

SCENES OF BELONGING: CINEMA AND THE NATIONALITY QUESTION IN
SOVIET UKRAINE DURING THE LONG 1960S

by

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Preface

While conducting research for this dissertation, I ran across an odd article from 1996 in a short-lived Ukrainian newspaper called *Film Currier (Kinokur"er)*, which excitedly reported on the front page that Planet 3963, discovered by astronomer Liudmila Chernykh from the Crimean Astrophysics Observatory in 1969, had been renamed in honor of the recently deceased Soviet filmmaker Sergei Paradzhanov. The editors thanked Tat'iana Derevianko at the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Museum for her efforts at achieving recognition for the change with international organizations, writing that it was important that the “universe have as many of ‘our’ planets as possible.” While affirming the national significance of the re-naming, which fit with the larger project of re-imagining Ukrainian history and its canon of heroes and villains – Turgenev Street in L'viv, for example, became Heroes of the UPA Street – the editors nonetheless kept “our” in quotes, suggesting either an ironic detachment from the possessive pronoun, or an inability to commit to such stellar possessions when the newly independent republic did not even have firm possession over its own coastline. Perhaps they felt the Museum was overstating Paradzhanov's importance, but just as likely the editors were ambivalent about associating the filmmaker's name with Ukraine in particular.

Despite being the creator of the most internationally heralded Ukrainian film, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (Tini zabutykh predkiv)* in 1964, the Tbilisi-born, Russian-speaking Armenian Paradzhanov spoke derisively about the “provincial” mind set of Ukrainian writers and artists, once joking that he was the “leader of *khokhol* nationalism.”¹ After his exile from the republic, the director worked in Armenia and Georgia. Today, the city of Erevan claims the

¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 588, l. 15. The word “*khokhol*” is a derogatory term for Ukrainians referring to the tuft of hair that characterized Zaporozhian Cossacks in the 17th century.

Paradzhanov museum, and an independent Armenia competes with Ukraine and Georgia for the ethno-national significance of the filmmaker's life and memorialization. In many ways, Paradzhanov's life and work highlighted the tensions between particularistic notions of nation in the USSR after Stalin and a Soviet cosmopolitanism proceeding from the vast movements of individuals and whole population groups within the largest geo-political entity the world has ever known. Just as his film became both a highly exoticized ethnographic spectacle of a small Carpathian tribe, with all the problematic associations that this might suggest, and a meaning-producing moment for a new generation of Ukrainian nationalists, Paradzhanov himself skirted between engagement with nationalist discourse and ridicule of those who identified with what he considered narrow-minded concerns.

While the "our" remained ambivalently in quotes for director Paradzhanov, the short article in *Film Currier* concluded with an effusive statement for the "unforgettable Ivan Mykolaichuk," the actor who played the leading role of Ivanko in *Shadows*. The newspaper demanded that astronomers also discover a planet for this Carpathian-born actor, writer, and filmmaker.² While Mykolaichuk's life and work is associated with Paradzhanov and what continues to be celebrated as "Ukrainian poetic cinema," his memorialization signified a different tension in post-Stalinist representational politics, this one between an "authentic," specialized image of the non-Russian and a historically situated and "realist" conception of Soviet "multinationality."

This dissertation looks at the ways individuals become placed onto particular landscapes within certain formal and aesthetic modes of memorialization and representation. I look at two decades of stability and (relative) prosperity in the Soviet Union, a period absent of Great Events like war, revolution, mass terror and famine. Ukraine, the second-most populous federative unit in the USSR, possessed a diverse economy, geography and social composition, yet its cinema between 1960 and 1980 became fixated on the small portion of the Carpathian Mountains that straddled the Southwestern

² "Shturm kosmosa," *Kinokur'er*, no. 19 (1996), 1.

portion of the republic along the Romanian border. In discovering a broader significance in this remote region, filmmakers appealed to prior author-architects of the Ukrainian nation, including Taras Shevchenko, Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, and Oleksandr Dovzhenko, to name just a few.

As Roland Barthes suggested in *Mythologies*, images become a fundamental part of the national landscape, which works in tandem with narratives to locate, articulate, and reproduce myths of collective belonging.³ Images themselves, like narratives, enter canonical usage, and thus narrow their signifiatory possibilities. Of course, myths are not self-contained systems, closed off from newer narratives, and newer significances for older ones. The singing peasants dressed in bright folk costumes in the Ukrainian films of the 1960s were not the same ones from an earlier cultural discourse, even if we continue to see the shadows of these cinematic ancestors in the films that I examine. In Stalinist cinema, such “national” characters were incorporated into a heroic narrative of the “friendship of peoples,” and the victory of socialist modernity over “feudal” backwardness. These same figures later signified the loss of a particular national history and folkloric mythology, owing to the forces set in motion by the First World War, Revolution, Civil War, collectivization, industrialization, and the Great Patriotic War. These shifts in meaning emerged in large part out of the same convergences of political de-Stalinization in the 1950s and subsequent disillusionment with the limits set upon it over the following decades. In freeing the signifiatory function of cinematic iconography from Stalinist narrative and stylistic models, however, authorities and filmmakers alike struggled to discover not only something affirmative with which to replace them, but also an audience willing to make sense of these changes.

This dissertation concerns a moment in the history of Soviet Ukraine when support for, and opposition to, Soviet power took on particularly national and nationalist dimensions, a period during which supporters of the regime and dissidents alike could appeal to the same structure of feeling contained within a popular iconography and national narrative. Amidst dissident politics and the

³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, tr. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 109-110.

official rejection of de-Stalinization during the mid-1960s, a group of filmmakers, writers, and actors working at the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Feature Film Studio attempted to rearticulate and re-imagine a vision of the geographic and ethnic unity of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Surviving members of the group under investigation in this dissertation became part of a self-fashioned nationalist cultural elite in a new independent nation-state. Today, Paradzhanov's camera man on *Shadows*, and later one of the most important Ukrainian filmmakers, Iurii Illienko, calls for a "Ukrainian Ukraine,"⁴ with all of the anti-Russian and, perhaps, anti-Semitic connotations of such a nationalist invective. The era's deceased, like Mykolaichuk, Paradzhanov and others, became sanctified objects of a nationalist pedagogy. This dissertation emerged from a desire to understand the cultural tensions of the nationality question in the Soviet Union during the emergence of the Brezhnev system. Ukrainian cinema occupied a crucial space lodged between the dissident and nationalist intelligentsia and the stagnant realm of official culture.

* * *

Since coming to graduate school at the University of Michigan, questions of nationality, ethnicity, and empire have been at the center of my studies, both more generally and specifically in relation to the Soviet Union. The previous decade had seen a plethora of innovative work on how multinational political states – the British Empire, the Hapsburg Empire and the USSR, to name a few – functioned as discursive entities. During my first semester of coursework, I read Yuri Slezkine's article, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," which, in its subtle complexity, argued that early Bolshevik leaders developed an idea of ethnic and national difference even as they affirmed the Marxist principle of internationalism. In the same way, the state affirmed both the separate space of the individual along with the principle of communalism.⁵ Later, I became more familiar with the sources of Slezkine's ideas, in Benedict Anderson's notion that nations become discursively

⁴ Iurii Illienko, *Za ukrains'ku Ukrainu: vidkrytyi lyst ukraintsiam* (Kyiv: Arata, 2005).

⁵ Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 414-452.

produced through the emergence and spread of print culture, and in Ronald Suny's elaboration of how non-Russian Marxists articulated a vision of ethnic nationality compatible with radical leftist ideologies during the Revolution and Civil War. According to Suny, this articulation continued to inform the development of Soviet nationalities policy, eventually contributing to the demise of the Soviet state itself.⁶

Recent scholarship on questions of nation and nationality further investigated how the Soviet Union itself was an "empire," despite the ideology of anti-imperialism that lay at the root of the state's formation. One reason for "Soviet empire" studies involves Russian historians' engagement with recent work on the history of European colonialism and theories of post-coloniality.⁷ While I remain uncertain that calling the Soviet Union an "empire" is useful for me, largely because such a pejoratively defined term would limit the type of questions I am interested in asking, it poses a number of interesting problems for studying this most vociferously anti-imperial state.⁸ While the 1950s and 1960s saw a flurry of books that referred to the Soviet Union as the new "empire," my own familiarity with such scholarship came from Terry Martin, whose use of the term was revisionist in its assertion that the Soviet "affirmative action empire" was an "empire" that sought firm centralization even as it empowered non-Russian elites and put into place systems of privilege for them. Martin attempted to demonstrate that the relationship between center and periphery that Stalin created in the 1930s was endemic of a peculiar kind of imperial practice, one that was dissimilar from both European and Russian empires of the past, but

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Ronald Suny, *Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁷ See, for example, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Cooper and Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-56.

⁸ I believe that Patrick Wolfe stated it most eloquently in the *AHR* over a decade ago when he wrote, "Imperialism resembles Darwinism, in that many use the term but few can say what it really means. This imprecision is encouraged by a surfeit of synonyms. Two stand out: imperialism is taken to be interchangeable with colonialism reducible to the word 'empire.' Add to these the compounding effects of elaborations such as hegemony, dependency, or globalization and the definitional space of imperialism becomes a vague, consensual gestalt." Patrick Wolfe, "History and Imperialism: A Century of Theory, from Marx to Postcolonialism," *AHR* 102 (1997), 388.

remaining fundamentally imperial.⁹ Serhy Yekelchuk, in his examination of “Stalin’s empire of memory,” was the first historian of the Soviet Union that I read, who engaged directly with post-colonial theory in his argument that non-Russian elites actively defined the parameters of the center’s “imperialistic” nationalities policy.¹⁰ What interested me about these two major studies of Soviet “empire” during the Stalinist era was that they both used Ukraine as a test case for exploring its workings.¹¹ While scholars, including Martin, have also examined “Soviet empire” in Central Asia,¹² I remain intrigued by the problems of articulating difference from Russia and Russians that are particular to the Ukrainian case.

Studying Ukraine’s role in the Soviet Union raises a number of unique questions, which are particularly suited for an analysis of the problem of visually representing difference. In many ways, this dissertation is also a process of working through my own uneasiness with these questions of difference, and with my personal attempts to “see” it. As I imagine is true for most historians of the Soviet Union, our knowledge of Ukraine came to us in the form of Russian History courses that continue to provide a more or less clear trajectory from Kiev to Moscow to St. Petersburg (and back to Moscow) as the explanation for the development of the modern Russian state. Ukraine re-appears in Russian history in 1654 with the Treaty of Pereiaslav, which united Cossack-controlled Eastern Ukraine with Moscow. Apart from the Battle of Poltava in 1709, however, Ukraine disappears again until the twentieth century. In many respects, Russian historiography continues to define Ukraine’s importance in terms of its effects on the Russian state.

At the same time, a native sense of Ukrainian difference has existed at least since the Cossack era, in the sixteenth century, and a modern nationalist

⁹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 19.

¹⁰ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 5.

¹¹ Martin also dedicates significant space in *The Affirmative Action Empire* to the Soviet east, Belarus, and the RSFSR.

¹² Douglas Taylor Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2004).

movement has existed since the late nineteenth century.¹³ By the same token, just what is meant by “Ukraine” and “Ukrainian” has been a contentious issue, not the least of which because of its existence between several different empires and states since the late medieval era. Only after World War II did one Ukraine exist as a nation, albeit within the pseudo-federal structure of the Soviet Union. Even today, perhaps especially today, Ukraine remains politically and culturally divided between Southeast and Northwest, Ukrainian-speakers and Russian-speakers, urban and rural, advocates of EU participation and those who desire stronger ties with Russia. In many ways, these divisions are the stuff of uninformed sound bites, and the contemporary political state of Ukraine is infinitely more complex, but perhaps also simpler. The Soviet project, call it “imperial” or “multinational,” aimed to establish a unified image of what “Ukraine” signified, and what it meant to be Ukrainian. It was particularly in the realm of images that these meanings could be articulated and questioned.

My selection of these images has had to be extremely limited in order to engage in both formal analysis and contextual and theoretical interpretation. But I followed certain principles in this selection process that I believe conform to the methodology employed herein and the questions I am interested in resolving. First, I only look at one of the several film studios operating in Ukraine during the 1960s and 1970s, the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Studio of Feature Films in Kyiv. Odessa Studio, a film production facility that made movies even before the Revolution, constituted a vibrant showcase for young talent especially in the late 1950s, with Soviet *auteurs* Marlen Khutsiev, Petr Todorovskii, and Kira Muratova getting their start there during the Thaw.¹⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, the identity of Odessa Studio shifted to one that was at the forefront of production in popular genres like adventure and comedy. Stanislav Govorukhin, Boris Durov and

¹³ Serhii Plokyh, “The Making of the Ruthenian Nation,” in *The Origins of Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 161-202; John A. Armstrong, “Myth and History in the Evolution of Ukrainian Consciousness,” in Peter J Potichnyj, ed., *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992): 125-39.

¹⁴ The moniker for Odessa Studio in the late-1950s and early-1960s was “*Studio molodykh* (The Studio of Youth).”

Vasilii Levin are the three most associated with this movement. Odessa Studio, thus, made a significant transition from the politics of film authorship (which I explore in Chapter 4) that characterized the Thaw, to a politics of audience demand and mass culture, which characterized the post-Thaw moment (examined in the final chapter). Nonetheless, filmmakers at Odessa did not participate in the specifically Ukrainian cultural politics that pervaded Dovzhenko Studio during this period. The *Odessity* did not, like the *Dovzhenkovtsy*, consider themselves “Ukrainian filmmakers,” nor did they consider their work to be emblematic of “Ukrainian national cinema.” Therefore, I feel it necessary to exclude this studio from analysis in this dissertation, believing that film production in Odessa must be examined in relation to central studios like Mosfil’m and Gor’kii. Documentarists working in Kyiv (at the Kyiv Studio of Documentary Films and Newsreels), however, did participate in the cultural politics that emerged in Ukraine during the early 1960s, but I have felt it necessary to limit myself to fiction film in this dissertation, largely because the aesthetic assumptions behind documentary are quite different from feature film production. Moreover, documentary was largely divorced from both *auteurism* and audience politics of the 1960s and 1970s.

Because this dissertation deals overtly with the confluence of cinema, mass culture and nationality politics in Ukraine, Dovzhenko Studio is the site of my examination. Yet, this one Ukrainian studio alone produced a daunting number of films to examine, which also would have made it impossible for me to accomplish the kind of rigid analysis of such texts that I desired. Therefore, I have had to be selective in my choice of films, and have chosen those directors who made movies about the Carpathians, largely because so much of the discussion of “national character” and “national culture” centered on the small portion of this Eastern European mountain range located in Ukraine. Alongside a number of films generally considered artistic achievements for the 1960s and 1970s, I explore an assortment of genre films that engaged in the politics of Carpathophilia. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 include analyses of specific films of importance, while Chapters 1, 2, and 5 will treat the dual phenomena of popular

and “official” filmmaking. In stating the previous, I in no way want to argue for an antiquated dichotomy of high and low culture, or of propaganda and entertainment: In fact, I demonstrate in Chapter 3 how the Carpathian film was part of a generic system of film and literary production in Ukraine that emerged even before the Revolution. At the same time, the cycle of Carpathian films during the 1960s and 1970s were in many cases conceived as “author-driven” expressions, and were highly modernist in their aesthetic outlook.

Apart from the films, I wanted to tell the story behind them, principally about the people who made them, but also about the authorities who put so many restrictions on the production of cinema in the Soviet Union, but who, perhaps more importantly, made these films possible. I spent close to a year putting these stories together, from largely unused documents found in Ukrainian archives, principally at the Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine, but also in the Ukrainian Party Archive, and the Ukrainian State Archive. In Moscow, I completed my research at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art and the Russian State Library. In addition to following debates about nationality and cinema in the central press, I read its much more extensive coverage in the Ukrainian-language press. Ukraine was the only republic to have its own mass-circulation film monthly, modeled on *Sovetskii ekran* (The Soviet Screen), which emphasized and promoted Ukrainian cinema. This magazine, *Novyny kinoekrana* (Screen News) has been a largely unexplored source for examining how one of the Union republics possessed its own culture industry even into the 1970s. I find it particularly interesting that the Union of Ukrainian Cinematographers, who operated the magazine, clearly perceived *Novyny kinoekrana* as a means to promote a vernacular mass culture, with its emphasis on light reviews, full-color images of Ukrainian actors and actresses, and the promotion of their localized celebrity status. Roman Szporluk has argued that Ukrainian-language newspapers dealing with art and culture were restricted in their coverage of high culture and folk culture, but neglected to articulate a

Ukrainian mass culture.¹⁵ Yet, we clearly see this represented in *Novyny kinoekrana*, the circulation of which reached 500,000 copies in the mid-1970s.

In examining filmmakers' attempts to create a Ukrainian mass culture through cinema, I also wanted to tell the story of those who watched these films, people who participated in the discursive construction of nationalistic value. Unfortunately, this latter task proved unrealistic. The quantitative data that I found on audience reception is filtered through the lens of film sociology and the clichés of Soviet film critical discourse. While I take up this topic in Chapter 5, such data does not tell us how individuals understood their relation to such nationalist texts as I examine in this dissertation. For an understanding of audience subjectivities, I have relied largely on the words of those few who wrote letters to Ukrainian newspapers, magazines, and Dovzhenko Studio itself, but I cannot generalize about their words. Instead, I view such rare texts as ways in which "ordinary spectators" (as they typically called themselves) self-consciously placed themselves within larger discourses that the much more accessible words of cultural and political elites contained.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult aspect of writing this dissertation was in its aim to take the visual quality of the filmic message seriously. In this decision, I was reacting to two separate but related methodological problems: First, I refused to treat films epiphenomenally as an "effect" of other, "larger" processes. Instead, I have found that films and filmmakers participated in the construction of history. Second, in looking at the particular films that figure prominently in this dissertation, I wished to avoid reducing their meaning to the literary components of story and plot and to examine questions of visual style and iconography in a suitable complex manner. In this respect, my graduate school experience was formative. I consider myself lucky that my mentors in the History Department continually supported my desire to pursue extended coursework in Film Studies, rather than treating it as ancillary to historical research. The colloquia and roundtables dedicated to "History of the Visual" held throughout the 2006/2007

¹⁵ Roman Szporluk, "The Press and Soviet Nationalities: The Party Resolution of 1975 and Its Implementation," in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 277-297; originally published in *Nationality Papers*, 1986.

academic year at the Michigan's Eisenberg Institute for History Studies also helped me in my interdisciplinary endeavors. In particular, I hope to answer claims from art historians and films scholars that historians use images merely to "illustrate" supposedly larger points. While I continue to use images by way of illustrating points outside of the filmic text (as, I believe, all historians should), in accepting that politics, and nationalist politics in particular, are infused with pathos and sentiment, I cannot help but ask what is available to embody such emotion. The problem of national identity, I would argue, is fundamentally aesthetic in nature, and to avoid the visual dimensions that films contain in such a complex system of representation is to misunderstand its effects.

* * *

Several individuals and institutions deserve my gratitude for the completion of this project. First and foremost, my advisor, Bill Rosenberg, provided me with unconditional support and, equally important, the confidence to pursue such an unusual topic for a historian of the Soviet Union. In a style that meshed nicely with my own method of working, Professor Rosenberg offered advice and deadlines when I needed them, but left me alone when I did not. Moreover, I hope that his way of approaching intellectual problems has worn off to some degree on my own thinking. Johannes von Moltke, a brilliant film historian, has shown me the importance of taking film analysis seriously, and in particular for working so closely with me on Chapter 3. Ronald Suny and Valerie Kivelson have shown patience in reading and listening to my frequently illegible ramblings. Professor Kivelson, in particular, has been a good friend and, deservedly, a tough critic. Of course, I would not be asking questions about Soviet nationalities policy if not for the pioneering work of Professor Suny. I am honored that he agreed to read and advise me on this project, despite his absence from the University of Michigan until later in my graduate studies. Finally, Scott Spector has been an important influence on my studies in introducing me to work by historians on film outside of my Soviet field, and in

reminding me that my work needed to speak to a broader community of historians.

Outside of Michigan, I owe a huge debt to Denise Youngblood for her pioneering work in Russian and Soviet film history. She, in fact, defined the field for me with her seminal monograph, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s*. Without her work, I would have never thought to work on a film-related topic. I also owe a lot to Josephine Woll, who tragically passed away as I was completing this dissertation. Although I never met her in person, I was constantly influenced by her work on Thaw cinema. I also want to thank my undergraduate advisor at the University of Missouri, Charles Timberlake, whose guidance of my thesis project helped prepare me for the rigors of graduate school.

I am grateful to the many institutions that helped facilitate my research and writing during graduate study. At the University of Michigan, the Center for Russian and East European Studies funded my study of the Ukrainian language, in addition to my first research trip to Kyiv. The Departments of History and Screen Arts and Cultures, in addition to the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, aided me immeasurably at key moments in my research and writing. I conducted the bulk of my research in Kyiv and Moscow for this dissertation on an IREX Individual Advanced Research Opportunities fellowship during the 2004-2005 academic year. While such support was essential for completing this project, all views expressed in it are entirely my own.

In Kyiv, I would like to thank Olena Ovcharenko at the Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine for offering tea and her only space heater during the cold months I spent in her reading room. Thanks to Irina Fomenko at the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Film Center for screening a number of films unavailable through other means. I am grateful to have met Svetlana and Miron Petrovskii, who not only provided a reasonably priced place to stay during part of my research, but also with their personal recollections about the period and subject of my project. Natalia Rumianets' helped me get my

bearings when I first arrived in Kyiv and took time out of her busy life periodically to show me around town.

I am also grateful to have met a number of wonderful people while in graduate school, colleagues, friends, and my wife, who positively contributed to my intellectual development and influenced this project. Conversations and arguments with Pete Soppelsa, Matt Ides, Anatoly Pinsky, Allison Abra, and Sonja Luehrman have all enriched this period of my life. My wife, Sara Babcox First, deserves more gratitude than I could express in such a formulaic declaration, but I thank her most recently for taking so much time away from her own dissertation to read and comment extensively on this project. Finally, I want to thank my parents, Sallie Spence and Bill First, in addition to my grandfather, Melvin First, for their unyielding support during my graduate studies.

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List of Abbreviations

CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPU	Communist Party of Ukraine
Goskino	<i>Gosudarstvennyi komitet po kinematografii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR</i> (State Committee on Cinematography under the Council of Ministers)
(G)UKK	<i>(Glavnoe) Upravlenie kinofikatsii i kinoprokata</i> (Administration of Film Infrastructure and Distribution)
KITM	<i>Kyivs'kyi institut teatral'noho mystetstva im. Karpenka-Karoho</i> (Kyiv Institute of Theatrical Arts)
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del</i> (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
RGALI	<i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi archiv literatury i iskusstva</i> (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art)
SK	<i>Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR</i> (Soviet Union of Cinematographers)
SKU	<i>Spilka kinematohrafitiv Ukrains'koi RSR</i> (Ukrainian Union of Cinematographers)
SRK	<i>Stsenarno-redaktsionaia kollegiia</i> (Screenplay Editorial Board)
TsDAHOU	<i>Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'ednan' Ukrainy</i> (Central State Archive of Civic Organization of Ukraine)
TsDAMLMU	<i>Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukrainy</i> (Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine)

TsDAVOU	<i>Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchych orhaniv vlady i upravlinnia Ukrainy</i> (Central State Archive of the High Organs of Power and Administration of Ukraine)
VGIK	<i>Vsesoiuznyi gosudarstvennyi institut kinematografii</i> (All-Union State Institute of Cinematography)

Introduction

Soviet cinema was an immense and costly cultural and industrial project, the medium's novelty striving to assist the work of constructing new socialist and Soviet identities, while establishing a space for collective amusement. While prior scholarship has examined Soviet cinema in terms of its role in reproducing class, state and gender identities, this dissertation, in its examination of the nationality question, expands upon the very definition of the goals of the cultural and industrial project itself.¹ In affirmation of the complex relationship between the "nations" that composed the USSR and the centralized state in Moscow, authorities instructed its loyal servants in the film industry to create scenes of national belonging that did not contradict the function of a highly centralized and Russian-dominated political and cultural system. Soviet cinema participated in a cultural project, which invested motion picture studios with the purpose to create and reproduce meaning out of categories of national difference within the USSR, while also attempting to reconcile these conceptions of difference. As historians Ron Suny and Yuri Slezkine have pointed out, this creation and attempted resolution of national differences had dire consequences, both for how the Soviet Union functioned and how it eventually disintegrated.² In my examination of the

¹ Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Judith Mayne, *Kino and the Woman Question: Feminism and Soviet Silent Cinema* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989); Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); David Gillespie, *Early Soviet Cinema: Innovation, Ideology and Propaganda* (London: Wallflower Pub., 2000); Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

² Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a

nationality question in Soviet cinema, I intend to point toward the ways that cultural producers understood their relationship to national categories, how films made sense of them, and to examine the seemingly ancillary mediating factors on attempted cinematic resolutions to this key problem in Soviet cultural politics.

The nationality question was not a new problem with the formation of the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, nor was it particular to the space of the former Russian Empire. Central and East European Marxists during the late-nineteenth century found themselves not only in opposition to the Imperial governments, under which they resided, but also to a variety of nationalist movements that were emerging simultaneous to social democracy. Whereas the overthrow of aristocratic and bourgeois class privilege that characterized imperial regimes remained an unproblematic goal for the political Left, the nationalities question resisted easy resolution, precisely because nationalists shared similar goals. The Left responded to such nationalist movements in a variety of ways. Rosa Luxemburg most famously argued against the struggle for an independent Poland, believing that such nationalist interests were counter to the spirit of Marxist internationalism and socialist revolution. Rather, they were merely a ruse by national bourgeoisies to erode workers' consciousness of how capitalism functioned.³ Austrian social democrats Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, however, countered that, because nations had become historical realities, socialism could incorporate principles of national autonomy and the protection of national minorities within a federative state structure (in their case, one which maintained the territorial integrity of the Hapsburg Empire).⁴ Soviet leaders, and Lenin and Stalin in particular, too believed that nations would not disappear with the victory of communism, but defined them more restrictively than the Austrian Social-Democrats. In his 1913 tract, "Marxism and the National Question," Stalin defined a nation as a "stable community" that shared a "common language,"

Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 415-452.

³ Rosa Luxemburg, "The Polish Question at the International Congress," in *The National Question: Selected Writings*, ed., Horace B. Davis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 49-59.

⁴ Otto Bauer, "The Nation," in *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, tr., Joseph O'Donnell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 19-138.

which he distinguished from “state communities” like Russia and Austria.⁵ As such, the “nationality question” related to how the promotion of national self-determination could be mobilized in support of a distinctly transnational movement like socialism. Yet, whereas sovereign nation-states emerged out of the disintegration of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires, a socialist “Union” of nationally defined “republics” replaced the Russian Empire.

Thus, nationality remained a salient question in the USSR insofar as the rights the state granted to nations, collectively, and to members of particular nationalities, individually. Soviet nationalities policy stretched far beyond the question of political rights, however, to embrace both highly essentialist and highly ambiguous claims about the very meanings of particular nationalities and national identities. Thus, the nationality question refers both to the problem of national rights and to that of defining self and other within the context of a multinational socialist state. Historian Terry Martin argues that even during the mid-1930s, with the terror against “bourgeois nationalism,” and various “affirmative action” indigenization policies halted, Stalin invented the metaphor of the “Friendship of Peoples” to describe the Soviet Union’s positive multinational character. The “Friendship” celebrated non-Russian folk songs, dances, material culture and theater with countless “Festivals of National Culture” being held throughout the late 1930s in Moscow and all the Union republics.⁶ Moreover, the “Stalin Constitution,” adopted in 1936 at the beginning of the Great Terror, gave the right to each Republic of seceding from the USSR, but held that the entire Union had to ratify any territorial alteration.⁷ This formulation of mandated identity expression alongside an abnegation of political will nonetheless insisted that national units composed the Soviet Union, and that the state was essentially

⁵ Joseph Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question,” accessed online: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm>: July 14, 2008.

⁶ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001): 437-42.

⁷ *Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: As Amended and Supplemented by the First, Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR* (Washington: Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1945); accessed online: <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/1936toc.html>: 15 October 2007.

above-national (*sverkh-natsional'naia*) or, perhaps, postnational.⁸ Martin refers to this political system as an “affirmative action empire,” which he labels a “strategy aimed at disarming nationalism by granting what were called the ‘forms’ of nationhood.”⁹ He understands the simultaneous promotion of non-Russian national identity and the vigorous persecution of “bourgeois nationalism” as the result of a bureaucratic division between “hard-line” and “soft-line” policies and institutions. Whereas the central leadership considered the Soviet of Nationalities, commissioned to oversee and maintain non-Russian cultural institutions, a “soft-line” organization, the NKVD, a “hard-line” institution, was called on to persecute nationalism. Each had their duties, and they rarely conflicted with each other in practice, even if they did in theory.¹⁰

With Stalin’s articulation of the “Friendship of Peoples” metaphor in the late 1930s as a stable and unquestionable definition for the relationship between Soviet unity and multinational diversity, the nationality question had been resolved. While Martin concludes his study with “soft-line” nationalities policy victorious in the late 1930s through such a metaphor expressed within a static system of cultural production, I argue that questions of national identity became newly contentious after Stalin’s death. During the mid-1950s, several high-level Soviet authorities, including NKVD head Lavrentii Beria and Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoian, voiced disapproval with the Russian bias of CPSU cadre development in the national republics during Stalin’s final years. They expressed a renewed commitment to advancing the titular nationalities within the republics. In its re-deployment of personnel along national lines, many authorities also intended for the project of cultural nation-building to continue after the hiatus of high Stalinism. Writers’ Unions in Georgia, Lithuania and Ukraine petitioned for an expansion of publication in non-Russian languages, and claimed exclusive rights over the thematic material related to their territory in art and literature. After 1960, the new filmmakers’ unions developed similar ideas for a new

⁸ One Soviet literary figure used the term, “*sverkh-natsional'naia* (above-national)”, to refer to Russian culture in 1930. Quoted in Martin, 437.

⁹ Martin, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

construction of “national cinemas” in the republics, one which emphasized national difference over Soviet unity and the “Friendship of Peoples.” While party leaders later questioned the loyalty of many filmmakers who constructed such images of national difference, they could never deal adequately with the presence of categories that determined meaningful resolution. Why was the Soviet Union divided into Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, etc.? Because Ukrainians, Georgians, Lithuanians, etc., live in those places. But what did it mean to be Ukrainian, Georgian, Lithuanian, etc.? By the late-1970s, Soviet authorities opted to leave this question unanswered, and thus ripe for the nationalist movements that emerged with *glasnost*’ a decade later, which eventually divided the country along strict republican lines. Before the certainty about national identity that gripped non-Russian independence movements during 1989-92, and before the enforced silence on the issue a decade and a half earlier, cinema proved to be one of the primary sites of publicly exploring categories of national difference.

* * *

This dissertation defines nations as “imagined” and ideologically “constructed” sites of political and cultural action, emerging, in their present form, only under the conditions of modernity, which include a mass press, industrialized economy, compulsory education and conceptions of participatory politics. As many historians have argued recently, people had to “invent” Ukraine as a nation and Ukrainians as a nationality before these ideas became political facts.¹¹ This project proceeds from these ideas, but offers an interpretation of how “Ukraine” and “Ukrainian” functioned as constructs after the Soviet Union had supposedly solved the “nationality question.” Not surprisingly, most scholarly work on the Soviet Union as a “nation-building” state deals with the 1920s-1930s, that is, the period when Soviet leaders defined nationalities policy and its intended goals. Due to this search for origins to the “question,” we have comparably less knowledge and methodological tools for evaluating how the

¹¹ Most recently, see, Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), and Serhii Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

Soviet nations continued to be reproduced after the death of one of the architects of nationalities policy, Joseph Stalin. In comparison to this earlier period, the 1960s appear both stable and peaceful. The post-Stalin political and economic order was in the process of consolidation, and there were few major challenges to it. Soviet citizens could be proud of their country's growing affluence, its advances in science and technology, and its superpower status in the world, even if they did not entirely accept the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of the press and their leaders. Within this context, we must view the nationality question alongside other elements of cultural dissent that emerged during this decade. Ukrainian dissidents, like their more famous brethren in Moscow, rejected the homogenization of "contemporary (*sovremennyi*)" Soviet life. For them, nationality was a question of self-discovery, an experiential rather than rights-based discourse that resembled what American commentators would call "identity politics."¹² While Ukrainian dissidents like Ivan Dziuba did appeal to political rights in their writings, more often they highlighted problems of media and popular representation, stereotyping, and the everyday and unofficial acts of discrimination that self-conscious Ukrainians experienced. Against conformist notions of "contemporaneity (*sovremennost'*)" and the "Soviet image of life (*Sovetskii obraz zhizni*)," nationality was posed as a question of cultural diversity.

Many Ukrainian filmmakers participated in this project of national self-discovery, although not in an openly oppositional manner. They crossed paths with Ukrainian dissidents, but did not enter their world entirely, principally because to do so would mean the end of their careers as filmmakers. Yet, in working squarely within the field of Soviet cultural bureaucracies, and subject to economic plans and the desires of film audiences, Ukrainian filmmakers attempted to establish a more or less popular imagery and narrative of what it meant to be Ukrainian, both in the past and within the contemporary Soviet Union. Cinema, much more so than literature or the other visual arts, is an inherently collaborative form, however, and subject to the interests, goals, and

¹² On identity and nation, see Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

intentions of a diverse and dispersed network of writers, directors, cinematographers, actors, studio and industry officials, Communist Party and government authorities, critics, and the administration of film distribution. Many of these groups, and many within each of these groups, had little interest in questions of Ukrainian identity. Others objected to what they labeled as Ukrainian cinema's "ethnographic" conception of "national character" during the 1960s, suggesting, also from the perspective of defending Ukrainian culture, that such a "fetishistic" and essentializing imagery denied Ukrainians' position within the contemporary world and as beneficiaries of socialist modernity. Nonetheless, the leadership of Kyiv's Dovzhenko Feature Film Studio during this decade made a conscious decision to support a group of predominantly young filmmakers with a decidedly different image of Ukraine than the "Friendship of Peoples" metaphor could contain.

As Anthony Smith argues, "The nation [...] is not only known and imagined: it is also deeply felt and acted out."¹³ While case studies on national formations investigate the ideologies of certain politicians and intellectuals, they rarely address the politics of representation: In the present case, this includes questions of what Ukrainians looked like, what Ukrainians sounded like, and in what kinds of spaces Ukrainians inhabited, especially as they took shape in popular imagery. These issues too belong to a particular historical context, and constitute meaningful areas of investigation. The construction and imagining of nations constitutes an essential historical problem, but this story in no way dispels how such an abstraction as that of a nation is reproduced. This latter problem stretches beyond the moment of construction, and, in the Soviet Union, was implicated in the process of knowing oneself as a nationalized subject. Cinema offered entirely new representational possibilities for those who would promote a nationalist agenda, especially in establishing a vivid connection between national space and the natural landscape. Film, moreover, provided a means to move away from the association of national identity exclusively with

¹³ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 137.

national rights, and language rights in particular, that area of politics that dominated earlier efforts of Soviet Ukrainian intellectuals.

The majority of filmmakers and writers in Ukraine were invested in the problem of revealing national difference, of coming to terms with what it meant to be Ukrainian in the absence of any project for achieving political sovereignty. As such, the nationality question in the 1960s was tied to the problem of artistic, rather than political, representation. In unintentional conformity with Charles Taylor's definition of multiculturalism, the Ukrainian creative intelligentsia sought recognition for a culturally sophisticated notion of Ukrainian nationality, in some cases, as a precondition for political loyalty.¹⁴

Two other factors contributed to the shift of nationality from a question of political rights to one of artistic representation and a striving for recognition of ethnic difference: First, in an attempt to overcome the effects of Stalinism in the arts, literary critics in particular demanded that authors look into themselves to find truth and authenticity in representation. Khrushchev, moreover, gave tacit approval for this project in his critique of Stalin's "personality cult" during the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956. According to their reasoning, artists and authors possessed power to create meaning, rather than simply charged with the responsibility to creatively interpret and "propagandize" a definitive political theme. Ukrainian filmmakers saw the basis of "national cinema" located, not within a system of production based on a Stalinist imagery of non-Russians, but as a function of the artist's/author's personal expression. In this function, filmmakers and writers were engaged in questioning the categories of national representation that the Stalinist system of cultural production had established with the "Friendship of Peoples" mythology. In turn, the artist/author gained new credibility and importance as the producer of nationality itself, precisely because more cultural authorities were willing to view art as an autonomous "field" after Stalin.¹⁵

¹⁴ See, Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25-73.

¹⁵ For an understanding of culture as a "field" of production, see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production*:

A second factor influencing the development of the nationality question during the 1960s emerged from the first: If nationality had become a problem of artistic representation, the ways the Soviet culture industry structured reception of cultural products was of key importance. The spectator/reader was no longer exclusively the “object of reshaping,” as one scholar recently characterized early Soviet reception theory, but an active consumer of an increasingly diversified amount of media.¹⁶ The artist/author had to consider who would be interested in their work on self-consciously national subject matter. On the one hand, this revision of Soviet media reception theory that took place in the 1960s intended to forge more particularized relationships between artists/authors and media consumers, but it also aimed to market particular types of “products” to specific segments of the population, in order to maximize financial returns on them. Thus, in cinema, melodrama would be directed toward women, adventure films toward young men, art films toward intellectuals (at home and abroad) and, at least potentially, national films toward members of those nationalities they claimed to represent. In practice, however, the increasing commercialization of the Soviet film industry during the following decade meant that authorities were most interested in the desires of the most active segments of the film-going public. Thus, Ukrainian filmmakers had to compete for the same spectators as Moscow filmmakers, rather than for “their own.” Due to the considerably less cost involved in book production, literature did not have the same demands to generate profits as cinema did, and the relationship between text and reader less determined by new sociological theories of media consumption. Thus, cinema provides us not only with a method to examine the new representational context of the nationality question, but also allows us to investigate new ways that cultural producers were conceptualizing a “national” public.

While much that is contained in the previous negotiations between a Stalinist system of national representation and an author centered vision, and

Essays on Art and Literature, ed., Randal Jackson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 30-73.

¹⁶ Evgenii Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*, tr., Jesse M. Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

between different types of conceptions of the media consumer, was common to all the cinemas of the national republics, Ukraine, and Dovzhenko Studio in Kyiv in particular, presents a number of unique issues for understanding the nationality question during the “long 1960s.”¹⁷ First, Ukraine was the most populous of the national republics that constituted the USSR, as Russia was itself a non-national federated republic composed of multiple national territories. Moreover, Ukrainian was the second largest “nationality” in the country, after Russian. As such, they were the largest “national minority” in the 1960s with approximately 40 million people in the republic and elsewhere in the country (predominantly in the RSFSR and Kazakh SSR).¹⁸ Indeed, when Ukraine declared its independence on July 17, 1990, it signaled that the Soviet Union’s days were numbered.¹⁹ Second, Ukraine was an important component of the nationality question during its formation because it was the site of major resistance to Soviet power twice before the end of the Second World War. Between the Russian Civil War and World War II, Ukraine became a major testing ground for Bolshevik indigenization policies that, according to Martin, aimed to diffuse nationalism through granting “the ‘forms’ of nationhood” to non-Russians.²⁰

Nonetheless, the common Soviet epithet of “bourgeois nationalism” frequently applied to Ukrainians in particular during the post-Stalin period,

¹⁷ The term, the “long 1960s,” comes from British historian Arthur Marwick to indicate the period from 1958 to 1974 in Western Europe and the United States, which encapsulated the cultural and social changes that coalesced during the 1960s. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁸ I. P. Zinchenko, “Natsional’nyi sostav i iazyk naseleniia SSSR,” in G. M. Maksimov, ed., *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1970 goda* (Moscow: Statistika, 1976), 196. After Ukrainians, Uzbeks were the next most-populous nationality in the USSR with 9.1 million in 1970.

¹⁹ Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone noted of Ukraine’s importance in the early 1970s: “The Ukrainians seem to be at the forefront of the national re-awakening, and solution of the national problem in Ukraine is crucial for the Soviet leadership, because, if the Ukrainians were successfully assimilated, pressures from other minorities would be of only marginal importance.” Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “The Dialectics of Nationalism in the Soviet Union,” *Problems of Communism* 22 (May-June 1974), 16. Martin also remarks for the pre-unification period that Ukrainians made up 21.3% of the entire Soviet population, and almost half the population of all non-Russians in the USSR. Thus, “Ukraine occupied the central role in the evolution of the Soviet nationalities policy throughout the Stalinist period.” Martin, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-8.

suggesting an inherent quality that they possessed, and against which authorities always had to maintain strict vigilance in order to detect the subtleties of dangerous expression. One interesting example of this occurred after the famous Kirghiz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov spoke “on the problems of national cinemas” at a 1967 conference. After listening to a draft of the speech, film critic and industry functionary Aleksandr Karaganov stated that it contained a “small manifestation of nationalism,” which could “bring a Ukrainian under the yellow banner [of national independence].”²¹ Despite Aitmatov’s discussion of larger inequalities in the Soviet film industry that prevented the further development of cinema in the republics, critics read such complaints exclusively as a provocation for impressionable Ukrainians.

While affirming an inherent connection between Ukraine and nationalism, central authorities also considered Ukrainians as one of the most easily assimilated groups into a Russian – that is, non-national – Soviet state identity. In many respects, the problem of Ukrainian identity in the 1960s related to the republic’s bilingual atmosphere combined with the high degree of Russian language comprehension among Ukrainians. According to the 1970 census, only 85% of ethnic Ukrainians in the USSR considered Ukrainian as their “native” language, the lowest of any nationality with a Union republic attached to it. Not coincidentally, 86% of Ukrainians lived in the Ukrainian SSR, the implication being that Ukrainians living outside of the republic were almost certain to assimilate into the Russian-speaking population around them.²² Thus, Soviet conceptions of Ukrainian identity present us with an interesting paradox: On the one hand, Ukrainians were thought to be prone to “bourgeois nationalism,” something central authorities certainly feared, while also being marked for easy assimilation, partly in order to spread the civilizing mission to the more “backward” Soviet nations of Central Asia. To many of those in power during the 1960s, the Ukrainian language itself constituted a type of cultural excess, something that lacked practical necessity and thus possessed potentially

²¹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 50, l. 38. The “yellow banner” is a reference to the flag of the nascent Ukrainian People’s Republic (1917-1918), which the current Ukrainian state adopted in 1991.

²² Zinchenko, 196, 200.

dangerous consequences. Leonid Brezhnev indicated this fear during a 1969 discussion of the “nationality question” with CPU First Secretary Petro Shelest, the latter a Russian-speaking Ukrainian who learned his “native” language after assuming his post in Ukraine. Brezhnev asked Shelest why Soviet publishers needed to print materials in Ukrainian when almost all Ukrainians also knew Russian. Offended, Shelest responded that Brezhnev would never ask a similar question of party leaders in the other republics.²³ To him, mere knowledge of Russian was not equivalent to the absence of a separate national identity rooted in language itself. The problem of Ukrainian language, then, related less to the needs of comprehension, and pointed more toward the recognition of cultural difference.

The project for filmmakers and writers then became a justification for the maintenance of a Ukrainian cultural identity, and which defended a conception of cultural difference within the context of a largely bilingual population. A fairly typical and mundane argument that emerged during a professional discussion in July 1968 of a now-forgotten Ukrainian film demonstrates the everyday political significance that filmmakers placed on the minutia of artistic representation. One member of Dovzhenko Studio’s Artistic Council, the group that workshopped early footage before the studio sought final state approval, asked of director Volodymyr Dovhan whether his latest film would be released in Ukrainian or Russian. The latter replied that he would shoot the material in Russian and immediately dub it into Ukrainian for republican release. Dovhan’s interrogator continued, apparently unsatisfied with his answer:

You understand, we have a lot of enemies [*vorohiv*] right now who position themselves against our activity. Even among our brother republics such people appear, who come here sometimes, and say it all into the microphone, particularly about the language that we speak here. Thus, [our] material works as propaganda.²⁴

²³ Petro Shelest, diary entry for November 3, 1969, in Iurii Shapovalova, ed., *Petro Shelest: “Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedu”*: Spohady, shchodennyky, dokumenty, materialy (Kyiv: Heneza, 2003), 317-18.

²⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2158, ll. 158-59.

The very existence of a Ukrainian-speaking public was fragile at best, necessitating the work of “propaganda” to generate recognition from potential “enemies” on the outside. The questioner’s point of contention in Dovhan’s film was more specific, however, as he took the director to task for the presence in the footage of a municipal sign that contained the Russian words, “Автоинспекция УССР (Automobile Inspection U[krainian] SSR),” rather than the Ukrainian “Автоінспекція УРСР.” Such a representational *faux pas*, minor as it might appear to the contemporary viewer, was tantamount to a denial of national difference, according to Dovhan’s critic.²⁵ Like Dovhan himself, most of the younger filmmakers who came to work at Dovzhenko Studio during the 1960s were Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and consequently perceived less meaning in representing Ukraine as linguistically pure. While individuals like Dovhan’s critic promoted their political rights to speak Ukrainian in conducting party and state business, the younger generation found little incentive to learn a language that they had lost while being raised in an urban and cosmopolitan environment. In coming to work at Dovzhenko Studio, an institution that promoted Ukrainian national identity, younger filmmakers butted heads with earlier conceptions of the nationality question, while attempting to forge a new politics of artistic representation that incorporated post-Stalinist interest in modernism. As the above example indicates, language could not remain the sole dimension of the nationality question for Ukrainians, despite what Brezhnev indicated to Shelest.

Filmmakers during the 1960s pushed for other forms of recognition of Ukrainian difference, principally located in a modernist exploration of Ukrainian folklore, but one which rejected the stereotypical notions of non-Russians contained in an earlier system of folkloric representation. In part, this new interest in folklore was a means to play with such canonical forms of “Ukrainianism,” but it also suggested that folklore remained the idiom through which Soviet citizens, including the filmmakers themselves, understood the republic and its people. For filmmakers during the 1960s, however, cinema could function to reveal the authentic character of Ukrainian folklore rather than its

²⁵ Ibid., I. 163. The speaker is never named in the minutes of the Artistic Council meeting.

ideological function to justify the Soviet political system. In contrast to a Stalin-era mobilization of a “folklore of consensus,”²⁶ such filmmakers relied on representations of exceptional Ukrainian spaces, ones which were unfamiliar, and thus outside of the “Friendship of People’s” canon of national characters and landscapes.

Much of the cultural work that went into this project emerged from the possibilities of Ukrainian “re-unification” in 1939, which brought the regions of Galicia, Volynia, Bukovyna and Trans-Carpathia into the Ukrainian SSR. While there were early attempts to assimilate eastern and western parts into a “whole” Ukraine during the Stalin era, the results were predictable in their teleology of Russian/Soviet liberation of Western Ukraine from the Austrian, Polish and Romanian landlords. During the 1960s, filmmakers at Dovzhenko Studio would discover an exceptional and unfamiliar space of Ukrainian authenticity in the western oblasts, which had been lost in the east to a Soviet-style modernity and Russian cultural hegemony. While not all of the filmmakers that I examine in this dissertation set all their films in the western oblasts, they approached Ukraine as unfamiliar territory, a territory that required re-exploration and a reimagining of its landscape and principle historical tropes. But this kind of knowledge of Ukraine was predicated on the continued existence of the Soviet Union itself, as an image of a conformist and Russocentric dystopia, which engaged Ukrainian filmmakers dually in the post-Stalinist cultural politics of personal expression and national awareness. Filmmakers’ explorations of Ukrainian identity were as much, or more so, *self*-explorations as they were attempts to propagate a collective national imaginary.

Despite their personal-centered vision of the Ukrainian nation, filmmakers frequently found themselves forced to address real audiences. In approaching the “problem of cinema and spectator,” as Soviet film industry authorities and critics alike identified what they viewed as the changing relationship between cultural producers, texts and publics after Stalin, filmmakers had to show

²⁶ For this term, see, Marcia Landy, *The Folklore of Consensus: Theatricality in the Italian Cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

willingness to engage with a consumer-centered media landscape. During the 1960s, discursive divisions between “elite” cinema and popular cinema were taking shape, with many of the newer directors at Dovzhenko Studio acquiring associations with the former category. Ukrainian identity, as envisioned by these (mostly) young filmmakers working in Kyiv during the 1960s, was an intentionally exclusive project, made to appeal to a particular kind of educated audience. Yet, Soviet authorities demanded that filmmakers make “cinema for everyone (*kino dlia vsekh*),” rather than cinema, as one critic put it, “for my friends.”²⁷ At the same time, films on “national” subject matter were by definition tied into a Soviet cultural policy that fostered the development of non-Russian literatures, theaters and other “high” forms. Popular cinema in the 1960s, however, engaged with generic models of entertainment cinema – melodrama, adventure, science fiction, etc. – which appeared uninterested in what the industry defined as “the national theme.” Thus, engagement with audiences presented its own series of problems that filmmakers were hard-pressed to resolve within the context of “national cinema.” As I show in this dissertation, the nationality question emerged anew during the 1960s within these tensions: first, in the articulation of national difference against a supposedly conformist notion of Soviet culture, and second between conceptions of elite and popular publics.

In the remainder of this introduction, I hope to address some persistent problems in Ukrainian historiography and argue that film and the practice of filmmaking provide sources for understanding the complex relationship between nationalism, socialism and the growing space of commercial culture in the Soviet Union. The majority of historiography on Soviet Ukraine between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Soviet Union was concerned with the problem of negotiating national rights between the Soviet state and the Ukrainian people. This dissertation aims to move the problem of Soviet nationalities policy away from questions of rights to explore the problem of artistic representation, in part because the period under examination demands that we look at different questions than had been present during the 1920s and 1930s. In this respect, I

²⁷ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 542, l. 34.

not only intend to address the relationship between Ukrainian cultural producers and the Soviet ideological regime, but also ideas about artistic production in Ukraine during the 1960s, its relationship to specific filmic texts, and between such texts and audiences. Only then can we begin to understand the new context of the nationality question after Stalin, where tensions not only existed between particularistic national identities and “Soviet” identities, but also between so-called national representation and personal expression, and between national representation and the growing space of commercial culture, tensions which came out of post-Stalin literary debates and the stagnation of the Brezhnev period.

The Politics of Ukrainian Historiography

Prior historiography concerning the Ukrainian lands assumed a marked distinction between the historical processes that produced contemporary Ukraine and those that produced Russia, and which attempted to dispel the idea that the former was only a region of the latter rather than a separate nation. One of the first ruptures in this methodological focus on “national history” came a few years after Ukrainian independence, with historian Mark von Hagen asking, “Does Ukraine have a history?” Of course, the question suggested more than its literal meaning. While rejecting the conception of Ukraine as “Little Russia,” von Hagen nonetheless questioned whether the territory of the recently independent Ukraine had a specifically “national” history of its own. Instead, he argued that Ukrainian history, with its division between several empires and states throughout most of its past, points to the greater importance of regional and local spaces than what a contemporary nationalist agenda would indicate.²⁸ Von Hagen pointed toward a certain political investment in Ukrainian history, calling the few who had studied it during the Cold War, both in the West and in Soviet Ukraine, “professional ethnics.” Ukrainian historiography in North America did, in fact, have its political motivations, largely in tune with the politics of the broader diasporic communities

²⁸ Mark von Hagen, “Does Ukraine Have a History?” *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (Fall 1995), 658-73.

in Canada and the United States, which generally viewed Russian/Soviet control as a violation of Ukrainian claims to national sovereignty. In the decade since von Hagen's article, the study of Ukraine has followed broader trends in Russian/Soviet historiography, particularly in its increasingly complex analysis of the origins and development of the nationality question. In its move toward an examination of the constructed dimensions of national identity and the political imaginary of nationalist ideologies, scholars have looked at the ways that the USSR was a "nation-building" state, rather than a new "prisonhouse of nationalities," as one critic of the Soviet Union once put it.²⁹ Thus, von Hagen's rhetorical question has become less relevant with Ukraine now serving as an interesting scenario for discussing the construction of nations during the Revolutions of 1917 and into the Stalinist period, rather than continuing to serve the goals of the Cold War or Ukrainian diaspora agendas.

This newer trend followed larger developments in Soviet historiography, first evident in Ronald Suny's work, which argued against calling Moscow's relations with the Soviet periphery solely "imperialistic," and instead for the importance of the central government's efforts to further pre-revolutionary nationalist goals. In this conception, national identities underwent further articulation only under the conditions of a Soviet nationalities policy.³⁰ Yuri Slezkine further explicates Suny's conception, itself grounded in "modernist" and "constructivist" explanations of nations and nationalism, drawing on the metaphor of the "the USSR as a communal apartment." For Slezkine, the "communal apartment" shows how the Soviet state attempted to celebrate both the separate "space" of each "nation" that comprised the Soviet Union, alongside the image of inter-ethnic unity that had emerged with Soviet modernity. Moreover, Slezkine sees nationality as a construct that eclipsed class's importance for the Soviet

²⁹ See, Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 414. Compare Slezkine's ideas with David J. Dallin, *The Soviet Prisonhouse of Nationalities: A Study of the Russian Experiment in Solving the National Problem* (Calcutta: Society for the Defense of Freedom in Asia, 1955).

³⁰ Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

project beginning in the Stalin era.³¹ Later monographs dealing with Soviet nationalities policy, such as Martin's, Amir Weiner's, David Brandenberger's and Francine Hirsch's work, took this line of argumentation further, stating that we can see a virtual erasure of class as a useable political, social and legal category by the mid-1930s. Based largely on a pragmatic approach to state power, Lenin, Stalin, and company realized that nationality was the only way to rule such an ethnically diverse political entity.³² The novelty of this interpretation becomes apparent only within the context of earlier Sovietology, which viewed non-Russian nationalism only as a challenge to the totalitarian order, rather than as constitutive of the political system itself.³³

A nascent Ukrainian studies emerged during the 1950s, at once affirming a Ukrainian diaspora agenda and a broader Cold War narrative of Soviet/Russian imperialism. One of the earliest studies of Soviet Ukraine was John Reshetar's *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism* (1952), which examined the development of the Ukrainian nationalist movement from the late-nineteenth century to its crescendo during the Russian Revolution and Civil War.³⁴ Like many scholars who would follow, Reshetar described the development of Ukrainian national consciousness through the acquisition of a literary voice: In this formation, nationalist politics emerged from cultural awareness. Ukrainian nationalism's point of origin was poet and painter Taras Shevchenko, who was the first to use the vernacular in his published work during the 1830s. Shevchenko himself moved from cultural engagement to politics in co-founding the underground Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1845, which promoted a pan-Slavic confederation of nations, based on equal relations,

³¹ Slezkine, 414-52.

³² Terry Martin, Amir Weiner, David Brandenberger, and Francine Hirsch to come degree all argue that nationalities policy emerged out of pragmatic concerns of the state concerning the limitations of class conflict as a principle of political legitimacy. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

³³ See, for example, Walter Kolarz, *The Peoples of the Soviet Far East* (London: G. Phillip, 1954); *Russia and Her Colonies* (New York: Praeger, 1955); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986); Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Viking, 1991).

³⁴ John Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), vii.

rather than on Russian imperial dominance. In the later years of the century, use of written Ukrainian was severely restricted in Russian-controlled Ukraine, and in 1876, Emperor Alexander II issued the Emskii Ukaz, which forbid written Ukrainian entirely.³⁵ Thereafter, vernacular culture developed in Hapsburg Western Ukraine. In Galicia, Ukrainian organizations and the Ukrainian language itself was tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged by the government, largely in its potential role in challenging their neighbors to the east. Within such a geopolitical framework, early Ukrainian nationalism perceived the acquisition of language rights as a fundamental component of its ideological program.

In the manner that Miroslav Hroch suggested in *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, cultural nationalism developed into political nationalism, and underground political parties formed in Kyiv and Kharkiv by the turn of the century.³⁶ When the Romanov dynasty fell in February 1917, a conglomeration of socialist, liberal, and populist parties formed the Central Rada in Kyiv a month later, and declared full independence for the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) at the same time as the Bolsheviks were dissolving the Provisional Government in Petrograd. As Reshetar pointed out, the Rada supported Lenin only insofar as Lenin genuinely supported "national self-determination" for the "oppressed nations" of the former Russian Empire.

