delicate balance between the Soviet maxim "socialist in content, national in form," and the often cosmopolitan sensibilities of Dovzhenko Studio's director-*auteurs*.

In 1954, François Truffaut wrote "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," which became one of the first articulations of "*La Politique des Auteurs*." Therein, Truffaut counterpoised two kinds of film directors—those that simply "set up the scenario (*metteur-en-scène*)," and the "*auteur*," the director-author. Truffaut called on filmmakers to reject obligations to screenwriters, with their penchant for "psychological realism" and, as film authors, to invent their own visual and narrative style. Truffaut, a French critic and later filmmaker, associated cinematic meaning with the "mark" of such a

¹ The August 2011 issue of *Kino Teatr* contained no less than seven articles of varying length on some dimension of Ukrainian cinema during the 1960s. See *Kino Teatr* 4 (2011): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_magazine.php?inid=52&page=1> (Accessed 1 September 2011).

² Bohdan Y. Nebesio, "Questionable Foundations for a National Cinema: Ukrainian Poetic Cinema of the 1960s," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* 42.1 (2000): 35.

director-author, and less so with the qualities that were already present in a literary screenplay.³ Ultimately, the director-author would be someone occupying the simultaneous roles of intellectual, artist and craftsman.

The cinematic *auteur* of the Soviet Thaw fit into a broader celebration of the artist's "personal expression" above the political demands of the party and state. In its notion of the individual artist as the producer of cultural meaning, a Thaw-era *auteur* theory developed in the Soviet Union, which rejected the Stalinist "cinema of leaders" in favour of a cinema of great directors. While Thaw-era literary (and film) critics were careful not to position their ideals of personal expression and "sincerity" in opposition to politics, per se, the intellectual culture of the 1960s introduced a greater focus on the transcendent value of art. As Ann Komaromi argues, the dissident movement emerged during this time partly to defend this principle of the politically transcendent space of art.⁴

Cinema was part of the Thaw narrative of dismantling the Stalinist culture industry by questioning the Communist party's absolute control over filmmakers' aesthetic decisions, and by advancing a new conception of realism more in touch with a pan-European *New Wave* than with the one advanced by Maksim Gor'kii in 1934.⁵ Yet this was primarily a phenomenon centred in Moscow, and around the productions of one film studio in particular, Mosfil'm. In Kyiv, 1960 was a depressing year for film production. Ukrainian film critics and the filmmakers themselves lamented how theatres showing mostly Ukrainian films stood empty. Party and state authorities, while at times highly critical of the now-classic works of Mikhail Kalatozov, Grigorii Chukhrai, Marlen Khutsiev and others, called Dovzhenko Studio's best films "mediocre" and "clichéd."⁶ During the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine in October 1961, First Secretary Mykola Pidhornyi singled out Ukrainian cinema for particular criticism, but not for ideological mistakes. Instead, he described the studios' films as "outwardly correct," but without

³ François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. 1, edited by Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 232–233.

⁴ Ann Komaromi, "The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture," *Slavic Review* 66.4 (2007): 605–629.

⁵ See, Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000). For Gor'kii's ideas about socialist realism, advanced at the First Congress of the Soviet Writers Union, see Maxim Gorky, *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union*, edited by H. G. Scott (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977) 25–69.

⁶ See the 14 March 1961 Resolution of the Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers, "On Measures for Improving the Ideological and Artistic Level of Film at Kiev's Dovzhenko Studio." Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukrainy (TsDAMLUMU) f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1540, ark. 2.

“inspiration.”⁷ In other words, they lacked specificity, a “mark” on the larger Soviet film industry during the Thaw. In many ways, the productions of 1960–1961 offered little that was new or attention grabbing, suggesting that a little controversy might actually reinvigorate Ukrainian cinema. Several of the great directors of the Thaw got their start at the studio in Kyiv during the 1950s, including Khutsiev, but left for Mosfil'm when they could. According to an open letter printed in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in January 1962, the studio management categorically refused to accept new cadres from the All-Union Film Institute (VGIK) in Moscow, instead affirming the creative authority of local directors and screenwriters educated during the Stalin era.⁸ A young Paradzhanov, who began working at Kyiv Studio in 1952, wrote to *Literaturna Ukraina* in the later part of the decade decrying the “lack of trust in people,” prevalent among heads of the studio, which deliberately pointed to how the Ukrainian film industry was out of touch with the cultural transformations of the Thaw and was ignoring the creative potential of individuals.⁹ As film critic Kostiantyn Teplyts'kyi wrote in late 1962, “There is not that essential creative atmosphere at the studio, [there is] no activity, no co-operation, no precision, no courageousness, and moreover, no innovation.”¹⁰ According to such critics of the studio, there seemed to be an intentional effort at the studio to remain “provincial” and outside of the main currents of Thaw-era cultural discourse.

TWO MODELS OF MAKING NATIONAL CINEMA: POPULAR CINEMA AND AUTEUR CINEMA

Despite the poor reputation of Dovzhenko Studio at the turn of the decade, a number of its films were genuinely popular with audiences. Viktor Ivchenko's *Ivanna*, a film about the young daughter of a Catholic priest in L'viv who joined the Soviet partisans during World War II, sold over thirty million tickets in 1959–1960. Viktor Ivanov's adventure film about an eighteenth-century Ukrainian peasant rebel, *Oleksa Dovbush*, sold twenty-three million the same year. Oleksii Shvachko's World War II spy thriller *Daleko vid bat'kivshchyny* (Russian: *Vdali ot rodiny*) [Far from the Fatherland] was the box office leader in 1960. And Oleksii Mishurin's 1963 comedy *Koroleva benzokolonki* [The Gas

⁷ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh orhanizatsii Ukrainy (TsDAHOU) f. 1, op. 1, spr. 1691, ark. 284.

⁸ V. Repiakh and others, “Moldye za ekranom: Komsomol'tsy otvechaiut na kritiku gazet: A chto dumiut rukovoditeli studii imeni Dovzhenko?” *Komsomol'skaia pravda* 31 January 1962: 2.

⁹ Sergei Paradzhanov, “...chtoby ne molchat', berus' za pero’: Vybrannyye mesta iz perepiski s nedrugom i druz'iami,” published for the first time in *Iskusstvo kino* 12 (1990): 332–335.

¹⁰ K. Teplyts'kyi, “Narodu—khoroshi fil'my! Notatky z V plenumu orhbiuro Spilky pratsivnykiv kinematohrafi Ukrainy,” *Radians'ka kul'tura* 25 March 1962: 3.

Station Queen] brought in over thirty-five million viewers.¹¹ These Ukrainian-themed genre films demonstrate that *auteurism* was not the only model for making national cinema in Soviet Ukraine. Musical comedy in particular was a genre in which a Ukrainian theme could be met with popular success at the box office from the 1930s onward. Films as diverse as Nikolai Ekk's *Sorochinskaia iarmarka* [The Fair at Sorochyntsi, 1939], based on the short story by Nikolai Gogol'. Vasyl' Lapoknysh's *Zaporozhets' za Dunaiem* [A Cossack Beyond the Danube, 1953], based on the nineteenth-century comedic opera, as well as Mishurin's *Gas Station Queen*, all made popular comedic use of Ukrainian stereotypes. Moreover, Ivanov continually represented Ukraine through popular genres like comedy (*Za dvoma zaitiamy* [After Two Hares, 1961]) and adventure (*Oleksa Dovbush*, 1959). The problem with this approach was, as most Ukrainian film critics admitted, that it perpetuated clichés of the Ukrainian folk character. While comedies and adventures were indeed the most profitable genres within the repertoire of Dovzhenko Studio in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Ukrainian filmmakers considered these forms to be primitive holdovers from the “Little Russianism” (*malorosiishchyna*) cultivated during the Stalin era, with its dated and condescending representation of Ukrainians. Kyiv film critic Mykola Berezhnyi warned Dovzhenko Studio's filmmakers in January 1964, “When you give them [the audience] films like this to laugh at, they are laughing at the land itself.”¹² Thus, market success carried a degree of guilt for the studio. Kyiv filmmakers at the beginning of the 1960s felt three simultaneous forms of pressure: to make films that rejected Stalinist and more traditional Little Russianist clichés and to engage with Thaw-era concerns; to remain competitive within the Soviet entertainment market; and to remain committed to the production of a specifically Ukrainian culture. As Tsvirkunov and Ivanov soon realized, however, they could hardly accomplish any of these tasks with the current group of creative personnel at Dovzhenko Studio, drawn either from pre-war assistant directors and cinematographers, or more often, from the Ukrainian theatre.

In May 1962, the Presidium of the Ukrainian Union of Cinematographers sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), focusing their attention principally on the “problem of cadres.” The message from Ukrainian filmmakers suggested that times had changed and Ukrainian cinema was lagging behind “the Russian masters.” Middle-generation filmmaker Mykola Mashchenko stated that none of the great films from Mosfil'm could have been made in Kyiv due to the “provincialist” and “localist”

¹¹ Although incomplete, some data on reception is available in Sergei Zemlianukhin and Miroslava Segida, *Domashniaia sinemateka: Otechestvennoe kino, 1918–1996* (Moscow: Dubl'-D, 1996). For other films, I consulted data generated by the Union of Ukrainian Cinematographers (TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 539, ark. 138–44).

¹² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 285, ark. 49.

attitudes of the leadership. Here, the focus was on catching up to the centre over reproducing the same comedies and melodramas that touched upon Ukrainian themes, which characterized production in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The decisive step in hiring and promoting new and younger “native cadres” at Dovzhenko Studio came with the appointment of Tsvirkunov to the position of managing director in April 1962.¹³ Ukrainian Minister of Culture Rostislav Babiichuk removed the previous studio head ostensibly for his failure to take steps to establish and maintain a local base of native cadres. Tsvirkunov assumed the directorship with the promise to improve planning mechanisms, work toward solving the “problem of cadres,” and to move Dovzhenko Studio toward the aesthetic principles that would go on to make central Soviet studios world famous by the end of the decade.¹⁴ At the same time, Tsvirkunov was well connected to young Ukrainian writers in the early 1960s and was conversant with, and in many cases, supportive of, demands to revive Ukrainian language and culture. He also possessed impeccable national and communist credentials: Tsvirkunov was born to a peasant family in 1917 in the village of Novoukraina in Zaporiz'ka oblast' in southeastern Ukraine. He graduated from the Voroshilov Pedagogical Institute in present-day Luhans'k in 1938 with a degree in Ukrainian Literature, and taught in a rural middle school in Luhans'ka oblast' before the war started in June 1941. He joined the party in early 1942 and became head of the political section in a partisan brigade on the Vokhovskii Front in Central Ukraine. In 1953, the Luhans'k party committee nominated him as chairman, but he entered graduate school two years later at the Central Committee's Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow, graduating in 1959 to a job as art and literature editor for the Russian-language CPU journal of Marxist theory *Kommunist Ukrainy*, later becoming senior editor for *Radians'ka Ukraina*. After consolidating his position at Dovzhenko Studio after the First Congress of the Ukrainian Cinematographers Union in January 1963, he travelled to VGIK in Moscow, where he convinced several Ukrainian graduates of their national obligations to return to work in Ukraine, with the additional promise that Dovzhenko Studio would be a space where youth “experimentation” would be met with sympathy.¹⁵

The problem remained, however, as to whether these young VGIK returnees were knowledgeable of, or willing to approach, a national representational mode in their work at Dovzhenko Studio. One of the young VGIK returnees, Artur Voitets'kyi, for example, would continually resist working in such a style, opting to adapt the works of Gor'kii and Anton Chekhov

¹³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1522, ark. 84–85.

¹⁴ See Tsvirkunov's speech at the First Congress of the SKU: TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 227, ark. 89ff.

¹⁵ See cinematographer Viktor Hres's remembrance of Tsvirkunov's trip to VGIK in “Vin osviatyv liubov: spohady pro Artura Voitets'koho,” *Kino teatr* 1 (2005): 22.

for the silver screen instead of Ukrainian writers like Oles' Honchar and Oleksandr Korniiichuk, which the studio preferred.¹⁶ Other returnees like Iurii Illienko and Leonid Osyka came to accept the Ukrainian theme as central to their work, but first went through a process of personal “Ukrainianization.” Since the development of “native cadres” became the principle upon which the studio had decided to solve its problems, the reliance on Ukrainian VGIK graduates could supply only a fraction of its needs, especially as such returnees came to Kyiv in the early 1960s as unknowledgeable and, as dissident Ivan Dziuba would argue in *Internationalism or Russification?*, “de-nationalized” Ukrainians, unprepared to engage with the nationality politics of the older generation. By privileging “native cadres” in the creative professions, a refocusing of existing energy occurred that went beyond basic economic attempts to catch up to the central studios. In so doing, the studio leadership was addressing difficult questions about local cultural knowledge, and suggesting that some filmmakers had a greater ability to embody particular concerns of national importance. Thus, VGIK graduates presented their own problems for the studio, even if the studio leadership was now firmly committed to promoting them as Ukrainian *auteurs*.

The nationalities of the directors, screenwriters, actors and other members of film crews in Ukraine were considered determining factors in how films themselves were positioned within the politics of national representation at the studio. Members of the studio collective staked their reputations on their abilities to participate in the cultural Thaw, which not only implied engagement with such discursive abstractions as “sincerity” and “authenticity,” but through this, an effort to transform the popular image of Ukraine and Ukrainians away from “those notorious attributes,” as writer Mykola Zahrebel'nyi called Stalin-era clichés. Zahrebel'nyi called for a rejection of the domesticated image of Ukrainians in Soviet cinema: “To show” them, as he stated, “not to simply pose them, not to simply display them in the background.”¹⁷ Ukrainian genre cinema educated viewers on the regional peculiarities of the Ukrainian republic, but did so using a formulaic method of generic Soviet national branding, which appeared out of touch with Thaw-era concerns with “authenticity.”

In addition to commercial success, filmmakers and the new leadership at Dovzhenko Studio sought recognition from Moscow for Ukrainian cinema as a legitimate art, one that did not require self-parody. In rejecting “those notorious attributes,” Ukrainian cinema asserted a new claim to national originality, but one in dialogue with Thaw-era concerns with “sincerity” and “authenticity.” Ukrainian cinema’s reputation was intimately tied to the broader perception of

¹⁶ During a 1972 SKU Presidium meeting, Voitets'kyi came under heavy criticism for his lack of national awareness and his preference for Chekhov over Ukrainian writers. See, TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 632, ark. 117.

¹⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1750, ark. 68.

Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. If Ukraine continued to evoke an image of rural backwardness, Ukrainian cinema too would carry similar connotations, largely because it was considered responsible for producing such stereotyped representations.

PARADZHANOV AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL AUTEUR

Oddly enough, during this era of promoting “national cadres,” the most notable director at Dovzhenko Studio in the 1960s was Armenian-Georgian filmmaker Sergei Paradzhanov, whose rise to success during this decade parallels, in many ways, the making of an *auteur*. Paradzhanov was neither a recent addition to the studio collective in 1963, nor was he even Ukrainian (according to either self-identification or line four in his passport), but his shift from genre-oriented director to *auteur* sheds light on how studio politics were changing in the early 1960s. Due to his less-than-stellar first decade of employment at Dovzhenko Studio, no one expected much when Paradzhanov first journeyed to the Carpathian region of Hultsul'shchyna in 1963 to film *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors]. The April 1962 thematic plan for the studio had the director slotted to make *Iurka—besshtannaia komanda* [Iurka, the One-Man Team], another *kolkhoz* comedy along the lines of his previous work in *Pershyi khlopets'* [The Top Guy].¹⁸ The film *Kvitka na kameni* [Flower on the Stone] about a religious cult in the Donbass, had been released with a category three rating,¹⁹ thus maintaining Paradzhanov's mediocre reputation at the studio. Consequently, Tymofii Levchuk listed *Flower on the Stone* as one of the previous year's “dull” productions during the First Congress of the Ukrainian Filmmakers' Union in January 1963.²⁰ Nonetheless, Paradzhanov was a reliable director who volunteered to take on projects that no one else wanted.²¹ Instead of *Iurka*, the studio put him in charge of making *Shadows* for the Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi Centennial commemoration.

While the film was conceptualized before Tsvirkunov's tenure as Dovzhenko Studio's director, it was only after the management change that the project took on more director-auteur aspects. Foremost Paradzhanov began

¹⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1539, ark. 50.

¹⁹ Industry categories ranged from one to four and determined the pay of the cast and crew and were based on a loose formula that accounted for artistic quality, socio-political significance and box office potential. The industry rated the best films in the first category, while refusing to allow all-Union distribution for category four films.

²⁰ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1620, ark. 14; f. 655, op. 1, spr. 227, ark. 63.

²¹ Defending Paradzhanov during a meeting of the Directors' Board to discuss *Flower on the Stone* in June 1962, Viktor Ivanov commented, “I would give him [Paradzhanov] a medal for bravery for *The Top Guy*. No one approached it at that time. No one wanted to make *Ukrainian Rhapsody* either. That was a difficult screenplay. He alone took on this project. You were the only person who came to the rescue on this picture and now it's easy for us to joke and complain.” TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1536, ark. 22.

editing Ivan Chendei's screenplay, and by March 1963, demanded a writing credit along with a sizable portion of the honorarium for the script.²² In a sense, the new leadership had responded to the as-yet-unanswered open letter submitted to the previous management. In trusting Paradzhanov, Tsvirkunov had allowed him to perform the role of author for the first time, transforming a typical Soviet literary adaptation into a unitary piece of art that bore the mark of its director-*auteur*. With Paradzhanov's revisions, the studio committed itself to a costly project, which demanded extensive and difficult on-location shooting in a remote part of southwestern Ukraine, essentially unsupervised. Moreover, Tsvirkunov allowed Paradzhanov to work with a fairly young and inexperienced cast and crew, with Illienko serving as cinematographer, Kyiv Theatrical Institute student Ivan Mykolaichuk performing the leading role, and graphic artist Hryhorii Iakutovych employed as a "consultant" on the set.

Also of key importance for transforming Dovzhenko Studio's reputation was *Novyny kinoekranu*, a Ukrainian-language film magazine, which was styled on the popular design and tabloid format of Moscow-produced *Sovetskii ekran*. Produced and financed by the Ukrainian Union of Cinematographers, *Novyny's* editors took a leading role in profiling *Shadows* even before it was out of pre-production. The June 1964 issue featured the then-unknown actor Mykolaichuk alone on the cover. Inside, Iurii Bohdashevs'kyi's article on *Shadows* already treated the second-year acting student as a celebrity, quoting at length his prattle about uncle Petro and aunt Varka and his "natural" interactions with locals on the set.²³ Two months later (still over a year before the film's release), *Novyny* featured an interview with Paradzhanov, where they quoted the director elucidating questions of "form" and his "long-time dream" to reveal the "fairy-tale-like existence of the Carpathians." The director emphasized participation and experience on-location in Hutsul'shchyna, highlighting his own process of bearing "witness" to "real" events and his discovery of ethnographic artefacts. Oleksii Miroshnychenko's article that followed featured detailed descriptions of Paradzhanov's and Mykolaichuk's creative process on the set, emphasizing the production of the film over and above its narrative.²⁴

This largely self-generated publicity helped construct the broader discourse of authorship connected with Paradzhanov's film, making it a media extravaganza long before it was released to the general public in fall 1965. *Shadows* was repeatedly sold to the Soviet public on the basis of its authors' discovery of a "pure" and "authentic" Ukrainian space. Moreover, the national significance of this space was connected in the press to the authors' own cinematic connection to the material within the film, and to their much-

²² TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1581, ark. 15, 44, 59.

²³ Iurii Bohdashevs'kyi, "Tak trymaty!" *Novyny kinoekranu* 6 (1964): 8.

²⁴ "Nashi interv'iu: Serhii Paradzhanov, kino rezhyser," *Novyny kinoekranu* 8 (1964): 4; O. Miroshnychenko, "Tini zabutykh predkiv," *Novyny kinoekranu* 8 (1964): 4–5.

publicized journey to the Caucasus to shoot it. One satirical drawing, which appeared in a November 1964 issue of *Radians'ka kul'tura*, depicted the director, flanked by his cinematographer Illienko and set designer Hryhorii Iakutovych (Figure 1), engulfed in an enormous *keptar*, an iconic sheepskin vest worn by the Hutsuls who appear in the film, while wearing their ordinary clothes underneath.²⁵

Figure 1.



²⁵ M. Malov'skyi, "Avtoram fil'mu 'Tini zabutykh predkiv' S. Paradzhanovu, Iu. Il'ienku, Iu. Iakutovychu," *Radians'ka kul'tura* 19 November 1964: 4.

Even as Illienko holds a camera to identify his profession, the visual metaphor of the shadows behind them indicates that the lights—and ostensibly the camera too—had been turned on them. While in the film, and in Kotsiubyns'kyi's novella from which it was adapted, the “shadows” are symbolically cast by the lost culture of the Hutsuls, who now lurk only in the distant and secluded corners of time and space, the cartoonist associated these shadows with the celebrity status accorded to the film's production by newspapers almost a year before the average reader could have even seen the film. Images like this helped construct Paradzhanov's public persona as a national *auteur* in the Ukrainian SSR. Moreover, the Ukrainian and central press featured Paradzhanov and the production of his film no less than thirty-three times during the two years before *Shadows*' first screening on 4 September 1965.

As an emergent Soviet *auteur* after making *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, Paradzhanov both alarmed and intrigued authorities in the film industry and within the party. In the aftermath of *Shadows*, many of the young returnees to Kyiv became his committed followers in their aesthetic outlook and interest in Ukrainian themes. Moreover, studio authorities participated in the construction of a Ukrainian *auteur*, seeing in Paradzhanov and his followers the possibility to disrupt ingrained styles of national representation and to “return to Dovzhenko,” the original Ukrainian *auteur*. Even after a political protest that dissident Dziuba staged in support of repressed Ukrainian intellectuals during the *Shadows* premier, studio and industry authorities were careful to acknowledge, in increasingly hyperbolic terms, Paradzhanov's accomplishments at Dovzhenko Studio. In summer 1963, Goskino in Moscow imposed economic sanctions on Paradzhanov and his crew for falling behind schedule in production. But with the increasingly celebratory atmosphere over the film's significance among the Kyiv and Moscow intelligentsias by late 1964, Goskino chairman Aleksei Romanov resolved to heed his Ukrainian counterpart's warning that, “The reduction of c[omrades] Paradzhanov's, Iu. Illienko's, and [production manager] N[onna] Iur'eva's pay will arouse a wide and very undesirable reaction among filmmakers.” On 19 January 1965, he reversed the sanctions.²⁶ The Ukrainian Filmmakers' Union admitted Paradzhanov as a full voting member on 30 April.²⁷ Moreover, with the receipt of his honorarium for co-writing the screenplay to the amount of 1200 rubles and bonuses that made Paradzhanov 6000 rubles wealthier, the director of *Shadows* was able to move out of the dormitory where he had resided for the past decade to a large apartment in the prestigious neighbourhood around Kyiv's *Ploshcha Peremohy*

²⁶ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TsDAVOU), f. 4754, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 45; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI), f. 2944, op. 4, d. 280, l. 30.

²⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 738.

[Victory Square].²⁸ Within the course of a year, Paradzhanov had gone from being a “reliable,” but mediocre, director to Dovzhenko Studio’s greatest genius, respected in Kyiv for transforming Ukrainian cinema, and in Moscow for being one of the Thaw-era’s emerging *auteurs*. Yet, this occurred before a single average viewer had seen the film.

After the premiere at the Ukraina movie theatre in downtown Kyiv, organs of film distribution pulled *Shadows* from theatres, for fear of similar incidents and perhaps unsure of Paradzhanov’s future political status. Yet, on 20 September, the film returned, first to the Ukraina, and then to several other locations around Kyiv and the rest of the Soviet Union by the beginning of October.²⁹ At least in the Ukrainian capital, *Shadows* screened for a full six weeks, which was surprising for a film that was not bringing in audiences on the level of contemporaneous genre productions like Ivanov’s comedy on military life, *Kliuchi vid neba* [Keys from Heaven].³⁰ Only works of particular political significance, such as those commemorating Lenin, the Revolution or the Great Patriotic War screened without box office success, which indicated the importance that Derzhkino and the CPU, now under Petro Shelest’s leadership, had placed on Paradzhanov’s film.

Even as *Shadows* and its *auteur* acquired political enemies, who used the film’s poor box office receipts as ammunition in their campaign against Paradzhanov in 1965–1966, Dovzhenko Studio, Derzhkino and Union authorities actively sought recognition for their accomplishments in re-inventing Ukrainian cinema. At the time, Paradzhanov was working on a new film, *Kyivs'ki fresky* [Kyiv Frescoes] however, which ultimately revealed the director’s indifference to Dovzhenko Studio’s national imperative to make films about Ukraine. *Kyiv Frescoes*, which Paradzhanov shot with cinematographer Oleksandr Antypenko in 1965, and which was essentially killed in pre-production, is a series of four self-contained thematic explorations, introduced and concluded with images from the Pechersk district in southern Kyiv, where both the Caves Monastery and Ukraine’s major war memorial are located. Whereas the director was constrained by the Ukrainian literary canon with *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in what he intended as an exploration of the Hutsul ethnoscape, he used *Kyiv Frescoes* for a fuller investigation of film’s aesthetic possibilities by combining his interests in beautiful objects with seemingly random juxtapositions. His justification for the assortment of thematic material contained in *Kyiv Frescoes* insisted that these elements composed the very living material of a city that was both nationally and historically Ukrainian and multi-nationally modern. Yet, in rejecting the very

²⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1581, ark. 59; f. 670, op. 3, spr. 166, ark. 7.

²⁹ For data on screenings, see the movie theatre schedules in *Na ekranakh Kyieva* (later, *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*).

³⁰ For data on ticket sales, see TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 539.

specific dimensions of each of these two sites of meaning-production, Paradzhanov's film appeared as a fractured representation, not of a space of cultural significance, but of his own aesthetic sensibilities. Throughout the project, however, Paradzhanov maintained that the film was intended to represent Kyiv during and after the war, and that he was lending his genius to "contemporary" concerns: the memorialization of the war in Ukraine. When it became evident to everyone that this was not Paradzhanov's real intention with the film, Goskino in particular questioned Paradzhanov's significance. Deputy Chairman Vladimir Baskakov wrote to Derzhkino chairman Sviatoslav Ivanov in August 1965 complaining that there was "no Kyiv" in the screenplay. In September, Ivanov issued a statement that the shooting script could not "be considered a completed and valuable basis for a future film about Kyivans and Kyiv."³¹ With its highly personal and abstract conceptions of the city, Goskino found Paradzhanov's project divorced not only from the ideological basis of the 1965 Victory Day celebrations, but also from the studios' identity within the framework of "national cinema" in the USSR.

At the same time, the director's identity as an *auteur* who had helped forge Dovzhenko Studio's movement away from Stalinist clichés and toward a new model and space of national representation provided him with a free hand in developing the project without the complicated bureaucratic system of double and triple levels of approval for each stage in the production process. When Paradzhanov submitted his screenplay to the studio in April, for example, the Screenplay Editorial Board urged the director to "consider the general conception" of the future film, but issued a broader statement to industry officials to resist any "rude interventions or rigid counsel."³² During a meeting to discuss the screenplay, everyone agreed with Illienko's assessment that this was "pure *auteur* [*avtorskoe*] cinema": "Such a screenplay has appeared because it was the physiological necessity of the author to express [it]. Therefore, the screenplay cannot be bad. It can't be a failure."³³ Paradzhanov continually asserted his intellectual independence, becoming increasingly irate with any suspicion about his intentions. To advance his unorthodox method, he called for the establishment of an "experimental studio [...] in the quest for the new," where filmmakers were allowed to "take risks."³⁴ Paradzhanov's conception of an "experimental studio" sought a method of filmmaking "*vne kollektiva* (outside of the collective)," believing that it could function as an alternative space of cultural production. Even Sigizmund Navrotskii, one of Paradzhanov's

³¹ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 179.

³² TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 4.

³³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 15.

³⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 16.

staunchest political enemies at Dovzhenko Studio, could agree with this principle of *auteurist* production “*vne kollektiva*.”³⁵

Yet, *Kyiv Frescoes* revealed that Paradzhanov was uneasy with making films exclusively for an agenda that privileged “national” representation at the expense of personal expression. After reading the shooting script in July, studio opinion on *Kyiv Frescoes* had shifted to some degree, although the leadership remained committed to promoting the film, largely because of the *auteur* behind it. The manner of critique is instructive for what the studio expected from Paradzhanov after his success with *Shadows*. Poet, screenwriter and one-time nationalist Dmytro Pavlychko, for example, was concerned with the “cosmopolitanism” of the imagery, of its lack of a “Kyivan, a purely Ukrainian image.”³⁶ Writer and head of the Screenplay Editorial Board at the studio, Vasyl' Zemliak, stressed that, like all directors at the studio, “Paradzhanov has to think with Dovzhenko’s categories.”³⁷ The message was clear: Paradzhanov’s personal expression was to be encouraged, but he had to work within the framework of Ukrainian national cinema in his choice of themes and mode of representation, a mode for which he himself had established the precedent with *Shadows*. In its decision to pass the shooting script on to Goskino, the studio opted to emphasize “personal expression” over “national” representation; however, asking Moscow to send the script into production on the basis that such a “risky experiment” was “possible and justified only because of the interesting and original mark of the artist who stands behind it.”³⁸

When Goskino saw the results of Paradzhanov’s “mark,” and those results did not correspond to the tolerated formal edginess and method of presenting nationality contained in *Shadows*, interest in the filmmaker’s character transformed into character assassination. In the midst of this conflict surrounding *Kyiv Frescoes*, the Cinematographers’ Union Presidium met to discuss Paradzhanov’s “conduct.” Ukrainian film critic Viacheslav Kudin noted that the director had “dug himself into a political, moral, and civil hole [during the production of *Kyiv Frescoes*]. We have only to listen to how he conducts conversations among students, how he used foul language around women. If we don’t pay attention to all this, the issue with comrade Paradzhanov can acquire a serious character.”³⁹

As an *auteur* whose work now dealt, to a greater degree, with his own interests and personality, Paradzhanov’s public conduct was subject to the same scrutiny as his political beliefs. During the *Kyiv Frescoes* fiasco, Zemliak characterized Paradzhanov as “one of those artists who easily hypnotizes those

³⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 199, ark. 67; f. 655, op. 1, spr. 268, ark. 165.

³⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 49.

³⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 53.

³⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 22.

³⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 346, ark. 32a.

around him,” and expressed concern that the director was developing an “entourage [*otochennia*]” of young people at the studio.⁴⁰ The presence of an *auteur* like Paradzhanov at Dovzhenko Studio was the principal means through which its management sought to escape from the clichés of Stalinist cinema without compromising the goal of national representation, and to mark off national cinema from genre production. Yet, in Paradzhanov’s increasing refusal to participate in this collective project, with his largely superficial mobilization of the local in *Kyiv Frescoes*, his conduct, which befitted a “cosmopolitan,” grew ever more problematic for the CPU, Goskino and studio authorities.

As Zemliak implied during a discussion of *Kyiv Frescoes*, the director of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* had tarnished his reputation as the bearer of “Dovzhenko’s categories.” While Paradzhanov promoted himself as the hand-picked successor to Dovzhenko, and the studio and press generally played along, he did not believe that “poetic cinema” could be contained by “narrowly national” concerns. He told his colleagues in July 1965:

Seven years ago, when I worked with [Petro] Lubens’kyi [screenwriter on *The Top Guy*], I couldn’t do what I wanted to. I didn’t know how. I was less literate. Today, when there’s Fellini, Illienko, there’s *Father of a Soldier*, when there are five-six great poets in Ukraine...I understand how to start to make new films at the studio, when Osyka and Illienko have appeared at the studio. We have a great big responsibility.⁴¹

While Paradzhanov routinely made use of the term “poetic cinema” to define his work alongside that of Illienko and Osyka, the attachment of the word “Ukrainian” was less essential for him. He was just as much interested in “poetic cinema,” as it applied to other *auteurs* like Fellini, poet-filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Andrei Tarkovskii as he was in self-consciously imitating the “poet of cinema,” Dovzhenko.

As an *auteurist* agenda intersected with issues of national representation in Ukraine, questions emerged about not only who was qualified to represent the republic, but also who was qualified to consume such an image. When celebration of Paradzhanov’s “authentic” image of *Hutsul’shchyna* shifted to complaints about his film’s lack of a mass audience, ostensibly because it was difficult to understand, it was not solely about accusations of “formalism” and audience politics, just as audience politics were not solely about audience desire. After all, the average film from Dovzhenko Studio during the mid-1960s was a box office failure, even more so than at the turn of the decade. For the moment, this remained a problem for the organs of distribution, and did not constitute an explicitly political problem. During 1965 and 1966 the two most contentious films ever made by Dovzhenko Studio were in production, establishing a

⁴⁰ TsDAMLMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 51.

⁴¹ TsDAMLMU, f. 1127, op. 1, spr. 172, ark. 64–65.

polarized atmosphere at the studio. Nonetheless, these films, directed by Illienko *Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh* [A Well for the Thirsty] and Vasyl' Illiashenko *Perevirte svoi hodynnyky* [Co-ordinate Your Watches] went forward with production on the basis of a dual promotion of the personal genius of these director-*auteurs* and the necessity for sophisticated Ukrainian themes. Nonetheless, Derzhkino either took them out of production or shelved them after completion on the basis that they would offend the Ukrainian people with their distorted image of the republic.

THE CONSENSUS OVER THE NATIONAL AUTEUR BREAKS DOWN

Before his career as a cinematographer, the adult Iurii Illienko had been to Ukraine only to visit relatives. His parents were among the “de-nationalized Ukrainians,” as Dziuba put it, engineers who had moved to Moscow after the war. During his VGIK years, Illienko worked with his instructor Iakov Segel' on *Proshchavaite, holuby* [Farewell, My Doves, 1960] and Artur Voitets'kyi on *Des' ie syn* [My Son Is Somewhere, 1962], both at the Yalta Film Studio, before Tsvirkunov recruited him to Kyiv. The young cinematographer was unfamiliar with Ukrainian literature and knew the Ukrainian language poorly at best. Yet, his work would come to be known as the foremost example of “Ukrainian poetic cinema,”⁴² a term that evoked both the principle of national authorship and a specifically Ukrainian artistic patrimony vis-à-vis the works of Dovzhenko.

Although taking place in contemporary Ukraine, *A Well for the Thirsty* makes frequent reference to the Great Patriotic War, both in the hero's memory and in the implicit consequences toward which the film points. Like *Kyiv Frescoes*, Illienko's debut was to fit within the framework of remembering the Ukrainian experience of the war for the twentieth anniversary of Victory Day in 1965. When commenting on the film's significance to officials in Moscow during January 1966, Oleksandr Syzonenko, the film's screenplay editor, noted that, once viewers saw this film, they would understand how difficult it was for the Ukrainian people to advance to victory during the war.⁴³ In this way, he attempted to establish the relevance of the film, both for the domestic viewer (he now admitted that *Shadows* functioned mostly within the realm of “foreign distribution”), and for the political demands of the anniversary year. *A Well for the Thirsty* was to be a film with an “actual theme,” which spoke to and about the “Ukrainian people” in their victory over fascism.⁴⁴

At Dovzhenko Studio, however, poet Ivan Drach's screenplay provoked discussion of the work's rural setting and use of the “old man” figure in the form of the film's main protagonist, Levko Serdiuk. These motifs were tied to

⁴² See, for example, Heorhii Kas'ianov, *Nezhodni: Ukrains'ka intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960–1970-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1995).

⁴³ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 5, d. 136, ll. 70–71.

⁴⁴ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 5, d. 136, l. 158.

traditional representations of Ukrainian folklore, something at once problematic for its association with Stalinist clichés and in line with current projects to reinvent national cinema in Kyiv. Filmmakers, critics and management alike saw in *A Well for the Thirsty* particular promise for its allusions to Dovzhenko's style and literary content. In particular, the central figure of the old man, Levko, recalled Dovzhenko's grandfather, Semen Petrovych, depicted in the late filmmaker's autobiographical vignettes in *Zacharovannaia Desna* [The Enchanted Desna].⁴⁵ Zemliak commented that the film affirmed the studios' return to Dovzhenko.⁴⁶ Screenplay editor M. A. Kyrychenko lauded Drach's adept homage to Dovzhenko's legacy, declaring, "If we're about Dovzhenko's traditions, then this screenplay [...] is a model for how we should follow those traditions."⁴⁷ Filmmaker Volodymyr Denysenko, another student of Dovzhenko, stated that Levko represented the "entire Ukrainian people."⁴⁸ Thus, the studio linked its screenwriting specifically to the film's national significance, seen in its association with the fictionalized space of Dovzhenko's childhood.

The Screenplay Editorial Board, however, identified two problems with the screenplay, the first of which concerned the folkloric quality of Levko in some of the scenes. Novelist Iakiv Bash, for example, was positive about the connections with Dovzhenko's work, but cautioned against Levko's potential association with "*khutorians'ki*" stereotypes. Non-Ukrainians, he averred, "will call him funny, an eccentric, and so on."⁴⁹ A second complaint registered confusion about the complex symbolism and predominance of metaphor contained in the work. In a sense, Drach's colleagues found fault with both the familiar stereotypes and the de-familiarized Ukrainian ethnoscape that the young poet imagined. Drach answered both complaints with the implication that he had written the film for a culturally knowledgeable Ukrainian viewer in mind. In calling the work a "film parable," he identified both the "simplicity" and "locality" of the "genre." He went on:

That is why when they say that it is absolutely necessary to justify [the presence of] the horse [a persistent image in the screenplay], it seems to me that for Ukrainian artists, for the world view of a Ukrainian, the horse is [already] so motivated in Dovzhenko, in Gogol' that you know what it is [...] Whoever knows this will not shrug their shoulders at this horse.⁵⁰

Whereas Drach represented ethnic knowledge, Illienko advanced the *auteurist* pursuit of ethnic discovery in his search for an authentic Ukrainian

⁴⁵ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1780, ark. 10; spr. 1781, ark. 31,34.

⁴⁶ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 64.

⁴⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 61.

⁴⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 26.

⁴⁹ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 41.

⁵⁰ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 47.

ethnoscapes. Illienko might have been ignorant of the specific quality of the “dovzhenkoist” elements in the screenplay, especially since they were drawn from Dovzhenko’s post-cinematic literary career, which enjoyed little success outside of Ukraine. Having only recently completed his work as cinematographer on *Shadows* on location in the Carpathians, Illienko was keen to discover more authenticities in the Ukrainian village that would become the setting of *A Well for the Thirsty*. Sounding like Paradzhanov a year and a half earlier, he told the Screenplay Editorial Board in April 1965:

Only when we find ourselves in the village, when we find this milieu, and the residents of this village will be speaking in their language, when we come upon the architecture, the background of the Ukrainian village, the authentic costumes, when the real thing emerges, when we avoid the make-up in this respect, as we understand it now. Only then can the screenplay be surrounded by the flesh which makes it possible to make the film that we have conceived.

We travelled two thousand kilometres around the villages of Ukraine. We especially picked up old men, and offered them a seat in the car and conversed. We met with analogous situations, of old men, who were in deplorable conditions [underlining in the original document]. But it’s interesting that not one of them complained, they held onto their dignity in speaking about their troubles, and regarded them with a light humour. Levko is written in this way, and not bombastically. Such a method is not eclectic; it is the method of researching character, and I think that in no way can it hinder the screenplay [...] ⁵¹

Illienko presented himself as an amateur ethnographer, who was, in the process, coming to know himself through an exploration of the folklore of real life. He knew the stereotypes, to which the experienced writer, Iakiv Bash, referred, but denied this quality of “colour” its lack of authenticity. When writing about the film upon its re-release in 1987, Illienko continued to tell the story of his journey through Ukraine towards a national consciousness:

I searched for a long time. [...] And there, in the very heart of Ukraine, between Cherkassy and Chigirin, where the Tiamin River flows into the Dnipro, I found the perfect spot [*blagodatyne mesta*]—hills, black earth, such a swirl of earthly paradise. And, moreover, in the valley, I saw sand, real sand, dunes even [*barkhany, diuny*]. And there stood a village, houses [*khaty*] with thatched roofs, and on the roofs—windmills. A Ukrainian village—standing on sand—how unnatural! I felt something in myself like a flash of lightening, like a prophecy—suddenly the essence of the film was revealed. The landscape turned out to be the key, the prototype, the methodology even. ⁵²

Whereas Paradzhanov was interested in questions of the beauty of the human object in nature, Illienko, in his interest in discovery and official ethnography, was interested in discovering a scientific basis for the authentic

⁵¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1781, ark. 43–45.

⁵² Elena Bokshitskaia, “Iurii Il’enko: Plata za kompromiss,” *Iunost’* 9 (1987): 81.

Ukrainian. In this case, Illienko returned to a space near his own birthplace in Cherkasy Oblast. Illienko begins to suggest that the village is not the pastoral idyll, nor does it possess a fairy-tale-like quality of tragedy, as *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* contained. This discovery of an alternative, primordial ethnic self demanded the labour of travel, and a struggle with the unnatural and uncanny contained within Illienko's own native ethnoscape.

As was the case with Paradzhanov a year earlier, however, the press did not help support Illienko's self-promotional agenda. His journey narrative would not be published until *glasnost'*. Only *Na ekranakh Kyieva*, a weekly newspaper most read for its "now showing" information, took any interest in promoting the nascent film. Interestingly, Illienko's longest statement to the press about *A Well for the Thirsty* mentions little except for its connection to *Shadows*: "Its theme is similar to *Shadows*—it's about the same people, the same culture," he says, affirming merely its national credentials.⁵³ Perhaps because *A Well for the Thirsty* lacked an appeal outside of its literary milieu, failing to interest the more visually oriented *Novyny kinoekranu*, it struggled to find a promotional approach. The film suffered further from the absence of a handsome lead like Mykolaichuk and concerns that Illienko's own *auteurist* narrative would fall flat with potential audiences. Ultimately, Illienko and his film failed to find visibility, and most readers could discover it only through a series of condemnations published in the final week of July 1966 in *Radians'ka Ukraina*, *Kul'tura i zhyttia*, and in September in *Novyny kinoekranu* (the latter a reprint from *Radians'ka Ukraina*).⁵⁴

Although Illienko remained a core member of the studio collective after his political failure with *A Well for the Thirsty*, proving that his *auteurist* and national credibility remained solid, Vasyl' Illiashenko came out of 1966 a failed *auteur* due to his work on *Co-ordinate Your Watches*. Illiashenko intended his film as a tribute to three poets who died on the Ukrainian Front during World War II and were posthumously accepted into the Ukrainian Writers' Union in spring 1962.⁵⁵ Dovzhenko Studio's Artistic Council was shocked at Illiashenko's audacity and utter pretension in one particular dream sequence, which imagined the three poets crucified on an embankment above the Dnipro. Zemliak, who had served as a partisan commander during the war, viewed such religious imagery as completely unacceptable, and found the scene itself "annoying."⁵⁶ Ignoring these complaints about the film, Illiashenko launched into an explanation of the authorial principles at work in *Co-ordinate Your Watches*: "I had faith only in myself. I had no intention of hiding behind

⁵³ "Interv"iu daie Iurii Ill'ienko," *Na ekranakh Kyieva* 9 October 1965: 1.

⁵⁴ *Radians'ka Ukraina* 30 July 1966; *Kul'tura i zhyttia* 31 July 1966; "Vysoka vidpovidal'nist' maistriv ekranu," *Novyny kinoekranu* 9 (1966): 1.

⁵⁵ See the shooting script: RGALI, f. 2944, op. 6, d. 503.

⁵⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 60.

[teacher Sergei] Gerasimov's wide back. I don't even follow his school. During my studies at VGIK I had my own theory: art is not a representation of life, but an allegory of life."⁵⁷

In alluding to his supposedly non-conformist school days during a meeting to discuss what was supposed to be a mature project, Illiashenko appeared hopelessly naïve and undependable. Tsvirkunov ended the discussion, stating that the young director "undermined our faith in him as a person."⁵⁸ Later in the week, on 25 December, shooting ended. Three days later, Gerasimov arrived from Moscow to discuss what to do with the film. Much of Illiashenko's material, he said, possessed an "artificial sentimentality, in the tradition of Ukrainian melodrama."⁵⁹ Paradzhanov, also present at the meeting, stated, "The director arranges [the film] incompetently."⁶⁰ He heralded the film as "*vne kollektiva*," but called the director's lack of talent "criminal."⁶¹ Instead of comparisons to *Shadows* and Dovzhenko, Paradzhanov accused Illiashenko of plagiarism, along with a deployment of clichés and Ukrainian stereotypes. To him, *Co-ordinate Your Watches* seemed to confirm Andrei Tarkovskii's warning that "poetic cinema [...] easily falls into pretentiousness."⁶² More damning, however, was screenwriter Lina Kostenko's statement that, "I could have expected something unpleasant, but not such serious artistic miscalculations [...] It's tasteless."⁶³ Thus, in the final dispute over representational knowledge, nationality was conflated with generation and questions of film style.

By April 1966, Illiashenko was accused of being a fraud and would never recover his reputation in Ukrainian cinema. The reasons for this are not obvious, but indicate that the studio continued to take seriously questions of personal authorship. In his defence of *Co-ordinate Your Watches*, Illiashenko also brought up issues of film authorship, but with his additional themes of the cult of personality and generational divide, the bread and butter of Thaw culture, he seemed to repeat tired clichés at this late a date.

Thereafter, studio and Goskino authorities would become more critical of the *auteurist* agenda that had characterized the studio since Tsvirkunov's tenure as managing director, associated as it now was with a certain youthful dilettantism with regard to the nationality question. Illiashenko faded into obscurity at the studio after his failure with *Co-ordinate Your Watches*, and only

⁵⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 113.

⁵⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 118.

⁵⁹ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 90.

⁶⁰ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 93–94.

⁶¹ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1783, ark. 93.

