UKRAINE: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, IDENTITY

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ABSTRACTS

Alessandro ACHILLI

VASYL' STUS AND RUSSIAN CULTURE: A COMPLEX ISSUE

My paper is part of a larger project, aimed at studying the many influences and intertextual connections of Vasyl' Stus, one of the figures of key significance for contemporary Ukrainian cultural identity, with writers of both Western and Russian literature. Scholarship on Stus is growing very quickly, but still fails to grasp the richness of his knowledge of foreign literatures. More specifically, studies on the last, hard twenty years of his life often cast a shadow on a truly scientific approach to his literary heritage. For quite obvious reasons, one of the most neglected aspects of his biography as a poet is the role of Russian language, culture and literature on his artistic development. I here contend that a detailed study of the writer’s Russian readings and of the possible influence they might have had on his work would help better understand his literary genealogy, his way of thinking and his poetic work. Discussions of works and authors of Russian literature constitute a significant part of his letters. Russian (Soviet) reviews and translations were often for him the key to various foreign literatures and cultures. Russian writers and thinkers aroused his interest in a particular, “privileged” way. Special attention should also be paid to the role of the particular Donbas culture in shaping the identity of the young Stus. This is quite evident in his prose.

Alla BOYKO

FAITH-MEDIA AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY.

Ukraine is a multi-religious country in which each denomination has its media outlets. These are needed by the churches not only for purposes of information, but also for their relations with the public and for influencing public opinion.

Historically, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and several Protestant organizations publish newspapers and magazines in Ukrainian. The vast majority of media that go under the aegis of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) are published in Russian; they significantly outnumber all other religious publications. Thus, the audience learns to think about the associations of the word “church” in the Russian language. This is the basis for the implementation of the church-political project “RW,” which is based on the idea of a mythical historical unity of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

However, the situation is not hopeless. Despite the dominance of Russian media, Ukrainian-language religious publications are increasingly breaking into the world of radio and television programs. There are certain changes in the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Some media are published in Ukrainian, including the scholarly journal Proceedings of the Kyiv Theological Academy and some magazines, newspapers and Internet sites. The Ukrainian language, despite the actions of politicians, has become a language of the Church and the basis for the further development of its culture.
Natalia CHABAN

THE EU IN THE EYES OF THE UKRAINIAN GENERAL PUBLIC: PERCEPTION STUDIES

Ukraine and the European Union (EU) are close but difficult neighbours. Relations between the two are permanently coloured by their self-visions. The EU sees itself as a "civilian," "normative," "transformative" and "ethical" power – a "force for good" and a "responsible global institution." Ukraine sees itself as belonging to a wider "Europe" and as possessing a cultural and civilizational cache sufficiently impressive for it to be treated by the EU as an equal. Official discourses in the EU and Ukraine suggest that the relationship is of primary importance, but to what degree do expectations and perceptions on the Ukrainian side influence this relationship? Is the EU perceived as a significant player? If so, of what kind? And how are perceptions evolving and influencing Ukrainians' attitudes towards possible accession? Perceptions are a basis for understanding and a foundation upon which actors make choices and decisions (Wetterqvist 2009: 16). Understanding the perceptions and perspectives of the "other" side can provide a basis for improved communication and give guidance on policy adjustments. To address the deficit of studies of Ukraine's visions of the EU, this paper analyses Ukraine's general public opinion on the Union. Data discussed in this paper came from a series of surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre since 2002, PEW polls and the EU-funded Opinion Polling and Research (OPPOL) project which looked into EU perceptions among the Ukrainian "elites" and public (2009-10).