Shortly thereafter, however, the small Bolshevik faction of the Rada attempted to seize power in Kyiv, and created an alternate Ukrainian capital in Kharkiv to form the first Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic when that failed. Meanwhile, nationalists in Hapsburg controlled Ukraine declared independence and formed the West Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), adding yet another nascent political entity to the territory. With the gathering momentum of the

³⁵ The Ukaz allowed only for the reproduction of important historical documents in Ukrainian. Alexander III would later allow the publication of song lyrics and, with the approval of state authorities, the performance of Ukrainian-language plays. Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: The Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43-45.

³⁶ Hroch defines three "phases" in the development of Eastern European nationalist movements: from literary and "cultural" work (Phase A), to clandestine political activity (Phase B), to mass movement (Phase C). Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 63.

Bolsheviks from the east, and Anton Denikin's anti-Communist Volunteer Army from the south, some members of the disintegrating Rada looked to Germany for support. After several violent changes of power between 1918 and 1921 – from a moderate socialist Ukraine under historian Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, to the German puppet government of Pavlo Skoropads'kyi, to Symon Petliura's nationalist regime – Ukraine came under Bolshevik control and became a founding member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.³⁷ For members of the original Rada, this turn of events represented a total failure for the Ukrainian national movement, not only because Ukraine entered into union with a political entity that resembled the same Russian Empire that fell in 1917, but also because Ukrainian lands remained divided between a reconstituted Polish Republic, which defeated the ZUNR government, Romania (which controlled the province of Bukovyna) and Bolshevik controlled Eastern Ukraine. Reshetar concluded that the independence movement failed as a viable political entity because Ukrainians, and especially the peasantry, had yet to develop a sufficient level of national consciousness. In Reshetar's conception, consciousness was something that naturally emerged under certain social and political conditions, but which failed to materialize in the Ukrainian case, implicitly due to its "temporal lag" behind the more modern nations of East Central Europe.³⁸

In John A. Armstrong's seminal *Ukrainian Nationalism, 1939-1945*, published a few years later, he took up the problem of Ukrainian nationalism during the Second World War. In his work, Armstrong explored Ukraine's second major challenge to the Soviet state, focusing on the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) during and after World War II. The OUN emerged in 1930s Polish-controlled Ukraine under the auspices of national liberation. After the 1938 German invasion, OUN leader Stepan Bandera found military support from Nazi Germany

³⁷ The other founding members were Transcaucasia, Belorussia, and Russia.

³⁸ For a critique of the trope of backwardness inherent to the modernist theory of nationalism, see, Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 1 (2005), 145. Martin writes that we can see the Soviet state as constituting a "Phase D" in the Hrochian scheme: "The party became the vanguard of non-Russian nationalism." Martin, 15.

to aid in ethnically cleansing Poles from western and central Ukrainian lands. After the initiation of hostilities between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1941, and the increasingly violent approach to the war-time occupation, the OUN began to fight the Germans and Soviet partisans.³⁹ In 1943, members of the OUN formed the UPA, with the express goal of fighting the Red Army after the elimination of the German threat. By the end of the German occupation, UPA had up to 100,000 soldiers,⁴⁰ who continued to fight the Soviet Army from underground during the remainder of the decade. Like Reshetar, Armstrong attributes the failure of the nationalist movement against Soviet Russia to questions beyond practical issues of unequal resources to the problems of national “consciousness” itself, particularly its absence among the eastern Ukrainian population. In essence, UPA’s vision of an independent Ukraine was much too divisive for Soviet Ukrainians to assimilate.

After Armstrong, studies of Soviet Ukraine turned directly toward an examination of the repressive organs of Soviet power, along with positing an understanding of Eastern Ukrainian national consciousness. After all, scholars had to deal with the fact that the richest flowering of Ukrainian culture occurred within the context of Soviet control during the inter-war period. While Armstrong and Reshetar were interested in actions that would lead to national independence, much of the later historiography would concern itself with the production of national consciousness itself, particularly within the context of Bolshevik indigenization policies in the 1920s. Literary scholar, George S. N. Luckyj, himself a World War II-era refugee from Soviet-occupied Galicia, was among the first to examine this topic in his 1956 monograph *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*. Luckyj viewed Ukrainian literature as the nexus

³⁹ Some also claim that the OUN was responsible for anti-Jewish violence, although other historians contest this claim. The Bandera group, however, was clearly responsible for anti-Jewish propaganda at various times during the period of their operations. Nonetheless, it is also clear that they were more interested in excising Poles and Communists from Ukraine than they were Jews (whom the Germans had already eliminated from Ukraine by 1943). See, Weiner, 251-264.

⁴⁰ Paul Magocsi disputes Armstrong’s number, claiming that, by 1944, UPA had between 25,000 and 40,000 soldiers. See, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 648.

of Bolshevik-inspired Ukrainianization policies during the 1920s. Through the promotion of cultural production and vernacular education, Ukrainianization aimed to construct a linguistically pure space in Eastern Ukraine, aiming to force assimilated Ukrainians and Russians residing in the republic to speak Ukrainian, and thus reproducing national consciousness and undoing the repressive practices of Imperial Russia.

Luckyj contended, however, that the Ukrainian people had matured as a nation by the 1920s, but that the Bolsheviks, as duplicitous Russian chauvinists, wanted to keep Ukrainian culture provincialized. He proposed to study “the conflict between the Communist Party and Ukrainian literature,” making it clear that he viewed these two institutions as irreconcilable.⁴¹ While admitting that such indigenization policies in Ukraine emanated from Moscow, Luckyj argued that they were merely pragmatic considerations to appease a largely hostile native intelligentsia at the end of the Civil War.⁴² Ukrainianization was merely a self-interested attempt by Russian Bolsheviks to bring Ukrainian culture back under Russian culture’s imperial wing.⁴³ Given the freedom to express itself, Luckyj posited, the Ukrainian intelligentsia was more “Western” oriented than their Russian counterparts.⁴⁴ He concluded his story with Stalin’s consolidation of power through the First Five-Year Plan, during which the Ukrainian intelligentsia had been demolished in a series of violent purges. “Ukrainianization” had ended by 1932, with many of its promoters shot under the charge of “bourgeois nationalism.” In what appears as the crux of Luckyj’s argument, he writes that Ukrainian intellectuals “welcomed the opportunity to propagate Ukrainian language and culture, forgetful of that part of the bargain in

⁴¹ George S. N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*, rev. and up. ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 3.

⁴² The “concession” argument is the standard explanation for NEP. See, Martin for an examination of this idea, pp. 20-21.

⁴³ Martin and other recent theorists of Soviet nationalities policy have also found that Bolshevik indigenization drives in the 1920s were largely “pragmatic” gestures, meant not only to appease non-Russian populations, but also to give the appearance that the emergence of socialism was a “native” phenomenon and not simply Russian imperialism under a new guise. Nonetheless, Martin rejects an interpretation that sees the Moscow leadership as entirely cynical in their rapprochement with the Soviet periphery. See Martin, 12.

⁴⁴ Martin also addresses “Ukrainianization” as one of the few instances where Soviet nation-building enterprises had the effect of radicalizing the local population. See, Martin, 21.

which they were required to pay the devil his due.”⁴⁵ His story ends in 1934 because that year essentially marked the end of “literary politics” itself in the republic.

Apart from Yaroslav Bilinsky’s *The Second Soviet Republic*, which focused on the immediate post-war and early Khrushchev years, there was relatively little historical scholarship in the West on Soviet Ukraine until the 1980s. Most of the work published during the 1960s and 1970s was on contemporary politics in Ukraine. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a series of new works focused on the Revolution and 1920s in Ukraine, but they offered little in the way of original analysis. One such work was James Mace’s *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation* (1983), which once again took on Ukrainianization. A student of Roman Szporluk and Luckyj, Mace paid due attention to Bolshevik leaders’ pragmatic and honest attempts to support Ukrainianization, but largely remained fixed to an explanation of conflict between Ukrainian nationalism and Russian Bolshevism. Mace, however, took the Luckyj argument further – Russians not only wanted to provincialize Ukraine and Ukrainian culture, but also practiced genocide against the Ukrainian people for the few who refused to participate in the Soviet project. Thus, he concluded his study with the assertion that the 1932-33 Famine in Ukraine was a deliberate policy meant to crush the remnants of Ukrainian nationalism unleashed with Ukrainianization. Essential to Mace’s promotion of the genocide argument was that Stalin and a faction of Russian chauvinists in the CPSU personally sought revenge against the Ukrainian people for the actions of nationalist intellectuals during the 1920s.⁴⁶

The first revisionist attempt at understanding inter-war Ukrainian history is Terry Martin’s *Affirmative Action Empire*, although he places Ukrainianization within a broader framework of the 1920s-30s Soviet indigenization drive, exploring how it occurred in unique ways in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Soviet

⁴⁵ Luckyj, 46.

⁴⁶ James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1983). Mace contributed extensively to the United State Commission on the Ukrainian Famine, which published *Oral History Project of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine*, three volumes (Washington, 1990).

East. Martin significantly departs from the “consciousness” paradigm to explore how a myriad of political interests were at play in the nationality question. Using an extensive body of archival evidence, Martin not only speaks of Moscow’s active support of Ukrainianization, but also demonstrates how Stalin and his colleagues were instrumental in forming and enforcing it. The much-maligned Lazar Kaganovich, who was CPU First Secretary during 1925-28, forbade anti-Ukrainianization statements in the press, and mandated firings for party leaders who did not make an effort to learn and speak Ukrainian. Thus, while Ukrainian “national communists” like Oleksandr Shums’kyi and Mykola Skrypnyk drafted Ukrainianization, it took a Russian-speaking Jew to pursue it as a “core Bolshevik project,” and to use force to back up its policies.⁴⁷ Moreover, Martin shows that by the late 1920s ethnic Ukrainians themselves were among the most openly hostile to Ukrainianization, precisely because it did not contain the possibility that Ukrainians might speak Russian as their “native” language.⁴⁸ In its rejection of “forced Ukrainianization,” the center demanded the establishment of a truly bilingual ethnic space in 1933, with a particular concern not to ignore the concerns of Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the republic, especially in the industrial Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine. Martin concludes, “Comprehensive Ukrainianization was abolished but it was not replaced with a policy of Russification.”⁴⁹ Thus, he resolves the problem of the simultaneous promotion of ethnic particularism and the persecution of bourgeois nationalism, without resorting to prior explanations that privileged an essentialized notion of “national consciousness.”

Serhy Yekelchuk’s *Stalin’s Empire of Memory* offers a different counterpoint to Luckyj’s and Mace’s conception of Stalinism in Ukraine. In asserting that “nationally conscious” Ukrainians actively participated in the Stalinist politics of culture rather than merely being the victim of it, Yekelchuk reconceptualizes agency under Stalin, even as he continues to maintain Stalinism’s essentially destructive energy. *Stalin’s Empire of Memory* takes up

⁴⁷ Martin, 86-98, 112.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 111-12.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 355-56.

where Luckyj left off in 1934 to examine the story of Ukrainian intellectuals' engagement with the Moscow leadership, from the height of the purges to the post-war stagnation of late Stalinism.⁵⁰ In positing a "dialogue" between center and periphery even during the darkest moments of Stalinism, Yekelchuk does not so much erase the terror and violence of these years, as he suggests the ways in which the Moscow leadership remained involved in a process of negotiation with local authorities in Ukraine. In this way, Yekelchuk also demonstrates how Soviet nationalities policy was not merely a "concession" to non-Russian nationalism during NEP, but something of essential importance to the ideological foundations of the Soviet state.

Moreover, the nature of Stalinist nationalities policy is the context from which we must see the later emergence of the dissident movement and the 1960s in Ukraine as a whole. Yekelchuk concludes his study with a note about this later period:

The "sixtiers" took up the restoration of the national narrative not because they were nationalists by nature but because they had grown up in Stalin's empire of memory, and that empire had failed to produce a non-national version of the past.⁵¹

While true to a large extent, Yekelchuk fails to account for the particular conditions of the post-Stalin period, and what kind of new interests were available for cultural producers during the 1960s.

A second problem with this literature concerns the central conflict between the party and intellectuals that it encompasses. With few exceptions, historians of Soviet Ukraine affirm that "politics" was located within the Party, while "culture" was located within the realm of literature. In this context, the politics of culture,

⁵⁰ The *zhdanovshchina* (1946-1952), associated with CPSU Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov, was a reaction to the more relaxed cultural atmosphere of the war years. In the literary journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, Zhdanov argued that the post-war era saw a further division of the world into two camps, and that writers and artists should respond accordingly with a new communist culture, one in which he envisioned the only domestic conflict as between "the good and the best." This principle, also known as *bezkonfliktnost'* ("the period without conflict," or "conflictlessness"), was officially denounced at the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952 as detrimental to Soviet culture.

⁵¹ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 160.

along with the politics of nationality, is explained through a pragmatic approach: Ukrainians with national consciousness want autonomy from “Russian imperialism,” while the “Russians” want to, alternately, placate or eliminate the threat of Ukrainian national consciousness. Such a research agenda has foregrounded explanation over analysis and interpretation of cultural texts. Scholars within this field have been convinced that political interaction was the basis of national identity formation, without investigating the texts available that underlie nationalist appeals. Cultural products were just that: the product of those political negotiations. In foregrounding questions of artistic representation in Ukrainian cinema and the problem of popular reception, this dissertation breaks with prior approaches to the nationality question as a function of either the “politics of culture” or the political negotiation of power between Moscow and the national republics. My understanding of “politics” is somewhat broader: instead of a concern with state power and ideology, I hope to examine those elements of politics that emerge from representational practice and knowledge production. Within this context, I see the period after Stalin as exceptional, rather than just “post-.”

Soviet Ukraine during the “Long 1960s”

CPU First Secretary Mykola Pidhornyι began his speech at the 22nd Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party (hereafter, CPU) in October 1961 with the words, “The contemporary generation of Ukrainians knows about the difficult past of our people perhaps only from literature.” Thus, he highlighted the importance of fictional representations for giving meaning to Ukrainian identity and national memory. In proceeding to list writers that belonged squarely in the tradition of classical nineteenth-century prose, however, Pidhornyι suggested that contemporary reproductions were both unnecessary and thus inherently problematic, due to the nationalist polemic that characterized Ukrainian literature as a whole.⁵² In the present moment of the 22nd Congress, Ukraine was

⁵² TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1691, l. 39.

meaningful only insofar as it had overcome its backwardness as a “colony” of Imperial Russia, Austria or Poland, and had entered the age of socialist “contemporaneity.” To belabor the presence of Ukrainian difference might open a can of worms about the continued oppression of the Ukrainian people, a suggestion outside the realm of Soviet possibilities. Yet, perhaps Pidhornyi’s statement included an element of wishful thinking, as the 1960s heralded a new period of fictional engagement with interpretations of Ukraine’s past and present. Writers and artists, especially among the “contemporary generation,” viewed Khrushchev’s denunciation of the “cult of personality” as a signal for a more honest system of representation more broadly. In Ukraine, many segments of the creative intelligentsia read Khrushchev’s statements explicitly through the lens of nationalities policy, with the possibility to continue the halted traditions of both the nineteenth and early twentieth-century masters and the Ukrainian modernists of the 1920s. In a letter to Pidhornyi on the eve of the 22nd Congress of the CPU, for example, First Secretary of the Ukrainian Filmworkers’ Union (hereafter, SKU) Tymofii Levchuk wrote that the end of the “personality cult” should aid in the development of a Ukrainian film culture, the likes of which were not allowed under Stalin.⁵³

Yet, the cultural changes that emerged during the “long 1960s” in the USSR were not associated unidimensionally with the (albeit, uneven) processes of de-stalinization. The Ukrainian cultural movement that emerged during this period was furthermore engaged with the Thaw project of rediscovering authentic experience, something that had immediate resonance in literature and literary criticism after Stalin’s death. Moreover, the protagonists of this movement were principally young people, many of who were as interested in contemporary cultural developments in Western Europe and the United States as they were with promoting a new vision of Ukrainian identity. While vast cultural, political and social differences continued to divide the capitalist democracies of Western Europe and the Soviet Union and its satellite states, we can see a certain convergence that occurred during this time that British historian Arthur Marwick

⁵³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 293.

characterized as the phenomenon that we understand as “the sixties.”⁵⁴ Like in the United States and the countries of Western Europe, young people were newly present in public life in the Soviet Union, many of them defining themselves in opposition to the World War II generation. Just as young people in the west established “underground” bookstores, record labels, and movie production facilities, Soviet youth began to self-publish anti-authoritarian literature and political tracts in what came to be known throughout the world as “*samizdat*.” At the same time, communist party authorities, even into the 1970s, believed it inherently good to support young people in the party hierarchy and in the specialist and creative professions. Thus, the new leadership after Stalin enabled youth initiative, despite the wide range of such activities that it considered detrimental. Most important, Soviet youth during the 1960s participated in a pan-European cultural exchange, whereby contact with Western pop music, movies, fashions and ideas became widespread. In part, this occurred through the unprecedented presence of Soviet citizens in western Europe and westerners in the USSR, but also through official and unofficial modes of market exchange between eastern and western Europe.

Within this context, young people had different reasons to be interested in the nationality question than their parents’ generation, who came of age on the eve of World War II. For this later generation, interest in Ukrainian identity was connected with a rejection of mainstream cultural policy, associated as it was with opaque bureaucracies and outdated folkloric stereotypes of what Soviet ideology had determined that they were. At the same time, these young Ukrainians who participated in the nascent Ukrainian cultural movement were the first born under Soviet power rather than in the Russian or Hapsburg Empires or inter-war Poland, and as such they had also assimilated the comparably new Soviet political culture and its associated identity. For example, like any Soviet political theorist worth his salt, dissident Ivan Dziuba included extensive and selective quotation from Lenin in his *samizdat* tract, *Internationalism or Russification?* (circ. 1966), in order to highlight and argue against a broad policy

⁵⁴ See, Marwick on the “characteristics of a unique era,” 16-20.

of discrimination against Ukrainian culture. While many young people were questioning certain tenants of Soviet life, they were doing so from the position of ideological authority. But rather than conceptualizing themselves as exclusive members of one ideological “camp,” this new generation of writers and artists were able to borrow freely from multiple creative sources, which circulated across Europe and North America.

The relationship between this young generation of Ukrainian intellectuals and the organs of power became more complex with the ascent of Petro Shelest as the CPU First Secretary in 1963. Unlike Pidhornyi, Shelest gave open validation to many of the new concerns of this decade, believing in the possibilities for a genuinely “contemporary” Ukrainian literature and art. Yet, in sharing many convictions with the older generation of nationally aware Ukrainian intellectuals, he maintained a firm belief in the “Friendship of Peoples” mythology, implicitly accepting central control over political and cultural life in the republic as a precondition to Ukraine’s status as a nation. In this way, Shelest continued to provoke the ire of “non-conformist” Ukrainian writers and artists, who sought recognition of Ukrainian difference from Russia. Most problematic for Shelest was the new fixation in Ukrainian art and literature with a loss of cultural identity, as the First Secretary continued to believe that new meaning could be inserted into the archetypical Soviet concept of “national in form, socialist in content.”

Nonetheless, Shelest too was a product of the post-Stalin era, and came to political maturity in the wake of the Twentieth Party Congress. Although Khrushchev and Pidhornyi had brought Shelest to his post as a trustworthy and capable technocrat, it was this new cultural landscape that Shelest felt compelled to address more and more frequently as he moved up through the ranks of the CPU. As a full member of the Politburo in the early 1960s, Shelest was at the apex of power in Moscow, but seemingly viewed his Ukrainian position as of primary importance. Historian Iurii Shapovalova writes that Shelest was the first CPU First Secretary who did not see his position as a stepping-stone to

something better in Moscow.⁵⁵ Thus, he frequently privileged his sentimental attachment to Ukrainian space over his political ambitions. The Shelest idea, Shapolava writes, “was based on a peculiar dual loyalty – [one that was] all-Union and [at the same time] republican, continuously maneuvering between two political discourses – centralization and anti-centralization.”⁵⁶ Shelest became one of the political enablers of the “Renaissance” of Ukrainian culture during the 1960s, but also one who failed to understand the new intentions of young artists and writers in the republic, connected as they were with a pan-European modernism and, paradoxically, with a sense of loss over an imagined “traditional” way of life. At the same time, as a Russian-speaking Ukrainian whose career more closely resembled Khrushchev’s than his supposedly Cossack ancestors, the First Secretary looked toward writers, artists and filmmakers for his image of an “authentic” Ukraine. In many ways, Shelest articulated the particular space of national politics as a function of artistic representation, while not sidestepping his political duties in Moscow, which were divorced from his cultural duties in Ukraine. Whereas Shelest formed alliances and enemies in Moscow based on his policy objectives, in Ukraine his network was established based on his cultural affinities.

Of course, culture and politics were never mutually exclusive areas of power in the USSR, as evidenced by Shelest’s ouster in the mid-1970s for his “independent” thinking. Despite the emergence of a Ukrainian cultural movement that penetrated the CPU hierarchy and mainstream cultural enterprises, policy decisions continued to privilege the pragmatic goals of civic unity. The Third Party Program, adopted at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in September 1961, for example, continued to deny the importance of national difference in favor of a future-oriented and undifferentiated socialist society. The Program stated, “The nations will draw still closer together [*sliiat*], and their complete unity will be achieved,” suggesting that the final movement of socialism toward communism

⁵⁵ Iurii Shapovalova, “Petro Shelest u konteksti politychnoi istorii Ukrainy XX stolittia,” in *Petro Shelest: “Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedy”: Spohady, shchodennyk, dokumenty, materialy* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2003), 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

would naturally erode the cultural and social conditions of nationhood.⁵⁷ Pragmatic necessity, moreover, demanded that everyone speak Russian, according to the Third Party Program. Party leaders, Shelest among them, along with many intellectuals in Ukraine began questioning the basis of this theory by the early 1960s. Cinema and literature under Shelest had the duty to keep the literary language of the republic alive. Thus, Shelest and dissident intellectuals shared many assumptions about the continued importance of the nationality question and maintenance of a Soviet nationalities policy to govern center-periphery relations. Moreover, Brezhnev became keenly aware of the dangers that his cultural affinities posed, especially after the events of 1968 in Prague.

The space that many younger filmmakers and writers diverged from Shelest was in the former's creative interest with the unfamiliar territory of Western Ukraine, or with the desire to discover the unfamiliar within the familiar territory of Eastern Ukraine. These explorations frequently complicated the notion of Ukraine as a monolithic ethnic territory, bringing to the forefront Ukrainians who did not speak the literary language, and landscapes that did not conform to prior stereotypes of the republic. In delighting in this unfamiliar territory, filmmakers sought to show Ukraine, not only as linguistically different from Russia, but also different from hegemonic conceptions of Ukraine itself. Because representations of Ukrainians and non-Russians in general were grounded in a particular formal and stylistic language, established during the Stalin era, the rejection of its content necessitated a rejection of its very "look (*obraz*)."⁵⁷ Herein lies the reason that many filmmakers turned toward a modernist aesthetic to convey their new conceptions of non-Russian space. Both domestic models, largely from the silent era avant-garde, along with recent trends in West European filmmaking, such as Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave, determined the development of a new style of non-Russian representation during the 1960s. While the legacy of such early Soviet directors such as Sergei

⁵⁷ Quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone, 18. In *Internationalism or Russification?*, Ivan Dziuba wrote that discussions of a new constitution during the later years of the Khrushchev period included language that attempted to further amalgamate the Union republics on the basis that they had become outdated in their usefulness. Ivan Dziuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, ed., M. Davies (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 102.

Eisenstein and, particularly for Ukrainian cinema, Oleksandr Dovzhenko remained fraught with contradictory values, film criticism had largely rescued them from their reputations under late Stalinism as formalists and, for Dovzhenko, as a Ukrainian nationalist. The association with Western European film movements was less ambiguously problematic, connected as it was with a “decadent” and “formalist” aesthetic that socialist realism had declared the death of in the mid-1930s. Famous Stalin-era film director Sergei Gerasimov, for example, wrote of the French New Wave’s “intellectually pornographic sauce” in a 1960 article critiquing the experimental tendencies of Georgian filmmaker Tenghiz Abuladze.⁵⁸ At the same time, socialist realism was itself under question as a monolithic framework, and many cultural authorities encouraged youth “experimentation” as a means to overcome Stalinist cultural tropes. Ukrainian cinema sought to engage with a local material, grounded in Ukrainian folklore and classic literature, but also to update its meaning through stylistic innovation, a process that involved negotiating Soviet conventions with 1960s innovations in modernist cinema.

Soviet Historiography and the Uses of Film

Although still rare, the study of film has enjoyed some prominence in Soviet historiography since the early 1990s alongside other explorations of “mass culture” in Russia, such as work on popular fiction, the press, theater and other leisure practices.⁵⁹ While diverse in focus, this literature sought to situate Russia

⁵⁸ Sergei Gerasimov, “Poddel’noe i podlinnoe,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5 (1960), 18.

⁵⁹ For work in this field on Imperial Russia, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); E. V. Dukov, ed., *Razvlekatel’naia kul’tura XVIII-XIX* (St. Petersburg: DB, 2000); Efim Kholodov, *Teatr i zritel’: Stranitsy istorii russkoi teatral’noi publiki* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institut iskusstvoznaniia, 2000); E. Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). For the literature on Soviet-era popular cultures, see Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public*

and the Soviet Union as peculiar types of media-driven societies, which shared key similarities to those of Western Europe, where a diversity of interests determined the structure of everyday life and cultural policy. This perspective helped dispel notions of the Soviet Union, in particular, as a “totalitarian” society, one in which the state rigidly controlled, or believed it possible to control, popular opinion and the ways that individuals responded to methods of propaganda and mass education. Within this literature, cinema functioned as a means to understand the complicated tensions between ideology and entertainment. Rather than a state that had the means to control social consciousness through forms of mass art like the cinema, scholars have posited that authorities were constrained by what audiences wanted to watch, and by their own agency as interpreters of images. Peter Kenez’s *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* and Denise Youngblood’s *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s*, both from 1992, each address the politics of filmmaking practice. Kenez addresses the unique problems of organizing Soviet cinema as a tool for ideological education, and attempts to investigate the degree of success films had in eliciting sympathy for Bolshevik policies.⁶⁰ In her work on debates about popular cinema during the 1920s, Youngblood integrates questions of production politics, film reception and narrative conventions. She argues that, despite the efforts of certain Soviet cultural organizations and film critics in the 1920s to construct a “revolutionary” cinema, “Film culture of the NEP was predominantly and aggressively ‘bourgeois.’” Until the First Five-Year Plan, the Soviet film industry was more concerned with profit and issues of resisting foreign control than the political dimensions of representational politics. With the onset of Stalinism, Soviet cinema had to serve both a mass audience and promote a clearly articulated Soviet “way of life.” Youngblood sees Soviet

Culture from Revolution to Cold War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Susan Reid, “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 211-252; Anne E. Gorsuch, Diane P. Koenker, eds., *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
⁶⁰ Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

cinema under Stalin (and after, according to the implications) as both entertainment and ideology.⁶¹

Both books successfully demonstrate the unique importance of cinema for establishing a particularly Soviet culture, but Youngblood, and Kenez in particular, intentionally avoid a sophisticated analysis of individual films or their potential reception. Consequently, both authors remain invested in such truisms as “the Soviet people wanted entertainment,” rather than politics or “propaganda” in the films that they watched. Youngblood, for example, takes the specificity of the medium no further than this contextual concern with “popular” reception, and very little of her work addresses the visual dimensions of the films under discussion, a necessary component for any understanding of film language and its intersections with cultural constructions of the “popular.” In other words, Youngblood’s definition of “popular cinema” combines Soviet discourse on the problem itself with predetermined conceptions of entertainment and propaganda, rather than viewing it as an aesthetic system defined by definite formal characteristics.

Historians of the Soviet Union using film as source material are not unique in the discipline in their aversion to formal analysis. In a September 2006 forum that appeared on the H-German online discussion network, which addressed our discipline’s recent attempts to “read” visual culture, film scholar Johannes von Moltke commented,

This emphasis on “use” and its historical contexts [...] seems both promising and appropriate for an exploration of the visual anchored in history as a discipline. However, we should be careful not to confine ourselves to such a pragmatics of the visual at the expense of other ways of studying visual materials and modes of display.⁶²

⁶¹ Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xiii.

⁶² Johannes von Moltke, commentary to “FORUM: German history after the visual turn,” H-German Discussion Network, 26 September 2006: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-German&month=0609&week=d&msg=q5BbiyPSoAWaa3cldQoczQ&user=&pw=>: accessed 18 January 2008.

In his commentary, Von Moltke suggests both the practical and methodological constraints on historians attempting to participate in the “visual turn.” On one level, historians are rarely trained to speak about the aesthetics of visual expression, and fearful of moving beyond their disciplinary comfort zone. On a second, more significant, level, historians are rarely interested in anything beyond what von Moltke calls the “pragmatics of the visual.” In Youngblood’s *Movies for the Masses*, for example, films function as evidence within early Soviet intellectual debates about entertainment and propaganda, rather than constitute an area of independent meaning production. Her reasons for using films in such a manner were justified, and her book contributed greatly to our understanding of Soviet constructions of a new type of mass culture. Yet, in reading *Movies for the Masses*, we have to wonder if Youngblood’s analysis of films (located in the second half of the book) in fact lends credence to her argument, or rather if they only serve to illustrate the debates in the earlier sections of the book. This raises the question of whether historians can move from examining a discursive category (i.e., entertainment or propaganda), which is historically grounded, to reading that category into the aesthetic fabric of a visual text, without de-historicizing the category itself. This question, in fact, tests the very limits of interdisciplinarity, as historians are more often than not unwilling to resolve it, rather than being incapable of doing so.

In addition to the above concerns, the examination of the intersections of nation and cinema present their own methodological problems. The Soviet film industry employed the term “national cinemas” to identify film production in the non-Russian territories since at least the late 1920s. The promotion of “national cinemas” was necessary in the same ways as that of “national” literatures: Cinema, like literature, represented the mark of an advanced nation, and the Bolsheviks demanded that “backward” nations catch up by replicating the cultural production of their more advanced comrades. In the mid-1920s, film studios were built in the Union Republic capitals of Kyiv, Erevan, Baku, Tbilisi and Tashkent to provide the industrial foundation for “national cinema” in the Soviet Union. In this inclusive sense, for example, any film produced in Ukraine was an

example of “Ukrainian national cinema,” regardless of the film’s subject matter or to whom the film was addressed. Yet, this notion of “national cinema” provides the historian with few analytical tools for examining particular films or directors and their relationships (or lack thereof) to questions of national identity. Andrew Higson, a historian of British cinema, writes that an understanding of nation and cinema also needs to incorporate questions of “exhibition and consumption,” the cultural specificity of particular films, in addition to how industries market films as “national.”⁶³ Higson’s approach to “national cinema” makes sense, not only from an analytical perspective, but also in addressing the specificity of the problem in 1960s Ukraine.

In this period, the Soviet film industry understood “national cinema,” not only as the context of production, but also as an aesthetic and narrative category that had implications for how it would promote particular films, and for how it would address filmmakers who made them. In the 1960s, the “national” film represented a subset of cinema production possibilities in the Union republics, rather than (only) the totality of production in these nationally defined spaces. At certain studios, Dovzhenko Studio in Kyiv most pronouncedly, the “national” film functioned as a sub-genre in terms of their visual and narrative conventions, how the industry categorized them and what critics and spectators expected from them. As recent film scholarship has shown, moreover, genre represents a historically grounded site of mediation between filmmakers, spectators, the film industry and the visual texts themselves. Film scholar Christine Gledhill writes, “Genre provides the conceptual space where questions of how to understand the life of films in the social can be pursued.” She goes on to argue, “In this space, issues of texts and aesthetics [...] intersect with those of industry and institution, history and society, culture and audiences.”⁶⁴ By approaching films that deal with self-consciously “national” subject matter using some of the tools of genre analysis, we can avoid both the pitfall of reifying a national(ist) conceptual

⁶³ Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 4-5.

⁶⁴ Christine Gledhill, “Rethinking Genre,” in *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed., Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 221.

vocabulary, without limiting our analysis to how people talked about the films. In Von Moltke's work on the German "*Heimat*" film, for example, he avoids an all-inclusive, and thus meaningless, notion of "national cinema," while grounding the nationalist films under discussion within a category located in a particular historical context.⁶⁵ I similarly hope to approach the "national" film in the Soviet Union, demonstrating that it functioned as an industry category, and as a broader mode of representing non-Russians in the Soviet Union. In this way, "national cinema" does not function as a reified category, but as a political and aesthetic problem. With this approach to text and context, I hope to show how Ukrainian cinema might help us understand the particular dimensions of the nationality question after Stalin, a period when the exploration of national identity was tied into problems of artistic representation, which sometimes had greater effect than past questions of national rights.

Nonetheless, the "national" film did not emerge as a *tabula rasa* during the 1960s, as its origins lie squarely within Stalinist aesthetics. Chapter 1 explores shifts in representational strategies from the 1930s through the early 1960s, focusing on how non-Russians fit into an image of the "Friendship of Peoples." Under Stalinism, I identify a folkloric mode of viewing the non-Russian in popular cinema, whereby Ukrainians, Georgians, Kazakhs, etc. became generically identifiable through objects contained on the body (costumes, mustaches, hats, hairstyles), in addition to the identification of certain non-essential concerns (nature, history) revealed within poetic monologue, song and dance. Contained within and above such a "colorful" spectacle of non-Russianness was a narrative of overcoming backwardness combined with political union that typically contained a strong component of Russian leadership. At the same time, many films made in the Union republics from the Stalin period attempted to articulate that union with "Russia" was of principle benefit to the non-Russian; that is to say, "internationalism" was not the principle, to which the films appealed, but rather a realization of national consciousness through political union. The

⁶⁵ Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

important shift in post-Stalinist modes of representing the non-Russian was the reconstitution of ethnic difference. When filmmakers appealed to folklore after Stalin, they frequently rejected the homogenizing narrative of the Stalinist folkloric, adopting what I identify as an ethnographic mode, whereby principles of national identification were linked to an exoticized image of essential differences.

Chapter 2 explores several interlocking phenomena related to the emergence of viable film studios in the union republics after Stalin: As part of Khrushchev's efforts at the devolution of authority to local enterprises, along with promotion of *khozraschet* – a Russian word alternately meaning self-reliance and accountability – film studios outside of Moscow and Leningrad were given some degree of autonomy. Along with this partial devolution of authority came an increase in funding for republican studios and a spurt in production. The principal issue that the studio leadership faced during the early 1960s was in attracting a new base of creative personnel to Kyiv. While committed to indigenizing the staff of directors, screenwriters and actors, Ukraine lacked a viable means to educate “its own” people. Thus, in encouraging young Ukrainians studying at the All-Union Film Institute (VGIK) to return to their native republic, the studio also found it necessary to re-nationalize such “Russified” cadres. Under new leadership, which was conversant with both Ukrainian national discourse and broader Thaw-era aesthetic questions, Dovzhenko Studio began recovering from its reputation in the Soviet Union as a provincial studio that continued to represent the world according to Stalinist aesthetic principles.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, Dovzhenko Studio produced an admixture of folkloric representations of Ukraine and a newer ethnographic, or “poetic” orientation. Chapter 2 also examines Volodymyr Denysenko's *A Dream* (*Son*, 1964), a film about a young Taras Shevchenko, the nineteenth-century Ukrainian national poet, in his journey from serfdom to freedom. A student of Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Denysenko made *A Dream* with poet Dmytro Pavlychko's script, which included remnants of the Stalinist biographical genre alongside many moments of narrative discontinuity more characteristic of West European New Wave movements. Moreover, while tied to a literary canon that Stalinism

had co-opted from an older generation of Ukrainian nationalists, *A Dream* updated Shevchenko to signify post-Stalinist ideals of youth, romanticism, non-conformism and personal expression.

The young Carpathian-born actor Ivan Mykolaichuk, who played the role of Shevchenko in *A Dream*, continued his rise to fame in Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* the following year, a film about an oft-exoticized tribe of highland shepherds, the Hutsuls. Chapter 3 focuses on the production of this unusual film, shot on location in the Ukrainian Carpathians with the participation of local peasants. The studio marketed the film as a revival of "Dovzhenko's poetic traditions" and appealed to the authenticity of "real Hutsuls," untouched by modernity, on display therein. While having only modest box office success, Paradzhanov's film became the largest influence on Ukrainian cinema into the mid-1970s, with its thematic concern with regional ethnography in the republic, and its outlandish visual style. Paradzhanov and cinematographer Iurii Illienko pioneered an observational style of camera movement, which emphasized the strange, fairy tale quality of the landscape and its people, even as it sought to engage the spectator directly through the erosion of realist dramatic conventions. These techniques and devices of a re-emergent cinematic modernism in Ukraine (dubbed "Ukrainian Poetic Cinema") integrated canonical socialist realist representations of the Carpathians and its inhabitants to produce a radicalized politics of self-knowledge in the republic. Paradzhanov, Illienko and the other Ukrainian writers and artists who worked on the film presented the Carpathians as a site of authenticity and purity through an aestheticized ethnoscape.⁶⁶ The cinematic journey to the Carpathians provoked a nationalist pride in a fragment of the Ukrainian people supposedly untouched by socialist modernity, the meaning of which could be extended to what the rest of Ukraine – and Eastern Ukraine in particular – had lost.

⁶⁶ I employ the word "ethnoscape" throughout this dissertation to mean, pace Anthony Smith, "Landscapes endowed with poetic ethnic meaning through the historicization of nature and the territorialization of ethnic memories." See, Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

When *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* first screened publicly on September 4, 1965, as part of Kyiv's annual "Cinema Days" festival, literary critic Ivan Dziuba interrupted the event with an unscheduled speech about the arrest of several Ukrainian intellectuals implicated in a supposed nationalist conspiracy. The event at the premier sparked the Ukrainian dissident movement and Ukrainian cinema's intersections with this movement. Common to certain Ukrainian filmmakers and dissident nationalists was a conception of personal authorship, whereby individuals could embody not some Romantic notion of the "national spirit," but the ability to see and articulate the "authentic" self. In examining Ukrainian cinema's politics of personal authorship in Chapter 4, I explore how Paradzhanov's largely aesthetic problems generated concerns about the unfulfilled promises of Soviet nationalities policy in the 1960s. This transition from the aesthetic to the political, however, was not natural or even intentional. Paradzhanov's *Shadows*, for example, represented above all a de-politicization of the signficatory function of the Carpathians and its "strange" and unknowable inhabitants. This later engagement with a new nationalist politics in the republic resulted in a number of films, most of them also set in the Carpathians, banned or which never made it into post-production. As I will show, these films demonstrate how problems of artistic representation had greater political effect within this new politics of nationality than even struggles for national rights.

By the mid-1970s, Shelest's successor as CPU First Secretary, Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi, called for the complete repression of the "Ukrainian poetic school," which included many of those filmmakers influenced by Paradzhanov's *Shadows*. Later, the CPU even forbade reference to "poetic cinema" in the press. While the Carpathians served these filmmakers as a site of authentic communion with a national past beyond the geo-political divides of early modern and modern Europe, located as it was in between Eastern and Western Ukraine, these young director-*auteurs* occupied a space in between a nationalist dissident

movement and the conformist Little Russianism of the 1970s CPU leadership.⁶⁷ Yet, their modernist sensibilities and thematic focus on ethnography provoked a political scandal by the middle of the decade.

Nationalist politics aside, other tensions were emerging in the early 1970s that also jeopardized “Ukrainian poetic cinema,” and which complicated the nationality question. Authorities in Goskino were fed up with what they labeled an “elite” cinema, and began to view republican studios as financial liabilities. Chapter 5 explores the descent from the politics of artistic representation, which was fundamentally embroiled in larger economic changes in the Soviet film industry. Industry authorities demanded a return to comprehensible and “realist” understandings of “national character” instead of the “difficult” aesthetic of Paradzhanov and his followers in Ukraine. The growing sociological field of film audience research demonstrated that central studios were the only ones that continued to make money during the industry’s economic downturn of the 1970s. Goskino turned more and more toward film genres that audience researchers could guarantee would sell tickets. Despite the political excision of “poetic cinema,” these filmmakers’ concerns initially were integrated into a new generic system of artistic representation. Now a national icon, Mykolaichuk continued to play the roles, in which he was coded as “ethnically” Ukrainian, but here these character types were determined by the generic conventions of adventure films, melodramas, and comedies. It was only at the end of the decade that Goskino completely abandoned the very idea of a “national theme” due to its scientifically determined economic liability. By 1980, Ukrainian films came to be associated with a “B movie” aesthetic in the Soviet Union, but otherwise resembled the generic and thematic conventions of central productions. The question of Ukrainian difference had been resolved, and, from the perspective of filmmakers, industry officials and critics alike, the era of “national cinemas” in the Soviet Union had ended.

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⁶⁷ Paul Robert Magocsi defines “Little Russianism” as interest in Ukraine as a “lower stage in a hierarchy of multiple loyalties.” *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 675.

While such concepts as “nationality,” the “nationality question,” and “national cinema” were familiar terms for the individuals that interest me in this dissertation, I also draw on the admittedly problematic notion of “identity,” which became a concept in Russia and Ukraine only through Anglo-American cultural studies during the 1990s. In drawing on this latter concept in my work, I hope to avoid the pitfalls of what Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper call “clichéd constructivism,” which they define as an unselfconscious repetition of “qualifiers” such as “multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, [...] gestures signaling a stance rather than words conveying a meaning.”⁶⁸ While such jargon is present in much recent work in cultural studies, Brubaker and Cooper do not give reason to reject these terms outright, if we demonstrate that they have real meaning in a particular context. In accepting that nations and identities are constructed, I nonetheless hope to investigate the texts and contexts that produce such essentialist claims. Brubaker and Cooper advocate getting “beyond identity,” largely because “identity” functions as a “place holder,” but this leaves us without a vocabulary to study the processes and practices of reification itself. Here, I use “national identity” as one of many accepted models for knowing oneself in relation to those around oneself in the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ Although I will speak frequently of “nationalism” in this context, I insist on “national identity” for its greater “multidimensionality.” As Anthony Smith writes, whereas “nationalism” refers exclusively to an “ideology or movement,” identity as a concept extends “to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism.”⁷⁰ I do not suggest that everyone need internalize an “identity,” but that identity was available for individuals and groups to employ for political, social, cultural, or sentimental purposes.

Every Ukrainian knew they were “Ukrainian,” largely because of the legal certainty of line four on Soviet internal passports. This study, however, examines the uncertainties of national identity, a space where certain individuals attempted

⁶⁸ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 21, no. 1 (2000), 11.

⁶⁹ Terry Martin opts for the term “national identity” for the Russian “*natsional’naia kul’tura*.”

⁷⁰ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, vii.

to make sense of, and propagate, what it meant to be “Ukrainian,” and what “Ukraine” was, apart from a territory with fixed borders that were determined largely by non-Ukrainians.

Chapter 1

The Thaw and Modes of Representing the Non-Russian in Soviet Cinema

When Nikita Khrushchev delivered the “Secret Speech” at the Twentieth Party Congress on February 25, 1956, movies were not among the most pressing matters at hand. Nonetheless, the General Secretary referenced films on eleven occasions during the night, clearly demonstrating that cinema was relevant to his diagnosis of “Stalin’s personality cult.” The General Secretary’s critique of movies under Stalin would be familiar enough to common understandings of Soviet “propaganda:” The image masked reality rather than revealed it; the leader figure dominated the plot; and spectators were brainwashed by dogmatic ideology. For Khrushchev, cinema was the most evident means by which the Stalinist state reproduced itself in popular consciousness. In this formulation, he also implicated the leader’s own consciousness. Stalin, according to his successor, “only knew the countryside and agriculture from film.” Lenin, in contrast, “was close to the people [...] He used to visit villages and talk with the peasants.” Several times during the closed session of the Congress, Khrushchev counterposed Lenin, the active subject, with Stalin, the subject or mere consumer of his own cinematic image: Stalin believed that he was solely responsible for victory during the Civil War because Mikheil Chiaureli presented him “literally vanquishing the enemy with his own sabre” in *The Unforgettable Year 1919* (*Nezabyvaemyi 1919*, 1952). He accepted that Soviet collective farmers were fat from all the meat, fruit, bread, and cheese they ate because Ivan Pyr’ev showed this to be the case in *The Kuban Cossacks* (*Kubanskie kozaki*, 1949).¹ Whether or not Stalin was so naïve

is beside the point; important here is Khrushchev's characterization of what we now label "Stalinism." Under the conditions of Stalinism, Stalin too mistook the image for reality, and had become the spectator of a totalitarian mass culture that he himself had helped construct.

Nonetheless, Khrushchev could only articulate the presence in Stalinist cinema of that which was absent in reality, without of course suggesting the aesthetic and formal principles at work under the "cult of personality." To overcome the cult, Khrushchev implied that filmmakers now had to seek out reality, to reflect that which was already present. More than any other film, Pyr'ev's *Kuban Cossacks* became emblematic during the Thaw for its "varnish of reality [*lakirovka deistvitel'nosti*]." A year after the "Secret Speech," Khrushchev ordered the film out of distribution in an attempt to purge Soviet culture of the remnants of Stalinism.² A seemingly innocuous Soviet musical comedy, Pyr'ev's film is about two former lovers who find themselves in "socialist competition" with each other as chairpersons of neighboring collective farms on the Southern steppe. But it was the imagery of abundance and almost overwhelming sense of happiness that bothered authorities and intellectuals alike about *Kuban Cossacks*. In distinction to Grigorii Aleksandrov's more famous Soviet musicals, *The Happy Guys* (*Veselye rebiata*, 1934), *Circus* (*Tsirk*, 1936) and *Volga-Volga* (1938), films structured around classic narrative motifs of conflict and resolution, and relying on the spectacle of farce and slapstick comedy, Pyr'ev presents us with a belabored sound and view of the land and people that inhabit his vision of the Kuban.³ The camera moves slowly across fields of wheat and village markets overflowing with objects.⁴ Pyr'ev allows fat peasants in embroidered vests and dresses to sing and speak at length about their happiness with such material abundance, which their collective labor has produced. And unlike Aleksandrov's films, Pyr'ev's heroes constantly reference the past, yet not as something to overcome, but as a moment to re-capture. In such a conservative and nostalgic mode, Moscow and other urban spaces are noticeably absent, and it is the space of the Soviet periphery that Pyr'ev explores.

In fact, the origins of the *kolkhoz* musical lie in Pyr'ev's experiences making films at Ukrainfil'm in Kyiv during the late 1930s.⁵ While working at Mosfil'm for *Kuban Cossacks*, Pyr'ev continued to represent a definitively "ethnic" space in his mobilization of a Stalinist folkloric aesthetic. As a culmination of Pyr'ev's style, *Kuban Cossacks* reduces narrative to a bare minimum in order to emphasize the "colorful" people and landscape that it explores. The speech of the Kuban, with its mix of Russian and Ukrainian, is frequently heard, and Pyr'ev himself later told the SKU that the film was intended as an homage to the Ukrainian national character.⁶

Interestingly enough, when Khrushchev was dismissing *Kuban Cossacks* for its "*lakirovka*," Pyr'ev was managing director of Mosfil'm, where he became a key figure in the articulation of a Thaw-era aesthetic that rejected such Stalinist excess. In *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw*, Josephine Woll writes that Khrushchev's words on cinema at the Twentieth Party Congress empowered screenwriters and directors to return to the "actual conditions" prevailing in the countryside, and on "real people," rather than such a folksy image of abundance found in the *kolkhoz* musical.⁷ Without reifying this new realism, we can identify certain aesthetic practices that conformed to its appeal. In supposed emulation of Lenin, filmmakers made the journey to the village, factory, schoolhouse, private homes, in order to render its existence "authentically" in fiction film. No longer would a political and cinematic education suffice; to overcome the *distance* associated with Stalinist representational models, principally located on homogeneous film studio grounds, filmmakers had to be "close to the people" in the most spatially literal sense of the term.

Because "national" film production and the representation of the non-Russian in particular was grounded in what I label a Stalinist folkloric mode, most emblematic in Pyr'ev's *kolkhoz* musicals, this chapter explores how such films functioned formally, and as components of Stalinist culture. I demonstrate that, while 1960s Ukrainian cinema engaged with Thaw-era cultural and aesthetic discourse, it did so within the visual codes of a folkloric mode of representation, which emerged during the 1920s and was canonized in the late 1930s. This

chapter first sets out to define the major principles of Thaw-era cinematic discourse, located within a literary centric notion of realism (*literaturnost*), and grounded in a discourse of “sincerity” and “honesty.” In the major section of the chapter, I lay out the cinematic foundations of what Thaw filmmakers and critics railed against in the 1950s-60s, Stalinist monumentalism on the one hand and a dogmatic, homogenous teleology on the other. During the late-1950s, Soviet film critics had identified Kyiv Studio as the most common site of reproducing such folkloric imagery, condemning its refusal to participate in the new realism that characterized Thaw cinema. Some Ukrainian filmmakers and critics asserted in turn that, while perhaps overblown at times, Ukrainian cinema’s “theatricality” – its exaggerated, trans-historical iconicity, located in the elaborate costumes, folk songs and dance, and comical speech – was the basis for its claim to national originality. While such anti-realism was condemned as a hold-over from the “cult of personality,” Ukrainian cinema in the 1960s searched for a means of visualizing “national character,” while also engaging in Thaw-era preoccupations with authenticity and realism.

I conclude by showing how Thaw-era Ukrainian filmmakers transformed this image of non-Russian space with the articulation of an ethnographic aesthetic, which was engaged with more recent theories of the maintenance of national difference in the Soviet Union and the consequent de-familiarization of ethnic spaces on screen. Ukrainian cinema did not dispense with folkloric representations, but rather further codified and differentiated its mode of production, so that the use of folklore in cinema asserted a claim to a differentiated, rather than homogenous, Soviet space.

The “Cult of the Little Guy”⁸ during the Thaw

By the time Khrushchev articulated his rejection of the “cult of personality” in February 1956, writers and critics had already voiced many of the General Secretary’s concerns about the “varnish of reality” in recent works of literature and cinema. French critic André Bazin was perhaps the first to speak

knowledgeably about the “Stalin myth in Soviet cinema” in his 1950 article of the same title for the left-wing Paris journal, *L’Esprit*. In examining Ihor Savchenko’s *The Third Blow* (*Tretii udar*, 1948) and Vladimir Petrov’s *The Battle of Stalingrad* (*Stalingradskaia bitva*, 1949-50), Bazin examined how Stalin himself served as a determining influence on the course of victory in the Great Patriotic War, rather than military leaders like Marshall Zhukov or common soldiers. When publishing his collected work in 1958, Bazin suggested in an appendix that his ideas in the article might have floated to Khrushchev himself because of his statement that Stalin “only knew the countryside and agriculture from film.”⁹ Even if untrue, it is clear that Khrushchev took his cues in elements of the “secret speech” from literary and art criticism. His very label of the personality cult was drawn from a reference in Vladimir Pomerantsev’s December 1953 *Novyi mir* (New World) article, “On Sincerity in Literature (Ob iskrennosti v literature),” about the unbelievable and “superhuman” qualities of Stalin-era literary heroes. Just as such literary heroes allegorically represented Stalin himself, Khrushchev was now using the critique of those literary heroes as a critique of Stalin. The metaphor of “the Thaw” to represent the post-Stalin era was also a literary reference, from Ilia Ehrenburg’s novel of the same title (*Ottepel’*), published in the May 1954 issue of the journal *Znamia* (The Banner). Ehrenburg’s work was an indictment against the emotionally opaque and ethically compromised Stalinist subject, who has learned “how to say nothing” for careerist ambitions and material comforts. In his novel, Ehrenburg laid out the principal dichotomies of post-Stalinist literary discourse - between opportunism and honesty, theory and experience, pragmatism and romanticism, imposed loneliness and genuine friendship, mere craftsmanship and artistic talent, knowledge and feeling, representation and reality and, if we are to believe the novel’s critics, the mass and the individual.¹⁰ The novel ends in the Spring of 1953 (after Stalin’s death), with the multiple psychological and emotional problems of the story suddenly resolved.¹¹

In Soviet film, Grigorii Chukhrai’s *Clear Skies* (*Chistoe nebo*, 1961), among many other examples from 1956-58 and 1961-1963, presents a similar

immediate transformation from the frozen years of the post-war Soviet Union to the freer atmosphere after Stalin's death, when people suddenly became more open, honest, and friendlier. Such discourse was ubiquitous during these years. SKU First Secretary Tymofii Levchuk stated during a March 1962 Plenum, "Let the elimination of the results of Stalin's cult of personality quickly teach [us to be] compassionate, considerate, and have a beneficial attitude toward one another."¹²

Pomerantsev's article in *Novyi mir* first introduced readers to the major preoccupations of Thaw-era literary politics, calling on writers and artists to reject the "stereotypical heroes, thematics, beginnings and endings" of Stalinist cultural production. Instead, creative work should embody the ideas and personal expression of its author, rather than the narrow political principles of the day. Pomerantsev, of course, offered more substantive advice to the post-Stalin generation of creative workers, both in his definition of "sincerity" as "talent," and in identifying its antecedent in "artifice [*delannost' veshchi*]" as a component of mimicry. Within the latter, he brought out the problem of "obvious constructedness [*javnaia sostroennost'*]" and the "far-fetched nature of characters and situations," drawing on the example of Sergei Boldyrev's mammoth novel about increasing the productivity of blast furnaces (*Reshaiushchie gody*, 1956).¹³

Fundamentally, he accused such writers like Boldyrev of not "experiencing the village."¹⁴ He juxtaposed his principle of "sincerity" with the "varnishing of reality [*lakirovka deistvitel'nosti*]," which showed only the "abundant banquet" and not the "foul factory cafeteria."¹⁵ While not necessarily proposing an exploration of new content, Pomerantsev concluded that writers needed to refocus their attention on "the problem of bringing everyday life to light in literature."¹⁶ That is, writers may still insist upon the theme of the Civil War, Revolution, the factory, *kolkhoz*, etc., but they should explore the diversity of human emotion and psychology within these settings and events, exactly as Ehrenburg set out in *The Thaw*. Instead of writing about the deeds of leaders, along with "things and

objects” that adorned the *kolkhoz* market, writers should concern themselves with “ordinary” human experience.¹⁷

Film critics writing in *Iskusstvo kino* during 1954-55 demanded the same focus on the “individual personality,” “simple people” and a “struggle for the authentic” in Soviet cinema.¹⁸ Later in the decade, Viktor Nekrasov, in a highly Pomerantsevian voice, explored transformations in Soviet cinema during the mid-1950s, positioning the new interest in human experience against the “great events” of the Stalinist “cinema of leaders.”¹⁹ In “Words, ‘Great’ and Simple (Slova, ‘velikie’ i prostye),” he distinguished a new “prosaic” style found in Marlen Khutsiev’s *Spring on Zarechnaia Street* (*Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse*, 1956) and *The Two Fedors* (*Dva Fedora*, 1958) from Iuliia Solntseva’s *A Poem about the Sea* (*Poema o more*, 1959), a film begun and based on a screenplay by the recently deceased Oleksandr Dovzhenko. While Khutsiev’s early features were everyday stories about ordinary people, Dovzhenko’s *Poem* addressed large issues of modernity and tradition. With a narrative focused on the friendship between a general and a *kolkhoz* chairman against the backdrop of the construction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station on the lower Dnipro, Nekrasov wrote, “I did not believe the film.” In associating Solntseva’s film with a left-over Stalinist aesthetics, Khutsiev came to represent a return to “the realism of everyday life [*bytovoi realizm*]” with *Spring* and *The Two Fedors*. Nekrasov advocated a return to Stanislavskii’s method in the precision of realistic details in acting. Solntseva’s and Dovzhenko’s film, he stated, “is based on a highly conventional situation and means.”²⁰ Nekrasov pointed toward the use of language in *Poem about the Sea* as an indicator of Dovzhenko’s complicity in Stalinist modes of representation:

Having read a book or watched a film, I always ask myself: Would I like to meet these new people? After *Poem about the Sea*, I can say, no. They would tire me with their talk. I know these people. And they would speak for a long time, in a lofty manner, only about the most serious things. And not making any jokes, with their heads raised high, they gaze off into the blue distance of the Dnipro. To argue with them would be pointless, because they will speak about correct and indisputable things. No, I do not want to meet them.²¹

Nekrasov identified a mode of speaking in film that was completely divorced from “real life” in its lofty “poetic” voice. As with *Kuban Cosacks*, the association with a particular place is pervasive. The Dnipro, the Kakhovka region itself, and the rootedness of the main characters all speak to a localist discourse within the film, even as these “elements” foreground the “stereotypical” theme of socialist construction.