⁶² TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1783, ark.124–26, 129; Andrei Tarkovskii, "Mezhdu dvumia fil'mami," *Iskusstvo kino* 11 (1962): 83.

⁶³ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, spr. 313, ark. 95

returned to make run-of-the-mill production dramas such as *Krutyi horyzont* [Steep Horizon, 1971] about the lives of Donbas miners, and *Sered lita* [Summertime, 1975] about a *sovkhos* that tests an experimental crop on its land; these later projects were written by older, politically mature members of the screenwriting staff.

In contrast, while the CPU shelved and condemned the film as bourgeois nationalist propaganda and the studio had to repay Gosbank the 268,000 rubles spent on its production, *A Well for the Thirsty* nonetheless affirmed Illienko's and Drach's reputations as brilliant *auteurs*.⁶⁴ In April 1966, as Drach returned from L'viv, he met with Illienko to discuss the director's idea for a new film, this one based on Gogol's *Večer nakanune Ivana Kupala* [St. John's Eve], promoted as a mix of "folkloric fantasy [...] with the *realia* of everyday life."⁶⁵ At the same moment when the studio was abandoning *A Well for the Thirsty* as a "politically dangerous" project, they were approving Illienko's new film, a film completely at odds with both the traditional Soviet adaptations of the "realist" Gogol' of the St. Petersburg years, such as Aleksei Batalov's *Shinel'* [The Overcoat, 1959] and the merely comical Gogol' adaptations intended for children, such as Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg's *Noch' pered Rozhdestvom* [The Night Before Christmas, 1951].⁶⁶ While Illienko had failed to produce an image of the contemporary Ukrainian ethnoscape, he returned to the relatively safe realm of adapting a classic Ukrainian text.

At the same time, Illienko continued to cultivate the image of an *auteur*, both at the studio and in the press, which was increasingly met with coldness on the part of the studio collective. During a March 1968 studio conference, Dovzhenko Studio set designer Volodymyr Tsyrlin brought up the increasingly under-represented topic of "*izobrazitel'nost'* (visuality)" in cinema. Illienko added to this, saying, "It is not cinema that has harmed film dramaturgy, but in particular it is film dramaturgy that has harmed film art [...] They want to rob cinema of the right to be an independent art form and to make it an appendage of literature."⁶⁷

Tsyrlin and Illienko expanded on this "offence" to film art in a series of articles in the studio newspaper, *Za Radians'kyi fil'm* [For Soviet Film], during late 1969. Illienko opened the debate on 8 October with "The Problem of

⁶⁴ On the repayment, see TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, spr. 77, ark. 58.

⁶⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1991, ark. 27.

⁶⁶ Sergei Gerasimov, for example, counterpoised Gogol' the "fiery romantic" in his earlier "Little Russian" tales and Gogol' the "inexorable realist" of his later, more famous works, "Shinel'" [The Overcoat], "Nos" [The Nose], and *Mertvye dushi* [Dead Souls], suggesting in the process the writer's own progression from Ukrainian spontaneity to Russian consciousness. Sergei Gerasimov, "Razmyshlenie o molodykh," *Iskusstvo kino* 2 (1960): 23.

⁶⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 2159, ark. 92.

Visuality and the Tendency of Criticism,” where he argued that, while Ukrainian cinema had become increasingly “visual” during the 1960s, film critics continued to write about it as if it were a “literary” form, with their examination limited to narrative and “philosophy.” Tsyrlin contended that critics refused to discuss a film’s “visual culture” because they remained unknowledgeable about its functioning. Moreover, filmmakers and screenwriters needed to study painting and other visual arts, in addition to literature, to understand how to make interesting pictures.⁶⁸ In a somewhat self-serving gesture, Illienko continued the discussion on 22 October in his article, “Trinity/Triumvirate,” where he referred to the profession of cinematographer as the most important of a film’s three “authors,” alongside the director and screenwriter.⁶⁹ Pointedly calling the cinematographer turned director turned screenwriter a “*samoznavets*’,”⁷⁰ film critic Iurii Levin countered in the 19 November issue that Illienko’s idea was “original, but not credible.” As Levin perceived the issue, perhaps correctly, Illienko continued to adhere to a principle of “*vne kollektiva*” authorship. Just as Truffaut understood in 1954 when he wrote “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema,” however, Illienko knew that the industry’s focus on screenplay production meant not only disinterest in visual experimentation—the very basis for “poetic cinema”—but also greater inflexibility in relation to thematic plans and the homogenization of film narrative and structure. The delineation of a “screenplay problem” was seen in the late 1960s as an official policy meant not only to undo the principle of film authorship of the mid 1960s, but also to erode studio independence by importing Moscow-produced, Russian-language texts.

The following year, a high-profile article written by critic Tatiana Ivanova appeared in *Sovetskii ekran* (and re-printed in *Ekran*, an annual almanac of Soviet film criticism), which accused Illienko, along with director Tenghiz Abuladze, of refusing to address the Soviet viewer in their films. She called Illienko’s *St. John’s Eve* “almost insurmountably difficult to comprehend.” She went on to say that, “The overabundance of effects and colours brought down on the viewer, and the uncontrollable intensity of the author’s imagination, sometimes, perhaps, ‘doles out too much’ (*daiushchei lishku*)” to the viewer.⁷¹ While such criticism had been typical of official cultural policy in the Soviet Union since the late-1920s, here Ivanova made a specific connection between national cinema and *auteurism*, both now associated with elitism and the authors’ own particularistic concerns. As First Secretary of the Soviet

⁶⁸ V. Tsyrlin, “Problema zobrazhennia i tendentsiia krytyky,” *Za Radians'kyi fil'm* 8 October 1969: 2.

⁶⁹ Iurii Illienko, “Tryiednist’,” *Za Radians'kyi fil'm* 22 October 1969: 2.

⁷⁰ The Ukrainian word *samoznavets*’ literally means, “a scholar of oneself.”

⁷¹ T. Ivanova, “Trudno—eshche trudnee—sovsem trudno,” *Ekran* 69–70 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970) 91.

Cinematographers Union, Lev Kulidzhanov, put it, such films from the studios of the republics succeeded on the “festival circuit” but did nothing to help “solve the problem of the viewer.”⁷² Hence, “national cinema” was not for the consumption of a Soviet audience, but rather for foreigners, a critique only one step away from accusations of “bourgeois nationalism.”

During the 1970s, authorities and critics advocated a return to national cinema as genre cinema, with films that did not exactly ignore the regional independence that studios in the republics had established over the previous decade, but ones that were assured to bring in a mass audience. Exceptions to this may be found in Central Asia, but for Ukraine, the era of the national *auteur* was over by the end of the 1960s. While Illienko (and Abuladze, for that matter) continued to make very unique films *about* Ukraine (and Georgia), he was under constant pressure to attach a clear socio-political theme and a linear narrative to them. Illienko, with Mykolaichuk as co-screenwriter and lead actor, made the anti-nationalist *Bilyi ptakh z chornoju oznakoiu* [The White Bird with a Black Mark, 1971] in part to address the growing division between *auteurism*, box office success and the national theme, but only achieved the same results: festival acclaim (this time, however, in Moscow), continued accusations of nationalism (this time from L'viv), and ultimately box office failure.

UKRAINE AND MODERNISM: QUESTIONING AN “ELITE” AGENDA

In many ways, Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* had established a consensus in Ukraine. Yet that consensus broke down, based in part on the very claims to authenticity that its filmmakers made, both in public forums, and within the film's formal arrangement. CPU officials and spectators alike began asking why such an “authentic” image of the Ukrainian people needed to be so unusual and complex. Were representations of the Ukrainian people so “difficult to master,” as First Secretary of the Cinematographers Union, Tymofii Levchuk, once stated, or were Paradzhanov and his followers more interested in their own “difficult” aesthetic questions than in Ukraine? With “Ukrainian poetic cinema” implicated in dissident politics, perhaps only by association, the unfamiliar ethnoscape that it presented on screen to a specific public now appeared as a potential threat. If *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* constituted the height of “authentic” representation, why did Ukrainian spectators not accept it as an image of themselves? In part, the fault lay in promoting a narrative of self-discovery, which celebrated the *auteur* as the creator of national meaning, asking the viewer to see the film as its author did. Moreover, in promotional materials, these films asked Ukrainian audiences to assimilate the unfamiliar as part of their own national identity, rather than accept the canonical objects, events and meanings contained in the “Friendship of Peoples” scenario. Many Ukrainians, like one engineer in Dnipropetrovsk who wrote with dismay and

⁷² RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 305, l. 61.

frustration upon watching *Shadows*, did not see the importance of defining Ukrainians as so fundamentally strange and different from Russians. Did this not diminish the importance of other potential identifications as Ukrainian or with Ukraine?

The dispute over Dovzhenko's legacy and his artistic intentions encapsulates the problem: Was Dovzhenko important for Ukraine because he mobilized a modernist aesthetic to reveal the essence of a unique "national character," or was he important because he showed how and why the great events of the twentieth century—the Revolution, formation of the Soviet Union, industrialization, collectivization, and the Great Patriotic War—happened in Ukraine? There was general consensus among Ukrainian artists and intellectuals during the 1960s as to the filmmaker's specific importance for the republic, but these questions of artistic representation touched on the very root of the problem of Ukrainian difference and how, and to whom, to show it. A filmmaker's stylistic choices could be used to render a film's subject matter as familiar and comprehensible or unusual and impenetrable, which, in the present case, had implications for spatial relations between Ukraine and Russia, and between the everyday and the extraordinary. As a Ukrainian modernist filmmaker, Dovzhenko rendered the everyday *as* extraordinary in his delineation of a unique Ukrainian "national character." As a Soviet and socialist realist filmmaker, however, he was invested in showing how Ukrainians participated in the revolutionary process, albeit within their own particular cultural, social and political context. Both positions on the legacy of the filmmaker and his work rejected the earlier notion of Ukrainian difference as backwardness, but the latter asserted a claim to active Ukrainian participation in modern politics and social processes, whereas the former affirmed, through Dovzhenko's role as an *auteur*, Ukraine's participation in a pan-Soviet and pan-European modernism.

During the 1960s, Dovzhenko Studio adopted an *auteurist* model for creating "national cinema," largely because its new leadership viewed the history of Ukrainian cinema in terms of personality and the mark of particular directors, most notably that of Dovzhenko himself. The problem with this model was that it only had the traditional repressive powers of the Soviet state to regulate thematic interest. The studio leadership gave young filmmakers like Illienko and Illiashenko (not to mention older filmmakers like Paradzhanov and Denysenko) the green light based on a dual commitment to developing young talent and to an *auteurist* agenda as a means to transform the studio's reputation. The conflict that emerged from the production of Illiashenko's and Illienko's debut films was between different conceptions of authorship, and their commitment to both modernism and the nationality question. And yet, the directors were less interested in literary descriptions of rural everyday life in the republic than in developing a visual style that produced a de-familiarized Ukrainian ethnoscape divorced from domesticated Stalinist folklore and engaged with modernist, "dovzhenkoist" poetics.

While Ukrainian cinema from the 1960s continues to be celebrated, we are beginning to see Ukrainian cinema developing new national narratives, especially over the course of the last decade, which rely on genre conventions and Hollywood-style storytelling to convey a sometimes nationalist message about the past in particular. Oles' Ianchuk's films about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) are but the most popular example of this technique. Furthermore, classic Ukrainian cinema has recently been commemorated in contemporary Ukraine. In 1999, a statue dedicated to Viktor Ivanov's 1961 comedy, *After Two Hares* appeared on the tourist stretch of Andriievs'kyi uzviz in Kyiv. In 2001 a monument to fighter pilots was unveiled in Kyiv featuring the likeness of Ukrainian actor/director Leonid Bykov in his 1973 war film *V bii idut' til'ky "staryky"* [Only the Old Go to Battle]. Dovzhenko Studio produced both of these popular films, which straddled the 1960s, an era that continues to be influential in Ukraine, and continues to invite analysis. However, with its *auteur* agenda, Ukrainian cinema in the 1960s in no way sought or achieved long-term consensus about the meaning or purpose of national cinema.

Mayhill Fowler

A Cesspool of Intrigue: Les' Kurbas, Oleksandr Dovzhenko, and the Film Industry in 1920s Soviet Ukraine¹

ABSTRACT: In the 1920s, theatre innovator Oleksandr “Les’” Kurbas (1887–1937) made three short films for the *Vseukrains'ke Foto-Kino Upravlinnia* [All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration] or VUFKU. His film career was short-lived, however. Lambasting the VUFKU as a “cesspool of intrigue,” Kurbas left film for good to focus exclusively on theatre. His films never gained wide release, and have since been lost. Kurbas’s brief foray into cinema could therefore be considered a non-moment, yet because Kurbas objected not to the medium itself, but to the institutions creating film, his encounter with the VUFKU illuminates the larger process of the formation of the Soviet film industry. Kurbas’s departure from film occurred simultaneously with the arrival of Oleksandr Dovzhenko (1894–1956), and their crossed paths show how the structure of the Soviet film industry shaped artistic possibilities. The institutional transformation of VUFKU into *Ukrainfilm*, the regional affiliate of the all-Union film monopoly *Soiuzkino*, signalled a cultural shift: from a film industry in Soviet Ukraine, to a Soviet Ukrainian film industry, one both part of wider Soviet cinema production and slotted specifically into a Ukrainian niche. Ultimately, this article argues that this process of consolidation and centralization in the film industry complicated the development of culture in the Soviet regions.

RÉSUMÉ : Dans les années 20, le pionnier en théâtre Oleksandr « Les' » Kourbas (1887–1937) créa trois courts métrages pour l'Association ukrainienne de photographie et de cinéma (*Vseukrains'ke Foto-Kino Upravlinnia*, ou VUFKU). Sa carrière cinématographique ne dura guère: Kourbas considéra la VUFKU comme “pleine d'intrigues de bas-fonds” et quitta le cinéma pour de bon afin de se concentrer uniquement sur le théâtre. Ses courts métrages ne reçurent jamais l'attention du public et furent perdus. La brève tentative cinématographique de Kourbas ne peut donc être considérée qu'une parenthèse. Toutefois, puisque Kourbas s'opposait non pas au média lui-même, mais bien à l'institution qui produisait les films, sa confrontation avec la VUFKU fait la lumière sur le vaste processus de création de l'industrie cinématographique soviétique. Le départ de Kourbas du cinéma arriva en même temps que l'arrivée d'Oleksandr Dovjenko (1894–1956) et leurs chemins se croisèrent, ce qui démontre la façon dont l'industrie filmique soviétique favorisait certaines ouvertures artistiques. La transformation institutionnelle de la VUFKU en *Ukrainfilm*, la filiale régionale du monopole cinématographique pansoviétique *Soiuzkino*, indique un changement culturel. D'une industrie cinématographique en Ukraine soviétique, on passe

¹ I would like to thank Serhy Yekelchuk for allowing me this opportunity, as well as the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments. All translations are my own; I follow the guidelines of this issue for transliteration (i.e., *Oleksandr Dovzhenko*) and use the Ukrainian transliteration of names for the sake of consistency.

à une industrie soviétique ukrainienne du cinéma, qui faisait à la fois partie de l'industrie cinématographique soviétique et se trouvait assignée à un créneau spécifique ukrainien. Enfin, cet article soutient que le processus de consolidation et de centralisation compliquait le développement culturel des régions soviétiques.

From summer 1924 to early 1925 theatre innovator Oleksandr “Les” Kurbas (1887–1937) made three short films for the *Vseukrains'ke Foto-Kino Upravlinnia* [All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration] or VUFKU; however, his film career was short-lived. A student noted that Kurbas, in exasperation, called VUFKU, a “cesspool of intrigue,” and indeed Kurbas soon left the film industry for good to focus exclusively on theatre for the rest of his life. The three short films never gained wide release, and they have since been lost. Kurbas’s brief foray into cinema could therefore be considered a non-moment, since he made but a handful of short films, none of which survive. However, because Kurbas objected not to the medium of film, but to the institutions creating film in the early Soviet Union, his encounter with VUFKU illuminates the larger processes of the formation of the Soviet film industry. Moreover, Kurbas’s departure from film occurred almost simultaneously with the arrival of Oleksandr Dovzhenko (1894–1956) into film, and their crossed paths show how the structure of the Soviet motion picture industry shaped artistic possibilities.

Specifically, Soviet cinema was eventually consolidated and centralized into an all-Union industry. This entailed a transition from VUFKU to *Ukrainfilm*, the regional affiliate of the all-Union film monopoly *Soiuzkino*, centred in Moscow. From an autonomous motion picture organization to a provincial affiliate, this institutional transformation signalled a cultural shift: from a film industry in Soviet Ukraine, to a Soviet Ukrainian film industry, one both part of wider Soviet cinema production and one slotted specifically into a Ukrainian niche. Ultimately, this process of consolidation and centralization complicated the development of culture in the Soviet regions. Viewed through this lens, Kurbas’s departure from film explains as much about the developing Soviet mass cultural industry as the films themselves might have done.²

Kurbas’s contributions to cinema in early Soviet Ukraine have now been well documented, both in memoirs and in scholarship. However, a more institutional approach reveals how the changing context of creating film shaped

² On Kurbas and film see Leonid Poltava, “Les’ Kurbas i ukrains'ka kinematohrafiia,” *Moloda Ukraina* 47–48 (1958): 23–24; Liudmyla Pukha, *Kinematohraf i Les' Kurbas* (Cherkasy: Siiach, 1999); Lubomir Hosejko, *Histoire du cinéma ukrainien, 1896–1995* (Dié: Editions à Dié, 2001) 28–29; Virlana Tkacz, “Les’ Kurbas’ Early Work at the Berezil: From Bodies in Motion to Performing the Invisible,” and Irena Makaryk, “Dissecting Time/Space: The Scottish Play and the New Technology of Film,” in *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, edited by Virlana Tkacz and Irena Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 362–385; 443–477.

the possibilities for artistic expression. Dovzhenko might appear to be less an exception (although his talent was exceptional) and more the perfect solution to creating high culture within a mass medium in the Soviet Union. While artists and officials experienced the centralization of culture in the Soviet Union as a loss, creating the Soviet film industry may have in fact demanded such centralization. Although Kurbas may not have flourished in this centralized industry of mass culture, Dovzhenko most certainly did.³

KURBAS AND FILM IN SOVIET UKRAINE

Film was not Kurbas's medium. Not because he could not express himself in the new genre; on the contrary, memoirs suggest that he was quite innovative in his directorial choices. But aesthetic experimentation was subject to officialdom and its disorganization to a much greater extent in film than in other artistic fields, such as live theatre. Although built on the remnants of the pre-revolutionary film factories from the southern Russian Empire, the post-revolutionary film system lacked money, cadres, equipment and direction. VUFKU was indeed, as Kurbas charged, awash in intrigue that complicated creative production. These intrigues circulated in three overlapping layers: within the organization of VUFKU itself, between VUFKU and other institutions (such as the local Party and police institutions), and between VUFKU and the film organizations in Moscow.⁴

VUFKU was a relatively new institution, founded only in 1922 and consisting of a directorate in Kharkiv, then the capital of Soviet Ukraine, and film studios in both Odesa and Yalta. Staffed by cadres who appear to have been less than passionate about creating a new film industry, VUFKU suffered from disorganization. A report in 1923 uncovered cases of embezzlement; VUFKU's chief accountant, the report suggested, was using VUFKU funds to throw elaborate parties, at one of which a guest got so drunk he fell off a bridge and died. The chief accountant in question explained to the commission investigating the affair, "I spit on VUFKU." The head of VUFKU at the time, V. Prokofev, actually wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine [CP(b)U] that he was unable to work for the organization any longer and wished to resign.⁵

³ On memoirs see Oleksandr Perekuda, "Kinematohraf i Les' Kurbas," in *Les' Kurbas: Spohady suchasnykiv*, edited by Vasyl' Vasyl'ko (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1967) 178–221; on Dovzhenko, the literature is massive, but see Serhii Trymbach, *Zahybel' bohiv* (Vinnytsia: Hlobus), 2007); on the benefits of an institutional approach to Soviet film I build on the work of Vance Kepley, "Federal Cinema: The Soviet Film Industry, 1924–1941," *Film History* 8.3 (1996) 344–356; and Bohdan Nebesio, "Competition from Ukraine: VUFKU and the Soviet Film Industry in the 1920s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 29.2 (2009) 159–180.

⁴ On Kurbas's innovation see Perekuda for his memoirs and Makaryk for an analysis of his directorial choices.

⁵ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob"ednan' Ukrainy [TsDAHOU] f. 1, op.

In late 1923, Zakhar Khelmno took over the reins at VUFKU in Kharkiv from Prokof'ev. Overall, staff turnover characterized the organization throughout the 1920s. Khelmno lasted longer than his predecessor, but was eventually replaced by Oleksandr Shub, who was replaced by Ivan Vorobiov, who was replaced by at least two more executives by 1929. The leadership of the Odesa factory was no different, with a similar litany of names; leadership turned over three times between Mykhailo Kapchyns'kyi's departure in fall 1924 and the arrival of Pavlo Nechesa in late 1925. Complaints and denunciations to both the police (at this point, the GPU) and the Central Committee of the CP(b)U accompanied each change in management. As Nechesa notes in his memoirs, these rapid-fire changes in management ensured that no one felt responsible for or invested in either VUFKU or any of its film studios because new cadres never knew when they might be replaced.⁶

It was into this unstable environment that Kurbas entered in March 1924. Khelmno hired Kurbas to direct a trilogy of shorts as part of a series: *Vendetta* (or, *An Eye for an Eye*), *Macdonald*, and *Arsenal'si* [The Arsenal Workers]. Nechesa claimed that during his tenure, Khelmno attempted to improve the organization; therefore hiring Kurbas, who already had the reputation of a leading artistic innovator in Soviet Ukraine, would have made perfect sense. Kurbas appears to have had both financial and artistic goals in mind in signing this new contract. On the one hand, he would receive 500 rubles per month from VUFKU, which was 200 rubles more than he was making as artistic director of the Berezil' Theatre. Kurbas needed the money not only for himself, but also for his theatre company and its actors, whom he hoped VUFKU would hire. Company members received no salary when theatre productions were on hiatus, and so filming during the off-season would bring welcome income to these starving artists. On the other hand, Kurbas seems to have also been intrigued by the artistic possibilities of the new medium of cinema.⁷

However, Kurbas worked at VUFKU precisely when it was undergoing this continuous turnover of personnel, and the chaos in management directly affected Kurbas's creative possibilities. For example, while Kurbas was filming *Vendetta* near Vinnytsia, in August 1924, the film crew ran out of funds while waiting for money to arrive from Odesa. They received a telegram from studio head Kapchyns'kyi: "No money. Hang in there. Kapchyns'kyi." Funds eventually

20, spr. 1779, ark. 43–72; I use CP(b)U for Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine.

⁶ Pavlo Nechesa, "A radians'ke kino vse-take bude!" in *Kriz' kinoob'iektiv chasu: spohady veteraniv ukrains'koho kino* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1970) 188–189, 200; Odesa Film Studio head A. Greimer, for example, was denounced for having too lavishly furnished his apartment on VUFKU's tab, see TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2027, ark. 33.

⁷ Derzhavnyi muzei teatral'noho, muzychnoho ta kino-mystetstva Ukrainy [DMTMKU] f. "Vasyl' Vasyl'ko" 10368 (shchodennyk volume vi), ark. 9; Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy [TsDAVOU] f. 166, op. 5, spr. 435, ark. 22–24; Nechesa 161–212, here 178.

arrived, but one wonders what had happened to the money since Kapchyn's'kyi was soon removed for alleged financial misconduct. A GPU report sent to the Central Committee of the CP(b)U stated that Kapchyn's'kyi had been traveling around Soviet Ukraine “in great comfort” making personal connections to increase his sphere of interest in business negotiations. Moreover, because he failed to keep up with fire safety, 297 films were destroyed under his tenure as studio director. The author of the memo further claimed that the film institute organized under Kapchyn's'kyi more resembled a brothel than a serious pedagogical institution. Whether true or not, the denunciations point to the chaotic nature of VUFKU as an institution. The allegation of “increasing his sphere of interest” and making personal connections around Ukraine suggests that Kapchyn's'kyi was making his own distribution deals with movie exhibitors and trying to sidestep VUFKU's Kharkiv directorate. Kurbas's complaint about the “cesspool of intrigue” occurred simultaneously with Kapchyn's'kyi's exit from the film studio.⁸

Kurbas's ability to control aesthetic output was dependent on the chaotic organization of VUFKU. Kurbas's experience as a film director, in this way, differed radically from his experience as a theatre director of his own company. Soviet theatre depended on financial support from the party-state at the local and union levels, to be sure, but Kurbas commanded authority in the rehearsal room and during performances. Memoirs attest to Kurbas's micro-managing style and his involvement in all artistic decisions related to his company. In other words, at least in the early 1920s, Kurbas controlled the aesthetics of his theatre. Without financial support the company could not perform, of course, but they could certainly prepare new work regardless of official involvement. While Kurbas and others were working on films for VUFKU, the rest of his company lived communally in Odesa, working on projects by themselves for the coming theatrical season. Unlike in theatre, financial mismanagement could disrupt filming, as cinema required expensive film stock purchased from abroad (the distribution of which demanded extensive coordination among officials) and officials were directly involved in the final cut of films.⁹

⁸ TsDAHOU, f. 1. op. 20, spr. 2027, ark. 48–48; the charge of burning 297 films seems excessive, and I wonder if the author of this denunciation meant 297 *metres* of film; Nebesio 168; a good biography of Kapchyn's'kyi, who was Jewish, can be found in *Evreiskie kinematografisty v Ukraine, 1917–1945*, edited by Iurii Morozov and Tatiana Derevianko (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2004) 120–125; Vasyl'ko 34 (date recorded as 15 August 1924); Greimer took up work 17 August 1924, see, TsDAVOU f. 2708, op. 1, spr. 71, ark. 17; on the telegram see Oleksandr Perehuda, “Kinematohraf i Les' Kurbas,” *Kriz' kinoob'iektyv* (1970) 42.

⁹ Vasyl' Vasyl'ko's diaries at DMTMKU, as well as Vasyl'ko's compilation of Kurbas's memoirs, attest to Kurbas's passion towards theatre, as well as his demands on his actors, see *Les' Kurbas: Spohady suchasnykiv*, edited by Vasyl' Vasyl'ko (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1967); see also the stenograms of the meetings of the directing lab run by Kurbas in *Les'*

But Kurbas's cinematic plans were subject not only to VUFKU personnel, but also to infighting between VUFKU and several other institutions that had jurisdiction over the film industry. No one yet knew who would control artistic decision-making: artists and directors themselves, officials managing the film studios and supervising production on a day-to-day basis, those staffing VUFKU's leadership in Kharkiv, or the Party itself. Kurbas's cinematic efforts were caught in the crossfire between these competing institutions.

After *Vendetta* Kurbas directed *Macdonald*, a satire on Britain's first Labour government inspired by the 1924 general strike. Dmytro Buz'ko, member of the VUFKU directorate in Kharkiv, wrote the screenplay. Apparently, when Kurbas initially read Buz'ko's screenplay, he felt it was of such poor quality he could not possibly direct it. It seems that the new manager of the Odesa Film Studio, A. Greimer, gave him the go ahead to interpret the storyline as he wished. Kurbas then reworked the script, adding several "special effects" (for example, when the British industrialists are fighting, King George and his little dog, sitting together on the throne, start to shake and eventually shoot up through the roof). After the picture's completion, the Odesa Province Political Enlightenment Committee concluded that, "the method of Comrade Kurbas's work deserved great attention" and admired the picture's "interesting form and dynamic."¹⁰

But Kharkiv did not like the film at all. Buz'ko was displeased with how his screenplay had been altered. With Buz'ko on the board of the VUFKU, it declared that it could not imagine, "a greater filth [*gadost*'] than what you sent us." Khelmno then wrote to Greimer that he should never have allowed Kurbas to make such changes in Buz'ko's screenplay and that VUFKU had decided not to release the film outside of Odesa unless it was remade. Greimer responded that if *Macdonald* were counter-revolutionary, then the CP(b)U should remove him from his position. He also accused the Kharkiv directorate of potentially damaging the future of film in Soviet Ukraine, blaming a certain Vainer, a secretary at VUFKU in Kharkiv, who had sent VUFKU's negative review of the film to the entire Odesa Studio. This review had angered Kurbas so much that he threatened to leave the film industry. *Macdonald* never had a wide release and Kurbas's work remained stuck in the crossfire between the studio in Odesa and the executives in Kharkiv. It is then no wonder that a director famous for

Kurbas: Filosofiia teatru, edited by Mykola Labins'kyi (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2000) 312–550; I emphasize here that Kurbas had the ability to control the aesthetic direction of his theatre largely in the 1920s—by the early 1930s the Party-state became much more involved in aesthetics; for a lengthy Commissariat of Enlightenment discussion of Isaak Babel's *Benia Krik*, see TsDAVOU f. 166, op. 5, spr. 338, ark. 21.

¹⁰ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 20, spr. 1852, ark. 48; Perekhuda 182–184.

controlling every aspect of production should call the VUFKU a “cesspool of intrigue.”¹¹

However, Kurbas’s experience was not unique. Tension between the Odesa Province Executive Committee (*Gubvykonkom*), the GPU, and VUFKU was evident in the reaction to Petr Chardynin’s *Ukrazia*, an action-adventure spy epic set during the Civil War in Odesa. The similarity in complaints and threats between the Odesa apparat and VUFKU suggest that this lack of clarity over aesthetic authority characterized much of early Soviet film. The Odesa Province Executive Committee screened Chardynin’s film and demanded changes from the pre-revolutionary director. So it also seems, did the Odesa division of the GPU. Consequently, Chardynin reshot significant portions of the film. These changes allowed Kharkiv to approve the film for wide distribution, but also meant that 1159 metres of film (a large quantity of a precious commodity) were wasted. Khelmno blamed Greimer, who had involved himself with Chardynin’s directing, and Greimer blamed Khelmno. These back-and-forth denunciations underscore the lack of clarity over whether the final product was the responsibility of the director, the film studio, the executive directorate, Odesa, Kharkiv, the Party, or the GPU.¹²

The *Macdonald* scandal seems to have turned Kurbas away from film; soon after production ended, Kurbas returned to theatre full-time for the 1925–1926 season. Vasyl' Vasyl'ko noted that everyone at the Berezil' felt they could do better creative work in theatre. The transcripts of Kurbas’s directors’ workshop show a conversation regarding the Berezil' Theatre Company’s future in film, in which Kurbas concludes that his actors may involve themselves in film, so long as they were fully prepared for their theatre work first. Such rigor suggests that his priorities lay in theatre, not film. Indeed, Vasyl'ko’s diary illustrates just how different the actual creation of theatre and film were at that time. Vasyl'ko wondered about the endless waiting, the headaches and temporary blindness caused by spotlights, and the artificiality of acting in front of the camera: “You can’t really feel anything, because you are so tortured that even if you were the most internally-focused actor, you are just exhausted and you can’t convey direct inner life.” Vasyl'ko, it seems, was just as disenchanted with the medium of film as Kurbas. In early 1925 Kurbas made *The Arsenal Workers*, a version of

¹¹ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 20, spr. 1852, ark. 48–49.

¹² Nor was it clear whether the authority to pay writers and artists lay with the studio or the directorate; for example, Babel' wrote his wife around this time that he had to go from Odesa to Kharkiv in order to get paid—he seems to have thought he would get paid at the film studio, where he was working, but actually had to go to Kharkiv, where the central VUFKU administration was, in order to get his payment, see Isaak Babel', *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moskva: Vremia, 2006) 4: 149.

the Arsenal uprising, to finish out his contract with VUFKU, however this marked the end of his film career.¹³

Instead of continuing to work in film or with VUFKU, Kurbas adapted film techniques to fit his theatrical productions by experimenting with cinematic technology on stage. He had already used filmed sequences in his 1923 *Jimmie Higgins*, but he developed this methodology further in his 1930 production of Ivan Mykytenko's *Dyktatura* [Dictatorship]. The play used a projector to depict the central character's dream sequence, however Kurbas combined this new technology with techniques that could not be used in film. In *Dictatorship*, for example, actors mimed riding on horseback, which created an effect that always elicited audience response. Kurbas's notion of *peretvorennia* [transformation], which was central to his theatrical methodology, involved actors using physical gestures that would communicate to the audience the essence of the character, repeating those gestures throughout a performance. *Peretvorennia* assumed a tangible connection with an audience sitting in front of live actors, not somewhere in a movie studio far away.¹⁴

Kurbas appears to have had no interest in re-joining the film industry. In fact, a leading official of the Commissariat of Enlightenment complained in 1926 that Khelmno had reneged on a promise not to steal actors away from theatre companies for contracts with VUFKU; the official feared Kurbas's wrath if he discovered that two leading actors would miss the start of the season because of their film schedules.¹⁵ For Kurbas, the film industry and the theatre industry were separate. The development of the film industry, however, became a template for the development of culture in all spheres in the Soviet Union. "Intrigue" characterized not only the struggle over authority in VUFKU, and between VUFKU and other cultural institutions, but also between VUFKU and film industries in Moscow representing the RSFSR. The final element shaping the Soviet film industry was the relationship between Soviet Ukraine, Russia and the greater Soviet Union.

SOVIET UKRAINE AND THE SOVIET MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

There was no Soviet-wide film industry until 1930. However devoted Communist officials may have been in VUFKU, the film industry in Soviet

¹³ Vasyl'ko 36, 50, 40–41; Labins'kyi 379–380.

¹⁴ See articles mentioned previously by Tkacz and Makaryk for discussion of Kurbas's use of filmed sequences in *Jimmie Higgins* and cinematic montage techniques in *Macbeth*. On *Dyktatura*, see Roman Cherkashyn, *My—Berezil'tsi* (Kharkiv: Akta, 2008) 68–72; on *peretvorennia*, see TsDAML "Fedortseva Sofiia Volodymyrivna," f. 173, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 18–19; see, also, Valentyna Chystiakova's description of her use of *peretvorennia* later in her career, DMTMKU Vasyl'ko 7164, letters Chystiakova to Vasyl'ko 4 October 1961 and 8 October 1961, both of which clearly show an awareness of the immediate theatrical audience.

¹⁵ Vasyl'ko 26; TsDAVOU f. 166, op. 6, spr. 598, ark. 60–61.

Ukraine still competed vigorously with that in the Russian republic, the RSFSR. This meant that distribution across the Union was uneven and Soviet culture as yet unconsolidated. For example, Kurbas's *Macdonald* may have ricocheted around Odesa and Kharkiv, but Chardynin's *Ukrazia* created a scandal on a higher level, between Soviet Ukraine and the RSFSR. Despite all the denunciations and recriminations over the 1159 metres of lost film, *Ukrazia* gained wide distribution and audiences reacted well. However, *Ukrazia* was shown in Europe before it was shown in Moscow. The movie premiered in Kyiv in March 1925, but was not shown in Russia until July 1926. Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein's now-classic *Battleship Potemkin* was also shown in Europe before it was shown in Soviet Ukraine; those in Kyiv saw the movie seven months after it had been released in Russia. Soviet film was a competitive, not consolidated, market.¹⁶

As these disagreements over distribution show, in the early 1920s there was no Soviet film industry *per se*, but rather a collection of various autonomous film studios and organizations. The tension between VUFKU and the centre was particularly severe because VUFKU was the largest of the outer-republic film studios, one that inherited several pre-revolutionary film factories in Odesa. Unlike *Vostok-Kino*, which was built from (relatively) nothing, VUFKU was a robust motion picture association. Despite its reputation as a "cesspool of intrigue," VUFKU presented itself as an autonomous institution that was highly competitive on the Soviet and international film market.

VUFKU was organized differently from other film associations in the Soviet Union. Under the aegis of the Soviet Ukrainian Commissariat of Enlightenment, VUFKU was part of a hierarchy similar to the major studios of Hollywood's golden years. VUFKU controlled production, distribution and exhibition, negotiating bi-lateral agreements with other Union film organizations and with Germany and Poland, even hiring Germans to come work at VUFKU to train personnel. VUFKU distributed films very much like major studios in Hollywood, according to a flat-fee system, where an exhibitor would pay a certain price per day, per film, according to the size of the exhibition space and type of picture. *Sovkino*, by contrast, was a joint-stock company with percentages held by multiple ministries, and acted as a middleman between production studios and exhibition locales, taking a percentage of the eventual profit from film screenings. Bohdan Nebesio argues that VUFKU's system was financially more successful, provoking jealousy from Moscow officials, who wanted a piece of the VUFKU pie.¹⁷

¹⁶ Hosejko 26; Kopley 352.

¹⁷ On the studio system, see Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Holt, 1996) 3–12; Nebesio 161–163; Pavlo Nechesa describes this distribution process in detail, see Nechesa 183; for a discussion of Sovkino specifically and the challenge of managing film in the RSFSR, see Richard

VUFKU officials, however, saw themselves not as part of a greater Soviet whole, but as an autonomous film organization separate from *Sovkino* or any other film organization. In 1928 the association published a self-promotional album, *Album du cinéma ukrainien*: “We want to believe that not only our friends, but also our enemies will have to acknowledge these great achievements that Soviet Ukraine has made, and with her Ukrainian cinema.” The album, complete with glamorous headshots of leading directors and actors, as well as descriptions and stills from recent full-length features, served as both proof and affirmation of VUFKU’s worth as a film company. Furthermore, the album suggests that VUFKU did not consider itself simply a subsidiary of a greater Soviet film industry, but rather the head of the film industry in Soviet Ukraine.¹⁸

Statistics put forth by VUFKU illustrate still further its detachment from all-Union issues and concerns. In a pamphlet published in 1929, Vorobiov, then the head of VUFKU, described the Soviet Ukrainian motion picture industry in numbers. To make his point that Soviet Ukraine was successful, but could be even more successful, Vorobiov used statistics on the film industries in Soviet Ukraine, the United States, Germany and Poland—neglecting to mention the Russian film industry. For Soviet Ukraine, the mecca of cinema was Hollywood. Hollywood, as Vorobiov pointed out, earned two billion of the two-and-a-half-billion dollar international film industry: “They have an entire city,” for the industry “that is called Hollywood,” with 25,000 permanent workers. The majority of worldwide film production and consumption took place in America, therefore Soviet Ukraine looked to America as the worldwide leader of the film industry. Next came Germany, then Ukraine, and finally Poland. Where the RSFSR or the Soviet Union as a whole might fit into this hierarchy, one could not learn from VUFKU’s interpretation.¹⁹

However autonomous VUFKU was, however, it depended on Russia and the West to fill their distribution needs. Vorobiov concluded that VUFKU needed 160 films a year and 1200 total copies of these films in order to serve the needs of cinema in Soviet Ukraine. He clarified that one-fifth of the responsibility for this fell on Ukrainian production, three-fifths on wider Soviet production (including the RSFSR), and one-fifth on pictures imported from the West—in other words, VUFKU itself had to produce and distribute thirty-two films a year, and needed thirty-two foreign films and ninety-six Soviet films. Of

Taylor, “Ideology as Mass Entertainment: Boris Shumyatsky and Soviet Cinema in the 1930s,” in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1994) 193–216.

¹⁸ *Ukrains'ke kino / Le Cinéma Ukrainien: Al'bom ukrains'koho kino / Album du cinéma ukrainien* (Kyiv: VUFKU, 1928).

¹⁹ I. Vorobiov, *Pro Ukrains'ke kino: stan, plany i perspektyvy ukrains'koi kinematohrafiï* (Kyiv: VUFKU, 1929) 10–12; similarly, *Kino*, VUFKU's journal, intended for a wide readership, rarely mentioned Russia in the first years, instead focusing on the French *avant-garde*, or film in Berlin or America.

course, Russian companies constituted the major producer of those films, and so VUFKU required trade agreements with Russia. The Soviet Ukrainian film journal *Kino* described *Sovkino* (the successor, from 1925, to *Goskino* and the largest film company in the Union) as “the organization that possesses a monopoly on distribution in the RSFSR.” One might assume, therefore, that one of the “enemies” implied by the *Album of Ukrainian Cinema* was Russia.²⁰

As competitors, Soviet Ukraine (VUFKU) and Russia (*Sovkino*) fought over cadres. Film innovator Dziga Vertov, for example, left Moscow with his brother, camera operator Mikhail Kaufman, to work for VUFKU. Isaak Babel' sold his screenplay, *Benia Krik*, to VUFKU, to be filmed at the Odesa Studio when *Sovkino* stalled in negotiations. The Main Repertory Committee (*Glavrepertkom*) in Moscow did not approve Babel's film adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's *Wandering Stars*, but Soviet Ukraine did not pay any attention to Moscow's decision; VUFKU snapped up the project, filming it in 1926. Babel' disliked the result, but he admitted that it was a “huge hit.” Like Kurbas, Babel' was frustrated with VUFKU, but still agreed to work there, instead of *Sovkino*, when it served his needs.²¹

VUFKU was indeed an autonomous film association, but it was in aggressive competition with both private entrepreneurs and other organizations. VUFKU was out to make a profit—in a socialist way. Film apparatchik extraordinaire Nechesa wrote memoirs that illustrate the acquisition and distribution of films in the early VUFKU years. Nechesa, as a Bolshevik sailor-hero of the Civil War and delegate to the Tenth Party Congress, was horrified when, in 1923, VUFKU managers boasted of enjoying their lunches on the NEP-man/entrepreneur's tab while negotiating deals. Nechesa, first at Yalta, then at Odesa, brought order and profit to VUFKU by squeezing out the NEP-men exhibitors and—it seems—aggressively negotiating distribution contracts. Nechesa boasts, in his memoirs, how he arranged for VUFKU to purchase fifty-eight licences for German films from the Soviet Trade Representative in Germany (somehow thanks to a deal brokered by Maria Andreeva, Maksim Gor'kii's actress-wife), and then resold those films to exhibitors in Soviet Ukraine and the RSFSR: “We profited in our contracts by selling the films on credit—for six months or a year. Then we immediately resold the licenses in Russia and with this we recouped the cost, and then with the sale of the licenses in the rest of the Soviet republics and distribution in Ukraine—it was pure profit.”²²

²⁰ *Kino* 2–3 (1926) 23.

²¹ See *Al'bom* 12–34; Isaak Babel', *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4 (Moskva: Vremia, 2006); Babel's to Kashirina 5 June 1926, 91–93; Babel's letter to Kashirina 5 January 1927, 127; Babel's letter to Kashirina 9 April 1927, 149.

²² *Kino* 9 (1927) 4; Oleksandr Shvachko, “Spohady pro nezabutnie,” *Kriz' kinoob'ektyv* (1970) 61; Nechesa 183.

Nechesa's pride in his accomplishments also shows that Soviet Ukraine (VUFKU) was in direct competition with Moscow (*Sovkino*). Distribution agreements operated on a coefficient system, a certain number of VUFKU films traded in exchange for a certain number of *Sovkino* films, and disagreements over these values caused tension. It was this disagreement over coefficients that created the "film blockade," as a result of which *Ukrazia* was not shown in Russia, and *Battleship Potemkin* was not shown in Soviet Ukraine. Moreover, *Sovkino* made under-handed deals to distribute *Potemkin* with non-VUFKU distributors in Soviet Ukraine, thus circumventing VUFKU and increasing the animosity between the rival organizations.²³

While re-negotiations ended the "film blockade," the real issue was that officials in the centre wanted *Sovkino* to become, not a middleman company for the RSFSR, but *Soiuzkino*, an all-Union cinema operation controlling and supervising the entire motion picture industry across the Soviet Union. The 1928 All-Union Meeting of Cinema Affairs voted to cancel the city-rank coefficient distribution system, which would end the era of the autonomous republic film organizations and create a single Soviet film industry. Both artists and officials in Soviet Ukraine, however, perceived the creation of a consolidated Soviet film industry negatively.²⁴

To that end, one of the items on the Politburo docket in May 1928 was the issue of the Soviet Ukrainian motion picture industry. Leading writers and artists published a letter in the leading papers and sent a copy to the Central Committee of the CP(b)U and the Commissariat of Enlightenment, blaming former VUFKU head Shub for "threatening our cinema production, and so we are turning to Soviet society, to the press, and to the leading organs." They blamed Shub for selling out VUFKU to the all-Union cinema syndicate. The ensuing organization—*Soiuzkino*—would "demand not only hegemony, but also destruction of VUFKU as an independent cinema organization." Vorobiov, Shub's successor, added his own memo to the Politburo explaining that the transformation of the "exchange" coefficient system to the new system would create a monopoly for *Soiuzkino*. The Politburo then formed a commission to work out the issue headed by General Secretary of the CP(b)U Stanislaw Kossior.²⁵

Nevertheless, *Soiuzkino*, headed by dedicated Party apparatchik Boris Shumiatskii, took over managing all-Union production and distribution, and

²³ Hosejko 26; Kepley 352; Oleksandr Shub, "Daite plivky," *Kino* 13 (1927); The coefficient was at first 9 from VUFKU and 20 from *Sovkino*, and then renegotiated in 1927 to 3 from VUFKU and 10 from *Sovkino*. On these re-negotiations, see TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 193.

²⁴ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 185–191, 192–194; Kepley 353–354; Nebesio 173.

²⁵ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 185–191; 192–194.