Khrystyna CHUSHAK

WHY DO "SOVIET PEOPLE" STILL EXIST IN UKRAINE? THE DISCOURSE OF CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN INTELLECTUALS ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIET LEGACY ON UKRAINIANS

Based on an analysis of interviews conducted with Ukrainian intellectuals in 2010-11, this paper argues that as a part of their own identity-reinforcing practices these intellectuals construct an imaginary community of "Soviet people" in Ukraine. Analysis of texts by contemporary Ukrainian intellectuals reveals that the discussion of the influences of Soviet times on Ukrainians is usually personified. It revolves around the so-called "Soviet person" or "homo sovieticus" that is described as the product of Soviet times. Analysing the various usages of these words in contemporary Ukrainian intellectual discourse, the paper shows that they are devoid of stable meaning and therefore cannot be treated as analytical terms. Without engaging with the discourse itself, the paper points out reasons for its existence that are extraneous to the discussions conducted by intellectuals. It shows that "Soviet people" are so prominent in the Ukrainian intellectual discourse because this notion performs several vital functions for contemporary Ukrainian intellectuals. These functions are mainly related to the processes of social transformation that the Soviet-period stratum of "intelligentsia" has been undergoing over the past two decades. The paper demonstrates how, among other things, such a conceptualisation of Soviet influences on Ukrainian society blocks ongoing re-stratification processes in Ukraine out of public discussion.

Danylo FILONENKO

LANGUAGE OF POPULAR SCIENCE MAGAZINES AND ISSUES OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

The popularization of scientific knowledge is one of the urgent problems of Ukrainian science, industry and culture. Today general popular science magazines – those that talk about all areas of science – are beginning to play a fundamentally new role in society.

The orientation of Ukrainian scientific and technical journals to a wide audience leads to lexical simplification, because the use of scientific terminology either requires audiences to have a certain level of technical education, or necessitates the provision of explanatory texts. Most modern scientific and popular publications in Ukraine appear in Russian. This is due to many factors. One of them is the absence or unavailability to journalists of dictionaries of scientific terminology.

Thus a terminological barrier arises. Not all readers of popular science magazines are familiar with all the terminology that appears in the media. Publications in popular form about scientific achievements, challenges and inventions in Russian lead to a distancing of the Ukrainian audience from contemporary science. Since the adoption of the so-called language law, this process has become more intense. A resolution of the problem is to be sought in the creation of Ukrainian scientific and popular media and a glossary of scientific terms.
Olena HALETA

LITERARY CombiNation: MEMORY AND SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN ANTHOLOGIES

During the last twenty years Ukrainian literature has faced the problem of self-determination in a post-totalitarian, post-colonial, and postmodern situation. In contrast to the lack of generalizing works of literary history, the number of anthologies has steadily increased over this period. Associated with a national modern project, an anthology is considered as a separate genre of the “second degree”: it is not just an assemblage of individual works, but also a means of constructing actual cultural identities. The main dimensions of this process are memory and space.

A cultural memory refers to the so-called actual past, which is used for meeting current challenges and building a coherent vision of the future of a community that describes itself through a collective “we.”

At the same time, geographical places and territories have been treated as symbols of different cultural traditions, historical traumas and attempts at self-mythologizing and de-mythologizing; they have claimed a role in producing a cultural poetics and politics.

Literary texts and contexts represented by literary anthologies demonstrate various ways of cultural mapping and of searching for, and designing, an original “future heritage” that is important for identifying cultural community (or communities) in contemporary Ukraine.

Oleh S. ILNYTZKYJ

QUEERING THE TERM RUSSKII, OR HOW NIKOLAI GOGOL (HOHOL) MADE THE WORD SAFE FOR UKRAINIANS

This paper examines the uses of the word russkii in Gogol’s works in the context of early 19th century “identity politics” and the struggle over his “national” soul. The paper looks at contemporary Russian and Ukrainian uses of the word and addresses how scholars (e.g., Robert Maguire and Edyta Bojanowska) and translators (e.g., Constance Garnett/Leonard Kent) have understood it. Using some of Judith Butler’s ideas, the paper shows how Gogol “redeployed, twisted, queered” (Bodies That Matter 173) the word russkii from a prevailing “Russian” signification to a “Ukrainian” one. Arguing that the word russkii functions “performatively,” the paper shows how its “national” referential function is often “Ukrainianized” in Gogol’s works, creating the concept of “Ukraina-Rus’.”