In contrast, Khutsiev’s films, in addition to other Thaw-era classics like Mikhail Kalatozov’s *The Cranes are Flying* (*Letiat’ zhuravli*, 1957) and Chukhrai’s *Ballad of a Soldier* (*Ballada o soldate*, 1959), are local only insofar as they focus on private human relations, which prefigure both landscape and event, the latter starkly subservient to ordinary human interactions. In this case, Nekrasov identified an entirely different manner of speech – “a passionate, but not bombastic, truthful and not utilitarian, a speech, in which ordinary people speak, the same [people] who sometimes do great deeds.”²²

Fundamentally, Pomerantsev and Nekrasov promoted a shift in focus from event/setting as the literary/cinematic subject to the human subject. Within this formulation, they promoted a de-spatialized image of character, a hero that would not be beholden to setting, someone who would exist independent of the spaces that they inhabited. On the contrary, in the Stalinist representation of the non-Russian, the human subject was placed within a particularistic landscape, one that was essential to their identity, and one which was in line with the location of the studio that claimed authority to produce such representations.

Socialist Realism and Folkloric Representation: *Tractor Drivers* (1939) and *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi* (1941)

Under a Stalinist mode of “national” representation, the landscapes and peoples of the Soviet periphery achieved recognition as unique within a folkloric visual vocabulary, replete with costumes, dancing peasants, and other evidence of “national color.” The figures, objects and landscapes, in addition to the plots and dialogue, that appeared in such films were rarely unfamiliar to audiences by

the late-1930s, most of them conforming to what Katerina Clark called socialist realism's ritualistic mode. In *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, she characterized socialist realist narrative as ritualistic in its reproduction of a "master plot," the "structuring force" of which consisted of the "spontaneity / consciousness dialectic."²³ In the canonical scenario, the hero is a "modest" communist, but lacks the discipline and leadership skills to accomplish the assigned task. In the end, he or she "masters his [or her] willful self... [and] attains an extrapersonal identity" of rational consciousness at the exclusive service of the collective.²⁴ Frequently, the hero achieves such consciousness with the help of someone more politically knowledgeable. Andrei Zhdanov viewed socialist realism as the union of "proletarian realism" with "revolutionary romanticism." During his tenure as CPSU Ideological Secretary, Zhdanov characterized this combination as "the most matter-of-fact, everyday reality with the most heroic prospects."²⁵

Py'ev's work was highly emblematic of the socialist realist "master plot," along with its mixture of "realism" with "romanticism." In fact, his 1939 Kyiv Studio production, *Tractor Drivers (Traktoristy)*, provided one of the definitive models for socialist realist narration and choice of content. Klim Iarko, the hero, is a demobilized tank driver who had served on the Manchurian border. Returning to his native village, now part of a collective farm in Southern Ukraine, Klim hopes to rekindle his love with Mar'iana Bazhan, a celebrated Stakhanovite tractor driver and the daughter of the *kolkhoz* chairman. As the narrative develops, he must prove that he can re-join the socialist community by shedding his military arrogance and learning to accept the legitimate authority of Mar'iana's father, a stern and capable, yet jovial, apparatchik. Only after Klim subjugates his will to that of the collective does Mar'iana agree to marry him. In Py'ev's film, the consummation of the central relationship is determined, not by physical attraction, but through labor initiative and acceptance of social norms. Moreover, Py'ev placed the prosaic tasks of plowing the fields and sowing grain on the sublime level of going to battle.

In focusing on plot repetition, the lack of individual consciousness, and the hyperbolic elaboration of the heroic personality in Stalinist narration, Thaw-era critics like Nekrasov followed the literary model of Pomerantsev, and generally ignored aspects of visual pleasure present in such films. As I demonstrate in this section, while such critics have identified the ritualistic mode of representing canonical events, settings and hero-types, Stalinist cinema also contained certain visual codes in marking the non-Russian variations to the socialist realist “master plot.” These variations indicate, not a counter-narrative to socialist realism, but a parallel space of meaning production. One could read Pyr’ev’s film on a different level, one which foregrounds the ethno-national elements of “excess” as of equal importance to its socialist realist “master plot.” As Kristin Thompson writes, “Excess is not only counternarrative; it is counterunity. To discuss it may be to invite the partial disintegration of a coherent reading.”²⁶ I tend not to accept that the visual elements of the Stalinist folkloric were “counternarrative,” but such folkloric “play” certainly affected a reading that worked in parallel with the narrative, and which occasionally presented moments of tension between style and narrative. I refer to this parallel space as the folkloric mode, which pervaded Stalin-era cinema from *Chapaev* (1934) onward, yet its presence carried additional meanings and connotations in the cinemas of the Union republics. In defining a visual folklorics, I hope to point toward the ways in which Stalinist cinema domesticated national difference, while maintaining the spectacle of particular spaces and the peoples that inhabited them. With the use of folklore in Soviet cinema, we see two principles at work – the spectacle of difference, and the narrative articulation of an undifferentiated Soviet *narod*.²⁷

As Soviet linguist Vladimir Propp argued, folklore constituted one of the most structured and ritualistic forms of narration, the “functions”²⁸ of which have appeared in popular cinema among other forms of modern media. As several scholars of literature and mass media have identified, folklore’s reproduction in popular art and in political discourse has served to reify notions of tradition and authenticity, and to articulate a culturally cohesive and socially level community. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu writes that the political use of

folklore serves to “negate symbolically the hierarchy without disrupting it.”²⁹ While admitting that even democracies deploy folkloric imagery to blur hierarchies, scholars have identified the use of folklore as a dominant source of cultural legitimacy in the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Ceaușescu’s Romania and Stalin’s USSR. In writing about Italian cinema under Mussolini, for example, Marcia Landy argues that cinematic folklore in particular keys into popular assumptions about the images of national pasts, infusing them with a politically motivated teleology.³⁰ Frank J. Miller speaks of a “cult of folklore” in the Soviet Union under Stalin, stating, “Under the critical dogma of socialist realism, literature and indeed all art were supposed to manifest *narodnost*,” which he translates as “the folkloric.”³¹

While representations of Russians in the Soviet Union made use of folkloric codes, they were not confined to it in the way that non-Russians in the Soviet Union were. In its visual vocabulary, the folkloric mode of representation was the means through which Soviet filmmakers could articulate ethnic difference within the space of a homogenous narrative teleology and static form. Such a system sought a simultaneous modernization and historicization of nationalistic materials, ostensibly to purge them of their bourgeois elements, even as it spectacularized components of non-Russian cultural expression and historical material. The Stalinist folkloric was a mobile form, in the sense that filmmakers could easily transport its imagery from Ukraine, to the Caucasus, to Central Asia with only minor modifications.³² One participant at a 1967 SK Plenum, dedicated to the “problems of the further development of national cinemas,” parodied this mobile quality of Stalinism’s representation of non-Russians: “The Georgian is the one dancing the *lezghinka*; the Kazakh is the one singing about an apple grove; and the Ukrainian is the one relishing his *saló*.”³³ Each variant of the Soviet ethnic communicates their difference indirectly through spectacular means, rather than directly through dialogue.

Pyr’ev’s emblematic *Tractor Drivers* introduces his Ukrainian hero, Klim, in a train compartment that he shares with a Georgian (identifiable with his thin mustache and dopey smile) and a Muscovite (identifiable by his non-

identifiableness). The three demobilized *tankisty* (tank drivers) are returning from the Manchurian border to their respective national spaces. While Klim plays the accordion, the three sing about their “native land,” the Soviet Union. After the song, however, each man in turn brags about their own particular native spaces – not so much communicating with each other as defining their subjective space of belonging. The Muscovite introduces a letter he received about the exciting political events in the capital and the sputtering, grinning Georgian talks about the wine and women of his republic, perhaps over-exuberant in his passionate gestures. We cut to a close-up of Klim, hugging his accordion with a romantic gleam in his eyes, as he talks about the Ukrainian steppe: “You open the door, and the wind rushes in; you open the window and the scent of cherry blossoms catches you.” In Pyr’ev’s vision of the Soviet ethnoscape, “national” characters possess a quality of excess in their personalities, but which does not obstruct the historicity of the present moment. The Georgian and the Ukrainian are each in love with a timeless quality of their native spaces, while the “Russian” discusses the historically contingent “space” of politics. While Klim becomes the hero of *Tractor Drivers*, we are not yet aligned to him. Instead, the opening scene aligns us with the Muscovite, an emotionally neutral character, one who offers the spectator nothing of himself as a member of a national group. Thus, the film presents a dichotomy between a political center and an ethnic periphery associated with domesticity and safety, which is encoded onto human bodies in the form of national “color” (see Figure 1.1).³⁴ The presence of the non-Russian is not based on a principle of inclusion, so much as it situates an extra-narrative and spectacular sentiment within the film’s diegesis.

In transporting socialist realism to the Soviet periphery, the socialist realist plot also was called upon to unite periphery with the center. As I suggested with the opening scene, however, *Tractor Drivers* did so while maintaining a firm dichotomy between both spaces. While the train united East and West, both geographically and ethnically, the center continued to function differently from the periphery. The people and landscape of the Soviet periphery were fundamentally associated with domesticity, while world events characterized the

center; the periphery is associated with a timeless quality, while the center becomes rooted in historical time. To represent this dichotomy further, Pyr'ev places the objects of an ethnic material culture solely within the intimate site of the domestic realm. Mar'iana, for example, is adorned in an embroidered outfit within the space of the home, while wearing a non-descript workers' outfit in the field. Similarly, we view Bazhan's mother, a character that appears only in the home, outfitted in ethnic garb (see Figure 1.2).

Perhaps the most evident interplay between historical time, represented through a narrative teleology of uniting individual personality with the collective, and the periphery with the center, and folkloric time, represented by "primordial" images of "national color," occurs in Ihor Savchenko's historical-biographical film, *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi* (1941), about the seventeenth-century Zaporozhian Cossack Hetman who first brought Left-bank Ukraine under Muscovite control. Savchenko's film represented the culmination of the two parallel sites of meaning production in the Stalinist cinema of the periphery: First, *Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi* is the quintessential Soviet historical-biographical film, a particular kind of socialist realist genre that dominated Stalinist cinema from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. As Russian film scholar Evgenii Margolit shows, the genre is characterized by a theatrical and monumental style and a predominant focus on the leader as the principle agent of history. Margolit writes that within this genre, the hero ceases to reside within a particular historical period and serves to justify the Soviet theory of government.³⁵

At the same time, the elements in the film that identified a particularly Ukrainian ethnoscape came to dominate Soviet cinema at least until the late 1950s, and in several ways, continued to be present in Ukrainian films during the 1990s. Common to the Stalinist folkloric, historical materialism demands that the Cossack hero come to *national* consciousness through his alignment with "Russia," which functions in this case as the agent of political and cultural modernization. The Muscovite state functions here as a counterpoint, not only to an enemy nation – i.e., Poland – but also to the spontaneity of Ukrainian "color," both seen as initially destructive forces. The narrative's job is not to destroy the



Figure 1.1. Stalinism's "Friendship of Peoples" mythology in *Tractor Drivers*: (l-r) Russian, Georgian, and Ukrainian.



Figure 1.2. The domestic space of the Stalinist folkloric in *Tractor Drivers*: Mar'iana (top) and her mother, Tet'iana Markivna.

elements of “color,” however, but to bind it to the safe and domestic space of song, dance and material culture (Figure 1.3), and purge it of its “*stikhiinye elementy* (spontaneous elements)” – violence and banditry. The film ends with Khmel’nyts’kyi, victorious over the Poles, signing the Pereiaslavl’ Agreement with two Muscovite emissaries. While the agreement celebrates Muscovy’s control over Left-bank Ukraine, the precise relationship between “Russia” and the Cossacks is complicated by Savchenko’s framing. In Figure 1.4, we see the Hetman clearly elevated in relation to the Muscovite emissaries, demonstrating that, as a sovereign, Khmel’nyts’kyi held a higher rank than the vassals of Tsar Aleksei I present during the meeting. The image shows two “nations” signing a treaty as equals, rather than the Russian state with a subordinate people. In this way, the arena of visual representation occasionally overshadowed the strictures of the narrative’s teleology.

Savchenko’s film remains heralded as a high water mark for “national cinema” in Ukraine under Stalin.³⁶ According to Tymofii Levchuk, “Ukrainian national cinema” was born at the same moment as Soviet cinema itself, when Lenin made the nationalization decree in August 1919. Although seemingly arbitrary, considering that films had been produced in Ukraine for a decade prior to this date, Levchuk justified his dating of the 50th Anniversary of Ukrainian National Cinema on two grounds: First, as he explained to Sviatoslav Pavlovykh Ivanov, the head of the Ukrainian Goskino, that although film production in Ukraine existed before Lenin’s decree, Ukraine had only become a nation during that year with the formation of the Bolshevik government in Kharkiv, whereas earlier film production had occurred within a Russian colony. Second, because foreign capital financed such pre-Revolutionary production, it was not “Ukrainian in character.”³⁷ Merely tautological, Levchuk’s first justification nonetheless affirmed the USSR’s nation-building project, along with the continued meaning that republican authorities placed on the dual origins of nation (Ukraine) and state (the Soviet Union). His second justification is more specific in its reference to questions of representation, despite its being couched in familiar anti-capitalist dogma. Without a certain “character,” a film’s national specificity could be called



Figure 1.3. Evidence of “national color” in *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi*.



Figure 1.4. The Hetman willfully signs the Pereiaslav Treaty with the Russians in *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi*.

into question.

Levchuk was not offering his reader a new way of thinking about the origins of Ukrainian cinema. Rather, he merely repeated two elements that constituted the meaning of “national cinema” since the 1930s. Around this time, we begin to see the ethno-territorial claim of Kyiv Studio to certain thematic material, rooted in a folkloric conception of national difference and present in visual and aural spectacle. Pyr’ev, a Russian filmmaker, came to Kyiv to make films about Ukraine, before returning to Moscow to make generically Soviet productions. While ethnically Ukrainian, Savchenko too worked in Moscow before returning to Ukraine to make Ukrainian-themed films.

Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s *Zvenyhora* (1927) as the “First Ukrainian Film”

With this alignment of folkloric theme and production space, we begin to see the generic origins of the “national” film. When critics began writing histories of Soviet cinema after World War II, it was within the context of this alignment that they identified as “national cinema,” rather than as constituting the totality of production on the Soviet ethnic “periphery.” Nikolai Lebedev’s *Outline on the History of Cinema in the USSR* from 1947 provides the first evidence of this conception, wherein “one of the founders of Soviet film criticism”³⁸ wrote,

Despite a quantitatively large film production, Soviet Ukrainian cinema during the first years of its existence was Ukrainian only in a territorial sense [...] But it did not become Ukrainian national cinema in spirit and style.³⁹

Like Levchuk, while Lebedev admitted that Ukrainian cinema existed since the existence of the Ukrainian SSR, he privileged the system of representation – indeed, a formal specificity – over a tautological explanation of “Ukrainian national cinema.” Because the economic fact of film production alone could not inject suitable meaning into such a term, Lebedev had to look elsewhere for a point of origin, which he found almost a decade after Lenin’s decree in Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s film, *Zvenyhora* (1927). While narratively and stylistically eclectic

and highly modernist, which would later stand at odds with socialist realism and Stalinist culture as a whole, the film introduced spectators to a canonical Ukrainian ethnoscape that came to visual maturity in the films of Savchenko and Pyr'ev.

According to Soviet film critic Nikolai Lebedev, *Zvenyhora* was “the first genuinely Ukrainian work of cinema,” due not only to its Ukrainian theme, but also because Dovzhenko was “organically connected with Ukrainian culture.”⁴⁰ Despite his earlier work on such genre-driven films as *Love's Berries* (*Iagodka liubvi*, 1926) and *The Diplomatic Pouch* (*Sumka dipkur'era*, 1927), Dovzhenko too considered *Zvenyhora* his first “real” film.⁴¹ As the first of two efforts explicitly located in Ukraine during the Revolution, *Zvenyhora* introduces a number of stylistic and narrative elements that remained consistent throughout his body of work. Here, the filmmaker also articulated a number of character types and image tropes that dominated not only the rest of his own work, but Ukrainian cinema as a whole. The main character in *Zvenyhora*, known only as “old man [did],” becomes a symbol of continuity and tradition, and a “generalized national image of the Ukrainian peasant,” according to film critic Rostislav Iurenev,⁴² while the Cossack in *Zvenyhora* represents a historical point of origin for the Ukrainian nation, while trans-historically characterizing the particular nature of the contemporary Ukrainian revolutionary. In this case, this trans-historical “Cossack” can be either a Ukrainian Bolshevik (the hero, Timosh) or a nationalist (his brother Pavlo). Finally, *Zvenyhora* introduces the landscape as an important visual / narrative component, which, through a stylized *tableaux*-like imagery, invites the spectator to contemplate its meaning-producing quality.

Although, as Lebedev pointed out, “The content is difficult to convey with words,”⁴³ *Zvenyhora* deals with various disconnected moments of a highly mythologized Ukrainian history, from the invasion of the Normans, to the 17th century Cossack Hetmanate, to the First World War and post-revolutionary Ukraine. *Zvenyhora* narrates each of the “historical” episodes separately and a-chronologically, which suggests a historical progression that never materializes. The film opens as seventeenth-century Cossack bandits encounter an old man

raving about lost treasure during a routine patrol for Polish soldiers. The middle of the film breaks to tell the story of the ninth-century Princess Roksana, who “betrays her nation” by marrying a Varangian lord. The end relates Timosh’s story as he joins the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. The connecting segments between these historical / mythological episodes follow Timosh’s brother Pavlo and their grandfather (the “old man”) as they search for a lost treasure (referred to as “our Ukrainian treasures” in the intertitles) at Zvenyhora. After the Civil War, Pavlo emigrates to Prague in order to acquire enough money to continue his search. In the final scene, he returns to Soviet Ukraine, attempting to convince the old man to bomb a Red Army train carrying Timosh. He refuses, and Timosh and his comrades invite the old man onto the train, believing that he can be re-educated, while Pavlo commits suicide. Most evidently, however, the “treasure” of Zvenyhora remains undiscovered at the end of the film.

The film is stylistically and generically eclectic, mixing rapid montage in the scenes of revolutionary change with paced shots of pre-World War I peasant communities in Ukraine; slapstick comedy exists alongside highly theatrical melodrama and the action of a war film. Evgenii Margolit pointed out in his dissertation that Dovzhenko’s *Zvenyhora* was one of the first Soviet films that borrowed freely from folkloric motifs. He saw in Dovzhenko’s film the “organic union of fairy-tales, legends, songs, and the *lubok*.”⁴⁴ The film’s central character, the old man, functions as a catalyst for relating the national *epos* (epic poetry), and he himself becomes the preserver of that tradition through his appearance in each of the episodes. Life in contemporary Ukraine is connected allegorically to folkloric narratives set against the backdrop of the unchanging Ukrainian space of Zvenyhora (loosely translated as “Jingle Mountain” from the Russian verb “*zvénét*,” to ring, and the Ukrainian word “*horá*” for mountain). Historical / revolutionary time constantly abuts with a de-historicized mythological time, which is in essence cyclical, due to the presence of the static images of Zvenyhora and the old man. This is an anti-materialist perspective, where humans, in their stability over time, function as objects in nature. The nationalistic value of this perspective is in the stability of place over the mutability

of history, and the revolutionary process represented in the film is only legible as positive insofar as it conforms to the film's allegorical constructs.

The film introduces the viewer to a number of image tropes, which will become canonical for Ukrainian cinema. The Cossacks wear their distinctive woolen hats and Turkish sabers, and among them is the iconic *bandura* player. The old man himself is an equally canonical image, which would repeatedly signify Ukrainian "tradition" in Dovzhenko's future films, and in many other Ukrainian films from this point forward. The old man is simultaneously comically superstitious, consistently drunk, yet in possession of folk wisdom; he is impoverished yet physically strong.

Like the old man, the treasure under Zvenyhora is also an ambiguous symbol, alternately signifying a meaning-producing object held collectively by the nation, a space of contamination by "impure powers [*nechistye sily*]," and an item of nationalist fetish. While the Cossack leader in the first scene shows the wisdom to suggest leaving "the treasure in peace," affirming that the value of the treasure lies in its untouched nature, Zvenyhora itself is excluded from the socialist modernity that the rest of the country experiences, due to the maintenance of the space's secrecy. The question remains whether we are to read the intertitle that proclaims the onset of modernity in Ukraine as positive or negative. In fact, this remains the problem that the film attempts to address, but fails in its much too deliberate "dialectical" ending of reconciliation between old and new.

Bohdan Nebesio writes that while ostensibly anti-nationalist, the mythical/historical narrative promotes the idea of Ukrainian history as separate from Russian history, and that the grandfather's stories, and thus "tradition," "can be reconciled with... the new socialist state."⁴⁵ The relationship between Russia and Ukraine is furthermore non-existent. Despite its status as the "first Ukrainian film," Iurenchuk ultimately dismisses the film because it "ignored Ukraine's connections with the Russian people."⁴⁶ This critique was equivalent to saying that the film rejected socialist realism. The essential problem that *Zvenyhora* attempts to articulate is the reconciliation of a nationalist mythical time with a

Marxist / materialist historical time. In this task, the film ultimately fails with its unbelievable ending. This was the reconciliation that Savchenko and Pyr'ev worked to establish successfully. But in formulating the familiar, domestic space of "national color," the implicit spectator is the non-ethnic Soviet citizen, who is invited to gaze at the antics of the non-Russian, without any assumed identification. Dovzhenko, in contrast, intended a Ukrainian spectator for his early work, with his refusal to make the Ukrainian ethnoscape and the narrative itself conform wholeheartedly to an emerging Stalinist folkloric mode. Dovzhenko's image of Ukrainian space is uncanny because it refuses to fit itself neatly within the Soviet Union as a whole.

In contrast, we see in such prominent examples from the work of Pyr'ev and Savchenko that the organization of space becomes a method of simultaneously defining difference, but within the political space of union or sameness. In *Visions of a New Land*, Emma Widdis shows how Soviet cinema participated in the transformation and reinvention of national space during the 1920s and 1930s. Through what she identifies as cultural mapping, Soviet authorities sought knowledge and mastery of space, and ways of making space one's own in order to use it effectively. Widdis identifies the term, "*osvoenie prostranstva* [command of space]" as "embodying [this] duality of knowledge and control."⁴⁷ The "Stalinist map," she argues,

pictured an immobile space, hierarchically organized around a dominant center from which lines of influence extended radially, and the relationship between center and periphery encoded relations of power. At the center, Moscow functioned as the viewing position from which the whole territory could metaphorically be "seen," and hence controlled.⁴⁸

Widdis notes from Clark that this notion of "knowledge / control" over space was explicitly tied to the Stalinist project of "dominating nature," to make nature conform to the new civilization. Despite this language of "*osvoenie*," Widdis does not accept that it tells the whole story. She opts for the inclusive term, "exploration," which she describes as a "decentered, nonhierarchical vision of space in which difference is emphasized over sameness[...]" In Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, "*osvoenie*" and exploration "intersected and collided in

cultural texts.”⁴⁹ While such a decentered vision of Soviet space predominated in the 1920s and during the First Five-Year Plan, by the late 1930s, Soviet cinema presented “the radially organized landscape of Stalinism,” that is, a space to be conquered by the center.⁵⁰ Francine Hirsch also traces such a movement from an “exotic” or exploratory treatment of non-Russians in ethnographic exhibits during the 1920s to a “modernized” non-Russian who was struggling to rid itself of elements of backwardness, those very traits that were exoticized in an earlier cultural discourse.⁵¹

We can see a movement away from the domesticated folkloric of high Stalinism by the 1960s, toward what I define as an ethnographic mode, a use of folklore that was static and highly specific, instead of mobile. Formally, the ethnographic mode brought visual “excess” to the foreground of the narrative space. Whereas the folkloric revealed a familiar knowledge of the ethnic subject, in the process of assimilation that I outline above, the 1960s ethnographic film relished in the spectacle of ethnic difference. In this shift, the principle variable is in how filmmakers conceptualized space, in terms of the relationship between the national and the natural. Whereas Widdis and Hirsch view such an ethnographic treatment of the non-Russian during the 1920s, and which I believe is present to some degree in Dovzhenko’s early work, I argue that the 1960s ethnographic mode represented a qualitatively different phenomenon, in part because the intended consumer of the “exotic” was different. While Hirsch and Widdis assume a “central” consumer of the image of the other,⁵² the ethnographic positioning of the spectator in the 1960s is simultaneously other and self. According to Widdis, space was “decentered” in 1920s films about the periphery, but spectatorship was clearly radial throughout the period: Modernization is brought from center to periphery, and “authentic, objective” knowledge is brought from the periphery to the center. As I argue, the material of this knowledge was then mobilized for a Stalinist folkloric, where “national color” was itself demobilized to the domestic realm, largely for a non-non-Russian consumer. I also disagree with Widdis’s argument that late Stalinist representations of the non-Russian was mere “ethnic decoration,” wherein “color was superimposed

onto a vision of homogeneity, and real difference was suppressed.”⁵³ In Savchenko’s *Khmel’myts’kyi*, we need only look beyond the function of the narrative to find that the image of “difference” continued to dominate non-Russian cinema under Stalin. The difference between a Stalinist ethnoscape of the periphery and that of the 1960s “national” film was in the latter’s de-familiarization of the former; that is, the 1960s “national” film questioned our knowledge of the space of the Stalinist folkloric system, even as it continued to mobilize its visual and narrative vocabulary.

Ukrainian Particularity and Overcoming “Theatricality”

The fact that Ukrainian cinema, and Kyiv Studio (renamed in honor of Oleksandr Dovzhenko in 1957) in particular, continued to mobilize a folkloric imagery as an affirmative mode of national representation into the 1960s, despite official condemnation of films like Pyr’ev’s *Kuban Cossacks*, indicates that we need to consider the form of Stalinist representation more seriously than did Thaw-era detractors. As Alla Zhukova and Heorhii Zhurov noted in the second volume of the 1959 history of Ukrainian cinema (*Soviet Ukrainian Film Art: Essays*), “In Ukrainian cinema, folklore frequently lies at the basis of the work itself, and is one of the sources, which express its ideological content.”⁵⁴ Without folklore, the authors implied, Ukrainian cinema would not exist as an independent national cinema. At the time of its publication, filmmakers at Dovzhenko Studio were embroiled in a controversy regarding the very importance of such a mode for Ukrainian cinema’s particularity. In this debate about the “original form of Ukrainian film art,” visuality rather than narrative took center stage as supporters and detractors of the 1950s style explored the relationship between Ukrainian theater, folklore and the cinema. This debate made evident to many filmmakers that an image of Ukrainian difference required the maintenance of folklore as a particular quality, even if cinema’s implementation of it could transcend Stalin-era falsifications.

From cinema's inception as a narrative art in the 1910s, filmmakers and critics have striven to define its relationship to the theater. At first, theater offered cinema a comparison with a respectable form. By the 1920s, however, French and Soviet filmmakers and critics in particular articulated the necessity for cinema to become explicitly "cinematic," and to reject elements of "theatricality." French Impressionists like Germaine Dulac argued that theatrical methods imparted a degree of dramatic "sterility" when applied to the cinema.⁵⁵ In a 1925 article, Soviet filmmaker Abram Room employed a dichotomy of theater and cinema, in which the former represented "illusion" and "stylization," while Room characterized cinema as "realism, life, the everyday, objectivity, properly motivated behavior, [and] rational gesture."⁵⁶ Yet, as Charlie Keil and other film scholars have noted, "theater" became a floating signifier in modernist critical discourse, at times used to advocate for greater realism in cinema, and at other times a movement away from narrative, and into an exploration of image and movement using the techniques of "deep focus, long takes and staging in depth."⁵⁷ In post-Stalinist Soviet cinema of the 1950s, however, the latter "theatrical" techniques were aligned with the monumentalism of the Stalinist folkloric, and thus were not desirable qualities in Thaw-era cinema.

In the third volume of *Soviet Ukrainian Film Art*, which dealt with the period 1941-54, A. A. Romitsyn complained of the pervading aesthetic of "theatricality [*teatral'shchyna*]" that came to characterize Ukrainian cinema after the war, which he identified within the realm of dramaturgy and *mise-en-scene*. On the one hand, there were objective reasons for identifying this quality of Ukrainian cinema: As I will explore in Chapter 2, most of the directors and actors at Dovzhenko Studio in the mid-1950s were drawn from the theater, or were educated at the Kyiv Theatrical Institute (KITM). Second, a portion of the studio's output in the 1950s constituted "film-plays," the literal screening of a staged performance.⁵⁸ Tymofii Levchuk, one of the few directors working at the studio who had been educated at the Kyiv Film Institute in the 1930s, made several film-plays out of a necessity to remain employed during the late-40s and early-50s.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, Romitsyn wrote that even after the Ukrainian studio

returned to “real cinema” in the latter part of the decade, “A theatrical *mise-en-scene* continued to prevail,” and the Ukrainian actor continued to work in a “garrulous” and hyperbolic manner. The Ukrainian film scholar identified a certain forcefulness of the composition, stating that filmmakers placed actors in the shot as if they were on stage. Moreover, directors strongly favored medium shots, at the expense of close-ups, which had the effect of reducing the psychological complexity of the individual roles. Finally, Romitsyn complained of a static camera, which produced a “manufactured” quality to Ukrainian cinema.⁶⁰

Thus, critics leveled a similar critique against such “theatricality” as they did other aspects of late Stalinist artistic culture, calling it a principle, as veteran Ukrainian director Miron Bilinskii stated, in which “living reality” is absent.⁶¹ According to Thaw-era critics, “theatricality” pointed toward the worst aspects of heavy-handed socialist realist narration and a stilted imagery that emphasized “things and objects.” Nonetheless, several Ukrainian critics and filmmakers were more ambivalent about the term, seeing in it aspects of Savchenko’s and Dovzhenko’s work, of which they believed contemporary Ukrainian cinema should take influence. For example, in the October 1958 issue of *Iskusstvo kino*, Ukrainian theater director and KITM instructor Ivan Chabanenko discussed Dovzhenko's "theatricality" – in which he recognized the same qualities of the filmmaker’s art that Nekrasov lambasted a year later – as the height of Ukrainian cinema’s original form.⁶²

Chabanenko, moreover, admitted that the new theatrical directors at Dovzhenko Studio in the 1950s made “imperfect” films, but that the qualities contained within these imperfections were “inherent to the features of the national particularities of the Ukrainian people.”⁶³ He concluded by asking whether Ukrainian cinema’s penchant for “theatricality [here, *teatral'nost'*],” is “really such a horrible evil. [...] And don't elements of theatricality, in the best sense of the word, have the right to exist in Ukrainian cinema as specific features of the national art?” From its origins, Chabanenko wrote, Ukrainian cinema and theater were connected in the extensive cross-over of actors between the two forms. He wrote, “Such a tradition of Ukrainian theater found its continuation and

perfection in the work of directors A. Dovzhenko, I. Savchenko, and many other masters of Ukrainian cinema."⁶⁴ Thus, "theatricality" became a means to define new representational principles for Ukrainian national cinema *through* a Stalinist aesthetic system. Here, however, Chabanenko significantly emphasized the visuality rather than the narrative of that system in speaking to concerns of Ukrainian specificity.

In speaking to a broader audience in the literary journal *Sovetskaia Ukraina* in January 1961, Dovzhenko Studio filmmaker Mykola Makarenko wrote his own justification for theatricality in the cinema. He derisively spoke of cinema "purists," who constantly tote the idea of "*kinematografichnost'*," arguing instead that the (pre-socialist realist) origins of Soviet cinema, and the work of Eisenstein and Dovzhenko in particular, contained no "code of laws." The early Soviet avant-garde borrowed freely from theatrical, as well as literary, conventions, largely because directors were working with the artistic knowledge they already had. Eisenstein came from the theater himself, and imparted a theatrical understanding of cinema, and Dovzhenko actively worked with theatrical actors from KITM. Makarenko wrote that there were those that claimed, "The Ukrainian actor's nature is anti-cinematic. He is sluggish, sing-songy [*pevuch*], and unrealistic."⁶⁵ Thus, he challenged the exclusively negative association of "theatricality" with these extra-narrative elements of Ukrainian national color, suggesting instead that they possessed expressive potential.

Romitsyn returned to the question of "theatricality" in light of Makarenko's article a year later in an article, "Innovation, Traditions and Imitation." Therein he argued,

The desire to see in the theatricality of movies a revelation of the eternal Ukrainian origins, of course, is unwarranted. The theatricality of cinema is not a national trait, but proof of professional immaturity. In the interests of directors, actors, cinematographers, set designers, and cinema as a whole, it is useful to consider *teatral'shchyna* in the cinema to be nothing more than a synonym for inertia, conservatism, and general professional illiteracy.⁶⁶

Miron Bilinskii also complained that Makarenko and Chabanenko had gravely misunderstood Dovzhenko as an advocate of such theatrical practices as

“wordiness [*velerechie*], prettiness [*krasivost'*], and false significance [*lozhnaia mnogoznachitel'nost'*].” Bilinskii complained, “One-sidedness and a false pathos are the main deficiencies in Ukrainian feature filmmaking during recent years.” Consequently, there was nothing appearing at Dovzhenko Studio along the lines of the best of Thaw-era cinema, evident in the recent work of Chukhai, Kalatozov and Tarkovskii. The only way to get rid of “false theatricality” was to stop defending it as the “genuine national form” of Ukrainian cinema. Dovzhenko, he concluded, was both “deeply national,” and “*kinematografichen*.”⁶⁷ Yet, the traits that he identified in line with the “theatricalists’ [*teatral'shchyky*]” defamation of Dovzhenko’s name were the same as Nekrasov had leveled against the filmmaker in his article, “Words, ‘Great’ and Simple.”

Despite the indication of such a complicated relationship between what was defined as the essence of Ukrainian cinema’s “national form” and what I have identified as the folkloric representational mode, Moscow critic Igor’ Rachuk essentially closed off the debate in his official biography of Dovzhenko, published in 1964. Therein, he wrote that, as a “son of the Ukrainian land, [Dovzhenko...] hated all who came out of a national, *khutorians'kyi* white-wash with the external prettiness of folkloric elements.”⁶⁸ The implication was that, if Kyiv Studio now made the claim to Dovzhenko’s name, its filmmakers had to follow the critical consensus on their patriarch’s creative work.

Nonetheless, the concept of *teatral'shchyna* as Chabanenko and Makarenko saw it contained an element of self-reflexivity about the cinematic form and about national representation itself. Perhaps the obvious example of “theatricality” in Ukrainian cinema is Dovzhenko’s Roksana scene in *Zvenyhora*. Here, story-telling folds in on itself, in an example of *mise-en-abîme*, as the film contains stories within stories within stories, which, in their self-conscious lack of realism could easily morph into a surrealist de-familiarization of folkloric material. In the modernist and ethnographic mode of “Ukrainian poetic cinema” during the 1960s, Sergei Paradzhanov and his followers would notice Dovzhenko’s stylistic eclecticism, with its combination of staged, *tableaux* framing, where medium shots predominate, and where actors deliberately moved away from realist

verisimilitude in their hyperbolic gestures. Alongside these practices, Dovzhenko's penchant for location shooting and documentary realism fit well with Thaw-era emphasis on the "authenticated" human image. In approaching Thaw-era aesthetic discourse within a dovzhenkoist idiom, however, Ukrainian filmmakers insisted upon the maintenance of the human subject's fundamental association with the Ukrainian landscape. In fact, within the ethnographic mode of the 1960s, Ukrainian filmmakers made an even stronger claim to the determining influence of landscape on human consciousness.

The visual representation of the non-Russian under Stalinism was fundamentally *not* about knowledge of different nationalities; rather, the folkloric mode was a means to re-create the Soviet periphery as a familiar ethnoscape, where "national color" was domesticated and existed in the realm of the expected. We cannot believe, nor did Khrushchev really intend us to accept, that Stalin in fact learned about the state of agriculture from watching Pyr'ev's *Kuban Cossacks*. Instead, the film was a creative attempt to reflect a familiar image of the Russian/Ukrainian periphery, but made no pretense to authenticity. In this respect, it is easy to see the concept of "national cinema" in line with how Terry Martin describes the transformation of Soviet nationalities policy in the mid-1930s. Within such a system of representation, politics and subjecthood itself was re-oriented toward the center, and non-Russian nationalism diffused within the safe realm of the folkloric.

Visualizing a Profitable, but "Authentic" Image of Ukraine

To arrive at the previous conclusion, we certainly do not need to look at a single film. The same conclusion can be, and has been, drawn from literature, theater, and other visual and performing arts. As Terry Martin argues, the "nationality question" itself had been resolved with the "Friendship of Peoples" mythology, articulated and accomplished through the ordered circulation of cultural products like books, films and performers, rather than through political

negotiation between the various nations of the Soviet Union. The specificity and formal dimensions of cultural texts come into play, however, when we consider how post-Stalinist cultural products drew upon an earlier mode of display. When the nationality question reappeared in Ukrainian cinema during the 1960s, it was built upon the visual, if not ideological, foundations of the Stalinist folkloric. But the cultural context for giving visual meaning to nationality had shifted in this later period, with Thaw-era discourse on “sincerity” and “authenticity” providing the basis for a new understanding of non-Russian folklore.

The second context from which we must approach the relationship between the Stalinist folkloric and the 1960s-era “national film” is in the changing conception of the market for mass media. After all, expectations about non-Russian subject matter in films necessarily contained assumptions about the intended spectator. As several scholars have identified, the cultural politics of the 1930s had dispensed with an idea that there existed distinct “proletarian” and “bourgeois” consumers of art, in favor of an undifferentiated Soviet “mass” reader/spectator.⁶⁹ Pyr’ev’s and Savchenko’s films were genuinely successful, attracting unprecedented numbers of spectators. This was the predictable outcome for a film industry that had sharply limited domestic film production, and dispensed with foreign imports. Film spectators had little else to watch at the time. Yet, these were also films formally coded for mass consumption. Their iconography of the Soviet periphery and narrative of union contained all too familiar tropes, and neither their folksy humor nor nostalgic worldview intended to challenge the viewer. Beginning in 1952, however, both production and consumption of films rose exponentially from the low of 1951 (when only twelve films were produced throughout the country) to the pivotal year of 1968 (when 4.7 billion tickets were sold, and the average Soviet citizen attended the cinema 20 times during the year).⁷⁰ In many ways, this explosion of film culture that occurred during the Thaw and after seemed to affirm the Stalinist precept of “art for the masses.” The film industry of the 1930s under Boris Shumiatskii also aimed to establish a kind of Soviet Hollywood, with popular genres such as comedies, adventure, and musicals that would attract spectators away from a

capitalist mass culture. From the standpoint of the CPSU and the film industry, the emphasis was on penetrating a mass consciousness, rather than on tapping new consumer markets. Filmmakers, like writers and artists, had a responsibility to speak in a language understandable to the masses, but the message was uniformly oriented toward socialist modernization and Soviet unity.

Soviet authorities never denied this responsibility, but cinema became accountable for other issues after Stalin. Filmmakers and studios were to develop their own “mark” on the industry, paving the way for greater emphasis on differentiation over ideological and industrial cohesion. Industry differentiation functioned on several levels, at once allowing the production of “art films” for international film festival consumption and cultural promotion of the USSR abroad, and the production of popular cinema for domestic consumption and industry profits. As I show in the following chapter, the language of differentiation also empowered republican studios to represent “their own” nationalities, and to make films for “their own” spectators. While films produced at the “national” studios were intended for all-Union release, promotion of them was targeted toward spectators within the republic. At the same time, industry and party authorities would use a film’s lack of success locally as a reason to refuse its all-Union distribution. In this way, differentiation functioned to tie films to a national public while potentially limiting their appeal. Nonetheless, in its articulation of age, gender, class and ethno-national difference, the language of “differentiation” represented a new discursive phenomenon in the post-Stalin era. While the Stalinist cinema of the periphery presented national difference only to, finally, deny it a political space, post-Stalinist cinema sought to exploit such difference. By suggesting that the specificity of the medium remains tied to how it structures consumption, I do not mean to reduce it to its “cultural use” as von Moltke criticizes historians of doing; rather, in seeing the development of the “national” film as a niche market, we have to understand audience expectations for particular types of images and for the studios that produced those images. The next chapter explores changes in the Soviet studio system that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which brought new emphasis on national studios,

and the development of “national cinema.” Dovzhenko Studio in Kyiv adopted this definition of “national cinema” because it understood as one of its goals to speak to and for a Ukrainian audience. In tandem with this re-conceptualization of the Soviet media consumer, I examine the types of “national” films that were intended to speak to this audience. In many ways, we see the disintegration of certain facets of the folkloric system of non-Russian representation, and the re-emergence of a politics of national identity within the Ukrainian film industry. In staking a claim to a section of the “differentiated” public and its own thematic material, Ukrainian filmmakers and the Dovzhenko Studio leadership also articulated its own principle of film authorship that attempted to tie personal expression to national belonging. Dovzhenko Studio’s principal task by the early 1960s, however, lay not only in establishing the ideological basis for autonomous cultural production in Ukraine, but in seeking recognition from Moscow on the very relevance of Ukrainian cinema itself.

Chapter 2

The Studio System, Genres, and Audiences in Ukraine during the early 1960s

Reaction against the “theatricality” theory of “Ukrainian national cinema” was so intense in 1962 that it effectively ruined director Mykola Makarenko’s career. He completed his *People Don’t Know Everything* (*Liudi ne vse znaiut’*, 1963) about Ukrainian partisan leader Dmytro Horotsvit, after which he could not find work until 1970, when he co-directed *Bread and Salt* (*Khlib i sil’*), a television mini-series about the Revolution of 1905 in Ukraine. Even then, the studio placed Makarenko’s name under the much younger and inexperienced director Hryhorii Kokhan in the credits. Ivan Chabanenko’s and Makarenko’s articles sparked intense anger over the seemingly intentional effort of filmmakers in the republic to remain “provincial,” and outside of the main currents of Thaw-era realist discourse. During the Central Committee’s Ideological Commission meetings between 1962 and 1964, filmmakers working in Ukraine considered it no great victory that L. F. Il’ichev and company excluded their work from political criticism. Dovzhenko Studio in the early 1960s was simply below the radar of ideological authorities.¹ During the 22nd Congress of the CPU in October 1961, First Secretary Pidhornyi drew a firm distinction between political correctness and artistic feeling when he stated that Ukrainian films possessed an “outwardly truthful” character, but lacked an “elaboration” of the heroes’ “inner lives.”²

The problem, according to many voices in Kyiv, was one of recovery from the effects of the “cult of personality,” which, as I explored in Chapter 1, had

¹ “Zapiska Ideologicheskogo otdela TsK KPSS o vypolnenii kinostudiei ‘Mosfil’m’ ukazanii iun’skogo (1963 g.) plemuna TsK KPSS o povyshenii ideino-khudozhestvennogo urovnia kinofil’mov, (24 Jan. 1964),” in *Ideologicheskie komissii TsK KPSS 1958-1964: Dokumenty*, comp. E. S. Afanas’ev, V. lu. Afiana, et al. (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998), 466-7.

² TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1691, l. 284.

supposedly reduced Ukrainian cinema to stale allegory and stereotypical notions of the Ukrainian folk character. Whereas Mosfil'm had successfully established modern production facilities, had their pick of the best of recent VGIK graduates, and profited from the extensive growth of distribution networks and mechanisms for film criticism and promotion, Kyiv Studio found itself in essentially the same position as it was on the eve of the war. From 1936 (when the Ukrainian film journal *Kino* was shut down) to 1956, the state refused to publish a single work of film criticism in Ukrainian or on Ukrainian cinema. During the same year, film educational facilities were closed in both Odessa and Kyiv.³ Neither of these decisions, enacted based on a conception that such institutions were hotbeds of bourgeois nationalism, were reversed during the 1950s. Even the most aping supporters of official policy in Kyiv confidently criticized this “legacy of the cult [*nasledie kul'ta*].” While Kyiv Studio was re-built after the war, a sharp curtailment of production in the late 1940s depleted its personnel, who were forced to look elsewhere for employment. Ivan Korniienko, the first of a new generation of Ukrainian film critics in the mid-1950s, argued that the cult “shackled the development of Ukrainian film art, film scholarship, and film criticism.”⁴ By 1960, however, Ukraine had made some progress, with the publication of the illustrated magazine *Novyny kinoekrana* (Screen News) and the establishment of academic departments for screen acting, film direction, and cinematography at the Kyiv Institute of Theatrical Arts (KITM).

Nonetheless, Dovzhenko Studio still found itself at a stark disadvantage to central studios, especially as the mid-1950s' emphasis on re-building the Soviet film industry came increasingly to mean the channeling of human and financial resources toward Mosfil'm, Gor'kii Studio, and Lenfil'm. Ukrainian film critic Oleh Babyshkin wrote that Mosfil'm and Gor'kii had overcome the “cult of personality” with a successful influx of recent VGIK graduates, while “this has not fallen at the

³ After 1940, only the department of film engineering remained at the Odessa Film Institute. TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 50, l. 15.

⁴ Ivan Korniienko, “Tendentsii i zavdannia,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, August 24, 1962: 1. Korniienko repeated his criticism in “Velinnia chasu,” *Radians'ka Ukraina*, January 10, 1963: 3.

feet of Ukrainian cinema.”⁵ Throughout the 1950s, the “national cinemas” of the Union republics remained in a decisively peripheral position in relation to the central studios. During the next decade, however, several ideas for overcoming this divide between Moscow and the Union republics, and for building industrially and aesthetically modernized “national studios” emerged, particularly in Ukraine. At the same time, real problems remained. The new leadership that took control over the Ukrainian film industry in 1962 – Sviatoslav Pavlovych Ivanov as head of Ukrainian Goskino, Vasyl’ Vasyl’ovych Tsvirkunov as managing director of Dovzhenko Studio, and Vasyl’ Sydorovych Zemliak as head of the Screenplay-Editorial Board (SRK) – remained divided (both among and within themselves) on the issues of native cadre development, language policy, and the thematic and aesthetic foci of Ukrainian national cinema. The new leadership, however, shared a desire to participate in the cultural Thaw, and with the politics of nationality. Soviet cinema’s growing commercialization also forced them to contend with questions of Ukrainian cinema’s profitability. As I explored in the previous chapter, many aspects of Stalinist practice and modes of representation remained in place, and maintained broad support among members of the studio collective, although for different reasons than Chabanenko and Makarenko expressed.

This chapter begins chronicling Dovzhenko Studio’s move from a small and insignificant provincial studio in the late 1950s and early 1960s to one of the principal institutions of non-Russian cinema in the Soviet Union. Republican studios had a difficult time making films on par with those produced at central studios, largely because the Soviet film industry did not attribute much importance to them, either as profit-making enterprises or as politically and artistically necessary. I argue that a post-Stalinist claim to nationalities policy fit into Thaw-era notions of authentic experience, and the articulation of organic knowledge of national space. The combination of demands for industry restructuring and cadre deployment along “national” lines set the stage for

⁵ Oleh Babushkin, “Shchob narod skazav: dobre,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, January 8, 1963: 2.

transforming the ways that studios and individual filmmakers conceptualized national representation and the consumption of “national” films.

The Industrial Demands of “National Cinemas”

According to industry authorities at the republican and studio level, the first problem of developing viable “national cinemas” was an administrative problem: how to address the sharply unequal distribution of capital between Moscow and the republican studios. While Central Asian, Caucasus, and Baltic studios had more modest goals, Ukrainian authorities continually demanded throughout the late-1950s and early-1960s a share of industry production equal to that of the central studios. In 1963, Mosfil'm planned to make 25 films, and in turn Levchuk set Dovzhenko Studio's goal at 20-25 during his speech at the First Congress of the SKU the same year.⁶ Unless it was willing to slash budgets for their productions even further, however, Goskino would continue to set studio production goals at 10-15 feature films per year in Kyiv (see Figure 5.2). When the Nineteenth Congress of the CPSU in October 1952 resolved to increase film production – and thus put an end to *malokartin'e* – republican studios understood this to be an all-Union affair, a project for extensive infrastructure development, both in Moscow, and in the republics. Moreover, with the elimination of the centralized Ministry of Cinematography, which occurred two weeks after Stalin's death in March 1953,⁷ industry power shifted to the Ministries of Culture in each of the Union republics. With this partial devolution to republican Ministries, authorities within the separate Administrations for Feature Film Production had considerable more power over the creation of production and thematic plans. After 1953, production increased most notably in Kyiv, Odessa, Moscow, Leningrad, and Tbilisi, although, because budgets were still determined within

⁶ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 24.

⁷ Liudmila Pustynskaia, “Kinematograf ottepeli v sotsian'no-politicheskom i kul'turnom kontekstakh,” in Vitalii Troianovskii, ed., *Kinematograf ottepeli: kniga vtoraia* (Moscow: Materik, 2002), 384. The Ministry of Cinematography was only one of 26 ministries eliminated in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death. Ronald G. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 388.

the All-Union Ministry of Culture, Mosfil'm and Gor'kii benefited disproportionately.

Moreover, despite the devolution to republican organizations, the central branch in Moscow still required its approval for screenplays prior to production and for all-Union distribution. A January 1962 order from the Ministry of Culture in Moscow, for example, complained that republican studios had been illegally approving screenplays for production before central organs had given them permission to do so.⁸ In many respects, authorities within the central Ministry of Culture still conducted business directly with individual studios, without the input of republican-level organizations. As Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone argues, while devolution re-established the idea of power-sharing between Moscow and the Union republics, the former did not invest the republics with any meaningful share. Nonetheless, republican organizations employed largely personal connections with other local and republican level organization and party departments, demonstrating that there existed “considerable room for maneuver by skillful republic-level leaders.”⁹ There were practical reasons for devolving production authority to republican organizations. Khrushchev himself gave intermittent support for plans to devolve economic decision-making to republican ministries and local enterprises. Notions of *khozraschet* during the 1950s urged greater self-reliance and financial responsibility in industrial production more broadly. Under the influence of economist Evsei Liberman’s theories during the 1960s, *khozraschet* took on the additional meaning of devolution of authority to local enterprises, on the reasoning that individuals closer to the site of production would have personal knowledge of how to make their enterprises more efficient. Moreover, “economic methods” could be employed to “stimulate” workers and management toward increased productivity.¹⁰

⁸ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1520, l. 82.

⁹ Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR,” *Problems of Communism* 23, no. 3 (May-June 1974), 12-13.

¹⁰ See, Abraham Katz, *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 30-31, 58. See also my discussion of how *khozraschet* functioned in the film industry during the 1960s: Joshua First, “From Spectator to ‘Differentiated’ Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965-80),” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 324.

Such talk of devolution of authority to republican organizations, studios and filmmakers themselves informed the planning and implementation of the February 1962 Plenum of the Union of Cinematographers (SK).¹¹ Apart from its organizational goals, one of the initial intentions for the Plenum was a full discussion of plans for developing republican studios. First Secretary Pyr'ev gave voice to some of these concerns in his opening speech, mentioning the necessity to provide assistance toward this end and in the development of professional "national cadres."¹² He spoke of "new forms of interrelations and mutual aid," and in Kyiv later that year, he rejected the notion of importing directors from central studios to work in the republics. "You have a lot of your own people," he emphasized, "so why [should we] come [to you]?"¹³ Although workers in Ukraine still had serious problems in attracting their "own people," Pyr'ev's statements were understood as a policy of native cadre development at republican studios.

While rejecting the import of Moscow cadres to republican studio, Pyr'ev listed joint productions with republican studios as the priority in aiding their development. SK representatives from the republics, however, viewed such "assistance" as counter to the construction of independent republican studios, and interpreted Pyr'ev's insistence on joint productions as a condescending jab at their unequal share of financial resources and creative cadres. Pyr'ev argued that joint productions would give meaning to "our multinational cinema."¹⁴ While

¹¹ The Union of Soviet Cinematographers was still a new organization in 1961. In June 1957, Ivan Pyr'ev headed the Organizational Bureau of a Union of Workers in Cinematography, with the goal of establishing a union for filmmakers along the lines of what the Writers' Union had become by the 1950s. The former director of Mosfil'm aimed to create an organization, in which filmmakers themselves would have real power to affect industry decisions, and to establish a standardized system of privilege in line with other members of the creative intelligentsia. The establishment of the Bureau in 1957 also created parallel organizations in most of the Union Republics. The February Plenum established a Union of Workers in Cinematography, and the First Congress in November 1965 established the Union of Cinematographers (SK).

¹² For the early Bolsheviks, the term "cadre" referred to the vanguard or leading members of the organizational committees. In this context, however, "cadre" simply refers to the basic framework of creative personnel, i.e., directors, screenwriters, cinematographers, and sometimes art directors (*khudozhniki*) and film critics.

¹³ TsDAMLNU, 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 204.

¹⁴ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 151, l. 63. Editor-in-Chief of *Sovetskii ekran* Dmitrii Pisarevskii responded to Pyr'ev's comments about aiding the development of "national studios" stating that this "aid" more often meant "supervision [*shefstvo*]." RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 167, l. 39.

“multinationality” indicated recognition of difference, it was one that could be reconciled in the process of exchange rather than through an equal distribution of capital. The decisions of the February Plenum followed from the First Secretary’s opening speech, stating that the Union would work toward more joint productions, “in an effort to unite the creative powers of multinational Soviet cinema, and [render] real help to the republican studios and an exchange of creative experience.”¹⁵ While joint productions might in fact bring much-needed money and other technological resources for later use at republican studios, these productions frequently employed cadres exclusively from the central studios. In this respect, such projects tended to contradict Pyr’ev’s stated intentions of “exchange.” Even Mosfil’m-Dovzhenko Studio co-production, *The Enchanted Desna* (*Zacharovannaia Desna*, 1964), directed by Iuliia Solntseva and based on Dovzhenko’s short story about his childhood in Chernihivshchyna, became an exclusively Mosfil’m production in terms of the credit assigned to the films, and even in terms of the resources allocated to their production.¹⁶ They were co-productions in name only, made to appease the studio’s sentimental attachment to their patron saint. When Goskino official Nikolai Dymshyts came to Kyiv for the January 1964 Plenum of the SKU to advise them on joint productions with other republican studios, playwright and Premier of the Verkhovna Rada Oleksandr Korniiichuk asked him why he only mentioned co-productions with other republican studios, and not with Foreign studios.¹⁷ Korniiichuk mentioned that domestic co-productions were only further provincializing for republican studios because it demonstrated that only Moscow studios were able to conduct their own “foreign policy.”¹⁸ Now that Ukraine had

¹⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 46.

¹⁶ In fact, when Volodymyr Denysenko approached Solntseva about making Dovzhenko’s *A Dream about My Son* (*Mechta o moem syne*) at Dovzhenko Studio, she refused to give up her rights to the novella. See their correspondence, TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1560.

¹⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 287, l. 286.

¹⁸ Between 1956 and 1964, Mosfil’m or Gor’kii Studio had collaborated with India on *Journey Beyond Three Seas* (*Khozhdenie za tri moria*, V. Pronin and K. A. Abbas, 1957), with France on *The Last Inch* (*Poslednii diuim*, T. Vul’fovich and N. Kurikhin, 1958) and *Normandy – Neman* (*Normandiia – Neman*, J. Dréville, 1960), with Bulgaria on *The Night Before* (*Nakanune*, V. Petrov, 1959), with Czechoslovakia on *May Stars* (*Maiskie zvezdy*, S. Rostotskii, 1959), with DEFA on *Five Days, Five Nights* (*Piat’ dnei, piat’ nochei*, L. Arnshtam, 1960) and *People and*

its own UN seat, why could it not participate in the global community of filmmakers alongside other nations?