VUFKU became *Ukrainfilm*, a *Soiuzkino* regional affiliate. Soviet Ukrainian officials complained about *Soiuzkino's* treatment of *Ukrainfilm*. Aleksandr Petrenko, an arts official in Soviet Ukraine, declared at the 1929 All-Union Congress of Arts Workers that Soviet Ukraine was not adequately represented in *Soiuzkino*: the RSFSR had thirteen representatives, while Soviet Ukraine had only one. Yet, according to Petrenko, Soviet Ukraine generated twenty-two percent of all-Union distribution and produced thirty-one films in the same year that the RSFSR made fifty-three films. Surely, those numbers would suggest that Soviet Ukraine deserved more representation in *Soiuzkino*. The Soviet Ukrainian Politburo declared that this all-Union syndicate was not good for “national cinema production and will lead to a break of cinema from general cultural and national construction and a monopoly of distribution.” They gave Kossior the task of bringing up the issue to the Kremlin. It seems that as devoted as Soviet Ukrainian officials were to the socialist project, they did not want to subjugate themselves culturally to the Soviet Union, instead preferring to retain some form of cultural autonomy.²⁶

Kossior, not surprisingly, was unable to negotiate with the Kremlin in order to secure any autonomy for the film industry in Soviet Ukraine. Between 1935–1936, *Ukrainfilm* made only eight films, five of which were not approved for distribution. A film company that ten years earlier had made twenty-four films now only produced a third of its previous output.²⁷

Let us return for a moment to Kurbas. The transformation from VUFKU to *Ukrainfilm*, that is, the centralization and consolidation of the film industry, happened as part of a series of policies across several spheres, creating a centralized all-Union Soviet culture. The creation of *Soiuzkino*, for example, coincided with the 1930 All-Union Theatrical Olympiad, organized to showcase the best theatres from the republics, which would compete for prizes in Moscow during the Sixteenth Party Congress.²⁸ Kurbas, according to memoirs, refused to go to the Olympiad because he did not want to participate in a competition with lesser competitors. Why should he take part in an Olympiad when leading Moscow directors, such as Vsevolod Meierhol'd, were not? Memos from the Arts Workers Union echoed Kurbas's concerns. No “serious” Moscow or

²⁶ The various autonomous organizations of VUFKU: Armenkino, Uzbekkino, Turkmenkino, Chuvashkino, Azgozokino, Goskinprom Gruzii, Vostok-Kino; TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 169; Kopley uses the notion of “federalization” to describe this process, which perfectly captures the idea of linking all of the republic-level film organizations into one network, but neglects the issue of centralization, see Kopley 352–353; TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 17–18.

²⁷ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 254, ark. 109–110; 111–112; 51–52; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF] f. 5508, op. 1, d. 1307, l. 133; Vorobiov 15.

²⁸ On *Ukrainfilm*, see (among others) TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 150, ark. 192–194; another issue was that Ukrainian was not one of the languages on Soviet passports, TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 407, ark. 53.

Leningrad theatres were participating; the only theatres competing for prizes would be “minority” theatres from the republics, judged exclusively by members of the arts from the Russian republic.²⁹ Furthermore, as *Soiuzkino* centralized the motion picture industry, April 1932 saw the foundation of the Writers’ Union, centred in Moscow, with affiliates in the Union republics.³⁰

While Nebesio is right to focus on the economic realities of the competition between Soviet Ukraine and the RSFSR, there was an additional ideological aspect to the new institutionalization. Namely, the existence of a film industry in Soviet Ukraine (one that could trade independently and potentially outperform its RSFSR counterpart) had no place in an emerging all-Union Soviet culture—just as there was no place for writers’ organizations exclusive to the republics, or non-Russian directors from the republics claiming equal stature with directors in Moscow. Soviet culture demanded centralization, which reduced the authority of regional, republic-level organizations and artists. Kurbas may have left VUFKU, but he was caught in the same centripetal force as VUFKU and other cultural and political organizations.³¹

Soviet Ukrainian officials believed that they could participate in the Soviet Union politically whilst maintaining cultural autonomy (and, to a certain extent, economic autonomy). However, the casualty of an all-Union Soviet culture was, in fact, regional sovereignty; a film industry in one corner of the Soviet Union could hardly remain autonomous in the powerful institutional—and ideological—centralization of Moscow.

DOVZHENKO AND SOVIET UKRAINIAN FILM

However, the story does not end with the institutional transformation of VUFKU to *Ukrainfilm* or the struggle of artists like Kurbas to cope with the centralization process. Other artists, such as Dovzhenko, still managed to create art in this centralizing Soviet structure. Certainly, it appears that Dovzhenko, like Kurbas, was frustrated with the “cesspool of intrigue,” that characterized Soviet Ukrainian film, and yet paradoxically, Dovzhenko found greater artistic freedom in Moscow. Dovzhenko’s career trajectory, like that of Kurbas, illuminates the possibilities and limitations for cinema in the Soviet regional republics.

Dovzhenko and Kurbas share much of the same story; they came from the same milieu of new elites experimenting with art in the 1920s. However,

²⁹ On Kurbas’s reluctance to go to Olimpiad, see Tamara Tsulukidze, “Les’ Kurbas,” in *Les’ Kurbas: Stat’i i vospominaniia o Lese Kurbase*, edited by M. G. Labins’kii and L. S. Taniuk (Moskva: Iskustvo, 1987) 105; TsDAVOV f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10776, ark. 17–18; 34–35.

³⁰ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid’ pro nespokii tryvaie* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1969) 6–20.

³¹ Nebesio 160.

Dovzhenko's success as a filmmaker would not have been possible without Kurbas. It was one of Kurbas's actors-turned-directors, whom Dovzhenko first apprenticed for when he started working at VUFKU. Kurbas's protégé and Berezil' director Favst Lopatyns'kyi was initially assigned to direct Dovzhenko's script, *Vasia—Reformator* [Vasia the Reformer, 1926]. Lopatyns'kyi ultimately declined the project (because of disagreements with one of the serial Odesa Studio heads), and Nechesa then gave the project to Lopatyns'kyi's untested assistant, Dovzhenko, known primarily for his drawings, writings, and poster designs (Nechesa, in his memoirs, appears pleased with himself that he discovered new talent). Incidentally, it was almost exclusively Kurbas's actors who performed in Dovzhenko's early films, and several of Kurbas's actors continued to work with Dovzhenko throughout his career.³²

As Kurbas was leaving VUFKU, Dovzhenko was entering the motion picture industry. Certainly, Dovzhenko arrived at VUFKU at a more auspicious time than Kurbas. Dovzhenko likely benefitted more from the party-state's policies of Ukrainianization (that is, promoting Ukrainian language and culture and allowing Ukrainian cadres to create a particular Soviet Ukrainian culture), and VUFKU may have been institutionally more invested in supporting directors and Ukrainian-language projects than they had been even a few years earlier. However, Dovzhenko's aesthetic also dovetailed with the requirements of the emerging category of "Soviet Ukrainian" film.³³

Dovzhenko began with films similar to those on which Kurbas had worked. Dovzhenko followed the short *Vasia the Reformer* with *Iahidka kokhannia* [Love's Berry], a comedy about a NEP-man forced to take care of his illegitimate child. Both not only starred Kurbas's actors, but offered light comedy non-specific to Soviet Ukraine. Nor did VUFKU, for that matter, make purely "Ukrainian" films. To be sure, the first VUFKU film was the historical drama *Ostap Bandura*, and such historical Ukrainian themes provided inspiration for many films, but not for all films. For example, VUFKU was also

³² Liudmyla Petryts'ka (wife of set designer Anatolii Petryts'kyi), claims that it was *her* milieu that urged Dovzhenko to try cinema when he needed to secure funds during his first wife's illness, see TsDAMLM "Petryts'kyi Anatolii Galaktionovych," f. 237, op. 3, spr. 47; for pictures of Berezil's actors in film see, for example, *Kino* 11 (1926) 4; on Buchma and Dovzhenko, see the column, "Liudy ekranu" in *Kino* 2 (1927) 6; see also Makaryk on Buchma's work with Dovzhenko. According to Hosejko, Dovzhenko left Kharkiv because it was a theatre town and he was not that interested in theatre, whereas Odesa was a cinema town; see Hosejko 37. On the links between VUFKU and literary circles, see Bohdan Nebesio, "Panfuturists and Ukrainian Film Culture of the 1920s," *Kinokultura* 9 (issue on Ukrainian Cinema) 2009: <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/nebesio.shtml>> (Accessed 30 August 2011).

³³ *Ukrainizatsiia* ("Ukrainianization") was the Soviet Ukrainian manifestation of the Soviet nationalities policy of *korenizatsiia* ("indigenization"). For more on this, see (among others) Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

at the heart of early Soviet Yiddish film; Babel' found a name for himself at VUFKU and Aleichem provided as much inspiration for content as Taras Shevchenko. Mykola Bazhan's *Kvartaly predmestia* [The Streets of the Suburbs] even explored a cross-cultural Jewish-Ukrainian romance. At this point, Soviet Ukrainian officialdom was not particularly concerned with promoting a chiefly ethnic Ukrainian quality in their films; rather they aimed at outsmarting the RSFSR by securing better licences and contracts, and winning in a competitive film market. Until the centralization and consolidation of Soviet film, Soviet Ukraine did not have to fill any particular niche.³⁴

A comparison with Hollywood might be productive here. Hollywood flourished in its classical era precisely because of the same studio system of vertical hierarchy as VUFKU. However, at each level there were multiple studios in competition with one another, with each filling a particular niche and creating its own house style, which together formed the Hollywood motion picture industry. The MGM style differed from Warner's, which differed from David O. Selznick. Each studio was known for certain genres, actors, and plots. The Soviet film system, in a sense, could be thought of as a socialist mirror of the network of Hollywood studios. Each studio—*Ukrainfilm*, *Mosfilm*, and so on—had to have its own niche. Though the Soviet film industry differed, due to its extreme centralization (comparable to MGM having its own monopoly), its ideological commitment and deep official involvement, film studios in the Soviet regional republics survived by filling a niche, coming up with genres, styles and actors that were unique in the greater Soviet market.³⁵

With works such as *Zvenyhora* [The Enchanted Place, 1928], *Arsenal* [Arsenal, 1929] and *Zemlia* [Earth, 1930] Dovzhenko was a perfect fit for the Soviet Ukrainian motion picture industry. His poetic imagery, his use of many of Ukraine's finest actors, and his use of markedly Ukrainian themes, created an artistic product that did not exist in other film studios in the Soviet Union.³⁶

In 1932 arts apparatchik Andrii Khvyliya wrote a memorandum complaining about the "narrowing" of the Soviet Ukrainian film industry because of policies promoted by *Soiuzkino*. He specifically referred to the fact that *Ukrainfilm* made films of "little distribution worth" and the policies of *Soiuzfilm* were only turning the republic film organizations "into rental offices" for films made in the Union centre. One could see the silent trilogy of *Zvenyhora*, *Arsenal*, and *Earth* as securing Dovzhenko's niche in the Soviet all-Union film market; these were

³⁴ On Yiddish film, see J. Hoberman, "A Face to the Shtetl: Soviet Yiddish Cinema, 1924–1936," in Taylor and Christie 123–149; see also Morozov and Derevianko.

³⁵ Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Hollywood Studio System* (New York: McGraw, 1981); see also Schatz, *Genius* 3–12.

³⁶ On Dovzhenko's poetics and their resonance in the later Soviet period, see Joshua First, "Scenes of Belonging: Cinema and the Nationality Question in Soviet Ukraine," Diss. (University of Michigan, 2008) 60–66, 209–219.

high art films not intended for mass distribution. But the concern of Khvyliia, and officialdom in general, was Soviet Ukraine's inability to compete in the mass distribution of wide-release films across the Soviet Union. The centralization and consolidation of the Soviet film industry created a paradox: mass culture was made in Moscow for Union-wide distribution, while the republics contributed genre pictures of a high art nature, such as Dovzhenko's silent trilogy, for limited distribution.³⁷

Dovzhenko's and Kurbas's paths crossed later in their lives, when both went to Moscow in 1933—but each under different circumstances. Dovzhenko feared arrest in Soviet Ukraine and appealed directly to Stalin; Kurbas was exiled from Soviet Ukraine to Moscow, where he would shortly be arrested. Just as Kurbas felt frustrated with his place as a “minority” director secondary to Moscow artists such as Meyerhold, Dovzhenko was equally frustrated by the limited possibilities in Soviet Ukraine offered by the niche of regional cinema. In fact, Dovzhenko may have correctly feared arrest in Soviet Ukraine in the early 1930s. The Soviet Ukrainian Politburo in 1932 condemned the “political blindness” of those involved with Dovzhenko's film *Ivan*. Similarly, the Soviet Ukrainian party-state objected to Kurbas's work and removed Kurbas from his own theatre in 1933. Denounced by the majority of his colleagues, Kurbas was forced into exile in Moscow, soon arrested, and sent to Solovki. Dovzhenko, however, bypassed the Soviet Ukrainian party-state by securing Stalin's patronage. Though Dovzhenko may have begun his career by finding his niche in Soviet Ukraine and by negotiating the institutional transformation from VUFKU to *Ukrainfilm*, he ultimately required Stalin's Kremlin in order to pursue his professional ambitions on the all-Union level.³⁸

In 1934 Stalin declared art in the Soviet Union aesthetically “national in form and socialist in content.” What this meant structurally, however, was that *Ukrainfilm* should remain a regional affiliate of *Soiuzkino*, not a separate organization, such as VUFKU. This institutional structure itself shaped aesthetic possibilities, as the examples of Kurbas and Dovzhenko suggest. To pursue artistic agendas within the Soviet cultural infrastructure, Kurbas left the “cesspool of intrigue,” of early Soviet cinema for the theatre. Meanwhile, Dovzhenko survived the transition from VUFKU to *Ukrainfilm* through his aesthetic style, which brought high-art Ukrainian-themed cinema to the all-Union market and helped Soviet Ukraine find its niche in Soviet cinema's new institutionalization.

³⁷ TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 254, ark. 109–110; 111–112.

³⁸ George Liber, “Adapting to the Stalinist Order: Alexander Dovzhenko's Psychological Journey,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53.7 (2001) 1097–1116; 1098; TsDAML “Dovzhenko Oleksandr Petrovych” f. 690 op. 1, spr. 16 [“Avtobiohrafiiia”]; Derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy [SBU] 75 608, “Kurbas Aleksandr Stepanovich,” ark. 70; on *Ivan*, TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 178.

Volha Isakava

Of Monsters and Men: Horror Film in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia

ABSTRACT: This article looks at recent horror films from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia through the notion of “cultural translation.” It argues that these films both mimic Hollywood horror tropes and subvert genre formula via engagement of local history and memory. Horror films, therefore, represent both the cinematic and cultural concerns of their times, reflecting the changing globalized realities of cinema as a medium, and the social and political dilemmas their viewers face beyond the movie theatre. The results are hybrid texts that engage the viewer in the polyphony of intertextual, global, and local connections.

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article examine des films d’horreur récents de Biélorussie, d’Ukraine et de Russie à travers le prisme conceptuel de « traduction culturelle ». Il soutient que ces films imitent les conventions hollywoodiennes et renversent les formules du genre de l’horreur via l’utilisation de l’histoire et de la mémoire locales. Par conséquent, les films d’horreur représentent des préoccupations cinématographiques et culturelles de leur époque, reflétant les réalités mondialisées changeantes du cinéma comme média ainsi que les dilemmes sociaux et politiques auxquels font face les spectateurs à l’extérieur de la salle de cinéma. Les textes en résultant sont hybrides et entraînent le spectateur dans une polyphonie de connections intertextuelles autant que mondiales et locales.

If one were to survey reader comments on cinema forums in post-Soviet countries, two issues that concern (and frustrate) horror fans about the domestic take on the genre would stand out. One issue is that domestic directors “cannot do horror,” and the other is that their presentation of horror is not Ukrainian, Russian, or Belarusian enough—or reflective enough of users’ (often vague) ideas of appropriate national characteristics exhibited in film. On the one hand, film viewers lament the fact that horror movies are not as good as those produced in Hollywood. The cited reasons range from budget constraints to philosophical suggestions of cultural resistance to the genre. On the other hand, viewers do not want their homegrown horror films to be just like Hollywood but to have a distinct national imprint; otherwise, viewers may as well watch American horror films.¹ In short, the post-Soviet horror film appears to be in a

¹ Comments come mostly from torrent sites (for example, <rutracker.org> and <kinozal.tv>) that attract heavy traffic from post-Soviet countries. These comments often disproportionately represent Russian speakers and an emerging middle class, whose active use of the internet came into focus after the Moscow protests in 2011. These are anecdotal observations merely of an illustrative nature, as they seem to vocalize particularly well the cultural patterns of horror films that this article examines.

double bind: it has to be as good as Hollywood productions and strive for genre recognition, *and* it has to convey a distinct local sensibility that would make these films stand out for a particular type of viewer. The irony is, of course, that these are almost mutually exclusive requirements.

One aspect of this dilemma is that the horror film has virtually no history in Soviet cinema.² The most famous and exceptional example is the 1967 film *Vii*, directed by Georgii Kropachev and Konstantin Ershov, a fantasy adaptation of the classical short story by Nikolai Gogol based on Ukrainian folklore. Popular Soviet films that were built around a sci-fi premise, such as *Chelovek-amfibiia* [Amphibian Man, 1961], directed by Vladimir Chebotarev and Gennadii Kazanskii, or mystery, such as Stanislav Govorukhin's *Desiat' negritiat* [Ten Little Indians, 1987] could be included as part of a genre evolution that never became horror per se.³ Throughout the Soviet era Western horror films seldom made their way into Soviet theatres. The rare few were usually films that could be perceived as highbrow (such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960 and Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, 1980), whose limited screenings attracted mostly the intelligentsia in large urban centres. The situation changed dramatically with the advent of perestroika and the lifting of censorship restrictions. The proliferation of "video-salons" that screened pirated movies contributed to the rapid spread of B-list horror, crime thrillers, pornography, and Asian martial arts movies to an audience starved for cheap thrills. By the early 1990s several films that sought to blend Western generic models with post-Soviet sensibilities marked the birth of post-Soviet horror film. One of the early examples is the supernatural horror film *Prikosnovenie* [The Touch, 1992]. In the mid-1990s serious budget problems and the collapse of the centralized film industry almost brought the film industries of the former Soviet republics to a halt. Owing to obsolete technology and the absence of a generic tradition, horror films of the 1990s were mostly undistinguished. Unfortunately, they generally lacked the innovation of 1970s American horror films that were also made on a shoestring budget and shot on location with minimal technology but unmatched ingenuity.

The horror films of the 1990s have had little or no impact on the resurgence of contemporary horror cinema. Like many other blockbuster films of the 2000s, in terms of cinematography post-Soviet horror owes more to Hollywood than to the Soviet tradition. Consequently, most post-Soviet horror films today seem to position themselves as "the first" or "the first real" or "the first art house" horror films. *Shtol'nia* [The Pit, 2006], directed by Liubomyr Kobyl'chuk, was promoted as the very first Ukrainian horror film. *Masakra* from 2010, directed

² It is important to mention that, despite the lack of a horror film tradition, there is a rich tradition of Gothic fiction in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia that undoubtedly informs contemporary horror productions. However, exploration of Gothic influences on contemporary horror cinema warrants a separate investigation.

³ Josephine Woll, "Exorcising the Devil: Russian Cinema and Horror," in *Horror International*, edited by Steven Jay Schneider and Tony Williams (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005) 336, 348–350.

by Belarusian director Andrei Kudzinenka, is described as the first “*bul’ba*-horror” (*bul’ba* being the venerable potato; the signature food of Belarus), and the Russian film *Mertvyie docheri* [Dead Daughters, 2007], directed by Pavel Ruminov, was branded as a unique philosophical fable in horror packaging. To my knowledge, in the former Soviet Union only a handful of horror films have been produced by studios in the past five years, even though, unlike in the 1990s, contemporary national film industries are on the rise, particularly in Russia.⁴

In an alien and domestically unexplored genre like horror, post-Soviet mainstream cinema faces the dilemma of how to produce popular films that can attract domestic audiences, when every expectation of this audience, usually comprised of a young post-Soviet generation, is monopolized by Hollywood conventions.⁵ In some respects this dilemma is akin to the classical problem of translation, rendered in terms of “domestication” and “foreignization.” What strategies does a film need to use in order to retain a Hollywood-like genre appeal? What strategies must it adopt to project itself as “one’s own” and local?⁶ In this paper I argue that horror films, caught in the double bind of foreign and domestic sensibilities, are engaged in complex negotiations to appropriate the “foreign formula” while aiming to create a distinct domestic product. The study of the horror genre is of particular importance as it investigates the newly emerged post-Soviet popular culture that is shaped both by local and global

⁴ Despite economic pressures at home and competition from Hollywood, the Russian film market is now the fifth largest in the world, with a number of domestic blockbusters and a thriving art house cinema. See Birgit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (London: Berg Publishers, 2009) 241.

⁵ By “popular” I mean film’s affinity with popular culture, or mass culture, or “culture industry,” as defined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). Popular culture is standardized, accessible, and mass-produced (and, as was argued by culture industry theorists, instilled with hegemonic values). The Hollywood entertainment industry is the paragon of international standards of popular culture. Horror films, almost by definition, belong in the domain of popular culture, being a structured, narrow genre whose target audience is young people, particularly adolescent males. The popular culture affinity of these films does not ensure their popularity or financial success with actual viewers. This paper does not examine the actual number of viewers or domestic box office earnings of horror films. Although the question of audience reception, generated revenues, and the popularity of horror films is a very interesting one, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁶ For the purposes of this paper, I limited myself to undertaking a film analysis of various strategies for appropriating and resisting the Hollywood language of popular entertainment, as opposed to examining how translation concepts (such as foreignization, domestication, equivalence) illuminate the cinematic context of Hollywood’s hegemony. For a definition of the concepts of foreignization and domestication in translation studies, see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995) 1–42.

sensibilities. In addition, the almost entirely transplanted nature of the horror genre highlights the dynamics of cultural translation and its relation to Hollywood hegemony. I have chosen three films based on their unique status in Belarus and Ukraine,⁷ and on the basis of explicit Hollywood mimicry present in the Russian film.⁸

In this article I also look at how horror films overcome the constraints of foreign and domestic sensibilities by engaging history as the site of these negotiations, turning, quite literally, history into a horror story. In his analysis of 1970s American horror films, Robin Wood writes that horror experiments with intense graphic violence and shocking sexuality, while maintaining an “incoherent” narrative and an unpolished, raw, low-budget look.⁹ The transgressive discourse of horror exposes a cultural (namely capitalist) veneer disguising the abyss of the politically and socially repressed, reconstructing the other as a monster and American life as hell. Wood writes, “[...] with unique force and intensity, at least one important aspect of what the horror film has come to signify—the sense of a civilization condemning itself, through its popular culture, to ultimate disintegration, and ambivalently (with the simultaneous horror/wish-fulfillment of nightmare) celebrating the fact.”¹⁰

In scholarship, horror is often viewed as a manifestation of the collective subconscious illuminated by the genre’s focus on monsters and “otherness.” The genre of horror is frequently analyzed as one that is engaged with history, particularly traumatic history; for example, 1970s American horror films are seen as an exploration of trauma from the Vietnam War.¹¹ Similarly, film scholars have argued that what could be considered a precursor of horror, German Expressionist cinema, represented the cultural anxieties of the Weimar era, even though expressionist films constituted neither the majority nor the most popular films of the time.¹² In cultural analysis, horror films often become a subversive foundation for exploring societal anxieties, repressed desires, and traumatic ruptures of national consciousness or the unconscious. Therefore,

⁷ A second Ukrainian horror film, *Synevyr* [Lake Synevyr] (shot in 3D) is scheduled to be released in 2013.

⁸ While I cannot always refrain from making value judgments, judging the films discussed in this article on their aesthetic qualities or whether they are “good” or “bad” cinema is outside the scope of this work.

⁹ Robin Wood, “The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s,” in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 70.

¹⁰ Wood 95.

¹¹ This argument is advanced, for example, by Adam Lowenstein in *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹² For a seminal work on this topic, see Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

horror provides an outlet for the re-appropriation and retelling of history. The genre's narrative and visual strategies reflect the cultural and political conundrums and preoccupations of its time. This is not to say that filmmakers consciously set out to prove a point about hybridity or cultural translation, but rather that a critic can "read against the grain" to determine the cultural significance and function of the "horror" approach to history and memory.

It is often argued that post-Soviet cinema engages in the examination, reconstruction, and re-appropriation of historical narrative—that the past can both justify and explain the present, and help to configure national identity. Susan Larsen, in her analysis of several popular Russian films, states that the configuration of national identity and cinema is connected to the exploration of "what it means to be Russian [...] engaged—more or less explicitly—with the relationship between contemporary Russian life and the cultural traditions of the Soviet and pre-revolutionary past."¹³ While Soviet times continue to be more and more removed from the present, engaging with history is an important facet of today's post-Soviet cinema. Contemporary scholarship on Russian cinema, for example, consistently emphasizes the importance of history and nostalgia for Russian cinema of the Putin era (from 2000 onwards), which is both openly encouraged by the state in mainstream, big-budget productions and polemicized in independent cinema.¹⁴

The post-Soviet situation can also be described as a post-colonial one, as has been argued by various scholars,¹⁵ with Ukraine and Belarus on one side of the divide and Russia on the other. Consequently, the re-appropriation of history becomes an important aspect of nation building and re-assessing the colonial past. Writing about Ukraine and Belarus, Taras Kuzio writes that "a central aspect of overcoming this [colonial] legacy is re-claiming the past from the framework imposed by the former imperial core."¹⁶ At the same time the post-Soviet situation seems to be more complex than traditional colonial binaries suggest. For example, Kuzio argues that Belarus, with its totalitarian rule steeped in nostalgic Soviet rhetoric, can be looked at as a unique example of a

¹³ Susan Larsen, "National Identity, Cultural Authority, and the Post-Soviet Blockbuster: Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov," *Slavic Review* 62.3 (2003): 493.

¹⁴ For more recent studies on this subject, see Nancy Condee, *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia: Movies, Memory, and Patriotism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

¹⁵ However, it is also argued that the post-Soviet postcolonial condition is unique. For discussion of the application of the terms colonialism and postcolonialism, see David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post in Postcolonial the Post in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 111–128.

¹⁶ Taras Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space," *Nationalities Papers* 30.2 (2002): 241.

colonized country that is not ready to break the bonds of colonization. Nostalgia emerges as a phenomenon that complicates the issue not only in the post-Soviet republics but also the former Eastern Bloc countries (with the notable example of East Germany's *Ostalgie*). In the former socialist bloc one of the features of the cultural landscape seems to be tension between the socialist past and the present.¹⁷ In Putin's Russia prominent examples include the restoration of the old Soviet anthem and the Russian government's directives to support "patriotic cinema," which serve as a financial incentive for the filmmakers and as a means to exert political pressure. Nostalgia, however, is not limited to the Soviet past. To navigate and re-define their complicated history, the post-Soviet nations engage different discourses: that of nationalism, as the elevation of controversial figures like Stepan Bandera in Ukraine suggests, or "Europeanness," the utopian vision of Europe as a "home to all of us" [*Evropa—nash obshchii dom*], as the Belarusian liberal opposition claims, and the recent Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine advocates. In Russia, the loss of its position as an imperial power has led to the creation of a cultural fantasy of the past as a golden age, and the rise of ideas of a "strong nation," besieged by enemies, channelling an imperial sensibility, which is present not only in popular cinema, but also in the real-world politics of the recent conflict in Ukraine. It has to be noted that these various discourses of the colonizer and the colonized do not exist today in an equal position of power and privilege any more than they did back in the Soviet times. It is all the more important to look into how popular films address the cultural binaries that propagate the purist notions of identity and provide clear-cut answers to post-Soviet condition with narratives of uncomplicated origins and national history full of heroism and free of controversy. Using film as a lens of cultural production, this article shows that this picture is rarely as unambiguous as it seems. These rigid notions of identity and belonging do not seem to work well in postcolonial conditions, often theorized via notions of fluid, fractal, and hybrid identities, such as in the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha.

The cultural tension created by competing discourses engaged in re-assessing history and reconfiguring identity in film can be productively explored through the postcolonial notion of cultural hybridity, as posited by Bhabha.¹⁸ Bhabha points out that cultural hybridity opens up a "third space" that allows for a previously muted and more ambiguous perspective to emerge. The notion of hybridity operates through negotiation or cultural translation between various

¹⁷ For studies exploring these tensions in Central European countries and the former Yugoslavia, see Agata Anna Lisiak, *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010); Nataša Kovačević, *Narrating Post-Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 102–122.

discourses and a certain refusal of authenticity—or belief that the essential or primordial quality that claims to precede hybridity and to be superior (as in colonial inequity) does not exist. Such hybridity gives us an identity that is both productive locally and disruptive of the narratives characterized by the binary opposition of the self and other. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, is a condition of culture that thrives on cultural translation as an activity of displacement, reflection, and appropriation that defies the idea of original source or primordial identity.¹⁹

Popular culture and everyday practices seem to be particularly well suited to research on hybrid practices and the language of the “third space,” since they are not usually perceived as “serious” endeavours in the eyes of political and cultural elites. A case in point is contemporary Ukrainian scholarship that examines the use of *surzhyk*, the hybrid Ukrainian-Russian vernacular language that is routinely derided for its deviation from literary Ukrainian. For example, Laada Bilaniuk’s work emphasizes *surzhyk*’s significance as a marker of identity and belonging.²⁰ Serhy Yekelchuk discusses the campy performances of a certain Ukrainian comedian, who engages both pro-Russian sentiment and Ukrainian national narratives as an effective means of self-parody and to re-appropriate colonial terms of inferiority.²¹ Michaela Wolf highlights the relevance of Bhabha’s theory of hybridity and third space to the practice of translation, particularly cultural translation:

Hybridity [...] is seen as [...] a force that transforms the cultural from a source of conflict into a productive element and thereby opens up a ‘Third Space’ [...] Third Space must be understood not as a static, identity-bestowing unity but as a process [which] makes no sense without constant renegotiation [when] antagonistic and oppositional elements gain a voice in the negotiations located in the Third Space and their negative polarity is dissolved [...] As we see from the contribution of postcolonial theory to the study of the translation phenomenon as an emancipatory

¹⁹ There is an ongoing critical debate around the relevance and productivity of the postcolonial notions of hybridity and third space in today’s world. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Hybridity, So What?” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18.2–3 (2001): 219–245; Amar Acheraoui, *Questioning Hybridity: Postcolonialism and Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). While this debate constitutes an important point for methodological considerations, it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in theoretical disputes. In this article I am using the notions of hybridity, third space, and cultural translation as more liberally applied concepts and methodological tools to facilitate cinematic analysis and explain the cultural functions of horror films, rather than debating the merits of the concepts themselves.

²⁰ See Laada Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) 103–142.

²¹ See Serhy Yekelchuk, “What Is Ukrainian About Ukraine’s Pop Culture? The Strange Case of Verka Serdiuchka,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 44.1–2 (2010): 217–232.

force (Homi Bhabha here presented as a case in point), translation can be viewed as a reinterpretation, as a constant repositioning of transferred signs which casts existing orders into question and leaves open many different possible contextualizations [...] context-dependent interpretations are made which break open previously fixed assumptions and, in their continual creation of uncertainties, produce things that have never existed and that cannot be brought back to an original state.²²

It may be argued that mainstream post-Soviet cinema creates such hybrid cultural forms, couched in a translation of Hollywood's language of popular culture and perceived as relatively politically innocuous. These forms give voice to local contextualizations of identities that have otherwise been condemned by official or established historical and national discourses as "inadequate," for example, as having failed to overcome the trauma of the collapse of the Soviet Union in Russia, or to re-establish a consensus around the purist notion of a national identity in Belarus. They open up a third space in which a different dialogue and new conceptualizations and contextualizations of history and identity can emerge. While we might not immediately see how cultural hybridity (currently) asserts itself politically in Belarus, Ukraine, or Russia, it does exist and thrive culturally, including in horror films. Post-Soviet horror is a genre heavily involved in the act of cultural translation; it constantly juggles the task of preserving its foreignness with its dependence on its affinity with domestic sensibilities. The uniqueness of the horror genre is that, unlike other genres with local cinematic traditions, it can only function through translation. It is the author's contention that post-Soviet horror blends Hollywood formulae with local representations of history in order to domesticate a foreign genre and to appropriate the local past, thereby opening up a third space for cultural production.

HISTORY "DEGREE ZERO": *MASAKRA* (BELARUS, 2010)

When a Belarusian film is playfully titled *Masakra*, a complex set of allusions are engaged, evoking both the English cognate and the Polish word for "massacre." The film title points to the ambiguous position of contemporary Belarus between East and West: between European Poland, a symbol of the European Union, and Russia, the embodiment of Soviet nostalgia, both of which are constructed in the Belarusian cultural imagination as symbolic powers rather than real geopolitical spaces. The title aptly reflects the flux and ambiguity of historical and generic identity promoted by the film. Will those who watch *Masakra* think of the Polish word and the Gothic traditions that are emulated in

²² Michaela Wolf, "Translation-Transculturation: Measuring the Perspectives of Transcultural Political Action," *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies Publications* April 2008: <<http://eicpc.net/transversal/0608/wolf/en/>> (Accessed May 15, 2014).

the film, or will they latch on to the English-sounding horror title and expect a Hollywood flick? Will they pick up on the language-mixing choices of Belarusian, Russian, and Polish in the film and regard it as a politically subversive work? The director of *Masakra*, Andrei Kudzinenka, has earned the reputation of a rebel ever since his first controversial film *Akupatsyia: Misteryi* [Mysterium Occupation, 2004]. *Occupation* deals with the Nazi invasion of Belarus, a topic of high public sensitivity and intense historical conditioning. The film's rendering of this topic was less than conventional and, for some viewers, quite blasphemous. In this film, Kudzinenka already experiments with the idea of multilingualism as representational of the Belarusian hybrid condition. In *Masakra* the use of this metaphor is taken to another level.

The film combines elements of the Gothic genre with a werewolf story set in nineteenth-century Belarus. A Russian scam artist arrives at the mansion of a mysterious Belarusian count, pretending to be a professor from St. Petersburg. He soon realizes that the mansion is haunted by mysterious forces and that the count is in fact a "were-bear." Some guests are invited to celebrate the count's engagement, and after their arrival they are murdered in a way similar to Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842). Attempting to save the count's fiancée, a Polish princess, the con artist ultimately prevails. The Russian obtains possession of the mansion in the mysterious and hostile Belarusian land; however, the count's fiancée loses her mind and starts communicating exclusively with bears. The story alludes to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), in which a metropolitan dweller comes to the periphery to find that it is full of spooky characters and supernatural events. The film plays with the notion of the border between the civilized and the barbaric. Transgressing this border suspends and inverts the rules and norms of the "civilized" world, subjecting its victims to strange and uncanny events. The film was promoted as "bul'ba-horror" with an emphasis on its playful self-awareness and exaggerated kitchiness, similar to recent pastiche-oriented and playful horror films like Wes Craven's *Scream 4* (2010), Sam Rahmi's *Drag Me To Hell* (2009), or Finnish director Jalmari Helander's transnational take on the genre, *Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale* (2010).

In *Masakra* the director employs a multilingual environment to introduce colonial dynamics. The bear family and the lower classes speak Belarusian, which is translated with the aid of Russian subtitles. This subversive gesture sadly reflects the linguistic reality of today's Belarus, suggesting that Belarusian is not understood by many in Belarus. The con artist and most of the guests, who are Russian functionaries, military officers and their escorts, speak Russian and show complete insensitivity to the local bear problem. They want to shoot the bears, while the count and most of his family, who are actually bears, would like to avoid that, for obvious reasons. Finally, the count's fiancée and her family are Polish and speak Polish (again Russian subtitles are provided).

The film's condemnation of colonial policies is unmistakable. The Russian trickster constantly recites fragments of Pushkin's poetry, mostly out of place, presenting Pushkin as an ideal of cultured discourse that needs to enlighten the dark corners of the Belarusian provinces. The count is brooding and confused, oscillating between speeches about how he wants a normal life and panegyrics to his accursed native land. The Polish princess betrays the count, and her actions ultimately lead to his demise, even though she suffers a mental breakdown afterwards. The subtitled Belarusian is exoticized, making it sound like a mysterious and ancient language, conjuring up dark forests, Gothic mansions, and dishevelled peasants who utter ominous prophecies. All these tropes are readily available in the Dracula narrative and numerous vampire spinoffs that fascinate consumers of contemporary popular culture around the world. Belarusians are represented as marginalized colonial subjects; they are literally half-human and half-animal. The fact that the bear is the Russian national mascot also slyly indicates that inhumanity, or the animal-like nature of the colonized, is in fact brought by the colonizer. The ending of the film, in which a Belarusian fugitive joins Garibaldi's army in Italy, reinforces this impression; it is practically a direct call to arms.

The film engages with local history through its allusions to colonialism and by modifying horror genre conventions, as seen with the innovation of "bul'ba-horror," which is a blend of ironic self-awareness that uses exaggeration and the grotesque to borrow a variety of disparate cultural tropes, appropriating them in a playful manner. This is especially evident in *commedia dell'arte* scenes of two servants engaging in intrigue behind their masters' backs, and in the exaggerated figure of the count's butler who looks and behaves like Nosferatu, the eponymous vampire from F.W. Murnau's celebrated film from 1922, delivering an expressionist performance that looks out of place in a Belarusian film made in 2010. Through its choice of linguistic means and "were-bear" themes, the film demonstrates that Belarus is a victim of Russian colonialism and, more ambiguously, treacherous Polish policies. Despite its clear anti-colonial message, *Masakra*'s take on history is muted at best. As in any other werewolf or vampire movie set in a vaguely defined Victorian period on the outskirts of civilization, the film's portrayal of nineteenth-century Belarus does not boast any historical authenticity. The film embeds itself in history while denying history any substantial voice, glossing it over with recognizable visual tropes of the horror genre: the Gothic mansion, were-bears, elaborate killings involving self-moving objects, comic relief in the vein of *commedia dell'arte*, the doomed romance, suspense created through the use of off-screen space, and so forth.

The film operates through a pronounced incongruity. By this I mean that the viewer is presented with obvious allusions and explications of colonialism, which are set simultaneously in the fictionalized horror world that follows the conventions of ahistoricity, implying no particular place or time. It is through this seemingly incongruous engagement with history that the film paradoxically

creates a national product or makes the horror genre of the werewolf or vampire variety into a specifically Belarusian film. The clash of opposing concepts and defiance of genre expectations become a subtle but constant motif throughout the film. For example, the Nosferatu-like butler is seen not inside a coffin, the appropriate place for a vampire, but a bathtub full of water, thus conflating the ideas of death and birth (baptism) and throwing off our horror genre expectations. Another example is a murder scene, in which a Russian general is crushed by self-moving walls, a fear-inspiring trope that has been around at least since *Star Wars*. In *Masakra* these walls are made of square bales of hay, and they magically appear in place of regular walls seemingly with the sole purpose of killing the general. Not only is it difficult to envision a brutal murder executed by moving stacks of hay, it also becomes a contrasting substitution for regular walls or a more appropriate horror murder weapon. It is easy to understand the frustration of horror aficionados, nonplussed by a vampire in a bathtub and killer hay. Curiously, hay is ubiquitous in the Belarusian mansion and serves as a marker of Belarusian distinctiveness. Another example of the use of hay to jar expectations occurs when we first see the allegedly Gothic mansion and the deformed hay sculptures that decorate its classical facade.

The larger motif of incongruity combines the non-specific Gothic horror time and place, or at least a foreign time and place, with historical retrospection, when our attention is focused on the Belarusian colonial past, marked linguistically and metaphorically via the human / animal dichotomy. *Masakra* adopts foreignizing genre conventions and domesticates them in an appropriation of history, while both gestures lack, to some extent, resolution and counteract one another. The Belarusian writer and critic Ales Adamovich once famously called Belarus the “Vendee of *perestroika*,” implying the republic’s backwardness and reluctance in joining national independence movements, but also a certain resistance to the “march of history,” inevitable path to the nation state and nationalism as progressive developments in Adamovich’s view. Other scholars have pointed out the problematic colonial history of the Belarusian state, in which nationalism could be considered as not fully developed or not enjoying popular support, implying what Adamovich would call Belarus’s unfortunate position “outside of history,” lacking national consciousness and identity.²³ That lack is defined in the film as the clash of historical awareness and genre atemporality, both of which produce a paradoxical vision of history “degree zero” or history that is ahistorical; colonization that is eternally taking place in the generic Gothic landscape; history that is a horror story.

²³ See, for example, Per Anders Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906–1931* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014).

HISTORY AS LABYRINTH: *THE PIT* (UKRAINE, 2006)

The horror genre generally caters to the younger generation of moviegoers, adolescent males being the primary age group in North America. Post-Soviet horror often features young, unknown actors, and, like its Western counterpart, addresses themes of adolescent sexuality and courtship, a tendency that emerged in 1970s and 1980s American slasher films, offering the trope of the “final girl.”²⁴ Suspense is the hallmark of the slasher film, which usually features a murderous maniac who pursues a group of teenagers through treacherous landscape or a familiar place made strange by the unspecified and omnipresent menace. *Shtol'nia* [The Pit], the very first Ukrainian horror film, is a classic slasher in this respect. It tells the story of a group of archaeology students stranded in underground tunnels who are pursued by a psychotic killer from an ancient pagan cult. The killer guns down the teenagers one by one; some die because of their foolish actions or inability to withstand the pressure. The film ends with a budding romance between the blonde heroine and the sympathetic geek hero, a generic finishing touch more characteristic of survival thrillers than slasher horrors, in which the “final girl” usually loses boyfriends and friends but gets the killer. Wes Craven’s classic slasher film *Scream* (1996) epitomizes the dynamic of making the boyfriend a psycho killer, who is ultimately vanquished by the heroine. *The Pit* effectively combines classic slasher horror and thriller elements. There is an omnipotent and ubiquitous killer, a generic device that both drives the plot and justifies the gratuitous violence unleashed upon the teenage victims. *The Pit* is also a survival thriller, testing the characters’ endurance and ingenuity by various, often natural, obstacles, such as a flood and malevolent sewer rats. The film employs few special effects and uses location shooting. The underground terrain is modified through the use of filters that introduce a dark green hue to everything in the tunnels, making the space at once familiar and estranged. Unlike many contemporary Russian blockbusters, such as Timur Bekmambetov’s *Nochnoi dozor* [Night Watch, 2004] and its sequel *Dnevnoi dozor* [Day Watch, 2006], which engage multiple Hollywood genres including horror, fantasy and thriller, *The Pit* does not boast special effects or a generous budget.

In its adoption of mainstream genre formulas, *The Pit* comes close to strategies used by Russian fantasy films, such as the *Watch* franchise. Homages to Hollywood in the *Watch* films consist of direct references (not necessarily with the same message) to Western popular films, which can definitely be picked up by viewers. *The Pit* almost entirely duplicates a rapid montage sequence of basketball players in *Day Watch*, accompanied by a similarly aggressive rap song, and introduces a sepia animated sequence that is analogous

²⁴ The “final girl” is a term coined by Carol J. Clover in relation to gender relations in slasher horror. See *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 35-42.

to the cartoon sequence in *Night Watch*. Such references elicit a recognition response from viewers on a nearly visceral level of perception, and the borrowing is typically strictly visual in nature. Thus, the sepia sequence in the *Pit* has nothing to do with the Russian film, except the device of visual interjection aimed at spectator's recognition. Unlike *Masakra*, whose borrowings consist mainly of generic conventions of plot, character, and locale distanced through an ironic lens, *The Pit* engages the *Watch* films in what seems to be direct visual mimicry, and the *Watch* films themselves engage a multitude of visual tropes from Western films. While these types of direct quotation are undoubtedly a way of alerting the viewer to Hollywood genre tropes, what distinguishes these allusions is that they no longer just borrow narrative and visual conventions but transplant them directly. Noël Carroll has analyzed a similar phenomenon in 1970s Hollywood films, describing this "power of allusion" as both a playful awareness of the cinematic heritage and a serious homage to this heritage.²⁵ The imitative visuality of post-Soviet films could be interpreted as homage. At the same time, by the virtue of their conscious excess, the visual quotes create a certain slippage in mimicry, or a sense of irony and transgression, something that a respectful generic copy would not display.²⁶

Thus, one can argue that post-Soviet horror replicates the visual devices (and the popular appeal) of foreign films but also displays a self-conscious desire to recreate and reconstruct canonic tropes in an ironic way. It seems that post-Soviet horror validates itself as a popular genre by bringing to the forefront all the foreignness in its possession. It signals to the viewer that it is a horror film (and a good one, it is hoped) through multiple generic adoptions (narrative or visual) that, like cues, are brought forth even in promotional posters (*The Pit* poster is suggestive of the famous masked killer from *Scream*). At the same time, the very direct and excessive "in-your-face" nature of these cinematic references suggests a degree of self-awareness and ironic appropriation that resists Hollywood hegemonic conformity. In this respect the Hollywood genre relies on the power of verisimilitude, not ironic repetition. This verisimilitude is recreated by means of seamless montage and, in the case of fantastic genres, the "horrors" in the horror film must be shot in a believable fashion. The strictly visual nature of post-Soviet allusions and references creates an awareness that functions as a

²⁵ Noël Carroll, "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)," *October* 20 (Spring 1982): 51–81.

²⁶ The sly sincerity of horror films can be compared to some extent with the notion of *stiob*, a peculiar form of irony in late-socialist cultures, which "overidentifies" with its object, usually some form of ideological discourse, making it impossible to tell if it is "a form of sincere support" or "subtle ridicule," see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006): 250. Sots-art and the necrorealism movement in cinema are examples of *stiob* in the underground culture and visual arts of the Soviet Union.

disclaimer that raging maniacs with chainsaws are not real, but rather a visual game of clues and quotes. These visual cues disrupt genre conventions and create an ironic distance between the Ukrainian or Russian film and Hollywood. They also problematize the relationship between the original and the copy, authenticity and replication. Interestingly, the viewers' comments discussed earlier also pick up on this ambivalence; the flouting of Hollywood conventions is interpreted as both a shortcoming (they cannot do horror) and an issue of difference (this is "our" horror).