Symon KOHUT

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY, QUESTIONS OF PURPOSE, AND QUESTIONS ALONG THE WAY: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF RAISING CHILDREN BILINGUALLY

I am a grandchild of Ukrainian migrants to Australia and I speak Ukrainian and English. My partner speaks only English, but we are raising our child bilingually. This experience has enlivened for me questions about the role of language in the formation of personal identity and the value of ethnic identity in modern Australia. Speaking only Ukrainian to my child has also challenged my sense that I am bilingual at all. In my paper, I propose to use my personal experience as a theatre for a general exploration of issues of language and identity, and to share some recently acquired insights into the linguistic dexterity demanded of child rearing.
Halyna KOSCHARSKY. Geoffrey HULL

ANALYSING A LINGUISTIC FOSSIL

When most of the Ukrainian-speaking districts of south-eastern Poland were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944, Galicia, Volhynia and Bukovina were absorbed into the Russian cultural sphere. The formerly Polish zone of the new expanded Ukrainian SSR, where spoken (and to a considerable extent also written) Ukrainian were heavily marked by the Polish superstratum, was henceforth subjected to the double linguistic influence of standard (eastern-based) Ukrainian and of Russian. Meanwhile, the numerous Western Ukrainians who had been Polish citizens before World War II and who either fled the country or had already been removed by the Nazis as forced labourers were involved in a migratory drift towards Western countries, especially Canada, the United States and Australia. Here the Western Ukrainian diaspora preserved the polonized variety of the language which at home was contemporaneously evolving into a more "standard" kind of Ukrainian. For the linguist, the pre-war varieties of Ukrainian “fossilized” in the Diaspora are of great interest because of the wealth of archaisms and polonisms they display. These are of interest not only to the historian of language, but also to language planners in Ukraine, where since independence there has been a renewal of Ukrainian involving in part the elimination of recent russicisms and the borrowing of “submerged” Western Ukrainian vocabulary still alive in Diaspora speech and writing. The present analytical exercise uses as its corpus the narrative of the migratory flight from Galicia in 1941 of a particular Western Ukrainian family and as such offers a further contribution to oral history.

Volodymyr KULYK

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

Language has traditionally been a crucial component of Ukrainian identity. Given Ukraine's lack of independent statehood for much of its history, Ukrainian identity was primarily ethnocultural rather than civic, and the common Orthodox faith precluded the effective demarcation of the Ukrainians from the Russians by another traditional identity marker, namely religion. However, the contradictory policies of the Soviet regime produced a large-scale discrepancy between language use and ethnocultural identity, as millions of Ukrainians switched to Russian as their first language without coming to view themselves as Russians. Moreover, independence boosted Ukrainian civic identity and stimulated reconsideration of its relationship with the ethnocultural identity of the titular group. Although the Ukrainian language occupies a special place in virtually all versions of Ukrainian identity, it has to be reconciled with the continued reliance on Russian of about half of Ukraine's citizens. At the same time, the perception of oneself as Ukrainian is gradually shifting from ethnocultural to civic, particularly among the young generations who were raised in independent Ukraine without a state-prescribed “nationality.” Last but not least, the escalation of identity struggles in the wake of the Orange Revolution has led to different dynamics in the two parts of Ukraine, with people in the east and south asserting their right to Russian and increasingly renouncing Ukrainian as part of their identity.