Delegates at both the February 1962 and January 1964 Plenums engaged with other problems of center/periphery relations, with the unequal distribution of capital occupying much of the discussion. Typical of speeches from republican delegates at the Moscow Plenum, Armenian director Stepan Kevorkov spoke about the “much more difficult work” that republican studios had in comparison to central studios. He complained that the “national” studios routinely received less money for productions, due to the industry’s rating system.¹⁹ Under this policy, studios were rated on a scale of one to five, with level one studios like Mosfil’m, Lenfil’m, and Gor’kii receiving the most generous funding, thanks in large part to Pyr’ev’s own role in resurrecting Mosfil’m. Armenfil’m, along with most of the republican feature film studios, were rated as “threes,” while Dovzhenko Studio and Gruzia-fil’m maintained a middle ground with level “two” ratings. In a Catch 22, films produced at republican studios were generally of inferior technical quality due to funding limitations, thus justifying the continued practice of underfunding productions. According to a November 14, 1964 Council of Ministers *prikaz*, the payment of studio management, in addition to creative and technical personnel, was based on the studio’s rating, which in turn was determined by the number of full-length films released each year by the studio. Along with this quantitative determinant, the first group included those feature film studios that “have a particularly important meaning for the development of Soviet feature filmmaking.”²⁰ Kevorkov iterated that this inequality, based as it was on a subjective notion of “importance,” should be at the basis of any discussion of the “development of national cinemas.”²¹

Even the quantitative aspect to this assignment of “pay categories” contained a degree of inequality, as the question of “importance” also constituted

Beasts (Liudi i zveri, S. Gerasimov, 1962), and with Italy on *They Went East (Oni shli na vostok*, G. de Santis and D. Vasil’ev, 1964). See, Sergei Zemlianukhin and Miroslava Segida, eds., *Domashniaia sinematika: otechestvennoe kino, 1918-1996* (Moscow: Dubl’-D, 1996).

¹⁹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 154, l. 7.

²⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1852, ll. 21-22.

²¹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 154, ll. 7-12.

the method of determining the very means of production, and thus, the level of production. In the mid-1950s, many republican studios, including Kyiv Studio, Gruzia-fil'm, and Armenfil'm among others, were slotted for significant expansion, also in answer to the demands at the Nineteenth and Twentieth Party Congresses for increased overall production. While the industry still worked toward increasing production, by the early 1960s the idealism of the previous decade had faded with a concern that spectatorship for domestic productions had reached a peak.²² Further production increases would occur almost exclusively at the most profitable studios, Mosfil'm, Lenfil'm, Gor'kii, and, to a lesser extent, Odessa. Meanwhile, the reconstruction projects begun in the 1950s at republican studios, under the banner of "developing national cinemas," remained uncompleted into the 1970s.²³ Thus, republican studios faltered, both under the system of centralization, and under the new conditions of the industry's profit-mindedness.

Apart from the studios themselves, authorities in the Ministry of Culture (and later in Goskino) also assigned films a "pay category" from one to five, which determined the level of pay the cast and crew received above their modest salaries.²⁴ Authorities determined these categories in the early 1960s mainly through subjective means – whether a film was politically and / or artistically "significant." Later assessments tended to include box office results, but this was only on a quasi-official basis until Filipp Ermash took control of Goskino in 1972. Studios and republican-level organizations could only recommend ratings that would then go to Moscow for approval, which effectively established a third layer

²² Goskino Chairman Aleksei Romanov, for example, told his Georgian counterpart V. Siradze in 1967 that expansion plans for republican studios in 1958 assumed an all-Union production of 250 films annually. These plans never materialized due to a lack of audience demand. Thus, Romanov wrote, Gruzii-fil'm also saw a reduction in its production plan. He stated that the only way to increase production further was to reduce the average film budgets, or increase the level of profitability from film distribution. RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 429, ll. 76-77.

²³ See Armenfil'm director S.T. Gasparian's complaint to Romanov in 1963: RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 1-2; Uzbek film director Usabaliev's concerns about the reconstruction of Uzbek-fil'm at a 1967 Union Plenum: RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 70, ll. 19-20; and Dovzhenko Studio director Vasyli' Tsvirkunov's similar complaint to chairman Filip Ermash in 1972 that the first stage of reconstruction, begun in 1958, had still not been completed: TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2523, ll. 14-16.

²⁴ An August 10, 1962 Ministry of Culture *prikaz* set a maximum salary of 200 rubles per month for all film studio workers, before bonuses. TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1520, l. 118.

of bureaucracy between the film and distribution. While Mosfil'm productions required approval in Moscow alone, Kyiv productions required approval in Moscow and in Kyiv.²⁵ Thus, in many cases, the devolution of authority to republican-level organizations served only the careerist ambitions of those quasi-authorities placed in these organizations.

Inequalities between center and periphery were as much a creative and administrative problem as they constituted a concern about quality of life. During a January 1962 meeting in Kyiv to discuss the program for the February Plenum, directors Sigismund Navrotskii and Oleksii Shvachko complained of low pay for workers in the Ukrainian industry, especially in comparison to those working in Moscow.²⁶ At the First Congress of the SKU the following January, film critic and Chairman of Feature Filmmaking in the Ministry of Culture, Vladimir Baskakov, told the assembled Ukrainian delegates that they needed to think less about money and more about their jobs, a statement that did not garner much applause in such an atmosphere of tension between the central industry organizations and republican studios.²⁷ Thus, Pyr'ev did not intend his condescending call for assistance to republican studios as antagonistic, especially in comparison to industry officials who wished to see reductions in benefits to workers at such studios, and others who perceived that republican studios were simply a drain on state finances and served no one's interest.²⁸

In the early 1960s, the Soviet Union began a second round of film industry reconstruction, which attempted to address some of these inequalities. First, industry authorities determined that the Ministries of Culture had become overextended with managing a completely overhauled and expanding domestic film industry. The decisions of the February Plenum highlighted the drafting of "a proposal on an organizational reconstruction of feature filmmaking."²⁹ This proposal resulted in the establishment of the State Committee on

²⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 186.

²⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, ll. 15, 48.

²⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, ll. 154-55.

²⁸ Critic V. Shalunovskii, for example, expressed the opinion that Dovzhenko Studio should be closed on account of its incredibly poor output in recent years. "Mysl', Tema, Talant," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, March 13, 1962, 3.

²⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 47.

Cinematography under the Council of Ministers (Goskino) in early 1963, which divorced both the Administration of Cinematography and the Administration of Infrastructure and Distribution (UKK) from the control of the Ministries of Culture.³⁰ The Council of Ministers appointed journalist and former deputy chairman of the Central Committee's Department of Propaganda and Agitation Aleksei Romanov to head the new Goskino. As someone who was politically orthodox but wanted to see the industry function smoothly, Romanov shared concern for the inequalities in salaries and bonuses identified by many filmmakers in the republics. In September 1963, he wrote to the chairman of the State Committee on Labor and Salaries A. P. Volkov and the Soviet Minister of Finances V. F. Garbuzov, asking them to amend the pay scale for workers in the Ukrainian film industry, which was set ten percent lower than the rate for workers in the RSFSR. In defense of this change, Romanov mentioned that Ukraine was "one of the most important Union republics," and that the Ministry needed to raise salaries so that its film industry could compete with central institutions.³¹ The Soviet salary reform that went into effect on May 1, 1965 officially mandated the standardization of labor compensation throughout the entire country, which essentially solved this most overt form of inequality among workers in the film industry, but maintained unofficial practices that favored central studios, such as the distribution of bonuses based on pay scales (see above).³²

Ideas began circulating in the early 1960s, initially within the Union of Cinematographers, to amend the protocols for calculating and distributing bonuses, the most popular of which was a plan for profit sharing. Under a 1961 project entitled, "Conditions and Measures for the Further Development of Soviet Cinematography," the SK Presidium suggested that "a part of a [film's] profit go toward the incentive of good work at studios and for the introduction of new technology."³³ In April 1962, Ukrainian filmmakers Sigismund Navrotskii and Oleksandr Pankrat'ev submitted their own "Measures for the Further

³⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1640, 57.

³¹ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 35, l. 73.

³² TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1856, ll. 9-10.

³³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, l. 66.

Development of Soviet Cinematography” on behalf of the SKU, in which they derided the current inefficient system by which studios sold their films “as products” to the organs of distribution in order to pay off loans to Gosbank. They stated that such practices did not insure that studios were “interested [in the] results of advancing a film in distribution, or with its success with spectators.” The authors proposed a new system of financing, whereby studios themselves distributed films through the organs of distribution. This would produce real results for making studios care about a film’s profitability, and would correlate overall profits with the amount the studio would receive for its budget and future investment. In addition, such a reform would allow republican studios to target local audiences more directly. Finally, Navrotskii and Pankrat’ev suggested a general increase in the honorarium paid to screenwriters (which stood at 4000-8000 rubles in 1962 currency) to 10,000-15,000 rubles, along with an increase in material benefits, which the authors called “labor incentive (*material’noe stimulirovanie*).”³⁴ Deputy Minister of Culture in Ukraine Svitlana Kyrylova followed suit in a proposal to her counterpart in Moscow N. N. Danilov, “On Measures for the Further Improvement of the Organization of Production of Feature Films,” in which she suggested “establish[ing] honorariums [i.e., bonuses] in relation to the amount of box office returns calculated from the sale of tickets at theaters, instead of the production award” currently in use.³⁵ Following Navrotskii’s and Pankrat’ev’s proposal, the plan that Dovzhenko Studio presented also criticized the “unneeded tutelage to Gosbank,” making reference to the then-current system of crediting and debiting studio accounts, and advocated “an ordinary commercial system of credit,” which took into accord concerns with local and enterprise-centered control over capital development, marketing, profits and labor compensation. This latter system, the Dovzhenko Studio plan asserted, would eliminate the “subjectivism” inherent in decision-making. The plan made direct reference to profit sharing with members of the

³⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, ll. 66-82.

³⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, l. 108.

studio collective for films that achieved an above average attendance, thus further ensuring a profitable product.³⁶

The idealism contained in these proposals is notable in their engagement with Thaw-era concerns about public opinion.³⁷ The proposal for a system of profit sharing assumed that the subjectivities of audience desire were necessarily of greater value than the so-called objective standards determined by industry assessments, which were in fact quite arbitrary and based on prejudices against republican studios. By claiming that republican studios and the filmmakers who worked at them were better qualified than central organs to assess what audiences would or would not like, the proposals asserted a principle of both professional knowledge and local experience. In the form of the proposals, republican studios asserted a greater claim to speak to “their own” spectators more so than could central organizations. While none of these proposals became official Goskino policy, they defined the discourse of the early 1960s, and determined the types of claims that republican studios and industry organizations made to market the particularity of “national” films.

Selling Ukraine as a Comedic Space

At the same time, organs of distribution in Ukraine were increasingly weary of promoting “their own” pictures. During a republic-wide meeting of rural projectionists in Kyiv on April 4-6, 1962, one participant stated that he hated showing Ukrainian films in the republic because the audience would leave the theater before the end. To this statement, he received several affirmative responses from his colleagues in the audience.³⁸ This projectionist’s complaint pointed to the long-standing reputation of Dovzhenko Studio. More seriously for Ukrainian filmmakers and authorities in charge of republican film production, however, such criticism indicated that Dovzhenko Studio’s “product” could not be

³⁶ TsDAMLJU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1948, ll. 57-64.

³⁷ See, Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

³⁸ TsDAVOVU, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 468, l. 108.

correlated to a “national” audience. Valentyn Fomenko wrote in *Pravda Ukrainy* that theater managers needed to black out the name of Dovzhenko Studio on film posters to avoid showing a film that no one would see.³⁹ A Donbass coal miner told the assembled delegates at the First Congress of the SKU that Kyiv productions were the chaff that they threw out at the end of the day. After reading the press, he said, it seemed “there [were] few nice opinions about Ukrainian films.”⁴⁰ In a July 24, 1960 article printed in *Radians’ka kul’tura* (Soviet Culture), critic Valentyn Rybak-Akymov reported that during the screenings for a Festival of Ukrainian Literature and Art (*Dekady Ukrainiskoi literatury i iskusstva*) in Moscow, only 20 people showed up at the theater. He complained that the same screenplays with the same situations and the same characters appeared repeatedly.⁴¹ Ukrainian writer Oleksandr Mykhalovych said during a 1963 SKU meeting that Dovzhenko Studio was a “disgrace,” at which “millions of spectators” laughed.⁴²

While the central press in particular lambasted Dovzhenko Studio’s work, continually making the claim that its productions were not popular with Soviet audiences, a number of films did attract sizable crowds in the early 1960s, such as Volodymyr Denysenko’s *Soldatka*, which sold 24 million tickets in 1960. Other box office performers included Makarenko’s *Where Human Blood is Not Found* (*Krov liuds’ka – ne vodytsia*, 1961), which sold over 21 million. Moreover, Sergei Paradzhanov’s *Ukrainian Rhapsody* (*Ukrains’ka rapsodiia*, 1961) sold 20 million, and Viktor Ivchenko’s *Ivanna* (1961) sold over 30 million.⁴³ With the average domestic production attracting 13 million spectators, these films were significant box office successes. Moreover, each of them dealt with Ukrainian subject matter. Due to the standards in place within the industry, however, they were not deemed “important” by the central industry organizations, and the people who

³⁹ See, Valentyn Fomenko, “Ne nabliudat’, a voevat’: zametki s kinostudii im. Dovzhenko,” *Pravda Ukrainy*, Jan 5, 1963: 3.

⁴⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 95.

⁴¹ V. Rybak-Akimov, “Vypuskaty til’ky khoroshi fil’mi,” *Radians’ka kul’tura*, July 24, 1960: 2.

⁴² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 285, l. 49.

⁴³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 539, ll. 138-140. Tymofii Levchuk was keen to mention these past box office successes in his article, “Spilnamy silamy,” in *Literaturna Ukrainy* on October 28, 1962 (pp. 2, 4).

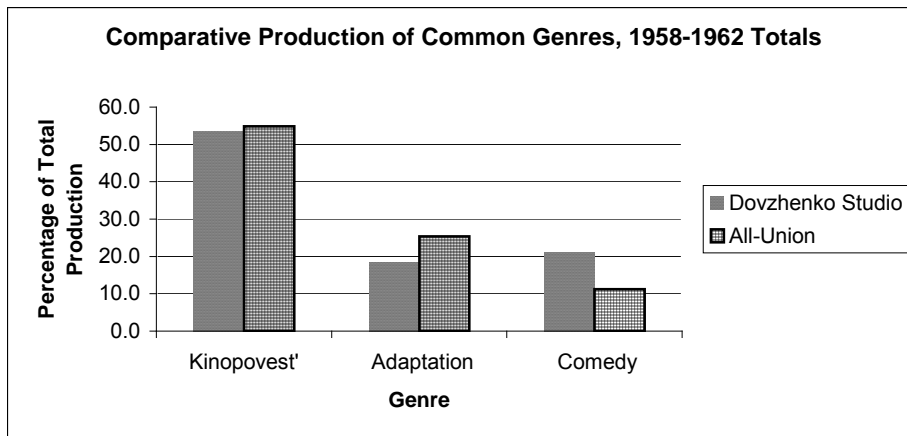
made them were given little credit. Thus, we should approach criticism of Dovzhenko Studio with caution, especially when we consider that the studio found itself with far fewer “leaders in distribution” in its heyday in the later 1960s and early 1970s. Another likely possibility was that film critics working at newspapers were promoting their own tastes in the selection of negative letters to the editors. This appears to be the case in many circumstances, but the vast majority of letters sent to the studio (which were unpublished) also expressed similar negative opinions about the films. Nonetheless, we should also consider that perhaps only a fraction of the letters were kept, and that the bound volumes of such letters reflected the concerns of those who selected them for safe-keeping in the archives of literature and art in Moscow (RGALI) and Kyiv (TsDAMLNU).⁴⁴ Nearly all letters from the early 1960s dealt with films that were at least mildly successful, but aesthetically unsophisticated genre productions – or examples of “Ukrainian theatricality” – which did not carry cultural value, and were in fact condemned for their rejection of “contemporary” methods and aesthetic concerns.

Comedy constituted one of the major genres at Dovzhenko Studio in the early 1960s.⁴⁵ It is here that stereotypes of Ukrainian peasant life constituted a type of national kitsch, and, while the genre was a money-maker for Ukrainian cinema, it was also a reason for the poor reputation of Ukrainian cinema in the first place. Nonetheless, Soviet comedies were among the films most remembered today, and were screened constantly on television and in theaters. Figure 2.1 shows that comedy appeared in the Dovzhenko Studio repertoire almost twice as frequently as in Soviet cinema as a whole during the period

⁴⁴ Denis Kozlov addresses this concern in his dissertation, “The Readers of *Novyi mir*, 1945-1970: Twentieth-Century Experience and Soviet Historical Consciousness,” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Toronto, 2005), 13-16.

⁴⁵ While the Soviet film industry did not yet have an official notion of film genre outside of the terms “film story (*kinopovest'*),” “film poem (*kinopoema*),” “film novel (*kinoroman*)” and literary “adapation (*ekranizatsiia*),” film catalogs continually identified the presence of “comedy” among these categories. See, Joshua First, “Making Soviet Melodrama ‘Contemporary’: Conveying ‘Emotional Information’ in the Era of Stagnation,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2, no. 1 (Jan 2008), 26-27.

Figure 2.1



Source: N.A. Glagoleva, et al., eds., *Sovetskie khudozhestvennyye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*, vol. 4 (1958-1963) (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968).

1958-62. While these films tended to be the most popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were also the most maligned.

In her 1966 monograph *The Film Comedy: Conflict, Character, Genre*, Svitlana Zynych wrote that, despite the powerful presence of comedy and satire in Ukrainian folklore, Ukrainian films had not developed the genre past its theatricalized clichés of embroidered vests, baggy trousers and silly old men. “In the majority of our movies,” she wrote, “the everyday details are only hollow bodies (*pasyvne tlo*), a choice of accessories, which in no way helps to reveal the Ukrainian national character.” In essence, Ukrainian comedies did not demonstrate the psychological complexity in their representations of national subject matter. Zynych argued that the character of the old man (*did*) in particular, “who initially represented the national wisdom of the Ukrainian people in the works of Dovzhenko and Savchenko,” now presented an offensive stereotype that only intended to make the public laugh. Her complaints were even sharper for those comedies that “remained nationally indifferent,” where the “sphere of the national is confined to the Ukrainian names of the heroes.”⁴⁶ Like many critics working within the framework of the goals for national studios after Stalin, Zynych resisted a narrowly folkloric definition of national character, while

⁴⁶ Svitlana H. Zynych, *Kinokomediia: konflikt, kharacter, zhanry* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1966), 98-101.

remaining committed to the overarching principle of national representation above and beyond newer, Thaw-era concerns with individuals' character. Two Ukrainian comedies from 1963 – Oleksii Mishurin's *The Gas Station Queen* (*Koroleva benzakolonki*) and Artur Voitets'kyi's *Path-Shmath* (*Stezhki-dorozhki*) – particularly irked Zynych for these reasons, of excess on the one hand, and ignorance on the other.

Mishurin's *The Gas Station Queen* was, beyond question, the most successful Ukrainian comedy of the early 1960s. Selling more than 35 million tickets in the year of its release, the film continued to play in Kyiv theaters throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁷ Mishurin's film is a "*pobutovy*" comedy – or, comedy of everyday life – about a young woman Liudmyla (played by the rising star of Iurii Chuliukin's *The Girls* [*Devchata*, Mosfil'm, 1961], Nadia Rumiantseva), who wants to become a soloist in the Kyiv-based traveling ensemble, "Ballet on the Ice." After failing the trials, she decides to seek employment in the tourist industry in Yalta. Liudmyla roller-skates from Kyiv to the Crimean coast, but only finds work at a truck stop on the outskirts of town as a gas station attendant. In her own move from spontaneity to consciousness, Liudmyla goes from being unhappy with the cards fate has dealt her, to a realization of her task in raising the cultural level of the abrasive characters that pass through her station. Thus, Mishurin's plot was situated between Stalinist and Thaw-era concerns with its reconciliation of the dichotomy between individual happiness and the needs of the collective. At the same time, the characters she meets on the way include a rude truck driver whose persistent shout of the Ukrainian "*UVAHA!* [attention!]" signals his demand for quick service, an unkempt rural film projectionist, whose mobile projection facility constantly screens out-of-date films, and the Ukrainian folk costume-wearing manager of the station, who needs to learn the value of Liudmyla's creativity. In the end, she helps each of them overcome their own particular qualities of backwardness. Moreover, she refuses to take a position of authority in the *obkom* Department of

⁴⁷ Today, *Gas Station Queen* continues to maintain a presence on Ukrainian and Russian television stations.

Education, resolving that her job as a gas station attendant allows her more opportunity to continue her mission.

Despite the box office success of *Gas Station Queen*, S. P. Ivanov commented during a SKU Plenum in 1965 that it was typical for Ukrainian films in that the film crew threw together a bunch of stereotypes with some “petty plot,” which told us nothing about contemporary life in the republic. Screenwriter Petro Lubens’kyi recalls the rabid criticism of the film when he and Mishurin took it to the Ministry of Culture in Moscow for approval.⁴⁸ Despite this, authorities saw the possibility for profit and approved the film for release. Critics continued to pan the film in the republican and central press. And indeed, the film harbors many of the problems that Zynych would identify in her 1966 monograph: the gaudy folk costumes, the characters’ naïve relationship to modernity, superstitious religious beliefs, and the Ukrainian language itself relegated to loud and impertinent speech. The film’s narratively motivated dialogue, on the other hand, occurs in Russian, and Liudmyla’s role functions as a sort of Russification, as the frequent patrons of the station gradually lose their “Ukrainianisms” by the end of the film. This shift even becomes self-referential, as Taras the projectionist begins the film with a small *kinoperedvizhka* (mobile projection facility) labeled with the Ukrainian letters “КИНО,” and graduates to a vehicle that plays wide-screen films, which is labeled in Russian, “КИНО” (Figure 2.2). The film’s teleology is somewhat surprising, given that the 1962 thematic plan called for a fuller description of Liudmyla’s past, including her move from Poltava (represented in early Gogol’ and other literary spaces as the Ukrainian heartland) to Kyiv to pursue her dreams. The studio – and Lubens’kyi, according to his rich description of his inspiration⁴⁹ – intended the film to “widely employ Ukrainian folk

⁴⁸ Petro Lubens’kyi, “*Koroleva benzokolonky*,” *Kino Teatr*, no. 2 (2001): 43.

⁴⁹ Lubens’kyi related his motivation for making the film, saying that while on the set of Paradzhanov’s *The Top Guy* (which he also wrote) in Lubny, a small city in Poltava oblast, he frequently rode the bus there from Kyiv, which always stopped at a “modest gas station” in the town of Pyriatyn. The employees were always incredibly slow and abrasive to the equally abrasive drivers forced to wait in long lines. He decided to make a film about a female gas station employee who always smiles and says “have a good day” after filling their tanks. While the film took place outside of Yalta, they in fact shot the film at the same station in Pyriatyn that inspired the plot. Lubens’kyi writes that they employed virtually everyone living in the town as extras. See, *Ibid.*, 42-43.



Figure 2.2. Taras, the unkempt Ukrainian projectionist in Mishurin's *Gas Station Queen* (1963)

humor and satire,” and Liudmyla’s own language was initially supposed to be Ukrainian. Like many attempts to make Ukrainian-language films in the early 1960s, however, a Ukrainian *Gas Station Queen* was not feasible because few actors knew how to speak “correctly.” Moreover, the inclusion of Russian actress Rumiantseva in the leading role provided a means to escape from Dovzhenko Studio’s negative reputation in the early 1960s. From these circumstances, we might read the theme of Russification in the plot as a movement away from lowbrow *surzhyk* to a literate tongue. Initially, the studio intended Mishurin to shoot the film in Ukrainian, but as no popular actors were available who spoke it, they chose Russian to accomplish this purpose instead. As Borys Buriak stated, in quoting Oleksandr Dovzhenko in 1964 (whose truth-speech was as evident as Lenin’s in 1960s Ukraine): “It is better to speak in perfect Russian than in poor Ukrainian.”⁵⁰

Recent VGIK graduate Artur Voitets’kyi’s coming of age *kolkhoz* comedy *Path-Shmath* appeared the same year. After Mechyslava Maievs’ka quit the production owing to disagreements with lead actor Ihor’ Borysov, Voitets’kyi transformed the production from a similar kind of Ukrainian “*bytovoi*” film as *Gas*

⁵⁰ Borys Buriak, “Internatsional’noe – ne beznatsional’noe,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (Feb 1964), 30.

Station Queen to a much subtler situation comedy, which omitted any mention or identification – linguistic or otherwise – of Ukraine. While sharing the narrative scheme of Mishurin’s film, with its focus on a creative but self-serving individual who must make an occupational sacrifice, Voitets’kyi’s film validates the Thaw-era theme of personal satisfaction, even at the expense of the functioning of the *kolkhoz*. After graduating from his course in accounting, Roman receives a post on the *kolkhoz* where his uncle is the chairman. Although happy about his nephew’s arrival at first, his uncle soon recognizes that the joyfulness is somewhat premature. Roman explains that he has no real interest in accounting, and that he was sent to receive such an education on official orders. He dreams, instead, of becoming a mechanical engineer. The chairman is not receptive to his fickle nephew and forces him to stay at the *kolkhoz*, despite Roman’s incompetence at his new job. Eventually the young man begins to value his life on the *kolkhoz*, especially after he falls in love with Oksana. At this point, however, his uncle chooses him to act as liaison to the Ministry of Agriculture in matters related to the development of corn. Eventually retired accountant Kalistrat Kalistratykh – who had befriended Roman early during his stay on the farm – convinces the chairman to allow his nephew to stay due to his skills in mathematics. The film ends as Roman feels the desire to leave once again, this time to pursue a graduate degree in his field.

Screenwriter Mykola Zarudnyi severely criticized the film for its lack of “Ukrainian atmosphere.” Screenplay editor S. Fomina complained that, while Mikhail Belikov’s camera work was done nicely, there were no “Ukrainian landscapes” in the film.⁵¹ To many at the studio, Zarudnyi’s screenplay had fallen too much under the influence of its replacement director, Artur Voitets’kyi, a VGIK returnee whom the studio collective considered nationally unaware.⁵² At the same time, Voitets’kyi’s intention was to present a more sophisticated comedy that did not essentialize “Ukrainianisms” in the manner of such films as *The Gas Station Queen*. As Fomina suggested, the landscape is reduced to a

⁵¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 83, l. 189.

⁵² TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1653, l. 71.

generic rural background that does not suggest either particularity or any essential quality. It exists, in fact, as a counterpoint to the mobile hero. *Voitets'kyi* transformed Zarudnyi's conflict between place and individual to one between personal satisfaction and official responsibilities. Moreover, in Zarudnyi's screenplay, Roman wanted to be a tractor driver rather than an accountant, very different from his desire in the film to be in the lucrative and urban profession of engineering. In the process of *Voitets'kyi*'s transformation and modernization of Zarudnyi's screenplay, the rural landscape suggests nothing apart from its association with the occupation that the state has imposed upon the hero, a type of generically determined backwater. Of course, the hero learns to value the simple people that inhabit such a place, but neither the plot nor the image facilitates identification between hero and place. Zynych criticized the film for ruining Zarudnyi's ethnographically informed screenplay with a non-nationally informed narrative and hero. The studio and Ukrainian Goskino recommended a category four rating for the film, essentially limiting the film in distribution to second-run suburban theaters and rural *kinopredvizhniki* in the republic.⁵³ In the places that *Path-Shmath* screened, however, it was wildly successful, and Tsvirkunov successfully appealed the rating on that basis in November 1964.⁵⁴

While *bytovoi* comedies like *Gas Station Queen* were indeed the most profitable genre within Dovzhenko Studio's repertoire in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Ukrainian filmmakers considered the form to be a primitive holdover from the "cult of personality" in its dated and condescending representation of Ukrainians. Ukrainian film critic Mykola Berezhnyi warned Dovzhenko Studio filmmakers in January 1964, "When you give them [the audience] films like this to laugh at, they are laughing at the land itself."⁵⁵ Thus, market success within the genre carried a degree of guilt for the studio, even though reform proposals emerging from the SKU and Ukrainian Goskino advocated a profit-sharing principle, whereby the industry would correlate pay categories (and thus

⁵³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1442, l. 65.

⁵⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1744, l. 59.

⁵⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 285, l. 49.

bonuses) to box office success. At the same time, as we saw with Ukrainian Goskino's and the studio's reception of Voitets'kyi's *Path-Shmath*, filmmakers and industry authorities in the republic were unwilling to sacrifice the particular mode of national representation – grounded in the production of a Ukrainian ethnoscape – that made Dovzhenko Studio a unique cultural institution. Thus, Kyiv filmmakers at the beginning of the 1960s felt three simultaneously interlocking types of pressure: to make films that rejected Stalinist clichés and engaged with Thaw-era concerns; to make films that sold tickets; and to remain committed to the production of a specifically Ukrainian culture. As the new administration soon realized, however, they could hardly accomplish any of these tasks with the current group of creative personnel at Dovzhenko Studio, pulled either from pre-war assistant directors and cinematographers, or more likely, from the Ukrainian theater.

Narratives of Return

As *Path-Shmath* moved from pre-production to production and reception, we see a project at the confluence of old and new concerns at the studio – between a Stalinist mode of folkloric representation and Thaw-era concerns about the primacy of individual personality. Voitets'kyi's film positioned the conflict between personal satisfaction and obligation to the state as grounded in a spatial politics, one which informed many other films from the early 1960s. During this time, *kolkhozy* were having trouble convincing young people to stay, and it was especially difficult to compel them to return after receiving advanced degrees in cities. Moreover, the “virgin lands” campaign initiated in the mid-1950s was now running out of steam, and educated young people no longer wished to spend their lives so far away from Soviet cultural and political centers.⁵⁶ The “return narrative” constituted a veritable cycle in literature and

⁵⁶ Khrushchev initiated the Virgin Lands campaign in 1954 to increase agricultural production substantially by cultivating vast stretches of land in the Kazakh steppe. Huge numbers of young people from European Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia were recruited to go to the virgin lands. While the harvests of 1955-56 were the largest the Soviet Union had ever experienced, the land

cinema throughout the post-Stalin era. From the returning soldier in the 1950s to the worker returning from the Virgin Lands in the 1960s, to the returning émigré in the 1970s, this narrative cycle dealt with problems of re-incorporation into the social fabric of everyday life in the Soviet Union. At least in many of the Ukrainian films in this cycle, they also presented an ambivalent dichotomy between an attachment to the local (family, landscape, and ethnic or regional identification) and responsibility to country and humanity more broadly. Dovzhenko Studio itself was engaged in a spatial politics in its attempt to attract Ukrainian VGIK students to return. The new leadership of the studio and Ukrainian Goskino positioned the return to Ukraine for students born and raised in the republic as a national obligation, while indicating that a decision to stay in Moscow might be grounded in personal satisfaction, material comfort, and greater sensitivity to new ideas.

Although Voitets'kyi attained employment at Dovzhenko Studio, principally because of his place of birth in the republic, his VGIK education subjected him to contemporary cultural politics in the capital. Voitets'kyi, as one of the filmmaker returnees to Ukraine, while interested in the same aesthetic problems of his VGIK colleagues who ended up at Mosfil'm and other studios around the USSR, was expected to make films in the "spirit of Dovzhenko," with all the baggage that this contained in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The studio realized that it had to find a middle ground to satisfy both the needs of an artistically "modernized" studio engaged with Thaw-era concerns, and its more traditional national representational goals. The biggest obstacle to the former goal in particular was contained in the problem of attracting creative personnel to the studio. Navrotskii stated during the June 1962 SKU Plenum that the "problem of cadres" was the "Rome, to which all roads led."⁵⁷ He identified the problem of Ukrainian students leaving the republic for a VGIK education in Moscow, only to then refuse employment in Kyiv after graduation. When they returned to Ukraine, Navrotskii

went underused by the early 1960s, as the ideological weight of the project waned. See, Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Debate on the Virgin Lands, 1953-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

⁵⁷ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 203, l. 22.

complained, they stayed long enough for one or two projects, and then went back to their new families and larger apartments in Moscow.

Consequently, Kyiv Studio in 1960 was left with the same “basic framework” of creative personnel they had a decade earlier.⁵⁸ After the war, Kyiv brought its personnel, from either outside the republic or from the theater. Among the pre-war filmmakers, only five remained there after the war. Writer Oleksandr Levada became the Ukrainian Deputy to the Minister of Cinematography in 1950, and chose to invite directors in the theater to work at Kyiv studio, reasoning that general experience was preferable to the relative inexperience of a recent VGIK graduate. The same year, Savchenko returned to Ukraine to make his final picture, *Taras Shevchenko*, bringing his VGIK students Aleksandr Alov, Marlen Khutsiev, Vladimir Naumov, and Sergei Paradzhanov with him as assistants. His senior students Alov and Naumov completed the film, with Paradzhanov remaining as assistant director, after Savchenko died of a heart attack unexpectedly. The three of them all stayed at Kyiv Studio after graduation, while Khutsiev went to Odessa. Nonetheless, after the success of Alov and Naumov on *The Restless Youth* (*Trivozhnaia molodost'*, 1954) and *Pavel Korchagin* (1956), they left Ukraine for employment at Mosfil'm. Paradzhanov stayed, largely because he did not garner similar recognition with his rather unnoted Ukrainian comedies. Other directors from the 1950s continued to be temporary workers, coming to Kyiv to shoot one or two films before returning to projects that were more lucrative in Moscow.⁵⁹ By 1960, there was considerable discussion in the press for why Dovzhenko Studio had not yet replaced these rising stars, who had left for greener pastures to the northeast.

While Navrotskii was correct in identifying the greater financial and material benefits to working in Moscow, he ignored Kyiv Studio's complicity in warding off young directors. Natal'ia Kolesnikova, writing for *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* in December 1961, blamed the studio's problems on a blatant lack of

⁵⁸ Vasyli' Illiashenko, *Istoriia ukrains'koho kinomystetstva* (Kyiv: Vik, 2004), 225.

⁵⁹ See, Borys Kryzhanivs'kyi and Iurii Novykov, *Viktor Ivchenko* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1976), 21-22.

interest in cultivating “creative youth,” having already given such future visionaries as Alov, Naumov and Sergei Bondarchuk nothing but grief while they worked in Kyiv.⁶⁰ In late January, Dovzhenko Studio’s *Komsomol aktiv* answered Kolesnikova’s criticism in the newspaper. The response acknowledged the correctness of the newspaper’s previous criticism, and their explanation for the studio’s “lag” became a virulent attack against the studio’s management and its bureaucratic excess, which prevented young people from expressing anything innovative. The activists mentioned that during the past eight years, the studio went through four directors. Obviously, they argued, this was not a period, in which a comfortable creative atmosphere prevailed. They wrote that the studio collective would not even recognize the current director – Volodymyr Pavlovych Nebera – by his face, because he never showed up for work:

He doesn’t show up in the [creative] departments, or on the set; he doesn’t come to meetings or parties, and ignores any invitation. At a recent *profsoiuz* conference, studio workers asked the administration to show them the new director, or at least his portrait!

The second problem they listed was the continued reliance on the same writers to supply the studio with screenplays. The studio needed to look beyond Oleksandr Korniiichuk and Oles’ Honchar, they argued, and investigate and cultivate the talents of younger Ukrainian writers. They implied that the same was true among directors. Projects continued to float to Viktor Ivchenko and Tymofii Levchuk, while others remained without work. When asked by the authors about incorporating young talent into the studio staff, the head of the department of cadres supposedly answered them:

The directorate considers that the studio has a full staff of creative cadres – even an excess – and we will not accept – not now, and not in the near future – any specialists from VGIK, and we will not allow any studio workers desiring to study at VGIK to be sent there.⁶¹

⁶⁰ N. Kolesnikova, “Po doroge na ekran,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, Dec. 12, 1961, 4. Pyr’ev even referenced the complaint in *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* during his speech during the Fourth Plenum in February 1962. RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 151, ll. 140-41; see also, V. Fomenko, “Ne nabliudat’, a voevat’,” *Pravda Ukrainy*, January 5, 1963: 3.

⁶¹ V. Repiakh, et al., “Molodye za ekranom: Komsomol’tsy otvechaiut na kritiku gazety. A chto dumaiut rukovoditeli studii imeni Dovzhenko?” *Komsomol’skaia Pravda*, January 31, 1962: 2.

The Presidium of the Ukrainian Union also resolved to respond to these criticisms on February 14, directly after Pyr'ev's statement at the February Plenum indicated that he had read the inflammatory January letter.⁶² On the 22nd, Levada wrote to the editorial staff of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in a highly defensive tone concerning the *aktiv's* response. While not taking issue with the letter's characterization of the leadership, Levada claimed that many of the statements in the article were false, although he did not indicate which.⁶³ Instead, Levada spent most of his letter defending the writers and directors identified in the earlier article – Honchar, Korniiichuk, Levchuk, and Ivchenko – from the “unbridled attack” in the *Komsomol'tsy's* letter. Thus, his message was not that the studio had solved its “problem of cadres.” Rather, the studio *Komsomol* had not only disrespected the elders of the Ukrainian culture industry, but in so doing, also failed to display proper knowledge of the national literature and thus to misunderstand the gravity of Ukrainian cinema's particular mission. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, however, neglected to print Levada's letter.

Perhaps more shocking was the appearance of the *Komsomol'tsy's* letter in the first place. After all, their critique could have been valid at any point during the past five years. Paradzhanov leveled much the same critique as the *Komsomol'tsy* in a 1957 “open letter” to then studio director Davyd Kopytsia, the Ukrainian and Soviet Ministries of Culture, Levchuk, and the editors of *Sovetskaia kul'tura*. Paradzhanov condemned the studio for refusing to allow new cadres the opportunity to work, while continually favoring Muscovite directors or pre-war Ukrainian cadres like Levchuk and Ivchenko. He stated that the conditions at Dovzhenko Studio directly violated the Twentieth Party Congress in its decision to further increase film production. In emulation of Thaw-era discourse about the correlatives of talent and sincerity, Paradzhanov claimed that the studio had lost all of its talented cadres due to a “lack of trust in

⁶² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 182, l. 55.

⁶³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, ll. 41-44.

people.”⁶⁴ Moreover, Paradzhanov registered indifference to the “national theme,” associating it with a tired Stalinist folkloric, in which he himself had worked with such films as *The Top Guy* (*Pershyy khlopets'*, 1959) and *Ukrainian Rhapsody*. While such films were popular, they did not contribute positively to the studio’s reputation, in the same way as author-driven productions such as Kalatozov’s *The Cranes are Flying*, which had legitimated Thaw-era film culture in Moscow.

Critic Kostiantyn Teplyts’kyi reported on the March 1962 Plenum in *Radians’ka kul’tura*, suggesting much the same in his assertion that a key reason for Dovzhenko Studio’s backwardness was in its lack of respect toward younger cadres, which limited their creative potential to a seemingly endless cycle of assistant positions on film crews. He argued that the studio needed to give young people the chance to express themselves honestly and independently. In this respect, he offered more serious criticism, writing, “There is not that essential creative atmosphere at the studio, [there is] no activity, no cooperation, no precision, no courageousness, and moreover, no innovation.”⁶⁵ In May 1962, the SKU Presidium sent a letter to the Central Committee of the CPU in response to their criticism and the results of the March Plenum. They focused their attention principally on the “problem of cadres,” suggesting that times were changing. The Union’s general statement mentioned that Ukrainian cinema was lagging behind “the Russian masters.” They quoted film director Mykola Mashchenko at the Plenum, who stated that youth at the studio were in a far more uncomfortable position in Kyiv than they would be in Moscow, where they “meet with sensitive treatment.” Mashchenko stated that none of the great films from Mosfil’m could have been made in Kyiv due to the “provincialist” and “localist” attitudes of the leadership. Here, too, the focus was on catching up to the center, over and above reproducing the same comedies and melodramas that touched upon

⁶⁴ Sergei Paradzhanov, “...chtoby ne molchat’, berus’ za pero’: Vybrannyye mesta iz perepiski s nedrugami i druz’iami,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 12 (1990): 32-34.

⁶⁵ K. Teplyts’kyi, “Narodu – khoroshi fil’my! Notatky z V plenumu orhbiuro Spilky pratsivnykiv kinematohrafii Ukrainy,” *Radians’ka kul’tura*, March 25, 1962: 3.

Ukrainian themes that characterized production in the late-1950s and early-1960s.

In suggesting that creative sterility resulted from the “problem of cadres,” studio authorities referenced a more general issue that arose in the mid-1950s with the decision to increase cinema production. Studios discovered that they not only needed material resources, they also required human resources to make the 150 films per year that the Central Committee demanded. VGIK in the 1950s was not equipped to train enough personnel for an industry of this scale. Republican studios needed to pull directors and actors from the theater to fill the lack of creative personnel, which became an inefficient and bureaucratically troublesome practice by the 1960s. The central studios – Mosfil’m and Gor’kii Studio – collaborated on the establishment of a film actors’ theater in Central Moscow, in order to avoid the necessity to employ theatrical personnel. Another means of solving the “problem of cadres” came with the establishment of the Higher Courses on Directing and Screenwriting at Mosfil’m, intended as a more practice-oriented approach to film education than VGIK, and would admit predominantly post-graduate students working in other fields. As a result, young people were recruited into the field on a level unseen since the 1920s.⁶⁶ In many ways, this influx of young filmmakers paralleled the structural transformations of Western European film industries in the late-1950s and early-1960s, which in part established the groundwork for such film movements as the French New Wave and Young German Cinema. In both the Soviet Union, and in France, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the film industry was composed of skilled tradesmen. The change in the late 1950s was part of a general re-orientation of cinema that privileged the role of the director-intellectual, or *auteur*, over the skilled professional.⁶⁷

While Mosfil’m and a few other studios benefited from this influx of young talent, Dovzhenko Studio – and even to a larger degree, other republican studios

⁶⁶ Sergei Gerasimov discusses this issue of recruitment in “Razmyshlenie o molodykh,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (1960).

⁶⁷ Authorities in the film industry generally rejected any association with the French New Wave, because it suggested a generational divide. See, Pyr’ev’s comments at the February 1962 Plenum. RGALI, f. 2836, op. 1, d. 151, l. 26.

– suffered a definitive lack of educated personnel. The most pressing issue concerned the financial burden of maintaining a studio with increased output. During the preparatory meeting for the January Plenum in Kyiv in 1962, Navrotskii complained of the continued lack of economic feasibility for native cadres. He presented his colleagues with numerous examples of recent VGIK graduates, having arrived in Kyiv for work, who had to live in student dormitories because of a lack of housing. Paradzhanov himself, who had made four feature films (and two other documentaries) at Kyiv Studio before *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in 1964, still resided in communal housing until the completion of his most famous film. He came to the studio during the final days of *malokartin'e*, however, when any position in the industry constituted a success. In the atmosphere of the Thaw, with most studios expanding production, there were other options for Ukrainian VGIK graduates, and most sent to Kyiv in 1960-61 returned to Moscow after a few months.⁶⁸ In May 1962, the Union Presidium reported to the Central Committee of the CPU that a delegation sent to VGIK discovered that none of the Ukrainian students studying there wished to return to Kyiv due to the “unfriendly manner” at the studio.⁶⁹ During the March 1962 SKU Plenum, director Leopol’d Bezkodarnyi was clearly resentful as he related that he did not want to work at Dovzhenko Studio, but because of the plan for developing native cadres he, as a Ukrainian, was ordered there.⁷⁰ By 1962, the dual practice of importing Moscow directors to Kyiv and Ukrainian theater directors to cinema no longer appeared as a viable response to the “problem of cadres.” With the exponential expansion of the industry, along with the creative advances of the Thaw, these options were both logistically untenable and aesthetically unwarranted. The most viable option in 1962 for solving the “problem of cadres” was to create a space to which Ukrainians wanted to return.

The decisive step in promoting “native cadres” came from the appointment of former partisan leader and literary critic Vasyl’ Tsvirkunov to the position of

⁶⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, l. 17

⁶⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 12.

⁷⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 163.

Dovzhenko Studio managing director in April 1962.⁷¹ Ukrainian Minister of Culture Rostislav Babiichuk removed P. Nebera as studio head ostensibly for his failure to take steps to establish and maintain a local base of native cadres. The decision, however, originated from people in the center. During the May Plenum of the SKU, Pyr'ev arrived in Kyiv seemingly with the sole motive of “encouraging” the Ministry to remove the inexperienced and disliked Nebera from his position.⁷² Tsvirkunov assumed the directorship with the promise to improve planning mechanisms, work toward solving the “problem of cadres,” and to move the studio toward the aesthetic principles and box-office successes of the central studios.⁷³

At the same time, Tsvirkunov was well connected to Ukrainian literary culture of the early 1960s, was conversant with, and in many cases, supportive of, demands to revive Ukrainian language and culture. He also possessed impeccable “national” and CP credentials: Tsvirkunov was born to a peasant family in 1917 in the village of Novoukraina in Zaporiz'ka oblast' in Southeast Ukraine. He graduated from the Voroshilovs'kyi 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 the head of the Political Section of 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 with 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 SKU First Congress in January 1963, he traveled to VGIK, where he convinced several Ukrainian graduates of their national obligations to return to work in Ukraine, with the additional promise that

⁷¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1522, ll. 84-85.

⁷² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 199.

⁷³ See, Tsvirkunov's speech at the First Congress of the SKU: TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 89ff.

Dovzhenko Studio would be a space where youth “experimentation” would be met with sympathy.⁷⁴

Mykola Mashchenko, the youngest and last of Dovzhenko Studio’s “*teatral’shchyky*,” made *Stories from the Red House* (*Novely krasnoho domu*) in 1963 as an allegory of return, which read the studio’s “problem of cadres” into a *kolkhoz* drama about the conflict between an authoritarian chairman and a bright young agronomist. Written by SRK head Vasyl’ Zemliak, and produced on the cusp of Tsvirkunov’s trip to VGIK, the film’s allegorical message of recovering from the “cult of personality” seemed especially appropriate. Mashchenko’s film tells the story of a Ukrainian village after World War II. The conflict between Chairman Stokolos and agronomist Maksym is set up as one between a Stalin-era careerist and an honest specialist. Through flashback, we learn that the hero was a partisan in the war, and occupied an old Red House on the *kolkhoz* as the fascists retreated. More recently, the red house provided the setting for Maksym’s love affair with Dusia. Due to his conflict with Stokolos, however, he leaves to work at a brick factory in Moscow, where he writes numerous letters to Dusia but never receives a response. He imagines she has forgotten about him and married someone else. After hearing of Stokolos’s death, however, Maksym returns to the *kolkhoz* where he meets Dusia once again, and discovers that he is the father of her child. He notices the changes that have occurred after the death of Stokolos and his cult of personality, and stays at the *kolkhoz* to work the rest of his life in peace.

While Zemliak’s publication of the short story, upon which the film was based, in the December 1962 issue of the literary journal *Vitchyzna* was greeted with celebration, changes in the way the “cult” would be treated in literature and film had occurred in March the following year.⁷⁵ The screenplay and subsequent film were subjected to numerous critiques for two reasons: first, for the film’s

⁷⁴ See, cinematographer Viktor Hres’s remembrance of Tsvirkunov’s trip to VGIK in “Vin osviiatyv liubov: spohady pro Artura Voitets’koho,” *Kino Teatr*, no. 1 (2005), 22.

⁷⁵ Vasyl’ Zemliak, “Novely krasnoho domu,” *Vitchyzna*, no. 12 (Dec. 1962), 7-39. On March 7, 1963, Khrushchev now claimed that no one knew about the extent of the violence of the Great Purges of 1936-38, and that all the top party leaders shed genuine tears during Stalin’s funeral. Priscilla Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965), 24.

sharp teleology, which represented the post-Stokolos era on the *kholkoz* as completely different from what came before it; and second, because Maksym is not portrayed as a deserter for leaving the kolkhoz due to his *personal* conflict with the chairman.⁷⁶ Officials in Ukrainian Goskino and the new studio leadership were, of course, well aware of the film's allegorical message and its teleological treatment of the personality cult from Zemliak's short story; yet, they remained supportive of the film, largely because its allegory encapsulated the spatial politics of Dovzhenko Studio's "problem of cadres." Tsvirkunov, S. P. Ivanov and Zemliak acknowledged that the studio's prior leadership had driven many capable filmmakers away from Kyiv, but suggested that Ukrainian VGIK graduates had an obligation to return to the republic. Due to ideological problems with central Goskino, Mashchenko's film, completed by summer 1963, was not released until May 1965, which made its theme particularly dated.⁷⁷ Chukhrai had made *Clear Skies* in 1961, and many members of the Central Committee of the CPSU had determined that this film had settled the question of the cult.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, Mashchenko's *Stories from the Red House* managed to do what the new studio leadership demanded: to incorporate Thaw-era concerns into a framework of national representation. Moreover, its allegory promoted the obligation for Ukrainian filmmakers to return. 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. Artur Voitets'kyi, for example, would continually resist working in such a mode, opting to adapt Gor'kii and Chekhov instead of Honchar and Korniiichuk.⁷⁹ Other returnees like Iurii Illienko and Leonid Osyka came to accept the Ukrainian theme as fundamental to their work, but first went through a process of personal "Ukrainianization." Since the development of "native cadres" became the

⁷⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1681, ll. 58-59.

⁷⁷ *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, May 9, 1965.

⁷⁸ One of the "Decisions" of the February SK Plenum in 1962 mentioned that Soviet cinema had finally overcome all traces of the personality cult. TsDAMLUM, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 45.

⁷⁹ During a 1972 SKU Presidium meeting, Voitets'kyi came under heavy criticism once again for his lack of national awareness, and for his preference for Chekhov over Ukrainian writers. See, TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 632, l. 117.

principle upon which the studio had decided to solve its problem, 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, “de-nationalized” Ukrainians, unprepared to engage with the post-Stalinist nationality politics of the older generation.

“Ukrainianizing” Creative Cadres, Writing and Embodying an Image of the Nation

In privileging “native cadres” in the creative professions, we see a refocus of existing energy that went beyond attempts to catch up to the central studios. Herein, the studio leadership was addressing difficult questions about local cultural knowledge, and suggested that some filmmakers had a greater ability to embody particular concerns of national importance. Although Sigismund Navrotskii’s and Oleksandr Pankrat’ev’s “Measure for the Further Development of Soviet Cinematography” did not generate fundamental changes that were not already forthcoming, perhaps the most important question that emerged out of their “measures” concerned the problem of educating native cadres within the republic. After all, VGIK graduates presented their own problems for the studio, even if the studio leadership was now firmly committed to accepting them. At the same time, educating cadres in Kyiv presented even greater logistical problems, above the need for qualified young director-*auteurs*.

Many film critics and filmmakers in the republic believed instead that the key to building Ukrainian national cinema was the development of professional screenwriters and actors. Several directors readily admitting that the top Ukrainian writers of the war generation – Oles’ Honchar, Mykhailo Stel’makh, Ivan Le – did not translate well to the screen.⁸⁰ Valentyn Rybak-Akymov wrote in a July 1960 editorial that the only way to solve the problem was to educate “our own national cadres of film dramatists.” During a meeting of studio directors

⁸⁰ See, for example, Oleh Babushkin, *Ukrains’ka literatura na ekrani* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1966), 139. See also, Leonid Osyka’s comments during the June 1972 SKU Presidium meeting: TsDAMLM, f. 655, op. 1, d. 632, l. 122.

during the previous month, several participants advocated the re-establishment of the Kyiv Film Institute with departments in screenwriting, acting, directing and cinematography. At the proposed institute, teachers would prepare young writers for the specifics of the screenwriting genre.⁸¹ At the February Plenum in Moscow, Navrotskii complained directly of Pyr'ev's assumption that more and better connections with established writers would solve the screenplay problem. Instead, he argued for a deliberate strategy to develop professional cadres of screenwriters who would be tied by a labor contract to a particular studio.⁸² As he stated in a March 1962 newspaper editorial, professional "screenwriters [should] write screenplays," and not writers untrained to do so.⁸³

While the institute remained an unrealized dream for workers in the Ukrainian film industry, 1961 saw the establishment of a film school at the Karpenko-Karyi Theatrical Institute in Kyiv (KITM),⁸⁴ with undergraduate programs in film directing, acting for the cinema, and cinematography (but without a screenwriting course). Viktor Ivchenko served as the first dean of the school, and the head of the Department of Screen Acting. By the 1970s, several prominent Ukrainian filmmakers and screen actors received their education there, but in 1961 Ivchenko's film school at KITM carried all the baggage of Dovzhenko Studio itself: that it was provincial, and thus inferior to a VGIK education. If the studio employed only personnel trained at home, some argued, it could never recover its poor reputation among industry authorities and spectators. Levchuk and the SKU Presidium attempted to support both methods, at least until KITM developed its curriculum further.

In many ways, the "actor problem" was similar to, but also more intense than other aspects of the "problem of cadres," simply due to the nature of the profession. In desiring to move away from the discouraged practice of employing

⁸¹ Valentyn Rybak-Akymov, "Vypuskaty til'ky khoroshi fil'my," *Radians'ka kul'tura*, July 24, 1960; see also, Oleksii Shvachko's comments during the January 5, 1962 meeting in Kyiv to discuss the upcoming Union Plenum, at which he stated that the only means to train new cadres was to re-establish the Kyiv Film Institute of the 1930s. TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, ll. 46-48.

⁸² RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 153, ll. 95-96.

⁸³ Syhizmund Navrots'kyi, "Stsenarii pishche stsenariyst," *Radians'ka kul'tura*, March 15, 1962: 3.

⁸⁴ Today, KITM is called the Kyiv National University of Theater, Film and Television (*Kyivs'kyi natsional'nyi universytet teatru, kino, i telebachennia im. I. K. Kaprenka-Karoho*).

theatrical actors for the screen, the studio leadership did not have many “native” professional screen actors to take their place, and frequently had to fill roles with Moscow actors. Moreover, the screen actors that did have a contractual agreement with Dovzhenko Studio were frequently unknown to a broader audience, and their employment in major roles would not help the film at the box office. On the rare instance that a Kyiv screen actor became known, he or she would likely find their talents wasted by staying in Ukraine. To give the most prominent example of this, Sergei Bondarchuk played the title roles in Dovzhenko’s final film *Michurin* (1948), Savchenko’s *Taras Shevchenko* (1951) and Levchuk’s *Ivan Franko* (1955), before moving to Mosfil’m to direct and star in his celebrated *Fate of a Man* (*Sud’ba cheloveka*, 1959) and *War and Peace* (1965-1968). Despite official discouragement of Ukrainian actors leaving Kyiv for Moscow in a August 1962 Ministry of Culture order, popular Ukrainian actors found little holding themselves back from a better career in Moscow.⁸⁵ Thus, due to distribution concerns, most Ukrainian directors continued to favor theatrical actors or those from Moscow over “native” screen actors, the latter of which were employed for minor roles in the majority of cases.⁸⁶ This practice incurred the continual enmity of Kyiv-based screen actors, and they developed the reputation for depression, alcoholism, and a lack of skill. B. Mykolaienko wrote in October 1962 that staff actors at Dovzhenko Studio “remain in the condition of step-children or illegitimate children.”⁸⁷ Head of the Actors’ Section in the SKU, Sil’viiia Sergeichikova, confirmed this state during her speech at the First Congress in 1963, telling her colleagues of the depraved condition of Ukraine’s “poor stock of acting material, which lives without perspective, and without any concern about it.”⁸⁸

During the February Plenum in Moscow, Navrotskii addressed the “actors’ problem” in a language that central authorities might have better understood: Kyiv needed a Film Actors’ Theater because Ukrainian actors would work for less

⁸⁵ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1520, l. 141.

⁸⁶ Ukrainian Minister of Culture Rostyslav Babiichuk complained of the inefficient use of studio actors in April 1962. See, TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1522, ll. 80-81.

⁸⁷ B. Mykolaienko, “Kinopasynky,” *Radians’ka Ukraina*, October 13, 1962: 3.

⁸⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 173

money than their Muscovite colleagues.⁸⁹ This at first seems to contradict his statement in the “Measures for the Further Development of Soviet Cinematography” that Ukrainian cadres should be paid the same as those in Moscow, but Navrotskii’s interest in this earlier document was on increasing the prestige of Kyiv directors and screenwriters. The actors’ problem, by comparison, was predominantly one of fiscal responsibility and administrative efficiency. In other words, it simply cost too much time and money to move actors from Moscow to Kyiv and back continually. In his unceasing efforts to solve the “problem of cadres” in the early 1960s, we get no indication that Navrotskii’s concerns were “nationally” motivated. A Polish Old Bolshevik who emigrated after the formation of the Polish Republic, he first worked in Leningrad at Belgoskino and Lenfil’ m, then came to Kyiv Studio directly after the war to help rebuild the studio. His ideas about the studio’s “independence [*samodeial’nist*]” from Moscow had little to do with questions of national representation, and instead Navrotskii worked toward building a stable base of personnel and developing technological infrastructure. For the same reason, he argued against such nation-building projects as the construction of a History of Ukrainian Cinema museum, a separate Ukrainian cinema archive, and a new Kyiv Film Institute on the basis that they would merely become financial burdens for the studio and SKU. Moreover, they were politically unnecessary, according to Navrotskii, and in fact carried an element “nationalist narrow-mindedness.”⁹⁰

Pavlo Nechesa, the head of the actors’ studio established in December 1962, had very different conceptions for the necessity to promote Ukrainian actors over those from Moscow. Nechesa had been the first managing director of Kyiv Studio, appointed to the position in 1929, and came out of retirement to take control of the actors’ studio in 1962. Like Ivchenko, Nechesa became a strong advocate for Ukrainian actors. Their orientation and intentions were different from those of Navrotskii’s, as they were clearly interested in the particular qualities that Ukrainian actors had to offer. Chief among these

⁸⁹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 153, l. 97.