The Pit is shot in Ukrainian, a conscious choice that weighs in on the language debates in Ukraine. Apart from the choice of language, similar to the Belarusian film *Masakra*, *The Pit* engages the colonial history of Ukraine through an origins allegory. The film starts with a stylized cartoon sequence describing Ukraine's pagan origins and the oppression of pagans that ensues after the adoption of Christianity; the sequence points to an ancient primordial history that is both mysterious and murderous. Over the course of the film we learn that history's greatest secret is a pagan cult that dwells in underground catacombs, one member of which is the maniac who preys on contemporary teenagers: they represent the collective sin of forgetting one's origins. This ancient cult, guarded by a monster that preys on those who trespass on his territory, is a very common horror trope (think of the Egyptian mummy films). *The Pit's* pagan overlord is both monstrous and enigmatic; he wears a hooded cloak and scribbles on walls in Old Church Slavonic as he hunts the teenagers and plays on their fears. In the end, as in many other suspense thrillers, the evil mastermind turns out to be an ordinary physical-education teacher, who appears in the basketball sequence at the beginning of the film.

It is interesting that the two references from the Russian fantasy blockbusters in *The Pit* talk about hidden and suppressed origins that lurk literally beneath the surface. It seems that the director's preoccupation with the issues of copy and original, replication and repetition are intertwined with the question of dangerous origins that are lost and, perhaps, better left that way. As the "final" girl and boy crawl out of the mine, leaving danger behind, they walk on a vast field with a suburban train in the far background of the long shot—an idyllic portrayal of both nature and a welcoming embrace of technology and the world of today, far removed from the complicated question of origins and the betrayal of primordial purity. *The Pit* is a patchwork of quotes, visual allusions, and horror and thriller conventions. It contemplates history in a similar vein, as a disconnected and often random assortment in which the questions of copy and original are problematized. Since Ukrainian history itself can be seen as contested ground today, fragmented, distorted, and marginalized by colonial discourse, the film conveys this message to the viewer both structurally and visually. History becomes the vehicle of this horror story and is treated with similar uncertainty and suspicion.

To underscore this point the film introduces the device of the haunted mine, a tunnel that is not simply a place of eerie haunted sewers but also a place in which history literally scares or kills. At different stages of their journey the characters encounter various markers of history (for example, warning signs written in Old Church Slavonic, which might as well be an alien language for today's teens) and various historic artefacts, like a World War II medical kit, provisions from a bomb shelter, and, finally, a machine gun. After trying to consume some wormy canned beef and fifty-year-old painkillers, the teens panic and go on a shooting spree, leaving only the main couple alive. Stretching horizontally like a labyrinth, space in *The Pit* simultaneously becomes a journey through time, in which the teenagers are just as lost. Recovered everyday objects are de-familiarized and become the markers of an unknown era whose origins are dangerous. Most of the time these mystery horror objects induce destruction and suffering (the medicine does not work, the canned food is poison, the gun is used to kill, and so forth). The confusing, macabre space of the underground labyrinth, shot in identical greenish hues, with shots that replicate each other, becomes a reflection of historical betrayal, of a history that does not make sense. One could argue that the confusion and polarization of public opinion over different historical narratives, such as the impact of colonialism (thinly disguised in the film as an allegory of pagan resistance to Christianity), the break-up of the Soviet Union, and independence and political strife in Ukraine, are reflected in the maze of the labyrinth, where everything is not what it seems, and objects both bear the weight of history and its uncanny potential for destruction—or the weight of a horror story.

THE MONSTER OF HISTORY: *TRACKMAN* (RUSSIA, 2007)

The Russian horror film *Putevoi obkhodchik* [Trackman], directed by Igor Shavlak, unlike its Ukrainian and Belarusian counterparts, does not contemplate colonialism and does not scramble for money. The film had 20th Century Fox's financial support to push all the genre buttons right. The film features all the usual (if tiresome) bells and whistles of contemporary thrillers, such as car chases, bank robberies, scantily clad women, fist fighting, and a variety of special effects introduced chiefly for their own sake. One is almost grateful that it is not available in 3D. In *Trackman* the familiar foreignizing strategies of self-imposed exoticism are both self-aware and self-effacing: *Trackman* borrows heavily and obviously. The eponymous maniac is modelled both visually and narratively on masked slasher killers, like Jason Voorhees or Michael Myers of the *Friday the 13th* and *Halloween* franchises, and especially on the Canadian slasher film *My Bloody Valentine* (George Mihalka, 1981). *Trackman*, shot by Americans for Russians, wears its borrowings on its sleeve. It avoids the ambiguity associated with visual cues in *The Pit* or the acute and self-effacing historicity in *Masakra*.

Like *The Pit*, *Trackman* uses space as its staple attraction and the force behind its narrative development. The film is shot in the vast system of Moscow's underground tunnels. This space is the abode of a mutant-monster who hunts people for their eyes and pursues a gang of bank robbers and their two female hostages.²⁷ The cinematographic use of space creates an interesting and complex perspective of the conflation of Russian sensibilities and the Western horror genre. The slogan that accompanied the ads promoting *Trackman*, "Old nightmares get a new face," is an attention-grabbing choice, and no indication is given in the film as to why these nightmares are old and their face is somehow new. The underground, a place rich in historical and cultural references, amplifies the film's take on history as an old nightmare that has come back to haunt contemporary Russia. The brief story of the trackman monster, recapped by a terrified character, offers an even more complex view of history. Trackman is both similar to and unlike Freddy Kruger (from the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise), Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers, or even the psycho of all psychos, Norman Bates. Serial killers in horror films are usually individuals who have had a sinister personal history with civilization, which is represented by coercive institutions, such as psychiatric wards, camps or schools, repressive family structure, or a hypocritical and secretive local community. Trackman is believed to be a rescue worker whose radiation poisoning from Chornobyl led him to become a monster and hunt down humans. He is an anonymous hero of Soviet civilization (his name is never revealed and seems to be of no importance) and at the same time a victim of the system. Unlike the monster-miner in *My Bloody Valentine*, Trackman has not violated a taboo (cannibalism in the Canadian film) that would justify his later madness. Consequently, Trackman's portrayal in the film is multi-layered: he is a Freddy Kruger—an abomination, an omnipotent monster; an anonymous "monster from the Id." He punishes transgressors, not hormonal teenagers but greedy gangsters and cowardly cops. He is a King Kong, who, remembering his humanity, falls for a blond woman; and a Frankenstein, a monster whose fate is man-made and exists as a kind of "j'accuse" moment in the face of contemporary society. In an ambiguous ending, the film reveals that Trackman is a disabled man, who was simply eavesdropping on the gangsters plotting the robbery. The ending can be read as a chilling confirmation that the past (and its monsters) still live among us.

The monstrous Trackman exists as proof that somewhere in the subconscious of contemporary Russia—literally in subterranean sewers—the past continues to live in the form of social aberration and retribution, an abject holdover of the agonizing empire, a mutilated witness to the crimes of the Soviet regime. In the late 1980s the Chornobyl disaster and the belated evacuation and rescue operation, largely concealed from the Soviet population, came to

²⁷ The idea of hunting for eyes appears in E. T. A. Hoffmann's Gothic short story "The Sandman" (1816).

represent everything that was wrong with the Soviet system: callous disregard for people's lives, hypocrisy, and the utter lack of protection and trust between the citizens and the state. Chernobyl came to symbolize the magnitude of the failure of the Soviet regime and the entire Soviet way of life. *Trackman* suggests that any monster that would haunt the contemporary Russian imagination would be an abject monster from the turbulent perestroika past, from the times of Chernobyl.

The film makes clever use of contrasting spaces to drive this point home. It starts in the sleek, modern glass-and-metal interior of a bank and then descends into the dark and filthy underground tunnels that represent not only the underbelly of the rich and glamorous city of Moscow but also the untouched past, abandoned by people and history, just like the Trackman. The Moscow subway project, inaugurated during Stalin's rule, was designed to be a monumental Soviet project, a symbol of the modernity and exceptionalism of the Soviet way of life. In a darker way, its many twists and tunnels gave rise to urban legends about secret government passages and KGB torture chambers. The subway in *Trackman* has neither of these cultural connotations, but it implies the historicity of them all; it is a forgotten and forsaken place that belongs to the past. The rat-infested tunnels, festooned with wires hanging from leaking ceilings, are filled with decaying heaps of trash, industrial objects, and workers' tools, all of which create an atmosphere of an abandoned civilization. As such, the subway harbours a relic of history that was discarded by the civilization above ground, a monster from the times that everyone wants to forget as quickly as possible: the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was a period perceived as a time of great disintegration and decay, political instability and economic hardship, and the collapse of value systems and identity structures. The monstrous Trackman is a lonely and crazed witness to those times, who has been pushed into the literal and metaphorical underground. No wonder he craves eyes, just like *Bloody Valentine's* monster-miner craves hearts. There are no more eyes to witness the history that has been pushed underground but which stubbornly comes back as a bad dream (*Trackman* borrows heavily from *Nightmare on Elm Street*) or a horror story.

The horror genre in post-Soviet cinema provides fertile ground for further research. The cultural dynamics and tendencies illuminated in this article are neither exhaustive nor exclusive, but indicative of the potentially larger cultural patterns of post-Soviet popular cinema. Preoccupations with history, identity, and genre may not be exclusive to post-Soviet horror films, but they appear to be central concerns in post-Soviet mainstream cinema, which is seeking to create a popular local product and compete with Hollywood on its own turf. Horror films chart a pattern that persists stubbornly in post-Soviet cinema: a search for a successful formula that blends the pleasure embedded in the

conventions of the genre and complex national sensibilities, a search that is particularly well articulated through reflections on history and memory.

Olga Pressitch

Language, Class, and Nation in a Soviet Ukrainian Blockbuster Comedy: *Chasing Two Hares* (1961)¹

ABSTRACT: The subject of this article is one of the most popular comedy films of the late Soviet period, *Za dvoma zaitsiamy* [Chasing Two Hares]. Made at the Kyiv Film Studio in 1961, it was originally a Ukrainian-language film based on Mykhailo Staryts'kyi's eponymous 1883 play that satirized pretentious upstarts eager to assimilate into Russian culture. However, the completed film was dubbed into Russian and released throughout the Soviet Union in the Russian version. The change of language reversed the meaning of the film's satire, turning the movie into a harmless folkloric comedy that reinforced imperial cultural hierarchies rather than undermining them.

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article aborde l'une des comédies les plus populaires de la fin de l'époque soviétique, *Quand on court après deux lièvres / Derrière deux lièvres*. Conçu aux Studio Kyiv Film en 1961, c'était à l'origine l'adaptation en langue ukrainienne d'une pièce de théâtre de Mykhailo Staryts'kyi (1883) qui ridiculisait les nouveaux riches prétentieux désirant s'assimiler à la culture russe. Toutefois, le film dans sa version définitive fut doublé en russe et parut à travers l'Union soviétique dans sa version russe. Ce changement de langue inverse la signification satirique du film, le transformant en une comédie populaire anodine qui renforce les hiérarchies présentes dans la culture impériale plutôt que de les déstabiliser.

In the late 1950s Kyiv Film Studio began working on a film version of a classic Ukrainian comedy, Mykhailo Staryts'kyi's *Za dvoma zaitsiamy* [Chasing Two Hares, 1883]. The movie was originally intended as a Ukrainian-language production to be released only in the Ukrainian SSR. However, upon reviewing the completed film in the fall of 1961, officials of the Soviet Union's Ministry of Culture requested its dubbing into Russian for release throughout the country. This type of request was neither exceptional nor undesirable for the filmmakers, but it had unusual implications in the case of this particular film because the meaning of its satire suddenly changed with the change of language. In the end, Soviet audiences, including in Ukraine, came to know *Chasing Two Hares* the film primarily in its Russian-language version. It became one of the most popular comedy films of the late Soviet period and a staple of television reruns.

¹ Earlier drafts of this paper were presented at the conference on "Ukraine: Language, Culture, Identity" at Monash University in February 2012 and the annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies in New Orleans in November 2012. I am grateful to Marko Pavlyshyn and the journal's anonymous reviewers for their critical suggestions and to Marta D. Olynyk, who edited the text.

In fact, the popular appeal of this movie far outlasted the Soviet Union itself. In 1999 the filmmakers and leading actors were awarded (in some cases, posthumously) the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Ukrainian State Prize for distinguished contribution to Ukrainian cinema.² In 2003, a made-for-television musical remake of *Chasing Two Hares* was released in Russia, featuring such Russian and Ukrainian pop music icons as Alla Pugacheva, Maksim Galkin, and Verka Serdiuchka. The statues of the 1961 film's two main protagonists on Kyiv's Andriivs'kyi Uzviz Street have been a major tourist attraction since their unveiling in 1999. Although the film tells the story of a marital disaster, one can often see Kyivan newlyweds having their pictures taken near the sculpture.

In this article I will analyze how the makers of the 1961 film adjusted the plot line of Staryts'kyi's play to fit the Soviet political and cultural sensibilities of the time. I argue that the play's original message contained a veiled threat to the structures of imperial cultural domination and that Soviet ideologues had good reason to overrule as dangerous the director's attempt to establish the film's relevance in the present. In the end, though, the preferential distribution of the film's Russian version reversed the meaning of the film's satire and instead established it as a harmless folkloric comedy that reinforced the colonial cultural hierarchy. As well, I will explain the film's lasting popularity in both Russia and Ukraine owing to its strong element of melodrama and musical characterization, both of which turned negative characters into attractive ones.

CHASING TOO MANY HARES

In the early 1960s the Soviet film industry was still searching for a recipe for a blockbuster comedy that would appeal to the new generation of cinema-goers. The only permissible comedy genres of the Stalin period, the musical comedy and the romantic comedy, appeared increasingly old-fashioned; in the public's mind they were also linked to the extreme idealization of everyday life in the Soviet Union and the glorification of Stalin's authority. The search for new comedic tropes took time. The problem was systemic, of course, connected as it was to the limited repertoire of "safe" contemporary topics that state ideologists would consider fit for comedic treatment. Nevertheless, in 1961 the all-Union Ministry of Culture ordered the republican ministries to include comedies in their plans for 1962 and report on the names of directors assigned to such projects.³

Finally, between 1965 and 1968 the Russian director Leonid Gaidai made his famous trilogy of comedies united by the character of a Soviet innocent

² See the presidential decree of 20 August 1999, "On Awarding the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Ukrainian State Prize for 1999," available on-line at *Zakonodavstvo Ukrainy*: <<http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1028/99>> (Accessed 5 June 2014).

³ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literary i mystetstva Ukrainy (hereafter cited as TsDAMLM), f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1399, ark. 62.

named Shurik. Present-day scholars argue that Gaidai's slapstick comedy was associated with greater bodily and linguistic freedom, and in this it reflected the strivings of the post-Stalin generation. It is only fitting that with the advent of political conservatism in the 1970s Gaidai lost the crown of the most popular comedy director to El'dar Riazanov, who produced romantic comedies with a (mild) critique of the existing order expressed through more traditional narrative devices.⁴ Interestingly, one of Gaidai's first experimental shorts, *Pes Barbos i neobychnyi kross* [Barbos the Dog and the Unusual Cross, 1961], was based on a story by the Ukrainian humorist Stepan Oliinyk—a story that Kyiv Film Studio examined but did not pursue as potential script material.⁵

People involved with the film industry in the Ukrainian republic shared the general understanding that a crisis had emerged in Soviet comedy, especially as far as contemporary topics were concerned. As the film critic Mykhailo Solomonov quipped in 1962 in the new Ukrainian cinema magazine *Novyny kinoekranu*, "Let us say openly: The situation with comedy is tragic."⁶ However, already by the early 1960s Ukrainian filmmakers had some success stories to share. In 1962, when the Artistic Council of the Kyiv Film Studio held a special conference to discuss strategies for developing a film comedy genre in the republic, the invited speakers were able to refer to *Chasing Two Hares* as a recent notable achievement in this genre. (The other movie that some conference participants mentioned, *Zelenyi furhon* [Green Carriage, Odesa Film Studio, 1959], was really an adventure film with some comedic elements set in Odesa at the end of the civil war.⁷) Significantly, neither of the two films treated a contemporary topic. In general, an obvious conceptual tension existed between the Soviet notions of "national" and "contemporary," which the conference's participants did not dare point out. Since everyday life in the Ukrainian SSR was not supposed to be substantially different from that in the Russian republic, that is, it was centred around heroic labour in industry or agriculture and a developing socialist consciousness, what traditionally defined the "Ukrainian" character of a Soviet movie was either its Ukrainian historical topic or its grounding in folk culture. However, since Stalin's time both approaches were

⁴ See Aleksandr Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attraction versus Narrative Cinema: Leonid Gaidai's Comedies and Eldar Riazanov's Satires of the 1960s," *Slavic Review* 62.3 (Fall 2003): 457 and 471–472.

⁵ *Radians'ka kul'tura* 22 March 1962: 4. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations in this article are mine.

⁶ M. Solomonov, "Pro smishne ta nudne," *Novyny kinoekranu* 3 (1962): 8.

⁷ TsDAML, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1526, ark. 10 and the newspaper summary in *Radians'ka kul'tura* 10 June 1962: 2. The republic's Deputy Minister of Culture Ivan Chabanenko also named *Chasing Two Hares* as the "most successful" recent Ukrainian comedy in his article in *Radians'ka kul'tura* 26 November 1962: 2.

expected to reinforce rather than undermine the structures of imperial cultural mythology. As Joshua First has argued, before the 1960s the safe “folkloric mode was a means to re-create the periphery as a familiar ethnoscape where ‘national color’ was domesticated and existed in the realm of the expected.”⁸ Of course, negotiating the limits of the permissible was a difficult task that carried with it the danger of generating an accusation of Ukrainian “bourgeois nationalism.” Ukrainian intellectuals still remembered the ideological campaigns of 1946 and 1951 against “nationalist deviations,” which targeted precisely works with any Ukrainian colouring.⁹ During the 1960s Ukrainian filmmakers would move beyond the folkloric / historical mode and consciously attempt to encode notions of the national self within modes and styles of cultural expression.¹⁰

At first, *Chasing Two Hares* appeared safer in this respect, as Soviet ideologists considered the long-dead Staryts'kyi a “progressive” pre-revolutionary writer, and his comedy—a progressive critique of middle-class aspirations and breaking with one’s own people. The problem lay, rather, in establishing the subject matter’s relevance for the Khrushchev period. Staryts'kyi, an active participant of the nineteenth-century Ukrainian movement, intended his play about a dissolute barber who is in love with one woman but seeks to marry another for her money as a satire of the eager assimilation of the Kyivan lower middle class into Russian culture—satire that was as relevant to Ukrainian theatre audiences in the 1960s as it was in the 1880s. It was a dangerous kind of relevance, however. Under the rule of first secretaries Mykola Pidhornyi (1957–1963) and Petro Shelest (1963–1972), the Communist party in the Ukrainian republic charted an uneven course in nationality policy, at times declaring its full support for the Ukrainian language and at others, attacking innovative young Ukrainian writers and promoting “internationalism.”¹¹ A more definite turn toward assimilation and political repression would come in the mid-1960s, and these dangers were certainly in the air even when the film was being made.

Thus, with the studio’s approval, the director Viktor Ivanov looked hard for ways to establish the film’s relevance to the Soviet present without stepping onto the dangerous terrain of endorsing Ukrainian cultural identity and condemning assimilation into an imperial culture. A student of Sergei Eisenstein

⁸ See Joshua J. First, “Scenes of Belonging: Cinema and the Nationality Question in Soviet Ukraine During the Long 1960s,” Diss. (University of Michigan, 2008) 71.

⁹ See Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹⁰ On this process, see First.

¹¹ See Yaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine After World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964); V. K. Baran, *Ukraina pislia Stalina: Narys istorii 1953–1985 rr.* (L’viv: Svoboda, 1992).

and Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Ivanov also published children's books in Ukrainian and doubled as screenwriter on several of his films. According to his son, Ivanov realized that the ideologues and studio officials had a weak command of Ukrainian literary classics, and he managed to sharpen the comedy's critique of the denationalizing and social climbing bourgeoisie with a number of his own gags.¹² Yet, he also needed to establish the film's connection to the Soviet authorities' official agenda. As the archival drafts of the script demonstrate, the storyline, set in late-nineteenth-century Kyiv, was to be framed by an introduction and conclusion taking place in "present-day" Kyiv of the early 1960s. Ivanov intended to begin the film with a bird's-eye view of the Ukrainian capital and then continue with images of the "past" surviving in the present, such as a priest getting out of an executive-class Volga automobile or youngsters parading in foreign clothes. In a later draft, which was actually filmed, the filmmaker employed a different strategy by trying to contrast the past with the present. In this version, the movie begins with a Revolution Day parade in contemporary Kyiv, the idea being to show the "new people" marching on the streets before cutting to the "old types" of the tsarist regime. The latter part is actually in the film, which begins with a satirical panorama of tsarist officials, priests, and bourgeois philistines gathered on the streets of old Kyiv, but the Revolution Day parade was cut in the final stage of the production. As well, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture recommended against the director's plans to end the film either by showing present-day successors of the main protagonist, the young men and women dancing to Western music, or by returning to the Revolution Day parade.¹³

Interestingly, it was official concern over nationality policy that led to the elimination of the seemingly unrelated *stiliagi* theme. The functionaries at the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture felt that the parallel between the main target of satire, the Kyivan barber who wanted to pass himself off as a "Russian," and present-day youth was a dangerous one. To them, *stiliagi* were not to be connected to the concept of assimilation into Russian culture but to the unhealthy fascination with the "bourgeois capitalist West with its decaying morals."¹⁴ It was thus safer to leave the comedy in the historical past than risk spelling out who, exactly, in the present would be considered the successors of Stryts'kyi's main protagonist.

In the final version, the film's relevance to the present is established only implicitly by the introductory voice-over telling the viewer that "this little story

¹² Olena Ivanova-Solodovnykova, "A tsia pokhmura liudyna znimatyme komedii," *Kino-teatr* 7 (2007): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=765> (Accessed 5 June 2014).

¹³ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 26; f. 670, op. 2, spr. 1247 and spr. 1685.

¹⁴ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 26.

took place not so long ago—half a century back.” Transposing the plot to approximately 1911, still within living memory for many in the audience, represented a significant updating of Staryts'kyi's 1883 play, which was itself a remake of a less successful 1875 play by Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi. The archives do not provide a clearly stated reason for this change, but one might suggest, in addition to a greater “relevance,” expanded possibilities for portraying class tensions and an opportunity to show the main protagonists going to the cinema. The significance of both topics is discussed in greater detail below.

As part of the formal, final approval of the film script, the studio was required to produce a memo outlining the proposed film's value to the Soviet audience. In the case of *Chasing Two Hares*, the officials at the Kyiv Film Studio enumerated several reasons for acceptance. Staryts'kyi's play, as reworked by the director / script-writer Ivanov, “sharply satirizes philistinism, the love of money, Khlestakov-style bragging, kowtowing before everything foreign, and the corruption of the native tongue.”¹⁵ Not only is the national-identity issue relegated to the last position on the list, it is also formulated so generally as to appear cryptic. The studio officials were obviously referring to the play's main protagonists, who attempt to speak Russian in order to appear to be of higher social standing, but in reality speak the ungrammatical mixture of Ukrainian and Russian known as *surzhyk*.¹⁶ As a Ukrainian-language film slated for release in Soviet Ukraine, *Chasing Two Hares* was thus expected to signal the official endorsement of standard literary Ukrainian as a proper component of Ukrainian identity and a marker of Soviet Ukrainian culture. However, the release of the film in Russian would completely reverse the satirical message.

THE FUNNY PART

The popularity of Staryts'kyi's play rested in large measure on linguistic malapropisms and the misunderstandings that resulted from language mixing. The plot focuses on the merchants of Kyiv's Podil district, who are tripping over themselves to pass themselves off as “cultured” and “Russian.” The barber Svyryd Holokhvostyi (“bar-tailed”) wants to be known under the more Russian-sounding name Golokhvastov. The shop owner Prokip Sirko claims that “Sirko” is just a dog's name, whereas his family name should be spelled “Serkov.” None of the play's characters speaks standard literary Ukrainian or Russian; all of them mix these languages to some degree. Still, Staryts'kyi reserved his heavy

¹⁵ TsDAML, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 11. Khlestakov is the main character in Nikolai Gogol's *Revizor* [The Inspector General, 1836], a fop and liar who impersonates a high-ranking official.

¹⁶ On *surzhyk* as a “sociolect” that is still widespread in Ukraine, see Laada Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) and Larysa Masenko, *Surzhyk: mizh movoiu i “iazynom”* (Kyiv: KM Akademiia, 2011).

satirical artillery for Golokhvastov and Sirko's daughter Pronia, the latter preferring this Russian-sounding diminutive to the Ukrainian Prisia (from Iefrosyna or Paraska). These two characters try the hardest to speak Russian, and their efforts lead to all kinds of comic errors. Some of these gags are preserved in the Russian version of the film. For example, when Pronia says in Russian that "today we are not receiving guests" (*nepriemnyi den*), her aunt Sekleta takes this for the Ukrainian *nepriemnyi* (unpleasant), declaring that for her the day is, on the contrary, a pleasant one (*priemnyi*) because she sold all the apples she had taken to the market. In another scene, when Pronia asks her servant Khymka to bring *ognia* (light) for Golokhvastov's cigarette, Khymka understands this as the Ukrainian *vohniu* (fire) and instead of matches brings burning wood from the stove.

However, much of the original play's *surzhyk* was deleted at the script-approval stage. Precisely because it remained so widespread in the Soviet present, the officials of the Ukrainian republic's Ministry of Culture felt that using *surzhyk* extensively in the film would be politically incorrect: "What was fully acceptable in a theatre play and received correctly by audiences would have been excessive (*nadmirnym*) in cinema."¹⁷ The educational function of Soviet cinema called for promoting the standard of "culturedness," represented in this case by standard Ukrainian: "It would be correct if the film's characters used primarily the contemporary literary Ukrainian language. A deviation from this principle could lead to scoffing at the Ukrainian and Russian languages."¹⁸ The playwright and satirist Ievhen Kravchenko was called in to rewrite the dialogue, leaving only some of what the studio officials termed "slang" exclusively to Pronia and Golokhvastov.¹⁹ This cultural homogenization effort made the "people" of Staryts'kyi's play sound more "Ukrainian" to the modern audience, thus strengthening the concept of "culturedness" vested in the people and opposed to the urban hybrid mass culture of Pronia and Golokhvastov. At this point, the script still followed the long Ukrainian theatrical tradition of staging this play as a satire about pretentious upstarts who renounce their nation.

Staryts'kyi's play was also part of the nineteenth-century Ukrainian theatrical tradition in that it included a lengthy scene of Golokhvastov carousing at Sekleta's, which allowed travelling Ukrainian companies to showcase folk singing and dancing. In the "ethnographic" theatre of the time, these were the two crucial components that attracted audiences. Even though this scene is in the movie, its character changed considerably because the filmmaker replaced some of the songs and had them all recorded in beautiful literary Ukrainian by professional choirs. The resulting scene leaves an incongruent impression, with

¹⁷ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 23.

¹⁸ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 27.

¹⁹ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 12 and 19.

these positively encoded components of the Ukrainian cultural canon serving rather inappropriately as a musical background for a wild party, where Golokhvastov dances with a nun and yells right into the camera, “I love carousing!”

Overall, however, the film’s message at this stage leaned toward the affirmation of Ukrainian culture as the culture of the “people.” The characters who attempted to speak Russian, but were in fact using *surzhyk*, represented the native petty bourgeoisie, whereas the speakers of conventional Russian in the film were members of the imperial army and the police. Archival documents show the considerable effort that went into underlining the class characterization of the play’s characters. In order to portray Golokhvastov as an idler, two of the scenes showing him working as a barber were deleted or re-filmed at the last moment, one of them at the request of the All-Union Ministry of Culture.²⁰ In contrast, the filmmakers developed the character of the blacksmith Stepan, the true love of the beautiful Halia, whom Golokhvastov is also pursuing, and created a new character, that of his young helper. Early on in the preparation of the script, Ivanov eliminated the character of the Jewish moneylender Ios’ka, who at the end of Staryts’kyi’s play exposes Golokhvastov’s insolvency. Instead, following the suggestion of the officials from the republic’s Ministry of Culture, he created a new character: a German “capitalist,” the owner of the blacksmith shop where Stepan is working who also doubles as a moneylender.²¹ This new plot line allowed the director to show at least a glimpse of class relations. The director also gave Stepan and his comrade a leading role in uncovering Golokhvastov’s fraud and putting a stop to his and Pronia’s wedding.

The director also focused on reshaping the character of Khymka, the Sirkos’ domestic servant. Much of the play’s comedy is based on her dim-wittedness, and the theatrical tradition dictated that an older comedienne be cast to play this “simpleton.” What he suggested instead and what met with the approval of the Ministry of Culture was a younger female trickster, who just pretends to be dim-witted, all the while making fun of her employers. Together with the two blacksmiths, Khymka was also to help expose Golokhvastov.²² The director further amplified the character’s transformation by casting in this role the attractive, young actress Taisiia Lytvynenko.

Overall, in his film script Ivanov tried to clarify the ambiguities present in Staryts’kyi’s play, even if they stemmed from the playwright’s Realist approach, which was laudable, at least in theory. For example, Staryts’kyi also endowed Sirko with some positive traits, such as familial love and the desire to see Pronia married “to a burgher, a toiling person, who would not squander money, would

²⁰ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 8.

²¹ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 27.

²² TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 27.

treat our child well, respect us, and follow the customs.”²³ In the script, however, Sirko is a one-dimensional caricature—a stupid owner of a small shop—and even more so in the film, in which he is portrayed by the popular character actor Mykola Iakovchenko, no master of subtleties. Ivanov also modified the other characters’ attitude to Golokhvastov, such as choosing not to include the play’s repeated references to Golokhvastov’s physical attractiveness.

The scene in Act 1, where Golokhvastov is shown in the company of young people from his neighbourhood, also underwent an interesting transformation. In the play some young men laugh at his pretensions, but others see him as a “smart and educated” person, who “walks and speaks like a gentleman (*pan*).”²⁴ In the film, however, Golokhvastov is the universal butt of jokes. The local youths are represented as a homogenous Ukrainian working-class group, dressed as workers on their day off in black jackets over embroidered shirts and wearing worker caps. (In the background, two women in Ukrainian dress are shown singing a folk song.) In contrast, Golokhvastov is wearing “fashionable” foreign clothing of bright and somewhat unmatched colours. The director obviously saw this scene as an opportunity to underline the film’s relevance to the present because of the obvious parallel between Golokhvastov and the *stiliagi* that he had originally wanted to emphasize. Staryts'kyi’s play provided convenient dialogue, with one young man mocking Golokhvastov’s claim that the fabric for his trousers was imported from Scotland. Golokhvastov mispronounces *shotlands'ka* as *shatalans'ka*, which his interlocutor pretends to understand as *sharlatans'ka* (charlatanic). The low camera angle puts into focus Golokhvastov’s narrow-striped trousers as the element of his costume establishing the strongest visual allusion to the *stiliagi*. Aiming to conclude the scene unambiguously, the director shows the Ukrainian youths physically ejecting Golokhvastov and his sidekick from the park, which is absent in the play.

However, the ministry’s objection to opening and ending the film with fast-forwards to the Soviet present played a joke on Ivanov and the studio by introducing ambiguity where it would be most visible, in the movie’s finale. The director originally wanted to end the film by teleporting the perambulating Golokhvastov into the “present,” where he would appear on the street dressed as a fashionable young man of the early 1960s and accompanied by two young women, who cast ironic glances at him.²⁵ With this and other possible framing devices excluded (already at the filming stage, Ivanov introduced the figure of a street organ grinder as a storyteller opening and ending the story, but it too was

²³ Mykhailo Staryts'kyi, “Za dvoma zaitsiamy,” in *Tvory u 8-my tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1964) 2: 384.

²⁴ Staryts'kyi 367.

²⁵ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 2, spr. 1247, ark. 97.

abandoned),²⁶ at the end of the film Golokhvastov and his two friends just walk away. Moreover, they do so while maintaining a pose. Although the wedding has just been called off, Golokhvastov's bankruptcy revealed, and the trio beaten up by the crowd, they are shown walking away as *flâneurs* and singing Golokhvastov's trademark joyous song.

AMBIVALENT SATIRE

The figure of Golokhvastov, supposedly the main focus of the film's satire, may provide some clues to the movie's runaway success. The director originally wanted to cast in this role the older and better-known theatre and film actor Mykola Hrytsenko. However, he was then working at Moscow's Vakhtangov Theatre, which did not allow him the leave of absence necessary for appearing in a film. Instead, Ivanov hired Oleg Borisov, a young actor from Kyiv's Lesia Ukrainka Russian Drama Theatre. In retrospect, the role of Golokhvastov propelled Borisov into stardom, leading to a distinguished career in film and theatre (in Leningrad and Moscow). At the time, however, his casting as Golokhvastov was controversial. After reviewing the first 400 metres of the film, the officials of Ukraine's Ministry of Culture demanded the removal of Borisov, who supposedly "did not create a striking interpretation." Based on trial shots of Hrytsenko, they suggested that his casting "would guarantee the film's success." Only Hrytsenko's unavailability put an end to the question.²⁷ Young and good-looking, Borisov created a different Golokhvastov from the caricature expected by officialdom. In an official memo recommending the completed film for the ministry's approval, the studio bosses used the following careful phrasing: "Borisov coped well with the role by finding, together with the director, a somewhat lighter (*polehshene*) interpretation of this character, which is fully consistent with the general concept of the film."²⁸ Simply put, his Golokhvastov was an attractive but light-hearted young man rather than a calculating gold digger.

Writing in *Novyny kinoekranu* after the film's release, the chief editor of the Kyiv Film Studio, Volodymyr Sosiura, Jr., complained about Borisov's performance: "Carried away with role creation, the actor tacitly makes his character somewhat attractive, likeable. Viewers even begin sympathizing with this scoundrel, they worry about the success of his 'enterprises'. This does not correspond to the main idea of the play and the film." Sosiura concluded that "the character of Holokhosty [sic], created by the talented actor, became more interesting and likeable than the schematic positive characters" in the film.²⁹

²⁶ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 2, spr. 1685, ark. 148.

²⁷ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 15.

²⁸ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 11–12.

²⁹ V. Sosiura, "Po-svoiemu," *Novyny kinoekranu* 2 (1962): 5.

Much of the character's appeal was anchored in Golokhvastov's songs. Staryts'kyi's play had none; it was Ivanov's bright idea to provide musical characterization of the two main protagonists using melodic models from late Imperial mass culture. The talented Kravchenko, who was paid a meagre 600 roubles for his extensive work on the script, wrote all of Golokhvastov's songs in an inventive imitation of colloquial *surzhyk*, and the composer Vadym Homoliaka came up with energetic, danceable tunes that sounded vaguely "familiar," because they imitated early twentieth-century pop music.³⁰ One of Kravchenko's collaborations with Homoliaka became the film's theme song and a runaway hit with Soviet audiences:

A canary flying in the sky
Sings towards the horizon.
So we'll go drinking and carousing—
Life is all about this and this is all we want.

Lassies-lovers always waiting,
Life is sweet as marmalade.
Hey, a guitar, treat us to a
Joyful, oh so joyful tune.

My Mommy has a big heart
And my Daddy owns a shop.
So they aren't neglecting me,
For I'm their only dandy son.³¹

The film scholar Aleksandr Prokhorov has commented on the interesting phenomenon that the most popular songs from late Soviet films are usually sung in films by negative characters. In his opinion, the sounds emanating from villains and outcasts "provided a welcome disruption in the narrative coherence of Soviet ideological discourse."³² Of course, it is also important to remember that the various ideological officials supervising the film production would only allow an "apolitical" song if it was performed by a negative character. In Golokhvastov's case, his irreverent songs challenged not just the official precepts of the Soviet way of life but also the cultural hegemony of either the

³⁰ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 6 (drafts of the text; the famous third stanza is added in handwriting, apparently at the last moment). See also f. 670, op. 4, spr. 65 (Homoliaka's scores) and f. 670, op. 1, spr. 956, ark. 36–56 (honorarium amounts). Ivanov had originally requested 4,000 rubles for Kravchenko; Homoliaka was paid 2,500. Ivanov himself had a contract for 40,000 rubles, but in the end accepted 14,000 because the studio claimed it could only pay him at the "made-for-television" rate (TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 40 and f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 41–43).

³¹ *Za dvumia zaitsami*, directed by Viktor Ivanov (Oleksandr Dovzhenko Kyiv Film Studio, 1961).

³² Prokhorov 466.

Ukrainian or Russian literary standard. Faced with a choice between carefully edited and orchestrated Ukrainian folk songs representing the safe imperial “ethnoscape” and Golokhvastov’s language-mixing urban romances, audiences in the Ukrainian SSR and elsewhere in the Soviet Union clearly identified with the latter.

The emancipatory effect of Golokhvastov’s songs did not disappear with the film’s dubbing into Russian, although the satirical thrust did change. The decision of the All-Union Ministry of Culture to request the film’s dubbing into Russian was formally justified simply by the film’s high artistic qualities, which made it fit for country-wide release.³³ In fact, it was common at the time for films made in the non-Russian republics and classified as categories “one” and “two” to be dubbed into Russian and released in both versions. In a famous act of disobedience, Sergei Paradzhanov resisted, on aesthetic grounds, the dubbing of his 1964 masterpiece *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors]. In general, however, dubbing meant wider distribution and additional income for both filmmakers and actors in the republic, who usually dubbed themselves. When actors did not know Ukrainian, films sometimes could be made in Russian first and then dubbed into Ukrainian during the editing stage. What worried Ukrainian cultural figures at the time, however, was the practice of distributing both versions in the Ukrainian republic instead of only Ukrainian in Ukraine and the Russian one elsewhere. They rightly saw it as an assimilatory practice.³⁴ One public protest against such distribution policies is discussed later in this article.

In the case of *Chasing Two Hares*, the decision to award the second category to the film and dub it was made at the last moment, which led to a scramble to finish the dubbing in time for a late-December release. Feverish work on dubbing the film took place in October and November 1961, resulting in the Russian soundtrack’s submission to the Ministry on 5 December and the film’s release on 21 December 1961.³⁵ Of course, in approving the film for Union-wide release the ministry could simply have been concerned with the insufficient number of high-quality Soviet comedies in the period before Gaidai and Riazanov found their footing. Yet, it would be hard not to notice the realignment of the target of satire in the Russian version of *Chasing Two Hares*. Instead of literary Ukrainian, the film’s positive characters now spoke Russian, albeit with the recognizable Ukrainian “h,” while still singing Ukrainian songs. The negative characters now spoke *surzhyk*, but viewers “read” it as a deviation from the Russian standard rather than the Ukrainian one. The point of criticizing

³³ TsDAML, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1456, ark. 72.

³⁴ Mykhailo Illienko, “Proekt ‘Paradzhanov,’” *Istorychna Pravda* 25 October 2013: <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2013/10/25/138407/view_print/> (Accessed 6 June 2014); and Larysa Briukhovets’ka, personal communication, 13 May 2014.

³⁵ TsDAML, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1456, ark. 65–66, 69, and 72.

assimilationist zeal is largely lost in the Russian version. At the same time, the change made the film fully acceptable to Russian audiences by producing a comforting image of “good” Ukrainians speaking accented Russian except when they sing their beautiful songs—perhaps the ultimate incarnation of the “imperial ethnoscape.” It could now be perceived as a situation comedy in which there is no conflict between the imperial and minority languages, but one is welcome to laugh at speakers of *surzhyk*, who implicitly represent backward, country-bumpkin Ukrainians striving to become Russians. This may well be one of the reasons behind the film’s popularity in the Ukrainian SSR, where assimilation was making great strides in the late Soviet period, as well as in the Russian republic.

AN UNLIKELY LOVE STORY

Yet, there must be some other reason why bronze statues of Pronia and Golokhvastov remain such a popular picture-taking spot for newlyweds, young couples, and tourists alike. I suggest that it can be found by analyzing the elements of vaudeville and, especially, melodrama in *Chasing Two Hares*. Compared with the play, the film contains two major, new additions, both alien to nineteenth-century ethnographic theatre. The first is the long scene at a girls’ boarding school that teaches manners and the art of dancing, and Pronia’s brawl with the school headmistress, which results in her expulsion. The entire scene is Ivanov’s invention; in the play we only learn from the dialogue of Pronia’s parents that she quit school after three months, thus forfeiting the entire year’s tuition. The studio officials approved of the addition as satire of bourgeois mores, although they felt that the portrayal of Pronia’s fight with the headmistress was possibly a bit extravagant.³⁶ However, what the boarding-school scene really offered the viewer was entertainment—comedy, music, and cancan-like dancing. At around the same time at the Moscow Film Studio Riazanov was making another musical comedy on a historical subject, *Gusarskaia ballada* [The Hussar Ballad, 1962]. There was no satirical angle or negative characters as such, and the film portrayed the tsarist army and nobility in a positive light. For Riazanov, resurrecting what was essentially a tsarist vaudeville was made easy by the fact that the film was set during the Patriotic War of 1812 and the subject matter could thus be justified as patriotic education for filmgoers. Ukrainian filmmakers did not have such an excuse and could only introduce elements of vaudeville under the guise of satire, as was the case in *Chasing Two Hares*.

If the elements of vaudeville modernized Staryts'kyi’s ethnographic comedy, it was the aspect of melodrama that ensured the film’s lasting success and popular pilgrimages to the site of the statues. At first, Pronia seems an unlikely

³⁶ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 11.

candidate with whom viewers can identify. Throughout most of the film she comes across as physically unattractive, loud, pretentious, and simple-minded. Early on in the filming process, the officials at the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture criticized Margarita Krinitsyna's portrayal of Pronia as "primitive," but she was kept on because the director saw Pronia in precisely this way.³⁷ Krinitsyna makes Pronia sound sincere only at two points in the film, and both these utterings are about love rather than marriage or status. Her rejoinders in both cases belong rather to a heroine of a drama, not a comedy. The first occasion occurs when Pronia asks Golokhvastov while trying to gaze into his eyes: "But do you really love me? We hardly know each other." The second is Pronia's last shot, in which she collapses on the stairs leading to St. Andrew's Church, shouting her last words at Golokhvastov: "Why were you pursuing me? Why did you beg me while kneeling before me? I agreed to marry you not because of your shops... I loved you..."³⁸ In this last scene Pronia, who is filmed from above, looks her most vulnerable, as well as sincere and human. Her transformation from an object of satire into a character who commands empathy is now complete. A naïve Pronia, who dreamed of true love but was deceived, is thus established as an object of identification for the audience—and Krinitsyna woke up a celebrity the day after the film's release. The film critic Solomonov decried in print the transformation of Pronia the philistine into a "heroine": "The comedy thus becomes a tragedy of an unjustly deceived 'ordinary' person."³⁹

There is an earlier, more metaphorical, visual hint in the movie that it is not just a satire on the Ukrainian petty bourgeoisie under the *ancien régime*. Staryts'kyi's play featured a satirical exposé of the Russified urban mass culture that fascinates Pronia and Golokhvastov equally. In their dialogue Pronia expresses her preference for the circus over the theatre and names her favourite chapbooks like *Ieruslan Lazarevich* (based on a Russian folk tale), *Krovavaia zvezda* [Bloody Star], and *Chernyi grob* [Black Coffin]. In turn, Golokhvastov recommends other cheap publications, such as *Bitva rus'kykh z kabardintsami* [The Battle between the Russians and the Kabardinians], *Matil'da chili Khrantsuz'ka Grizetka* [Mathilde or the French Grisette], and *Beznevina devitsa chili liubov ukhitrtsia* [An Innocent Maiden or Love Will Find a Way].⁴⁰ Interestingly, the first titles on both lists signify Russian popular culture (*The Battle between the Russians and the Kabardinians* is also connected pointedly to imperial conquests of other peoples), while the subsequent ones embody the shared European, lower-class mass culture that reached the Ukrainian provinces

³⁷ TsDAMLM, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 774, ark. 15.

³⁸ *Za dvumia zaitsami*.

³⁹ Solomonov 9.

⁴⁰ Staryts'kyi 375.

via the Russian language.⁴¹ The director replaced this dialogue with a more dynamic and visual scene showing Pronia and Golokhvastov going to the cinema, a plausible solution since the film is set in about 1911. After viewing a short “Chronicle” section featuring a satirical take on pre-revolutionary Kyivan society, the lovers watch the feature presentation—a silent melodrama entitled *Krovavaia Matil'da* [Bloody Mathilda] filled with steamy affairs, betrayal, and crimes of passion. As the camera closes in on Pronia’s expression, in turn excited and frightened, the viewer begins to realize not only that she is just like us, but also that the filmmakers are perhaps playing the same trick on the viewer as Mathilda’s bloody drama on Pronia—appealing to basic human emotions.

* * *

The Russian dubbing of *Chasing Two Hares* and the subsequent preferential distribution of the Russian version throughout the Ukrainian republic did not cause a public scandal at the time, but that was only because the authorities would not allow two scandals in a row related to the use of cinema as a tool of assimilation. Just as the crew was putting the finishing touches on the film in early September 1961, *Literaturna hazeta* published a similar complaint about another film. An unhappy viewer from the western Ukrainian city of Rivne by the name of P. Skachok wrote to the Ukrainian Writers’ Union paper to complain about a recent Ukrainian film, *The Forest Song*, which was playing in his native city only in Russian, even though it was originally made in Ukrainian.⁴² In all likelihood, there were scores of such complaints, but only the Writers’ Union mouthpiece was bold enough to raise the issue, in part because the film was based on Lesia Ukrainka’s much-loved classic play and also because Rivne happened to be a solidly Ukrainian-speaking city. As a result, the republic’s Minister of Culture Rostyslav Babiichuk issued a series of reprimands to the various functionaries in Ukraine’s film distribution system, as well as a circular letter demanding adherence to the rule of “simultaneous release of Ukrainian and Russian versions of films made by Ukraine’s film studios.”⁴³

In reality, however, already by the early 1960s the practice of “simultaneous release” meant that Ukrainian versions of Ukrainian-made films saw a limited release in the western (predominantly Ukrainian-speaking) part of the republic, as well as in rural areas in central Ukraine, whereas Russian films were shown in the east and in the big cities of the republic’s central provinces. The creeping promotion of assimilation through film distribution practices only increased in

⁴¹ On the role of such chapbooks in Russian popular culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁴² *Literaturna hazeta* 1 September 1961: 4.