Olga OLEINIKOVA

LIFE STRATEGIES OF UKRAINIANS IN A Transitional SOCIETY: TWO DECADES OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it attempts to explain the process by which social transformations are realized in post-Soviet Ukraine; and, secondly, it introduces models describing the life-course strategies by which Ukrainians confront the uncertainties of a transition society. By dissecting the individual's ways of dealing with structural changes systemic in the economic, political and social spheres the paper demonstrates within the specifics of Soviet and post-Soviet sociology of life-course studies that Ukrainian life pathways are distinctly polarized, whereby agents adopt one of two opposing life strategies: one dynamic, risk-taking, future-oriented and open to mobility (“achievement strategies” or “building [creation] strategies”), and the other conservative, risk-minimizing and survival-oriented and less conducive to any type of change (“survival strategies” and “strategies of adaptation”). Moreover, the paper argues that the role of migration as a realization instrument of life-course strategy should not be overlooked by social scientists, as it gives insight into the circular relationship between social transformations and actions of individuals in conditions of social change.
Yana OSTAPENKO

RETHINKING UKRAINIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA: THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND POTENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

What kind of Ukrainian are you? Hofstedes' national cultural dimensions employed as a theoretical framework to look at Ukrainian diaspora and Ukrainian migration in Australia.

When people migrate from one nation or culture to another they carry knowledge about their national and family histories, traditions, values and norms with them. On settling down in a new society, their cultural identity is likely to change and migrants need to seek some ways to preserve their native culture avoiding assimilation by the host culture.

The paper examines some key factors such as Ukrainian language, various cultural and ethnic Ukrainian institutions that enable the Ukrainian diaspora to preserve its national identity and heritage. It employs Hofstedes' national cultural dimensions to specify the degree of the cultural differences and values between Ukrainian and Australian cultures.

Marko PAVLYSHYN

NORMALISING A UKRAINIAN INTELLECTUAL IDENTITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE ROLE OF MARKO VOVCHEK (1833-1907)

A question that confronted educated Ukrainians – predominantly landowners descended from Cossack notables – in the Russian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century was whether they should foster an identity distinct from an all-imperial one, and if so, what the components of this identity should be. Proximity to the Ukrainian peasantry, carriers of the Ukrainian language and of a rich folk culture; the value placed by the late Enlightenment and the Romantic movement upon the culture of ordinary people; and a sense of historical distinctiveness persuaded several cultural activists and writers (e.g., Kotliarev'skyi, Kvitka-Osnovianenko and the Kharkiv circle) of the need to generate a high culture employing the Ukrainian language and proclaiming an affinity with the majority Ukrainian population of Ukraine.

Early steps in the project were dominated by the comic mode. Later, Shevchenko’s Ukrainian-language verse demonstrated the potential of the Ukrainian language for the full range of poetic expression. However, until the appearance of the Ukrainian-language writings of Marko Vovchok (Maria Markovych), one prerequisite of a multifunctional modern culture – and of an identity able to be shared by a modern Ukrainian intelligentsia – was lacking: a stylistically transparent prose able to function not only in a poetically charged way, but as a neutral medium for communicating content. The paper identifies the features of Marko Vovchok’s works that made this innovation possible.

Olga PRESSITCH

CLASS, LANGUAGE, AND NATION IN A SOVIET UKRAINIAN BLOCKBUSTER COMEDY: CHASING TWO HARES (1962)

My paper will analyse one of the most popular Soviet Ukrainian films of the post-war period, the comedy Chasing Two Hares. Based on Mykhailo Staryts'kyi’s eponymous play of 1883, the film’s comedic effect was derived primarily from the mixture of Ukrainian and Russian spoken by the main heroes. However, if the original film was made in Ukrainian, the version released for distribution was dubbed into Russian, which drastically changed its meaning. Instead of juxtaposing the negative characters who are trying to speak Russian with positive Ukrainian types, the final version presented “good Ukrainians” who speak literary Russian and petty bourgeois types who use surzhyk. At the same time, the film’s linguistic comedy in and of itself does not explain its runaway popularity or the presence of the statues of its main protagonists in downtown Kyiv. I will argue that another important factor was the element of melodrama, the genre for which Soviet audiences were perpetually avid, even though in this case it is represented through the framework of a classical Ukrainian ethnographic comedy.
Stephanie PROCIW-CHARALAMBOUS

YEARNING FOR THE HOMELAND: "FROM THE BEGINNING AND TO THE GRAVE..."