⁹⁰ TsDAML MU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 182, l. 191.

qualities was the ability to speak Ukrainian. Nechesa's reasons were clear: "Ukrainian national cinema" demanded films in the vernacular. His enemies in this project were not only individuals like Navrotskii, who had never learned the language and placed no importance on Soviet nationalities policy, but also the Ukrainian organs of distribution. During the SKU First Congress in January 1963, Nechesa claimed that the head of Ukrainian UKK, L. Ia. Zahorodniuk, once stated that only "banderists [i.e., followers of OUN leader Stepan Bandera]" wanted films in Ukrainian. The rest of the Ukrainian people preferred Russian-language films. Nechesa countered, "Distribution continues to ignore the national form of cinema art," and that they "incorrectly understand policy on the nationalities question."⁹¹ Nechesa was committed not only to promoting Ukrainian actors, but also to make sure that they knew the language of the republic, frequently demanding of actors who did not speak "correctly" to take night courses on the Ukrainian language.⁹² S. P. Ivanov gave tacit support for Nechesa's platform later in the year when he stated during a studio meeting: "When the actors are not Ukrainian, and the language is not Ukrainian, and even the author of the screenplay is not Ukrainian, to speak about the national form of Ukrainian cinematography remains only a speech (*rozмова*), and we can't reconcile [ourselves] with this."⁹³

The goal that everyone involved in developing native cadres shared, however, was to establish a permanent screen actors' theater in Kyiv, like existed in Moscow. The problem, as Oleh Babyshkin wrote in *Literaturna Ukraina*, was that directors were "perfectly satisfied with the famous names in acting, who come to Kyiv or Odessa on tour and perform the same roles they have done ten times over."⁹⁴ A November 1962 memorandum from the SK in Moscow sent to the Presidium of the SKU stated that the film industry must solve the actors' problem:

⁹¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 267.

⁹² TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1541, l. 13; f. 655, op. 1, d. 705, l. 87.

⁹³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 245, l. 38.

⁹⁴ Oleh Babyshkin, "Shchob narod skazav: dobre," *Literaturna Ukraina*, January 8, 1963: 3.

This is a general question for all studios, but it is especially important for national cinemas. The Ministry of Culture, together with the Union and the participation of the leaderships of the national republics will find a way out of this situation.⁹⁵

In December, Levchuk wrote to First Secretary Pidhornyi that the solution to the problem of cadres was necessary for the development of “our cinematography.” He complained of the poor living conditions in which workers found themselves upon arriving in Kyiv.

Levchuk wrote that, although the condition of Ukrainian cinema since the days of the cult of personality had improved immensely, it was time to improve the conditions of national cinema in Ukraine with the improvement – both materially and creatively – of working conditions at the studios.⁹⁶ In his evaluation of Ukrainian cinema on the eve of the SKU First Congress, Babyshkin identified the chief aesthetic problems in Ukrainian cinema as a preponderance of “sociological schemas” and the “dominance of stereotypes,” especially in relation to the representation of the Ukrainian *kolkhoznik*.⁹⁷ In his use of “correct representation,” he called for more complexity in images of peasants on the screen. Moreover, in condemnation of the Stalinist folkloric, he wrote of the “lack of national form” or a “forgery of the national form that appears in the external attributes, which directors endow their characters based on the recipes of old, ‘little-Russian,’ vagrant, *hopak*-dancing, *horilka*-swilling musicians.”⁹⁸ During the March Plenum of the SKU, Levchuk began his speech, stating that all of Dovzhenko Studio’s productions of the following year were

in the language of backward clichés about a tedious and bland people, and not less about their tedious and bland passions... Instead of the diverse and living *kolkhoznik*... a half-witted old man looks at us from our screen with drunken eyes. He resembles our *kolkhoznik* like a piece of driftwood [resembles] a tree...

⁹⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 180, l. 277.

⁹⁶ Ibid., l. 293.

⁹⁷ Babyshkin, “Shchob narod skazav: dobre,” 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid. The “*hopak*” is a Ukrainian Cossack war dance, which appeared frequently in Stalin-era Ukrainian films like Pyr’ev’s *Tractor Drivers* and Savchenko’s *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi*. “*Horylka*” is the Ukrainian word for vodka.

Developing native cadres was a means to satisfy these concerns with authenticity, while infusing new talent into the studio that was not exclusively reliant on the good will of central studios. Like Nechesa, Babyshkin cited the chief problem in hiring non-Ukrainian actors as their lack of knowledge of the republican language. Along with him, however, Nechesa's and Ivchenko's concern for employing Ukrainian actors in many ways echoed debates about language politics in 1960s Ukraine more generally. As Babyshkin and many others complained, 1962 saw only one film produced entirely in Ukrainian (Ivan Kavaleridze's *Poviiia*). Although the concern for producing films in Ukrainian had emerged as early as the mid-1950s,⁹⁹ little was accomplished in this area until a decade later. A January 8, 1962 Studio meeting on the actors' problem determined the necessity for more training in Ukrainian language, organized through the dubbing section of the studio, along with the establishment of a large actors' theater with 150-200 individuals to meet the demands of all three Ukrainian feature-film studios (Dovzhenko Studio, in addition to Odessa and Yalta).¹⁰⁰ Later in the decade, screenwriter Evhen Zahdans'kyi gave a common complaint that he could not find actors who knew Ukrainian, even though this, he felt, was the only proper method of national representation, "to show the true Ukrainian character and people."¹⁰¹

While Levchuk could not compel Pidhornyi to act on the "problem of cadres," S. P. Ivanov reported in October 1963 that the new First Secretary Petro Shelest was concerned about such a state of affairs.¹⁰² Later in the year, Ivanov

⁹⁹ See the letter from four Dnipropetrovsk students printed in the December 9, 1956 issue of *Radians'ka kul'tura*, which stated that Kyiv needed to educate its own "stars" for the purposes of making more films in Ukrainian. V. Shevchenko, et al., "Vykhovuvaty svoikh aktoriv," *Radians'ka kul'tura*, December 9, 1956: 3.

¹⁰⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1541, l. 14.

¹⁰¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 392, l. 183.

¹⁰² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 245, l. 133; Ivanov was undoubtedly telling the truth in his statement. Shelest continually rallied against the inadequate use of Ukrainian cadres, and the favoritism shown to Muscovites. In particular, see his letter to the Central Committee in April 1964, in which he complained about a recent Central Committee and Council of Ministers Resolution that required all painters, graphic artists, and sculptors to be trained in either Moscow or Leningrad. He stated that this was incorrect nationality policy due to its exclusion of the Kharkiv Art Institute, the L'viv Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts, and the Kyiv Art Institute. If they were not added to the list, he argued, "Ukraine will be without the possibility to prepare painters, graphic designers, sculptors, and theatrical set designers." Petro Shelest, "Lyst do TsK

wrote to the studio leadership on the lack of Ukrainian-language films, and henceforth demanded express permission from Ukrainian Goskino to complete a film in Russian.¹⁰³ The studio director responded during a studio meeting in October 1964, in which he promised to solve the problem, in part through encouraging directors to employ Ukrainian actors who knew the language adequately.¹⁰⁴

In late 1963, Volodymyr Denysenko began working on *A Dream (Son)*, a film revolutionary in its ability to answer so many of early 1960s concerns at Dovzhenko Studio. Denysenko was also a native returnee, who first studied theatrical directing at KITM in the late 1940s, during which he was accused of a nationalist conspiracy and sent to Kolyma. After the amnesty of 1953, he applied to VGIK, and studied under Dovzhenko, but returned to Kyiv the following year to complete his KITM studies. In 1962, he collaborated with Ukrainian poet Dmytro Pavlychko on a screenplay about the young Taras Shevchenko, and began shooting the Ukrainian-language film with a cast of Ivchenko's KITM acting students, including Ivan Mykolaichuk in the leading role. *A Dream* was both nationally aware and conversant with Thaw-era stylistic concerns.

Locating the National Self between the Folkloric and the Thaw: Volodymyr Denysenko's *A Dream*

Whereas Savchenko's 1951 *Taras Shevchenko* follows the Ukrainian national poet's adult years, which he spent as an Imperial conscript and in Central Asian exile, *A Dream* deals with a period of the poet and painter's life that he spent in serfdom. While employing the poem of the same title contained in Shevchenko's major poetic work, *Kobzar'*, as its source material, *A Dream* was generically a historical biography. Yet, unlike Savchenko's film, which closely follows the trajectory of a folkloric representation of a leader's *vita* and his

KPRS pro pidhotovku spetsialistiv u Kyivs'komu khudozhn'omu instytuti (April 18, 1964)," in Lurii Shapoval, ed., *Petro Shelest: "Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedy": Spohady, shchodennyk, dokumenty, materialy* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2003): 427-428.

¹⁰³ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1744, l. 46.

¹⁰⁴ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 205.

connection to his native land, Denysenko's film is more in line with the "portrait of the artist." As Evgenii Margolit argues, the new historical-biographical film after Stalin represented a definitive break from the earlier genre, first of all in its choice of hero: The "hero-artist is in a certain sense the antithesis of the leader figure."¹⁰⁵ Denysenko's *A Dream* prefigures such films as Tarkovskii's *Andrei Rublev* (1966) in its representation of the self-sufficient hero-artist. Denysenko's first major work was intended to explicate the events that led to Shevchenko writing the title poem. The narrative, however, refused to rely on a strict chronology of events in Shevchenko's life; instead, a number of associations and metaphors are maintained throughout the film. The manner of the production is sharply distinguished from Savchenko's earlier film on Shevchenko due to the poetic and non-realist style, with its emphasis on "tonality [*koloryt*]" (or imagery) rather than characters and events. Here the metaphor of the dream works throughout the film, and informs all of the events that are displayed.

A Dream begins in the Petropavlovskaia Krepost' as an older Shevchenko, bald with his recognizable drooping mustache, is led up a staircase by two guards. After an interrogation, Lieutenant General Dubel't charges the poet with spreading revolutionary propaganda through his political associations and through his literary and artistic work. The interrogation takes place entirely in Ukrainian. There is no attempt to maintain the linguistic authenticity of the interaction, which would have obviously been in Russian. The very fact that he is speaking about the right to use Ukrainian as fundamental to the relation between Russian colonizers and the Ukrainian colonized further detracts from the realism of the scene. This detraction from realism is not from some sort of poetic expression, but from an attempt to present a pure linguistic form, one that is all-Ukrainian based on the space of production and the Ukrainian material upon which the film is based. As Dubel't reads Shevchenko's sentence, a voice-over of the title poem is interjected into the foreground. The rest of the story occurs in

¹⁰⁵ Evgenii Margolit, "Istoriko-biograficheskii fil'm v sovetskom kino," in *Noveishiaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino*, vol. 6, ed., L. Arkus (St. Petersburg: Seans, 2004): Accessed online, http://russiancinema.ru/template.php?dept_id=15&e_dept_id=6&text_element_id=61, 17 February 2008.

flashbacks, and sometimes flashbacks within flashbacks. Shevchenko is a boy, abused by the village priest, but soon discovers his interest in painting. He visits a local artist, who convinces him to approach his master, Count Engel'gardt. The latter promises to make him a court artist, but the young Shevchenko instead becomes his houseboy. They travel to Riga together, and then to St. Petersburg. There, Engel'gardt discovers that he can make money from Taras's talents, and sends him to study at the Petersburg Institute of the Arts. There, Shevchenko meets the Russian painter Karl Briulov and poet and tutor to Aleksandr II, Vasilii Zhukovskii, who arrange to buy his freedom.

For perhaps the first time in Soviet cinema, flashbacks continually interrupt the narrative, but not to provide back-story in the manner of Mashchenko's *Stories from the Red House*. Here, flashbacks function as moments of self-consciously "subjective narration," to use Maureen Turim's phrase, which constitute a definitive break in the narration. As such, these flashbacks function as "psychoanalytic confessions" read into historical time.¹⁰⁶ Instead of a folkloric-materialist progression of time, whereby the narrative of Ukrainian-Russian unity is read into the natural fabric of history, and where such a historical end-point determined the basis of a mature national consciousness, the flashbacks in *A Dream* call into question such a notion of historical time. History itself becomes highly subjective as it is read through Taras Shevchenko's own memories. In such modernist use of flashback, Susan Hayward writes, "Time is carved up and layered." It "naturalizes the past," and makes it seem as if the past and present are one and the same through structuring the past into the narrative logic of the film. Hayward also identifies its nationalistic implications: By personalizing history, and making it a part of the individual psyche, it becomes a "moral lesson to be learnt [and] it can lead to patriotic identification."¹⁰⁷ In this way, flashbacks serve to connect the subjective and personal with political and social history of the nation.

¹⁰⁶ Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (London: Routledge, 1989), 12.

¹⁰⁷ Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 133-35.

Turim and Hayward's identification of how flashback work in modernist cinema rings true in Denysenko's film, as the hero's memories trigger the movement through time. The young Taras is constantly imagining himself in two places at once, in the actual space of Riga or Petersburg, and in the mythological space of the Ukrainian village. He simultaneously inhabits both the ideological space of an idealized pastoral and a modern political consciousness of class and national oppression. While viewing himself within the cultural context of the Imperial metropole, he seeks identification with his Ukrainian childhood. This is understated within the narrative itself, and works solely on a visual level. At the same time, *A Dream* follows many Soviet conventions for historical films, such as the operatic rendering of folk songs, rather than the naturalistic rendering of them in later works of "Ukrainian poetic cinema."

Critics in the republic warmly received the film, as they saw in Denysenko's film a "highly artistic" use of "native cadres" and a representation of Ukraine that resisted common stereotypes. Even the image of Shevchenko in *A Dream* was updated from a dour-looking middle-aged man with a droopy mustache and wool Cossack hat to the finely-dress and wide-eyed youth that Mykolaichuk played. During an initial screening of the film, one member of the Dovzhenko Studio Artistic Council stated that *A Dream* visually articulated the meaning of "line four" in his passport.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the film did little for Dovzhenko Studio's reputation, despite a number of positive reviews. Its significance was entirely local, despite its visual sophistication along with its ability to translate Thaw-era discourses about authorship and personal expression to the republican screen. Poet Dmytro Pavlychko, cinematographer Mykola Chorny, and actor Ivan Mykolaichuk each received distinction from the Verkhovna Rada for their work on the film, and Denysenko won the title "Honored Artist of Ukraine" for his direction.

Perhaps we may attribute the indifference non-Ukrainians displayed for *A Dream* to a general apathy of audiences toward nationalities projects, associated

¹⁰⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 68. "Line four" is the item on official questionnaires and identification documents that indicated an individual's "nationality."

as they were with the formulaic tone of the Soviet press in recognizing such anniversary events.¹⁰⁹ The Shevchenko Sesquicentennial, celebrated throughout the Soviet Union during the Spring and Summer of 1964, bore the mark of an official gala, but one whose object was little known outside of Ukraine apart from information conveyed during the major anniversary years.¹¹⁰ *A Dream* did little to “inform” audiences about the life of Shevchenko because, in its simultaneous engagement with the historical-biographical genre while appearing chronologically fragmented, audiences unfamiliar with the hero probably left the theater no more knowledgeable as to who he was, apart from the “great figure of national importance to the Ukrainian people,” of which the Soviet press had already informed them.

The Shevchenko Sesquicentennial picked up where the 1939 quasiquicentennial left off, the latter of which employed the 1937 Pushkin death centennial as a model. Like the latter, it included a major re-naming of cultural spaces in Shevchenko’s honor and a number of large statues dedicated to him in major cities in the Soviet Union. The 1964 gala continued with the dedication of more statues in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and L’viv, and the re-naming of the town of Aqtau, Kazakhstan (the region that Shevchenko spent a portion of his exile in the late-1840s and 1850s) in the poet’s honor.¹¹¹ In March 1964, First Secretary of the Union of Ukrainian Writers Oles’ Honchar delivered a major speech about “Shevchenko and the Contemporary” in Moscow’s Great Theater (*Velikii teatr*), which set the dominant tone for the sesquicentennial (Figure 2.3). He opened the speech with the words:

¹⁰⁹ David Brandenberger discusses the growing chauvinistic attitude toward the celebration of non-Russian culture that began in the 1930s, and which contributed to the articulation of what he calls Russian “national bolshevism.” David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 107-108.

¹¹⁰ Russian-language editions of Shevchenko’s major work of poetry, *Kobzar’*, were only published in Moscow on the 125th anniversary in 1939 and the 150th in 1964.

¹¹¹ Shevchenko/Aqtau, Kazakhstan attracted many Ukrainians during the Virgin Lands campaign, and they constituted almost half the population until Kazakh independence, when many of them left, mainly for the Russian Federation.

The Taras Shevchenko Anniversary has become a celebration of our brotherhood, a hallowed celebration of multi-national socialist culture. [...] It is precisely this [Leninist] Friendship [of Peoples] that has brought us all together as one with a feeling of honor and love toward the genius son of the Ukrainian people, toward the great poet-revolutionary.¹¹²

Honchar listed Shevchenko among other “national” poets in the Friendship of Peoples canon, figures ranging from the ninth to the nineteenth century – the Georgian Shota Rustaveli, Persian-Tajik Abdullah Rudaki, Persian-Azeri Nezami, Armenian Sayat-Nova, Latvian Janis Rainis, Lithuanian Kristijonas Donelaitis, Turkmen Magtymguly Fyragy, and Uzbek Ali-Shir Nava'I – which, “alongside Pushkin, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, Chekhov and Gor'kii represent our native artistic culture before the world, and become ornaments of a universal culture.” Thus, Honchar reduced Shevchenko’s personal significance to a mobile and a-historical mythology of “all-Union cultural history.”

Yet, there was a fundamental difference between the memorialization of such “national” figures and that of Pushkin, et al.: As Katerina Clark argues, the Pushkin celebration of 1937 was essentially a popularization of a common ritual among the Russian intelligentsia, whereas the celebration of non-Russian cultural figures sought to reclaim them from pre-revolutionary nationalists with the assertion that the formation of the Soviet Union had resolved the nationalist concerns of what those figures signified. In so doing, these canonical non-Russian figures became generic images of anti-imperialism, and early harbingers of a Russian-friendly “internationalism.” For example, in the Kievskaiia Metro Station in Moscow, built in 1953, one of the mosaics pictures an imagined meeting between Taras Shevchenko and Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Aleksandr Herzen, and Vissarion Belinskii. Thus, fundamental to the Stalin-era image of the Ukrainian poet was an individual who unproblematically existed in both Ukrainian and Russian intellectual and revolutionary traditions, and who was equally important to both cultures.

At the same time, Shevchenko continued to function as a nationalist symbol in Ukraine, one who stood for Ukrainian independence from Bolshevik

¹¹² Oles' Honchar, “Shevchenko i suchasnist',” *Literaturna Ukraina*, March 11, 1964, 2.

Russia during the demonized reign of nationalist Symon Petliura in 1920. Dovzhenko presented the latter image of the poet in his second film, *Arsenal* (1929), which associated the cult of Shevchenko with decisively counter-revolutionary elements during the Civil War (Figure 2.4).

In Stalinism's domestication of Taras Shevchenko in 1939, however, the state ceased promoting an image of nationalist appropriation of Shevchenko's image, at the same time as such actual appropriation would have been grounds for immediate repression. What emerged of the Shevchenko image in the realm of popular culture constituted a significant element of Ukrainian national kitsch. An image published in *Novyny kinoekrana* displays a Taras Shevchenko icon surrounded by *rushnyky*, and presiding over a garishly decorated room with embroidered wall hangings, ceramic objects, bucolic landscapes and a woman in full national costume inspecting a female headpiece (See Figure 2.5). What, in the 1920s would have been identified as "nationalist culture" was now located within the safe, domestic space of the Stalinist folkloric.

Despite Honchar's predictable speech on the continued significance of the poet, and the continued predominance of such domesticated Ukrainian national imagery, the inclusion of Denysenko's *A Dream* as a component of the 1964 anniversary served to complicate Shevchenko's image in the republic, which paved the way for his use by young intellectuals and dissidents. Ivan Dziuba recalled hearing someone state in the movie theater after watching *A Dream*: "Have you seen how the Banderists come in gangs to this movie?..."¹¹³ indicating that such a complicated and modernist treatment of the poet, and one who continually affirmed his Ukrainian identity in opposition to Imperial Russia, was already implicated in nationalist discourse. During and after the sesquicentennial, there were periodic unofficial gatherings of Kyiv young people and intellectuals at the 1939 statue of the poet in Shevchenko Park (across the street from Shevchenko University). After one such gathering in May 1966, Iurii Kondufor, the CPU Department of Science and Culture chief, reported to Petro

¹¹³ Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, ed., M. Davies (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 100.



МОСКВА. Уроцистий вечір у Великому театрі СРСР, присвячений 150-річчю з дня народження Т. Г. Шевченка.
 Фото В. Сторожа та Е. Насіна. Фотохроніка ТАРС. Шпідунго по фототелеграфу РАТАУІ.

Figure 2.3. Oles' Honchar speaking at the Great Theater in Moscow on March 11, 1964 for the Shevchenko Sesquicentennial. Source: *Literaturna Ukraina*, March 11, 1964: 2.



Figure 2.4. Orthodox priests and Ukrainian nationalists worship icons of Taras Shevchenko in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* (1929).

Shelest that Kyiv intellectuals had asserted that they were trying “re-claim the great *Kobzar*’ from Russia.” Kondufor demanded that security organs pay attention to such “anti-social” gatherings.¹¹⁴ Just as future dissidents Ivan Svitlychnyi and Dziuba had articulated their dissent upon Soviet cultural infrastructure, Denysenko presented an image of Shevchenko that resisted characterization within a folkloric teleology, which was nonetheless produced upon the representational material and within the production context of a Stalinist mode.

Disposing of “Those Notorious Attributes”: Toward an Ethnographic Politics of Representation

While no one at Dovzhenko Studio, within the SKU or Ukrainian Goskino, admitted as much, the “problem of cadres” appeared to be solved by 1965, and people stopped talking about it. The studio hired several young Ukrainian directors – most of them VGIK graduates rather than from the theater or Moscow imports – while Vasyl’ Tsvirkunov also helped establish actors’ and screenwriters’ studios in Kyiv, all of which brought Ukrainian cinema out of the immediate personnel crisis of the early part of the decade. Moreover, budgets for Dovzhenko Studio productions began to increase noticeably along with central Goskino’s acknowledgement that Ukrainian cinema had improved. Whereas only two films had been awarded with a pay category of one or two in 1963, four had received the first pay group and six more the second in 1965.¹¹⁵ Of course, Ukrainian film production remained on a smaller scale than the SKU desired, but with the immediate administrative crisis resolved, studio politics shifted from the various concerns over personnel and catching up to the central studios to more directly confront issues of artistic representation.

As I have shown in this chapter, and will continue to demonstrate, both of these areas of concern were part of the same continuum. The nationalities of the directors, screenwriters, actors and other members of film crews in Ukraine were

¹¹⁴ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 24, d. 6160, l. 104.

¹¹⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1956, l. 46-50.



Figure 2.5. Shevchenko (top center) as patron saint of Ukrainian national kitsch.
Source: *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 7 (July 1965).

considered determining factors in how films themselves were positioned within the politics of national representation at the studio. Members of the studio collective banked 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 more generally. Ukrainian screenwriter Mykola Zahrebel’nyi acknowledged Denysenko’s *A Dream* as the “first film at Dovzhenko Studio, which I’m not ashamed to say that this is a film from Dovzhenko Studio, where our people are shown (*pokazanyi*).” In this sense, “shown” implied more than mere presence, as the writer then counterposed *A Dream* to “those notorious attributes,” which continued to plague Ukrainian cinema: “There’s the Zaporozhians, there’s the Haidamaky, there’s the Dniro.” He 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.”¹¹⁶ As Zahrebel’nyi indicated, films produced at Dovzhenko Studio during the early 1960s visited the canonical sites of national importance, and looked in on the canonical people that inhabited these spaces. Films such as *The Gas Station Queen* presented spectators with particular spaces in the republic, but did so within an all too familiar mode of national branding, which appeared out of touch with Thaw-era concerns with “authenticity.”

Rather than commercial success, or rather, 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 which 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 was engaged in seeking recognition during the early 1960s. In this way, Ukrainian cinema’s reputation was intimately tied to a broader image of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. If Ukraine continued to be an image of rural backwardness, Ukrainian cinema too would have such a reputation, largely

¹¹⁶ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 68.

because it was considered responsible for producing such meaning. While the figure of Taras Shevchenko was associated in popular culture with Ukrainian kitsch, Denysenko attempted to update the image of the national poet to signify not only national awareness, but also youth, a contemporary sensibility and intelligence. While members of the studio collective and the Ukrainian intelligentsia generally approved of Denysenko's picture, it failed to garner much recognition for Ukrainian cinema more broadly within the Soviet Union. It did not dispel "those notorious attributes," largely because *A Dream* remained tied to the generic system of non-Russian cultural production under Stalin, despite significant stylistic and narrative innovations contained therein.

In the following chapter, I examine Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, the first film that brought fame to Ukrainian cinema since Oleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth (Zemlia)*, 1930). The elements of its fame had as much to do with the eccentricities of the director and his personal style as it did with the unusual material upon which the film was constructed. Paradzhanov's film and the drama that surrounded its production marked a new means of national representation in the cinema, based not on the familiar sites of Ukrainian folk spectacle present in such films as *Tractor Drivers*, *Gas Station Queen*, and even *A Dream*, but on the principle of ethnic self-discovery, necessitating a journey to unfamiliar territory and thus a different means to render national space itself. *Shadows* worked with a conception of, and relationship between, space and its inhabitants that was specific to its particular site of exploration, rather than constituting a generic site of all-Union importance within the "Friendship of Peoples" mythology.

Chapter 3

Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965) and the Carpathian Journey

In the July 1965 issue of the Ukrainian illustrated monthly, *Ranok* (Morning), readers might have seen a poem by Hanna Shaburiak extolling the beauty of *Hutsul'shchyna*, the “Land of the Hutsuls.”

Певна зовсім і просто не вірю,
Що в житті щось знайду рідніше,
Ніж гуцульська земля барвіста,
Мов орнамент космацьких крашанок,
Намистинка земного намиста, -
України великої паросток.

I am quite sure and I simply don't believe
That I will find something more my own in life,
Than the colorful Hutsul land.
They say the ornamental designs of Kosmach,
Like a tunic of earthly beads, -
Is the germ of great Ukraine.¹

The poem at once takes possession of “Hutsul land” by calling it “my own,” while the term “colorful” pointed toward its domestication within a folkloric mode. Shaburiak, moreover, assumed her readers' familiarity with the material culture of the region in her reference to the “ornamental designs of Kosmach,” the latter a village with several health spas, camping resorts and a folk arts (*kraevedcheskii*) museum nearby. The next line, “Like a tunic of earthly beads,” connects these multiple meanings for the tourist observer, associating Hutsul-made objects with the landscape itself, interweaving nature and culture. The final line – the kicker – places a particular nationalistic value on *Hutsul'shchyna*: this is the primordial

¹ Hanna Shaburiak, “Sonata Hutsul'shchyny,” *Ranok*, no. 7 (July 1965), 13.

space, which gave rise to the modern nation. As Christopher Ely concedes in his treatment of landscape in nineteenth-century Russia, the presence and draw of tourism constitutes one of the first stages for defining a natural space as nationally significant.²

The Hutsuls are, trans-historically and metonymically, the pre-modern “us” in the present. Yet, in claiming *Hutsul'shchyna* as one’s own – perhaps because of this possession claim – Ukrainians would have had to admit the exceptionality of such a space. While they probably had never met one of these iconic sheep-herding mountaineers called “Hutsuls,” living predominantly in the sparsely populated Chernivets and Ivano-Frankivsk provinces, readers were inevitably familiar with *Hutsul'shchyna* as a site of national importance to the republic. Magazines like *Ranok*, and other newspapers and travel guidebooks recently had been promoting the new “Hutsul'shchyna” camping lodge near Kosmach, where Ukrainian tourists could enjoy hiking in the Carpathians, relaxing in health spas, and watching real Hutsuls make their favorite kind of sheep’s milk cheese, *brynza*,³ on the nearby *kolkhoz* “Radiants’ka Verkhovyna.” *Hutsul'shchyna*, and the Hutsul herself, straddled several contiguous sites of meaning production, at once a “colorful” oddity on display for poets and tourists alike and as a scene of national belonging for various generations of Ukrainian artists and intellectuals.

Soviet Ukrainian cinema too approached *Hutsul'shchyna* in the aftermath of “reunification” in 1939, with many filmmakers, including Oleksandr Dovzhenko, sent west to propagandize the coming of Soviet power. Films like Abram Room’s *Wind from the East* (*Veter Vostoka*, 1939) and Tymofii Levchuk’s *A Star over the Carpathians* (*Zoria nad Karpatami*, 1949) represented the beauty of the landscape and the folk wisdom of the highlanders, but clearly foregrounded the political and cultural tasks of overcoming backwardness as a precondition for actual incorporation into Soviet Ukraine. As the above titles suggest, the agents of history were not the Carpathian highlanders, but the modernizing state. By comparison, a cinematic discourse of ethnographic authenticity relocated

² Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 5.

³ *Brynza* is kind of like feta cheese.

Hutsul'shchyna during the 1960s as an implicit counterpoint to the modernizing state. In stressing “authenticity,” 1960s-era engagement with the Carpathians denied the applicability of the modernization narrative. This chapter deals with how “authenticity” functioned within Sergei Paradzhanov’s *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, easily the most hyped Ukrainian film during the long 1960s. The discourse of authenticity in and about *Shadows* functioned both to question Stalin-era aesthetic principles, a common element of the cultural Thaw, while establishing a new means of non-Russian representation.

Long before Paradzhanov’s film appeared on the big screen in November 1965, Dovzhenko Studio began promoting it within the republic as a cultural object of national importance. A press release from early 1964 stated, “Hutsuls [themselves] were making this film,” which produced an “astonishing” effect of “authenticity” on the production. It went on to stress the leading actor’s personal connection to *Hutsul'shchyna*: “Ivan Mykolaichuk was born in those very same Carpathian lands[...] He does not perform, *but lives in this image* [emphasis mine].”⁴ Whereas Shaburiak’s “Sonata of *Hutsul'shchyna*” demonstrated how objects of a folkloric material culture become nationally possessed, the press release showed how the human image itself embodied such a site of national importance. In both the poem and film, humans become not mere inhabitants of the land, but in fact part of the land.

In conflating land and people, both representations fit into a new ethnographic mode of representing the non-Russian in Soviet visual culture. The poem and the film, moreover, addressed a reader/spectator who was positioned as a participant/observer, called on to decode the nationalistic value of their visual qualities. As I detailed in Chapter 1, the ethnographic mode defines the modernist use of folklore and material culture that characterized the work of Paradzhanov and his followers in Ukraine.⁵ Like the folkloric, the ethnographic

⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1581, l. 20-21.

⁵ This use of “ethnographic” is not to be confused with George S. N. Luckyj’s use of “ethnographic” in *Literary Politics in Soviet Ukraine*, where he argues that symbolists like Kotsiubyns’kyi were interested in getting away from prior “ethnographic” literary representations of Ukrainians. I would identify Luckyj’s use of “ethnographic” more in line with how I use

mode identifies a particular relationship between visual style and how non-Russians are written into film narration. The folkloric mode, associated with Stalinist cinema, introduced the spectacle of “national color” within a classic organization of filmic space and narration, whereby the narrative teleology indicated that, while non-Russian subjects were primordially located in particular spaces, the “national” hero nonetheless stands above them. The ethnographic mode highlighted visual style and circular narration, and the human subject exists within the landscape, unable to stand apart from it. Whereas earlier Ukrainian films that dealt with national subject matter imagined porous national boundaries – either through the return narrative or within the political union of Ukraine and Russia – *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* suggests an entirely enclosed and a-historical space, penetrated only by the filmmakers and, indirectly, the spectator. Paradzhanov’s film certainly contained a cohesive narrative structure, but its intended ethnic texture is conveyed, not through narrative, or not through narrative alone, but through its observational camera-work, at times even documentary-like, which alternately serves to alienate and attract the spectator. This attraction/alienation principle that the camera establishes parallels Shaburiak’s construction of ethnoscape through a possession/difference dialectic. To make sense of the poem’s and the film’s nationalistic value, the reader/spectator had to first possess such difference within oneself, and convergently, understand *Hutsul’shchyna* as the “germ of great Ukraine.”

In earlier chapters, I used the term “folkloric,” in contrast to “ethnographic,” to refer to Stalinist cinema’s mobilization of folklore to justify a contemporary political program of patriotic unity. The folkloric mode sought to represent a simultaneous modernization and historicization of particular non-Russian national traditions. In Chapter 1, I examined Ihor Savchenko’s 1941 historical-biographical film, *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi*, to show how plot and iconography became uniform in the Stalinist cinema of the periphery, even as they continually brought attention to particularistic concerns of individual nations within the Soviet

“folkloric” in this dissertation. See, George S. N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*, rev. ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 30.

Union. In this chapter, I address how and why this shift from the folkloric to the ethnographic took place in representations of the Ukrainian Carpathians. As I argued in Chapter 2, this emphasis on representing difference over unity, and style over narrative, fit into larger cultural processes related to Thaw-era aesthetic problems, indigenization policies at republican studios, and political imperatives that favored limited devolution of authority. This chapter looks closely at the cinematic results of those processes, in one of the most unusual films released in the Soviet Union during the 1960s.

To contextualize the importance of Paradzhanov's journey to the Carpathians in making *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, I also examine a dominant image of the Carpathians in Ukraine from the early twentieth century until the 1960s, which was located in folksy representations of Hutsul song and dance, and as a site for exotic tourism. Paradoxically, this system of representation intended to produce an authenticated site of ethno-national self-knowledge, which could be extended throughout the republic. Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* functioned on many levels – at once affirming a domesticated and generically driven notion of the folkloric for Ukrainian Trans-Carpathia, while remaining a highly experimental film appearing at the end of the cultural Thaw. By winning a number of awards at international film festivals – most notably in Mar del Plata, Argentina, Rome, New York, and Sydney – *Shadows* became the first film that Western critics would identify as “Ukrainian” rather than generally “Soviet” or “Russian.”⁶ *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* signified the completion of the Carpathian journey, wherein Ukrainians could perform the Hutsul as themselves.

As Dovzhenko Studio's press release determined, the guiding principle of media hype was the film's supposed ethnographic authenticity, located in the actuality and spontaneity of Hutsul performance on screen. In the promotion of

⁶ During his coverage of the 1966 New York International Film Festival, the famous *New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther commented on the film: “The late show at the festival last evening was an unusual Ukrainian film, “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors,” which was made in 1964 to celebrate the 100th birthday anniversary of the Ukrainian novelist, Michalo Kotsiubinsky, from one of whose books this film was made.” Bosley Crowther, “Film Festival: ‘The Hunt’,” *The New York Times*, Sept 20, 1966, 39.

Paradzhanov's film, the language of authenticity took on a signification that, while building upon Thaw-era concerns with representational honesty, pointed toward a mode that transcended mere realist articulations. In this way, the language of promotion for *Shadows* approached a type of jargon, in the sense that "authenticity" took on, as Theodor Adorno suggested in *The Jargon of Authenticity*, a quality of "mystification." With such "magical" properties contained within the concept of "authenticity," its idealized content appears to exist simply in mobilizing its discourse. "Authenticity," thus, conflates reflection on a philosophical problem with the actual objects of that reflection,⁷ in this case those objects which provided the film with its ethnic "texture." In positioning Hutsuls and *Hutsul'shchyna* as authenticated objects, they are meant to transcend both their contemporary and historical existence.

Important here, however, is the specificity of the claim to authenticity – that is, the historical context in which it arose – in addition to the formal practices that were intended to render cinematic objects authentically. Even when the press attempted to subvert the studio's claim to a transcendent ethnographic authenticity, it approached the film according to its own visual and conceptual logic, rather than *vis á vis* the film's ideology or realist verisimilitude. Whereas these latter concerns were related principally to the aesthetic principles at work within the film, the problem of authenticity touched on the very processes of production, which were also on display and constituted a key source of Paradzhanov's film's final meaning. One satirical drawing, which appeared in the November 19, 1964 issue of *Radians'ka kul'tura*, depicted the director, flanked by his cinematographer Iurii Illienko and set designer Hryhorii Iakutovych, (Figure 3.1). All three are engulfed in an enormous *keptar'*,⁸ with their "ordinary" clothes underneath. We see Paradzhanov and Illienko in contemporary clothing – the director seemingly in a three-piece suit, and Illienko in a more casual shirt with rolled-up sleeves – while Iakutovych is outfitted in a second embroidered shirt,

⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, tr., Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), xiii.

⁸ A *keptar'* is the characteristic highlander wool and sheepskin vest, worn throughout the Carpathians. The word comes from the Romanian word, *cheptar*, for "vest."

along with the characteristic feathered hat of a Carpathian highlander. 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 Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi's novella from which it was adapted, the “shadows” ostensibly are 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 of the film's production almost a year before any common reader of the newspaper had actually seen it on the screen. The cartoonist made the filmmakers into actors within a second drama about the production of the film, in which the spectator too is invited to participate in the film's discourse of authenticity.⁹

The problem of authenticity in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* demonstrates how the film became a matter of popular interest, associating questions of cinematic authorship with film style and popular reception. The artist forces us to consider whether the man in the embroidered shirt under the embroidered vest is in fact more ethnically “authentic” than the Georgian-born and Russian-speaking Armenian director or the Russian-born and Russian-speaking Ukrainian cinematographer. Or, is authenticity necessarily exclusive to such representational regimes? The above images satirically play with the notion of the “authentic self,” visually associating it with a *matrëshka*-like being. In positioning such a self-consciously strange film in relation to notions of “the authentic,” moreover, its authors, studio representatives, as well as the press implied a conceptual distance from the Stalinist folkloric with the assertion that Ukraine might still be unfamiliar territory. The principle of authenticity, thus, determined the production context as well as the film's aesthetic means.

⁹ M. Malovs'kyi, “Avtoram fil'mu ‘Tini zabutykh predkiv’ S. Paradzhanovu, lu. Il'ienku, lu. Iakutovychu,” *Radians'ka kul'tura*, November 19, 1964: 4.

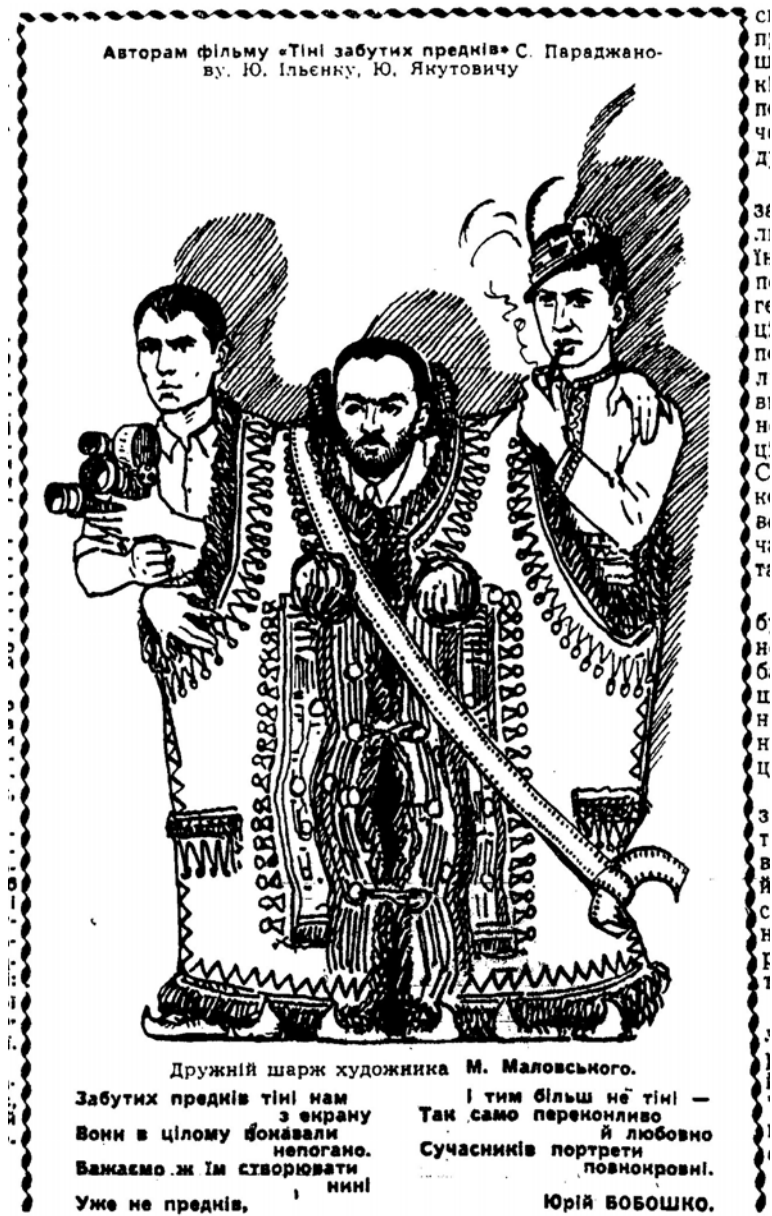


Figure 3.1. Caricature in *Radians'ka kul'tura*, Nov 19, 1964: "To the Authors of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*"

* * *

As a student of Ihor Savchenko until his untimely death in 1950, Paradzhanov first came to Ukraine while working as an assistant director on his teacher's *The Third Blow* (*Tretii udar*) and *Taras Shevchenko* in 1948-1950. He returned to Moscow to complete his studies under Dovzhenko, who helped him get a permanent position at Kyiv Studio in 1952. There, he made his first film, *Andriesh* (1952), a fairytale-like creation that expanded upon his thesis project, *A Moldavian Fairytale*, from a year earlier. A non-event in Soviet cinema at the time, in hindsight *Andriesh* looks vaguely familiar, and introduces several themes that preoccupied the director in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* and later films: the animacy of nature, material culture and an interest in non-Russian folklore.

Many of the film director's biographers attribute this interest in the ethnic exotic to Paradzhanov's cosmopolitan upbringing.¹⁰ He was born to a Russified middle-class Armenian family in Tbilisi in 1924, a period during which many Armenians were leaving Georgia for Armenia, due to problems of ethnic conflict that emerged during Menshevik control of the city (1917-1918). The Parajanians, who remained successful businesspeople during the period of NEP, opted to stay.¹¹ Sergei first attended a technical school for rail workers during the war, having avoided military service after failing the health exam. A year later, he decided on a career in singing, graduating from the Tbilisi Opera Academy in 1945. After another change in career plans, he ended up in Moscow at VGIK studying film directing. After completing work on Savchenko's two films, Paradzhanov returned to Moscow, where he met Nigyar Kerimova, a Tatar sales clerk at GUM, whom he soon married. Nigyar's family disapproved of her marriage to an Armenian and her brothers killed her shortly thereafter. Paradzhanov returned to Kyiv to serve as assistant director on Vladimir Braun's *Maksimka* (1952), where he met and married Svitlana Sherbatiuk, the daughter of the Ukrainian ambassador to Canada. Ivan Dziuba recently recalled the first

¹⁰ See, Karen Kalentar, *Ocherki o Paradzhanove* (Erevan: Hitutiun, 1998), 8-10; Vasilii Katanian, *Prikosnovenie k idolam* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1997), 210.

¹¹ Kalentar, 8.

time he heard the name, “Paradzhanov:” The future Ukrainian dissident was attending a performance of the Kyiv Philharmonic in 1959, and caught sight of Svitlana, whom he defined as the most beautiful woman at the concert. He asked his friend who she was, to which the reply was, “Don’t bother, some Armenian has already abducted [*zaharbav*] her,” alluding to a common stereotype of the Caucasus kidnapper.¹²

Paradzhanov was equally derogatory in his first recollection of the people he met in Ukraine. During a December 1964 meeting in Moscow to honor Paradzhanov’s success on the film, he decried the “provincialism [*khutorianstvo*] and little-Russian mentality [*malorossiishchina*]” that prevailed at the studio, alluding the safe and static folkloric imagery that characterized Ukrainian cinema particularly during the 1950s.¹³ And yet, apart from *Andriesh*, the films that he made before *Shadows* were largely part of this system of Stalinist folklorics: From the *kolkhoz* comedy *The Top Guy*, a musical, *Ukrainian Rhapsody*, and a social drama about resistance to a religious cult in the Donbass called *Flower on the Stone* (*Kvitka na kamne*, 1962), there was little indication of what Paradzhanov had to offer Ukrainian cinema. He intentionally detached himself from studio politics, and, consequently, we have few documents, other than the letter I cited in Chapter 2, that reveal much about his early career in Ukraine.

We receive some sense of the director’s future concerns at a meeting of Dovzhenko Studio’s Directorial Board in June 1962 regarding *Flower on the Stone*, during which Paradzhanov complained of his failure to reveal the “authentic Donbass atmosphere.” He blamed this shortcoming on the screenwriter’s refusal to allow the actors to speak in “contemporary Ukrainian.”¹⁴ These concerns with linguistic authenticity, which would take center stage in the production of his next film, might seem strange coming from such a determined monoglot, but for Paradzhanov, performance of ethnicity was of key importance in his aesthetic outlook. In essence, Paradzhanov was more concerned with the

¹² Larysa Briukhovets'ka, “Ivan Dziuba: Paradzhanov bil'shyi za legendu pro Paradzhanova,” interview with Ivan Dziuba, *Kino Teatr*, no. 4 (2003), accessed online: http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=129; March 24, 2005.

¹³ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 528, l. 41.

¹⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, delo 1536, l. 40.

sound of Donbass *surzhyk*¹⁵ than with what the characters were saying. In this respect, he had little interest in Ukrainian language politics of the early 1960s, with its emphasis on promoting a standardized, literary Ukrainian in the cinema. Vadym Sobko, the screenwriter that Paradzhanov blamed for the lack of linguistic authenticity in *Flower on the Stone*, for example, stated during the SKU First Congress, “If we continue to speak such *surzhyk* in films, we will beat ourselves with our own most important weapon.”¹⁶

In Denysenko’s *A Dream*, moreover, one complaint about the film was Mykolaichuk’s vaguely Western Ukrainian inflected speech. Tymofii Levchuk suggested that another actor – one who spoke standard Ukrainian – overdub Mykolaichuk’s lines due to the gravity of Shevchenko’s representation.¹⁷ Thus, many at the studio, especially among the older generation who used Ukrainian in their daily lives, viewed the respectability of a literary language as an escape from folkloric representations, with its frequent mobilizations of *surzhyk* or Ukrainian-accented Russian as components of aural spectacle in Ukrainian cinema. Shevchenko, Ukraine’s first modern cultural figure, could not in good conscience speak in the “language of backward clichés.”¹⁸ Paradzhanov, in highlighting the “authentic,” however, viewed national difference as an aesthetic, rather than political, problem. Difference had to be discovered, experienced and revealed, and in this project, the outsider’s lack of knowledge might contribute more than those who commanded cultural authority, associated as they were with a compromised position *vis á vis* a discredited Stalinist aesthetic. In other words, even if Ukrainian characters stopped speaking Russian, neither authenticity nor realism would necessarily be the result. In fact, the Ukrainian speech of historical figures like painter Karl Briullov or poet and tutor of Tsar Alexander II, Vasili Zhukovskii, in *A Dream* seemed anything but authentic, and rather highlighted the explicitly political project at the root of Denysenko’s work.

¹⁵ *Surzhyk* is a Russian/Ukrainian pidgin language spoken in the rural areas of Eastern Ukraine. Typically, a Russian lexicon is used with a distinct Ukrainian pronunciation and morphology.

¹⁶ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 70.

¹⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 7.

¹⁸ These are also Levchuk’s words, from the March 1962 SKU Plenum. TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 14.

Despite his penchant for linguistic spectacle and rejection of mainstream language politics in Ukraine, Paradzhanov in no way offered a return to the Stalinist folkloric. In fact, Paradzhanov wrote extensively about his early “failures” in “Eternal Motion,” his first and only work of film theory, published in *Iskusstvo kino* four years later as he was coasting on the success and fame garnered from *Shadows*. Therein, he emphasized his journey to discover the “authentic” Ukraine while collecting materials for production:

When I began work on the film *The Top Guy*, I exposed myself to the Ukrainian village for the first time. And I was exposed to the staggering beauty of its texture, and its poetry. And I tried to express its charm on the screen. But from the blows of the plot – and this, in essence, was an unimportant humoresque – the entire task was shattered. Not with what proved to be landscapes, stone-like peasant women, storks, tractors, and straw wreaths. The material on which the films *Flower on the Stone* and *A Notion* were made is deeply memorable to me. The folk thread, sewing, the imprint. Ancient songs of Ukraine. I wanted to convey the world of these songs in all their protogenic charm. I wanted to convey the folk “vision” without museum make-up; to return all of this staggering embroidery, reliefs, and tiles to their creative source, to merge them into a united spiritual act.¹⁹

Here, Paradzhanov tells us that his inspiration came from travel and observation. He positioned himself as an amateur ethnographer in his active discovery of Ukraine’s “protogenic charm.” Paradzhanov definitively tried to distance himself from a Stalinist folkloric, represented by the “landscapes, stone-like peasant women, storks, tractors, and straw wreaths,” and later with “museum make-up.” In the articulation of his aesthetic principles, Paradzhanov demanded his ethnic subject carry elements of folkloric color, but asserted that authenticity warranted such exotic human images. Moreover, landscapes could not exist independent of culture, as generic spaces in nature. Paradzhanov believed that space not only determined human culture, but that humans were part of the landscape itself. As “Eternal Motion” argued, his journeys eventually took him to the Carpathians, where he discovered the ideal and transcendent space for a more expressive national representation, a space both familiar from his earlier travels

¹⁹ Sergei Paradzhanov, “Vechnoe dvizhenie,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 1 (Jan 1961), 61.

and yet “savage,” strange, and unfamiliar.²⁰ In encountering the Ukrainian periphery, Paradzhanov had discovered a space seemingly untouched by Soviet modernity, and it was such a space that invited an extensive and inclusive discussion in the republic on the authenticity of the “Ukrainian national character.”

A Brief History of Carpathophilia

In 1962, Paradzhanov and his cast and crew began their ascent into the mountains that would come to signify so much in the years that followed, and which would transform the thematic focus of Ukrainian cinema for the next 15 years. The national spectacle of the Ukrainian Carpathians represented in Paradzhanov’s film, however, has a much longer history, first emerging in Polish literature with Józef Korzeniowski’s 1840 romantic play “The Carpathian Highlanders,”²¹ then as the subject of L’viv ethnographer Volodymyr Shukhevych’s four-volume work, *Hutsul’shchyna* (1899-1909), and later alongside Ukrainian modernism with the work of artists Ivan Trush (1869-1941) and Olena Kul’chyts’ka (1877-1967) and writers Ivan Franko (1856-1916), Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi (1864-1913), Ol’ha Kobylans’ka (1863-1942), and Vasyl’ Stefanyk (1871-1936).²²

²⁰ During a meeting with Moscow filmmakers in December 1964, Paradzhanov said, “This occurs between Uzhhorod and Chernivtsi – in the center of Europe – such savagery [*varvarstvo!*]” RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 528, l. 43.

²¹ Józef Korzeniowski the romantic-era playwright is not to be confused with Józef Korzeniowski the British novelist known to the world as Joseph Conrad.

²² Patrice Dabrowski argues that Korzeniowski’s play was essentially an allegory for Poland’s own liberation struggle against the Russian and Hapsburg Empires. Later, British and French travelers and collectors of folklore would find a particular interest in Hutsul material culture, and during the 1880 ethnographic exhibit in Galicia, many Western Europeans came to see the beautiful objects on display. Dabrowski, however, is primarily concerned with the importance of the Carpathians and the Hutsuls for Polish national identity at the end of the nineteenth century. She tells of a previously *terra incognita* becoming a Polish tourist destination after a series of ethnographic studies of the region. Doctor and amateur ethnographer Tytus Chałubiński, who journeyed to the Carpathians in the 1870s, saw the highlander as “a superior Polish peasant, one who came to be seen as preserving the old Polish ways.” This “discovery,” according to Dabrowski, revealed a new layer to imagining the Polish nation, a populist layer that was not centered on the essential “nobility” of Poles (387). But, in the process of making the region a tourist attraction, members of the Polish Tatra Society also saw the region as a cash cow, in desperate need of economic development and general modernization, which also would serve

Although this chapter seeks to understand the modern – and specifically post-war – representations of the inhabitants of the Southwestern Ukrainian Carpathians, we should not fail to recognize that the Hutsuls in fact did (and do²³) exist as a self-identifying group in this region at least since the fourteenth century. The network of Hutsul villages spreads out along the Prut and Cheremosh Rivers in Southern Ivano-Frankivs'k *oblast'* and East into Chernivets' *oblast'*. Hutsul communities also exist in northern Romania and the Northwestern tip of Moldova. Most Hutsuls speak a dialect of Ukrainian, with several loan words from Romanian and Hungarian. Until collectivization in the late 1940s, Hutsuls engaged in timber production, in addition to cow and sheep herding. Contemporary *Hutsul'shchyna* constituted a part of the Polish Commonwealth until the First Partition of 1772, when it went to the Hapsburgs. After World War I, most of the region returned to the inter-war Polish Republic, with the exception of Southern Bukovyna, which Romania absorbed in 1920. The Soviet Union occupied the region in 1940 (after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty). After the formation of general Ion Antonescu's fascist state in 1941, Hitler validated Romania's historic claim to the entire region. Only after his fall in 1944 did the Soviet Union re-occupy *Hutsul'shchyna* and proclaimed it an organic component of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

All of the aforementioned artists and writers grew up and worked in Hapsburg and – after World War I – Polish and Romanian Ukraine, most of them

the needs of the locals, who were then living in abject poverty (388). The Poles who organized the 1880 ethnographic exhibit had two purposes: One, they sought to bring attention to this backward part of the empire, and two, to make the emperor realize that the Hutsuls were in fact Polish, rather than "Ruthenian," which was a competing identity in the region during this time (400). See, Patrice Dabrowski, "'Discovering' the Galician Borderlands: The Case of the Eastern Carpathians," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 2 (2005): 380-402.

²³ In the Carpathian region of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast and the Sub-Carpathian region of Zakarpats'kyi oblast in contemporary Ukraine, Hutsuls are legally defined as a "subethnos" of the Ukrainian "nation." Recent attempts by regional authorities to define Hutsuls as part of a Rusyn "national minority" have met with protests by self-identified Hutsuls, who fear that they would relinquish their claim to Ukrainian nationality. While the federal government of Ukraine does not recognize nationality as a legal category in the same way as the Soviet Union did or contemporary Russia does, nationality continues to play a role in the collection of census data. See, "Na Zakarpatti Rakhivs'ka raionna rada rada [sic] zvernulasia z protestom do Prezydenta ta Henprokuratura proty rishennia oblasnoi rady pro vyznannia natsional'nosti 'rusyn'," *UA-Reporter.com: Novosti Uzhgoroda i Zakarpat'ia*, March 23, 2007: accessed online: <http://ua-reporter.com/novosti/20556/>, May 2, 2008.

expressing a mild form of cultural nationalism that nonetheless accepted “foreign” control. With the introduction of anti-Ukrainian legislation in Poland and particularly in fascist Romania, the surviving individuals expressed support of limited Soviet control over the region. The exception is Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi, born on the other side of the mountains in Vinnytsia to a bureaucratic family in the Russian civil service.²⁴ As a young seminary student in the border town of Kamianets’-Podil’s’kyi,²⁵ he joined the more radically nationalist Shevchenko Brotherhood. As an adult, he moved to the North-Eastern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, where he spent his most productive period, and joined the more moderate educational organization “Prosvita (Enlightenment)” in 1906. It was not until 1910 that he first traveled to the Carpathians, after becoming interested in mountains while on vacation on Capri, the latter a popular destination for European intellectuals and artists. *Hutsul’shchyna* was quickly emerging as an Eastern version of the Italian island for the Polish and Ukrainian intelligentsias. While in the Carpathians, he wrote to his friend Maksim Gor’kii: “If only you knew what a captivating, almost fairy-tale corner of the world this is, with its dark-green mountains and eternally whispering mountain springs.” He drew further attention to the “costumes and customs” of the “nomadic Hutsuls,” and wondered whether he had been “transported to some new and unknown world.”²⁶ After his publication of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in late 1911, he returned to the Carpathians to gather material for a larger epic volume about the Hutsuls, but fell ill with a heart condition, and, after returning to Chernihiv, died on April 12, 1912. Kotsiubyns’kyi defined his work in the Carpathians as clearly ethnographic in intention. Especially after the Revolution of 1905, the writer gradually shifted his style from a populist and realist aesthetic along the lines of Gor’kii (evident in the

²⁴ Much of his work, however, was published in L’viv rather than Kyiv, due the comparative ease to publish in Western Ukraine, away from Russian imperial censorship. See, Bohdan Rubchak, “The Music of Satan and the Bedeviled World: An Essay on Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky,” in Mikhailo Kotsiubynsky, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, (Littleton, CO: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies by Ukrainian Academic Press, 1981), 87.