⁴³ TsDAML, f. 670, op. 1, spr. 1403, ark. 15.

the following two decades with the gradual expansion of the distribution of Russian versions. The Ukrainian original of *Chasing Two Hares* was considered lost until the surprise announcement in July 2013 that a single copy had been discovered in the regional film archive in Mariupol'. The archival arm of the Ukrainian Film Agency, the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Centre, immediately announced plans to have the copy restored and re-launched at a film festival in Kyiv in fall 2013.⁴⁴ In the meantime, it was posted on YouTube in free access. Commenting on the YouTube version, a leading Ukrainian writer, Oksana Zabuzhko, argued that the original Ukrainian film contained a number of subversive anti-colonial messages: "It was interesting to see how many of them passed Soviet censorship of the 1960s. Understandably, not all [such messages] that Staryts'kyi's play contained. Still, what passed through was so undesirable that the authorities shelved the Ukrainian version."⁴⁵ Of course, the restored version was still a Soviet film, an entertaining comedy with elements of melodrama and proper class emphasis. However, the restoration of the main satirical edge aimed at assimilation into a dominant culture reinstated the challenge to the imperial cultural hierarchies present in the original version.

⁴⁴ "Kinosensatsiia: Heroi lehendarnoho fil'ma 'Za dvoma zaitsiamy' zahovoriat' ukrains'koiu movoiu," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia* 11 July 2013: <http://dt.ua/CULTURE/kinosensaciya-geroyi-legendarnogo-filmu-za-dvoma-zacyami-zagovoryat-ukrayinskoyu-movoyu-124921_.html> (Accessed 12 June 2014).

⁴⁵ "Znaishly ukrains'ku versiiu komedii 'Za dvoma zaitsiamy'," *Gazeta.ua* 25 July 2013: <http://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/ukraine-newspaper/_znajshli-ukrayinsku-versiyu-komedyi-za-dvoma-zajcyami/508542?mobile=true> (Accessed 12 June 2014). The Ukrainian version was not really shelved as such, but television reruns during the late Soviet period featured the Russian-dubbed version exclusively.

History, Politics, and the Cartography of Sexed Bodies in Iurii Illienko's *A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa*

ABSTRACT: This article explores the “corporeal” dimension of Iurii Illienko’s reconstruction of cultural and historical discourses in the 2002 film *Molytva za het'mana Mazepu* [A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa], which focuses on the hetman’s drama, his relationship with Peter I, and the defeat of Swedish and Ukrainian joint forces at the Battle of Poltava in 1709 that signified Ukraine’s submergence into a supranational, imperial community. Illienko’s cinematic space, in which plots of history and sexual politics are mapped onto one another, allows for conceptualizing the body as a site of political and cultural construction, contestation, and radical resistance. Demanding an intertextual approach that involves an open exchange between his cinematic domain and a “universe” of intersecting historical, cultural, ideological and political discourses, his multilayered re-memoration strategies expose both the fictionality and the political dogma surrounding the inherited mythologies. As a decentred reflection of the past, the film poses critical questions about competing histories and the dynamics of historical agency in colonial and postcolonial contexts, thus making a contribution to the protracted process of decolonization in Ukraine.

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article aborde la dimension “ corporelle ” des reconstructions culturelles et des discours historiques dans *Une prière pour l'hetman Mazepa* de Yourii Illienko, film mettant l’accent sur la tragédie de la vie de l’hetman, sa relation avec Pierre I, ainsi que la défaite des forces communes ukrainiennes et suédoises dans la bataille de Poltava en 1709, bataille ayant mené à la submersion de l’Ukraine dans une communauté impériale supranationale. L’espace cinématographique proposé par Illienko présente des complots historiques et politico-sexuels, et permet une conceptualisation du corps comme site d’une construction culturelle, politique, contestataire et de résistance radicale. Exigeant une approche intertextuelle qui implique un échange ouvert entre son domaine cinématographique et son “ univers ” où se croisent discours politiques, historiques, culturels et idéologiques, ses stratégies de remémoration multilatérales révèlent la fictionnalité et le dogme politique entourant l’héritage des mythologies impériales. Comme réflexion décentrée du passé, le film pose des questions critiques sur les histoires antagonistes et sur la dynamique des agences historiques dans des contextes coloniaux et postcoloniaux, contribuant ainsi à un long procédé de décolonisation en Ukraine.

Paul Ricoeur asks, in his book on memory and history, “Do the abuses of memory placed under the heading of obligated, commanded memory find their parallel and complement in the abuses of forgetting?” and answers, “Yes, in the institutionalized forms of forgetting, which are a short step across the boundary

of amnesia [...]”¹ The loss of historical memory is an inevitable consequence of colonialism, which brands a colonized culture as inferior against its own Grand Narratives. When this inferiority is accepted and normalized by the colonized, the colonized slowly give in to cultural amnesia.² Although the days of “official” colonial amnesia seem to be gone, Ukrainian post-independence society is relentlessly engaged in the project of re-memoration by constructing and reconstructing cultural and historical discourses in order to rethink and conceptualize the colonial experience in all its complexities and contradictions.

Iurii Illienko’s *Molytva za het'mana Mazepu* [A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa, 2002],³ Ukraine’s biggest-budget feature film since independence, ingeniously recovers an historical stratum that has been distorted and practically erased from the Ukrainian collective memory, and has also proven to possess explosive political and historical energies. *A Prayer* has faced a semi-official ban in Russia, has become a weapon in political disputes at home, and has been persistently attacked for its excessive and brutal violence, nudity, and graphic representations of sexual scenes.⁴ I intend to explore here the “corporeal” dimension of Illienko’s cinematic space, in which plots of history and sexual politics are mapped onto one another, thus conceptualizing the body as a site of political and cultural construction, contested meaning, and radical resistance. Michel Foucault explains how the body does not stand in external relation to power but is inscribed by an historically contingent nexus of power and discourse: “the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immense hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”⁵ In accordance with the time period *A Prayer* is set in, the director charts his visualization of history through the lens of Baroque culture, in which the body is “highly sensitized to the fact that it is a body always in the state of becoming—endlessly transmutable, unstable and transgressive of any permanent identity,”⁶ thus

¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 452.

² See Bhagabat Nath, “Cultural Amnesia in Amit Chaudhuri’s *A New World*,” in *Studies in Postcolonial Literature*, edited by M. Q. Khan and Bijay Kumar Das (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2007) 190.

³ *Molytva za het'mana Mazepu*, directed by Iurii Illienko (Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Studio, Creative Union *Rodovid*, Ministry of Culture and Arts of Ukraine, 2002).

⁴ See, for example, Iurii Shevchuk, “‘Molytva za het'mana Mazepu’ v Harvardi,” *Kino-teatr* 1 (2005): <http://ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=383> (Accessed 27 August 2011) and “‘Molytva za het'mana Mazepu’: frahmenty vidhukiv,” *Kino-teatr* 2 (2003): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=84> (Accessed 1 September 2011).

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 25.

⁶ Masha Salazkina, “Baroque Dialectics or Dialectical Baroque: Sergei Eisenstein in/on

turning it into a contemporary instrument of cultural revision and renewal. The examination of Illienko's re-memoration strategies demands an intertextual approach, involving an open exchange between his cinematic domain and a "universe" of intersecting historical, cultural, ideological, and political discourses that become instrumental in constructing *A Prayer's* meaning.

Choosing one of the most turbulent periods of Ukrainian history as his setting, Illienko focuses on the drama of Hetman Ivan Mazepa and the defeat of Swedish and Ukrainian joint forces at the battle of Poltava in 1709, which sealed Ukraine's fate by politically decapitating it, signifying its submergence into a supranational, imperial community. For modern-day patriotic Ukrainians, Mazepa has become a symbol of Ukraine's struggle for autonomy and independence from the Russian Empire, symbolizing, since the nineteenth-century Ukrainian revival, the "glorious Cossack past, which was emerging as a cornerstone of modern Ukrainian historical memory and identity."⁷ For Russians, Mazepa has come to denote the iconic traitor. As Paul Robert Magocsi states:

[The] hetman symbolized the treacherous desire of all those "evil forces" who wanted to separate from an "indivisible mother Russia," whether a Soviet or a non-Soviet Russia. The terms *mazepintsy* (Mazepa-ites) and *mazepinstvo* (Mazepa-ism) came to be used in imperial Russian, Soviet Marxist, and even post-communist Russian discourse as synonyms of treachery toward the state and opportunistic separatism.⁸

Anathematized by the Russian Orthodox Church, Mazepa was excluded from the disciplined and institutionally regulated forms of imperial collective memory, too; even his portraits were "systematically hunted down in Ukraine and destroyed."⁹

Further, an ideologically subversive role was also assigned to Ukrainian Baroque architecture, as it constituted a large-scale, monumental "portrait" of the Mazepian epoch. Associated with the name of Mazepa, whose twenty-two years of rule "coincided with the most spectacular cultural outburst of the age,"¹⁰ Baroque architecture was subjected to "persecution," since its exquisite beauty was apparently viewed as corrupting the purity of the designated colonial

Mexico," in *European Film Theory*, edited by Temenuga Trifonova (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 218.

⁷ Serhii Plokyh, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) 70.

⁸ Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 254.

⁹ Plokyh, *Ukraine and Russia* 66.

¹⁰ Alexander Sydorenko, "Ivan Stepanovych Mazepa (c. 1632–1709), Hetman of the Ukraine," in *Great Leaders, Great Tyrants? Contemporary Views of World Rulers Who Made History*, edited by Arnold Blumberg (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 1995) 187.

monuments of achievement. As Stephen Slemon writes in his analysis of the symbolic significance of the monuments of Empire:

Colonised cultures must always remain un-inscribed [...] their cultural acts of self-definition and resistance are written out of the record; and in the process, subjugated peoples are “troped” into figures in a colonial pageant, “people without history” whose capacity to signify cannot exceed that which is demarcated for them by the semiotic system that speaks for the colonising culture.¹¹

Accordingly, in 1800 the Russian tsar Paul I prohibited building cathedrals in the “Ukrainian Baroque style,”¹² and in the 1930s Baroque buildings were methodically destroyed because such architecture “conducted anti-communist work.”¹³

Mazepa was equally inconvenient for the Soviet historiography that enforced celebration and glorification of the “reunification” of Ukraine with Russia under the Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654, a fateful alliance the Hetmanate concluded with Muscovy during the rule of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, Mazepa’s “major antipode in official Russian propaganda.”¹⁴ This glossed myth of unity was actively promoted both as the focal point of the period and the beginning of Ukrainian history proper, and was persistently reduplicated in ideologically sanctioned heroic master narratives.¹⁵ In the context of the ongoing re-examination and contestation of the hetman’s legacy, Gary Marker’s observation that the competing stories about Mazepa never seem to end and “continue to engage political and artistic imagination even now”¹⁶ rings particularly true.

While granting the defaced hetman corporeal materiality and centrality in his cinematic text,¹⁷ Illienko refuses the assumption of a single focus, one that

¹¹ Stephen Slemon, “Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing,” *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987): 5.

¹² Leonid Zaluzniak, “Ukraina—Rosii: Rizni istorychni doli,” *Starozhytnosti* 10.14 (1991): 6.

¹³ Anatolii Makarov, *Svitlo ukrains'koho baroko* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1994) 225.

¹⁴ Serhii Ploky, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 454.

¹⁵ Ironically enough, there were some “glitches” in the “Soviet historical imagination,” to borrow Serhy Yekelchuk’s phrase. The author writes that as late as 1935, the authoritative *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* labelled Khmel'nyts'kyi a “traitor” and “top Ukrainian feudal” and the treaty as having “legalized the beginning of Russian domination in Ukraine,” in *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 17.

¹⁶ Gary Marker, “Casting Mazepa’s Legacy: Pylyp Orlyk and Feofan Prokopovich,” in *Personality and Place in Russian Culture: Essays in Memory of Lindsey Hughes*, edited by Simon Dixon (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2010) 111.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in the period between 1907 and 1919 there was what seems an acute interest in Mazepa among Russian imperial and post-October revolution

would ensure an “objective,” linear progression of his imaginary history. As if blatantly flaunting the representational techniques of the Baroque period that was also the “great age of anamorphosis,”¹⁸ the director chooses the oblique angle, rejecting a frontal plane of projection, to recapture and form Mazepa’s image anew. Illienko revisits the Ukrainian Baroque not only in the film’s “pictorial” fanciful dimensions—created by an illustrious artist, Serhii Iakutovych, who feels his sensibilities to be Baroque¹⁹—but also through the evocation of the Baroque passion for signs and the interplay of appearances. This links the Ukrainian director to “neobaroque” cinematic productions, a term that, while used in a variety of contexts, is employed by contemporary film criticism to refer to the “intense sense of spectacle and theatre, of illusion and metamorphosis, traditionally placed at the heart of baroque art.”²⁰

Illienko clearly articulates the theatricality of *A Prayer* by structuring it as multiple shows within the show, “written” and “directed” by Mazepa himself, who also announces the titles of the acts and describes its genre as a *vertep* performance, wherein the viewer literally slips from lavishly decorated stage settings into cinematic “reality.” The latter is similarly unstable, inhabited by proliferating personalities—Mazepa’s role, for example, is played by three actors who often merge into one another in the same scene—and the use of various masks, thus reinforcing the sense of the fundamental instability of all identities. Flowing out of the theatre, the world is thus transformed into a stage, which is itself ever-shifting, signifying the dissolution of the line between reality and fantasy, fantasy and dream, dream and hallucination.²¹

filmmakers, starting with the 1907 *Kochubei v temnitse* [Kochubei in the Dungeon], directed by A. Sukov-Vereshchahin (Fotokinoatel'ie, Kyiv) and ending with the 1919 *Mazepa*, directed by S. Veselovsky (Aktsionerne tovarystvo H. Libken, Kyiv). The website *Im'ia Ivana Mazepi: Istorii. S'ohodennia. Maibutnie* lists ten films of this period; all of them are lost: <<http://www.mazepa.name/filmy-shcho-prysvyacheni-ivanu-mazepi/#more-254>> (Accessed 28 August 2011).

¹⁸ Peter C. Sutton, “Artificial Magic,” in *Dali's Optical Illusions*, edited by Dawn Ades (New Haven and London: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, in association with Yale University Press, 2000) 34.

¹⁹ See Ol'ha Briukhovets'ka's interview with Serhii Iakutovych, “Symvolichnyi zhest chy vybukh nesvidomoho,” *Kino-teatr* 2 (2005): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=83> (Accessed 3 September 2011).

²⁰ Naomi Greene, “Jean Cocteau: A Cinema of Baroque Unease,” in *Reviewing Orpheus: Essays on the Cinema and Art of Jean Cocteau*, edited by Cornelia A. Tsakiridou (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1997) 132.

²¹ It is interesting that Illienko's film visibly displays certain features of the Ukrainian literary Baroque, such as “wanderings of poetic imagination” between the real and imaginary; the eradication of stable temporal and spatial significations, creating a wavelike time; a particular cultural somnambulistic point of view (characteristic of “high Baroque”); allusions, symbols, extended metaphors and parables, and the presence of

Furthermore, the images of predatory violence, severed heads, crucified and decapitated bodies and scenes of torture and floating blood are also reminiscent of the conceptual and thematic repertoires of the European drama of tyranny, and of the Baroque martyr-drama, with its sufferings, torments, and physical agony.²² Especially “haematomaniac” are the scenes of the destruction of Mazepa’s capital, Baturyn, which the eighteenth-century *Gazette de France*, *Lettres historiques*, *Mercure historique et politique*, and *Clef du Cabinet* described as a “horrific massacre,” with “women and children on sabers’ edges,” emphasizing the “inhumane customs of the Muscovites” and their “barbarity.”²³

Given the complicated visual effects—the “mirror games, the effects of trompe-l’oeil, the distortions and elongations”²⁴—of the Baroque stylistics consistently used by Illienko, the film reveals its affinity with such “neobaroque” film directors as Jean-Jacques Beineix, Luc Besson, and Leos Carax, whose works are also characterized by “striking visual effects and stylistic flourishes, their insistence on ‘surfaces’ rather than reality.”²⁵ Illienko seemingly draws on yet another aspect of the European Baroque—its painterly tradition. In contrast to Ukrainian art of the period whose high point was portrait painting,²⁶ European Baroque visual artists were “infusing vigorous realism” and exploited the potentials of naturalism in their work, especially in representations of the human body,²⁷ “draped or undraped, male or female, and freely acting or free to act in an environment of physical forces and interacting bodies.”²⁸

A Prayer starts with an allegoric representation of the map of Europe as a woman, thus channelling Illienko’s imaginary geography into a gendered political body.²⁹ The image is overwritten by text that starts, “I, Mazepa, created

something “dark” in all spheres of human existence. See Anatolii Makarov, “Krasa barokko,” *Khronika 2000: Ukrains'kyi kul'turolohichnyi al'manakh* 1 (1992): 100; Makarov, *Svitlo* 90–95.

²² See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by John Osborne (London: NLB), 1977.

²³ Il'ko Borshchak and Rene Martel', *Ivan Mazepa: Zhyttia i poryvy velykoho het'mana*, translated by Mykhailo Rudnyts'kyi (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991) 110.

²⁴ Greene 133.

²⁵ Greene 133.

²⁶ See, for example, Pavlo Zholtovs'kyi, *Ukrains'kyi zhyvopys XVII–XVIII st.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1978); Platon Beletskii, *Ukrainskaia portretnaia zhivopis' XVII–XVIII vv.* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1981).

²⁷ John Rupert Martin, *Baroque* (Boulder: Westview, 1977) 45.

²⁸ Fred S. Kleiner and Christin Mamiya, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: The Western Perspective*, vol. 2 (Boston: Wadsworth, 2005) 593.

²⁹ It is also worth mentioning that the “intersection of history, visual plotting, and ideology has recently been identified in cinema as a mapping process,” in Michael F. O’Riley, *Cinema in an Age of Terror: North Africa, Victimization, and Colonial History*

this old beauty on the eve of the Poltava battle in May 1709 for King Charles XII.”³⁰ Mazepa, here presented as a cartographer, is a figure of power, who textualizes spatial reality in a symbolic act of mapping. As that of any mapmaker, his cartographic eye, which “practices a baroque of the surface, which couples detail within infinity, visible and readable information with the realization of a fantasy of totality,”³¹ is equated with mastery and control as it produces a representational space through different manifestations: material, symbolic, and political. At the same time, Illienko’s map opens up and emphasizes a gap in representation between the map signifier and the world to which it refers, introducing the requirement of interpretation and decoding into the rationalist project of cartography. In addition, it announces itself as a graphic summary of a larger discursive repertoire of the film, thus serving as its visual and conceptual prolegomenon.

If cartography is conventionally a form of political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of power, here it represents an ambiguous, almost reverse process in power dynamics. The map is fluid, as if reflecting the instability and multiplicity of history, and the decentered perspectives of the Baroque. The opening title “Moskovia Rvssia”³² and Mazepa’s portrait and heraldry in the initial shot are transformed into “Ukraina” and a looming head of Mazepa’s effigy, symbolically executed by Peter I and set on fire later in the film. In another transformation, a panoramic view of Europe as an old woman’s body—with Ukraine situated between her spread-eagled legs, represented by miniature architectural forms in an easily discernible Baroque style—morphs into a beautiful young girl, her form merging almost completely into the landscape, only to then turn into a languidly prostrated female body in a blink of an eye. The images along the old–young woman axis constantly alternate with a typically Baroque taste for the most extreme and contradictory antithesis. The final cartographic shots feature the young girl’s body/map as an anonymous void, zooming in on a now unscribed area formerly occupied by Ukraine, which looks like a wild entanglement of vegetation that, in the context of Mazepa’s statement, is highly suggestive.

(Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2010) 17.

³⁰ *Molytva*.

³¹ Quote of Christine Buchi-Glucksmann, in Elizabeth Hodges, *Urban Poetics in the French Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 103.

³² “Rvssia” here is a Latinized form of *Rus’*, the territory of Ukraine (as it is called, for example, on Sebastian Muenster’s map of Europe, discussed later), but not *Rossia*, the name adopted for Muscovy by Peter I, which was transposed into *Russia* in English, *Russland* in German, *Russie* in French, *Rusia* in Spanish, *Rússia* in Portuguese; all of them mistakenly derived from *Rus’*.

Illienko conceptualizes Ukraine as the “sweet womb” of Europe, desired by everyone and possessed by everyone, promiscuously giving herself to every contender until she becomes old. In employing this tactic of representation, he makes visually and verbally explicit the sexual innuendo involved in traditional discourses of discovery, exploration, invasion, and conquest.³³ Mazepa offers the cartographic image of this sexually charged body to Charles XII by way of explanation as to “where he found himself as a result of the Northern War with the Muscovite tsar.”³⁴ Illienko chooses a figurative quasi-pornographic discourse for Mazepa to explain the geopolitical situation to his strategic ally, wherein old Europe’s “womb” turns into a “sweet flower” once he declares it an “independent state.”³⁵ This is quite a disturbing metonymic metamorphosis, because by virtue of the male’s declaration, the sex organ of the old whore becomes an autonomous pure flower that outwardly implies virginity. This overall sexual metaphor of willing and forced copulation culminates in the now virginal Ukraine’s rape (literal defloration), with all its violent connotations, and Mazepa’s eternal damnation by the country’s rapist (Peter I).

This shot concludes Mazepa’s concise visual chronicle of the future events and geopolitical relations, and places Ukraine both literally and symbolically on his imaginary European map. The map resurfaces closer to the end of the film, in a flash-forward scene set during World War II, in which Soviet soldiers find Mazepa’s grave in St George’s Cathedral in Galati—a reference to an initial scene in which Peter desecrates Mazepa’s grave in the same cathedral—along with his map and portraits. The Soviet marshal gives the order to “execute” the hetman’s mummified body, recovered from the grave, and to burn Mazepa’s images and the map. He then shoots the soldiers who found them, thus symbolically eliminating any sources that could have sustained the memory of the hetman.

The aesthetics of the film’s opening shots draws on the cartographic practices of the Baroque, when maps not only documented the most recent geographical findings, but also exhibited the latest styles of ornamentation, the “naturalistic baroque imagery” of the seventeenth century.³⁶ The stylized sepia-coloured map, which imitates early monochrome cartograms using the style of elegantly adorned Ukrainian Baroque polygraphy, includes heavily decorated compositional elements found on period maps where the “titles have the form of

³³ See Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 54–57.

³⁴ *Molytva*.

³⁵ *Molytva*.

³⁶ James A. Welu, “The Sources and Development of Cartographic Ornamentation in the Netherlands,” in *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays*, edited by David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 147.

vignettes,” containing a variety of cartouches, decorative wind roses, and parerga.³⁷

In featuring the land as woman, the film also utilizes a conceptual aspect of European cartographic iconography that emerged at the end of the sixteenth century. According to Bernhard Klein, it was Sebastian Muenster's 1588 map of a feminized Europe that signified a paradigmatic change in cartography: “Most obviously, the body of the world is now clearly gendered [...] a geographical space explicitly imagined as female assumes a host of qualities articulated by the signifier ‘woman’ in a patriarchal culture—passivity, fertility, penetrability, a need for male protection, a submissive return to the domestic.”³⁸ But while in Illienko's film the topographic image of the woman is unambiguously sexual, Muenster's map represents Europe as a queen: Spain forms the crown and head, France and Germany the neck and bust, Bohemia the heart, Italy the left arm holding an orb (Sicily), and Denmark the right arm holding a sceptre, with Britain as the flag. The remainder of the figure is a flowing robe covering the rest of the continent.

If the European map, depicting a female royal figure that symbolically represents autonomy and power, implies certain gender politics since it “conceives of the global body as the object of an analytic masculine gaze,”³⁹ the voyeuristic eye of the camera “narrating” the map in *A Prayer* does so in a much more straightforward manner; even more, this film's mapped female body is seemingly awaiting the whim of male possessors or protectors. Illienko's cartographic endeavor might also reflect, even if unconsciously, a clandestine European tradition of mapmaking. In her *Nudes from Nowhere*, Darby Lewis refers to the 1620 “A Discourse on Ireland” by Luke Gernon, who recalled once seeing, without remembering where, a map of Europe that “was described in the lineaments of a naked woman, and upon the surface was a map of the countries. I dare not set down how every country was placed lest I should misplace them, but one was in her forehead, another was on her right breast, another on her left, others in her arms, others on her thighs, and France, with a pope, was in her placket [privates].”⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that the English legalist clearly remembers the location of only one particular female organ, and this organ is placed on the territory of England's perennial rival, whereas Illienko's Mazepa, whose

³⁷ Jan D. Bláha, “Aesthetic Aspect of Early Maps. Inspiration from Notes by University Professor Karel Kuchar,” in *Advances in Cartography and GIScience*, vol. 1, edited by Anne Ruas (London and New York: Springer, 2011) 62–63.

³⁸ Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (London: Palgrave, 2001) 36.

³⁹ Klein 36.

⁴⁰ Darby Lewis, *Nudes from Nowhere: Utopian Sexual Landscapes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 129.

discourse is similarly centred on Europe's emblematic vagina, assigns this function to his own country.

In doing this, Illienko utilizes the traditional "femininity" of colonized territory, which served for centuries as an enduring paradigmatic trope for colonial relations. As Ann McClintock contends, the "feminizing of the land represents a ritualistic moment in imperial discourse, as male intruders ward off fears of narcissistic disorder by re-inscribing, as natural, an excess of gender hierarchy."⁴¹ While adopting such discursive practices, the director also subverts them because of his "minoritarian" positioning—he is an outsider to this discourse—that manifests itself in his employment of the conventional Ukrainian symbolic trope of the country represented as a woman ravished by a male aggressor.⁴² This layer of an intertextual dialogue with tradition once again emphasizes the connection among conquest, colonization, and rape. In addition, such representation has further implications that intersect in multiple ways, as the idea of the national landscape as feminine is tied together with gendering the concept of the nation. Nation as woman is "paradigmatic of the way narratives of the nation are fashioned out of a fantasy of lost origins: the idealized nation represents a constantly sought, if hopelessly unrecoverable absence,"⁴³ and cartography is of central importance to this "nation-state's fantasy" because it signifies a "valorized past."⁴⁴ By gendering the country and surveying it, *A Prayer* reveals how political struggles tend to be acted out at a symbolic level on the site of the ideological representation of women and their bodies.

By resorting to allegorical representations, Illienko attempts to construct what Alok Bhalla has aptly called "revenge histories,"⁴⁵ drawing on Frantz Fanon's rethinking of the Nietzschean ethic of *ressentiment* in colonizer-colonized dialectics and the psychological uses of violence in anti-colonial contexts.⁴⁶ Since the history that the colonizer writes is not the "history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that

⁴¹ Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 24.

⁴² The most iconic example is Taras Shevchenko's poem *Kateryna* (1838), visually translated in his 1842 painting of the same title.

⁴³ Michael Mays, *Nation States: The Cultures of Irish Nationalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007) 10.

⁴⁴ Brian Keith Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001) 115.

⁴⁵ Alok Bhalla, "A Plea Against Revenge Histories: Some Reflections on Orientalism and the Age of Empire," in *Indian Responses to Colonialism in the 19th Century*, edited by Alok Bhalla and Sudhir Chandra (New Delhi: Sterling, 1993) 1.

⁴⁶ See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963) 35–106.

she skims off, all that she violates,”⁴⁷ the historical tormenter, from the viewpoint of *ressentiment*, is history as such, oppressive and unforgivable. In the process of creating his cinematic counter-discursive historical narrative, which is driven by the desire for representational vengeance characteristic of masculine anti-imperialist discourses in general, Illienko both fixes and destabilizes the inherited gendered power matrix by hybridizing the aggressive myth of both imperial and nationalist masculinities. The latter emerged in nineteenth-century revivalist discourses through the retrieval of heroic Cossack figures, which became a manifest symbol of Ukrainian masculinity and one of the central revivalist icons. *A Prayer*, while revitalizing the Cossack cult of courageous acts and masculine violence, carries on this tradition. Illienko's Ukraine—an object of desire to both exterior malefactors and interior benefactors, and thus the symbolic mediator in the struggle between competing virilities—now appears as a half-naked submissive maiden, now as a dominatrix, now as a monstrous executioner in a bloody red apron, now as a fortune-teller with colossal breasts.⁴⁸

This essentialized metamorphosing female body also functions as a homoerotic and homosocial link connecting the colonizer and the colonized. It is possible to look at the relationship between Mazepa and Peter I within a framework of “erotic triangles” of male homosocial desire conceptualized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men*. Sedgwick argues that “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved,”⁴⁹ thus viewing the power relationships between men and women as dependent on the power dynamics between men and men. She suggests that in any “male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power.”⁵⁰ Along this line of thought, Ukraine in *A Prayer* is featured as a symbolic “property” and object of male political desire, translated into an erotic metaphor for the primary purpose of negotiating the bonds and power configurations between the two statesmen, and the power disparity between them is complicated by the

⁴⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967) 51.

⁴⁸ Ol'ha Briukhovets'ka briefly discusses Illienko's representations of women in “Myth Six: The Ukrainian Woman and Sex, or, in Search of a National (Un)consciousness” from her article “Iak molytysia molotom, abo (De)konstruktsiia mifiv,” *Kino-teatr 2* (2003): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=86> (Accessed 6 September 2011).

⁴⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 21.

⁵⁰ Sedgwick 25.

asymmetry in the colonizer–colonized duo. Furthermore, as Sedgwick argues, male–male relationships represent a continuum without rigid demarcation lines between homosocial and homoerotic desire, a continuum that has strong implications for the colonial project, which relies greatly on homosocial forms of domination, hence making the relationship between Mazepa and Peter even more volatile and ambiguous.

Illienko's "triangulation" in surveying female bodies does not stop here. The climactic scene, in the film's string of erotic symbology, spotlights the obsessive seductress, Liubov Kochubei (*liubov* is Ukrainian for "love"), who has been haunting Mazepa throughout his life. She is shown masturbating with her husband's decapitated head, while simultaneously commenting on the developments of the Battle of Poltava. This erotic triangle—Mazepa, his repressed love/sex object, and her husband, who as Mazepa's political foe, is executed by the hetman—is brought into focus. With macabre overtones of quasi-chthonic rites, Illienko disturbingly turns male political violence and warfare into an aphrodisiac for a sexually insatiable woman. In addition, this conflation is continuously reinforced by the image of the "Prophet's sword," which is featured extensively in erotic scenes between Mazepa and Liubov. Finally, after their wild, phantasmal lovemaking in the concluding scenes, she commits suicide by forcing her chest on the sword's sharp point. It is interesting that Mazepa gave this sword, which once belonged to Grand Prince Sviatoslav,⁵¹ to Kochubei during his and Liubov's wedding ceremony as a token of justice, chivalry, combat, and historic continuity. No matter how shocking the vividly "pornographized" female body might have been for a traditionally conservative Ukrainian audience (still not quite free from the iron "chastity belt"), Illienko's "mapping" of the male body appeared as even more outrageous.

One of the reasons why some critics have labeled *A Prayer* as "strongly anti-Russian"⁵² is Illienko's representation of Peter I,⁵³ a celebrated figure in history, as well as the subject of ongoing controversy.⁵⁴ Illienko obviously does

⁵¹ During his reign the territory of Kyivan Rus' was greatly expanded, see "Appellations: The Brave and the Conqueror (942[?]-972[?])," in *Encyclopaedia of Ukraine* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2001).

⁵² See, for example, Thomas Grob, "'Mazepa' as a Symbolic Figure of Ukrainian Autonomy," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, edited by Alexander Woell and Harald Wydra (New York: Routledge, 2008) 94.

⁵³ Larysa Briukhovets'ka discusses the reaction of Russian film critics in "Iurii Illienko. Porakhunky z imperatoramy," *Kino-teatr* 6 (2010): <http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=1093> (Accessed 6 September 2011). She is also the author of *Kinosvit Iurii Illienka* (Kyiv: Zadruha, 2006); unfortunately the book has been inaccessible to me.

⁵⁴ Stephen J. Lee, *Aspects of European History 1494-1789* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 203; see also Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

not share the sentiments of those, such as Vissarion Belinskii, who felt that the name of the Russian tsar

must be the moral point in which are concentrated all the feelings, all the convictions, all the hopes, the pride, the veneration, and the adoration of all Russians: Peter the Great is not only the creator of the past and the present greatness of Russia, but he will remain forever as the guiding star of the Russian People, thanks to which Russia will always follow its present path to the high goal of moral, human, and political perfection.⁵⁵

In contrast to this veneration proclaimed by “furious Vissarion,”⁵⁶ Bishop Burnet, who closely observed Peter during his visit to England in 1699, offers quite an unflattering view of the tsar’s personality. According to the bishop,

[Peter is a] man with a very hot temper, soon inflamed, and very brutal in his passion. He raises his natural heat by drinking much brandy, which he rectifies himself with great application. He is subject to convulsive motions all over his body, and his head seems to be affected with these [...] [A] want of judgment and an instability of temper appear in him too often, and too evidently.⁵⁷

While deliberating on the reasons as to how Peter I became a “heroic phantom whose greatness no one ever thought of questioning,” Frederick the Great highlights Peter’s qualities as a statesman: “Cruel in peace, weak in war, admired by foreigners, hated by his subjects; a man in short who carried despotism as far as a sovereign could, and to whom fortune and luck stood instead of wisdom.”⁵⁸

Drawing on this critical vein, Illienko transforms an emblematic enlightened monarch of official Russian history into a “sadist, a tyrant and a sodomite.”⁵⁹ Forcing Peter I out of the closet undoubtedly contributed to provoking the Russian Ministry of Culture to consider banning *A Prayer* and to declare that it “could damage relations between Russia and Ukraine.”⁶⁰ The

⁵⁵ Riasanovsky 126.

⁵⁶ Often called, “the father of the Russian radical intelligentsia,” Belinskii, in his views on Peter I, seems to be strikingly reactionary; a monarchist obsessed with Russia’s messianic role and its exceptional path of development.

⁵⁷ “Peter the Great: From Bishop Burnet’s History of his own Times,” *Analectic Magazine* 12 (1818): 162–163 (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas of Johnston’s Head, 1818), available on-line at <openlibrary.org> (Accessed 10 March 2014).

⁵⁸ Georges Oudard, *Peter the Great*, translated by Frederick Macurdy Atkinson (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2007) 369.

⁵⁹ Ievhenia Mussuri, “Movie Myths of Moscow,” *Kyiv Post* 19 July 2002: <<http://www.thepost.kiev.ua/main/11497>> (Accessed 15 May 2006).

⁶⁰ “Russia Considers Banning Ukrainian Film,” *The BBC World Service* 4 July 2002: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/europe/2094360.stm>> (Accessed 21 September 2008).

film's opening scene depicts an enraged Peter I in Mazepa's burial vault, brutally sodomizing a soldier of the Preobrazhensk Regiment and screaming, "You will be my Mazepa!"⁶¹ When Peter's entourage appears, the stunned private, who confirms his name is Mazepa, is momentarily promoted to the rank of general by the tsar; a replica of a gesture that once propelled Aleksandr Men'shikov⁶² from obscurity (he was a seller of meat-pies) to court favourite and one of the most powerful men of the Petrine era. The rape works here on two levels: metaphorical—as a tactic of intimidation by power, fuelled by the desire to avenge and humiliate the "traitor," who escaped the tsar's punishment—and literal—whereby Peter engages in what the director presents as his habitual sexual practices (as suggested in the film by a remark from Catherine, his future wife, that Peter promised her never to do it again).

Cultural and symbolic associations of being penetrated with "feminine" passivity are well forged, as are associations of passivity with the loss of male political and social power. Michelene Wandor writes that, in terms of metaphorical signification, the "rape of man by man operates with more resonance than the rape of a woman by a man. The symbolism of sexual violence is here displaced on to homosexuality, and the way it evokes traditional notions of homosexuality as 'unnatural.'"⁶³ Moreover, by unleashing his fury on an imaginary "proxy" of Mazepa and wording it in terms of a military operation by referring to his sex organ as a "bayonet," Peter not only fails in his attempt at "emasculating" and "impaling" Mazepa and thus re-establishing the order of hierarchy, but is himself effeminized, cast as a homosexual, and even symbolically castrated by being powerless against the dead hetman.

Illienko unmistakably politicizes his same-sex erotic scenes by adopting the discursive strategies of colonizers who, "in what was intended as an insult, often labeled colonized men as effeminate or homosexual,"⁶⁴ because domination for a patriarchal culture can only ever be experienced as a form of emasculation. In his analysis of the homology between sexual and political dominance in imperial discourses, Revathi Krishnaswamy states that the "goal of feminization is effeminization—a process in which colonizing men use women/womanhood to delegitimize, discredit, and disempower colonized men."⁶⁵ Illienko's twisted

⁶¹ *Molytva*.

⁶² Men'shikov was a notoriously corrupt Russian statesman, and a highly appreciated associate and friend of Peter I. Alan Bray argues that Men'shikov was Peter's lover at the time of their sojourn in London. See Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (Viborg: Gay Men's Press, 1982) 98.

⁶³ Michelene Wandor, *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender* (London: Routledge, 2001) 187.

⁶⁴ Kathleen M. Sands, "Homosexuality, Religion and the Law," in *Homosexuality and Religion: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey Siker (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007) 5.

⁶⁵ Revathi Krishnaswamy, *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* (Ann Arbor:

maneuver, based on what Homi Bhabha terms “postcolonial mimicry,” locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance,⁶⁶ and is supplemented by the conventional conflation of heterosexuality with civilization and homosexuality with savagery. Illienko positions Mazepa as a “straight” sexual body involved in various romantic and erotic adventures with women and Peter as the “bugger.” Since “in popular discourse a ‘real man’ in Russia is heterosexual, homophobic, and hyperpotent (the opposite of impotent),”⁶⁷ such representations of the Russian tsar’s sexuality could not but stir a wave of indignation in the generally homophobic Russian media.

Alongside other “politically incorrect” representations of Ukraine’s imperial “Older Brother,” this “exposure” must have been quite appalling for some Russians, even though the Russian tsar is commonly profiled among distinguished homosexuals on western gay web sites, and James Neill mentions him in an extensive list of those individuals with a “marked homosexual preference”—Michelangelo, Humboldt, Napoleon, Flaubert, Rodin, to name just a few—who made “luminous contributions” to and had “pivotal influences” on “human civilization.”⁶⁸ One of the first historical references to Peter’s homosexuality is found as early as 1698, in evidence provided by a certain Captain Rigby, who was tried in England.⁶⁹ David F. Greenberg refers to the tsar’s sexual preferences as fact in his inquiry into the construction of homosexuality, when he states that in Russia same-sex sexual practices were not criminalized until the early eighteenth century when, “Peter the Great, who often slept with his soldiers, hypocritically made the prohibition secular”⁷⁰ as part of his westernization reforms.⁷¹

To appreciate the implications of this revelation (whether true or not) for official Russian historical memory, one should keep in mind that Russian society seems to predominantly subscribe to the eighteenth-century view that

University of Michigan Press, 1998) 3.

⁶⁶ See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 124–27.

⁶⁷ Sarah D. Phillips, *Disability and Mobile Citizenship in Postsocialist Ukraine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011) 183.

⁶⁸ James Neill, *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009) 73.

⁶⁹ Bray 98.

⁷⁰ David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 303.

⁷¹ For similar statements about Peter’s bisexuality, see Igor S. Kon “Russia,” in *Sociolegal Control of Homosexuality: A Multi-National Comparison*, edited by Donald J. West and Richard Green (New York: Kluwer, 2002) 221–222; and Chuck Stewart, *Gay and Lesbian Issues* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003) 76.

homosexuality is a “crime against nature,” or the late nineteenth-century medical conception that regarded it as a “manifestation of inherited psychological degeneration.”⁷² It is not only the “masses” in Russia that express profound homophobia, as reflected in sociological research and monitoring;⁷³ for example, according to a new Pew Research Centre survey conducted in thirty-nine countries from 2 March to 1 May 2013, only sixteen percent of Russians, “say homosexuality should be accepted by society.”⁷⁴ These popular attitudes have been reflected in a 1990s campaign against homosexuality launched in educational literature, wherein homosexuality was “described as a dangerous pathology and ‘an infringement of normal sexual relations,’”⁷⁵ as well as in present-day homophobic legislation. In June 2013, Russia’s lower house of Parliament (*Duma*) unanimously adopted a law against “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” (its original wording being much more straightforward—“propaganda of homosexuality”⁷⁶). Graeme Reid, LGBT rights program director at Human Rights Watch, aptly commented that “Russia is trying very hard to make discrimination look respectable by calling it ‘tradition,’ but whatever term is used in the bill, it remains discrimination and a violation of the basic human rights of LGBT people.”⁷⁷ The law was approved by the Council of the Federation and on 29 June 2013, was signed by Russian president Vladimir Putin,⁷⁸ labelled the “czar of homophobia” by human rights

⁷² Greenberg 1.

⁷³ For example, sociological monitoring by the Levada Centre over the last decade, “indicates a steady rise in tension, widespread xenophobic attitudes and the intensification of a range of interlocking social phobias including migrant-phobia, homophobia and Islamophobia.” See Elena Omel’chenko and Al’bina Garifzianova, “Skinheads as Defenders of Russia? Power Versus Friendship in Xenophobic Youth Subcultures,” in *Subcultures and New Religious Movements in Russia and East-Central Europe*, edited by George McKay et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009) 35.

⁷⁴ “The Global Divide on Homosexuality: Greater Acceptance in More Secular and Affluent Countries,” *Pew Research: Global Attitudes* 4 June 2013: <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/>> (Accessed 20 July 2013).

⁷⁵ Igor Kon, “Sexual Minorities,” in *Sex and Russian Society*, edited by Igor Kon and James Riordan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 94.

⁷⁶ *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Dumy po voprosam sem’i, zhenshchin i detei* 6 June 2013: <<http://www.komitet2-6.km.duma.gov.ru/site.xp/052057124053056057.html>> (Accessed 20 July 2013).

⁷⁷ “Russia: Drop Homophobic Law, Investigate Murders, Stop Prosecuting LGBT Groups,” *Human Rights Watch* 11 June 2013: <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/10/russia-drop-homophobic-law>> (Accessed 20 July 2013).

⁷⁸ For chronology, see “Zakonoproekt 44554-6 O vnesenii izmenenii v stat’iu 5 Federal’nogo zakona ‘O zashchite detei ot informatsii, prichiniaushchei vred ikh zdorov’iu i razvitiu i otdel’nye zakonodatel’nye akty Rossiiskoi Federatsii v tseliakh zashchity detei ot informatsii, propagandiruiushchei otritsanie traditsionnykh semeinykh

campaigner Peter Tatchell.⁷⁹ This brief detour into Russian state-sanctioned homophobia, when supplemented with a traditional macho gender ideology, explains much in Russian media reactions to *A Prayer*.

It is interesting that the subtler undercurrent of both homosocial and homoerotic desire in the relationship between Mazepa and Peter—their adversarial lust; their competition for power and domination; their love and hatred for one another—somehow went unnoticed by film critics. While Peter's homosexual behaviour is blatantly transmitted on screen, there is also a very short, almost ephemeral image, which the viewer glimpses in a chamber prepared for the hetman by Liubov Kochubei. The space is extravagantly luxurious, evoking the sumptuousness of Baroque interiors, with their combination of sculptural and painted forms almost eclipsing the walls.⁸⁰ When Mazepa opens a folding door, covered with paintings that blend into the wall and seemingly lead to nowhere, for a fraction of a second the aperture reveals the images of two gorgeous nude male figures, standing side by side: a young Mazepa and his racialized counterpart, a young Asian man. Whether this represents Liubov's hidden fantasy about desiring both, an ironic gesture towards European art tradition, a hint at Mazepa's erotic adventures, or an oblique reference to Mazepa's 1673 diplomatic mission to Khan Selim Giray,⁸¹ remains an enigma. Whoever the ambiguous young lover of Mazepa is, this brief scene exemplifies the complexities of desire in which questions of race, homoeroticism, and power intersect.

Likewise, the images of a nude young Mazepa on horseback, with his hands bound behind his back, galloping at full speed across the screen numerous times are also suggestive. They allude to the legends of Mazepa's amorous escapades replicated in western European romantic discourses, and are marked by a strikingly overt homoerotic voyeurism, thus creating homosocial and homoerotic overtones. However, Illienko further complicates and problematizes the connotations of the nude rider's image when, instead of the young beautiful male body, Mazepa's terrifying and wizened corpse furiously dashes through the landscape. Peter's supposed revenge—after violating Mazepa's grave, he orders

tsennostei," *Federal'noe Sobranie Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Gosudarstvennaia Duma*: <<http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/main.nsf/%28SpravkaNew%29?OpenAgent&RN=44554-6&02>> (Accessed 20 July 2013).

⁷⁹ Peter G. Tatchell, "Vladimir Putin, The Czar of Homophobia," *Huffington Post* 04 July 2013: <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/peter-g-tatchell/homophobia-russia-vladimir-putin_b_3544610.html> (Accessed 20 July 2013).

⁸⁰ See, for example, John Pile, *History of Interior Design* (London: Laurence King, 2005) 145.

⁸¹ See *100 naividomishykh ukrainsiv*, edited by Iu. Pavlenko (Kyiv: Avtohrad, 2005): <<http://ebk.net.ua/Book/biographies/100nu/part2/mazepa.html>> (Accessed 30 August 2011).

his courtiers to tie his enemy's corpse to a horse's back and let the frightened animal loose—turns the dead hetman into the tsar's (and by extension the Russian Empire's) nemesis.