This paper will address the ways in which Ukrainian post-war migrants to Australia reflected upon their experiences in the new land through literary and other cultural texts. It will demonstrate how Ukrainians living in Australia continued to harbour close emotional ties to the homeland after their displacement from it and consequent resettlement in the host country. The paper will focus on the Ukrainian migrants’ preoccupation with the longing to return to the ancestral land, as well as their expressions of fears for Ukraine under the Soviet regime. It will consult William Safran’s diaspora theory to establish an understanding of a community that identified itself as one living in exile though striving to retain its Ukrainian language, culture and identity. This discussion emerges from research undertaken towards my Honours dissertation completed at Monash University in 2012.

Natalia PYLYPIUK

HRYHORIJ SKOVORODA’S “MALOROSSĪA” AND “UKRAINA”

Cultural historians have devoted much attention to the plurilingualism of the Cossack elite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hryhorij Skovoroda, who shared the same alma mater with many Cossack leaders but hailed from a less privileged social background, was also plurilingual. Like many of his Mohylanian fellows, he used Latin for private correspondence. But unlike them, he devoted much energy toward the transformation of Slavonic into a conversational language and a literary vehicle beyond the strictly religious sphere. My paper will explore his use of the terms lingua and jazyk, and place names such as Malorossia, Ukrayna and Velykaja Rossia, as well as various designators of ethnicity, to determine how he approached his own identity.

Anatoliy RUSNACHENKO

UKRAINIANS AND NON-UKRAINIANS IN THE CP(B)U/CPU

I propose to look at the representation of Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians in the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), their presence at party congresses and their expressed identity as Ukrainians at these official meetings, particularly from the mid-1920s to the late 1950s. Published and archived sources and materials are used for the report. The lecture places the composition of the CPU into the context of tensions in the cultural and political life in the USSR.

Ukrainians were underrepresented in the CPU and its leadership for a long time, despite constituting the absolute majority of the population of the Ukrainian SSR. This is explained in part, but not wholly, by the low urbanization of Ukrainians (and some national minorities) relative to Russians and Jews. The representation of different nationalities in the CPU in large cities in the last years of classic Stalinism is of special interest. In my opinion, the proportions of communists of different ethnic origins explain to a great extent the ideological pressure exerted by an imperial government (administration) on Ukrainian culture. The environment of party congresses reflected very well the existing political line prevailing in the state at any given time, as well as individuals’ levels of dependence upon it. This was manifest before and after the Second World War not only in speeches at the congresses, but even during the registration of delegates.
Natalya SYDORENKO,

FOR THE FUTURE’S SAKE: UNREALIZED LESSONS OF THE PAST (MASS MEDIA AND LANGUAGE IN UKRAINE)

The eternal historiosophical questions, “Who are we? What are we? What do we need?” that were written on the pages of Ukrainian periodicals in the early twentieth century were repeatedly replicated in the mass media of independent Ukraine at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where they took such forms as “Of whose parents are we the children? By whom are we chained?” The awakening of the Ukrainian nation, the need for freedom for the native language in the Russian Empire (there was not a single Ukrainian-language periodical in Eastern Ukraine till November 1905) and the achievement of constitutional rights led to the establishment of 45 newspapers and magazines in 1905-14, with at least a threefold increase in their number in 1917.

The Ukrainian press and the nation’s elite of that time (there were many editors, publishers and publicists among the statesmen of the national liberation struggle: Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Myktya Shapoval, Symon Petliura, Mykola Mikhno’sky, Serhii Yefremov, Mykola Vorony and many others) defended the “national truth,” the “emancipation of Ukrainians,” individual expression, and the unity of Ukraine (Ivan Franko: “We must learn to hear ourselves as Ukrainians”; Mykhailo Hrushevsky: “Ukrainians must become a nation”).

Lack of spiritual unity and historical affinity in the spiritual and cultural spheres, the “cursed” language issue, double standards in the area of information policy (quantitative media indicators did not have qualitative consequences for the Ukrainian mass media) mean that questions of the past hundred years – “How to become a Ukrainian? Which Ukraine do we wish to live in?” – remain on the agenda.