²⁵ Kamianets’-Podil’s’kyi was on the border of the Russian and Hapsburg Empires after the First Partition, and later on the border of Poland and the Soviet Union in the inter-war period.

²⁶ Letter to M. Gor’kii, August 9, 1910, in Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi, *Tvory v semy tomakh*, vol. 7 (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1975), 69.

first half of *Fata Morgana*, the entirety of which was written between 1903 and 1911), to more of an impressionist orientation in such works as *Intermezzo* (1907) and *Shadows*.

The popular romantic image of the Carpathian inhabitants temporarily dissolved after World War II, when security organs were combing the mountains for the remnants of the UPA movement. With the Tenth Anniversary of the “re-unification” of Ukraine in 1949, however, Western Ukraine was redeemed with a message of the victory of socialism over the poverty, ignorance, and “bourgeois nationalism” that authorities in Moscow and Kyiv claimed had prevailed in Polish and Romanian-controlled Ukraine. During the early 1960s, Ukrainian filmmakers carried the torch of Carpathophilia from the folkloric to an ethnographic orientation. In this later formation, the Carpathians provided not only an ideological component of Ukraine’s “re-unification” but more importantly, it became an exotic space of self-knowledge for Kyiv artists and intellectuals. This shift emerged alongside both a growing Ukrainian dissident movement along with the proliferation of mountain imagery in Soviet popular culture.

“Oh Verkhovyna, You are Ours, Oh Precious, Little World”:²⁷ Representing the Carpathians through the Carpathian Tourist

The imagery of the Carpathians in Ukraine emerged in tandem with a broader visual discourse in the Soviet Union on mountains, enlisted primarily toward promoting the growing potential for tourism in the Caucasus and Crimea. As Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker argue, “For eastern Europeans inside multinational empires, tourism became one mechanism to help to define self and other, and it contributed to reifying nation-building projects.”²⁸ By the 1960s time for leisure activity both expanded and became more individual in orientation. The

²⁷ This was the title of a feature article on Hutsul song and dance in *Radians'ka kul'tura*, July 28, 1960: “Verkhovyno, svitku ty nash,” p. 2.

²⁸ Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, “Introduction,” in Gorsuch and Koenker, eds., *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006): 2. They go to argue, “In the Soviet Union... tourism was supposed to help individuals to internalize the nation; and through this process the nation, in turn, would become like the human body – united and functioning as a whole” (10).

1960s represented a period in the Soviet Union, like in the United States and Western Europe, when greater numbers of people could afford time and money for personal leisure. This growing orientation toward “privatization” of public life, as Vladimir Shlapentokh once referred to the post-Khrushchevian malaise in Soviet society, made tourism a means for personal enjoyment, while the obligatory visit to such nationalistic icons as war monuments were merely tolerated.²⁹ At the time, Boris Grushin saw the Soviet Union developing into a “mobile society,” both in terms of the movement of labor and in terms of the pursuit of leisure and knowledge of other places.³⁰

Yet, tourism to the mountains was not about leisure alone; rather, the specific quality of the landscape was to appeal to pop-philosophical notions of transcendence. After completing his first film, *Vertical* (*Vertikal'*, 1967), a story about mountain climbers in the Caucasus who narrowly escape death from an avalanche, the young Vladimir Vysotskii told reporters in *Sportivnaia zhizn' Rossii* (Russian Sports Life): “It seems to me that, of all types of sports, mountain-climbing tends to have more of a moral effect on the individual.”³¹ In *Vertical*, however, the rustic ethnics that inhabit the mountains exist on the periphery of the primary conflict between man and landscape. The inhabitants of *Hutsul'shchyna* were not only part of the tourist spectacle, but also read into the transcendent quality of the landscape.

As Paradzhanov's film finally hit theaters in fall 1965, *Ranok* published a photo montage that complimented *Shadows*, which showed a group of men and women dressed in traditional highlander costumes preparing a horse for tilling the fields alongside a group of backpackers leaving a large tourist center (Figure 3.2). Although tourism to such places as the Caucasus and the Black Sea coast were significantly more popular during the 1960s, there were a number of such

²⁹ For an analysis of how ordinary Soviet citizens after Khrushchev viewed nationalistic public spectacle, see, Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³⁰ The term “mobile society” comes from Hermann Bausinger, *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, tr., Elke Dettmer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 39. Boris Grushin, *Svobodnoe vremia* (Moscow, 1967).

³¹ N. P. Cherepanova, “Luchshe gor mogut byt' tol'ko gory,” *Sportivnaia zhizn' Rossii*, no. 5 (1968), 23.

organized trips to the Carpathians. A 1977 tourist guidebook featured 12 different organized and self-guided tours through the Carpathians. Four of the tours included a stay at the “Hutsul’shchyna” resort (pictured in *Ranok*), which opened in 1965 together with the “Hutsul’shchyna” restaurant, and another included a 14-day tour of the Hutsul region based out of the “Hutsul Valleys” resort. Thus, while Caucasus tours were far more extensive and prevalent in the tourist literature, the Carpathian tours were unique in the Soviet Union in that the organization of tourism centered on experiencing the region’s inhabitants, rather than solely on nature activities and relaxation.³² To help facilitate the journey to the mountains, *Karpaty* publishers was established in 1964 in the Trans-Carpathian city of Uzhhorod. They initially specialized in tourist guidebooks and picture books, which, while generally published in Ukrainian and Russian-language editions, were clearly intended for a Republican – rather than all-Union – audience.³³ The promotion of the Carpathians as a space of “traditional” Ukrainian folk values occurred alongside the promotion of the tourist journey to this space. Viewing this “panorama” of the Carpathians in *Ranok*, the highland farmers and backpackers become part of the same ideological construction. The happily-laboring villagers acquire more than an element of “to-be-looked-at-ness” because the tourists are positioned as active participants in the Carpathian drama, and to no less degree do they acquire the same visual quality in their performance as tourists/spectators.

Along with the spectacle of traditional life in the Carpathians came the responsibility to protect it. Later in 1965, *Ranok* published an article on nature preservation in the Carpathians, together with a series of photographs of mountain vistas. Pavlo Skochok, a member of the republican council of the State Committee for Nature Preservation, argued,

³² N.A. Ivashkina, ed., *Turistskie marshruty* (Moscow: Profizdat, 1977), 82-84. The differences between organized tourism in the Carpathians and that in the Caucasus may also include the differences in the physical structure of each mountain ranges. While the Caucasus had a number of steep peaks and rock faces conducive to the sport of mountain climbing, the rounded features of the Carpathians were more conducive to hiking and exploration.

³³ This limited distribution for Carpathian guidebooks is indicated by the fairly small number of copies printed. For example, one of the largest print-runs for 1965 was a photo album entitled *Karpaty*, for which 20,000 copies were made.



Figure 3.2. *Hutsul'shchyna* as tourist attraction. Source: *Ranok*, no. 8 (Aug 1965)

The Carpathians are our national pride. Their beauty has long warmed the heart with the memories of all who have been caressed by their attractiveness, and songs about Carpathian mountain valleys are sung from Moldavia to Finland.³⁴

While Skochok initially articulated the specifically “national” importance of the space, the reader soon learns that this assertion is self-consciously associated with the outsider’s experience in the Carpathians, rather than anything inherent to the space itself. Similarly, the tourist, as a type of spectator, is given the role of producing meaning. But such an outsider teeters on the boundaries of inclusion into this vulnerable Carpathian pastoral after acquiring such knowledge about preservation. Skochok, in his role as an ideological guide, told readers and potential tourists that a visit to the Carpathians should indeed produce a feeling of communal – indeed, national – responsibility.

Underlying these representations of tourism was a conception of the Carpathians as a sign pointing not only toward the quintessential rural pastoral, but also toward a division between such an invented authenticity and the cultural and social processes that went into giving it meaning as a “national” construct; that division between “you” and “ours,” which required cultural suturing. For Western Ukrainian intellectuals, the idea of the Carpathians developed into a distinctive regional identity in the early twentieth century, which only later produced nationalistic feelings in tandem with the political upheavals of East-Central Europe in the inter-war period. With the increasing popularity of tourism, Kyivans and other Eastern Ukrainians were also invited to visit the mountains, and to associate it with their own national space, as the “germ of great Ukraine,” waiting to be discovered and personally possessed.

³⁴ Pavlo Skochok, “Homin Karpat,” *Ranok*, no. 10 (1965), 7.

The Carpathians as a Generically Defined Site of Historical Knowledge

One of the dimensions of “national pride” that Skochok referenced was the historic national importance of the region for Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Viktor Ivanov’s *Oleksa Dovbush* (1959), perhaps the first in a new cycle of films about the Carpathians, attempted to establish this importance, but did so within a conventional generic and stylistic framework that I have previously defined as the “folkloric mode.” As a popular historical epic, the film located a primordial struggle between Ukrainians and Poles among the Carpathian Hutsuls. Dovbush, the legendary 18th century bandit-turned-rebel leader of the highlanders, defends the Hutsuls against the arbitrary will of the Polish *szlachta*.³⁵ After taking a blood obligation to an old *opryshok*³⁶ to avenge his comrades’ deaths at the hand of *Pan*³⁷ Jablonski, Dovbush leaves his life of petty crime to gather a group of Hutsul rebels. Upon first meeting the *pan*, Dovbush easily subdues him in a sword fight, but spares his life after a promise to return the peasants’ livestock. Jablonski initially follows through with his promise, but later kills Dovbush’s parents in revenge. He eventually tracks down the *pan*, killing him, but in Dovbush’s flight from the castle, his fiancé, Marichka, is captured. Dovbush’s men, in turn, capture Jablonski’s widow, and offer the Poles an exchange. After another series of double-crossings, Dovbush breaks into the tower to free his love, only to (literally) be stabbed in the back by his friend Shtefan. The latter had made a pact with a Polish priest, who promised to marry the latter to his long-time crush, Marichka. After leaving victorious,

³⁵ The *szlachta* (or, *shliakhta*) is the Polish and Ukrainian term for the Polish nobility.

³⁶ The *opryshky* were peasant rebels operating in Galicia, Zakarpattia and Bukovyna, who fought an intermittent guerrilla war against Polish, Austrian and Romanian landowners over the entire period of Western Ukrainian serfdom (sixteenth-early nineteenth centuries). Dovbush led the *opryshok* movement from the late 1730 to the early 1740s. See, V. V. Hrabovets’kyi’s work on the *opryshok* movement in the Carpathians: Vladimir Grabovetskii, *Oleksa Dovbush: legendarnyi geroi ukrainskogo naroda* (Moscow, Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskaiia literatura, 1959), a popular history coordinated with Ivanov’s film, and V. V. Hrabovets’kyi, *Antyfeodal’na borot’ba karpats’koho opryshkivstva :XVI-XIX st.* (L’viv: L’viv University Press, 1966), a more rigorous scholarly monograph on the broader *opryshok* movement in the Carpathians. Iakutovych designed the front cover of the latter.

³⁷ *Pan/pana/pani* is the Polish/Ukrainian title for a member of the nobility, equivalent to the English “sir.”

Marichka and Dovbush's men lead their dying leader to the mountains, where he disappears with Marichka over the horizon.

Typical of the socialist realist "master plot," the titular hero moves from the spontaneity of local banditry to the social consciousness and responsibility of a revolutionary leader. Moreover, the film answers the demand in Ukrainian cinema to locate a historic – and, indeed, familial-like – connection between the East and West. Although "Russians" are absent in the film, the presence of the Cossack Mykhailov in Dovbush's group as a representative "from Ukraine" narratively associates the two liberation struggles of the *haidamaky*³⁸ and the *opryshky*, and writes the impetus for "unification" into the 18th century. In the screenplay, the narrator makes the film's nationalistic argument explicit, associating highland and highlander together, as the credits roll in front of a montage of forested mountain vistas:

The Carpathian Mountains, like deep wrinkles in the ancient face of the land. From time immemorial, children of the one mother Ukraine lived here until the Polish, Austrian, Hungarian, and Wallachian lords seized this land, tore it to pieces, and divided it among themselves. How much suffering did our brother-heroes experience in captivity, but they did not give in, and were not annihilated. Anger was excavated from the hearts of the people, like those springs from mountain cliffs, and came down like a merciless sword on the heads of the oppressors. Two hundred years ago, this anger had a human name. They called him Oleksa Dovbush...³⁹

The screened Russian-language version differs from this Ukrainian text in the shooting script. Instead of identifying the oppressor nations, or a pre-modern Ukrainian nation, the narrator informs us that the Carpathian lands constituted a significant part of the Kievan Rus' state from the 9th to the 13th centuries, thus tying together the fates of Ukraine and Russia more directly.⁴⁰ Most importantly

³⁸ The *haidamaky* were Cossacks and peasant rebels in Right-Bank Ukraine (lands West of the Dnipro and East of the Carpathians), who fought Polish landowners during the 1830s-60s. See, Oleksandr Lola, *Haidamats'kyi rukh na Ukraini 20-60rr. XVIIIst.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1965).

³⁹ See the Ukrainian-language shooting script: TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 2, d. 1536.

⁴⁰ As Jaroslaw Pelenski writes, the Soviet theory of the "Kievan inheritance" "allots equal rights to [...] the three East Slavic nations [...] but which in fact is much closer to the traditional Russian theory and its forceful advocacy of Russian national interests than it is to the Ukrainian [theory]." "The Contest for the 'Kievan Inheritance' in Russian-Ukrainian Relations: The Origins and Early Ramifications," in *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 4.

for rendering the film as socialist realism, this agent of Ukraine's anger is an iconic "positive hero," at once extraordinary in his combat abilities and flawlessly virtuous in his moral outlook. At the same time, such a leader demands absolute allegiance and courage on the part of his followers. While recruiting his *opryshky*, he forces them to walk across a narrow plank over two bare cliff faces. The first person – an old man, seemingly drunk – falls to his death, which inspires little remorse from the calm and collected Dovbush. The camera constantly hovers on Dovbush's face in close-up, his eyes revealing compassion and beauty, while his thick mustache emphasizes his paternal sternness and absolute commitment to the revolutionary cause (Figure 3.3).⁴¹

Nonetheless, there are several possibilities for seeing *Oleksa Dovbush* as generically interested in other problems. The love triangle involving Shtefan, Marichka, and Dovbush demonstrates how the Carpathian cycle functioned within the realm of political melodrama. After all, the political drama is quickly subordinated to this personal drama, which lies outside questions about class and nation that the film purportedly addresses. Also generically significant is *Oleksa Dovbush's* dialogue with the conventions and iconography of the Western in its representation of a frontier society with tenuous connections to a political center. Like the Western, the physical and cultural space of the film is located in the borderlands of two states, in this case Poland and Russia. Yet both of these spaces have shifted in context. Instead of Enlightenment-era St. Petersburg and Warsaw, East-Bank "Ukraine" stands in for Russia and *Pan Jablonski's* remote outpost of aristocratic decadence and violence stands in for Poland. This Western-like iconography of vigilante on horseback, high cliff faces, immoral gentlemen, and the damsel in distress would have been familiar to Soviet audiences in the 1950s owing to the large numbers of Hollywood films that the Red Army confiscated from Nazi film archives in Berlin in 1944, which

⁴¹ In Soviet cinema, the Hutsul is canonically represented with a mustache, but it usually takes the form of Ivanko's thin strip of hair in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.



Figure 3.3. Oleksa Dovbush: The Stalinesque Hutsul

subsequently screened in the Soviet Union over the next decade.⁴² Thus, we might see Ivanov's film as an attempt to emulate the epic Western of the 1930s-40s, while sufficiently adapting it to the ethno-historical context of the Russian Imperial and Polish "frontier."

While over 23 million people saw *Oleksa Dovbush* in 1959, critics were dismissive of its "traditional dramaturgy," perhaps pointing toward its Stalinist folkloric mode of narration. Nina Ignat'eva wrote in the January 1961 issue of *Iskusstvo kino* that while "a striving for poetic elevation... is in general associated with works of Ukrainian cinema, this sometimes emerges as 'sugary' and falsely 'touching little pictures [*kartynky*].'" This is precisely what happened with Ivanov's film, she argued, with its sappy love story and endless shots of cliff faces and men on horseback chasing each other. The plot, Ignat'eva wrote, was "traditional" in the "stupidest meaning of the word."⁴³ Nonetheless, what the critic found appealing about the film was the "colorfulness of Hutsul *byt*"⁴⁴ and the originality of Carpathian nature." Here we find the critic more willing to accept the film's ethnographic texture, while the director's intention seems to be closer to the folkloric message of trans-historicity and a narrative of unity through diversity.

⁴² See Kristin Roth-Ey's discussion of Soviet "trophy films" in her dissertation, "Mass Media and the Remaking of Soviet Culture, 1950s-1960s," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2003): 107-117.

⁴³ Nina Ignat'eva, "V puti," *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 1 (January 1961): 90-94.

⁴⁴ *Byt* is untranslatable, but comes closest to meaning "everyday life."

Critics, however, noticed the film's representation of the Hutsul's exotic world, transposing it in the process to the chaos of Carpathian nature. Here, despite the fairly democratic historical teleology (Eastern and Western Ukrainians uniting, without the help of the Russian state, to eliminate Polish aristocratic injustice) of a chapter leading toward Ukrainian unification, critics largely picked up on the film's ability (or lack thereof) to represent these human objects accurately and authentically. As Ignat'eva suggests, it is the filmmaker's gaze – like the tourist above – which catalogs and defines such authenticities.

Paradzhanov also weighed in on the debate about *Oleksa Dovbush*, but from the distance of seven years. In "Eternal Motion," the director caustically wrote,

They [the film crew] came to the Carpathians *cinematically educated* [my emphasis]. More importantly, they drew it with exotic and decorative motifs, but we did not recognize any Hutsuls in the film. We did not see their gait, did not hear their charming speech, and the movement of thought."⁴⁵

Paradzhanov counterposed his conception of ethnographic authenticity with filmmakers' specialized knowledge of cinematic technique and generic conventions. While Soviet film scholarship traditionally focused on the development of plot and character psychology to define the essence of socialist realism, the 1960s brought with it a shift in realist discourse to accommodate what it loosely referred to as "poetics." As Ignat'eva and Paradzhanov implied, although disagreeing on the specific qualities of a particular film, they would judge a film's realism not only according to narrative convention, but also according to the visual quality of the human subject. Paradzhanov wrote in his article that aesthetic "power is [located] in the authentic object,"⁴⁶ and here it seems he could alternately be speaking about the *keptar'* or the Hutsul himself.

As he did with his own film *Flowers on the Stone*, Paradzhanov took particular offense to the "inauthentic" language of *Oleksa Dovbush*. Like the Donbass miner, Hutsuls should not speak either perfect Russian or Ukrainian,

⁴⁵ Sergei Paradzhanov, "Vechnoe dvizhenie," *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 1 (January 1966): 63-64.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

despite the problem of comprehension that dialect presented.⁴⁷ Paradzhanov's claim to authenticity in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was associated with a process of de-familiarizing the ethnic texture of the film, and with a rejection of direct translation. In this way, he imagined the ethnographic concept of "national color" as a particular form of untranslatability in his film. Whereas *Oleksa Dovbush* employs the sounds of the *trembita*, *floiar*, and *drymba*⁴⁸ – the traditional instruments of the Hutsuls – it does so exclusively with the accompaniment of a symphonic score more characteristic of classical narrative cinema. While Ivanov's film occasionally uses dialectal terms and phrases, especially to characterize Uniate priests and older Hutsuls, the bulk of the dialogue is spoken in flawless literary Russian. Paradzhanov would later break with both of these normalizing conventions in his attempts at de-familiarizing the soundtrack in *Shadows*. The elements of soundtrack include untranslated voices and non-verbal music, which function to immerse the spectator in the ethnoscape of *Hutsul'shchyna*, rather than perform a mediating role with the cinematic conventions of musical composition and dubbed-over with literary voices. As Paradzhanov certainly believed after reading Kotsiubyns'kyi's novella in 1961, this interest in de-familiarizing the aural dimensions of ethnic texture also informed the writer's use of language.

Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi and the "Painterly Text"

When production on *Shadows* began, the studio intended that the adaptation of Kotsiubyns'kyi's 1912 novella would contribute to the celebration planned for the writer's centenary in 1964. Initially, Dovzhenko Studio asked

⁴⁷ Ibid., 63-64.

⁴⁸ The *trembita* is long, valve-less horn used in funeral dirges and to signal the end of the working day for shepherds in *Hutsul'shchyna*. The *floiar* is a wooden piccolo-like instrument, usually associated with Hutsul shepherds, who played the instrument while tending the pasture. The *drymba* (or, Jew's Harp) is a tiny pear-shaped woodwind with a reed (or, tongue) dissecting the middle. One plays the instrument by placing it in the mouth, and blowing on the reed while "strumming" it back and forth. Its characteristic sound is associated with marriages, funerals, and liturgical holidays in *Hutsul'shchyna*. See, Volodymyr Shukhevych, *Hutsul'shchyna*, vol. 5, book 3 (L'viv: Naukove Tovarystvo imeny Shevchenka, 1902): 70-77.

Paradzhanov and writer Ivan Chendei to adapt a minor Kotsiubyns'kyi short story called "The City [*Mist*]," but upon the request of the writer's daughter Iryna, the studio agreed to work on *Shadows* instead. The latter concerned the tragic love between two Hutsuls, Ivánko and Maríchka, the children of the rival families Paliichuk and Hutentiuk, in a village near Chornahora, the Black Mountain.⁴⁹ The first half of the story loosely follows a *Romeo and Juliet* narrative. The two lovers meet during a quarrel between their fathers after a parish fair, during which Paliichuk falls dead from an axe wound. The two children continue to meet each other in secret until they are teenagers, Ivanko promising that he will marry her despite the familial conflict. Due to the poverty that Paliichuk's death brought to the family, Ivanko must hire himself out as a shepherd in a high mountain valley. The young lovers part, with Marichka pregnant, vowing to meet again at the end of the grazing season. While in the mountain pasture, Ivanko begins to have visions of the girl, and believes that nymphs are playing tricks on him. Several cows and sheep go missing (their deaths attributed to the devil, "Velykyi"⁵⁰), and a number of others die in a blizzard. At the end of the summer, when the livestock are returned to their owners in the lowland villages, Ivanko descends the mountain to discover that Marichka had been caught in a flood while fording the Cheremosh River. Villagers tell him that she had drifted over a waterfall and died on the rocks below. After discovering the body, Ivanko falls into a deep depression and disappears to the Hungarian side of the mountains for six years. He eventually returns to his village, marries the wealthy Palanha, and becomes a stable farmer. At first, he is satisfied with his new life, but soon grows tired of the constant troubles with his neighbors, which include a witch on one side and a sorcerer on the other. The more his thoughts turn to Marichka, the less he is enamored with his shallow and materialistic wife. On Saint Iurii's Day (May 6, the first day of Spring in Ukraine), Palanha leaves early to perform

⁴⁹ V. Luhovs'kyi, *Nevidomyi maestro: S. Paradzhanov, Tini zabutykh predkiv: Rozkadrovky* (Kyiv: Kino-Teatr, 1998), 29.

⁵⁰ "The Great One"

the holiday rituals outside in the nude,⁵¹ where she encounters Iura the sorcerer gazing at her body.⁵² While initially angry at her neighbor's voyeurism, but due in part to Ivanko's persistent depression, she comes to accept him as her lover after encountering him during a violent storm. While drinking at a tavern, Ivanko meets the sorcerer, whom Palanha is fondling. Ivanko challenges Palanha's new love and the latter beats him to the ground, but spares his life. Ivanko has another vision of Marichka in a highland forest, which ends with the arrival of a forest spirit who challenges him to a *haiduk* competition.⁵³ The nymph imitating Marichka returns, luring Ivanko off a cliff to his death. The story ends with Ivanko's funeral, Palanha's well-articulated wails fading into revelry as "they forgot about [Ivanko's] body."⁵⁴

The plot of the novella is structured around Ivanko's three journeys into the mountains. The first time is as a child, when he hears the *aridnyk*⁵⁵ play the flute. His second journey concerns his time spent as a shepherd, where he first encounters the Marichka nymph, and the third time occurs after Iura beats Ivanko, during which the Marichka nymph lures him to his death. The plot revolves around a dichotomy between the highlands and the lowlands, each with their own dangers and advantages for Ivanko. The highlands represent the land of demons and creativity, while the lowlands represent depravity and comfort. While Ivanko's relationship with Marichka represents the realm of pure existence/art, his marriage to Palanha describes the banality of everyday life. Typical of literary impressionism, Kotsiubyns'kyi blurs the boundaries between objective and subjective narration. The reader is never confident whether the

⁵¹ Bohdan Rubchak writes in the notes to the English translation that Saint Iurii's Day is associated with the Spring Festival of the pagan god Iarylo, when villagers typically engaged in "orgiastic" displays meant to protect the livestock from witches and other evil spirits. See, "Notes on the text," in Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, tr. Marco Carynnyk (Littleton, CO: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1981), 69-70.

⁵² Until Vasili Pichul's *Little Vera (Malekaia Vera)*, 1988), *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was the only Soviet film to feature female nudity.

⁵³ The *haiduk* is a dance, which men perform, involving hopping from side to side with their legs in a sitting pose. The winner of the competition is the individual who maintains the posture and continues to dance the longest.

⁵⁴ This description is based on the 1967 text, Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, *Tini zabutykh predkiv* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1967).

⁵⁵ *Aridnyk* is another Hutsul term for the devil.

supernatural elements of the story are really occurring, or if Kotsiubyns'kyi is offering us an interpretation of events already filtered through Hutsul mythology: His text is littered with references to “sad mountains,” “sleeping walls,” “breathing fire,” and the Cheremosh “relating its dreams.” Through such metaphoric excess, inanimate objects and natural processes are imbued with anthropomorphic agency. The Hutsuls interact and communicate with these objects and “dark forces” as they would with other human beings.⁵⁶ These visual queues point toward Kotsiubyns'kyi's explicit interest in creating a “painterly” text. He consistently referred to his “exotic” stories about Hutsuls, Tatars, and peasants from Moldavia and Capri as “sketches” and “pictures (*obrazky*),” demonstrating his concern with modernist literature's intertextual relationship to the visual arts. As Rubchak explains, Kotsiubyns'kyi considered his careful and subtle use of “color” to be as essential as its use in painting.⁵⁷ Thus, “color” is not only an ethnographic trope, as in Shaburiak's poem, but also an important textual component, which serves as the iconographic bridge from the object of nature to the human subject and its material culture.

Paradzhanov brought these painterly concerns with color to the cinema in his adaptation of Kotsiubyns'kyi's novella. In the writer's language, “color” is embedded in his excessive use of metaphor, which frequently functions intertextually by reference to visual forms: “The entire world was like a fairy tale,”⁵⁸ he writes at the beginning of the novella, more likely an allusion to the contemporaneous Symbolist renderings of fairy tales than to the oral or written texts themselves.

As Paradzhanov would be in his adaptation, so was Kotsiubyns'kyi concerned with the verbal and aural ethnoscape of the Carpathians. The language of the narration furthermore conveys the confusion of narrative voice. When the writer traveled to the Carpathians for his fieldwork, he experienced a

⁵⁶ Rubchak further explains that the *aridnyk* in the story is given agency as a Pan-like figure. Kotsiubyns'kyi divests Ivanko's “pact with the devil” of its moral exigencies. “The Vanisher [*aridnyk*] becomes Kotsiubyns'kyi's ambiguous agent of salvation against the background of a specifically Hutsul Christianity, bedeviled in its own way.” The role of the *aridnyk*, he argues, is essentially “dual natured,” reflecting Greek concerns about the nature of Pan. Rubchak, 107.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵⁸ Kotsiubyns'kyi, 9.

very different form of Ukrainian than the one he grew up with, and wanted to convey these differences with the hybridized language that he employed in the text. For example, Kotsiubyns'kyi used the term “*bovhar*” instead of the standard Ukrainian “*pastukh*” for cowherd, and “*buryshka*” for “*kartoplia*,” meaning potato. The end of the story included a glossary of terms to help the Eastern Ukrainian reader understand the text, but the refusal to translate these terms within the text itself was a significant authorial decision, which sought to convey the ethnoscape of the narrative. In this way, Kotsiubyns'kyi's language functioned on the level of “color,” in that it sought to convey a spectacle essentially beyond the direct capabilities of a literary text. The glossary, then, represented a form of subtitling meant to transmit information without disrupting the text's intended ethnographic authenticity, and attempted to demonstrate the essential untranslatability of certain terms in his attempt to render sound through written words.

Not surprisingly, such an impressionistic text, initially published in Hapsburg L'viv in 1912 to avoid Russian imperial censorship of Ukrainian-language literature, also fell outside of the commonly acknowledged Soviet canon of Kotsiubyns'kyi's work. A 1929 Kyiv edition of the story, however, attempted to highlight a realist *Shadows* by including a series of illustrations drawn by Olena Kul'chyts'ka (Figure 3.4). Her images functioned to normalize the strangeness of *Hutsúl'shchyna* and its culture. The illustration of Ivanko beginning his ascent into the mountains presents a clear and almost cliché narrative line, while the appeal of the three figures is their “realistic” psychological interaction rather than their exotic or mythological traits. This juxtaposition of realist illustrations with the writer's impressionistic language further affected the novella's generically hybridized quality. Stalinist era criticism of *Shadows*, in the little that there was, exclusively emphasized Kotsiubyns'kyi's “sociological” concerns. For example, P. Zlatoustov wrote during the same year as the publication of the Kul'chyts'ka-illustrated version that the writer was largely

interested in the “demoralization” of poverty, which expressed itself in the Hutsul culture of vendettas, superstitions, and “savage customs.”⁵⁹

Although Zlatousov’s interpretation remained dominant into the 1960s, and critics of Paradzhanov would draw on him and his protégés to disparage the film’s lack of verisimilitude to Kotsiubyns’kyi’s original, a critical divergence also emerged in the years leading up to the writer’s centenary. Along with Petro Kolesnyk’s standard interpretation in “Kotsiubyns’kyi against Modernism,” we find Olena Kravets’s monograph, *M.M. Kotsiubyn’skyi on the Everyday Life of the People* (both 1963), which advanced the writer’s work as an example of fictional ethnography, which was moreover a defense of the development of national culture, literature, and art in Ukraine.⁶⁰ The promotion of Kotsiubyns’kyi as a nationalistic icon was certainly different from the proto-socialist realist author and intimate friend of Gor’kii that Stalin-era scholars had identified.⁶¹ In this reevaluation of Kotsiubyns’kyi, Paradzhanov was given a greater degree of artistic freedom to interpret this most eccentric work of literature.

Paradzhanov’s *Shadows* and the Authentication of the Carpathian Ethnoscape

In adapting a work of such importance to the history of Ukrainian national literature, Paradzhanov was initially uninterested in hiring Ukrainian actors for the leading roles. Illienko convinced him to hire his wife, Sovremennik⁶² actress

⁵⁹ P. Zlatoustov, “Idealizatsiia chy zhakhlyva diisnist’,” *Chervonyi shliakh*, no. 4 (1929): 165; quoted in Rubchak, 104.

⁶⁰ Petro Kolesnyk, “Kotsiubyns’kyi proty Modernizmu,” *Vitchezna*, no. 4 (1963); Olena Kravets’, *M.M. Kotsiubyns’kyi pro narodnyi pobut* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1963); quoted in Volodymyr Zynych, “Interes do etnohrafii,” review of Kravets’, *Literaturna Ukraina*, September 15, 1964: 3.

⁶¹ It should be said, however, that Kotsiubyns’kyi’s earlier work was more in the realist vein, and made them easily acceptable adaptations for Ukrainian filmmakers throughout the Stalin era, and into the 1950s. Borys Tiahno first adapted *Fata-Morgana* in 1931 at Ukrainfil’m in Odessa, followed by Oleksii Shvachko’s *The Bloody Blossom* (*Kravavyi rassvet*), V. Karasev’s *Pe-koptor*, and S. Komar’s *Horses are Not To Blame* (*Koni ne vinovaty*), all in 1956. The latter two were written by Kyiv studio director Davyd Kopytsia. In 1958, famed Soviet director Mark Donskoi adapted *At a High Price* (*Dorohoiu tsinoiu*), which became one of the first respected films released by Kyiv Studio after Savchenko’s *Taras Shevchenko* in 1951. Donskoi’s film was still in the Stalinist allegorical fairy-tale genre, but its use of color and Mykola Topchi’s interesting camera work made the film closer in style to Paradzhanov’s loose mode adaptation in 1965.

⁶² The Sovremennik is Moscow’s theater for young actors. It was established in 1956.



Figure 3.4. Olena Kul'chyts'ka's illustrations for Kotsiubyns'kyi's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1929 Soviet edition). Source: Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, *Tini zabutykh predkiv* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1929)

Larisa Kadochnikova, as Marichka. For the role of Ivanko, Paradzhanov found MKhAT actor Gennadii Iukhtin perfect for the job.⁶³ Thus, we find the director particularly uninvolved in the cultural politics of Dovzhenko Studio at the time, wishing instead to appeal to the leading actor's fame over the ability to speak Ukrainian. As assistant director Volodymyr Luhovs'kyi recalls, Ukrainian Goskino was at first supportive of Iukhtin for his ability to bring in audiences, which might be impossible with an unknown Ukrainian actor. Clearly, Goskino hoped for another blockbuster along the lines of *Oleksa Dovbush*.

When KITM film dean Viktor Ivchenko asked Paradzhanov to consider his acting student Ivan Mykolaichuk for the role of Ivanko, the director was less than excited. Due to Ivchenko's status in the industry, however, Paradzhanov was essentially forced to send a telegram to the Carpathian village of Chortoryia where Ivan lived, requesting that the acting student come to Kyiv for a script reading. The director had no intention, however, to cast Mykolaichuk in the role, and refused to even watch him read for the part. During his audition, Luhovs'kyi recalls that if the cinematographer had not been there, he would have mistaken the performer for an actual Hutsul.⁶⁴ Thus, Mykolaichuk's very origins attached a large degree of linguistic authenticity to the role that he would perform. While Paradzhanov and Illienko continued to insist upon Iukhtin, the Dovzhenko Studio Artistic Council viewed Mykolaichuk's reading and voted overwhelmingly for him, thus placing the importance of resolving the "problem of cadres" over that of marketing possibilities.⁶⁵

After finalizing the details of production, Paradzhanov, the cast and crew traveled to the village of Verkhovyna (before 1963: Zhab'e), the population center of the Ukrainian side of *Hutsul'shchyna*, and the contemporary site of the kolkhoz "Radiants'ka Verkhovyna," where they began work on the film. Ukrainian graphic artist Hryhorii Iakutovych (pictured in Figure 3.1) was hired as a set designer and

⁶³ Luhovs'kyi, 41, 43.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁵ Ibid. During my presentation of a section of this chapter at the 2007 ASN Convention, Columbia University professor Iurii Shevchuk took issue with my positioning this as an issue of marketing concerns. He argued instead that the choice of central actors over republican actors was a deliberate policy aimed specifically toward Russification as an end in itself. I see no basis for this argument or any evidence for it in the literature or in archival documents.

guide through the Carpathians.⁶⁶ Iakutovych, a respected young graphic artist and specialist in Carpathian Studies, was illustrating a 1967 edition of Kotsiubyns'kyi's novella. His images were strikingly different from Kul'chyts'ka's 1929 drawings, the former reflecting new interest in the avant-garde during the Thaw. The expressions of the figures are crudely drawn, and space itself is flattened and de-contextualized (Figure 3.5). Human figures fade into the background. The randomly-placed symbols in this visual environment lack both the depth of natural space and psychological investigation of Kul'chyts'ka's earlier illustrations.

Paradzhanov also hired Uzhhorod painter Fedir Manailo (1911-1978) as an "artistic consultant" on the film, to whom screenwriter Ivan Chendei introduced the director earlier in 1963.⁶⁷ While Manailo worked in a number of styles and genres during his long career – from socialist realism to romantic mountain vistas – his images of Hutsuls from the 1930s, which interested Paradzhanov, were strictly in a neo-primitivist vein (Figure 3.6). Texture, color, and pattern are the important formal elements in both the Hutsul woman with a water jug and the highlander youth carrying the lamb. Faces are crudely rendered, and do not

⁶⁶ See, Georgii Iakutovich, "Khudozhnik ot boga," in Kora Tsereteli, ed., *Zhizn' – igra: Kollazh na fone avtoportreta* (Nizhnii-Novgorod: DEKOM, 2005): 83-84. Iakutovych was one of two up-and-coming graphic artists in 1960s Ukraine, who focused on Carpathian themes. The other was the L'viv-based Hungarian Mariona Ilku. Ilku's work from the early and mid-1960s was more realist in its rendering of space than Iakutovych. See his images in Iurii Belichko and Andrii V'iunyk, eds., *Ukrains'ke narodne vesillia* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1969.): plates 59 and 81.

⁶⁷ Fedir Manailo had been largely ignored during the Stalinist and Khrushchev periods due to his relationship to Ukrainian Monumentalism, a version of neo-primitivism popular during the inter-war period in Polish Ukraine. Manailo was born in 1911 in the village of Ivanivtsy in the region of the Hapsburg Empire that later composed the Czechoslovakian province of "Trans-Carpathian Rus'" (sometimes referred to as "Carpathian Ruthenia") after World War I. Manailo studied painting in Prague in the early 1930s, graduating in 1934. He returned to the provincial capital of Uzhhorod the following year, where four years later, local leaders declared an independent "Carpathian Rus'." Germany occupied the region during 1941-1944, after which the Soviet Union incorporated it into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as Zakarpats'ka oblast (or, "Trans-Carpathian Province"). Many Uzhhorod artists emigrated, first to Prague, and after 1948, largely to France, Germany, Canada, and other sites of the Ukrainian Diaspora. Manailo, a dedicated communist since his days in Prague, decided to work with the Stalinist regime, agreeing to change his style to match Soviet realist conventions. His political past was fairly sketchy, however, and hardly any of his newer, politically-correct, work was ever shown. Consequently, Manailo faded into relative obscurity by the mid-1950s. In the 1960s, however, critics and gallery directors took a new interest in his work. There was a large exhibit at the Museum of Ukrainian Art in L'viv in the summer of 1962, and Ihor Verba reviewed the exhibit in the main Ukrainian literary journal, *Vitchyzna*, in June. Uzhhorod writer Ivan Chendei frequently employed Manailo as an illustrator of his many editions of children's fairy tales based on Carpathian legends.

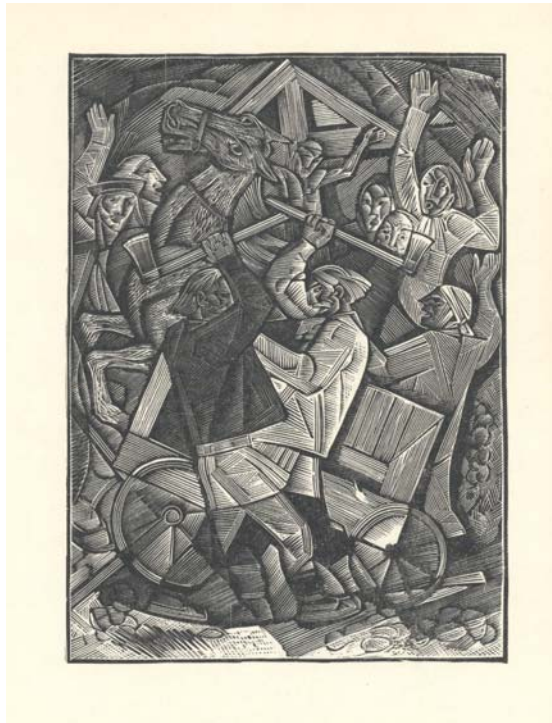


Figure 3.5. One of Hryhorii Iakutovych's illustrations for Kotsiubyns'kyi's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1967 Soviet edition)

reveal the subject, as they are subsumed under the objects and symbols of everyday life and material culture. We also notice the characteristic flattening of space of neo-primitivism in Manailo's images, which heightened their collage-like feel. In Paradzhanov's decision to include these artists within the film crew, he associated himself with a revived appreciation for Ukrainian modernists, whose interest in the Carpathians implicitly connected them with the independence and autonomist movements from the turn of the century through the 1920s. Yet, claims about the film's authenticity were grounded in a notion of ethnographic realism, which valued the particular visual quality of the human subject and its organic relationship to the natural world over representations grounded in generic or modal conventions. Paradzhanov's decision to film almost exclusively on location in *Hutsul'shchyna* represented the convergence of Ukrainian modernism with the unique Thaw-era realist discourse. For the director, *Hutsul'shchyna* was both a space mediated through such modernist

representations and a real space of ethnographic knowledge. In promotional material about the film, press releases constantly emphasized that the film crew spent extensive time in the Verkhovyna region, investigating the sounds and colors emanating from the “strange” land of the Hutsuls. It furthermore stressed that Paradzhanov was shooting the film not far from the leading actor’s native village. As the cast and crew completed filming in late summer of 1964, features on the production of the film gradually appeared in the republican press, particularly on the actor himself. Mykolaichuk appeared on the cover of the June issue of *Novyny kinoekrana*, shaven, in the likeness of the young Taras Shevchenko, but dressed in a contemporary suit complete with a necktie embroidered with a common Verkhovyna pattern (Figure 3.7). The cover image highlighted both his handsome face, in addition to his ethnic and regional connections. Mykolaichuk’s style was *narodnyi chic*, an authenticated ethnic subject, who was seamlessly compatible with modern urban Soviet society. The image also served to blur the lines between his personal performance as the “romantic Hutsul,” and his role in the film as the tragic Hutsul, Ivanko. Iurii Bohdashevs’kyi’s article in the issue emphasized the specificity of his upbringing, mentioning by name uncle Petro and aunt Varka. They were shooting the film “not far from the village where the boy was born.” Mykolaichuk’s activity while on location for *Shadows* blurred the line between his role and his performative self. Bohdashevs’kyi explained,

Ivan met with the Hutsuls, listened to their songs, their leisurely stories. People liked this affable boy, and called him “our Ivan”... And in fact, he was “their own.” His house [*khata*], where he grew up among a rambunctious crowd of brothers and sisters, was not far away.⁶⁸

Two months later, as the film was in post-production, the magazine featured an interview with Paradzhanov, who also affirmed the crew’s “intimate” familiarity with the exotica of Hutsul material and spiritual culture. Critic Oleksii Miroshnychenko’s accompanying article brought out the authentic character of Mykolaichuk, whom we can look in the eye, and see his resemblance to the Ivanko that Kotsiubyns’kyi had himself found in the Carpathians.

⁶⁸ Iu. Bohdashevs’kyi, “Tak trymaty!” *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 6 (June 1964), 8.

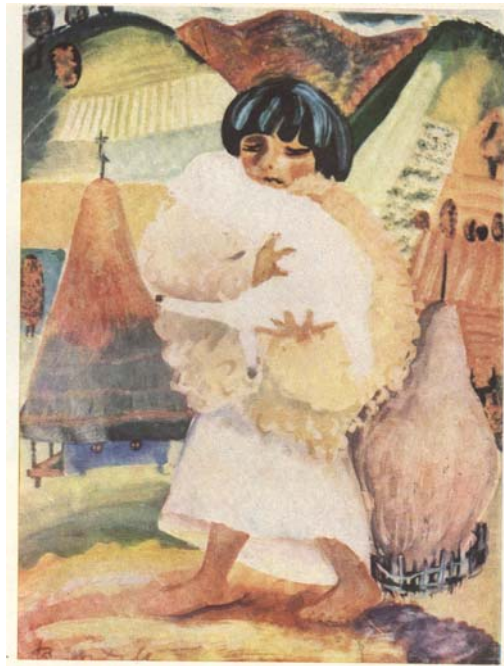


Figure 3.6. Fedir Manailo's images of *Hutsul'shchyna*, c. 1930s. Source: V. P. Tsel'tner, *F. Manailo* (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozhnik, 1986)

Miroshnychenko reported that, while shooting an episode that occurs during the singing of *koliadky* (Ukrainian Christmas Carols), Ivan's performance so affected Paradzhanov that the director was scared to halt the action after Illienko completed the shot, for fear that the crew would disturb the event itself. At another point, Mykolaichuk purportedly invited the crew to his home in Chortoryi so they could experience "genuine Hutsul customs."⁶⁹ In December, as both of Mykolaichuk's films were receiving lots of press, L. Korobchak featured an article solely on the actor, quoting Mykolaichuk about his role in *Shadows*: "Paliichuk is my *zemliak* [fellow countryman]. He is close to me, and I can sense him." The author continued:

The 23-year old actor found himself in the fairy-tale Carpathian region – dear to his soul – both legs on Hutsul land with the cries of the shepherds, sounds of the *trembita* and little girls singing. Mykolaichuk worked with delight, the characters came out easily and freely, and [he] improvised well.⁷⁰

In describing Mykolaichuk's authentic character, however, critics objectified him not as an ideal Ukrainian, but as a feature of the Carpathian ethnoscape. Poet Ivan Drach reviewed the film for *Literaturna Ukraina*, writing that the actor "naturally" perceived the world "as a Hutsul" from the time he was born. He concluded by asking the spectator to "rush to sip from [the film's] pure Carpathian spring."⁷¹

Mykolaichuk was a willing participant in this everyday performance as both a Hutsul and as a Soviet citizen conscious and proud of his Ukrainian nationality. When applying for membership for the SKU in March 1966, the actor answered each of the questions on the Russian-language application in Ukrainian. He listed his social position as "peasant [selianyn]" (rather than "civil servant [sluzhashchii]," which was more common for a film industry worker) and crossed

⁶⁹ Paradzhanov and Oleksii Miroshnychenko, "Tini zabutykh predkiv" *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 8 (1964), 4-5.

⁷⁰ L. Korobchak, "Podviinyi debut: Aktors'ki syluety," *Radians'ka kul'tura*, December 3, 1964: 4.

⁷¹ Ivan Drach, "Sviato z pryvodu ekranizatsii *Tinei zabutykh predkiv*" *Literaturna Ukraina*, September 15, 1964: 4.

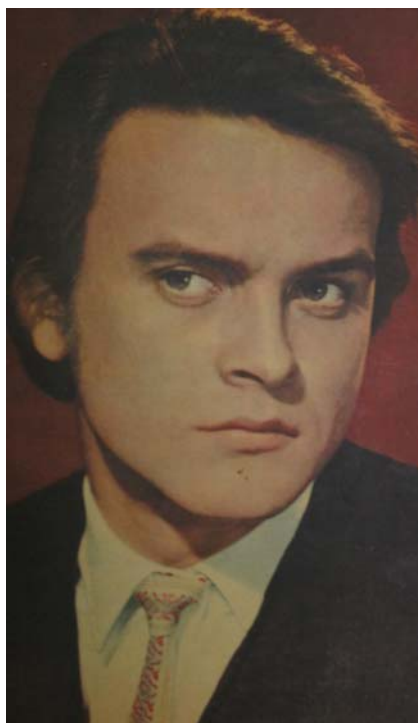


Figure 3.7. Ivan Mykolaichuk on the cover of *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 6 (June 1964)

out the Russian letter “r.” (for “god”), writing in a Ukrainian “p.” (for “rik”) in the line for date of birth.⁷² When reporting in *Mystetstvo* (Art) magazine on his trip to Argentina for the Mar-del-Plata film festival, Mykolaichuk indicated that he, as a Ukrainian from the Western oblasts, rather than the film itself, was the attraction for the many émigrés in the audience. He reported that he brought his audience copies of the *Kobzar*’ and a birch branch as “women and men” cried in memory of their native land.⁷³ Mykolaichuk promoted himself as the embodying image of the Carpathian land, which, metonymically, stood for Ukraine as a whole. Essentially, the actor was able to perform the cultural work of moving the unfamiliar periphery of the Carpathians to the center of Ukrainian identity. In his description of the Mar-del-Plata event, he worked to assimilate the image of

⁷² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 1685, ll. 2-3. “God” and “rik” are the Russian and Ukrainian (respectively) words for “year.”

⁷³ Ivan Mykolaichuk, “Daleka podorozh,” *Mystetstvo*, no. 4 (1965); pub. in Mariia levhen’evna Mykolaichuk, ed., *Bilyi ptakh z chornoïu oznakoiu: Ivan Mykolaichuk: spohady, interv’iu, stsenerii* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1991), 213-215.

Shevchenko – existing dually within the “Friendship of Peoples” mythology and Ukrainian nationalist pedagogy – with that of the Hutsul, the ethnographic oddity.

* * *

With the first screening at Dovzhenko Studio, the film brought credibility to Paradzhanov as the film’s author, but also contributed to an evaluation of what it meant to be Ukrainian among the many members of the Kyiv intelligentsia invited to the event. Director Iurii Lysenko made it most clear that authenticity itself was grounded in a particular regime of representation when he told the studio Artistic Council that this was a film that taught him a lot about his own people that he had not previously known.⁷⁴ The question of self-knowledge thus became something outside the realm of truth, and only contained within styles of performance. Critics and filmmakers openly distinguished between a folkloric mode that relied on a conformist mode of melodramatic or comedic performance, and a modernist abnegation of space and psychology, which simultaneously functioned to defamiliarize and authenticate the Carpathians as essentially and ethno-nationally Ukrainian.

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors was a text that could be, and was, used in both modes. Before Paradzhanov and Chendei began writing the screenplay, the story had been adapted for a ballet in L’viv and the production was touring the republic in 1960. This ballet version, however, bore no similarity to Paradzhanov’s film, as its emphasis was strictly on the melodramatic elements of the plot, and employed classical symphonic music to accompany Hutsul choreography in what was determined to be a light and colorful Hutsul “love story.”⁷⁵ In this way, the ballet brought to the forefront the ways in which classical style came to be associated with realism in its ability to normalize or make familiar cultures that were articulated as alien. But in “leveling” figures like Oleksa Dovbush and a ballet performance of Kotsiubyns’kyi’s novella with Aleksandr Nevskii or, say, the *Nutcracker*, Ukrainian intellectuals did not

⁷⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 109.

⁷⁵ Liubomyr Hoseiko, *Istoriia ukrains'koho kinematohrafa*, tr. Stanislav Dovhaniuk and Hoseiko (Kyiv: Kino-kolo, 2005), 184.

necessarily believe that these contributed to a proper recognition of national culture, even if it made such a culture more legible to both “self” and “other.”

We should not, however, fail to see that Paradzhanov’s adaptation, which stressed de-familiarization over legibility, was itself, and for those very reasons, a form of ethnographic spectacle. In James Clifford’s examination of the connections between French Surrealists and ethnographers during the 1920s, he identifies a representational mode – referring to it with the Russian Formalist term, “*ostranenie* [de-familiarization]” – by which the exotic and the familiar exist side-by-side.⁷⁶ In the combination of Paradzhanov’s self-promoted journey to the Carpathians to film “actual Hutsuls,” and his collage-like imagery of *Hutsul’shchyna*, the film too occupied a space between amateur ethnography and surrealism. The “Hutsuls” were both possessed in the sense that the film crew captured them on camera for popular consumption, and fundamentally strange in their non-standard Ukrainian speech and folk culture. Hutsul folk culture was both on display and transformed into a collage of color, which at times emulates impressionistic painting (Figure 3.8). Thus, with its emphasis on visual and aural texture, the authenticated Hutsul ethnoscape transcends notions of Thaw-era realism entirely. Yet, much of the claim to authenticity remained located within a discursive play between text and context, inside and outside – between the Carpathian native, represented on screen through Mykolaichuk and other “real” peasants, and the recorder/viewer, represented dually by the filmmaker who journeys to *Hutsul’shchyna* and the “virtual tourist” who views the native in an artificially re-constructed, a-historical Carpathian ethnoscape.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 117ff.

⁷⁷ Francine Hirsch employs the term “virtual tourist” for the spectator of ethnographic information that Soviet authorities intended for museum exhibitions. See, Hirsch, “Getting to Know the ‘Peoples of the USSR’: Ethnographic Exhibits as Soviet Virtual Tourism, 1923-1934,” *Slavic Review* 62, no. 4 (2003), 683-709.



Figure 3.8. Camera movement emulates Impressionistic painting in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

A Ukrainian *Bergfilm*? The Carpathian Journey and National Identity

Dovzhenko Studio's press release stressed that "Hutsuls are making this film: giving consultation, playing [the roles] of ordinary residents of the most distant valleys." The studio promotional material implied that the filmmakers themselves had penetrated such a "distant" region, heretofore unknown to modern audiences. These Hutsuls were in fact "*playing*" themselves, similar to Mykolaichuk, but without the lasting appeal of the actor's hybridized image in the press. Mykolaichuk was above all an *approachable* Hutsul – an individual who had journeyed from the unknown (*Hutsul'shchyna*) to the known (Kyiv) – while the Hutsul extra was still an ethnographic found object that Paradzhanov had discovered for the spectator.

The central press first took notice of *Shadows* after Paradzhanov screened it before a general meeting of the Union of Cinematographers on December 24, 1964. In providing a "Russian context" for the screening, participants in the discussion afterward were considerably more apt to discuss its importance to Ukrainian culture. Evgenii Pomeschikov, screenwriter on Pyr'ev's

Tractor Drivers, spoke first, informing those present that his identity as a Ukrainian qualified him to evaluate and translate the film. He told the others,

This is a simple people who preserve to this day what is dear and national. From this perspective, it's amazing to me how these two 'Cubans' [i.e., Paradzhanov and Illienko] made this film.⁷⁸ Paradzhanov is not Ukrainian, but having resided in this Verkhovyna, he was so deeply penetrated with its spirit, with its powerful national tradition, that I can't find another word for this picture [other] than authenticity, and *this authenticity is extraordinarily decorative* [emphasis mine].⁷⁹

Thus, Pomeshchikov indicated the importance of clothing and other objects of *byt* in articulating this notion of authenticity, the revelation of which required a special kind of journey to *Hutsul'shchyna*. L. Varshavskii, writing for *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, also emphasized the "clothing and embroidery" that represented the film's "national color."⁸⁰ Drach mentioned the film's "*dekorativnost*" when he reviewed it a second time for *Literaturnaia Rossiia* (Literary Russia) in February 1965. There, he marveled at the "*zgardy* [beaded necklaces] and *cheresy* [belts]" found in the film. "All of them are accessories of the everyday life of the Hutsul and Ukrainian highlander... All of this is part of the wealth of the Carpathians," and thus of Ukraine itself.⁸¹ In her review of the film for *Sovetskaia kul'tura* in August, Elena Bauman assured readers that the film would present the kind of ethnographic material endemic to the "ethnographic museum" despite its essential "*dekorativnost*."⁸²

In the most famous article on the film, Ivan Dziuba, like Pomeshchikov, emphasized the necessity of the Carpathian journey for understanding the significance of the region for Ukrainian national identities. He wrote,

⁷⁸ The word here is in fact "*kubintsy*," and I am not sure why Pomeshchikov used it to take the place of "ethnic other" in general.

⁷⁹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 528, l. 3-4, 8, 10, 25, 41, 43-44, 46.

⁸⁰ L. Varshavskii, "Pravda narodnykh kharakterov," *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, June 8, 1965.