Besides its tabooed homosexual subject matter, there are certainly other seditious moments in Illienko's representations of the Petrine cohort, such as a scene depicting Mazepa's spectacular appearance in Moscow. Splendidly dressed, he enters through the gates of a gold Baroque altar brought as a gift to Peter and declares his and the Ukrainian Cossacks' loyalty to the tsar in a highly refined manner. Peter, clad in an enormous fur coat, with only a plain white nightgown beneath it, demands that Mazepa give him his elegant gold boots and fabulous brocade jacket. In addition to highlighting the role of Mazepa in "civilizing" the uncultured Muscovites (a reversal of conventional colonial "civilizing mission" rhetoric) and thus "provincializing" an emerging empire, and Peter's "stripping" of Ukraine as a means of his rising to supreme autocratic power, the director could also be reinforcing his suggestion of Peter's homosexuality through a stereotypical portrayal of the gay man's heightened interest in outfits. After being re-dressed, Peter explains to Mazepa the current political situation in Muscovy by discussing his regent half-sister, Grand Princess Sophia, as well as Prince Golitsyn, head of the foreign ministry and Sophia's chief advisor. In show-and-tell fashion, Peter holds an unclothed, hermaphroditic rag doll with enormous breasts and testicles and explains that he is going to "tear their balls off." Sophia is also said to be a "horse with balls,"⁸² and he aptly "castrates" the grotesque rag body. In a general context of violence and brutality, the scene might not seem that remarkable, just another instance of "degrading" the Russians. However, it quite tellingly represents the obscenity of power that is abused.

Illienko, with his revisionist impulse, teams art with sex and violence to produce the film's manifold shocks, potentially shaking up the historical amnesia of Ukrainian audiences. However, his transgressive, sexually explicit, and contentious imagery was used against his fans in the parliamentary election campaign in spring 2002. Since *A Prayer* received generous funding from the government of Viktor Iushchenko, TV channels hostile to the then reform-oriented prime minister and his party, repeatedly aired some of the most graphic and disturbing erotic scenes from the film "in a clear attempt to embarrass [Iushchenko's] supporters and discredit the block."⁸³ In this context, Illienko's eroticization of history highlights the importance assumed by sex in political operations in post-independence Ukraine.

Ironically, *A Prayer* has become a character in absentia of sorts—virtually out of audiences' view, it has been looming in Ukrainian cultural space and provoking heated public debates. Thus, after a limited theatrical release in

⁸² *Molytva*.

⁸³ Mussuri.

Ukraine and screenings at several film festivals in 2002 (Berlinale in Germany, where it was screened outside the competition, and *Kinotavr* [Cinemataur] in Sochi, where it was branded “Russophobic” by Russian critics⁸⁴), it was banned from Ukrainian distribution until 2009. A new, edited version was shown for the first time in 2010, at the L'viv film festival *Kinolev* [Cinematic]. *A Prayer* also opened an eight-film retrospective of Illienko in Kyiv in October 2010, followed by retrospective screenings of his oeuvre organized by the *Illienko Film* studio in other Ukrainian cities during the 2010–2012 period. These were all in the format of “A Week of Iurii Illienko’s Films,” and often shown at film club venues.

It is noteworthy that the figure of Mazepa continues to ignite political controversies due to Ukraine’s divided collective memory and political cleavages. Those oriented towards Russian and Soviet historical narratives question his status as an outstanding Ukrainian statesman, so forcefully represented in *A Prayer*. Their resentment towards the hetman, based on his alleged “disloyalty” to the Russian crown, reflects the legacy of colonialism and demonstrates its greatest achievement: forcing the colonized to look at themselves through the colonizer’s eyes. Therefore, the Ukrainian “gratefully oppressed,”⁸⁵ to use James Joyce’s renowned phrase, seem to still be entrapped in a system of rhetoric and representation that forces them to face ready-made images manufactured, hierarchically ordered, and imposed by colonial rule.

The recent debates surrounding the commemoration of the 1709 Battle of Poltava in Ukraine⁸⁶ and Russia’s insistence on “shared” history, fixed unitary historical identification, and joint “celebration” of the event in the summer of 2009⁸⁷ show that in the sphere of history, decolonization is slow in making an impact. Furthermore, not unlike Illienko’s representation of Peter violently battling the dead Mazepa in his tomb and the old hetman symbolically grabbing Peter by the throat from his grave, Russian politicians, who seem to be chronically under the duress of imperial phantom limb syndrome, are still haunted by Mazepa’s ghost and his ability to cast long shadows across Russian ideology. The resolution of the Russian Duma to commemorate the Battle of Poltava as a “great date of Russian and world history,” passed on 3 July 2009,

⁸⁴ Vasyli' Semak, “Molytva proty anafemy,” *Relihiia v Ukraini* 11 November 2010: <<http://www.religion.in.ua/main/6743-molitva-proti-anafemi.html>> (Accessed 5 August 2013).

⁸⁵ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 30.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Ol'ha Kovalevs'ka, “Mif pro Poltavu pislia 1709 roku,” *Dzerkalo tyzhnia* 45 (2008): <<http://www.dt.ua/3000/3150/64828/>> (Accessed 8 February 2009).

⁸⁷ “Ukraina i Rossiia stolknulis' pod Poltavoi: Dve strany poshli protivopolozhnymi istoricheskimi kursami,” *Kommersant* 49 (2008): <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=871344>> (Accessed 8 February 2009).

again recycles a centuries-long rhetoric of vilifying Mazepa as a “traitor,” “anathemized by the Russian Orthodox Church.”⁸⁸

Ewa M. Thompson explains that Russian historians’ (and by extension, politicians’) unwillingness “to let it go” is due to their failure to reconcile “themselves to the loss of the ‘inner empire.’ They seem unable to grant to Russia’s neighbours—Ukrainians, Balts, Central Asians, Georgians, Chechens, and others—the right to view history in their own way and to proclaim their separate identities.”⁸⁹ Illienko’s *A Prayer* represents yet another facet in an ongoing post-Soviet “battle of histories,” to rephrase the famous title of Mazepa’s contemporary Jonathan Swift.⁹⁰ Illienko bends the straight line of the inherited imperial mythologies into vicious circles to expose both their fictionality and the political dogma surrounding them. Simultaneously, the film becomes a decentred reflection on history. But most significantly, it poses some critical questions—To whom does colonial history belong? Can it be a shared history of the colonizer and the colonized? Or must it remain two tunnel-vision narratives that never intersect? Regardless of whether one appreciates Illienko’s imaginary history, his film contributes to a protracted process of decolonization in Ukraine by revealing the mechanisms of conversion, whereby histories are erased but resurface as symptoms of the colonized body politic, to be reread, reinterpreted, and rewritten.

⁸⁸ “Vshanuvannia Mazepy peresvart’ Ukrainu z Ievropoiu,” *Zaxid.net* 10 July 2009: <http://zaxid.net/home/showSingleNews.do?vshanuvannya_mazepi_peresvarit_ukrayinu_z_yevropoyu__rosiya&objectId=1081652> (Accessed 27 August 2011).

⁸⁹ Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000) 192.

⁹⁰ *The Battle of the Books* was published as part of the prolegomenon to *Tale of a Tub* (1704).

Victoria Frede. *Doubt, Atheism, and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. xiv, 300 pp. Illustrations. Index. \$26.95, paper.

Focusing on the period from about 1823 to 1868, Victoria Frede demonstrates that for the Russian intelligentsia, doubt and atheism represented alternative belief systems, rather than lack of belief. Delving into the diaries, publications, and police files (among other archival sources) of Russia's educated elite, she details the complex relationships between social origins, stances on the "eternal questions," and attitudes towards the imperial regime, noting that these alternative belief systems were tied to political opposition. She clarifies the role that well-known Western philosophical works played in the formation and dissemination of Russian atheism, and emphasizes the tremendous significance of personal relationships.

Her narrative proceeds along generational lines, beginning with a secret society formed in 1823: the Wisdom Lovers—a philosophically-minded circle preoccupied with Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Their fascination with a German idealist and pantheist suggested a willingness to explore ideas at variance with Orthodoxy. While from an Orthodox standpoint, doubt is a force destructive of faith, leading to despair, the Wisdom Lovers viewed doubt as a potentially constructive force, leading to greater knowledge. They bequeathed this positive conception of doubt to the next generation.

In the 1830s and 1840s, Aleksandr Gertsen and his friend Nikolai Ogarev, appropriating ideas from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Schelling, and Ludwig Feuerbach, embraced doubt as a permanent condition. While their works indicate that they rejected belief in immortality of the soul, their unbelief in God was only implied. One of the general rules of their circle of friends was to avoid explicit denials of God's existence. Their intellectual descendants, however, went beyond doubt and carved out explicitly atheist systems of belief.

By 1849 doubt, but not atheism, was largely embraced by the intelligentsia. Yet, 1849 represents a "turning point" in the history of Russian atheism because a group of young merchants "shifted the idea that God does not exist from the unspeakable to the spoken" (pp. 117–118). That year, as part of Nicholas I's efforts to destroy a perceived revolutionary conspiracy, thirty-six members of two intellectual circles (the well-known circle of Mikhail Petrashevskii and the little-known circle of the tobacco merchant Petr Shaposhnikov) were arrested. While the Petrashevtsy certainly questioned aspects of Orthodoxy and religious faith, any atheism among them was only tacit. In the investigation of the merchants' circle, however, authorities discovered that Shaposhnikov and especially his friend Vasilii Katenev held both atheist religious opinions and republican sentiments. Frede views their atheism and political opposition as two parts of one related phenomenon—"anti-authoritarianism" (p. 98). Of central importance to the merchants and later generations of atheists was Feuerbach's notion of human "action by oneself" (*Selbsttätigkeit*), the need for human "independence from God" and "self-sufficiency" (pp. 98–99).

If Katenev and his associates were the first to vocalize atheist ideas, Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobroliubov were the first to print such ideas (p. 120). They espoused atheism from the mid-1850s on, believing it to be a necessary prerequisite for Russia's salvation. The emancipation of the self from external authorities was necessary for the new men committed to the social and political regeneration of Russia, a "radical" idea because it "implied a kind of individualism that had never existed in Russia's highly

communitarian society” (p. 148). Their readers could either focus on the communitarian element of working for Russia’s salvation, or this idea of self-sufficiency. Either way, atheism “heightened” rather than ended “the search for truth” (p. 149).

Frede then traces how the student radicals of the 1850s and 1860s tended to adopt the communitarian aspect of Chernyshevskii’s and Dobroliubov’s thought, while Dmitrii Pisarev believed it necessary to live without faith in anything except one’s own inclinations. In a world without God “the individual [...] must stare bravely back into the void created by the abnegation of ready-made answers” (p. 207).

Besides linking the doubt and atheism of individuals and group with political opposition, Frede also demonstrates that religious terminology and concepts permeated the outlook of the intelligentsia even after they embraced doubt or outright atheism. Thus, Frede argues that “Russian atheism of the nineteenth century was not secular” (p. 147). The intelligentsia did not “desacralize” but re- or differently sacralized the world. With the exception of Pisarev, the doubters and atheists of the nineteenth century pursued a religious endeavour to save Russia. Pisarev stands out for his reluctance to shift his disbelief in God to belief in any other absolute principle.

Frede’s study is impressive. The spiritual mini-biographies deepen our understanding of how particular individuals experienced a profound re-defining or loss of religious faith. Her systematic analysis of the specific ways that individuals employed concepts espoused by Western philosophers, especially Feuerbach’s *Selbsttätigkeit*, brings welcome precision to understanding the transmission of Western ideas in Russia, though she also conveys the deeply personal and relational nature of their dissemination.

Heather Bailey, *University of Illinois Springfield*

George Gasyna. *Polish, Hybrid, and Otherwise: Exilic Discourse in Joseph Conrad and Witold Gombrowicz*. New York: Continuum. 2011. 276 pp. \$42.95, paper.

George Gasyna offers a unique and much anticipated comparative reading of selected works by Witold Gombrowicz (*Cosmos, Trans-Atlantyck*) and Joseph Conrad (*Nostramo*). Such an approach might not immediately strike one as all too original, but it is truly thought-provoking in exploring the indeterminate discourse that Conrad and Gombrowicz produce as a result of their exilic experience. Far from merely cataloguing biographical events, Gasyna seeks to interrogate the inner workings of Conrad’s and Gombrowicz’s exilic liminal discourses, ones that defy the gravity of the sanctified cultural and literary assumptions of their age or any clean-cut identifiable ideological affirmations. Configured as such, liminal rather than reactionary, Conrad and Gombrowicz anticipate modernist and postmodernist poetics respectively. On the face of it, such a bold periodization endeavour is anything but ground-breaking, as a battery of publications calculated to tag both Polish writers with this or that *-ism* has already been fired by many scholars (Slavic or otherwise). But the angle from which Gasyna delves into the writers’ aesthetics is novel: he interrogates the language triggered by their cultural in-betweenness in order to point to the blind spots of indeterminacy undercutting their poetics.

With this as his solid point of departure, Gasyna superbly charts Gombrowicz’s and Conrad’s trajectories of exile, asserting their dual hybrid identities, or, as he puts it, *homo duplex persona*, as epitomised in their works of fiction and life writing. Equipped with acute analytical skills, for which the author owes much intellectual indebtedness to such pillars of postmodernist and poststructuralist theory as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida, to list but a few, and encyclopaedic knowledge of

twentieth-century European history and culture, Gasyna magnificently caters to the tastes of those who seek in-depth historical references and close-readers orientated toward interpretive hair-splitting in a characteristically deconstructionist vein.

Particularly well-argued is the author's examination of the *heterotopic* discourse of *Trans-Atlantyk*, which "helped precipitate a crucial debate on the subjectivity of exilic writing" (p. 178) in its indomitable resistance to cut-and-dried ideological schemata. This project of a disbanding of linguistic autonomy is pushed a step further in *Cosmos*, which for Gasyna "announces the dissolution of modern narrative subjectivity into a *mise-en-abîme* of competing simulacra" (p. 221). Gasyna intermittently peppers his book with argumentative signposts of that ilk, leaving the reader in no doubt as to where the writer under scrutiny belongs: Conrad the modernist, Gombrowicz the postmodernist. But whether such periodic compartmentalization exhausts the writers' aesthetic potentialities remains open to question (although at times Gasyna does in fact problematize this well-groomed partition). This division could perhaps be rethought by the author, given his own assertion that "Gombrowicz became a consummate destroyer of forms and formalisms" (p. 23), and that Conrad's "critic cannot forcibly fit the text into one or two dominant modes of seeing" (p. 50). These cultural and aesthetic labels of Gombrowicz's and Conrad's reputed post/modernity could perhaps do better justice to the assumed tactical waywardness of their rhetoric if put forth more tentatively.

In terms of structure and organization, the chapters are segmented into the related aspects of exile, modernist and postmodernist discourse, life writing, heterotopia, and identity politics respectively, thus providing comprehensive panoply of Gombrowicz's and Conrad's idiosyncratic exilic poetics. In addition, the book includes a list of instructive abbreviations and a glossary. As regards the latter, it is commendable that the author left some Polish problematic historical or culture-specific terms untranslated (e.g., Gawęda, góral). The book also is meticulously researched: the exhaustive bibliography overlooks no major critical corpora of Slavic, francophone, and anglophone Studies. Although properly indexed, some crucial terms illuminating the argument—*the other*, *subject*, *subjectivity* in particular—beg referencing. This, however, does not diminish the book's indisputable merits.

Gasyna's *Polish, Hybrid, and Otherwise: Exilic Discourse in Joseph Conrad and Witold Gombrowicz*, in its deployment of an intricate theoretical toolkit, the impressive erudition of its author, as well as the titanic interdisciplinary research work that allows no intellectual or argumentative short cuts, is bound to remain a landmark publication in the vast body of Gombrowicz and Conrad studies for years to come. Confidently investigating the convoluted workings of exile and language in the contemporary cultural framework, this publication is a useful reminder of how much these often-debated writers still bring to the post-war literary table, helping inform our present-day complex cultural condition; be they Polish, hybrid, and otherwise.

Paweł Wojtas, *University of Warsaw, Warsaw Higher School of Linguistics*

Olga Kucherenko. *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. xiv, 266 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$128.50, cloth.

Olga Kucherenko's *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941–1945* is a significant contribution to the field of social history of World War II. Soviet children's participation in the war effort in general, and the life stories of specific child heroes, have

been well-known to anyone growing up in the post-war Soviet Union. However, neither in Russian historiography, nor in the West has this important topic received sufficient and systematic critical attention.

Between 1941 and 1945, more than twenty-five million men and women fought in the Soviet army, navy, air force, or paramilitary formations. Children-soldiers constituted roughly between 0.4% and 1.2% of these Soviet warriors. The estimates concerning their number range from 60,000 to 300,000 (p. 2). Most were teenagers, aged between fifteen and eighteen. Despite their relatively small number, as Kucherenko demonstrates, the children's presence on the front-line became a noticeable social and cultural phenomenon, had an impact on the life of a military unit, and elicited noticeable responses from society.

The monograph is divided into two parts. In order to explain why, despite the government's ban on mobilizing teenagers, so many of them were eager to go to war and did everything possible to either persuade adults so they could join the army or outwit the authorities who tried to keep youngsters away from the front, in part 1 Kucherenko examines the formation of the Soviet patriotic discourse in the pre-war decade. Drawing on a plethora of archival sources, secondary literature, *belles-lettres*, film, and media, Kucherenko demonstrates how successful Soviet propaganda was in preparing the population, and especially young people who were born after the October Revolution, to readily contribute to their country's war effort and, if needed, sacrifice their life for the Motherland. Although convincing in providing the background information that proves that Stalinist propaganda of the 1930s–1940s “worked,” part 1 overall gives the impression of being unnecessarily detailed and somewhat abstract, for the topics of the patriotic education in the 1930s and of society under Stalin have been well researched and are familiar to specialists. When reading the three chapters of part 1, one gets the feeling that no justice is done to the young combatants' actual experience, their life stories, memoirs, and testimonies.

This impression, however, disappears when the reader begins part 2. Its four chapters and an overview are based on biographies, interviews, and testimonies of former child soldiers. Moving accounts are given about children in the regular army, among the partisans, and in the navy. The author pays specific attention to the role of young women. Kucherenko explains how, beside and in many cases aside from the teenagers' romantic visions of war, which had been fostered by the pre-war system of education and the 1930s' popular culture, the complexities of wartime existence left many children soldiers no option but joining the army. Hunger, displacement, loss of home and family, as well as fear of joining a criminal gang or execution by the Nazis were powerful factors in motivating teenagers to look for ways in which to enlist or join the partisans. Based on unique and very engaging materials, such as testimonies or interviews, the chapters in part 2 provide a fascinating account of Soviet society during World War II. Kucherenko explains what roles young combatants played at the front; the strategies they used to persuade the adults not to send them away; and the relationships between children-soldiers and adult combatants. The reader's only regret is that for academic purposes some of the fascinating life stories are cut short so that the reader is left wondering what might have happened later to the particular child soldier Kucherenko is discussing.

The monograph is rich in facts, texture, and narrative. In addition to her meticulous work with archival documents, Kucherenko demonstrates exceptional skills in using secondary sources, some of which provide only one or two sentences that are directly relevant for her study, and in drawing on popular culture (*belles-lettres*, film, and memoirs) to enrich her analysis.

Although *Little Soldiers* is primarily a social history, the book offers valuable insights into the Soviet pre-war and wartime patriotic culture. *Little Soldiers* should be on the reading list of scholars and students of Soviet history, society, and culture, as well as specialists in military history, anthropologists, and psychologists.

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Alexander Etkind, Rory Finnin, Uilleam Blacker, Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis, Maria Mälksoo, Matilda Mroz. *Remembering Katyn*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012. 185 pp. Index. Photographs. \$22.95, paper.

Katyn is known to faculty and students in Slavonic Studies as the execution and burial site of 4,100 Polish military (actually 4,421, including some non-Poles [p. 6]) shot by the NKVD in April-May 1940, which was discovered and publicized by the Germans in mid-April 1943. What is not generally known is that the name “Katyn” now stands for the four known execution sites of Poles shot in spring 1940 at Katyn Tver’, Kharkiv, and Kyiv, as well as several thousand arrested Polish citizens held in NKVD jails and also shot at this time, for a total of 21,857 (p. 6). The names of the victims are known and memorialized at the four Polish war cemeteries except for those shot in Belarus, whose death lists have not been found.

Preceded by a useful map, a timeline that runs from the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August, 1939 through early 2011, and introduction, the book contains seven chapters on the memory and meaning of Katyn. The Coda focuses on “Katyn-2,” an account of conflicting Polish interpretations of the causes of the fatal Polish presidential plane crash on 10 April 2010.

Space restrictions preclude the discussion of each chapter, so this review must be more selective. In the introduction, Etkind expresses his view of history, along with that of the six listed co-authors, as follows: “Memory is history spoken performatively [sic] ... [which] abides to [sic] the poses and practices of a broad circle of priests and pilgrims, politicians and filmmakers, artists and scholars, tourists and their guides” (p. 8). For the authors, the Katyn memory has two aspects: “metonymical,” as in Poland, where it is read as part of its history “meant to stand for the whole,” and “metaphorical,” when it is applied to similar massacres elsewhere (p. 8). Thus, in Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic States it is a “toponym” or symbol for Stalinist and Nazi massacres representing their “memory events.” It is worth noting that for Poles Katyn stands not for the whole of Poland’s history—which had its most brilliant phase in the sixteenth century—but as the single, worst crime perpetrated on the nation in World War II. The chapter on Katyn in Russia continues the story there. Despite the admission of Soviet guilt by Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev (1990) and Boris Yeltsin (1992), also the publication of many documents, the Katyn massacre still has many supporters of the old Soviet claim that it was a “Fascist,” that is German crime, while the published documents are said to be fakes.

Chapter 1, “Katyn in Poland,” is a very good account of the resistance to the “Katyn Lie,” which prohibited any discussion of the topic during the communist period—unless it was classified as a German crime carried out in 1941. The discussion starts, however, with the statement that Poland’s problem with Katyn is the lack of an eyewitness account of the crime (pp. 13–14). This is true, and also applies to the other sites, but it should be noted that there is no known eye witness survivor of any Stalinist execution except, of course, the executioners themselves.

Polish émigré writers, beginning with Józef Mackiewicz—the unnamed editor of Katyn documents in English (1948) and the author of the first account in English (1951)—are rightly credited with keeping the memory alive and seeking justice. In communist-ruled Poland, crosses were put up several times from the mid-1950s onward by opponents of the regime in the military segment of Powązki Cemetery, Warsaw. This was done on special dates: August 1 (outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, 1944); September 17 (Soviet invasion of former Eastern Poland, 1939); and November 2 (Catholic All Souls Day). They were placed next to the monument to the Home Army, which resisted the German occupation during World War II. The crosses were regularly taken down by the authorities and put up again by the opposition. If there was no cross, people would put flowers in the “Katyn hollow” (pp. 8–20). In the politically more relaxed late 1970s and still more in the 1980s, civic Katyn organizations sprang up: institutes, societies, local Katyn families’ associations, and a federation of Katyn families. Books on Katyn published in the underground press from 1976 onward included translations of Janusz Zawodny’s *Death in the Forest* (1962). The movement to memorialize Katyn, however, really took off after the collapse of communism in Poland in June 1989. Andrzej Przewoźnik’s work in organizing exhumations at the four burial sites, and then establishing Polish War Cemeteries, alongside those of Soviet victims, at Katyn, Mednoe (Tver’), Kharkiv (Piatikhatki), and Kyiv (Bikovniia), is discussed in the chapters on Ukraine and Russia. Polish writers are cited in chapter 1, particularly W. Odojewski, and the author for Andrzej Wajda’s famous film, *Katyn*. A topic missing in this chapter is the continuing division of Polish opinion as to whether Katyn was a crime of genocide, that is, Poles murdered as Poles (a belief held by some historians and a significant segment of public opinion today) or a war crime and a crime against humanity, which is the official stance of the Polish government as well as the Russian Memorial Society.

Chapter 2 is an excellent discussion of Wajda’s film, *Katyn* (2007), presumably written, or largely based on research by Matilda Mroz, an expert on Polish films of the communist era and after. The film focuses on the suffering of POW families, who did not know their loved ones’ fate until the spring 1943 German announcement and publication of lists of names (although these were incomplete and included errors). The film, divided into lessons with accompanying commentary, became part of the history curriculum for the upper classes in Polish schools, although parents and teachers protested, claiming that the graphic execution scenes “had a damaging effect on teenagers,” who were unable to deal with them (pp. 41–42). The original film also had its critics, some of whom accused Wajda of continuing the Polish tradition of presenting the Poles as martyrs and victims, and also of manipulating the audience (p. 41). The chapter’s author overlooked the fact that the film was submitted in 2008 for the category of best foreign film at the Oscars, but lost to the Austrian film *Die Fälscher* [The Counterfeiters], which told the story of Jewish prisoners in a labour camp who foiled a Nazi plan to circulate counterfeit British pounds and US dollars.

The bibliography indicates that there are many books on Katyn, but *Remembering Katyn* takes a novel approach focusing on various kinds of memorialization in Poland and several countries whose territories were contested by Hitler and Stalin. Should it be viewed as a praiseworthy example of team research, given that seven scholars are listed as co-authors of the volume, or as Etkind’s use of other scholars’ research, since he heads “The Memory at War” (MAW) project, which is funded by the Humanities in the European Research Area, Joint Research Program, and which generated this book? Whatever one’s opinion might be, this is a very interesting volume, although more for the specialist than for the general reader. It is certainly timely, being published a few months ahead of the year

2013, which marks the seventieth anniversary of the German discovery of Polish military remains in Katyn Forest.

Anna M. Cienciala, *University of Kansas*

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie, ed. *Taboo Pushkin: Topics, Texts, Interpretations*. Publications of the Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. xix, 482 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95, paper.

In 1852, Pavel Annenkov, Pushkin's first biographer and an astute critic of his works, wrote Ivan Turgenev about his forthcoming study: "Don't be too awfully eager to see the biography. There *are* a few facts, but they are floating in a sea of cant." ("*Nechego bol'no zarit'sia na biografiu. Est' koe-kakie fakty, no plavaiut oni v poshlosti.*") Turgenev replied, "The true biography of a historic figure will not soon be possible for us, never mind the censorship side of things, but even from the point of view of the so-called proprieties."¹ Censorship and the proprieties had interfered with Annenkov's exposition of Pushkin's last years, and with his treatment of many other aspects of the poet's life and works. So it is no surprise that succeeding generations of Pushkin scholars have tried to remedy this state of affairs. Scholars of the Soviet period mainly addressed issues of politics and censorship that had been ignored or distorted and thus discovered new dimensions in Pushkin's texts. More recently emphasis has shifted to the "so-called proprieties," those things which have been "taboo." And in view of the nearly sacrosanct position which Pushkin occupies in the Russian national pantheon, Russian or non-Russian scholarship which dismantles any part of the "Pushkin myth" can also be said to break a taboo. An earlier example of this demythologizing can be found in the volume *Legendy i mify o Pushkine* (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1994). The current book from the Wisconsin Pushkin series continues these lines of investigation. In her very useful introduction, Alyssa Dinega Gillespie writes that the aim of the collection is to reclaim Pushkin from a mythologized status as culture hero and establish his real human self (p. 26).

The volume follows a standard academic structure, opening with biography, continuing with pieces on the works and ending with aspects of Pushkin's reception. The entire first section well merits reading: Irina Reyfman on "Pushkin the Titular Councilor," Igor Nemirovsky on "Why Pushkin Did Not Become a Decembrist," and Joe Peschio on the nature of the Green Lamp society. Reyfman stresses that despite Pushkin's mediocre success in the service, there were times in his life when such a career seemed desirable, and that his contemporaries certainly saw him through this lens. Nemirovsky and Peschio highlight the connections between liberalism and libertinism among some young people of the period, which made those with this profile, like Pushkin and his friends in the Green Lamp, equally unacceptable both to the government and to the high-minded Decembrists. The bulk of Peschio's article is devoted to his archival research on the Green Lamp as a context for Pushkin, rather than to Pushkin himself. Pride of place in this section belongs to Oleg Proskurin's "Pushkin and Metropolitan Philaret," for its philological prowess and clear-eyed realism. He has certainly succeeded in "mov[ing] the topic from a hagiographical into a historical space" (p. 116). This essay will change many readers' perception of the interchanges between Pushkin and the eminent Metropolitan.

¹ B. L. Modzalevskii, *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki (Izbrannye trudy)* (Sankt-Peterburg: Iskusstvo—SPB, 1999) 448.

The next section deals at length with sexuality in Pushkin's works, blasphemy coming in second (Andrew Kahn on the *Gabrieliad*), and politics third (Katya Hokanson's excellent piece on the "anti-Polish" poems). Igor Pilshchikov takes up where the eminent Soviet scholar Mstislav Tsiavlovsky left off with his study on the controversial smutty ballad "The Shade of Barkov" and presents an intelligent survey of the literature on the subject. He gives an astonishing history of efforts to suppress Tsiavlovsky's commentaries, proof, if more is needed, that "obscene language in Pushkin still remains a taboo for Russian scholars" (p. 163). Gillespie adds an article on Pushkin's bawdy, while Douglas Clayton and Natalya Vesselova contribute a short piece on "Tsar Nikita and his Forty Daughters," "an amalgam of the French libertine conte [...] and native Russian folklore traditions" (p. 228). Jonathan Brooks Platt deals with Pushkin's lyrics to a dead beloved as examples of "necro-eroticism" (p. 239). Gillespie's well-informed article is marred by an untenable effort to erase the boundary between the erotic and the pornographic, and the timeworn cliché of the authorial pen/is is overworked. There is a grinding of gears when we shift from "The Shade of Barkov" to "The Prophet." Gillespie's interpretation of this famous lyric as "a metaphoric act of double rape" (p. 202) will strike many readers as outré, and is made less convincing by lapses in translation. *Usta zamershie moi* are not "frigid lips" but lips which have become motionless (p. 202). And the angel strikes not with a bloody fist, but with a bloody right hand (*desnitseiu krovavoi*), the holy instrument of righteous power (p. 202). To my mind, Platt's opaque discussion of love lyrics like "For the Shores of a Distant Fatherland" as necro-erotic debases a sublime and humanly touching subject. "Deviancy" (p. 250), "the edge of transgression" (p. 246), that is Platt's argument. It is almost a relief to consider an outright erotic blasphemy, like the *Gabrieliad*. Kahn writes of it, "By celebrating sexual license through profane violation, and sacrilege through freedom of speech, Pushkin courted both danger and a clandestine success" (p. 274). In this section of the book, Hokanson's essay stands out, contextualizing the "anti-Polish" poems so that they become not only comprehensible politically but stirring poetically. She establishes that the "national voice" which Pushkin found in them carries over into his great "Monument" poem (p. 309).

The final section of the volume starts with David Bethea's piece on taboo in the *Captain's Daughter*. The taboos he treats are the dark familial elements of the historical romance and the way it approaches the off-limits topic of the Pugachev rebellion, humanizing a demon of the popular unconscious. Alexandra Smith's essay on Ivan Ermakov's psychoanalytic readings of Pushkin, Carol Any's "Red Pushkin and the Writers' Union in 1937," and Caryl Emerson's "Krzhizhanovsky's Pushkin in the 1930s" round out the collection. Smith's stimulating essay provides insight into a critical trend of the 1920s only recently rescued from official Soviet taboo. It will be of special interest to all who have been impressed by the now-classic Pushkin studies of Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva, which turn out to have been informed by similar stirrings. Ermakov's Pushkin was a poet with a "dynamic unconscious" manifesting "contradictions and conflicting emotions," but who was ultimately able to master them creatively (p. 351). Thus he became a model for the new Soviet man to transcend historical traumas and conflicts and attain personal culture. For her part, Any provides an absorbing account of the struggles of the Soviet critical establishment during the Pushkin centenary year to appropriate and ideologically cleanse the writer's complex image. She concludes, "The official Pushkin of 1937 emerged amid taboo undercurrents that rippled through published discussions and highly publicized events like the Pushkin plenum" (p. 396). Finally, Emerson's essay again returns us to the 1930s with a case study on the creation of another unorthodox Soviet Pushkin, Krzhizhanovsky's stage adaptation of the "symbolist era Cleopatra myth" (p. 405).

deriving from Pushkin's evocative fragment "Egyptian Nights." "An unrecognized writer pulls a canonical jubilee Pushkin into ever more illicit zones" (p. 405), in this case farce. Emerson envelops her treatment in a detailed, even overwhelming theatre context, including director Alexander Tairov's contrasting work on the Cleopatra subject. In the end, a relatively unknown corner of Pushkin's legacy has been brightly illuminated.

As a whole, this is a very worthy collection which presents "its Pushkin" coherently. It includes some highly informative pieces and a few which have truly new findings to offer, not an everyday accomplishment in Pushkin studies.

Leslie O'Bell, *University of Texas-Austin*

Emília Hrabovec. *Slovensko a Svätá stolica 1918–1927 vo svetle vatikánskych prameňov* (Slovakia and the Holy See 1918–1927 in the Light of Vatican Archives). Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave, 2012. 560 pp. Cloth.

Accessibility to documents and archives is essential for accurate and credible historical research. Still, it is not unusual for state and other archives to be unavailable for a given period of time (all states generally impose a period, usually twenty or fifty years, when official archives are sealed). But there are also exceptional situations like the Cold War when there was an interdiction to do *any* archival research in the Iron Curtain countries. With the fall of communism, contemporary scholars, especially historians, were finally able to undertake documentary research on the twentieth-century history of the states and nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Not only did archives become available, but collections of documents were also published that made such research even more accessible. The importance of documentary availability cannot be underestimated, especially when seeking to analyze and understand historical situations that are unusual and/or complex. Contemporary historical scholarship has been greatly enriched by this new development.

The Vatican is well known for the strict control it exercises over its archives. Nor does the Holy See make it a habit to publish collections of its documents. For this reason, the volume of documents from Vatican archives, assembled by Emília Hrabovec, one of Slovakia's outstanding specialists in church history, church-state relations, and Slovak and Central European history, is not just a welcome addition to the research that is currently taking place on the countries of the former communist bloc, but is an important tool to our understanding of a crucial period in Slovak history, when Czechoslovakia was in the process of consolidating itself as the nation-state of the "Czechoslovak nation." This is a period that is not well examined in Western scholarship and yet it should be, given what subsequently happened to Czechoslovakia, first in 1939 and again in 1992.

The period that these documents cover represents the early years of the new state when two independent, but nevertheless closely related processes, were converging in the aftermath of the Great War and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: first, the need to establish new ecclesiastical boundaries in Slovakia that modified the former Hungarian sees to reflect the new political situation arising from the creation of Czecho-Slovakia (this was the spelling used in the Peace Treaties); and secondly, the incorporation of Slovakia into a centralized nation-state that came to be called Czechoslovakia (when the constitution was adopted in 1920). What linked these two things was the strength of Catholicism in Slovakia, far greater than that in the Czech Lands, and the desire of the Slovak clergy to protect it through the creation of Slovak dioceses (out of the previous Hungarian ones) that were not under the control or influence of the Prague government, whose "Czechoslovak"

ideology and overt anti-clericalism were not well received in Slovakia. The documents that Hrabovec has assembled, namely reports from Vatican envoys Teodor Valfè di Bonzo (1918–1919—in Vienna), Clement Micara (1919–1923—in Prague), and Francesco Marmaggi (1923–1928—in Prague), minutes of Vatican meetings, and direct correspondence with Czech and Slovak church authorities, show that the Holy See was keeping a close watch on Slovakia and that it was receiving very well informed and very sophisticated reports on the political, economic, and social situation in the new state, and especially on the religious conditions in Slovakia. The documents also show how domestic religious issues could have serious international ramifications. What one gains from them is a vivid sense of the changing political situation, of the struggles of the Slovak clergy and Slovak politicians to prevent any sort of *Gleichschaltung* of Slovakia into the new state, and of the Vatican's sense of responsibility in helping protect the interests of the Church but also the Catholic population of Slovakia. The tug of war between the Vatican and the Czechoslovak government, especially on diocese boundaries and on the nomination of Slovak bishops, lasted until a document on a *modus vivendi* (neither a treaty nor a concordat) between the Vatican and Czechoslovakia was signed in September 1927. This is the period that these documents cover and they relate specifically, but not uniquely, to Slovakia.

Hrabovec's introductory essay is not just an excellent presentation of these documents, but above all a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the political situation in Slovakia in the first decade of the new state of the Czechs and Slovaks, especially as it pertains to religious matters. The second breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1992 and the evident success of the second Slovak Republic demand that we look back at the early years of the common state to see whether the seeds of the breakup were sown already then. The Vatican documents clearly show what the challenges and battles were in this new country that had embarked on a process of forging a new nation-state and how Slovak political as well as church leaders reacted to it. This volume becomes, as a result, an indispensable tool for the historian of Czechoslovak as well as Slovak history. In her essay, Hrabovec makes it clear that Prague's interest in Slovakia was defined by the ways and means the government could integrate it into its centralizing and Czechoslovak policies. Vatican envoys were among the first to understand that this was going on and also to realize that such an outcome, were it to succeed, would not be positive for Slovak Catholics, nor ultimately for the inhabitants of Slovakia. The two declarations of independence (in 1939 and in 1993) have since confirmed the accuracy of their understanding and also of their foresight.

The documents selected for this volume are published in the original language, namely Italian, Latin, and French. Given the importance of the subject, it is not just Hrabovec's essay, which is in Slovak, which should be translated and published in English, but also the documents that she has collected. This would make them, along with her outstanding scholarship, available to a far greater public.

Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *York University, Glendon College*

Anne Konrad. *Red Quarter Moon: A Search for Family in the Shadow of Stalin.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. xvii, 356 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Index. \$80.00, cloth. \$35.00, paper.

Red Quarter Moon tells the stories of Anne Konrad's extended family members from the moment when their Mennonite communities came to be seen as class enemies during the Russian Civil War to the present day. The book is clearly a labour of love and reflects more

than twenty years of meticulous research in archives and in spaces across the former Soviet Union. Konrad's own parents left the USSR in 1929, becoming homestead farmers in northern Alberta before finally settling in Abbotsford, BC. Many of their siblings were not so fortunate, and it is the life histories of these missing relatives and their descendants that structure Konrad's narrative.

The first and last chapters of the book serve as interesting bookends, since they concern the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) case files for Konrad's uncles who disappeared in the purges. Given only a few hours to examine the papers, Konrad and her husband, historian Harvey Dyck, frantically copied as many details as possible concerning the charges brought against the three men as well as about their eventual fates. Their efforts suggest just how important the search for accurate information remains for those whose families were so dramatically affected by the twists and turns of Soviet history.

In other chapters, Konrad outlines the family history from the early twentieth century and demonstrates that, once the travails of the Revolution were over, the NEP years were not so bad for her relatives. Danger began to circle again with the advent of the First Five-Year Plan and the collectivization of Soviet agriculture. Thousands of Mennonites responded to the latter by converging on Moscow in the hopes of obtaining exit visas. Some, but certainly not all, of Konrad's family members were among the lucky ones to receive the precious papers that allowed them to escape being dispossessed and labelled as kulaks. As the history of Konrad's uncle Gerhard reveals, other Mennonites survived by moving from place to place frequently (often avoiding anywhere with a large number of German speakers) and refashioning themselves as workers. Another path to survival can be seen in the story of Konrad's aunt Justine, whose family had a harrowing crossing into China, lived as refugees in Harbin for eighteen months, and finally obtained Nansen passports. They eventually wound up settling in Paraguay.

In chapter 5, via the stories of four of her uncles, Konrad reveals the ways in which the purges of the 1930s affected ordinary families. Her uncle Isaak, for instance, was arrested and tried in 1936. He may have been tortured. He was eventually released, but was a broken man. While his immediate family joined the collective farm, that did not save Isaak from a second arrest in 1938. He was never heard from again.

As we see in chapters 6 and 7, World War II brought further misery for the remnants of the Mennonite communities. At least 25,000 Mennonites (and 100,000 Germans) were deported from their homes after the Nazi invasion. The family of Konrad's Uncle Johannes Braun, for example, were deported to Siberia. However, other members of the extended family lived under Nazi occupation in Ukraine, and their fates reflect the vagaries of life along the Eastern front. The case of Viktor Braun (son of Konrad's uncle Isaak) raises interesting questions concerning collaboration with the enemy, particularly when the people in question had been so victimized by the Soviet state. The daughters of Konrad's uncle Heinrich became *Ostarbeiter*. Hermaine Braun and her five children, on the other hand, were evacuated with the *Volksdeutsche* when the Nazi armies began to retreat. They were overrun by the Red Army on the outskirts of Berlin, put into a Soviet detention centre, and then repatriated to the USSR (where they were promptly sent to Siberia). Imprisonment also featured in the narratives of those who escaped Nazi hands during the war years, since living under Soviet authorities was often no better. Konrad's relatives worked as loggers in the *trudarmii* in Siberia and were sent to the gulag for practising their religion. One who was conscripted into the Red Army in 1939 eventually spent ten years listed as a German POW in a Soviet camp. It was only after the war, and more specifically after the death of Stalin, that the police surveillance of suspected minorities eased. That allowed some of

Konrad's surviving relatives to move closer to each other and to reach out via letters to family members living abroad.

The need to restore connections and to find one's heritage is particularly noticeable in chapter 9, which describes in ethnographic terms Konrad's own travels within the Soviet Union. For instance, on a 2001 journey along the Trans-Siberian railway, she poignantly searches for any physical traces—houses, schools, villages—of her family history and meets with the families of her surviving relatives.

Part archivally-based study, part oral history, part ethnography, Anne Konrad's *Red Quarter Moon* is a haunting account of an extended family's struggle to survive in twentieth-century Russia. Because the stories contained therein are so diverse, the book offers no simple answers. Instead, it shows life in all of its tortured complexities. The prose is readable and the historical background information is sufficient that the book could certainly be used in undergraduate history courses.

Alison Rowley, *Concordia University*

Werner Lehfeldt. *Akzent und Betonung im Russischen: 2., verbesserte und erweiterte Auflage.* Slavistische Beiträge, 485. Munich, Berlin, and Washington, D.C.: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2012. xii, 174 pp. Paper.

Werner Lehfeldt's *Akzent und Betonung im Russischen* represents in effect the fourth edition of an encyclopaedic monograph on Russian word stress by one of the world's foremost experts in this complex field of study. Between the first edition (also written in German and entitled *Akzent und Betonung im Russischen*), which came out in 2003, and the current edition in German being reviewed here, two editions, which are essentially Russian translations (with revisions) of the first edition, appeared—*Акцент и ударение в русском языке* (*Iazyki russkoi kul'tury*, 2006) and *Акцент и ударение в современном русском языке* (*Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury*, 2010). The latter monograph in Russian (2010) is in fact a somewhat closer representation of the German edition being reviewed here (2012) than the former Russian translation (2006) and could basically suffice as a substitute for those unable to read it in German. The main differences between the Russian edition of 2010 and the German edition of 2012 are the addition of an excursus on de Saussure's (quite recently discovered in his unpublished and incomplete handwritten notes) concept of accent and stress, a new sub-section entitled "Noch einmal zum Verhältnis zwischen Akzent und Betonung" (which is also connected with de Saussure), as well as many smaller, but often significant differences, in many cases, of course, improvements and corrections. The inclusion of the excursus on de Saussure ("Exkurs: Zur akzentologischen Konzeption Ferdinand de Saussures") into the monograph is the result of the discovery of an incomplete essay of his entitled "Notes sur l'accent lituanienne," something which was a cause for joy for Lehfeldt when it recently came to his notice, in which de Saussure outlines a binary differentiation between "*la grammaire de l'accent*" and "*la physique de l'accent*," a differentiation which also lies at the very heart of Lehfeldt's own monograph, and, indeed, is the basis of its title which distinguishes "*Akzent*" (accent) from "*Betonung*" ([word] stress).

At the heart of Lehfeldt's monograph, therefore, lies the strict distinction between "accent" and "stress" (used in the specific sense of *Akzent* and *Betonung* indicated above), the former characterized as the phonological property of abstract word forms exclusively, the latter as that of concrete word forms exclusively; as Lehfeldt explains, "[...] konkrete Wortformen als Repräsentanten der ihnen jeweils zugeordneten abstrakten Wortformen

angesehen werden können” (p. 16). Abstract word forms “[...] stellen gewissermaßen ein Realisierungsangebot dar, das ein Sprecher von Fall zu Fall in unterschiedlicher Weise befolgt” (p. 16). *Akzent* forms the topic of the longest and arguably most important chapter of the book (“Abstrakte Ebene—Akzenteinheiten”) and in it Lehfelddt works his way clearly and methodically through much of the theoretical complexity of stress in Russian (I use “stress” here in the most general sense, covering both of Lehfelddt’s categories), including the theoretical framework for establishing stress types and paradigms and assigning words to them, the relationship of frequency and stress types, the important question of stress variation and linguistic norm, as well as the shift of stress on to certain prepositions before certain nouns. As a whole, the book is aimed more at non-experts who wish to gain a more detailed insight into this area; however, the discussion of many of the relevant scholarly works, as well as the wealth of examples, will also be of great benefit to specialists. The consistent clarity of expression is something which can only be commended and welcomed. My only substantial uncertainty in this chapter of the book is the underlying conflict between the rather idealized idea of a single “*Akzent*” being “offered” to the speaker, when so much variation exists in Russian stress (not only in initial forms, but also within the paradigms and sub-paradigms of certain words). Lehfelddt, of course, discusses stress variation in detail at other points in the book, but the question remains of how one can provide a single basic “*Akzent*” for word forms which may, for example, have several or even just one inflected form characterized by entirely equivalent (non-deprecated) variant stress.