Victoria TEAM

“LARD IS A UKRAINIAN NARCOTIC”: EATING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF UKRAINIAN AUSTRALIANS

Traditional Ukrainian cooking is characterised by the substantial use of fat, including pork lard, butter and full-fat sour cream. In contrast with contemporary perceptions of fat as a source of disgust, in Ukrainian culture, fat is still considered a source of pleasure, satisfaction, wealth, and a stereotypical attribute of traditional Ukrainian cuisine and culture. Fat men are considered to be well positioned, and fat women, beautiful and sexually desirable. Despite high and increasing rates of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in Ukraine, the popularity of lard has increased with its greater availability in recent years. This is sustained on migration. Studies indicate that, despite various cultural changes on immigration, food and eating-related beliefs and practices may persist.

In this presentation, I will discuss fat-related beliefs and practices among other eating behaviours of Ukrainian Australians aged 50 years and over. The ethnographic materials are derived from qualitative research on eating habits and physical activity among Ukrainian Australians conducted in Melbourne in 2007. As identified in this study, multiple political, environmental and sociocultural factors both in their country of origin and in Australia influenced immigrants’ eating beliefs and practices.

Evhen TSYBULENKO

UKRAINE: UNLEARNED LESSONS

The paper compares and contrasts the political, economic and societal changes that took place in Ukraine and Estonia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. While, according to experts of the Deutsche Bank, both former republics had very good possibilities of becoming prosperous independent states, Ukraine failed to do so. The paper claims that this happened because of the differences in the mentality of Ukrainians and Estonians. The author argues that, to improve the situation in Ukraine, its Eastern regions, which hinder the country’s development and democratisation, need to be left out on their own. The paper proposes a way in which this could be done. After that, the rest of Ukraine would be able to follow the Estonian model of post-socialist transformations and become a member of the EU and NATO.
Lyubov VASYLYK

THE DISCOURSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY MAGAZINES

The article analyses the journalistic content of modern literary magazines. The nation-creating aspect of worldview journalism was isolated for examination. A conceptual paradigm of a discourse of national identity can be traced.

Worldview journalism is one of the discourse-dominating ideas in contemporary Ukrainian literary and art editions. Its peculiar semantic significance derives from concepts – key meaningful codes – which embody the most important national and identifying discussions. This discourse is structured by such fundamental concepts as Ukraine, liberty, God, soul and memory, which embody national values, form a conceptual model of personality and society, correlate with the nation's historical experience, and determine conceptual paradigms of journalism at different periods in the history of Ukrainian journalism. This discourse reveals the social and cultural tendencies of the time, its dominant features, actual realia, processes and ideas. Such worldview journalism has always had a significant influence on the formation of national identity and is nowadays a prominent mass-media phenomenon. It shapes philosophical understandings of life and introduces substantial ideas, including that of national identity, into mass communication discourse. Being an example of the conceptual level of reality assimilation, worldview journalism verbalizes in the mass media important social debates that deal with the formation of nation and personality, with civil liberties and with the level of spiritual development of the society. The journalistic text is viewed from a diachronic point of view, taking into consideration its semiotic nucleuses. These reflect the spiritual level of society in a given epoch. The explanation of concepts in worldview journalism allows the actualization of sense-creating worldview guidelines and influences the identification level of the personality, as well as defining and developing existentially important “nation-creating” discussions. The effectiveness of such discourse depends on the receptive aspect of the conceptualization of substantial information and on the functionality of concepts in the system of worldview journalism, as well as on their cognitive, intentional and directional potential. This is how the discourse in which nation and personality are consolidated is formed – at the intersection of philosophy, history and ethnology.