⁸¹ Ivan Drach, "Spasibo!" *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, February 26, 1965: 17.

⁸² Elena Bauman, "Nad kem plachut trembity..." *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, August 14, 1965: 3.

Those who have been in the Carpathians know that the real life of the Hutsul from birth to death – as it was from time immemorial – is aesthetically conceptualized and arranged with traditional rituals, customs, and beliefs. His entire *byt* is art, the art of the word, the knife, and the brush.⁸³

In emphasizing this journey, at once about “spiritual” transcendence, tourist consumerism, and national identity, Dziuba helps us discover a link between the 1960s Carpathian film and the themes found in the Weimar-era *Bergfilm*. I find this link significant, not for the association of the German genre with a supposedly “fascist aesthetic,” but for alpine imagery’s fundamentally modernist claim to transcendence of worldly concerns – the market, politics, etc.⁸⁴ As Kotsiubyns’kyi himself established in his novella, the highlands were a space of direct communion with artistic inspiration, whereas the lowlands were associated with the mundane cycle of production and reproduction. Yet, both the *Bergfilm* and Paradzhanov’s film assumes a market for objects associated with this transcendent space.

As Eric Rentschler argues, the *Bergfilm* finds its meaning in the collision of an authentic *Gemeinschaft* with the mapping and defining powers of the rational

⁸³ Ivan Dziuba, “Den’ poiska,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5 (1965), 82.

⁸⁴ In “Fascinating Fascism,” Susan Sontag argued that Riefenstahl’s *bergfilme* were part and parcel with her Nazi propaganda vehicle, *Triumph of the Will* (1936), and her documentary of the 1936 Berlin Olympics (*Olympia*, 1938), not in her continued “search for beauty,” but in her interest in “high places” (both real and figurative), and “of the challenge and ordeal of the elemental, the primitive.” In this sense, Sontag’s notion of the “fascist aesthetic” reads ideal political power as a “natural” phenomenon, unhindered by “civilization.” As Sontag defined it, “fascist aesthetics” involves a “preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behavior, extravagant effort, and the endurance of pain.” She also identified “the turning of people into things; [...] and the grouping of people / things around an all-powerful, hypnotic leader-figure or force[...]. Its choreography alternates between ceaseless motion and a congealed, static, ‘virile’ posing.” Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), 86-87, 91. As I state above, these dichotomies were present within highly divergent political traditions during the 1920-30s, and, as we see with Paradzhanov’s film, such concerns carried over to the post-Stalin era. In no way, however, can we accuse Paradzhanov himself of reproducing a “fascist aesthetic;” after all, the Hutsuls are far from idealized physical specimens in the film. While Paradzhanov’s penchant for transforming humans into objects may be problematic on an aesthetic level, it carries none of the connotations of power relations that Sontag identified within fascist art. Sontag admits, however, that “all totalitarian countries” embody features of the “fascist aesthetic” (92). The problem then becomes what value the term itself serves, except to erase fundamental differences in aesthetic and political outlooks.

individual employing the tools of modern technology.⁸⁵ He points out that Leni Riefenstahl's emblematic *The Blue Light* (*Das blaue Licht*, 1932) functions to "transform exterior landscapes into emotional spaces."⁸⁶ Riefenstahl's film concerns a young woman, Junta, who has been cast out of her native village for being a witch. She resides in a mountain cave that emits a blue light during the full moon, which lures young men from the village to seek out its source, only to die in the climb to get there. One day, a landscape painter from the city comes to the village, where he hears of Junta. After meeting her, he falls in love with her natural beauty, despite their inability to communicate verbally (She speaks Italian and he German). One full moon night, he follows her, in secret, to the source of the blue light, where he finds her among the crystals that produce the aura. The painter rushes to tell the villagers of the treasures that exist in their midst, and they proceed to steal them when Junta is away. After realizing what has happened, she falls to her death in grief.

Rentschler reads the painter as a common tourist, as such bringing modernity to the isolated mountain village through his discovery of the crystals. Moreover, the film is mediated through the painter's views of the exotic space, while self-reflexively pointing to the painter as hero, with whom it sets up the spectator to identify. While *The Blue Light* presents the journey from the modern city to the mountains within a diegetic origin (the painter), with *Shadows*, the production drama implicates the merging of modernity and "traditional" cultures to define the space of "authenticity." Paradzhanov told readers in his article "Eternal Motion" that he "fell in love" with the exotic space of *Hutsul'shchyna*, regardless of the fact that he could not understand the language of its inhabitants.⁸⁷ In this closed community, the tourist painter enters this authentic space in the second drama of the film, that of its production and reception.

To shoot the scene of Ivanko as a shepherd in a remote mountain valley, Paradzhanov's crew orchestrated the construction of a modern road from the

⁸⁵ Eric Rentschler, "A Legend for Modern Times: *The Blue Light* (1932)," in *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 26-51.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁷ Paradzhanov, "Vechnoe dvizhenie," 63-64.

town of Verkhovyna.⁸⁸ Thus, while the film presents a closed community, seemingly without any relationship to the outside world, its very authenticity is defined through the introduction of modern and technologically determined notions of visuality. The studio and press continually celebrated the crew's desire to film on location, within the pristine alpine nature, and among the actual Hutsuls. In this way, *Shadows* also becomes, in Rentschler's words, a timeless "village tale offered up to visitors."⁸⁹ Dziuba, above, in addition to Paradzhanov in his many statements about the film, made it clear that the journey to view and then to artistically define the Carpathians was an essential aspect of authenticating the space itself.⁹⁰

The particular space that Paradzhanov "offered up to visitors," however, was not (simply) the familiar bucolic landscape that Riefenstahl presented in *The Blue Light*. The Soviet filmmaker lacked interest in re-creating the iconic mountain vista, or with the kind of static close-ups that Riefenstahl featured in the earlier film, as he associated them with a tired Stalinist folkloric mode.⁹¹ In fact, most of *Shadows* is conducted in medium shots, which avoids both psychological exploration of the heroes and villains, while also giving the feeling of disorientation due to the absence of clear establishing shots. The rare long shot in Paradzhanov's film eliminates the element of horizon that characterizes the mountain vista, and effectively flattens the landscape to a pallet of colors and textures (Figure 3.9). Rather than a strategy of inter-cutting to show simultaneous action in different spaces – a hallmark of classical film narrative

⁸⁸ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1724, ll. 26-31.

⁸⁹ Rentschler, 34.

⁹⁰ The production of authenticated knowledge about an exotic space is also suggested in Riefenstahl's photographs of the Sudanese Nuba tribe, which resulted in the 1974 volume, *The Last of the Nuba* (New York: Harper and Row). As Sontag related, alongside the Nubian "emblems of physical perfection, with large, well-shaped, partly shaven heads, expressive faces, and muscular bodies that are depilated and decorated with scars," is a series of pictures of Riefenstahl herself, photographing her quickly disappearing African subject. Sontag argued that the real "story" of Riefenstahl's book is the production drama. Sontag, 73-74.

⁹¹ In *From Caligari to Hitler*, Siegfried Kracauer identified the close-ups in *The Blue Light* as "resemble[ing] landscapes molded by nature itself and, in rendering them, the camera achieves a fascinating study in facial folklore." He concludes, "This mountain girl conforms to a political regime which relies on intuition, worships nature and cultivates myth." Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed., Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 259.

style – a mobile camera explores space, follows the course of a single action, or remains completely static with a long lens, rendering certain scenes into an exotic tapestry of human activity. These latter scenes of stasis are highly theatrical, frequently with Hutsuls performing folk dances and songs directly for the camera (Figure 3.10), while the mobile camera suggests recent developments in documentary techniques rising out of hand-held camera technology.

Shadows does not, however, provoke the sort of “contemplation” – nor does it invite a rational understanding – of nature and the exotic cultures that inhabit it, a principle which lied at the basis of *The Blue Light* and even Kotsiubyns’kyi’s novella. As Johannes von Moltke argues with regard to Riefenstahl’s film, and similar to my own thoughts about Kotsiubyns’kyi’s source, these works were stylistic hybrids. They at once offer an ethnographic spectacle, in addition to providing rational commentary, either in the form of supplementary illustration, or in the form of the tourist painter, who attempts to make sense of exotic space, but in the process destroys it.⁹² In Paradzhanov’s *Shadows*, through the processes of visual and aural de-familiarization, nature is subsumed within an artistic, musical, and literary metaphor. The camera does not “transform superstition into knowledge;” rather, nature becomes an independent “intelligence” unwilling to reveal its mysteries.⁹³ “The narrative trajectory” is not, as Rentschler and von Moltke suggest in the case of the *Bergfilm*, “modernization.” Here, we have a fuller attempt at narrative, visual, and aural spectacle. The film does not narratively invite identification, nor is the spectator positioned to gain rational knowledge about the Carpathians. The “mystery” of the Hutsuls is not revealed in the narrative. They are essentially unknowable beneath the realm of their own demonology and the colorful objects that they appear as.

It is style or form, therefore, along with how the industry, the filmmakers and critics positioned the film, which “invites” the outsider and offers him or her

⁹² Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 49.

⁹³ Rentschler, 34.



Figure 3.9. Flattening of mountain space in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*



Figure 3.10. Market spectacle in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

knowledge. Iurii Illienko's camerawork also implicates this second drama of production in his curious use of point-of-view (POV) shots. In the opening scene of Oleksa's death, for example, we view the tree's perspective as it comes crashing down on the young man's body, suggesting the continued theme of nature's agency on the lives of the Hutsuls. In the scene that follows, a jerky camera surveys a procession of women playing a small stringed instrument as a man's voice chants a funeral dirge. The POV-style shot does not, however, reveal a diagetic origin, as Ivanko himself steps into the shot, excluding him as the most obvious subject of the gaze on this procession. The most shocking instance of the movement from such an "authorial" POV shot to a subjective POV shot is during the fight between Paliichuk and Hutentiuk, all conducted in one shot. Initially, the camera follows Hutentiuk and his wife to the right, and then moves left to reveal Paliichuk and his wife, the former with axe in hand. The camera follows him to the right, toward Hutentiuk, as he raises his axe. The camera shifts right, and tilts slightly to frame Hutentiuk diagonally in the bottom right of the frame, raising his own axe. At this moment, we notice that the camera has *become* Paliichuk's line of sight as the axe comes down over the lens and blood fills the screen (Figure 3.11).

Later, the camera is static before a line of Hutsul dancers facing it, suggesting the presence of an off-screen audience (Figure 3.12). In this vein, Paradzhanov's statement about not wishing to stop shooting the *koliadky* scene (quoted above) is particularly instructive. The camera as the "author," by drawing attention to itself, imparts itself into the narrative, which was compounded when spectators were subjected to so much spin over the making of the film. The film, through its visual style, and acting style, prohibits identification with any of the characters. But the presence of such a subjective and self-reflexive camera, together with what I have labeled the production drama, makes it available for identification with the filmmakers. If the idea and the process of the journey to the Carpathians, then, is essentially transformative for the creators of the film, and validated by such respectable literary critics like Dziuba, the very *experience* of the film becomes transformative for the spectator. This actual and virtual



Figure 3.11. Subjective death in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*



Figure 3.12. An implied audience for Hutsul folk spectacle in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

journey connects two modern sites of Ukrainian self-consciousness – L'viv and Kyiv – with the Carpathians, and metaphorically “opens” or “reveals” what was lost to their modern intellectual sensibilities.

“...a flurry of hysterically modernist techniques...”

Earlier in this chapter, I examined the ways in which the Carpathian exotic was both textually canonized and naturalized in Ukrainian art and literature, with the promotion of “traditional” Carpathian song and dance, and more recently in images of tourism, and in films like Ivanov’s *Oleksa Dovbush*. As I argued, Paradzhanov did not break from the convention of a folksy and anti-modern representation of the Hutsuls; in fact, the film intensified the sense of the Hutsuls’ isolation from the geo-political and historical space that surrounded them. Thus, we might also wonder, along with film critic Robert Payne, “What makes [Paradzhanov’s film] more than exotic people in pretty costumes?”⁹⁴ Yet when viewing *Shadows*, especially for the first time, the spectator is overcome by a sense of its strangeness. From the opening scene of the tree falling on Ivanko’s brother Oleksa, the spectator begins to understand what Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell meant in referring to the film’s style as a “flurry of hysterically modernist techniques.”⁹⁵ In this statement, Thompson and Bordwell do not associate the film with other Thaw-era productions from the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ Instead, the authors of *Film History: An Introduction* positioned Paradzhanov’s film as an example of 1960s international art cinema, which Bordwell in particular believed had its own peculiar formal and narrative logic, in addition to its own audience.

Our sense of the strangeness in *Shadows* is located, not in the expository components of the film, but in the frequent breaks in classical film style (by which I mean to include both Hollywood and socialist realism). Like Dovzhenko’s *Earth*,

⁹⁴ Robert Payne, “The Storm of the Eye: Culture, Spectacle, Paradzhanov,” *Spectator* 10, no. 1 (1990), 32.

⁹⁵ Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 460.

⁹⁶ See, Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

the surface of Paradzhanov's film reveals an overly simplistic story – classical, in its allusion to *Romeo and Juliet* – but one which is subordinated to method (*siuzhet*) and aspects of stylistic excess.⁹⁷ The camera's proclivity for erratic movement and subjective positioning is the most obvious sign of such "modernist technique," but the foregrounding of symbols from Hutsul mythology, with which the film assumes the spectator's familiarity, and a de-contextualized elaboration of the aural and material culture of a civilization clearly distant from the features of modern life, also contributes to a cinematic experience of de-familiarization. I employ this term in a slightly different way than did Shklovskii or Brecht because, even in pop-cultural discourse, the Hutsuls are anything but normative citizens. They appear as strange. But they also have a history of appearing in a particular generic mode, which Paradzhanov intentionally disrupts. Thus, de-familiarization is possible due to a process begun in the later nineteenth century of the literary incorporation of *Hutsul'shchyna*. Moreover, as I argue in Chapter 1, the very project of Stalinist folkloric representation was to make non-Russians knowable within a particular mode of domesticating the Soviet periphery. Paradzhanov's project was to transform these knowable curiosities back into strange beings.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, however, Paradzhanov goal was of a dual nature: He aimed at not only de-familiarization but also assimilation or possession of *Hutsul'shchyna* into oneself through the process of the journey, either real or transposed through the filmic medium. The recurring POV-like shot from the beginning of the film is neither first person nor third person narration. It is, in fact, a hybrid of the two forms. But in producing such a hybrid of subjective/objective narration, Paradzhanov has substituted the world of the Hutsul with his own aesthetic principles and interests in the exotic. Illienko contributed to this substitution in his technique of, as Pier Paolo Pasolini put it, "making the camera felt."⁹⁸ As Pasolini defined the style of poetic cinema, there is no identification with the protagonist; rather, there is identification with the filmmakers and their worldview expressed through a formalistic manipulation of

⁹⁷ For the definition of "stylistic excess" that I use here, see Chapter 1, fn33.

⁹⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" in John Orr and Olga Taxidou, eds., *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: A Film Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 48, 51.

images. The immediacy of Paradzhanov's and Illienko's images establishes their very presence.

As Regina Bendix reminds us, "Textualized expressive culture such as songs and tales can, with the aid of the rhetoric of authenticity, be transformed from an experience of individual transcendence to a symbol of the inevitability of national unity."⁹⁹ Such is what happened to *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. The spectator is made to be aware, not only of the camera, but also of a "meaning," which originates from an "author;" an author who demands to be unhindered in his or her "quest." Three separate "authors" emerged from *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, two of whom were identified in M. Malov's'kyi's image, with the addition of Mykolaichuk.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, the screenplay's original author, Ivan Chendei, fell aside in this new discussion of authorship during the mid-1960s. Each of these new authors stood in for a particular kind of claim to authenticity: Paradzhanov was the outsider who traveled to the Carpathians to gain genuine knowledge of the Hutsuls; Illienko, whose camera the spectator "senses" (we see the camera move in step with his, and even perceive its shadow at times¹⁰¹) in almost every scene, moves fluidly from objective to subjective narration, without so much as a cut; and Mykolaichuk, whose presence as a "local" could be generalized beyond the confines of the Carpathians through his representation, both behind and in front of the screen.

Ukrainian National Identity, in "Color"

During his opening speech at an SKU Plenum on March 1, 1965, Levchuk introduced *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* as a "turning point" in Ukrainian

⁹⁹ Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 20.

¹⁰⁰ Iakutovych only worked on one more film after *Shadows*, Leonid Osyka's *Zakhar Berkut* (1970). Unlike Paradzhanov, Illienko, and Mykolaichuk, his celebrity was only temporary.

¹⁰¹ Robert Neupert notes that the camera's shadow was seen frequently in French New Wave productions, which emerged from the naturalist aesthetic of shooting on location with available light. François Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960) is the most obvious example. See, Robert Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 195.

cinema, and explicitly tied it to a national phenomenon. He included in the speech that despite their horrible oppression at the hands of the capitalists, “A fragment of *our* [emphasis mine] Ukrainian people – the Hutsuls – were able to keep their native language, their colorful folklore, their manners and customs, and their songs!”¹⁰² A Marxist might well ask of the First Secretary why he appeared to be celebrating feudalism as a form of resistance to capitalism. Clearly, Levchuk was uninterested in presenting a proper historical materialist interpretation of the Hutsuls, as he had done earlier with *A Star over the Carpathians*. Instead, he mentioned Paradzhanov’s attention to an “actual” representation of everyday life. Its ethnographic details provide the film with its “national form,” and Paradzhanov “revealed the depths of the life processes of the Ukrainian people” in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, the difficulty of which had not been “mastered” until then. Earlier he even stated that the ethnographic elements found at the basis of *Shadows* “will be one of our prerequisites for the molding of our product.”¹⁰³ Almost a decade later, Levchuk revisited his 1949 film about the Carpathians, this time highlighting the exotic nature of the mountain inhabitants, rather than an emergent socialist society. What “bewildered” him, he wrote, was the “fairy-tale” landscape itself.¹⁰⁴ In foregrounding authenticity over realism, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* had established a new context for discussing non-Russian cinema. Instead of literary concerns with film narrative, Paradzhanov demonstrated that national meaning might be located exclusively within a film’s imagery and soundtrack. The visual and aural qualities in *Shadows* marked off a site of Ukrainian difference, a site located outside of a rights-based agenda focused on the language question.

Levchuk wrote in January 1965 that *A Dream and Shadows* “contain a bright national form, and with their contents reach into the sediment of life... The conclusion involuntarily arises that the enrichment of national form in our art is a

¹⁰² TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 310, l. 13.

¹⁰³ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1751, l. 151.

¹⁰⁴ T.V. Levchuk, *S liubov’iu k zritel’iu* (Moscow: Biuro Propaganda Sovetskoi Kinoiskusstva, 1974), 6-7.

guarantee of creative success.”¹⁰⁵ Nationality was, for the moment, a question of artistic representation. After its release on screens in October and November, Levchuk introduced the film during a Union Plenum as “a revelation of the national originality of culture, everyday life, and the customs of our people,” by which he meant “our” Ukrainian people.¹⁰⁶ Paradzhanov had revealed an undiscovered country in *Hutsul'shchyna*, but Levchuk along with other promoters of the film, transposed its meaning to the whole of Ukraine. In so doing, Ukraine itself became the undiscovered country, newly and authentically revealed through *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.

Ukrainian cinema had established a certain imagery of authenticity, located not only within *Hutsul'shchyna*, but also within the authenticating potential of the individual artist, which could later be either rejected or capitalized upon. Despite such statements on the “authenticity” of national representation and the embodiment of the national spirit that the film seemed to invite everywhere that people saw the film, there was also a vicious campaign launched against the film. Perhaps out of jealousy, or perhaps out of a genuine dislike for Paradzhanov and his film, some at the studio found it ideologically fruitful to call attention to the film’s lack of a Carpathian audience, thus essentially using the filmmakers’ and critics’ own language of authenticity against it.¹⁰⁷

The following two chapters take up the theme of “national authorship” as the establishment of a new type or “genre” of cinema production – “Ukrainian poetic cinema” – which asserted a specifically Ukrainian claim to Thaw-era aesthetic problems, while intersecting with nationalist politics, on the one hand, and with audiences, on the other.

¹⁰⁵ Tymofii Levchuk, “Rik tvorchykh shukan’,” *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 1 (January 1965), 1.

¹⁰⁶ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 313, ll. 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 400, l. 152.

Chapter 4

Ukrainian Nationalism and Film Authorship in the 1960s

When Sergei Paradzhanov first journeyed to *Hutsul'shchyna* in 1963, no one expected much to result. The April 1962 thematic plan for the studio had the director slotted to make *Iurka, the One-Kid Team* (*Iurka, besstannaia komanda*), another *kolkhoz* comedy along the lines of his previous work in *The Top Guy* (*Pershyi khlopets*) and *Ukrainian Rhapsody* (*Ukrains'ka rapsodiia*).¹ *Flower on the Stone* had been released with a category three rating, thus maintaining Paradzhanov's mediocre reputation, and Tymofii Levchuk listed the latter film as one of the "dull" productions of the previous year during the First Congress of the SKU in January 1963.² Nonetheless, he was a reliable director who volunteered to take on projects that no one else wanted.³ Instead of *Iurka*, the studio put him in charge of the Kotsiubyns'kyi Centennial, an event significantly overshadowed by the Shevchenko Sesquicentennial. From this perspective, the success of *Shadows* after his return to Kyiv in 1964 seemed all the more significant. Upon their initial viewing of the film, the studio, SKU, and Paradzhanov himself, immediately recognized that it was the most significant Ukrainian film since Dovzhenko's time.⁴ Moreover, they viewed the director as an altogether different kind of individual from what he had been to them before going to *Hutsul'shchyna*,

¹ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1539, l. 50.

² TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1620, l. 14; f. 655, op. 1, d. 227, l. 63.

³ 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 Real Guy* [sic]. 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. I can also shoot some arrows, but that's not the point here." TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1536, l. 22.

⁴ For example, Dovzhenko Studio film director Sulafim Tsybul'nyk's reaction to the incomplete footage in 1964 was that *Shadows* "will be the first, after Dovzhenko, to bring the studio international glory." See, Nikolai Blokhin, *Izgnanie Paradzhanova* (Stavropol', 2002), 66.

one who was not merely “talented,” but set apart from the studio collective, and possessing genius.

Perhaps more pertinent to cinema in the 1960s, however, Paradzhanov had become a Soviet variation on what the French journal *Cahiers du cinéma* had called an “*auteur*.” 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 counterposed 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 their beholdenness to screenwriters with their penchant for “psychological realism” and, as film authors in their own right, to invent their own visual and narrative style. The French critic and later filmmaker associated cinematic meaning with the “mark” of such a director-author, and less so to the qualities that were already present in a literary screenplay.⁵ As John Hess has pointed out, the “aestheticist” concerns of *auteur* criticism were aimed also at divorcing cinema from its politically and socially progressive foundations in post-war France.⁶ While such a context is difficult to transpose to the post-war Soviet Union, we might note that the Thaw-era “cult of the little guy” was grounded in a similar notion of the artist’s “personal expression” above the political demands of the party and state.⁷ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, moreover, Paradzhanov’s aestheticist concerns with Ukrainian authenticity stood at variance with mainstream language politics in the republic.

While we have little knowledge of the readership for *Cahiers du cinéma* in the Soviet Union during the 1950s, Oleksandr Dovzhenko gave an apparent response to “A Certain Tendency” the following year in *Iskusstvo kino*. In also addressing the static quality of Soviet literary adaptations, the only living member of Soviet cinema’s 1920s avant-garde called on directors to use a visual

⁵ François Truffaut, “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema,” in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 232-33.

⁶ John Hess, “La Politique des Auteurs (Part One): World View as Aesthetics,” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 1 (May-June 1974): Accessed online: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC01folder/aturism1.html>: May 13, 2008.

⁷ See my discussion of the “cult of the little guy” in chapter 1.

vocabulary that was not beholden to literary modes of narration. Thus, the screenplay should be left to the interpretive powers of the director.⁸ 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 favor of a cinema of great directors. While Pomerantsev and other early apologists of the cultural Thaw were careful to position their ideals of personal expression and “sincerity” not 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 has recently postulated in “The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture,” the dissident movement emerged during this time in part as the defense of this principle of the politically transcendent space of art.⁹ Especially after the “mass meeting” on Moscow’s Pushkin Square on Soviet Constitution Day, December 5, 1965, authorities were particularly concerned with the political power that individuals could wield in defense of this “apolitical” principle.¹⁰

As an emergent Soviet *auteur* after making *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, Sergei 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 Studio became committed Paradzhanovites in their aesthetic outlook and interest in a Ukrainian ethnoscape. Moreover, studio authorities participated in the construction of a Ukrainian *auteur*, seeing in Paradzhanov and his followers the possibility to disrupt ingrained modes of national representation and to “return to Dovzhenko,” the original Ukrainian *auteur*. Nonetheless, the cultivation of “personal expression” at the root of both *auteur* theory and Thaw-era cultural expression constantly intersected with the emergent Ukrainian nationalist movement, precisely because the intellectuals who comprised the latter were interested in many of the same problems that emerged during the

⁸ Aleksandr Dovzhenko, “Pisatel’ i kino v svete trebovanii sovremennosti,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (Feb 1955), 7-14.

⁹ Ann Komaromi, “The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture,” *Slavic Review* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 605-29.

¹⁰ The Pushkin Square meeting on December 5 was intended to protest the closed trial of writers Andrei Siniavskii and Iurii Daniel’.

cultural Thaw as the filmmakers themselves. During the 1960s, Ukrainian nationalism in Kyiv took on new dimensions that were more in dialog with the “Thaw generation” than with the independence movements of the earlier part of the century. Thaw-era Ukrainian nationalism, moreover, constituted a dissident message geared toward a particular audience, in many ways, the same audience that Paradzhanov’s followers intended for their supposedly apolitical films. Ivan Dziuba and other Ukrainian dissidents constantly divided the nation into intellectuals and the “de-nationalized” masses, indicating clear allegiance with the former, while the latter represented the hopeless cause of Ukrainian autonomy rooted in any kind of mass movement. Similarly, Paradzhanov stated in December 1971 before an audience of “creative youth” in Minsk that the mass “audience should apologize” to him for not understanding his films.¹¹ We must assume that he was not referring to his present supporters who came to listen. Thus, a Ukrainian *politique des auteur* not only emerged as a socio-aesthetic phenomenon, as a successful means to “differentiate” Dovzhenko Studio’s product from that of other studios, but principally within the realm of film industry and audience politics.

The intersections between audience politics and dissident politics became public on September 4, 1965, during the official premier of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. Expectations were high for the crowd that gathered at the “Ukraina” theater in central Kyiv that Saturday evening, the majority of whom had procured tickets through connections to people who worked on the film or at Dovzhenko Studio.¹² Others demanded entry, and when the box office closed, rushed the doors. “Ukraina” director Fedir Brainchenko alerted the *militsiia* to the problem, but allowed Paradzhanov to introduce the film, in a hope that such a public ritual would help calm the situation. Instead, the latter launched into an embellished monologue concerning the conflict with industry authorities over dubbing the film into Russian. The confident Paradzhanov asserted that “blacks, the French, and

¹¹ James Steffen, “Sergei Parajanov’s Speech in Minsk before the Creative and Scientific youth of Byelorussia on 1 December 1971,” *Armenian Review* 47, nos. 3-4, 48, nos. 1-2 (2001-2002), 17.

¹² Interview with Svetlana Vasil’evna Petrovskaia, Kyiv, 9 June 2006. Petrovskaia claimed that she and her husband, literary critic Miron Petrovskii, received tickets from Ivan Dziuba, who probably received them from poet and screenwriter Ivan Drach.

Argentines” understood it, but “the organs [of distribution] aren’t allowing the film to be released, on the grounds that our people won’t understand it.”¹³ The director’s concern did not include linguistic comprehension – as I stated in the previous chapter, Paradzhanov himself would have struggled to understand the “authentic” Hutsuls who participated in the film’s production – but with maintaining the aesthetic integrity of his work of art. Similarly, Paradzhanov suggested that Goskino’s insistence on a Russian dub was based on the contrary principle of pragmatic comprehension and on the equally mundane problem of violating industry policy.¹⁴

In directing this statement to his intended audience, Paradzhanov elicited sympathy for a principle of personal expression, which was divorced from the specific qualities of the on-screen speech. Linguistic comprehension, in Paradzhanov’s view, would actually disrupt a broader comprehension of the author’s intentions. While the emergent Ukrainian dissident movement viewed the promotion of a literary Ukrainian language as the foundation of resisting “Russification” and “de-nationalization,”¹⁵ these participants in radical *kul’turnyystvo*¹⁶ viewed the occasion of Paradzhanov’s premier as the perfect opportunity to draw attention to the government’s reaction against their cause.

Brainchenko initially watched in silence as his intentions to maintain order during the premier were thwarted further. After Paradzhanov’s contentious “introduction,” literary critics Dziuba and Mykhailyna Kotsiubyns’ka – the latter a grand-niece of Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi – approached the stage to present the film director and costume designer with flowers. Dziuba immediately seized the

¹³ Letter from F. Brainchenko to S. P. Ivanov, personal archive of Sviatoslav Pavlovich Ivanov; published in *Poetychne kino: zaboronena shkola*, Larysa Briukhovets’ka, ed. (Kyiv: ArtEK, 2001), 286.

¹⁴ According to the February 1965 Goskino *prikaz* on labor and finances, all literary and film material had to be translated into Russian and sent to Moscow before final approval. TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1852, l. 166-68.

¹⁵ For use of these terms, see esp. Ivan Dziuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, ed., M. Davies (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968). 151-56.

¹⁶ The Ukrainian word, “*kul’turnyystvo*,” has no English or Russian equivalent in the present meaning, but I translate it as a form a cultural nationalism, a movement that promoted a rebirth of native language, culture, and/or religion, but was not in essence exclusionary, nor did it necessarily disapprove of Soviet power in Ukraine. In its traditional definition, *kul’turnyystvo* is equivalent to the Russian “*kul’turnichestvo*,” which means simply “cultural education.”

microphone from Paradzhanov to proclaim that the “reaction of 1937” had returned.¹⁷ As the secretary of the theater Partkom scrambled for the PA system to drown out Dziuba’s speech, the latter quickly informed the audience of arrests during the previous two weeks of 19 Ukrainian intellectuals accused of a “nationalist conspiracy.”¹⁸ Dziuba shouted above the loud music coming from the PA system and sirens from the approaching *militsiia* vehicles: “Whoever is opposed to tyranny, stand up!” As the *militsiia* entered the theater, Brainchenko grabbed the microphone from Dziuba’s hand. The projectionist started the film as chaos erupted between the security organs and the ticketless spectators. The event marked a watershed in Ukrainian cultural politics, in that Dziuba’s act transformed an official gathering into what amounted to a street riot. Dziuba and Kotsiubyns’ka had brought post-Stalin “literary politics” into a public space.

Like many of the filmmakers, writers and intellectuals associated with Ukrainian dissident politics during the 1960s and 1970s, Dziuba was born into an Eastern Ukrainian peasant family, educated in Russian-language institutions, and came to consciousness as a Ukrainian through a diversity of intellectual pursuits that encompassed interest in literature, history and law. Until late 1962, he was a senior editor for the main SPU journal, *Vitshyzna* (Homeland), and was responsible for publishing non-conformist writers like Ivan Drach, Dmytro Pavlychko, Lina Kostenko and Oleksandr Syzonenko. When Dziuba resolved to act on September 4, he was in the midst of writing his major political tract, *Internationalism or Russification?* Therein, he complained of a “de-nationalization” of the Ukrainian people, owing to Soviet population resettlement policies and a conscious effort in Moscow to “provincialize” Ukrainian culture, which had the effect of “pushing Ukrainian language into the background.”¹⁹ Each of these problems emerged from a “violation in Leninist nationalities policy,” according to Dziuba.²⁰ In essence, the purpose of the book, according to the

¹⁷ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 50, l. 65-66.

¹⁸ *Poetychne kino*, 269.

¹⁹ Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, tr. M. Davies (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

author, is in justification of the principle of criticizing the uneven implementation of a continually affirmed Soviet policy.

As recent work on Soviet dissidence suggests, the defense of the principle of “socialist legality” constantly butted heads with the messianic principle of the intelligentsia’s role in Russian/Soviet society.²¹ In affirming both a natural and legal connection between cultural production and nationality, Dziuba was trying to reconcile this division, while maintaining a properly “Leninist” position. His ideas about “de-nationalization” are particularly instructive for why *Shadows* was relevant to his position in *Internationalism or Russification?* After all, Dziuba remembers telling Ivan Drach, “This is an anti-Soviet film,” but that he should keep that fact secret.²² Specifically, Dziuba pointed out in his tract that films from Ukrainian studios were dubbed into Russian, even in Ukraine, thus promoting the second-class status of the vernacular.²³ In refusing a Russian dub for *Shadows*, Paradzhanov thus resisted this process (at least, from Dziuba’s perspective) of “killing” the Ukrainian people.²⁴ The film pointed toward a more general significance for Ukrainian *kul’turnytstvo*, as Dziuba’s very concept of “de-nationalization” when applied to individuals and social groups made explicit the cultural labor involved in maintaining a meaningful category of national identity. If Ukrainians could lose a sense of themselves as “Ukrainians” in Siberia, Karelia, Slovakia, Canada, *Ukraine*, etc., Dziuba showed that instruction in Ukrainian language, history, literature and film was absolutely necessary, indeed a civil right, wherever Ukrainians lived. Thus, the journey toward ethnic self-knowledge implicit in *Shadows* was also a principle upon which Dziuba attached hope for a newly nationalized Ukrainian people.

²¹ See, for example, recent articles in *Slavic Review*: Ann Komaromi, “The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture,” *Slavic Review* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 605-29; Benjamin Nathans, “The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol’pin and the Idea of Rights under ‘Developed Socialism,’” *Slavic Review* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 630-63.

²² Larysa Briukhovets’ka, “Ivan Dziuba: Paradzhanov bil’shyi za legendu pro Paradzhanova,” interview with Ivan Dziuba, *Kino Teatr*, no. 4 (2003), accessed online: http://www.ktm.ukma.kiev.ua/show_content.php?id=129; March 24, 2005

²³ Dziuba, 125.

²⁴ Dziuba quoted the Ukrainian academic, K. D. Ushyns’kyi, with the words, “When a language has died on the lips of a people, the people is also dead,” p. 154.

Yet, what kind of public was it that went to see *Shadows* that night, to which Dziuba addressed his call to stand up against “tyranny”? The literary critic had several choices for a venue that evening, including Denysenko’s *A Dream*, playing at the Leningrad an hour earlier, and the premier of the long-anticipated military comedy, *Keys from Heaven (Kliuchi vid neba)*, directed by the ever-popular Viktor Ivanov (*Oleksa Dovbush*), which was playing at the Sputnik at the same time.²⁵ These latter two films also dealt with local topics, and were presented in Ukrainian. As I argued in Chapters two and three, however, Denysenko and Ivanov were working within tried and true genres of representing the nation, despite the innovations of the former production. The audience at Ukraina that evening was a particular kind of elite audience, one that expected to see an unusual film. Many of them had already seen *Shadows* during free, private screenings at the October House of Culture.²⁶ Dziuba believed that particular texts invited pre-determined readings; perhaps we might say generically determined readings. In broaching his political cause of defending accused Ukrainian nationalists, he needed a space, in which a particular kind of reception was already activated, while also desiring the centrality of Ukraina’s physical location, and the significance of the movie theater’s name.

Thus, we find in Dziuba’s choice of protest venue a peculiar desire for both visibility and exclusivity, in addition to an interest in the specific problems that Paradzhanov’s film raised. Several newspapers had featured *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in promotional materials related to the annual “Cinema Days” event in Kyiv that would take place on that first weekend in September. Of the supposedly 340,000 people who attended at least one screening during the three-day extravaganza, it would seem logical that some of them would want to see the most talked-about Ukrainian film of the year.²⁷ Upon learning that the screening was already sold out, many of them might have become angry at the system of privilege for members of the intelligentsia, whose connections entitled

²⁵ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 317, l. 6.

²⁶ A September 3, 1965 *prikaz* from central Goskino ordered its Ukrainian branch to halt further private screenings of *Shadows* in anticipation of its public screening. TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1852, l. 179.

²⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 306, l. 107.

them to see such a film. Central Goskino considered the possibility that spectators in Kyiv would become rowdy, warning its Ukrainian branch on Friday to enlist responsible members of the Profsoiuz organizations, the Komsomol *aktiv* and pensioners to catch ticketless spectators as they entered theaters during “Cinema Days.”²⁸ While Ukrainian Goskino had already initiated a campaign against ticketless spectators in the republic, efforts were oriented toward rural film points, where up to half of film audiences were getting in free in some oblasts.²⁹ In these cases, blame was placed on rural projectionists who either failed to collect the entrance fees or were accused of embezzling the funds.³⁰ The situation was different during the *Shadows* premier: People were barred at the door, some successfully entering through the fire escape, others simply pushing their way in. Rather than constituting a problem of state finances, an official “creative meeting with spectators” had been violated, which was only then compounded by Dziuba’s protest action. The *militsiia*’s confrontation was not with the ticketed guests at “Ukraina” theater, some of whom stood up after Dziuba’s rallying cry, nor even with Paradzhanov, Kotsiubyns’ka or Dziuba himself, each of whom suffered longer-term consequences as a result. Brainchenko had called the *militsiia*, rather, to disperse a violation of public order, which the ticketless spectators represented.³¹

On the following Thursday, the SKU Presidium met to discuss the “unfortunate events” of September 4. Paradzhanov denied responsibility for Dziuba’s speech, stating, “I am a Soviet person and in essence I do not agree with Dziuba.” He complained of the “poor organization” of the premier, also alluding to the chaos of the ticketless spectators’ presence who diluted the pool of intellectuals. Volodymyr Denysenko also affirmed that the problem lay not in Paradzhanov “demagogic” speech, but in the “hooligan behavior” at the premier.³² Yet, it was no coincidence that the “Ukraina event” exploded at the

²⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1852, l. 178.

²⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, 2059, l. 65.

³⁰ TsDAVOU, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 497, l. 27.

³¹ Brainchenko reported to S. P. Ivanov that Dziuba once again tried to rally the spectators after the screening suggesting that he remained untouched by the *militsiia*. See, *Poetychne kino*, 269.

³² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 309, l. 244-45.

Shadows premier, within the confluence of a film intended for a particular kind of audience – the Ukrainian intelligentsia – with a festival intended for a mass audience. Dziuba’s message of persecuted intellectuals, moreover, was clearly intended to garner sympathy from Paradzhanov’s own exclusive audience.

The audience politics surrounding Paradzhanov’s film was indeed complex, and not only for the events that occurred during its premier. The intended “elite” audience for *Shadows* was, in fact, confirmed by top authorities in the film industry, who were concerned to treat Paradzhanov and his crew with due respect lest they incur the enmity of other filmmakers (the enmity of “the spectator” was not yet a category of concern regarding the film). In the summer of 1963, with such an ordinary film already behind schedule, central Goskino imposed economic sanctions on Paradzhanov and his crew. With the increasingly celebratory atmosphere over the film’s significance from the Kyiv and Moscow intelligentsias by late 1964, Goskino chairman Aleksei Romanov resolved to heed his Ukrainian counterpart’s warning, “The reduction of [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.” Romanov reversed sanctions on January 19, 1965.³³ The Ukrainian Union of Cinematographers admitted Paradzhanov as a full voting member on April 30.³⁴ 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 that he had resided for the past decade to a large apartment in the prestigious neighborhood on Ploshcha Peremohy (Victory Square).³⁵ Within the course of a year, Paradzhanov had gone from being a “reliable,” but mediocre, director to the 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 non-elite spectator had seen the film.

³³ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 50, l. 45; RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 280, l. 30.

³⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 738.

³⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1581, l. 59; f. 670, op. 3, d. 166, l. 7.

After the premier at “Ukraina,” organs of distribution pulled the film once again, for fear of similar incidents and perhaps unsure of Paradzhanov’s future political status. In the politically charged atmosphere of 1965-66, with the recent arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals (not to mention the Siniavskii / Daniel’ trial) compounding tensions between the creative unions and the CPU, and among various interests within each of these organs of power, Paradzhanov and his followers at the studio skirted two issues: that of individual genius and personal expression, on the one hand, and correct national representation, on the other. By the end of 1966, the Central Committee of the CPU had labeled three films, which appeared to exist within a correct mode of socialist realist and national representation, “politically dangerous.” Such a designation, however, fundamentally existed within a new imagined relationship between an *auteur* and particular kinds of audiences. As Thaw-era cultural politics 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. This chapter investigates the politics of Ukrainian authorship and the “danger” that emerged in Paradzhanov’s subsequent film, *Kyiv Frescoes* (*Kyivs’ki fresky*), his cinematographer Iurii Illienko’s directorial debut *A Well for the Thirsty* (*Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh*), and his young protégé Vasyli’ Illiashenko’s *Coordinate Your Watches* (*Perevir’te svoi hodynnyky*), which also became the articulated foundations of a “new school [*novoe napravlenie*]” in Soviet cinema, “Ukrainian poetic cinema.”

***Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* and Reception Politics**

For two weeks after its premier, there was no mention of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in the press. Finally, on September 17th, Evhen Kyrlyuk, the most important Shevchenko scholar in Ukraine, wrote an article in *Literaturna Ukraina* proclaiming *Shadows* to be a definitive work of socialist realism. While admitting its complexity, he argued for the film’s inclusion under a newer conception of socialist realism that emerged with the end of the cult of

personality. Indeed, as Thomas Lahusen has noted, socialist realism contained little of its “educational foundation” in post-Stalinist articulations of its “method.” Especially after the Twentieth Party Congress, Soviet literary critics were given freer reign to define this “historically open system of the truthful representation of life.”³⁶ Kyryliuk concluded that Paradzhanov and Ivan Chendei had “correctly read Kotsiubyns’kyi’s story,” and had removed the “crude sociological schemes” (i.e., Zlatousov’s strict socialist realist reading of Kotsiubyns’kyi) that pervaded interpretation of Kotsiubyns’kyi during the period of the cult.³⁷ The following Monday, “Ukraina” tested the waters with another evening screening of the film. It passed without further problems, and nightly screenings occurred at the “Ukraina” from September 27 to October 17.³⁸ Thereafter, *Shadows* expanded beyond central Kyiv theaters, even showing regularly at several factory clubs³⁹ until late November.⁴⁰ While the film did not even see an average degree of box office success for Soviet cinema, selling under 11 million tickets throughout the USSR, it garnered enough interest to maintain its presence at theaters in major Soviet cities throughout the Fall of 1965. And, while organs of distribution were weary of the film, Josephine Woll’s claim that “*Shadows* barely ran in commercial theaters” is far from true.⁴¹ Nonetheless, we cannot consider Kyiv’s pattern of distribution representative of Ukraine as a whole, and certainly not of the Soviet Union as a whole. *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was a festival film, functioning internationally and domestically to demonstrate the vitality of Ukrainian high culture.

As the film was leaving Kyiv theaters in November, the SKU gathered in Plenum, where Levchuk once again praised the film for its “revelation of the national originality of culture, everyday life, language, and customs of our

³⁶ Thomas Lahusen, “Socialist Realism in Search of its Shores: Some Historical Remarks on the ‘Historically Open Aesthetic System of the Truthful Representation of Life,’” in Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Socialist Realism without Shores* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 9.

³⁷ Evhen Kyryliuk, “Pravda, opovyta romantykoiu,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 17 September 1965: 3.

³⁸ *Na ekranakh Kieva*, 25 September, 2 October, 9 October, 16 October 1965.

³⁹ As a general rule, factory clubs functioned as second-run movie houses in the Soviet Union, where workers could watch popular films for approximately half the price of regular showings.

⁴⁰ *Na ekranakh Kyeve*

⁴¹ Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 186.

people.”⁴² Nonetheless, S. P. Ivanov’s statement that “spectators judged the film harshly” probably had more resonance in the hall that day. Indeed, one engineer from Dnipropetrovsk wrote a long and derisive letter to the Russian-language daily *Pravda Ukrainy* complaining of the film’s incomprehensible “Ukrainian atmosphere.” Addressing the (unpublished) letter directly to Dovzhenko Studio, he wrote:

I am an ordinary movie watcher, [just] one of the consumers of your product [*odin iz potrebitelei vashei produktsii*], and if you wish to know what happened to me during a screening of *Shadows of Distant* [sic] *Ancestors*, take a bowl of good Ukrainian *borshch*, put a half kilo of honey in it and try to eat it within a half an hour... That will tell you about the condition of my brain during the next day...⁴³

While it was not unusual for people writing to journals or newspapers about films to identify themselves as non-professionals or “ordinary [*riadovol*],” this writer’s further delineation of that identity with “consumer” of a “product” indicates how Soviet audience politics was changing in the 1960s. In his analogy to *borshch* and honey, moreover, the writer alluded to the Stalinist folkloric mode of representing non-Russians, but in Paradzhanov’s schema, it is mere intellectual citation, which, rather than amusing (pace Pyr’ev), becomes nerve-racking for spectators. The engineer from Dnipropetrovsk continued, asking, “For what reason do you try to mess with the spectator’s psychological condition? [...] The spectator never forgets that he sits in the theater, in a comfortable chair [...] and that he is the spectator.” Such a notion of spectatorship was definitively at odds with what scholars have identified as the model for media consumption in the Soviet Union. In *The Making of the State Reader*, Evgenii Dobrenko argues that the role of Soviet authority in the realm of culture was to facilitate a proper relationship between text and reader, to create or “mould” a new kind of reader/spectator in the process. In this respect, the Soviet spectator was not simply a “consumer” or “recipient” of culture, but the “object of reshaping.”⁴⁴ In

⁴² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 313, l. 22.

⁴³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1829, l. 1.

⁴⁴ Evgenii Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic*

approaching the authorities, the engineer, however, made it clear that he did not want indoctrination, political or otherwise, during his leisure time; rather, he felt invested to speak as a spectator wanting nothing more than comfort and entertainment from an engaging plot. In using the vocabulary of the Soviet “mass spectator,” moreover, he further transformed it from the “object of reshaping” to the subject of leisure and irony:

For the first time in my life, I saw how spectators, not by themselves, but in rows, got up and left[...] Someone stated aloud their grandfather’s aphorism, “Cross yourself at such a strange sight.”⁴⁵ In general, the audience revealed the most rare unanimity.

At the same time, the engineer was versed in other aspects of Marxist-Leninist dialectics to critique the studio on the basis of its own stated goals: first, to represent the Ukrainian ethnoscape; and second, to “develop along the traditions of Aleksandr Dovzhenko.” He went on:

In my view, you develop only the form of Dovzhenko’s art, that is to say, the most external level, and attach to this the progress of the highest technical know-how. But Dovzhenko’s art reached such heights [of expression] due to the fire of patriotic feelings, and a civic pathos, that is, due to the content.

Thus, the engineer ended his critique of *Shadows* condemning its emptiness, its very inability to *affect* the spectator, to transcend the material world. “Feelings” and “pathos” were the stuff of “content,” while “technique” was located in the formal dimensions of the film. This is not necessarily a “contradiction,” as he meant to reject the author’s role in the film by de-emphasizing being (the filmmaker’s journey to *Hutsul’shchyna*) and doing (the filmmaker’s talent or authorship) to return to the practical and objective question of what the film accomplished. Here, the answer was simple: The unaffected spectator left the theater, unsatisfied.

Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature, tr., Jesse M. Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), vii, 2.

⁴⁵ The phrase he used was “На яке диво дывись, а на це – перехрестись.” In writing Ukrainian words, the engineer employed the Russian characters, “ы” and “э,” to emulate Ukrainian sounds, instead of the correct letters, “и” and “е.” The standardization of literary Ukrainian, away from the former letters, took place during Ukrainianization, and hence contained a connotation of Ukrainian “nationalism” to some Russian-speakers in the republic.

In fact, few would deny the filmmakers' talents, or the film's political importance for Ukrainian "national cinema," but in speaking for the Ukrainian subject-spectator, opponents of Paradzhanov were able to question the film's legacy. When the SKU met to discuss nominating *Shadows* for the Shevchenko Prize (the highest CPU award for literature and art) on January 5, 1966, various members danced around the film, largely because it seemed from their vantage point that only foreigners and intellectuals appreciated it. While certainly a bad sign, many at the meeting stated that this did not necessarily exclude the film from the Prize, due to the incredible talent of the director and cinematographer. Iurii Kondufor, the chair of the CPU Department of Culture, who had to ratify all nominations, stated very clearly, however, "No one is nominating this film for the Shevchenko Prize. Argentina celebrated [*otmetila*] this film, but that in no way means that we should get behind it."⁴⁶ Later in the meeting, Oleksandr Korniiichuk made the case even clearer why the film would not be nominated despite the support of the entire SKU:

For the Argentines who watched *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, it was important how the cinematographer made the trees spin around[...] but we Ukrainians, when we evaluate such a defaced image of the Ukrainian people, it's not pleasant for us. There is some kind of wild tendencies there. This is not the Ukrainian people. This film has nothing in common with Kotsiubyns'kyi.⁴⁷

In making this claim, Korniiichuk in fact affirmed that the film was intended for a specifically Ukrainian audience, but it failed because *Shadows* instead appealed to an international "*festival'nyi zritel'*."

During a March 1967 Union Plenum, screenwriter and deputy chairman of Ukrainian Goskino, Oleksandr Levada, pointed out "the peculiar disproportion between the film's form and content." Rather than accuse *Shadows* of all-out formalism, which would have necessitated its condemnation, Levada casually noted its lack of a popular audience, with Carpathian spectators in particular

⁴⁶ Quoted in Blokhin, 68.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 69.

writing “letters of outpourings of displeasure concerning the film.”⁴⁸ In further de-emphasizing the production drama, Levada was able to dissect the filmmakers’ organic connection with the Carpathian highlanders, and thus complicate the film’s claim to authenticity. Levada brought the film down from the mountain of personal expression to “actual” Hutsuls living in “the present [*suchasnist*].” The June 1967 issue of *Novyiny kinoekrana* echoed Levada’s concerns, publishing a letter from a self-identified Hutsul, Bohdan Chufus. He wrote,

Our Carpathians are magical, winding with green forests, filled with the roar of the Prut and the Cheremosh. It has given birth to not only one hero: The legendary Oleksa Dovbush fought here, [and] partisans under the command of Sydir Kovpak fought for freedom, peace and happiness in the forests and villages. What magical people we have! No artist – [either] painter, composer, or poet – has captured the beauty of the Carpathians, the grandeur of the Hutsul’s soul! And you don’t see any films about our country. Dovzhenko Studio gave us *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* – a genuine poem about the life of the Hutsuls, about a pure and great love. But this event was in the past! We would like to see contemporary Hutsuls, who approach the glory of communism with their labor. We are waiting, dear filmmakers, for films about the contemporary Carpathians from you.⁴⁹

In this overdetermined letter, the writer did not deny that particular landscapes produce certain types of people, and affirmed the primordial quality of ethnicity; nor did Chufus deny the talent of Paradzhanov’s film by drawing attention to issues of “formalism” or “abstractionism;” rather, the problem became its very distance from actuality. Chufus still maintained, “You don’t see any films about our country,” suggesting that Paradzhanov’s subject was located elsewhere. Chufus’s concerns were not for the *auteur*, but in the film’s very relevance to the Carpathian spectator. Kotsiubyns’kyi’s title, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in fact invited this critique. The engineer from Dnipropetrovsk, moreover, affirmed the subject’s very “distance” with his intentional mistitling. As I explore in the remainder of the chapter, however, Paradzhanov’s and other Ukrainian filmmakers’ engagement with the “contemporary theme” proved all the more

⁴⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 400, l. 152.

⁴⁹ Bohdan Chufus, “Lyst do kinomyttsiv,” *Novyiny kinoekrana*, no. 6 (June 1967), 4.

problematic, particularly within the context of the official emergence of the “cult” of the Great Patriotic War during 1965.

Ukrainian National Representation and the Politics of Paradzhanov’s Genius

As the campaign against *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* emerged in 1966-67, Paradzhanov experienced another political defeat with his aborted production, *Kyiv Frescoes*. The latter film proved to be the beginning of the director’s undoing, ending with his arrest a decade later. While he promoted *Frescoes* as a Victory Day film – an homage to Kyiv, the “Hero City”⁵⁰ – the film bore no similarity to parallel works released during this important anniversary year. After 1965, Brezhnev would establish what Nina Tumarkin calls the “cult of World War II,” with the naming of new “hero-cities,” the construction of the eternal flame on the side of the Kremlin wall, and a number of large monuments on the sites of major battles and Nazi atrocities.⁵¹ While such sites were simultaneously evocative of Soviet heroism and suffering, Paradzhanov’s film seemed to exist completely outside of such a narrative.

In the actor’s trial that Paradzhanov shot with VGIK returnee Oleksandr Antypenko in 1965, which essentially killed the production, we see a series of four self-contained thematic explorations, introduced and concluded with images from the Pechers’ki Region of Southern Kyiv, where both the Caves Monastery and Ukraine’s major war memorial are located. Within the frescoes themselves, we see the origins of Paradzhanov as a *bicoloreur* artist, one who would eventually produce art from the trash found in his prison cell. Whereas the director was constrained by the Ukrainian literary canon with *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in what he intended as a total exploration of the Hutsul ethnoscape, he used *Kyiv Frescoes* for a fuller investigation of the aesthetic possibilities of combining his

⁵⁰ Kyiv, along with Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa, Sevastopol’, and Stalingrad became Hero-Cities (*Goroda-heroi*) by decree of the Supreme Soviet on May 8, 1965. Nonetheless, Moscow and Kyiv were newer designations, as the other cities had held the semi-official titles of Hero-cities since May 1, 1945.

⁵¹ Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 143-44.

disparate interests in objects and things. His justification for the apparently random assortment of objects and thematic material contained in the *Frescoes* trial insisted that these elements composed the very living material of a city, both nationally and historically Ukrainian and multinationally modern. Yet, in rejecting the very specific dimensions of each of these two ideological sites, Paradzhanov's film appeared as an essentially fractured representation of a particular space of cultural importance. Moreover, in its self-reflexive juxtaposition of mass culture and high art, *Frescoes* not only appeared to celebrate Kyiv's existence between history and the contemporary, but also affirmed a supposedly bourgeois understanding of an undifferentiated culture of consumption.

The first "fresco" is emblematic of the entire short: Three soldiers pose in an empty room save for three paintings Cossack *hetmany*⁵² behind them. The *mise-en-scène* of the shot, as with the trial in general, is artless. There is even lighting, the camera sits at a 90 degree angle to the rear wall. The scene is silent, except for the ambient sound of the three soldiers who walk in. Each of them sits in a wooden chair, and removes their boots. One of the soldiers wears a cowboy hat, and has a handlebar mustache. After removing the hat, he poses with a Cossack *bulava*.⁵³ While posing, water flows across the uneven hardwood floor, and the soldiers begin mopping. The second part of the trial occurs in the same barren room, the center of which now contains a lifeless soldier lying on a bed, with a woman and child attending to his body. A museum-like picture frame hangs in the foreground of the shot, composing the three in the background. We hear sounds of priests chanting.

The second half of the trial continues in the same Soviet interior, but becomes more fragmented, mixing filmic citations from Eisenstein and Dovzhenko with Orthodox ritual, jazz, a wedding, classical mythology, children's games and Renaissance art. In an apparent collage of Western and Eastern European art objects, Paradzhanov juxtaposes items from the Kyiv Museum of

⁵² "*Hetman*" is the Ukrainian Cossack title for the political and military leader of the group. It is equivalent to the Russian, "*ataman*."

⁵³ The *bulava* is a ceremonial mace that symbolizes the *hetman's* power.

Western and Eastern Art – vases, busts, Velázquez’s *Infanta Margarita* – with objects from an Orthodox mass – incense, bells and garments. We cut to a contemporary couple in bridal costume. Their movements are slow, deliberate, and highly theatrical, reminiscent of Dovzhenko’s battle scene between the Rus’ and Scythians in *Zvenyhora*. Finally, in a reference to *Potemkin*, a baby carriage rolls across the screen, empty, except for a black shawl that the bride pulls out. We cut to an open book (one of Paradzhanov’s persistent images) with a needle on top of it, and then to a boy, composed, like the dead soldier, behind a swaying picture frame as he throws paper airplanes at the camera (Figure 4.1). We cut to a series of people holding Orthodox icons as a boy dressed in Angel’s wings cranks an antique gramophone. A black couple dances to jazz. A nude female stands motionless in the frame, with birch logs separating her standing body from a man lying on the floor. The trial ends with a montage of churches from the Caves Monastery complex, seemingly presented as an afterthought, reminding the spectator of the film’s intentions to present an “image of Kyiv.”