In the next chapter Lehfelddt turns his attention to the concrete level, stress (*Betonung*), systematically working through the various problems of the physical aspects of stress, including vowel reduction / intensity in relation to stress position (introducing more recent theory by Tat’iana Nikolaeva) and the realization (or not) of stress in certain positions. Of particular interest is chapter 4 devoted to a somewhat less-studied area of stress, namely secondary stress, in which the features of what would seem at first to be a fairly stable area are shown to be of an exceptionally high level of complexity and subtle variance among speakers of Russian. In chapter 5 (“Funktionen von Akzent und Betonung”) Lehfelddt examines primarily (with regard to *Akzent*) the semantic, grammatical, stylistic, normative, and pragmatic differences which occur when two otherwise identical word forms are distinguished by stress (for example, words whose meanings are distinguished by different stress positions). Both in terms of the clarity of exposition, as well as the wealth of examples provided, this is an excellent chapter. In his examination of the function of stress (*Betonung*), Lehfelddt gives a detailed attempt to discover whether word stress in Russian prose texts occurs with any amount of rhythmicity, that is to say, whether there is a pattern in the occurrence of stressed and non-stressed syllables. Notwithstanding the painstaking analysis, the evidence is inconclusive and the topic awaits further investigation. The final chapter of the book is essentially a synthesis of A. A. Zaliznjak’s work on early Old Russian stress from *От праславянской акцентуации к русской* (Nauka, 1985), and is a much needed, accessible introduction into this complex and little studied area.

It is impossible to do full justice to Lehfelddt’s outstanding monograph in a review of this length: *Akzent und Betonung im Russischen* in this current, revised edition is the culmination of years of dedicated and detailed research into all aspects of Russian word stress. It represents a highly significant achievement in the field of Russian phonology and will remain a standard work and reliable point of reference for many years to come.

Robert Lagerberg, *University of Melbourne*

Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin, eds. *Tolstoy on War. Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012. 246 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$24.95, paper.

Editors Rick McPeak and Donna Orwin issued this volume to commemorate the bicentennial of the Battle of Borodino during Napoleon's fateful invasion in Russia. The recently taken photograph in colour on the cover features a premonitory thickening of atmospheric pressure before a summer thunderstorm over the deserted field at Borodino. In a matter of minutes, all of it will be drenched in torrential rain and hit by lightning—the church cupola with a gilded tip, lush meadows, and the trees. Pushkin's line “the thunderstorm of 1812” immediately comes to mind. If asked about the defining feature of the volume, I would have to say, keeping in mind the subtlety of this first prompt, that from the front matter to the index it is the essays' enduring sensitivity to the relationship between the historical past and the present. The editors and authors should be congratulated and thanked for providing readers with what constitutes a beautiful collaborative effort of specialists in several fields in the humanities and social sciences. With the help of Lev Tolstoy, the essays disambiguate the dogmatic uses of fiction in order to prove narrower disciplinary concerns of a given social science or humanities industry. With the help of their open-eyed disciplinary honesty and rigour, they explain the complex origin and shared afterlife of a literary masterpiece that cannot be bounded to a single cohort of knowledge or specialty.

The volume asks, through skilled interpolations by both editors, what great books do to a liberal arts education in order to “prosecute violence virtuously” (p. 193). Attractively produced and meticulously edited, the volume includes twelve illuminating essays with detailed annotations that add significantly to provide the answer to the question above at the same time as they aid and enrich our understanding of Tolstoy's methods and approaches to the artistic recreation of war. Drawn into action are Dmitrii Likhachev and Anthony Kwame Appiah, Ulysses Grant and Douglas MacArthur, Caesar and Carl von Clausewitz, Plutarch and Cassirer, Honoré de Balzac and Herman Melville, Madame Blavatsky and Frantz Fanon. There is something new on every page, perhaps unexpected, but always to the point.

Every essay is memorable. Dominic Lieven addresses Tolstoy's famous claim that morale is the most powerful factor for victory and finds strong corroboration for this claim in the Russian army's unusual record of tenacity in 1812. Against the enduring misconception, Alexander Martin portrays Moscow of 1812 as a cosmopolitan, thriving city, which learns momentous lessons about the invader and its future paths through the catastrophe that it suffers and survives. Allan Forrest focuses on Tolstoy's representations of the French, finding that the French inform Tolstoy about the importance of multiculturalism within the Empire, as well as about the social democratic power activated in response to the heroic pressure issuing from “great men.” Jeff Love and Gary Saul Morson use the vehicles of language and representation in order to assess the possibility of Tolstoy's dismantling grand narratives and the myth of great men. The same democratizing tendency can be observed in Dan Ungurianu's and Donna Orwin's essays probing Tolstoy's text against the historical and military sources and eyewitness responses. Andreas Herby-Roth's and Rick McPeak's essays deal with the legacy of von Clausewitz's instrumental and existential warfare and his principle of friction in Tolstoy's book. Elizabeth Samet and David Welch consider the decentralizing effects of Tolstoy's artistic argumentation in light of such contemporary principles as open-source warfare, operational adaptability, and the logic and appropriateness of cultural contexts and praxis in international relations.

The volume started with a conference in April 2010 on West Point's campus. Gathering contributions from multi-disciplinary-homed international presenters is always a tricky business, frequently threatening to dissolve the collection into groups of centripetally-directed monologues. Not in this case. The twelve essays by a spectacular team of experts do not entrench their discussions behind the redoubts of their respective disciplines. Instead, they work across a range of productive topics that make for an informative conversation based on investigations of the real connecting issues. These connecting issues hold the contributions marvelously together exactly because they are so central to many readers today: violence and human diplomacy; the honour and horror of war; historical catastrophe and collective memory; patriotism and civic disobedience; governance and partisanship. Rather than serving as token backdrops, European politics and geopolitics; representations of the Empire and its enemies; historical truisms and myths; military history and theory; modern and contemporary warfare; international relations and its companions in poetical discourse are engaged in the ever expanding and complicating cross-sectional discussions that continue from essay to essay, extending well beyond the normative scope of the more customary literary frameworks.

With a keen eye to providing a style free of jargon, the editors have made this volume a joy to read. Seventeen illustrations of historical portraiture, cartoons, sketches, maps, book covers, and other cultural miscellany in black and white are very helpful. This book is going to be soon a sure staple on syllabi in many disciplines, and an important educational and reference tool for everyone interested in history and Tolstoi, but it will be very useful to all categories of readers, within and outside the academy.

In conclusion, a few words about the interdisciplinary focus. Despite the ambitious sweep of the included contributions, it should be noted that the editors qualified the title of their volume, acting with a modicum of shrewd restraint. They do, after all, concentrate "only" on Tolstoi and war. However broad the application of their current effort, they do not pretend that their volume can exhaustively and preemptively answer all interdisciplinary concerns that Tolstoi's great masterpiece could or will pose. Immediately, thanks to reading this stimulating and inspirational book of criticism, we want to go further, beyond war, and we want to keep questioning Tolstoi on adjoining territories, *inter alia*, about what would constitute narrative truth and historical art.

Inessa Medzhibovskaya, *Eugene Lang College,
New School for Liberal Arts / New School for Social Research*

Larissa M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych, ed. *An Anthology of Modern Ukrainian Drama*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2012. xvii, 521 pp. \$39.95, paper.

In 1998, in her introduction to the Ukrainian edition of *An Anthology of Modern Ukrainian Drama*, Larissa Zaleska Onyshkevych noted that the idea for the volume had been conceived "over twenty years ago when [she] was teaching a course in Ukrainian drama at Rutgers University" (p. 7). She additionally revealed her plans to publish a parallel English version of the book. Fourteen years have passed since then, and the project has materialized into a wonderful 525-page tome. Although the informational vacuum surrounding Ukrainian drama lasted for an astoundingly long time, Zaleska Onyshkevych was perhaps the most suitable person to break the silence. A prolific scholar, she has devoted her entire career to studying Ukrainian theatre, and she is currently a recognized authority in the field. Hardly any recently defended dissertations on Ukrainian drama do not rely on her cutting-

edge articles and books. Her works always present new information, profound personal insights, and historical and literary erudition.

The newly printed *An Anthology of Modern Ukrainian Drama* is by no means an exception. Structurally, the volume consists of an introduction and ten plays by nine Ukrainian playwrights. Each play is preceded by a short biographical note, a concise critical review, and a brief bibliography. Organized chronologically, the texts provide the reader with many best examples of Ukrainian dramaturgy of the twentieth century: Lesia Ukrainka's *In the Wilderness* (trans. Roxolana Stojko-Lozynskyj), Mykola Kulish's *The People's Malachi* (trans. John Prasko) and *Sonata Pathétique* (trans. George and Moira Luckyj), Volodymyr Vynnychenko's *The Prophet* (trans. Christine Oshchudlak Stawnychy), Ivan Kocherga's *Masters of Time* (trans. Anthony Wixley), Liudmyla Kovalenko's *The Heroine Dies in the First Act* (trans. Charles Stek), Eaghor Kostetzky's *A Play About a Great Man* (trans. John Prasko), Bohdan Boychuk's *Hunger—1933* (trans. Vera Rich), Oleksii Kolomiets's *Planet Speranta* (trans. Don Boychuk), and Valerii Shevchuk's *Birds from an Invisible Island* (trans. Larissa Zaleska Onyshkevych).

Despite the fact that not all the plays are translated by professionals, the quality of translation appears to have met the highest standards. Zaleska Onyshkevych's input consisted not only in translating one play and in writing critical essays, but also in revising renditions by others. Her correspondence with several authors (for example, the late Kovalenko, Kostetzky, Boychuk, and Shevchuk), whose works are included in the anthology, has palpably shaped the translations. Boychuk has even endorsed Vera Rich's English translation of *Hunger—1933*.

In the introduction, Zaleska Onyshkevych succinctly provides the reader with the history of Ukrainian drama and discusses major periods in the development of theatrical art in Ukraine. She pays much attention to literary styles of the plays (neo-romanticism, realism, expressionism, and so on). According to her, "most [plays] reflect when and where they were written, whether it was under certain official restrictions or historical pressures specific to Ukraine or all of Europe. The works [...] express universal concerns and values and reflect the vicissitudes that humankind faced in twentieth-century Europe" (pp. xiv–xv). The editor additionally discusses perception of the plays by authorities and, to a certain extent, by audience. Finally, she analyzes different revisions the plays underwent and the role of time in each of them.

With most anthologies the choice of contributors and texts is their most difficult (and, therefore, the most exposed to criticism) aspect. While *An Anthology of Modern Ukrainian Drama* includes many important plays, the list is by far not exhaustive. Some of the drama genres (for example, historical drama or comedy) are noticeably absent. Sacrifices, however, are always an inevitable part of compiling selected works, and, hopefully, future editions will fill the gaps.

Generally, the anthology will certainly be a valuable resource for classes of Ukrainian theatre and drama or survey courses in Ukrainian literature. The book, moreover, will be appealing not only to specialists, but also to a larger audience interested in Ukrainian history and culture.

Mykola Polyuha, *Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania*

Joe Peschio. *The Poetics of Impudence and Intimacy in the Age of Pushkin*. Publications of the Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. xii, 160 pp. Index. \$29.95, paper.

Ever since he became the Russian national poet in the late nineteenth century, the image of Aleksandr Pushkin has been, except for a few brief moments in time, rectified and bowdlerized to suit the political circumstances, with certain issues and works marked off as “taboo.” The fall of the Soviet Union and subsequent opening of some, but not all, archives, and the relative freedom to publish without censorship, led to the publication by Igor’ Pil’shchikov and Maksim Shapiro of a scholarly edition of Pushkin’s pornographic poem “Ten’ Barkova” [The Shade of Barkov], and a reconsideration of the poet as a subversive writer, not in the political, but in the social and literary sense, in his use of themes and language that was beyond the pale of censorship.

Joe Peschio’s learned and witty book fits into this context of resituating Pushkin. The author sets out to show how the young Pushkin developed first in the unofficial environment of the Arzamas and then in the clandestine Green Lamp society. In his introduction Peschio describes the fate of the hapless Aleksandr Polezhaev, whose obscene poem “Sashka” (1825) had fallen into the hands of Nicholas, as an example of the official attitude towards literary mischief. Then, in the first chapter he sets the groundwork with a discussion of the prank (*shalost’*) as a social phenomenon in Alexandrine Russia, and its flourishing in an atmosphere of domestic intimacy. He follows with a chapter on Arzamas, analyzing the letters of the members to show how calculated rudeness was an inherent part of the epistolary poetic. The discussion is underpinned with recent theoretical work on such issues as politeness in speech and calculation of the admissibility of the “face-threatening act” (p. 52).

In his third chapter Peschio differentiates the Green Lamp from Arzamas, demonstrating that the crucial innovation was the cultivation of taboo sexual themes in an environment of total secrecy. Much of the chapter is devoted to homosexual themes in the poetry of the “Lampist,” as Peschio calls him, Arkadii Rodzianko, whose work still languishes unpublished in the Russian State Library (RGB) in Petersburg. Peschio does scholars working on the Golden Age a great service by quoting some of the poems and analyzing them in detail. It would be an even greater service if he, or someone, published them in their entirety. Peschio’s fourth chapter is a study of Pushkin’s *Ruslan i Liudmila* [Ruslan and Liudmila, 1820], where he examines how the poem brought the Arzamasian feature of “rudeness” and “Lampist” sexual banter into the public domain, and the critical reactions this evoked.

In an epilogue Peschio gives a hilarious account of the attempts to publish “The Shade of Barkov” in the Soviet period. He then describes the polemic that has arisen in Russia around Pil’shchikov and Shapiro’s publication, in which Russian scholars have divided into three camps: those who argue that Pushkin “could [not] have written something that bad” (p. 121), those who believe he did write it, but do not think it should be included in the new jubilee edition, and those who insist that Pushkin did write it and that it should be included.

Peschio’s book is a serious contribution, drawing on rare and unpublished material, to stripping the taboos away from the image of Pushkin. Pushkin’s work did have a political content, but not, as the Soviets claimed, because he was a Decembrist, but simply because it challenged the taboos and conventions of literary officialdom. How ironic it is that today those shibboleths and conventions are again coming back to haunt him.

J. Douglas Clayton, *University of Ottawa*

James Pettifer. *The Kosova Liberation Army: Underground War to Balkan Insurgency, 1948–2001*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. 379 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Appendices. Bibliography. Notes. Index. \$51.00, cloth.

Once the wily Josip Broz Tito split from the Soviet sphere in 1948, scholarship on this otherwise peripheral geographic zone grew immensely in the 1950s and 1960s before fading again by the autumn of the Cold War standoff. That changed with the brutal wars that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s. These conflicts kept the region tense until finally tiny Kosovo achieved independence from Serbia in 2008.

Author James Pettifer analyzes the nature of Kosovo's path to war and I celebrate his attempt because of the real lack of scholarship on this particular area. Most of the works on Kosovo that this reviewer has seen stem from the perspective of journalists or former international workers. Their writings, though valuable, often lack historical depth. Another positive attribute of this work is the voluminous bibliography and a correspondingly high number of notes that provide a solid grounding in the literature. It appears that the author knows Albanian, which has allowed him unique access to sources that few in the West have consulted. A logical progression is apparent too since the book is based largely on a chronological structure that is most helpful when dealing with the numerous details and angles of this complex story. Pettifer also tells the story well with a generally good style and a minimum of tangential distractions.

This volume is not without faults, however. While Pettifer tried to set the stage for the Kosovar insurgency in 1948, he lacked evidence for those earlier years compared to the details of post-1980 political struggles and the birth of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). I imagine that a clear progression exists between those who disliked Tito in the early years and the later thinkers and fighters like those in the KLA. Yet, Pettifer presents scarce evidence of how the Yugoslav Secret Police (UDB-a) tortured Kosovar Albanians. Nor does he cite statistics that show a longstanding mistreatment. It happened, but Pettifer did not show enough of it to claim the roots of his book begin in 1948. On a similar note, it seemed surprising that he did not emphasize the Congress of Berlin or Conference of London (after the first Balkan War), each of which divided up land without respect to ethnic sympathies and effectively assigned modern borders with large diasporas within the region. Understandably, the author focused more on how the Serbs had acted in the twentieth century to colonize Kosovo (often brutally), but left out the history as to why the Serbs thought they had the right to do so.

Pettifer also made clear some of the connections with the West that the Albanians had used and pointed to some notions about why the West involved itself so readily. But, I could not help but wonder why he did not reference any of the studies that argued Western involvement stemmed from the mismanagement of the Bosnian crisis. Srebrenica's slogan of "Never again" was fresh in the minds of policymakers and that perhaps prompted a premature unilateral move to support the Kosovars against the defiant Slobodan Milošević, but this point is nowhere clear in the volume.

A few things that frustrated me on occasion were the misspellings and lack of clarification of first names and acronyms (Pettifer clarifies the acronym MUP only after numerous usages for instance). I suppose some of the blame rests with the copyeditors at Columbia University Press, who also chose to leave out the diacritical marks from Slavic words. On page 70, a single sentence has two grossly misspelled words in Serbian (as *Sebsko Jedinstovo* and *Velika Srbija*), but this issue pops up intermittently with Slavic words throughout the text. This, in my opinion, prompts questions about the author's expertise on the subject, which may or may not be fair. In the end, even the former

Macedonian Prime Minister Ljubčo Georgievski's name is misspelled every time it appears (as Lujpjo, Lupjo).

I also had trouble with one assertion that Pettifer made early in the text about how the Yugoslav People's Army "inherited" its doctrine and underwent "little or no doctrinal development" in the Titoist period and "none" after Tito's death (p. 9). This statement shoots from the hip and fails to understand the continual doctrinal changes that this reviewer sees as having helped undercut the effectiveness of the armed forces by the time the Yugoslav wars began. Instead of a lack of change, there was substantial and continual tinkering (for example, General People's Defence and eleventh-hour plans like *Jedinstvo*). Army commanders were constantly adapting their force structure and thinking to meet new threats up until the early 1990s and perhaps Pettifer judged the ineffectiveness of such forces against the KLA too hastily.

In conclusion, this book contributes to the field by shedding light on the otherwise lesser-known part of the Kosovo conflict, specifically the roots of the KLA insurgency and some of the important wartime actions. One can overlook its faults to gain a larger understanding, especially about how outsiders (Swiss, German, and American-Albanians) aided the insurgency, but I suspect that the author failed to look closely enough into non-Albanian sources to balance out this study correctly.

Robert Niebuhr, *American Global Academy*

Maria Popova. *Politicized Justice in Emerging Democracies. A Study of Courts in Russia and Ukraine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xii, 197 pp. Figures. Tables. Bibliography. Index. \$100.95, cloth.

Independent courts, free from politicians' interference, are among the key factors for upholding the rule of law and thus for maintaining democratic political system. Maria Popova asks why the rule of law has proven so hard to establish in post-authoritarian settings, despite what appears to be near universal consensus that it is the most desirable legal arrangement (p. 2). The author presents the answer in a new theory of *strategic pressure* that applies to those regimes that are neither consolidated democracies nor consolidated autocracies, whether they are electoral democracies, hybrid regimes, or competitive authoritarian regimes. This theory posits that intense political competition in these states increases the number of court cases whose outcomes matter to incumbents. As a result, weak incumbents are more likely to try to extract favourable judicial decisions in a greater number of cases. The consequences are the politicization of justice, the subordination of the courts to the executive, and the failure of the rule of law project (p. 3). For these intermediate regimes, the book rejects conventional accounts that link judicial independence to structural insulation and to high levels of political competition.

Methodologically, judicial independence is measured through observation of trial outcomes. The protocol follows four steps: choosing legal issue areas; comparing the win-rate in court of the pro-governmental and non pro-governmental sides; correcting selection bias; and supplementing the dataset with interviews and surveys on judges' attitudes. As far as the legal issue area is concerned, the author has chosen electoral registration disputes and defamation lawsuits against media outlets, both of which are salient to politicians, both incumbent and those in opposition. The cases used in this book are Russia and Ukraine, countries that share a common history, similar initial post-Soviet institution building and economic trajectories. These countries, however, diverge on two variables that existing literature sees as crucial for judicial independence, namely the structural insulation of

judiciary, which is more pronounced in Russia, and the intensity of political competition, which is higher in Ukraine. Overall, the author analyzes quantitatively and qualitatively the output of 800 defamation lawsuits and 252 electoral registration disputes in Russian and Ukrainian lower courts during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The main results from the study suggest that the systemic advantage that pro-governmental plaintiffs enjoyed in court during the 2002 parliamentary campaign in Ukraine was at least twice as big as the advantage that pro-Kremlin plaintiffs benefitted from during the 2003 parliamentary election in Russia. The judicial independence in 1998–2003 appears to be lower in Ukraine than in Russia as far as the defamation lawsuits are concerned. In Ukraine, the pro-governmental plaintiffs not only won more often than the opposition, but also received higher moral compensation awards. The qualitative data from more than 100 interviews with judges, lawyers, politicians, civil servants, journalists, and litigants, suggests that Ukrainian judges systematically favoured government-affiliated litigants in response to pressure by incumbents. If Russian politicians did not as often impose their preferences on judges, it was not because they could not accomplish it, but because they did not bother with it (p. 13).

Chronologically, the book is organized as an integrated entity rather than a series of independent articles. The first three chapters present the research question, theoretical framework, and methodological choices. The third and fourth chapters outline the role of Russian and Ukrainian courts in the provision of free and fair elections and of press freedom using mainly quantitative methods of analysis. The sixth and seventh chapters discuss politicians' capacity and willingness in both countries to pressure the courts using mainly analytical narratives and qualitative methods of analysis. The conclusion wraps up the main arguments and suggests a possible pathway toward establishing independent courts, by reducing the willingness of politicians to lean on the courts rather than by engaging in attempts to wipe out their capacity to interfere in judicial decision making (p. 174).

Politicized Justice in Emerging Democracies presents rich ethnographic material collected through observations and interviews that may warrant alternative interpretations—ones that may not necessarily fit well with Popova's new theory of *strategic pressure*. For example, the author could have discussed the fusion of interests between political incumbents and judges within a framework in which courts play a more active role in offering services to weak incumbents instead of simply having the binary choice of accepting or refusing to obey the political executive.

Simeon Mitropolitiski, *Université de Montréal*

Joseph Sherman, ed. *From Revolution to Repression: Soviet Yiddish Writing 1917–1952*. Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2012. 288 pp. £12.99, paper.

In an influential anthology, *Ashes out of Hope*, Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg wrote in the introduction, “In the entire thwarted and scarred history of modern Yiddish literature there is no chapter more tragic than that of the Soviet Yiddish writers.”² For the two critics, even the destruction of Yiddish culture, including literature, in the Holocaust does not approach the intensity of the Soviet-Yiddish demise. This new anthology, *From Revolution to Repression: Soviet Yiddish Writing 1917–1952*, edited by the late wonderful scholar and

² Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg eds., *Ashes out of Hope: Fiction by Soviet-Yiddish Writers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977) 1.

translator of Yiddish literature Joseph Sherman, takes a more measured and less sentimental approach to the topic. Consisting of both poems and prose by the most noted Soviet Yiddish figures, from earlier to later pieces, it should become a very beneficial volume in teaching modern Yiddish literature and culture.

Though the fate of Soviet Yiddish writers of this period was unquestionably tragic—practically all of them were killed by Stalin’s regime by 1952—their association with it and the entire Soviet project was by no means clear-cut, naïve, or one-sided. Again Howe and Greenberg, speaking in the Cold War environment of 1977 and out of their own ideological sentiments, simplify the picture by asking, “It may be worth pausing for a moment to ask ourselves: did the Yiddish writers suffer greater burdens than writers in other languages who also lived through the Stalin years?” (p. 14). Their cautious but affirmative answer is yes, to which they add the following: “It was not so much that the Yiddish writers believed the Soviet propaganda; it was that, in order to maintain a bit of dignity and hope, they *had* to believe that if things were bad at home, they were still worse abroad” (p. 19—italics in the original). Finally, assessing what these writers produced “during the worst years of the Stalinist period” as “enforced ‘agit-prop,’” Howe and Greenberg conclude, “there are some things it is better to leave in the past” (p. 25). The value of Sherman’s collection is that it reminds, or reveals to the reader, through its introduction and biographical notes on the writers, that the Yiddish luminaries, namely David Bergelson (1884–1952) and Peretz Markish (1895–1952), were in the highest echelons of Soviet literary power precisely “during the worst years of the Stalinist period” (Howe and Greenberg, p. 25). In other words, they were its active participants, with all the complexities and, for us, retrospective unpleasanties that such a positioning demanded.

Two questions are invariably asked in regard to Soviet Yiddish literature—how Soviet was it and how Jewish was it? Both are superfluous, for by its very definition it was both, and we must keep in mind that neither the “Soviet” nor the “Jewish” are monolith notions. Thus, it should be studied on its own merits within these two diverse contexts, without assuming, as did the earlier critics, that the Soviet layer in it was always perfunctory. In the anthology, this Soviet / Jewish negotiation is best exemplified by the stories of Markish and Bergelson. Although the poems included in it, by Leyb Kvitko (1890–1952), David Hofshhteyn (1889–1952), and Iza Kharik (1898–1937), as well as Markish, are clearly valuable, precisely because only their translations are provided with very sparse commentary, their richness would not be as apparent, at least to the uninitiated reader. The same is true of Der Nister’s (1884–1950) tremendously complex and idiosyncratic symbolist stories in the anthology. To a large extent, Der Nister belongs in his own category, both in terms of his biography and aesthetics, and no anthology, especially of such a wide scope, can begin to unpack it.

For this reviewer, the two most important pieces in the collection are Markish’s long short story, “The Workers’ Club,” and Bergelson’s post-war story, “The Sculptor.” Markish’s work, published in Kharkiv in 1928, and masterfully translated by Sherman himself (with the assistance of Aleksandra Geller), is incredibly rich in the associations and intertextual links it conjures up. Concocting a familiar Soviet tale—turning a synagogue into a worker’s club in a shtetl—and the opposition this generates among the local Jews who finally acquiesce in and celebrate the transformation, Markish’s imagery resembles at points Isaak Babel’s in *The Red Cavalry*, Shmuel Yosef Agnon’s in *A Guest for the Night*, and Andrei Platonov’s in *Chevengur*. The story’s ideological impetus is not ambiguous, but this does not nullify its rightful place in Jewish modernist and Soviet traditions.

Bergelson's "The Sculptor," again beautifully translated by Sherman, was published in Moscow in 1947. Howe and Greenberg stress the turn toward traditional Jewish culture that some of the Soviet Yiddish writers experienced as the result of the Holocaust. The trajectories of their engagement with Judaism are far more intricate—Markish's story is a case in point—but there is no doubt that the Holocaust left a special imprint on their imaginations. Perceiving it not necessarily and not always as the apocalyptic event, they placed the destruction in the historical framework—both Jewish and Soviet—and emphasized the possibility of renewal after the war. Depicting, in a restrained and underhanded fashion, a famous sculptor's—a Moscow Jew—return to his native desolate shtetl after the war, the story both unabashedly proclaims his attachment to this place and foregrounds the unity of simple Jews and Ukrainians "who fought together as partisans" (p. 252) during the war. To answer the question of what in this thoroughly Soviet and thoroughly Jewish Holocaust story was sincere and what was prescribed by the regime's policy is to misunderstand the realities of late Stalinism. The writers were attached to the regime at the hip; that is why their remove from it was not merely tragic, but also treacherous and painfully ironic.

Marat Grinberg, *Reed College*

Mykola Soroka. *Faces of Displacement: The Writings of Volodymyr Vynnychenko.* Montreal and Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012. xx, 242 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00, cloth.

Volodymyr Vynnychenko was prominent in the Ukrainian movement of the first quarter of the twentieth century both as a writer and a politician: not only did he play a central role in the 1917–1920 revolutions in Ukraine, but he was also the first Ukrainian playwright to achieve some success on the European stage and become, in the 1920s, an extremely popular author in Soviet Ukraine. Yet, Vynnychenko, who for a time was so important to Ukrainian culture and politics, spent more than half of his life outside the country.

Mykola Soroka's monograph examines the impact of Vynnychenko's separation from Ukraine upon his literary work. Soroka argues that none of the terms for writers abroad—exile, émigré, expatriate, traveller, emigrant / immigrant, nomad, diaspora member—adequately characterizes Vynnychenko's experience: at different times in his life, the Ukrainian displayed attributes associated with several of these concepts. Soroka therefore prefers to describe Vynnychenko's situation as one of "displacement" in order to underline how the writer's identity and relationship to his host- and homelands shifted throughout his life.

During his first period abroad before 1914, Vynnychenko initially exhibited the characteristics of an émigré who hoped to return. His work mainly dealt with Ukraine. However, whereas before leaving the country he had composed realistic depictions of everyday life, now he moved to more abstract, philosophical discussions because distance from his homeland starved him of direct impressions to provide him with subjects. Removal from the mores and social obligations of Ukrainian society also allowed him to explore controversial topics, such as the corruption of revolutionary ideals and sexual morality. At the same time, Vynnychenko displayed the traits of an expatriate, for whom living abroad represented an opportunity to become acquainted with modernist literary trends. This is evident in his increasing preoccupation with art and beauty and the incorporation of symbolist elements into his work. Despite these more positive aspects, Vynnychenko also felt the isolation and uprootedness of exile—experiences explored in his

novel *Equilibrium* (1911), a study of the moral decay undergone by revolutionaries forced to leave their country after 1905–1907. Another feature of this was Vynnychenko's nostalgia for Ukraine, expressed in the lyrical descriptions of his homeland and his children's stories.

In his second period of exile beginning in 1920, Vynnychenko's attention moved from Ukrainian themes to universalist ones. This involved reconceiving himself as a citizen of the world. Vynnychenko's universalism was certainly tied to his Marxism. However, it was also a response to his increasing disappointment with the Bolsheviks and his poor relations with the rest of the Ukrainian émigré community. The re-orientation was evident in his utopian novel *Soniachna mashyna* [The Solar Machine, 1921–1924] and his new philosophy of happiness—concordism, a somewhat doctrinaire call to return to a primordial, natural way of life characterized by asceticism and veganism. In order to propagate this philosophy, Vynnychenko sought to integrate himself into the French cultural discussion by submitting novels to literary competitions and trying to get his works translated—all without success. Soroka sees Vynnychenko's last works as a “late homecoming” (p. 155): as he neared the end of his life, Vynnychenko increasingly expressed nostalgia for the homeland he had not visited in decades through nostalgic lyricism, packed with visual, auditory, and olfactory recollections, present in, for example, his last novel *Slovo za toboiu, Staline!* [Take the Floor, Stalin!, 1950].

Perhaps, at times, Soroka is too ready to take Vynnychenko's own assessment of himself at face value: for example, Soroka accepts the Ukrainian author's explanation that his negotiations with the Bolsheviks failed due to Bolshevik betrayal. Moreover, Soroka could have defined Vynnychenko's relationship with the Bolsheviks more precisely. Certainly, Vynnychenko combined a commitment to Marxism with scathing criticism of the Bolsheviks. However, Soroka seems to miss that for a long time Vynnychenko criticized the Bolsheviks in the belief that his critique could bring about a change in their policy; before the mid-1930s, Vynnychenko thought that the Bolsheviks, for all their errors, were on the right side of history. Indeed, on the basis of Soroka's account of Vynnychenko's last novel, *Take the Floor, Stalin!*, it seems that even late in life the writer contemplated the possibility of the Soviet Union's ability to reform itself.

Nevertheless, Soroka has written an engaging portrait of a difficult and complex man. Soroka's approach—using this concept of “displacement” to examine the shifting nature of the identity of a writer living abroad—proves extremely fruitful. His assessment of the impact of displacement upon Vynnychenko's writing is very convincing. The monograph is essential reading not only for scholars of Ukrainian literature, but also for historians wanting to understand Vynnychenko's politics. Underlying the work is the fascinating question of how concepts of national identity can develop outside the physical borders of the imagined nation and then be re-imported back into it.

Christopher Gilley, *Universität Hamburg*

Natalya Chernyshova. *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era*. BASEES / Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 259 pp. Illustrations. Index. \$160.00, cloth.

In a groundbreaking debut monograph, historian Natalya Chernyshova adds her voice to the increasingly lively conversation on Soviet society and culture during the Brezhnev years. Chernyshova, a lecturer in modern history at the University of Winchester (UK), skillfully charts the course of the “Soviet consumer revolution” from 1964 to 1985 (p. 2).

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The Brezhnev regime, she demonstrates, stepped up promises to improve living standards and increase access to consumer goods, and, to a much greater extent than Brezhnev's predecessors, managed to actually deliver. Wages rose along with popular expectations, but government and industry floundered in trying to satisfy consumers and shape their tastes. Official rhetoric appeared confused and ambivalent. It simultaneously legitimized the pursuit of material comforts and demanded that the people engage in these activities within vaguely defined and ever-shifting limits. More goods appeared in state-run stores, but the absurdities of Soviet economic planning meant that many of these items were unattractive, low quality, or otherwise undesirable. Meanwhile, Soviet citizens enjoyed unprecedented contact with and knowledge of Western wares. This was thanks both to state imports (meant to compensate for the underdeveloped consumer goods industry) and increased access to the outside world through foreign films and music, new travel opportunities, and the booming second economy. As an informed, ambitious, and demanding Soviet consumer emerged under these influences, the Brezhnev regime scrambled to cope with a complex new reality that it had played a central role in creating.

Chernyshova's argument unfolds in seven thematic chapters. She first outlines the politics and economics of socialist consumption, and then goes on to discuss how the "consumer revolution" affected social norms, popular values, and everyday experiences. Next, Chernyshova analyzes the role of new consumption patterns in fragmenting late Soviet society, paying special attention to divisions along lines of gender, class, and generation. She then rounds out her work with three satisfying case studies that examine clothing and fashion, furniture and home decor, and household technology. In addition to documents from city and union-level archives in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and local and republic archives in Minsk, Chernyshova makes extensive use of Soviet press sources, consumer complaints, memoirs, literary fiction, and cinema. She thus places her appraisal of the role of consumption in daily life and identity formation alongside valuable assessments of the economic and political impact of such phenomena as the Kosygin reforms, the unexpected new oil wealth of the 1970s, and popular reluctance to purchase ugly raincoats. Rather than concentrating strictly on official policies or the intricacies of dysfunctional bureaucracy, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* sets forth a narrative rich in colourful anecdotes and evocative of the hopes, desires, and disappointments that defined late Soviet life.

Ever cautious, Chernyshova peppers her text with qualifications, reminding the reader that the prosperity and improved living standards Soviet citizens experienced during the Brezhnev years remained relative and modest. Yet this does not mean that these changes were insignificant, nor should such caveats suggest that Chernyshova's subject is frivolous. Rather she demonstrates that these small changes had major consequences. Chernyshova thus rejects the "stagnation" label, instead emphasizing the development of a vivid consumer culture, populated by actors with real agency, who took a commanding role in their interactions with the Soviet state. She both challenges and reinforces the notion that Soviet life became "privatized" as the populace retreated from officialdom. Soviet citizens, Chernyshova insists, could not escape engaging with the state, especially not while shopping or making other decisions related to consumption. Yet the Brezhnev regime's rejection of de-Stalinization, its embrace of Russian nationalism, and its efforts to counteract a burgeoning demographic crisis together afforded more individual control over the private sphere. The Soviet state now intruded into this space with much less intensity than ever before. Further, Chernyshova describes a government badly in need of structural reform, but too invested in shoring up official ideology to commit to real change. She also tells the story of an increasingly individualized, modern, savvy consumer, ready for a more

holistic engagement with the world beyond Soviet borders. In this framework, such seemingly minor events as the state's decision to begin producing blue jeans—and the fact that many Soviet shoppers scoffed at these socialist denims—take on urgent significance. These changes typify the mix of “progress and frustration” that defined Brezhnev-era consumer culture and also prepared Soviet citizens for the transformations of the 1980s and 1990s (p. 205). Chernyshova's book will especially benefit scholars, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates interested in late Soviet culture and society, as well as those studying consumer cultures in other national and transnational contexts.

Adrienne K. Jacobs, *University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*

Alexander Etkind. *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. xvi, 300 pp. \$87.50, cloth. \$28.45, paper.

Russian novels, films, and other works of art of the past half century are crowded with ghosts, spirits, vampires, werewolves, zombies, and similar monsters. This is presented as a consequence of the unjustified victimization of millions of people incarcerated in the Gulag, the lethal Soviet prison camp system. The result of negligence rather than purposeful intent, they died in high numbers. Never properly buried, these dead return as the “undead,” monsters that haunt the living generations. They will persist in doing so until their descendants have laid them to rest, by acknowledging and remembering them.

In a nutshell, this is the message of *Warped Mourning*, the new book by Alexander Etkind, Professor of Russian Literature and Cultural History at the University of Cambridge and author of *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (2011). In his words, “If the loss is not recognized, it threatens to return in strange though not entirely new forms, as the uncanny. When the dead are not properly mourned, they turn into the undead and cause trouble for the living” (p. 16–17). The *uncanny* concept is derived from Sigmund Freud's theory that whatever is repressed returns in distorted, fragmented, or monstrous forms.

Neither the authorities nor the general public in post-Soviet Russia have come to terms with the communist past. Unlike the Germans, they never fully distanced themselves from the totalitarian terror. Perpetrators have not been punished; neither have victims been decently compensated. After Stalin's death in 1953, two de-Stalinization drives were both followed by periods of stagnation which attempted to escape from the memory of Stalinism. Lack of social consensus still blocks the crystallization of memory. Nowadays the country is led by “former KGB officers who are no more interested in apologizing for the past than they are in fair elections in the present” (p. 211). In addition, the Russian people seemingly allow authoritarian rule and human rights violations. Many Russians still have a high regard for Stalin and defend his bloodshed as a possibly exaggerated but necessary policy. The concentration camp system they inherited has much in common with Stalin's Gulag, extra evidence that “Russia is still living by the rules of the gulag” (p. 214). If the Russians mourn, it is “warped mourning” indeed.

According to the author, the first aim of the art products of “magical historicism” mentioned is “to understand the central trauma, or rather catastrophe, of the Soviet period” (p. 232), to perform “mimetic mourning,” in the sense of a recurrent response to loss that entails a symbolic re-enactment of that loss. In his view, the catastrophic past (together with the pathetic present and dangerous future) makes contemporary Russia “a greenhouse for ghosts, revenants, and other spectral bodies” (p. 235).

However, one could ask: are these contemporary Russian art forms so different from those of other times or places? The author himself points out that classical Russian literature was already “a treasure house of the uncanny” (p. 222) such as Aleksandr Pushkin’s Bronze Horseman chasing poor Evgenii, or his Stone Guest; Mikhail Lermontov’s Demon; Nikolai Gogol’s Vii; A. K. Tolstoi’s Vampire; and a panoply of Russian symbolists’ beasts. Or, have a look at Slavic folklore. Related to the human condition, the dead haunting the living is a theme of all times and places, although terrible events, of course, can add to it. Counterculture movements of people of a certain age do not need a history of Gulags and terror to be susceptible to this challenging of death. The “Necrorealists,” Leningrad artists of the late 1970s and one of the examples mentioned by Etkind, might as well be an expression of such extremism; neither is an element of kitsch to be ruled out.

An exercise in cultural studies, *Warped Mourning* displays great erudition by a highly literate author as well as an insider. Born two years after Stalin’s death, he ranks himself in the “ex-Soviet intelligentsia.” His grandfather was arrested as a “Nepman” under Stalin and after a couple of months in prison was told that he was to be executed. Liberated instead, he never returned to his former self. He died during the Siege of Leningrad. The dissident essayist Efim Etkind was the author’s uncle.

A reader at home in the subject will find much of interest in the book, particularly the chapter “Writing History After Jail,” which looks at scholars like Dmitrii Likhachev, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Lev Gumilev; the passages on Vladimir Vysotskii singing Gulag songs, or the sections devoted to Andrei Siniavskii and Iulii Daniel. In classifying the victims, the author makes an instructive difference between the *dokhodiagi*, the “goners” or “soon-to-be dead,” described by Varlam Shalamov in his *Kolyma Tales*, who suffered without any purpose, and the survivors, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Ivan Denisovich, who maintained some kind of goal to their life, be it returning to their relatives and friends or bearing witness.

But I would not recommend the book to a student trying to find his way in the subject matter. The points Etkind wants to make are advanced in a quite complicated style. One has to be schooled in order to understand sentences like this one: “Aleksi’s memory breaks out of the cinematic duality of the visual and the acoustic and absorbs another sensory domain that is unusual for film: the olfactory” (p. 168). Or: “a monument creates a mystical zone in which time stops its flow, as in a snapshot, and space is transfigured from its neutral, dispersed condition into one that radially focuses on the monument” (p. 180). Or, to give one last example: “Explicating the spirit of postrevolutionary melancholia, Derrida substitutes ‘ontology,’ a central term of traditional philosophy, with ‘hauntology,’ a science of specters and an art of talking to them” (p. 199). By the way, Jacques Derrida’s point that Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms were “equally hostile to the specter and spirit of Communism” and that this fear is “key to explaining the outbreaks of terror in both cases” (pp. 200–201), seems to darken rather than illuminate our understanding of the topic.

Marc Jansen, *University of Amsterdam*

Steven Harris. *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life After Stalin.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press and Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013. xxii, 394 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00, cloth.

Stephen Harris’s *Communism on Tomorrow Street* is a history of accommodation under Khrushchev. Stalin’s Soviet Union had been a barracks society, marked by massive

violence and material sacrifice for most. In contrast, Khrushchev's regime attempted to provide a modicum of material comfort to Soviet citizens through a mass housing campaign. Its goal to provide Soviet citizens with a single-family apartment was emblematic of the changing relationship of state and society. Eschewing many of the traditional narratives of the Thaw, Harris shows how mass housing contributed to the experience of daily life under Khrushchev.

The first two chapters of *Communism on Tomorrow Street* place Khrushchev-era housing in its Soviet and European intellectual context. Harris argues that Soviet ideas about housing developed from broader European discussions of a rationally determined minimal living space and the desirability of single-family housing. Soviet idealists of the revolution and 1920s sought rational distribution norms but also supported communal housing as a means of creating a revolutionary society. However, in Stalin's 1930s the paradigm shifted to favour single-family homes, although the beneficiaries of this shift were primarily Soviet elites. Khrushchev's housing campaign confirmed the single-family apartment's desirability by attempting to extend the privilege of separate housing to the broader population. However, space distribution norms retained their currency, forcing architects under Khrushchev to design single-family apartments with less living and auxiliary space.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the distribution of housing in its political and social context. Harris argues that central leaders aimed to centralize authority in housing and base its distribution on "objective measures" of need. (It should be noted that these measures often seemed less than objective and perhaps could have been analyzed more deeply to unpack the goals of central leaders.) However, using the case of Leningrad, Harris asserts that local politicians continued to favour privileged social groups with housing. Particularly fascinating is how would-be housing recipients positioned themselves, often successfully, as native Leningraders and siege survivors, but rehabilitated Gulag returnees were disadvantaged in their search for new apartments. Chapter 4 examines the "people's construction" campaign that began in 1955 when factory workers formed housing collectives to build their own apartment complexes. For the next half decade, these structures accounted for roughly ten percent of housing constructed annually. Despite the seeming success of this program, it lost official support in 1959, the victim of the entrenched elites surrounding Khrushchev. Defending the privileges of the white-collar supporters who were left out of worker-dominated "people's construction," the fall of the program foreshadowed motivations of the coup of party leaders against Khrushchev in 1964.

The final three chapters present a rich picture of everyday life and its discontents in the era of mass housing. Although the construction of mass housing was initiated in the party leadership, it was shaped by the ordinary people who built their lives in new apartments. As they moved into new buildings—often while still under construction—residents made their own environments, filling in the gaps where state control was absent with neighbourhood social organizations. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the regime's portrayal of the separate housing lifestyle and the complaints that new residents lodged when these portrayals did not meet the realities or desires of citizens. Countering the notion that these grievances were nascent anti-regime protests, Harris asserts that they represented the regime's sturdiness—the engagement of society with the state and vice versa.

From the outset, Harris strives to show the everyday experience of ordinary people in the Thaw through housing. In the search for the everyday in Khrushchev's Soviet Union, the author intentionally marginalizes the extraordinary as a corrective to a literature on

society in the Thaw that he argues has emphasized popular reaction to major political developments. Yet by engaging the narratives of the Thaw more actively (if only to dismiss them as less important to ordinary citizens than their living situation), the book might have made clearer the significance of mass housing for our understanding of the Khrushchev era. Additionally, although the work is about the Soviet regime's attempts to put people in new housing, the book itself often seems under-populated. People appear in brief sketches or as faceless residents to illustrate points but few provide compelling narratives, making the book a dense read at times.

However, the variety of perspectives is also a strength of *Communism on Tomorrow Street* and the research in it is quite extensive. Harris provides fascinating new information about how state and society tried to build the daily lives of citizens in the post-war period.

Seth Bernstein, *National Research University,
Higher School of Economics, Moscow*

Robert Hornsby. *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*. New Studies in European History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. x, 313 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$103.95, cloth.

Rejecting the traditional dichotomy between “belief” and “non-belief,” Robert Hornsby explores Khrushchev-era “political dissent,” behaviours that, although the authorities labelled them “anti-Soviet,” often arose from citizens’ devotion to socialist ideals. Setting aside forms of dissent based on nationalist or religious sentiments, Hornsby concentrates on political dissent, a narrower category elastic enough to encompass distinct worker and intelligentsia groups and their characteristic activities. Juxtaposed in each section and chapter, these two classes of protest introduce a certain tension into the analysis. On one hand, workers and other rank-and-file citizens “lashed out” to voice discontent with material conditions or official abuses, causing an “outburst.” On the other hand, diminutive intelligentsia circles of idealistic socialists gathered to discuss society or, if oriented to action, to scatter leaflets in the hundreds or even thousands extolling Leninist values and preaching revolutionary struggle against the dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

The year 1958 divides the book’s two chronological periods. In each half, Hornsby outlines the authorities’ approach to suppressing dissent distinctive to each five-year period. The years from March 1953 to June 1958 brought the basic tenets of Stalin’s terror state into question, as the Soviet leadership dismantled the inefficient, apparently random terror apparatus. The process of unravelling the established norms of acceptable discourse and behaviour peaked in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s Secret Speech, which revealed lurid details about Stalin’s “cult of personality” and further blurred the boundaries between acceptable Soviet and anti-Soviet activities. This culminated when events in Hungary in the summer and fall of 1956 sparked official fears of similar convulsions in the USSR. The techniques they used, which Hornsby terms “putting out fires,” aimed to manage non-conformist behaviour as it became visible (p. 54). Arrests for anti-Soviet activity reached their post-Stalin peak in number and in the severity of the resulting sentences in 1956 and 1957. Although some were truly hostile, many citizens and party members earnestly spoke out in support of Soviet ideals, unknowingly transgressing the now obscured borders surrounding permitted expression.