Serhy YEKELCHYK

MEMORY WARS ON THE SILVER SCREEN: UKRAINE AND RUSSIA LOOK BACK AT THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Under Putin’s rule Russian cinema has engaged in an energetic and well-funded mythmaking effort aimed at re-establishing the old Soviet image of the Great Patriotic War as the foundation of the new official memory. Many of the latest Russian war films pointedly include negative Ukrainian characters. For this reason, in 2010 the Ukrainian authorities banned the Russian historical fantasy flick We Are From the Future 2, and in early 2012 activists of the right-wing Freedom Party in Ukraine picketed some cinemas showing The Game, a new Russian film set in Kyiv during the Nazi occupation. For years, however, the nearly moribund Ukrainian film industry has not been able produce a successful answer to the spate of Russian war films – a movie that would engage the opponent by using the same tools of mass culture. The patriotic historical films of director Oles’ Yanchuk (The Undefeated One, 2000; The Iron Hundred, 2004, funded by a Ukrainian Australian benefactor; Metropolitan Andrei, 2008) did not receive wide distribution even in Ukraine. It was only in 2012 that Mykhalo Illienko in his Firecrosser found a way to link new and old myths of the war in a film crafted in the Hollywood tradition and with elements of fantasy. Often called “the first Ukrainian blockbuster,” this movie found its way into the mainstream film distribution system and was even released in Russia (on DVD and television). According to a leading Ukrainian writer, Oksana Zabuzhko, in the film’s main character the nation has finally found its hero. In my talk I will try to make sense of this success story by positioning it in the context of post-Soviet memory struggles and global cultural trends.
Sergei I. ZHUK


In December 1978 a college student who later became the most prominent disc jockey in a big Ukrainian industrial city wrote in his personal diary, “I am twenty years old. Sixty years ago people of my age made the Revolution in my country. Meanwhile, our Komsomol bosses criticize me for my being too young to organize the central city disco club and have all financial responsibilities!” Ten years later, in November 1989, the same author, who had by then graduated from his college and become a successful organizer of Komsomol business in the same city, still complained in his diary, “This young jerk (pridurok), a regional Komsomol secretary, who is much younger than me, tries to teach me that I am too young to handle video salons in this district!!!” Other personal diaries by that author’s contemporaries who also lived through late socialism demonstrate how, in different contexts, the diarists used (and misused) various notions of youth at different stages of their lives.

Using seven diaries of contemporaries (three from cities and four from towns), archival documents, periodicals, personal correspondence and interviews, this paper compares developments and paradoxes in cultural consumption and practices among various social groups in small towns – Uman’ and Vatutine (Cherkasy Region) and Synel’nykove and Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovs’k Region) – and big industrial cities – Cherkasy and Dnipropetrovs’k – in Soviet Ukraine during the last two decades of socialism. This paper is an attempt to study the concrete development of cultural détente from a “bottom up” perspective, avoiding the Moscow/Leningrad “elitist/conformist” emphasis of recent scholarship.

This paper explores how Soviet officials, scholars and local populations constructed and implemented various notions of youth. Combining the methods of symbolic anthropology, oral history and historical sociology, my paper concentrates on how different cultural settings and the ideological and political conditions of late socialism affected the notions of age and contributed to the various models of the concept of youth that were available for everyday consumption. My major goal is to trace the construction of the notion of the “young man” (molodoi chelovek) in the available narratives of the personal diaries written by young Soviet people of different ages (from adolescence to the time of their college graduation) during the last decades of socialism in Soviet Ukraine. Analysing published “personal stories of the Soviet experience,” Irina Paperno noted that these memoirs always emphasize “the negotiation between the self and community” and “define themselves as accounts of lives embedded in a social matrix.” In contrast to Irina Paperno, Jochen Hellbeck and other scholars who concentrated their research on diaries and memoirs written before 1970 and on the materials whose authors were mature adults and mainly Soviet intellectuals, I use diaries written mostly by Soviet children of the middle and high school age and by very young people of college age. Moreover, in contrast to Paperno, I demonstrate how these children’s diaries were directly “embedded in a social matrix” and served as their intimate reactions to and personal reflections on various developments in the outside world.