Yet these events also proved a turning point in the fight against dissent, inaugurating the second period. Tellingly, no comparable spike in arrests or prosecutions followed the public denunciations of Stalin at the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961 because the

boundaries of acceptable criticism had again solidified. Hornsby concludes that new policing strategies, used with increasing frequency after mid-1958, helped mark new limits of permissible criticism. He examines preventative measures that the KGB grouped under the Russian term *profilaktika*, such as “conversations” with those who had misbehaved and non-custodial sentencing for first-time offenders. By contrast, authorities resorted to sentencing only hardened *antisovetchiki* to comparatively short prison terms in the much smaller camp system. Hornsby devotes a section to examining how the security organs detained individuals by assigning them to psychiatric facilities, a practice Brezhnev-era dissidents loudly denounced. Hornsby deftly places this and other aspects of the Khrushchev era within the broader narrative of post-Stalin non-conformism and policing. Throughout, he acknowledges the intelligentsia groups as proto-dissidents; however, by considering their goals and ideals alongside those of workers who dissented, he avoids writing an exclusive pre-history of the Brezhnev-era dissident movement.

Hornsby’s book makes several contributions to the field. First, it strengthens the scholarship on Khrushchev-era society by carefully considering the content of documents from the Soviet procuracy, police, Komsomol, and the Communist party, but also the blind spots inherent in those institutions’ worldview. Hornsby augments these with memoirs and writings by authors, mostly representatives of the intelligentsia, who fell into the police dragnet. Furthermore, he contributes to the scholarly trend that has recently called into question the received concept of “the Thaw” as a period characterized by liberals and conservatives battling over reform. Hornsby finds that policies aimed at combatting dissent ebbed and flowed. The authorities took a relaxed approach in times of calm, but responded decisively to prevent any perceived threat to the Soviet order from metastasizing. By the early 1960s, an increasingly professional and educated KGB replaced the raw force so characteristic of the Stalin era with these more sophisticated policing methods. Hornsby concludes that these strategies proved effective and served as prototypes for those used under Brezhnev to prevent dissidents from reaching wide audiences. By taking preventative measures, the KGB forced them to address instead the Soviet leadership and the international human-rights community, both of which they considered less harmful. Finally, Hornsby argues that by stabilizing the status quo in the “medium term,” these measures explain the observed decline in the number and ferocity of the protests and outbursts under Brezhnev. His interpretation thus differs from that of scholars who have judged the relative social quiet under Brezhnev as a sign of a collapse in “belief” in the Soviet system among the majority, who lost hope that it might make good on the prosperity and order Khrushchev had promised.

Aaron Hale-Dorrell, *University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*

Anna Kuxhausen. *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. xiii, 228 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95, paper.

Anna Kuxhausen has written an engaging and informative book devoted to discussions of *vospitanie* or upbringing in eighteenth-century Russia. Framed by scholarship on the Russian Enlightenment, including the religious Enlightenment, and more extensively by European and Russian historiography concerned with gender and childhood, she analyzes Russian writings on women’s health, pregnancy, childrearing, and education in order to illuminate the relationship between “modern” state building and the physical and spiritual / moral raising of children. Based on medical treatises, advice manuals, primers, grammars,

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literature, and legal-administrative documents, Kuxhausen explores understandings of *vospitanie*; government efforts to control and medically organize midwifery; attitudes toward and practices of breastfeeding; beliefs about and knowledge of the special physical needs of children (subject matter that includes swaddling, diet, and the European-style cold regime); the centrality of moral education in eighteenth-century upbringing; and finally, the education of girls, with particular reference to the Smolny Institute established by Empress Catherine II.

Through this empirical and descriptive source material the reader is introduced to a number of analytical themes and institutional settings. Kuxhausen's primary goal is to explore the development in Russia of a conception of childhood that blended Enlightenment models with traditional social and cultural practices. Here the author connects Russian policy and thought to European ideas about childhood as a distinctive phase in the development of the individual human being—a phase that according to John Locke required physical, moral, and intellectual education. In the school reforms of Catherine II, Kuxhausen argues, children became future members of “the body politic,” and as such an important resource for the state and society. The Enlightenment / Catherinian effort to create “a new breed of Russians” (p. 12) is in this manner tied to the concept of “raising the nation.” The connection between education and nation building is a central theme of this study, though Kuxhausen does not engage with scholarship devoted to Russian national identity or the conceptual history of the nation. Nor, in her discussion of educational policies and practices institutionalized in the Moscow and St. Petersburg foundling homes, the Catherinian popular schools, and the Smolny Institute, does she relate her analytical approach to more traditional understandings of the imperial Russian (at once Petrine and Catherinian) service state.

Together with the process of nation building, Kuxhausen makes good use of gender analysis and European scholarship on gender history. Building from materials that document the development of the Russian medical profession (or proto-profession) beginning already in the reign of Peter I, Kuxhausen highlights the impact on midwifery and childrearing practices of medical and scientific expertise, gendered masculine, and claims to authority based on that expertise. In this discussion the argument that Russian Enlightenment discourse on upbringing is gendered masculine seems to rest on: 1) the proposition that hierarchies of gender, education, and social status led to the discursive displacement of female midwives by male doctors; and 2) on the fact that eighteenth-century medical writers, scientists, and trained physicians were overwhelmingly male. Here as elsewhere gender analysis illuminates critical aspects of human relationships left unnoticed by other methods and categories of analysis, but it can be difficult to apply to intellectuals and policymakers who did not think in such terms.

Although Kuxhausen's source materials are eclectic, amorphous, and not always easy to incorporate into a structured argument, she has overcome these obstacles and written an interesting, readable introduction to topics long neglected in the scholarship on eighteenth-century Russia. As she herself notes, there are many mini-topics touched on throughout her book that deserve further study. Reception is one example that other historians also have found difficult to document. Perhaps more to the point are Kuxhausen's suggestive comments about the maternal imagery surrounding the persona and policies of Catherine II. *From the Womb to the Body Politic* gives hope that despite the limitations of the available sources, there is more to be discovered.

Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *California State Polytechnic University-Pomona*

Susanna S. Lim. *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685–1922. To the End of the Orient.* Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia. London: Routledge, 2013. xv, 223 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$155.00, cloth.

Susanna S. Lim's book is a new contribution to the recently burgeoning field of research that sees Japan and China as important markers and makers of Russian national identity. The conceptual originality of the book lies in distinguishing two notions of Asia for Russia—an "inner" positive East and a negative "Far East" (p. 13). The author also argues that at those moments in history when the West and the Far East presented threats to Russia, the identification of their cultures took place (p. 168). Lim scrupulously collected numerous examples from original and secondary sources, mainly of a literary and philosophical nature, many of which were ignored by previous scholarship.

Chapter 1 provides an historical background of Russia's contacts with China and Japan and claims that, contrary to Western Orientalists, Russians showed greater sympathy and sensitivity to Asian countries. At the same time, Lim points out that even early writings were not free from the impact of nationalist thinking.

The vision of China in the age of Catherine the Great is the subject of chapter 2. It demonstrates how the "stance of the Oriental spectator" (p. 47) was used to glorify the wisdom and benevolence of the Russian tsarina and simultaneously was a tool for criticism of her rule by liberals.

The subsequent chapter introduces readers to the works of Russian Sinologists, though they were not much in demand by the society at large. Instead, the word *kitaishchina* (deriving from *Kitai*, the Russian name for China) was coined to designate all kind of inertia and conservatism. The author makes an interesting observation that Aleksandr Gertsen was the first to appropriate this metaphor to Western Europe. Lamenting about the complacency and philistinism of the post-1848 European bourgeoisie, the philosopher called it the "Chinese West" and contrasted it to the historical youth of "Scythian" and "barbarian" Russia.

The next chapter deals with the process surrounding the emergence of the Far East as a separate category in Russian politics and mindset due to the conclusion of treaties with Japan and China in the mid-nineteenth century. It examines a variety of works, some of which, bolstered by belief in the messianic mission of Russia and critical attitudes to the West, envisaged a great future for Russia, while others predicted the ascendancy of China. A sad omission here is the figure of Archbishop Nikolai who was one of the proponents of Russia's enlightening mission in Japan and the prime authority on this country at home.

The final two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed an active Russian Far Eastern policy and a worldwide rise of interest in the problem of race. Chapters 5 and 6 analyze what impact these had on Russian ideologies relating to the Far East. It is in these chapters that Lim's discourse becomes most sophisticated. She navigates the subjects so that readers are able to comprehend that neither the Easterners' views on the supposed spiritual affinity between Russia and Asia, nor the adoration of Japanese art could be accommodated well during any Russian search *vis-à-vis* national identity. It was the prophetic idea of Pan-Mongolism, put forth by V. Solov'ev, that predicted the onslaught of the yellow race, which appeared to be most productive. Pan-Mongolism appealed to the *fin-de-siècle* sense of crisis, and the apocalypse came true in 1905 at Port Arthur and Tsushima. At this point in time, in the works of Symbolist poet Valerii Briusov, Russians were recast into the image of barbaric and dynamic Huns who seemed able to destroy Japan and whose advance was welcomed. Lim qualifies this as the creation of the inner positive

East. Her reading of Briusov suggests that the poet was talking about the historical change brought by revolution, which he perceived as inevitable and destructive, but also imbued with cleansing, positive power.

Racial imagery becomes more meaningful in *Petersburg*, the famous novel by Andrei Belyi. Embracing occult theories of races, a parody on *japonisme*, anxiety over anti-Semitism and revolution, the novel, Lim points out, expresses the conflation of the West, epitomized by the city itself, and the Far East, represented by various images of the “yellow peril” plaguing this city. Though Belyi and other intellectuals, concludes Lim, found Russia’s long searched identity in Scythianism and its political analogue Eurasianism, in the Soviet period the identity problem was obscured by ideological exigencies only to be revived again after the disintegration of the Soviet state.

In sum, the book is a welcome addition to the studies of Russian national identity and may be recommended to post-graduate students and all those interested in the question of identity.

Yulia Mikhailova, *Hiroshima City University*

John MacKay. *True Songs of Freedom: Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Russian Culture and Society*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. xv, 157 pp. Illustrations. Index. \$24.95, paper.

Despite the complex and sometimes fraught relationship between Russia and the West, Russian readers have long been avid consumers of Western literature, and Russian culture has long been shaped and has defined itself in relation to foreign literature and culture. This short book explores the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural reception through a detailed case study of one work: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* came rather late to Russia, though it has had a long life, both in Russia and in the Soviet Union, having appeared in over one hundred editions in Russian and the other languages of the Soviet Union between its first publication in 1857 and 1991. It was, and perhaps still is, regarded by Russian readers as a classic of world literature, making it a fascinating subject for close study.

John MacKay forensically charts the history and changing significance of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in Russia, exploring not only the way it was consumed by critics, but also the means by which the novel was made to intervene in contemporary political debates and service particular ideologies. Drawing upon a broad range of source material, including contemporary responses from Lev Tolstoi and other authors, translations, theatrical adaptations and film and visual responses, the author traces the multiple afterlives experienced by the text in the Russian context.

These afterlives are examined chronologically from the earliest point of publication. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the pre-revolutionary reception of the novel. The Russian government was initially suspicious of the potential for unrest to be inspired by readers’ comparisons between the plight of black slaves and Russian serfs. The early responses to the novel certainly make those comparisons, and the applicability of Stowe’s accounts to the Russian situation was certainly debated by its nineteenth-century readers, even before it appeared in translation. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the novel’s peculiar genre-shifting starts to emerge as it became established as simultaneously a canonical classic, a (deracialized) tale for children, a “fount of ethical example,” and a “source of (sobering) knowledge about the United States and its history” (p. 56).

In chapters 3 and 4, MacKay examines the most dramatic reshaping and manipulations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the Soviet cultural context. Shorn of its religious connotations (especially in the editions for children), which were, of course, anathema to the Soviet cause, the novel became a “handy instrument for propagating official doctrines on reality” (p. 80) and a tool of Soviet cultural policy. Soviet criticism drew parallels between the historical narrative and contemporary American policies of segregation and persecution of Black citizens, feeding into broader anti-American discourses. MacKay's fascinating discussion of the shifting significance and use of foreign literature concludes with a short comparative coda, which explores the more recent, (mostly) post-Soviet, decline in the importance in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* alongside the rise of a more recent sensation: Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), emphasizing his implicit claim that that the long life of Stowe's novel should be understood not in purely literary terms, but as a coincidence of social, political, and cultural factors.

MacKay's most interesting conclusions lie in his statements about the novel's instrumentality, the “ambiguous shaping force of political interest (whether governmental or not) on the text” (p. 31), which are amply illustrated. Nonetheless, the analysis could have been usefully supplemented by a study of the conditions of production of the text in its various historical contexts, which might have made use of such sources as typescripts and editorial documents. If MacKay had consulted discussion within publishing houses, for example, he would have been able to illuminate more clearly the political and ideological interventions that controlled and directed the publication of Stowe's work.

A closer examination of the conditions of production of the novel in the Russian context might also have resulted in a more sustained focus on the work of the translator, who, as the agent with most ability to shape the work, does sometimes disappear from view in MacKay's account. Additionally, examples from the translations are cited in an English back-translation. Quoting the Russian here would have been helpful for readers wishing to examine in detail elements of style.

Despite these minor issues, the book makes a valuable contribution to several fields and will be appreciated not only by Russian and Soviet historians, but also by scholars of comparative literature and translation studies.

Samantha Sherry, *University of Oxford*

David North. *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*. Oak Park: Mehring Books, 2013. xvii, 259 pp. Index. \$15.95, paper.

As a one-time youthful Trotskyist, I can appreciate David North's full-throated defence of the great twentieth-century “tribune and theoretician of world socialist revolution” (p. xi). The author is not an academic but rather chair of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site, a leading forum for the Trotskyist *Weltanschauung*. The explicit task of this book, actually a collection of North's essays and talks between 2001 and 2012, is to discredit “the Post Soviet School of Historical Falsification,” especially in the persons of three leading anti-Trotskyist British biographers—Ian Thatcher, Geoffrey Swain, and Robert Service—whose “treatment of the life of Leon Trotsky is without the slightest scholarly merit” (p. 53). Apart from such exaggerations and oversimplifications (and unfortunate *ad hominem* jibes) (p. 159), by and large North is justified in criticizing Service, in particular, for myriad factual errors and distortions. I also find myself in general agreement with his favourable distinction between Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin, but

here again he goes too far in suggesting that the three British academics are neo-Stalinists and probably anti-Semitic (pp. 143–144).

The substance of the author's argument is that Trotsky was the second most important leader after Lenin during the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917; a major Marxist theorist (especially regarding Marxian internationalism); the architect and driving force behind the victorious Red Army in the Russian Civil War of 1918–1921; the true and legitimate heir to Vladimir Ilich Lenin; the voice of the authentic Marxism of the Fourth International and the world proletarian revolution (as opposed to the Third International's betrayal and apostasy); and the victim of a vicious slander campaign initiated by Stalin that continues to this day by latter-day Stalinists and their academic fellow travellers in Britain and elsewhere.

Most if not all of what North has to say is not new. He goes over the ground covered by the classic works of Isaac Deutscher and E. H. Carr, as well as the more recent contributions of Baruch Knei-Paz, Dmitrii Volkogonov, Bernard Patenaude, and Vadim Rogovin. All of these authors are cited approvingly in contrast to the three villains. To be sure, it is useful to be reminded just how prescient were many of Trotsky's assessments and prognostications. Nowhere is this more evident than in his critique of Stalin's "socialism in one country" and its effects on both the development of Soviet society and the world socialist revolution.

In addition to being terribly repetitious—almost inevitable because of its composition—and excessively strident in tone, the book's partisanship raises some other concerns. While North makes a convincing case for Trotsky's originality as a Marxian theorist as well as brilliance as a revolutionary leader, he is less convincing about Trotsky's character and conduct. I too discount the scurrilous innuendos about Trotsky's personal and family life as alleged by his critics and opponents, but there is no denying his supreme arrogance as well as willingness to spill blood freely in the revolutionary cause. And North's veneration of Trotsky knows no bounds. Unable to read Russian himself, he makes a far-fetched comparison of Trotsky's prose with Lev Tolstói's by citing an anonymous émigré (p. 8).

While I find North's defence of Trotsky against his Stalinist and other critics quite convincing, the explanation for his defeat is less so. For the author that outcome is the result of the weakness and immaturity of the working class in Soviet Russia in combination with Stalin's hijacking of the revolution by creating a careerist bureaucracy that benefitted from his patronage. But perhaps Trotsky's failure also grew out of his misreading of the situation, both domestically and internationally. Capitalism proved to be far more resilient and responsive to economic downturns than he expected, and that played to Stalin's advantage. Moreover, he fatally underestimated the latter's political acumen.

North's book of course is not an academic monograph and has none of the usual scholarly apparatus, lacking both a bibliography and primary sources in the original language. But as polemics go—in the Leninist tradition—it is effective and convincing.

N.G.O. Pereira, *Dalhousie University*

Alison Rowley. *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880–1922*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. xii, 323 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$65.00, cloth.

What can we learn from looking at postcards? And more broadly, how does visual culture reflect and disseminate popular culture, while also shaping it? These are the questions that traverse *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880–1922*.

Postcards imported from Europe became a staple in mail communication during the very implementation of Russia's postal service in the second half of the nineteenth century. But it was not until 1898 that the first Russian-made picture postcards started to be produced. They were used to support charity work, advertise commercial ventures, draw tourism, establish political legitimacy, and mark history. Because their print runs exceeded by far those of posters, magazines, and illustrated books, they became central to the circulation of images. Postcards also rapidly became collectible items, selected for the subject they represented or for their aesthetic quality.

In this book, historian Alison Rowley builds on ethnohistorical and visual culture traditions in order to understand the social relations that created a vibrant picture postcard market and encouraged their circulation within Russia and internationally. She remains acutely aware of the limitations of her archive. The firms that produced the postcards have often disappeared without leaving records. Artists, photographers, and others involved in creating the images are often unknown. There are no ways of finding out how many postcards were produced and what percentage survived, or who owned them and how they were actually used.

The book starts by looking, in chapter 1, at the creation of the postal system in Russia (with the first post office opening in Moscow in 1875), the explosion of the postcard as a medium, and the importance it gained as a communication tool and cultural artefact in the *fin de siècle* and the early Soviet period. The expanding postal network as well as advances in paper, printing, and photography technology and techniques all contributed to the creation and popularisation of these objects. The following chapters shift the discussion to the types of subjects represented on picture postcards, examining how these resonated broadly with popular culture, economic concerns, and politics. They focus on themes as rich and varied as representations of the landscape, celebrity culture, romantic and erotic depictions of the body, portrayals of the monarchy, and illustrations of World War I and of the Russian Revolution. The book ends with an epilogue which takes an insightful look at how the categories outlined above functioned differently across the revolutionary divide, some being modified to correspond to events and party ideology, others disappearing altogether. This section of the book poses the question of historical breaks and cultural continuity, but also of the legitimacy of genres under different commercial and political systems.

Rowley is an outstanding scholar. Her work is insightful, the book is exceptionally well written, and her argument is always clear. There is, however, one blind spot: the images are only discussed in terms of their referential nature. The form and structure they take, the techniques used (the fact that there are no bodies in photographed landscapes, for example, is a direct result of shutter speed), the meaning and function of style and techniques in a broad visual culture, but also the repetition and migration of imagery from one medium to another (from painting or mass produced journals to postcards) could have enabled the author to more fully understand *how* and not just *what* the images communicated.

The book is generously illustrated with 130 black and white reproductions. Most of the cards were collected by the author over several years; most have never been published before. While many of them were originally printed in black and white, it would have been worthwhile to reproduce the colour picture postcards in all their glory.

Annie Gérin, *Université du Québec à Montréal*

Evgeny Sergeev. *The Great Game, 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2013. xix, 530 pp. Index. \$69.45, cloth.

Evgeny Sergeev offers a thoughtful, broadly researched examination of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia—the Great Game. He argues that the Great Game is a jigsaw puzzle with three dimensions: first, Great Britain and Russia offered competing models of globalization to their Asian conquests and neighbours; second, decision-making took place on multiple levels but elites in the two states held the initiative; and third, resolution of this competition set the foundation for their co-operation before and during World War I. The author includes the breadth of Asia from the Ottoman Empire to Japan.

In the Prologue, Sergeev sets out the two states' primary motivations for imperial expansion. He highlights their desire for natural borders and the increased prestige that came with expanding empires. The differences between them included political, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics and aspirations of the two systems. As Russia pacified the Caucasus and began to look East, Britain started viewing Russia as its primary rival. The Russians' loss in the Crimean War shifted their attention fully to these arenas.

Sergeev breaks up the Great Game into five phases. First, during the period from 1856 to 1864, Russia sought compensation for its Crimean defeat. Efforts to introduce differing visions of modernization in Asia led Russia to consider pushing toward India. The British sensed this new threat and the Great Game commenced. Between 1864 and 1873, Russia absorbed many of the khanates, trying to bring its own version of order to the region. These moves alarmed the British, but leadership in London divided between forwardists, usually Tories and British leadership in India, who were inclined to active measures, while inactivists, usually from the Liberal side of the political spectrum, typically sought more diplomatic approaches. At this time the competition drew in Eastern Turkestan, thanks to the weakness of the Chinese regime. In 1873, Russian foreign minister Aleksandr Mikhailovich Gorchakov and British foreign secretary Granville George Leveson Gower, 2nd Earl Granville negotiated an agreement that those inclined to diplomacy in both capitals hoped would quiet the competition, but the forwardists in London had little confidence and the war party in St. Petersburg had little patience. The years from 1874 to 1885 were the climax of the Great Game as Russian expansion continued. Military leaders even planned a march on India, but Russia could not do so because of internal weakness and external pressure coming from many of the great powers of Europe. The British became embroiled in another war in Afghanistan, trying to shore up their influence in that crucial buffer. The Russian seizure of Merv brought a fragile equilibrium. Between 1886 and 1903, when the new Franco-Russian Alliance changed British calculation yet again, competition concentrated on the Pamirs and Tibet, with continued manoeuvres in Persia. Russia failed to achieve its hopes in either. The last years to 1907 ended the Great Game as Russia and Britain sparred in northeast Asia until the 1905 Japanese defeat of Russia. Now Russia consented to negotiate with Britain, which was concerned about the massive cost of engaging the Russians across such a wide field and the growing threat represented by the

new Germany. The resulting entente of 1907 appeared to be a diplomatic revolution after such a long rivalry.

Sergeev improves on many studies of this imperial competition by employing sources from multiple archives in the United Kingdom and Russian Federation as well as in Uzbekistan and India. He has also read widely among both English and Russian published primary and secondary material. Liberally sized quotations offer a substantive taste of contemporary documents. He provides a more authoritative view than Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac do in *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Basic Books, 2006), and he offers a broader context for more focused studies, such as Firuz Kazemzadeh's *Russia and Britain in Persia: Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran* (I.B. Tauris, 2013) and Tatiana Shaumian's *Tibet: The Great Game and Tsarist Russia* (Oxford University Press, 2000). The work, however, does not replace David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's examination of the ideology of empire in *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), for the topic is only glancingly dealt with here. So, too, he does not consistently grapple with the participation of local peoples. Certainly Asian leaders appear, such as Yakub Beg, Habibullah, and the Dalai Lama, but the voice given to local populations is not as balanced as Sergeev appears to want. Furthermore, maps would have been useful to include in the volume, given the variety of contested ground discussed.

More substantively, Sergeev does not convince this reviewer that the Great Game ended in 1907. While he dismisses them, scholars, such as Jennifer Siegel in *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (I.B. Tauris, 2002), show that the rift between Russia and Great Britain never disappeared before World War I, and tensions increased as Russia felt increasingly confident due to economic growth and military expansion. Foreign Office debates during the 1914 July Crisis indicate serious concern over renewed Russian aggression in Central Asia if Britain remained on the sidelines while Russia and France defeated the Central Powers on their own.

That aside, Sergeev provides a particularly useful examination of the competition of British and Russian systems for predominance in colonial Asia. It will be a necessary work to consult for some time to come.

Ronald P. Bobroff, *Wake Forest University / Oglethorpe University*

James Steffen. *The Cinema of Sergei Parajanov*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. xix, 306 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95, paper.

Sergei Paradzhanov (1924–1990) is one of the most revered directors in world cinema. His unique aesthetic and the story of his persecution at the hands of the Soviets combine to guarantee the fascination of cinephiles worldwide. However, despite the adulation he has long received, very little detailed or reliable information about Paradzhanov's life and films has been available in English, perhaps contributing to the mystique surrounding him. James Steffen's long-awaited monograph (he edited a special issue of *The Armenian Review* on the director in 2001) aims to change this situation, and it does so admirably.

Paradzhanov, an ethnic Armenian from Tbilisi who made films in Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, was never quite anchored in one tradition; he was always something of an outsider. This ambiguous and multi-faceted state presents potential problems for the researcher and perhaps partly explains why an English-language monograph has been so long in arriving.

In writing this book Steffen has meticulously researched the cultures of each country (in some cases learning the languages) to provide insight into the literary and folkloric material that Paradzhanov's films are based on, and to provide valuable contextual material about the industry that the films were produced in. This context gives some insight into how the organizational structure of the Soviet film industry (a centralized cinema ministry based in Moscow and semi-autonomous studios in outlying republics) both helped and hindered Paradzhanov's career.

Steffen devotes a chapter to the genesis, production, reception, and analysis of each of the four major feature films. In his analyses, Steffen focuses on teasing out the nuances of these densely-packed films and their symbolism. That is not to say he avoids the complex theoretical issues the films raise; however, he never becomes bogged down with theoretical jargon or concepts, allowing his own research and opinions to lead the way.

For example, a later section of the book (pp. 236–240) looks at Paradzhanov's mixture of subtle homosexual themes with the imagery of Eastern exoticism, dubbing this "oriental drag" but preferring to see it in a historical lineage including Mikhail Kuz'min, Gustave Flaubert, and the photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden than to become mired in a discussion about gaze theory. Steffen notes that the Caucasus was seen by the Soviets as an exotic other within their own boundaries, and that Paradzhanov's own national identity and sexuality were ambiguous, and concludes that the director's fascination with oriental aesthetics was both a kind of self-affirmation and an idiosyncratic form of patriotism.

In addition to discussion of the four films on which Paradzhanov's reputation rests, there is also vital biographical information, a meticulous account of Paradzhanov's court cases, and detailed descriptions of his early films and his later, unrealized projects. Tantalizing descriptions of what the films would have likely been like are anchored by detailed research, including correspondence between Paradzhanov and the legendary formalist critic Viktor Shklovskii over conceptual flaws in Paradzhanov's long-cherished adaptation of Mikhail Lermontov's *Demon* [The Demon] (p. 179).

Steffen hints that *Legenda Suramskoi kreposti's* [The Legend of the Surami Fortress's] (1984) domestic reception was controversial but then provides little evidence for this assertion in the subsequent section (pp. 212–215). Later (pp. 220–230), he explains the failure of Paradzhanov's planned adaptation of Iakob Tsurtaveli's *Tsamebay tsmidisa shushanikisi deoplisay* [The Passion of Shushanik] in terms of just such a controversy: the rise of Georgian nationalism in the 1980s meant that Paradzhanov's wish to emphasize the story's Armenian protagonist, and the director's own status as a Georgian-Armenian, became problematic in the light of this rising movement.

The epilogue, in which Steffen traces Paradzhanov's influence on directors as diverse as Moshen Makhmalbaf and Tarsem Singh, feels somewhat slight, but in many ways Paradzhanov is still in the process of being discovered and understood, and an aesthetic as unique as his cannot easily be assimilated. Finally, Paradzhanov emerges as an artist with a deep aesthetic conviction to a kind of antiquary materialism, but also an artist out of time obsessed with the distant past, and yet requiring new forms of spectatorship (DVD, the multiplicity of possibilities opened up by internet) to have his significance fully apprehended.

Steffen has written a detailed, even-handed study that, while displaying obvious passion for its subject, avoids some of the hand-wringing pitfalls of writing on artists who have fallen victim to state persecution or otherwise had maligned careers. Though it is a comprehensive biography, hopefully this book will spark a surge of further scholarship on Paradzhanov, using Steffen's work as a foundation on which to build.

John A. Riley, *Gumi, Gyeongbuk, South Korea*

Liisa Steinby and Tintti Klapuri, eds. *Bakhtin and his Others: (Inter)subjectivity, Chronotope and Dialogism*. London: Anthem Press, 2013. 145 pp. \$99.00, cloth.

This slim collection of essays published in 2013 makes an important contribution to the field of Bakhtin studies. Editors Liisa Steinby and Tintti Klapuri explain in their introduction that their goal is two-fold. First, the volume addresses the question of the “Other” in Mikhail Bakhtin’s writings, a concept which is not to be understood in terms of alterity but rather as a “co-subject: one to whom we listen when he speaks, whom we speak to, whose words we include in our own speech” (p. xxi). Intersubjectivity is thus a major focus of the volume. Rather than viewing Bakhtin’s well-known texts on literature as a departure from his early philosophical work, the editors stress that Bakhtin explored art as a medium in which the “ethically acting concrete individual is most completely presented” (p. xvii). All of the contributors thus firmly situate the ethical subject at the core of Bakhtin’s thinking and view even his literary essays as demonstrations of his commitment to problems of ethics. The volume’s second goal is to address the question of “Bakhtin’s others” (p. xxi)—those thinkers whose work Bakhtin either explicitly or implicitly evokes. This volume continues a current trend in Bakhtin scholarship devoted to contextualizing Bakhtin’s work by situating his essays not only with respect to the writings of the Bakhtin circle, but also within the wider context of the German philosophical tradition and early Soviet literary studies. Primarily stemming from a research project conducted by a group of scholars in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Turku, Finland, this volume also includes two chapters originally presented as conference papers. The eight essays included in this collection can be roughly categorized as either being “theoretical” or constituting “applications.”

Three of the four theoretical chapters are by Steinby and form the backbone of this work. In fact, her contributions could have been the basis for a single-author manuscript, as she is clearly the driving intellectual force behind this collection. The great strength of these three essays is Steinby’s ability to provide concise introductions to important Bakhtinian concepts while also providing a welcome contextualization of his ideas. Steinby’s first contribution, “Bakhtin and Lukács: Subjectivity, Signifying Form and Temporality in the Novel,” explores Bakhtin’s indebtedness to the early writing of Georg Lukács. Steinby examines the genesis of the novel according to these two critics, focusing in particular on the plurality of voices present in the novel and on novelistic temporality. Steinby’s second article provides a detailed overview of the use of the musical metaphor of polyphony to describe novelistic construction by comparing Bakhtin’s use of the term with the Romantic idea of the musical composition of literary works as represented by Friedrich Schlegel. This chapter ends with a brief discussion of Thomas Mann and Milan Kundera, as Steinby demonstrates how these authors express a plurality of viewpoints in their texts. The third essay by Steinby, “Bakhtin’s Concept of the Chronotope: The Viewpoint of an Acting Subject,” is the longest and most developed of all of the contributions in the volume, and the one which proposes the clearest departure from traditional Bakhtin scholarship. While acknowledging that chronotopes are usually understood as “forms of cognition or/and categories for representing these” (p. 107), Steinby proposes that the concept should rather “be understood in relation to Bakhtin’s ethical thinking” (p. 111). Steinby situates the chronotope in relation to an earlier essay on the *Bildungsroman*, stressing that here the concept is tied to “certain specific authors, such as Goethe” (p. 114), whereas in Bakhtin’s later writings it becomes the general organizing principle of the novel and the determiner of novelistic sub-genres. Steinby links chronotopes to the notion of “chairological” time, in

that they “present a concrete situation where certain kinds of action are possible” (p. 120). While this is not a radical redefinition of the chronotope, Steinby does offer a fresh perspective on the concept, and her emphasis on the chronotope as a generator of space-time for specific human actions does explain the shift in focus in the sections of the chronotope essay devoted to François Rabelais, in which Bakhtin primarily explores various types of carnival behaviours.

A fourth theoretical chapter is offered by Auni Mäkikalli, who posits “the rise, in the course of the eighteenth century, of individualism, and modern temporality” (p. 28) as shared concerns of both Bakhtin and Ian Watt, author of *The Rise of the Novel* (1957). According to Mäkikalli, Bakhtin’s writings on the early eighteenth-century novel could be more productively juxtaposed with the works of Watt and other Anglo-American critics, such as Michael McKeon. The remaining chapters all entail close readings of a variety of authors using Bakhtinian methodology. Interestingly, two of the contributions treat poetry: Mikhail Oshukov’s “Familiar Otherness: Peculiarities of Dialogue in Ezra Pound’s Poetics of Inclusion” and Christian Paul’s “Author and Other in Dialogue: Bakhtinian Polyphony in the Poetry of Peter Reading.” Paul argues for the applicability of Bakhtinian concepts to the poetic genre, in spite of Bakhtin’s predilection for the novel, and both contributors provide convincing analyses of the poets under consideration. Another chapter, Edward Gieskes’s “Tradition and Genre: Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*,” examines the relationship between Kyd’s play and classical tragedy, noting that the playwright “appropriates structures from the tradition of Latin drama, repurposes them and fills them with other kinds of language” (p. 92); Gieskes thus highlights the interplay of various discursive modes within the play. Klapuri rounds out the collection with an essay on the provincial chronotope in Anton Chekhov, an analysis inspired by Steinby’s view of the chronotope as a category for possibilities of human action.

The articles in this collection are generally well-written, though in a few of them one senses that they were written with strict page constraints, and the overall quality of the scholarship is excellent, with individual contributors all citing recent and pertinent studies in the field. The decision of these Finnish scholars to publish their work in English will allow this volume to garner a wide audience among Bakhtin scholars.

Tara Collington, *University of Waterloo*

Ilse Stritzke (with Bernie Stritzke). *Nightmares of an East Prussian Childhood: A Memoir of the Russian Occupation*. Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2013. vii, 189 pp. Map. Index. \$32.00, paper.

This riveting account of a family expelled from the town of Palmnicken on the Baltic in East Prussia tells the story of the Glauses and their travails prior to their escape to West Germany in 1950. It puts an individualized set of human faces to the post-war expulsions of Germans from Poland, Russia, and other points in the East that took place for several years after World War II and that flowed into the somewhat earlier treks of refugees as the Soviet armies moved westwards. The latter took revenge for German atrocities perpetrated on the Soviet civilian population during the German advance by visiting similar horrors on the everyday Germans who remained in their path. Some 12–14 million people were evacuated, often under extremely dire conditions, in what was the largest forced migration in history to date and estimates range from 500,000 to two million deaths on the way. Most of those removed from their previous homes were women, children, and old people who in many cases had lived in these areas for generations.

The stories are told through the eyes of Ilse Stritzke, née Glaus, who was 10 years old in 1944, a year that saw the rapid advance of Soviet troops and the creation of successive waves of refugees whose tales of the reign of terror released by the Soviet troops were deeply disturbing and raised the question of whether or not the family should stay or flee. The fatal decision to stay, made by Ilse's mother, is the dramatic entry into the recounting of rape, death, and cruelty that follow, but there are also moments of kindness shown by Russian soldiers to the German population under Soviet occupation. Survival against great odds, and the joys of finding enough food to occasionally slake the chronic hunger that was a constant during the Russian occupation is graphically described. Finally, what remained of the family was evacuated in November 1947 to Thuringia, part of what would be the GDR. Only then do the personal rifts and familial breakdowns start to bubble to the surface. The news of her older sister's death in a Soviet prison was yet another blow in a series of tragedies that saw the youngest and oldest members of the family die. In the 1950s, most of the younger members of the family left Germany. Ilse's older brother moved to Argentina to escape real or imagined retribution for having been in the SS, her parents divorced, and Ilse herself met her husband Gerd Stritzke. She immigrated with him to the United States shortly after their wedding in 1956. The family became part of a yet under-researched diaspora, as many young Germans emigrated in the 1950s in the hope of finding opportunities for a better life in America.

The book raises important questions about memory and voice for the historian. Bernie Stritzke, Ilse's son, wrote the book based on his interviews with his mother. For much of the period Ilse's memory is the only guide, except for the last eighteen months under the Russian domination, during which she kept a diary. Memory is often faulty, and the events referred to took place decades before being written down. Stories told to family members may not be completely accurate in order to spare the feelings of one or more relatives or friends. It may even be an unconscious act to edit out certain types of distressing events. Although Ilse Stritzke claims that her son was totally accurate in writing her memoirs ("I was so overwhelmed and felt sometimes I was actually reliving my past [...] [p. 3]), it is impossible for any account to fully reflect an event or series of events that are past, since narrative choices involve complex connections between fact and linguistic flow. There is also the issue of language and translation. Were the interviews in English or German? Last but not least, there is the fact that the protagonist moves from childhood to adulthood in the years 1944–1956. The narrative voice sounds adult throughout, but can the adult ever recapture the experience and perspective of childhood? Ilse Stritzke's voice is thus heard through her son's retelling and through her adult knowledge and understanding.

These comments should not detract from the book's importance as part of a genre which narrates the lives of ordinary people caught in a turbulent moment in time. It corroborates the stories of other women who were expelled from East Prussia, such as the memoirs of Libussa von Krockow (which were written by her brother and are available in English under the title *The Hour of the Women*) and the account by Marion Gräfin von Dönhoff, *Namen die keiner mehr nennt* [Names That Are No Longer Spoken]. It is an important reminder of the reality that it is often women and children who bear the burdens of war, and that at least in some cases, the tragedies were overcome.

Rosemarie Schade, *Concordia University*

Steven A. Usitalo. *The Invention of Mikhail Lomonosov: A Russian National Myth.* Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 298 pp. Index. \$48.25, cloth.

Every school-aged child in the USSR was indoctrinated with the tale of the great eighteenth-century Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, son of a poor fisherman from the north. As the story goes, despite the privations he faced, at the age of sixteen Mikhail travelled to Moscow, driven by his determination to obtain an education. He carried with him nothing but two books: *Slavonic Grammar* by Meletii Smotritskii and *Arithmetics* by Leontii Magnitskii. Lomonosov's fame was so great that in the last 200 years, an enormous body of works about him has been produced by Russian linguists, historians, philologists, historians of science, and scholars in a multitude of other disciplines. According to Steven A. Usitalo, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, interest in Lomonosov dissipated; he became a marginalized figure and occasionally, the centre of derision and jokes (pp. 254–260). All of this makes the idea of writing a book about Lomonosov more than daring and challenging. Does the world need another work on Lomonosov? With his book, Usitalo has proven that it is possible to write in an original way about an old topic and make it exciting and relevant. The author not only deconstructs and obliterates the old myth, but retraces the true story of Lomonosov, the scientist.

Usitalo presents a very concrete study of Lomonosov and the manufacturing of his image as the father of Russian science. The book is not just a study of a specific scientist, but also of the Russian preoccupation with key heroic figures and the tendency towards the creation of larger-than-life monuments. Lomonosov's myth is just one of many found in Russian history (think Peter the Great, Aleksandr Pushkin, Vladimir Lenin). All of their stories tend to follow the standard pattern of the traditional lives of saints: saintly parents, an exemplary childhood, followed by hardships, then "miracles" or heroic deeds, and eventual "sainthood."

Usitalo's book consists of five chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue. It also provides readers with an extensive and very relevant bibliography. From the first chapters a complex story of the fashioning of the myth is presented, starting with Lomonosov's own self-promotions as the first and only Russian scientist who, in order to achieve his goals, had to overcome terrible obstacles including his humble birth and the opposition of foreign scholars at the Academy of Sciences. According to Lomonosov, these foreigners were determined to prevent the native son's rise to fully deserving greatness (pp. 48–50). The humble birth of, and deprivations experienced by, the future father of Russian science and Russian language became the leitmotif of all future Lomonosov biographies. Usitalo states that despite the slight debunking of the myth by Aleksandr Radishchev, the image of Lomonosov, the scientist, continued to progress, and was propelled even further by another mythological figure, the poet Pushkin (pp. 129–166). In the middle of the nineteenth century, following Pushkin's foolhardy acknowledgement, serious attempts were made to expand Lomonosov's reputation from natural scientist to first Russian physicist and chemist as well. It was claimed that because most of Lomonosov's scientific works were left unpublished, their true originality and complexity was overlooked by contemporary science.

The major steps toward solidifying Lomonosov's scientific relevance were taken in the twentieth century with the ground-breaking work of Boris Menshutkin. He provided further justifications in describing Lomonosov's legacy as that of a misunderstood scientific genius whose research was neglected because it came ahead of its time. According to Menshutkin, only with the late nineteenth-century advances in chemistry and physics was it possible to understand fully the multi-faceted levels of Lomonosov's

scientific research (pp. 208–246). Usitalo points out that Minshutkin's work was the last block in the development of the myth of Lomonosov. During the Soviet period, the old concepts offered by the nineteenth-century biographers and by Menshutkin were marginally reworked by adding the appropriate quotations from Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Lenin. Lomonosov's scientific contributions were also expanded across many disciplines by producing numerous books on the topics of Lomonosov as a metallurgist, mining pioneer, geologist, geographer, and so on.

Usitalo attributes the collapse of the Lomonosov myth in the post-Soviet period to the overall destruction of Soviet-style hero worship. There is also a question, I believe, of the degree to which the Lomonosov myth can come back in the Putin era, where a return to Soviet mythology is on the rise, particularly in those elements that advance Russian nationalism. In this case, who can serve better towards the promotion of national pride but a son of the people who was able to overcome unsurmountable hardships, outshine the foreigners in the Academy of Sciences, and rise to his full heroic heights? With this book Usitalo advances not just our understanding of Lomonosov, but opens the window to a larger study of the role of myth-making in the development of national consciousness.

Marina Swoboda, *McGill University*

Hans Werner. *The Constructed Mennonite: History, Memory, and the Second World War*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013. 205 pp. Photographs. Maps. Index. \$27.95, paper.

Hans. Ivan. Johann. John. The four names reflect the complex life story of the man who would eventually become John Werner. This highly readable monograph, written by Werner's son, reconstructs one man's life within a turbulent period that required the constant identity shifts echoed in the four names. At the same time, it offers a case study in how events are remembered, reconstructed, and retold to form a coherent, useable past for their authors. The "usability" of certain memories has particular relevance for John Werner, whose wartime service in both the Red Army and the Wehrmacht left him with a "spoiled biography" (p. 178). Much of the text is spent deconstructing what his father has carefully built to assemble a new narrative that is both true to history and also to his father's own understanding of his past.

Hans Werner was born just months after the October Revolution in a Siberian Mennonite community. Faced with the harsh reality of life under Soviet rule, many Mennonites immigrated to Canada; his family tried, but failed to do so. In the Stalin era, Hans became Ivan, a young tractor driver and shock worker who enlisted in the Red Army in 1938. Three years later, his tank crew was captured during the German invasion. Ivan was spared the inhumane treatment meted out to other Soviet POWs, and became Johann, a newly minted German citizen and soldier in the Wehrmacht. He saw combat on the Western Front before his capture by Allied forces in the spring of 1945. In his last transformation, Johann emigrated to join other German Mennonites living in Canada. During this final chapter of his life, he was John, the immigrant with all the stories.

The narrative is at its most compelling in the wartime years, which occupy a preeminent place in John Werner's post-war constructed self. Now living within a pacifist Mennonite community during the Cold War, Werner remembered himself in that earlier time as an ordinary soldier, carefully curating his actions to suggest a modest role in events and to highlight acts of compassion. If the war stories seem at odds with the pacifism of his faith, it is worth noting that Mennonite religious practice and beliefs played virtually no

role in John's life (at least as he related it) prior to the post-war period. This is in stark contrast to his wife, whose life experiences are only briefly recounted in a single chapter. Like John, Sara Werner came from a Mennonite community, but she experienced the war as a refugee along with her family, and interpreted her life events through a religious framework meant to suggest spiritual lessons for herself and her co-believers.

The author draws heavily from both formal interviews and informal conversations with his now deceased father, but also benefits from outside German and American archival records, and from the lucky discovery of a close relative's memoirs. The latter make it possible for the author to piece together a more extended family history that John Werner had either forgotten or never known.

The author embeds his work in interdisciplinary studies of memory. Each largely chronological chapter is accompanied by an analysis of how and why certain events might have been reconstructed, adapted, or left out. His father never mentions his previous marriages. His largely negative portrayal of Jews is acknowledged at various points. Overall, these sections are intriguing, but rather short. At times, one is left not wholly satisfied by the author's explanations and wanting a deeper engagement with memory studies.

The author is clearly most comfortable embedding his father's narrative within the German historical context. The corresponding analysis for the Soviet period is skeletal at best, with references to only a handful of secondary sources. This fact is most apparent in the lack of reference to recent scholarship about how ethnic minorities, including Soviet Germans, navigated the interwar and wartime experiences by becoming "amphibians" or "chameleons," shedding and gaining new identities in order to adapt to drastically and often suddenly changing circumstances. In a similar vein, one wonders what materials from local or regional Russian archives might have revealed about Hans / Ivan Werner.

This work will interest scholars of the Canadian immigrant experience and Mennonite history. The highly readable text makes it also suitable for classroom use, and the book could serve as an accessible introduction to memory studies for undergraduates.

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