After I viewed the short film at the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Film Center in Kyiv, the archivist explained that *Kyiv Frescoes* was “only a trial [*proba*],” not intended to function as a complete film. Indeed, when reading the screenplay, we realize that the story does contain a hero, identified only by “person [*chelovek*].” “Person” is a filmmaker living in an apartment building overlooking Ploshcha Peremohy, who has recently been divorced from his wife and is searching throughout Kyiv for the subject of his next film. Such autobiographical material would characterize each of Paradzhanov’s subsequent films, wherein the director situates the “portrait of the artist” within a particular ethnic tapestry – Armenia for *Sayat-Nova*, Georgia for *The Legend of Surami Fortress* (*Legenda Suramskoi fortretsy*, 1984), and Azerbaijan for *Ashik-Kerib* (1988). Nonetheless, the “trial” that existed in the film archive functioned as a foretelling excerpt of what *Kyiv Frescoes* would have looked like, had Paradzhanov completed it. Each of the scenes within the “trial” were



Figure 4.1. Random randomness in Paradzhanov's *Kyiv Frescoes* (1965)

represented *verbatim* in the shooting script.⁵⁴ Moreover, Paradzhanov edited the “trial” as a short film for public screenings, after it became obvious that Goskino would not permit the completion of the film.⁵⁵ The purpose of a “trial” was to test various actors’ abilities to play a given role. Here, we see only parodies of acting, only self-reflection about the function of the images. In his next film, *Sayat-Nova*, made at Armenfil’ m in 1968, we see the realization of Paradzhanov’s aesthetic of self-reflexivity and *bricolage*. Humans dressed in period costume appear on a plain set with beautiful objects, artlessly presenting the audience with a representation of symbolic motifs related to the title character. When presenting the latter film to a group of “creative and scientific youth” in Minsk on December 1, 1971, Paradzhanov indicated this new aesthetic principle: “*Sayat-Nova* was filmed from a single spot[...] not adjusting light, color, not adjusting the optics, from a single spot[...] The picture is terribly static[...] and for this it is very dear to me.”⁵⁶ With *Kyiv Frescoes*, Paradzhanov had returned full circle to the Stalinist literary infatuation with “things and objects,” but within a completely surrealist mode. His images were increasingly divorced from the specifics of cinema (depth, movement, montage), and approach an aesthetic of modernist metatheater with its own self-reflexive “theatricality.”⁵⁷ Reading *Kyiv Frescoes* through this later project, we perceive that, rather than a trial, the short

⁵⁴ See Paradzhanov’s shooting script, TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 2, d. 2280.

⁵⁵ According to James Steffen, the *Kyiv Frescoes* trial screened at Kyiv Dom kino as part of a retrospective on Paradzhanov’s work between December 3, 1965 and January 14, 1966. James Steffen, “A Cardiogram of the Time: Sergei Parajanov and the Politics of Nationality and Aesthetics in the Soviet Union,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 2005), 199.

⁵⁶ “Sergei Paradzhanov’s Speech in Minsk before the Creative and Scientific Youth of Byelorussia on 1 December 1971,” tr. Nora Seligman Favorov and P. Elana Pick, *Armenian Review* 47, nos. 3-4, 48, nos. 1-2 (2001-2002), 18.

⁵⁷ Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner argue that one of the means by which modernist theater attempted to reject “theatricality” was in an insistence on theater’s artifice, and an embellishment in self-reflexivity. Modernist theater called attention to the presence of the audience, frequently addressing spectators directly. Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner, “Introduction: Modernism and Anti-Theatricality,” in *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage* (Basingstroke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4. In Paradzhanov’s mobilization of theatrical elements in his later films, he meant to cite Ukrainian “theatricality” of the 1950s, drawing attention to its artifice, while opening acknowledging its spectacular allure. In this way, *Sayat-Nova* was not simply anti-theatricality in the ways that Ackerman and Puchner identify, but a post-theatricality that was not only aware of its effect, but also admiring of its form. See also in this volume, Elinor Fuchs, “Clown Shows: Anti-Theatricalist Theatricalism in Four Twentieth-Century Plays,” in Ackerman and Puchner, 39-57.

film Paradzhanov presented to the studio, Ukrainian Goskino and a select public at Kyiv Dom kino in December and January 1965-66 was the expression of a director who now felt entirely comfortable moving outside of the realm of Soviet aesthetic and narrative conventions. The short's bookends of war memorials and churches are all that returns us to a Soviet cinematic commonplace. The question that emerges from this highly experimental and, indeed, *personal*, project is how *Kyiv Frescoes* made it as far as it did, despite reservations about it at all levels of the Soviet film industry.

Throughout the project, Paradzhanov maintained that the film was intended to represent Kyiv during and after the war; that he was lending his genius to “contemporary” concerns: the memorialization of the war. When it became evident to everyone that this was not Paradzhanov’s intention with the film, Goskino in particular questioned the film. Deputy Chairman of Goskino, Vladimir Baskakov, wrote to S. P. Ivanov in August 1965:

We can't forget that the film's action takes place in Kyiv, a city that experienced a heavy siege [*osada*], encirclement, and occupation, which became an arena for an intense battle, and in 1943, the Soviet Army's victory. All of this is missing in the screenplay.⁵⁸

Baskakov noted 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.”⁵⁹ In Paradzhanov’s highly personal and abstract conceptions of the city, Goskino found his project divorced, not only from the ideological basis of the Victory Day celebrations, but also from the studio’s identity within the framework of “national cinemas” in the USSR.

At the same time, the director’s identity as an *auteur*, who helped forge Dovzhenko Studio’s movement away from the Stalinist folkloric and toward a new mode and space of national representation, provided him with a free hand in developing the project apart from the complicated bureaucratic system of double and triple levels of approval for each stage in the production process. When

⁵⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 172, l. 82.

⁵⁹ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 47, l. 179.

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.”⁶⁰ *Shadows* cinematographer Iurii Illienko called the screenplay “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. If it was my will, I'd get a group together and shoot a screenplay [*literaturnaia stsenariia*], even without a shooting script [*rezhiserskaia stsenariia*].⁶¹

Paradzhanov continually asserted his intellectual independence, becoming increasingly irate with any suspicion as to his intentions. To advance his unorthodox method, he called for the establishment of an “experimental studio[...] in the quest for the new.”⁶² Clearly, Paradzhanov’s idea for an “experimental studio” was based on Grigorii Chukhrai’s Experimental Studio at Mosfil’m, established during the previous year. Whereas Chukhrai’s “experiment” aimed to correlate production and profit, Paradzhanov demanded Kyiv Studio follow with an “experimental studio” invested with “taking risks.”⁶³ Paradzhanov’s idea was similar to Chukhrai’s, however, in that both sought a method of filmmaking “*vne kolektiva* (outside of the collective),” believing that an “experimental studio” could function as an alternative space of cultural production.

There were certainly precedents for “*vne kolektiva*” cultural production emerging in the late 1950s and early 1960s, such as the Kyiv “Klub tvorchoi molodi (Club of Creative Youth),” which existed under the tutelage of the Ukrainian Komsomol. As Heorhii Kas'ianov points out, the KTM was an opportunity for the Komsomol to monitor non-SPU activity among young people, while still offering the youth an opportunity to engage in experimentation that

⁶⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 172, l. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, l. 15.

⁶² *Ibid.*, l. 16.

⁶³ The “Experimental Studio” was to be one of the testing grounds for Libermanesque economic reforms, along with Khrushchev’s garment factories and the many other “experimental” enterprises, mostly in light industry, that sprung up in the mid-1960s.

would be frowned upon within the official sphere. A "Second Ukrainian Theater" was organized under the KTM, where there were not only performances by students studying at the conservatory and KITM, but also a Kyiv Jazz group, history lectures, and poetry readings.⁶⁴ We should not, however, restrict our understanding of "*vne kolektiva*" to youth organizations and a nascent dissident ideology, as Kas'ianov suggests in his book on the Ukrainian "resistance movement [*rukh oporu*]." Sigismund Navrotskii, who actively fought for resolving the "problem of cadres" in Ukrainian cinema, became an active opponent of "youth experimentation" and perhaps the most recognizable Neo-Stalinist at Dovzhenko Studio during the later 1960s. For example, Navrotskii called "six years in prison" for Ivan Dziuba's speech at the *Shadows* premier a "liberal measure."⁶⁵ Nonetheless, he too fancied himself an *auteur*, continually calling for the elimination of "a whole series of instructions, which take root in our everyday lives and do not give us the possibility to live and work freely and creatively."⁶⁶ In speaking against Vasyli' Tsvirkunov's regimentation of thematic plans during a Union meeting, Navrotskii complained that when the studio "pins a director" to a particular film, "creative individuality gets lost."⁶⁷ Speaking during a Plenum of the SKU in 1962, Navrotskii attempted to explain why he had become more of a "critic" than filmmaker in recent years:

No creative worker... has any desire to work according to a plan [*robotat' po planu*]; they have their own personal creative plan; they want to do such things closer to themselves [*lit.*: "in their biography"]. They don't want to be embarrassed in front of [other] people. I am deeply convinced that it is necessary to do [things] exactly in this way. But there is also another working principle: the principle of working on whatever earns [money]. This doesn't suit me.⁶⁸

He advocated that the studio provide the opportunity for a select group of talented directors to work "*ne po planu*" and "*vne kolektiva*," with only the "Party

⁶⁴ Heorhii Kas'ianov, *Nezhodni: ukrains'ka intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960-80-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1995), 19.

⁶⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 345, l. 23.

⁶⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 198, l. 15.

⁶⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 228, l. 7.

⁶⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 67.

Program” to guide them.⁶⁹ Yet Navrotskii’s “personal” conception for a film, an “exploration of the international character of the October Revolution,” was in no way similar to that of Paradzhanov’s symbolist conception contained in *Kyiv Frescoes*, even if we accept that the latter film was in fact “about Kyiv.” The studio never gave Navrotskii the opportunity to make his film about the October Revolution, and he instead began working on an unlikely topic for this Polish old Bolshevik. *Across the Blue Sea (Po sinnemu moriu)* was to be a film about the “internationalist” dimensions of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in their struggle against the “Turkish Beys.”⁷⁰ Navrotskii resisted making the film, but his lack of work was costing him and his family needed income. In 1964, he took on a project about a group whose history, he believed, “should have been repressed.”⁷¹

In this resistance to Ukrainian “national themes,” however, we see a similarity that these two highly dissimilar filmmakers shared: Both Navrotskii and Paradzhanov were 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*. Most speakers complained that they “didn’t see Kyiv” in the script. Pavlychko, for example, was concerned with the “cosmopolitanism” of the imagery, of its lack of a “Kyivan, a purely Ukrainian image.”⁷² Vasyl’ Zemliak stressed that, like all directors at the studio, “Paradzhanov has to think with Dovzhenko’s categories.”⁷³ 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 thematics and mode of representation, a mode for which

⁶⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 268, l. 155.

⁷⁰ The film was halted in production during 1964, for unknown reasons. See the shooting script: RGALI, f. 2944, op. 6, d. 431.

⁷¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1653, l. 148.

⁷² TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 172, l. 49.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, l. 53.

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 pass 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.”⁷⁴

When Goskino saw the results of Paradzhanov’s “mark,” and those results did not correspond either to the tolerated formal edginess and method of seeing nationality, contained in *Shadows*, interest in the filmmaker’s character transformed into character assassination. In the midst of this conflict surrounding *Kyiv Frescoes*, the SKU 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.⁷⁵

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 around him,” and was concerned that the director was developing an “entourage [*otochennia*]” of young people at the studio.⁷⁶

To contextualize Paradzhanov’s arrest and imprisonment eight years later, we have to take into account how the director’s personal character and aesthetic sensibilities were part of a continuum. “Ukrainian poetic cinema,” the self-conscious movement that emerged at Dovzhenko Studio from *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, was not simply a new aesthetic platform of national representation; rather, it was a means of defining “national cinema” in relation to an individual *auteur*. Due to the international importance in the 1960s of *auteur*

⁷⁴ Ibid., l. 22.

⁷⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 346, l. 32a.

⁷⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 172, l. 51.

cinema in France, Italy and Germany, along with the conscious designs of film critics and filmmakers themselves, the “Auteur Theory” came to dominate discussion of the very meaning of “national cinema” in Europe and North America. In fact, *auteurs* like Jean-Luc Godard in France, Rainer Werner Fassbinder in West Germany and Federico Fellini in Italy came to embody their nations to an educated, international public during the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁷ The presence of an *auteur* like Paradzhanov at Dovzhenko Studio was the principle means through which its management sought to escape from the Stalinist folkloric, without compromising the goal of national representation, and to mark off national cinema from central 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 to the CPU, Goskino and studio authorities.

While I do not intend to address his arrest and imprisonment in this dissertation, I find it instructive to mention that the director was charged publicly with indecent conduct, in particular with spreading syphilis to those same young men who admired him a little too much after making *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. Paradzhanov’s arrest was announced in the Ukrainian-language daily, *Vechirni Kyiv*, under the heading, “In the Name of the Law,” alongside other arrests for drunkenness and various violations of public order. The article, penned by the First Deputy to the Head Prosecutor in Kyiv, stated that the film director “led an immoral type of life, ruined his family, converted his apartment into a den [rus. *pryton*] of depravity, and resorted to sexual corruption[...].”⁷⁸ Thus, Paradzhanov’s private space was implicated as a particular component of his “*vne kolektiva*” lifestyle. In Paradzhanov’s case, as well as that of Navrotskii, “*vne kolektiva*” implied a separation from the confines of the studio, the latter an

⁷⁷ See, James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); John C. Stubbs, *Federico Fellini as Auteur: Seven Aspects of his Films* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006).

⁷⁸ R. Dolyns'kyi, “Imenem zakonu,” *Vechirni Kyiv*, 1 March 1974, 3.

official space invested solidly in a collective enterprise of Ukrainian national representation.

Oleksandr Dovzhenko and “Ukrainian Poetic Cinema”

As Zemliak implied during a discussion of *Kyiv Frescoes* (see above), the director of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* had tarnished his reputation as the bearer of “Dovzhenko’s categories.” The original Ukrainian *auteur*, as Soviet film historian Nikolai Lebedev suggested in his *Outline on the History of Cinema in the USSR*, Oleksandr Dovzhenko came to embody the discursive intentions of the studio that later bore his name.⁷⁹ Ukrainian film critic Borys Buriak wrote that, before Dovzhenko, there was no “Ukrainian national cinema,” only directors who came to work in Ukraine.⁸⁰ One of the frequent critiques of the studio in the early 1960s was that Kyiv had failed to live up to its namesake’s standards. Screenwriter Mykola Zarudnyi, for example, stated during the March 1962 SKU Plenum that he felt “Oleksandr Petrovych’s displeasure” upon entering the studio grounds where a bust of the filmmaker stood.⁸¹ Thus, at the beginning of the decade, national embodiment was grounded particularly within Dovzhenko’s individual character, perhaps to an equal degree as it was within his work.

Critics and filmmakers celebrated Oleksandr Dovzhenko, not only for his choice of Ukrainian subject matter, but primarily for his unique style. In distinction, Ukrainian cinema boosterism of the early 1960s viewed Dovzhenko’s style within a continuum of personal expression and national representation. While Paradzhanov promoted himself as the hand-picked successor to Dovzhenko in his *Iskusstvo kino* article, “Eternal Motion,” he did not believe that “poetic cinema” could be contained by “narrowly national” concerns. Kyiv could be represented in a different manner than could have happened previously, not because of what Kyiv was or had become, but due to changes in the world of

⁷⁹ See my discussion of Lebedev and Dovzhenko in Chapter 1.

⁸⁰ Boris Buriak, “Internatsional’noe – ne beznatsional’noe,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (February 1964), 30.

⁸¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 76.

artistic representation, which touched Ukraine, the Soviet Union and Western Europe in similar ways. He told his colleagues,

Seven year ago, when I worked with [Petro] Lubenskii [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.⁸²

While Paradzhanov routinely made use of the term “poetic cinema” to define his work alongside that of Iurii Illienko and Leonid Osyka, the attachment of the word “Ukrainian” was less essential for him. He was as much interested in the term as it applied to other *auteurs* like Fellini, poet-filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Andrei Tarkovskii as he was the self-conscious student of the “poet of cinema” Oleksandr Dovzhenko. Yet the Soviet and Ukrainian context for “poetic cinema” was fundamentally entangled in the life and legacy of Dovzhenko, not only because Dovzhenko Studio continually drudged up his name for emulation but also as legitimating “poetic cinema’s” aesthetic and “political” agenda within the particular space of Ukraine.

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 was not solely about audience desire. After all, the average Soviet film in the mid-1960s was a box office failure. For the moment, this remained a problem for the organs of distribution, and did not constitute an explicitly political problem. By contrast, those who initiated the reaction against *Shadows* beginning in early 1966 played the audience card to distance mainstream production at Dovzhenko Studio from what was soon labeled “Ukrainian poetic cinema.” During 1965 and 1966, the most contentious two films made at Dovzhenko Studio were in production, which, combined with the Ukrainian intelligentsia’s response to the arrests of August-September 1965 over the course of the following year, established a certain

⁸² Ibid., ll. 64-65.

polarized atmosphere at the studio. Nonetheless, Illienko's and Illiashenko's films went into production on the basis of promoting personal expression and a Ukrainian national theme, two principles that emerged from the marriage of Thaw principles and a reinvestment in the "national character" of republican film production, both of which existed on the margins of official policy in Moscow and Kyiv.

Illienko's directorial debut, *A Well for the Thirsty* (*Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh*, 1966, released 1988), was shelved by the end of 1966, while production was halted on Illiashenko's *Coordinate your Watches* (*Pereverte svoi hodynyky*, 1966) around the same time. While diverse in style, both directors considered their work to be the heirs of Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora*, on the one hand, and Paradzhanov's *Shadows* on the other. Paradzhanov, for his part, actively used his prestige to promote their work, calling on the studio to establish a conscious policy for cultivating "poetic cinema."⁸³ During this short period of two years, the idea of "poetic cinema" took on an all-important dimension of how filmmakers at the studio defined their work. Illiashenko, for example, pleaded his case for such a difficult film with the words: "It's necessary to consider that each game has its rules, which you can't but consider. This also has its rules, and it's necessary to judge it accordingly."⁸⁴ As Leonid Osyka was completing work on his remake of Illiashenko's film, *Love Awaits Those Who Return* (*Khto povernetsia – doliubyt'*) in 1966, he answered complaints that his film was mere imitation of Paradzhanov with, "This is in agreement with the genre of poetic cinema."⁸⁵

While no one had yet stated that "poetic cinema" was a "genre," Osyka's statement would have made perfect sense to his friends and critics at Dovzhenko Studio. Denysenko proclaimed in 1964 that one could divide the production of the studio into two varieties: those that were merely "imitative" of film production in Moscow, and those that contained a "cinema poetics [*kinopoetika*]," which appealed to "Dovzhenko's traditions."⁸⁶ On a literal level, the films that

⁸³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1965, l. 242.

⁸⁴ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 728, l. 15.

⁸⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1783, l. 64.

⁸⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 161.

Denysenko referenced, and those that later came to be identified with “poetic cinema” were themselves written by poets. Denysenko’s *A Dream* was written by Dmytro Pavlychko, and *Shadows* screenwriter, Ivan Chendei, was a poet and collector of Carpathian folklore. Ivan Drach and Lina Kostenko, the authors of Illienko’s and Illiashenko’s films, were the two most prominent representatives of the young generation of Ukrainian poets during the 1960s. Kostenko was, moreover, the wife of Vasyl’ Tsvirkunov. Thus, poets and filmmakers came together at Kyiv studio like nowhere else in the Soviet Union. While poetry received renewed attention during the Thaw, with such celebrity poets as Evgenii Evtushenko, Andrei Voznesenskii and Bella Akhmadulina emerging during this time, they remained noticeably absent from the film industry.⁸⁷

A second factor that we see in Denysenko’s statement was “poetic cinema’s” claim to Dovzhenko’s legacy. Both Denysenko and Paradzhanov studied under the aging filmmaker at VGIK during his final years. As the Dovzhenko Septuagennial drew near in 1964, everyone at the studio had some claim to the filmmaker’s legacy, whether that was a direct pedagogical relationship, a chance encounter, or simply an aesthetic affinity. In this latter claim, filmmakers opened the discussion about “poetic cinema” as a particularly Ukrainian phenomenon, but which initially participated in one of the most official commemorations of the mid-1960s. In the years leading up to the anniversary year, Dovzhenko’s role in Ukrainian cinema took on mythological proportions. He became the foremost pre-war Ukrainian filmmaker, the embittered victim of the “personality cult,” a writer who carried on the Ukrainian traditions of Shevchenko and Ivan Franko, a member of Soviet cinema’s Holy Trinity alongside Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, and the “inventor,” according to Pavlychko, of an aesthetic movement known as “poetic cinema.”⁸⁸ While “poetic cinema” functioned more broadly in Soviet critical debates about the re-examination of modernism and the early twentieth century avant-garde, its

⁸⁷ Only Evtushenko made a foray into cinema with his outlandish screenplay about the Cuban Revolution, *I am Cuba (Ja – Kuba, 1965)*.

⁸⁸ Dmytro Pavlychko, “Siiartel’ vichnoho,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 15 September 1964: 3.

association with Dovzhenko imparted a clear nationalistic value to the term in Ukraine.

In Chapter 1, I examined how Dovzhenko's early work was conversant with Ukrainian modernism. At the same time, his later work came increasingly to be identified with an outmoded Stalinist aesthetic for Thaw-era critics. By the early 1960s, Dovzhenko's position in Soviet and Ukrainian culture had been redeemed entirely, and critics praised his work like never before. The director's Civil War epic, *Shchors* (1939), about Ukrainian Bolshevik leader Mykola Shchors who died fighting Symon Petliura's nationalist army in 1919, held particular weight in 1960s discussions of Dovzhenko's contribution to "poetic cinema." Film critic Semën Ginzberg stated that *Shchors* was the only film of its time that completely escaped from the "cult of personality."⁸⁹ Although Stalin himself commissioned Dovzhenko to make the film, suggesting to him that it should be the "Ukrainian Chapaev," the result bore little similarity to the Vasil'ev Brothers' 1934 blockbuster. With its mix of the Eisensteinian monumentalism of *Aleksandr Nevskii* and *Ivan Groznyi* and the Stalinist folkloric of Savchenko's historical films, *Shchors* comes to exemplify Katerina Clark's notion of socialist realism's "modal schizophrenia," with "its proclivity for making sudden, unmotivated transitions from realistic discourse to the mythic or utopian."⁹⁰ The most powerful figure in the film was not the leader figure, as in Savchenko's and Eisenstein's epics, but a fictional character, an old Ukrainian peasant named Vasyly' Bozhenko who joins the red partisans, and imparts a degree of "folk wisdom" to Shchors's strategy. While such characters were ubiquitous in the historical-biographical genre, nowhere do they dominate the narrative and imagery to such an extent as in Dovzhenko's film.

In the critical language of the 1960s, *Shchors* was the film in which Dovzhenko most successfully combined socialist realism with his own brand of "cinema poetry." It was in this realm of the "poetic" – the space that Bozhenko

⁸⁹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 957, l. 124 (Moscow conference on Dovzhenko's work, December 15-16, 1964).

⁹⁰ Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 37.

inhabited in the film – that the folkloric elements were contained. To state the case simplistically, Dovzhenko’s “poetics” referred to his use of extra-narrative elements of spectacle, what Kristin Thompson referred to as “excess” in Eisenstein’s *Ivan the Terrible, Part 2*.⁹¹ In critics’ referral to Dovzhenko as the “poet of cinema,”⁹² however, they privileged these elements of folkloric excess, which suggested a fundamental difference in his aesthetic outlook from others who employed folkloric representations during Stalinism. Dovzhenko’s distinction as the “poet of cinema” implied that the containment of the folkloric – its domestication, as I refer in Chapter 1 – was not certain in his work. According to several critics, Dovzhenko’s films were “plotless [*bezfabul’nyi*],” and his use of the folkloric image threatened to inhibit the structure of the narrative, and thus skirted the boundaries of formalism. Yet, according to a 1964 conference dedicated to strengthening “Dovzhenko studies [*dovzhenkovedenie*]” in film criticism, it was this very “plotlessness” that made the director so necessary for early Soviet cinema.⁹³ Clearly, Nekrasov’s counterpositioning of the Thaw-era problematic of “sincere” realism and Dovzhenko’s Stalinist aesthetic was no longer relevant to Soviet critics by the mid-1960s (see, Chapter one).

At Dovzhenko Studio, where “speaking in the language of Dovzhenko” was stated studio policy in the 1960s, a “soft” claim to the filmmaker’s legacy meant a continued commitment to representing a local and national space, and that Dovzhenko Studio in particular had an exclusive claim to Ukrainian thematics. To make a “hard” claim to Dovzhenko suggested that the only possible representation of Ukrainians was within the “genre” of “poetic cinema,” that is, in implementation of a modernist and counter-realist “poetics.” As I suggested at the outset of this chapter, the difference between “soft” and “hard” claims to Dovzhenko’s legacy were also contained in an understanding of film style as, in the former case, a collective mode of representation attached to the

⁹¹ Kristin Thompson, “The Concept of Cinematic Excess,” in Philip Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 130-142.

⁹² See especially Iraklii Andronikov’s introduction to a series of articles about Dovzhenko in the May 1958 issue of *Iskusstvo kino* – “Poeziia Dovzhenko,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5 (May 1958), 133-39.

⁹³ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 957, l. 24.

studio's "mark" or "branding," and, in the latter case, determined by personal expression and attached to the "mark" of individual authorship. Several remarks made during studio and SKU gatherings in the mid-1960s indicated the emergence of a polarized atmosphere among Ukrainian filmmakers on the issue of "poetic cinema." Film director Oleksandr Muratov, in discussing the "two tendencies in Ukrainian cinema" at a Union Plenum in late-1965, complained that "some comrades" believed that only "expressive" films can represent the Ukrainian ethnoscape, while films about "real life" are somehow not national.⁹⁴ Oleksandr Syzonenko made a similarly polarizing remark from the other side during the March 1962 SKU Plenum. The screenwriter and editor at Dovzhenko Studio recalled the "violent struggle in the thirties" between the "poets of cinema," which he associated with Dovzhenko, Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and the "realists or prosaists," who rallied behind film director Sergei Iutkevich. Syzonenko continued, "Eisenstein is no more, Pudovkin is no more, and Dovzhenko is no more, but Iutkevich remained, and it has not been the best side of our cinema that has remained."⁹⁵

It is easy to read into Muratov's and Syzonenko's remarks the existence of such a divide between "poetic" and "realist" conceptions of Ukrainian cinema at the time, but it was in fact an "old" divide, as Ivan Pyr'ev noted in response at the Plenum, and one which initially had very little to do with Ukraine. While the origins of "poetic cinema" lie in French avant-garde film criticism during the early 1920s, the concept first appeared in the Soviet Union through the Russian Formalists, specifically Iurii Tynianov and Viktor Shklovskii.⁹⁶ In the formalist tract on cinema, *Film Poetics (Poetika kino, 1927)*, Shklovskii identified the two "genres" of cinema as poetry and prose, asserting, "Plotless cinema is 'verse' cinema."⁹⁷ In comparing the "formal and technical" with the "semantic,"

⁹⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 313, l. 88.

⁹⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 199, l. 138.

⁹⁶ For an excellent study of the French concept of "poetic cinema," see Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology, 1907-1939*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁹⁷ Viktor Shklovskii, "Poetry and Prose in Cinema," tr. Richard Taylor, in Boris Eikhenbaum and Richard Taylor, eds., *Poetics of Cinema, Russian Poetics in Translation*, no. 9 (Oxford: RPT Publications, 1982), 89.

Shklovskii privileged the visual over the narrative elements of a film. Although such ideas were rejected by the mid-1930s, with “formalism” functioning as a pejorative for “elite” art, and in distinction to socialist realism, Shklovskii continued to be a significant writer and teacher into the 1970s, even guiding Ivan Drach’s thesis work at the Screenwriting Institute (*Vyshii stsenarnyi kurs*) at Mosfil’m.⁹⁸

While Dovzhenko famously said, “I belong to the poetic camp,” his own influences were not as clearly “formalist” as that of Eisenstein’s and of other members of Proletkult and the constructivists. In re-fashioning the meaning of the “poetic” for a later Thaw vocabulary, Efim Dobin’s *The Poetics of Film Art* (*Poetika kinoiskusstva*) is instructive for understanding Dovzhenko’s place in this new debate. Beginning with the premises that “style dictates meaning,” and that “image-meaning” is an important perspective for critical analysis, Dobin attempted a historical examination into the question of “poetics,” focusing in particular on the “dovzhenkoist [*dovzhenkovkii*]” image, which he claimed was a problem of *mise-en-scene* rather than montage or narrative (thus excluding early Eisenstein and Pudovkin).⁹⁹ In revisiting the poetic / prosaic conflict of the 20s and 30s, Dobin called “narrative” and “metaphor” “two different paths, two different principles in correlation, in combination, in reciprocal association of the general and the particular [*edinichnyi*] in an artistic cinematic image.”¹⁰⁰

While successful in the mid-1920s, Dobin argued that the “poetic school” declined in the later part of the decade due to the complete dissociation of the metaphor from the narrative, as occurred in Eisenstein’s *October* in particular. Demonstrating a familiarity with both the Formalists, and the French avant-garde, Dobin wrote, “The avant-gardists’ attempts to create a ‘pure,’ poetic, plotless

⁹⁸ In distinction to VGIK, which also offered advanced degrees in screenwriting, the *Vyshie stsenarnye kursy* at Mosfil’m were intended for individuals who had already received a higher education in a related subject, and who were already professional writers desiring additional employment at Soviet film studios. Dovzhenko Studio sent Ukrainian writers to Moscow for their first year of study, and they completed their second year by correspondence under the guidance of a senior screenwriter in Kyiv.

⁹⁹ E.S. Dobin, “Poeticheskoe i prozoicheskoe v kino,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 8 (1960): 88-107; Dobin, *Poetika kinoiskusstva: Povestvovanie i metafora* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1961), 10. Alternately, we can translate “*obrazno-smyslovoi*” as “image-meaning.”

¹⁰⁰ E. Dobin, *Poetika kinoiskusstva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1961), 57-58.

cinema cannot but end in failure. It was a utopian and groundless task.”¹⁰¹ The French avant-garde filmmaker Jean Epstein, whose theories had the most lasting effect on the Formalists, “attempted to develop a certain mystical, pantheistic conception of poetic cinema, in [their] aspiration toward philosophical depth.”¹⁰² Dobin complained along similar lines regarding *October*, arguing that Eisenstein increased the role of metaphor to the extent that the people [*narod*] themselves became nothing more than their metaphorical significance.¹⁰³ Thus, Eisenstein’s fetish of the metaphor in his work from 1927 to 1936 had dual significance: First, his stylistic excess “marked off the metaphor from the second originary element of art [i.e., the “narrative-psychological”],” and second, the “masses” in Eisenstein’s *October* embody transcendental meaning – elements of a spiritualized natural landscape – rather than human subjects. There were no personages, much less heroes – only metaphoric conception.¹⁰⁴ While disavowing such abstractionism, Dobin refused to subscribe to Sergei Iutkevich’s notion that “poetic cinema” was only an “elite” form of intellectual “connoisseurism,” distant from the masses.¹⁰⁵ Dobin, thus, opened the space for a new theory of “poetic cinema,” removed from both the debates between Eisenstein and Iutkevich, which helped articulate socialist realism, and from the now-false dichotomy that Nekrasov proposed in light of the Twentieth Party Congress. Dobin suggested instead that an emphasis on visual style and metaphor did not necessarily disrupt a film’s realism. Not until the posthumous re-appraisal of Dovzhenko’s role in Soviet cinema would his identity as the “poet of cinema” re-emerge. Instead of the mouthpiece of the “cult” that Nekrasov suggested in “Words, Great and Simple,” Dovzhenko was now the embittered victim of Stalinism, who nonetheless managed to resist its influence on his work, even the work most directly associated with Stalin. Dobin examined *Shchors* to explore Dovzhenko’s mature poetics, a space where

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57-59.

¹⁰² Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁰³ Efim Dobin, “Sud’ba metafora v kino,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (Feb 1964), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Eisenstein, of course, responded with *Aleksandr Nevskii*, which combined his interest in montage with a heroic narrative.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Dobin, “Poeticheskoe i prozaicheskoe v kino,” 91.

the filmmaker's modernist disposition was tempered by tribute to a heroic, party-minded leader and his folksy, peasant sidekick. In discussing this particular film, however, Dobin was able to isolate and praise Dovzhenko's anti-realist aesthetic contained in the scene of Bozhenko's funeral, affirming the importance of Dovzhenko's personal authorship in the scene's very "constructedness [sostroennost]"¹⁰⁶ and stylization: "It is completely obvious that A. Dovzhenko did not attempt at accuracy, not even at resemblance... All the scene's components are in complete harmony with its high, ceremonial, poetic construction."¹⁰⁷ Dobin made a further point about Dovzhenko's construction of the landscape: He showed that Ukrainian nature itself dictated such a construction:

The blossoming sunflowers across the entire screen is a favorite image of his native Ukrainian nature... Nature in Dovzhenko's [work] is never a passive space of action. The landscape is itself metaphorical. It peculiarly "accompanies" the transparent theme of the majority of Dovzhenko's films – the theme of the liberation of his native Ukraine from forces hostile to it. In the landscape elements of Dovzhenko's films is the image of his native land, its eternal creative force. In this way, it is poetic.¹⁰⁸

Two primordial elements stand out in Dobin's praise of Dovzhenko's *Shchors*, both of which are irrelevant to the heroic story, and in many cases serve as counterpoints to the narrative: the peasant Bozhenko, drawn from Dovzhenko's autobiography (resembling his grandfather and uncle, according to the director), and the quality of the landscape. The funeral scene (Figure 4.2) connects both elements in a trans-historical moment as young soldiers carry the peasant's body over a suddenly peaceful Ukrainian steppe. The funeral is "poetic" not only due to questions of form – the use of visual metaphor, in particular – but more frequently encapsulates the particular content that is capable of embodying such formal properties.

¹⁰⁶ See, Chapter 1. Pomerantsev blamed Stalinist literature for its "sostroennost'."

¹⁰⁷ Dobin, *Poetika*, 109-10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 113-14.



Figure 4.2. Vasyl' Bozhenko's funeral in *Shchors* (1939)

With his affirmative Ukrainian ethnoscape, which refused to domesticate national color, placing it instead at the center of political action, along with his films' anti-realist qualities, Dovzhenko easily played into concerns about the “traditions” of Ukrainian cinema, while his modernism lent credence to an *auteurist* agenda at Dovzhenko Studio during the 1960s and 1970s.

Lurii Illienko's *A Well for the Thirsty* and “Ukrainian Poetic Cinema” in the 1960s

It's so real, sometimes it feels stylized.
Lurii Illienko, speaking about *A Well for the Thirsty*, January 1966¹⁰⁹

Before his career as a cinematographer, Lurii Illienko had been to Ukraine only to visit relatives. His parents were among the “de-nationalized Ukrainians,” engineers who had moved to Moscow after the war. During his VGIK years, Illienko worked with his instructor Iakov Segel' on *Farewell, My Dove* (*Proshaite, holuby*, 1960) and Artur Voitets'kyi on *My Son is Somewhere* (*Des' ie syn*, 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,”¹¹⁰ a term that evoked both the principle of

¹⁰⁹ Ye. Semenova, “Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh,” *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, 15 January 1966, 2.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Heorhii Kas'ianov, *Nezhodni: Ukrains'ka intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960-70-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1995).

national authorship and a specifically Ukrainian artistic patrimony, read through Oleksandr 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 20th Anniversary of Victory Day in 1965. Evidence of this orientation is contained in the publication of Ivan Drach's literary screenplay in the October 1964 issue of *Dnipro*, the Ukrainian-language Komsomol literary journal. The featured story of the issue is prefaced with a photomontage of Kyiv's liberation in November 1943, with images of tanks rolling down Khreshchatyk, Khrushchev speaking to the liberated residents, a fallen Nazi plane on a field with a tractor sowing wheat, and a silhouette of the Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi statue on Sofiia Square.¹¹¹ When commenting on the film's significance to a Moscow audience in January 1966, Syzonenko noted that, once you see this film, you will understand how difficult it was for the Ukrainian people to advance to victory during the war.¹¹² In this way, he attempted to establish the relevance of the film, both for the domestic spectator (he admitted that *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* 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 on an "actual theme," which spoke to and about the "Ukrainian people" in their victory over fascism.¹¹³

Today, Illienko's film remains a signpost of Ukrainian national cinema, alongside *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. As with Paradzhanov's film, the context of the *political* reception of *A Well for the Thirsty* has determined how Ukrainians remember the film today. In discussing the film with Svetlana Vasil'evna, the wife of Kyiv literary critic Miron Petrovskii, she assured me that she had seen the film in the 60s during a personal screening with Drach and Dziuba. Much of the contemporary response to the film seeks to place it within a

¹¹¹ K. Lishko, "Dniv tykh chuiemo vidhomin..." *Dnipro*, no. 10 (October 1964), 4-5.

¹¹² RGALI, f. 2944, op. 5, d. 136, l. 70-71.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, l. 158.

Ukrainian literary canon of resistance to tsarist / Bolshevik power. Ukrainian film critic Vadym Skurativs'kyi stated that the essential conception behind *A Well*, along with *Shadows*, and other examples of "Ukrainian poetic cinema," was the destruction of the Ukrainian peasantry, which began in the late 18th century with the coming of serfdom and concluded with the *Holodomor* of 1932-33.¹¹⁴

Interesting here is that Skurativs'kyi viewed these symbolic and highly folkloric films as social documents, or rather responses to the long-term processes and results of Ukrainian social history. At no point did he mention the cultural or aesthetic significance of the film, and resisted answering my questions about such topics. Rather, his concerns were the contexts of political and social history, along with a sort of behind-the-scenes look at the cast and crew, many of whom with which he was at least familiar, if not long-term friends.

A Well for the Thirsty is about an old man named Levko Serdiuk, who lives alone with his memories in a dying village in Cherkas oblast'. One day, he decides to die. The old man finds wood to build a coffin, and invites his sons and their families back to their native village to witness his death, or rather, to witness him lying in his homemade coffin until he becomes uncomfortable and gets out. His family has dinner together, and the film ends with his daughter-in-law going into labor as she picks apples. CPU Ideological Secretary Andrii Skaba stated that *A Well for the Thirsty* "is against us from beginning to end[...] It's insulting to the Ukrainian people[...] and [to] the Ukrainian landscape."¹¹⁵ Thus, the affirmation of a Ukrainian ethnoscape was both demanded and demanded correct representation. The violation of such a system did not constitute a problem of center-periphery relations, or a violation of socialist realist principles, but an "insult" to the Ukrainian ethnoscape.

Drach began writing his "dangerous" screenplay in 1962, for his graduation project at the Screenplay Institute. While only 26 years old at the time, the poet was well-published in the early 1960s, a party member and the darling of the Ukrainian literary establishment. In his introduction to Drach's first

¹¹⁴ Conversation with Vadym Shurativs'kyi, June 2006.

¹¹⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 345, l. 54; d. 355, l. 166.

book, also published in 1962, Ukrainian poetry historian, Leonid Novychenko, wrote, “There are comrades ready to see in him the essential ‘mode’ of contemporary young poetry.”¹¹⁶ That year, *Voprosy literatury* (Questions on Literature) interviewed him as one of the most representative of young Soviet poets, alongside Voznesenskii and Evtushenko. Like Paradzhanov, Drach claimed influence from a diversity of Russian, Ukrainian, Western European and American writers and filmmakers, mentioning in the interview Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Federico García Lorca, Hemmingway, “the early [Pavlo] Tychyna,” Maksym Ryl’s’kyi, Dovzhenko and Fellini.¹¹⁷

Drach published his first major work, “Shevchenko’s Death (*Smert’ Shevchenka*),” in the March issue of *Vitchyzna*, while Dziuba was still the literary editor. In his poem, Drach forwarded two ideas regarding the poet’s memorialization: First, Shevchenko was one of the few figures that Eastern and Western Ukrainians shared equally, even before “re-unification” in 1944; and second, the poet himself served as a harbinger of individual artistic style, which eclipsed his political significance as a “revolutionary democrat.” Drach wrote,

The artist does not have well-trodden norms.
He himself is the norm, he himself in his own style...
In this hundred-year and hundred-colored storm
I throw myself into the troubled sorrow-waves.¹¹⁸

Here, Drach was as much interested in the legacy of the poet for a new Ukraine that encompassed both east and west, as well as the Diaspora in the Russian Far East and on the Canadian plains (with his reference, “From Winnipeg to Vladivostok”), as he was in re-capturing a politics of personal expression, which, with its emphasis on “sorrow” and “loss,” denied the affirmative politics of the Stalinist folkloric. With Drach’s direct influence at Dovzhenko Studio, these two sentimental elements continually worked together with a formal interest in body/space metaphor to establish what would be called “Ukrainian poetic cinema.”

¹¹⁶ Leonid Novychenko, “Ivan Drach – novobranets’ poezii,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, September 18, 1962, 2. This article was also published as the introduction to Drach’s *Soniashnyk: poezii* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo khudozhnoi literatury, 1962), 3-19.

¹¹⁷ “Molodye – o sebe” *Voprosy literatury*, no. 9 (September 1962), 130-31.

¹¹⁸ Ivan Drach, “Smert’ Shevchenka,” *Vitchyzna*, no. 3 (1962), 3.

“Shevchenko’s Death” was included in his collection, *Sunflower*,¹¹⁹ where he brought both of these concerns to bear. The centerpiece of the collection is a poem entitled, “Spraha (Thirst),” published first in the May 1962 issue of *Dnipro*, which appeared at the time as a poetic response to Khrushchev’s critique of the cult of personality, with its predictable sentiment of a “thirst” for authentic life and a return to humanistic values. In imagined conversation with Walt Whitman and Aphrodite in his college dorm room, Drach wrote:

I have sorrow – wild, insatiable,
Nothing can calm it, forever unquenchable.
This is the thirst of compassion [*liudianist*] and beauty and opportunity,
I am filled with this. It burns me daily
A passionate thirst is human happiness,
Humanity’s anxiety is my anxiety.”¹²⁰

Novychenko noted that Drach came to being, like “his generation,” under the conditions of the Twentieth Party Congress. While the literary historian interpreted this passage within the context of the general cultural Thaw, we might relate it to *A Well for the Thirsty* (*Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh*) in its allusion to the unused well of the village that emerges after the war, signaling its spiritual death. Drach moves from an aesthetic of hope in humanity’s ability to quench their thirst to an ironic statement about the “well for the thirsty,” which has dried up and is no longer potable.

Novychenko defined Drach’s style as “associative,” seeing in it parallels to “Dovzhenko’s film language.” While acceptable to a certain extent, Novychenko called on Drach to reign in certain aspects of his excess, especially when it created distance between the poet and reader:

¹¹⁹ The sunflower is an important crop for Ukraine, both agriculturally and, consequently, symbolically. In Ukrainian cinema, for example, one of the most memorable images is in Dovzhenko’s *Earth* (*Zemlia*, 1930) of a peasant woman framed from below with a sunflower next to her. While Drach’s intention is to use the symbol for the republic itself, it is instructive that the sunflower is essentially meaningless to Western Ukraine, where it was never grown.

¹²⁰ Ivan Drach, “Spraha,” *Dnipro*, no. 5 (1962), 53. This verse in *Soniashnyk* is slightly different, with the first two lines reading, “There is sorrow in the world – wild, insatiable / There everyday, forever unquenchable,” p. 67.

It is true that the poet has a right to expect a reader who actively “works together” with his thoughts, but this does not at all justify the appearance in certain of Drach’s verses of images that demand special puzzle-solving skills [*spetsial’ne rozhaduvannia*]. In the end, poetry is not a rebus [puzzle].¹²¹

Drach’s response to such mild criticism would allude to theories of audience differentiation, that the reader for whom the poems were intended – a highly educated, Ukrainian-speaking public – would understand his complex “imagery.” Nonetheless, with the Ideological Commission reports of 1962-1963, Drach discovered that there was a slippery slope from his appeal to a small subset of the mass audience and accusations of “formalism.” In April 1963, First Secretary Pidhornyi singled out Drach, along with Dziuba, for criticism during a meeting with ideological workers in the CPU, stating that their work was fodder for “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist counter-revolutionaries abroad.”¹²² Andrii Skaba moreover accused Drach in the May issue of *Kommunist Ukrainy* of having “an unjustifiably complicated descriptive system,” which he blamed on “the disease of his age [*bolezni’ vozrasta*].”¹²³ Despite such high-level criticism, literary journals *Dnipro* and *Vitshyzna*, along with Dovzhenko Studio, continued to support their work actively.

Drach had finished his screenplay by 1964, and the head of the Screenplay Institute asked Tsvirkunov to consider it for production at Dovzhenko Studio, on the basis that it dealt with Ukrainian thematics.¹²⁴ In following the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture’s 1962 directive to employ Ukrainian writers to help “reveal Ukrainian literature, art, and culture,” Tsvirkunov had hired Drach into the Screenplay Studio (*Stsenarnoe masterstvo*). While providing Drach with a regular salary, in addition to the standard honorarium for all work accepted for production, the *masterstvo* demanded that he write exclusively for Dovzhenko Studio (members of the screenplay studio had no ability to “sell” their work to

¹²¹ Novychenko, “Ivan Drach,” 3.

¹²² *Radians’ka Ukraina*, 10 April 1963; quoted in Heorhii Kas’ianov, *Nezhodni: ukrains’ka intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960-80-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 1995), 24.

¹²³ A. Skaba, “Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie trudiashchikhsia – vazhneishaia zadacha partiinykh organizatsii,” *Kommunist Ukrainy*, no. 5 (May 1963), 29-30.

¹²⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1781, l. 74.

other Soviet film studios), providing his employer with one viable screenplay every 18 months. To maintain his full salary, Drach additionally submitted at least six reviews of other screenplays and served as the principle editor on another screenplay each year.¹²⁵ Thus, despite the Fordist style of cultural production that Tsvirkunov was attempting to institute at Dovzhenko Studio in the early 1960s in an attempt to solve the “problem of cadres,” the *masterstvo* also functioned as a haven and regular employment for non-conformist poets like Drach, Pavlychko, Kostenko and Vinhranovs’kyi.

Drach began the literary screenplay for *A Well for the Thirsty*, subtitled “A Contemporary Parable,” with an epigraph from the final lines of Plato’s *Phaedo*, during which Socrates takes the hemlock and dies. Drach intended to present a similar mythology of the noble death that he did in his poem, “Shevchenko’s Death.” In the performance and reproduction of the death ritual, death was to affirm the positive quality of life itself. We soon learn, however, that Drach’s screenplay functioned as morbid parody of such a ritual, envisioning an old and lonely widower, whose many sons have either died during the war or left him to pursue a “contemporary” lifestyle in the city. The old man, Levko, decides to build his own coffin and lay in it until death comes, inviting his family back to their native village to observe the indefinite spectacle.¹²⁶ Despite the bleak theme of loneliness and death, Drach injected several moments of light-hearted comedy, which appealed to the Stalinist folkloric: Levko discovers the *kolkhoz* director’s electric razor, which Levko attempts to use, unsuccessfully, on his own grizzled face. Later in the screenplay, Levko’s daughter-in-law Solomonina presents him with a radio to communicate with his youngest son, an airplane test pilot. The old man, who is more comfortable talking to his pet goat, is unable to speak to a machine, managing only an awkward cough. Other elements of comedy include the old man’s prolonged quest for official approval to acquire wood for his coffin,

¹²⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1540, l. 3; d. 1745, ll. 1-6.

¹²⁶ Ivan Drach, “Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh,” *Dnipro*, no. 10 (October 1964), 7-42. The epigraph from Plato’s *Phaedo* appeared in a later draft, which was submitted in Russian to central Goskino.

the latter of which alluding to the comedy of Soviet bureaucracy found in Aleksandrov's *Volga Volga* (1938) among many other early Stalinist films.¹²⁷

When the studio reviewed Drach's screenplay for production, many immediately identified the work's rural setting and iconic old man as tied into a traditional Ukrainian folkloric mode. Yet they saw in *A Well for the Thirsty* particular promise for its allusions to Dovzhenko's style and literary content. In particular, the figure of Levko recalled Dovzhenko's work through the latter's fictionalized accounts of his own grandfather, Semen Petrovych. During a discussion of the screenplay, Drach's colleagues conflated this resemblance with the idea of maintaining Dovzhenko's "traditions."¹²⁸ Zemliak commented that the film would affirm the studio's return to Dovzhenko. He told the board, "In recent years we have moved away from that knowledge, which Dovzhenko left behind."¹²⁹ Screenplay editor, M. A. Kyrychenko, argued more adamantly for the maintenance of "Dovzhenko's traditions" in this screenplay: "If we're about Dovzhenko's traditions, then this screenplay[...] is a model for how we should follow those traditions."¹³⁰ Levchuk, along with Syzonenko, commented on the film's shooting script that Levko reminded him "very deeply of Semen Dovzhenko," fictionalized in the filmmaker's short story *The Enchanted Desna* (*Zacharovannaia Desna*).¹³¹ Denysenko extracted from this that Levko represented the "entire Ukrainian people."¹³² Thus, the studio linked writerly knowledge specifically to the film's national significance, seen in its association with the fictionalized space of Dovzhenko's childhood. Significantly, the screenplay's definitively bleak representation of the Ukrainian ethnoscape was not at issue: After all, Dovzhenko's work too focused on death and rural poverty.

The SRK identified two problems with the screenplay: first within the folkloric quality of some of the scenes with Levko. Novelist Iakiv Bash was positive about the Dovzhenko associations, but cautioned against Levko's

¹²⁷ The Russian version of the screenplay is contained in the file, RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 497.

¹²⁸ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1780, l. 10.

¹²⁹ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1781, l. 64.

¹³⁰ Ibid., l. 61.

¹³¹ Ibid., ll. 31, 34.

¹³² Ibid., l. 26.

association with a “*khutorians’kyi*” type: Non-Ukrainians “will call him funny, an eccentric, and so on.”¹³³ The 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 ethnoscape that the young poet imagined. Drach answered both complaints with the implication that he had written the film for a culturally knowledgeable Ukrainian spectator 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 motivate 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.¹³⁴

This claim is interesting in light of Novychenko’s accusation that Drach engaged in writing convoluted puzzles. Whereas Drach made the claim for ethnic knowledge, Illienko made the *auteurist* claim for ethnic discovery, in his search for an authenticated Ukrainian ethnoscape.

Illienko was probably 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. With being fresh off the heels of shooting *Shadows* on location in the Carpathians, he was keen to discover more authenticities in the Ukrainian village that would become the setting of *A Well for the Thirsty*. Sounding like Paradzhanov from a year and a half earlier, he told the Studio SRK in April:

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.

¹³³ Ibid., l. 41.

¹³⁴ Ibid., l. 47.

We traveled two thousand kilometers 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 humor. 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[...]¹³⁵

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

I searched for a long time. [...] And there, in the very heart of Ukraine, between Cherkassy and Chigirin [Ukr. Chyhyryn], where the Tiamin River flows into the Dnipro, I found the perfect spot [*blagodatnye 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 thatch 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 prophesy – suddenly the essence of the film was revealed. The landscape turned out to be the key, the prototype, the methodology even.¹³⁶

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 Ukrainian. In this case, Illienko returned to a space near his own birthplace in Cherkasy Oblast.¹³⁷ 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. A discovery of the primordial ethnic self demanded the labor of travel,

¹³⁵ Ibid., l. 43-45.

¹³⁶ Elena Bokshitskaia, "Iurii Illienko – pris za kompromiss," *Iunost'*, no. 9 (1987), 81.

¹³⁷ The Illienko family lived in Cherkasy city from the mid-1930s until the war, when Iurii's mother and his two brothers were evacuated to Moscow. Iurii was born in Cherkasy in 1937, but grew up in Moscow, and did not return to Ukraine until he graduated from VGIK.

and a struggle with the unnatural and uncanny contained within Illienko's own native ethnoscape.

The director, however, made an interesting connection to *Shadows*, stating that his debut was about "the same people and the same culture."¹³⁸ Illienko here indicated that the basis for exoticizing the Ukrainian people was the Hutsul. In generalizing the Hutsul to all Ukraine, however, all-Ukraine becomes *Hutsul'shchyna*, simultaneously self and other. Illienko commented on Miliutenko, "You can't tell him apart from the peasants from the surrounding villages. And the issue is not in *typazhna tochnist'*,¹³⁹ but in the deep truth of [his] character." Miliutenko too commented, "I feel a deep kinship of Levko's family with my own. There is a lot in common."¹⁴⁰ Thus, we read a similar treatment of Illienko's film as we did with Ukrainian coverage of *Shadows*, in its emphasis on associating the actor with the role as a function of "character," and the role itself with a more general notion of Ukrainian "character."

Illienko's interest in ethnography was not unusual considering the discipline's connections to Ukrainian poetry and folklore, along with its associations with Dovzhenko's concerns. The aging poet Maksym Ryl's'kyi (son of nineteenth-century Ukrainian ethnographer Tadei Rozeslavovych Ryl's'kyi) founded the first Soviet Ukrainian ethnographic journal in 1957, *Narodna tvorchist' ta etnografiia* (Folk Art and Ethnography), which published articles on home construction, language use, family life and pre-Revolutionary folk songs in Ukraine, and increasingly printed photographs of actual Ukrainian peasants working with objects. This was in distinction to the traditional concerns of Soviet folkloristics in its focus on the transposition of folkloric concerns onto the revolutionary canon (i.e., songs about Lenin, *rushnyky* with portraits of Kaganovych, etc.), and images of humanless objects. During the 1960s, Ukrainian ethnographers were interested in the connection between ethnicity,

¹³⁸ "Interv"iu daie Iurii Ill'ienko," *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, 9 October 1965: 1.

¹³⁹ "Exact type"

¹⁴⁰ Ye. Semenova, 2.

material culture and landscape, concerns which filmmakers like Illienko assimilated in the absence of Drach's personal claim to ethnic knowledge.¹⁴¹

A Well for the Thirsty passed into production on April 20, 1965, with the prediction that it would “undoubtedly become a significant event in Ukrainian cinema.”¹⁴² It was decided to shoot the film in the place that Illienko claimed to have discovered while traveling through the republic, in the village of Trushivtsi in Cherkass Oblast', located at the very geographic center of the Ukrainian SSR. As the credits inform us, Illienko continued Dovzhenko's and Paradzhanov's formula for authenticity, and employed peasants from the Chyhyryn district as extras, functioning more generally within the *massovki*, but also as ethnic decoration.

In making the film, Illienko reduced the *bytopisatel'nost'* and humor of the present-day narrative to a minimum, even eliminating a number of dominant relationships between Levko and his neighbors and family to the point where spectators unfamiliar with the published screenplay would miss significant portions of the symbolic world on display. Instead, Illienko focused almost exclusively on the fuzzy boundaries between present-day reality, memory and the spatial politics of war memorialization (the placement and ceremony of the war memorial, for example). The stark tonality of the film stock continually emphasizes the dream-like quality – caught between memory and the contemporary – of the world that Levko inhabits. The sky and water appear black, while the trees possess an infrared glow. Skurativs'kyi claims that Illienko used expired film stock from the Ukrainian factory in Shostka to achieve this look, a product which was not known to be of the highest quality (See, Figure 4.3).

Despite the utter lack of color – and, indeed, of any degree of tonal range – and the further reduction of the narrative space of the film, several features of *A Well for the Thirsty* closely resemble *Shadows*. Iurii Davydov's cinematography highlights the same combination of presentational and observational styles,

¹⁴¹ Of course, these older concerns continued to dominate the journal. My point here is simply that we see a privileging of newer concerns, which were the ones that we see emulated in “poetic cinema's” representation of the Ukrainian ethnoscape.

¹⁴² TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1781, l. 30, 61.



Figure 4.3. Dream-Image in *A Well for the Thirsty* (Illienko, 1965): Levko (Miliutenko) and his wife (Kadochnikova) at the well.

alternating between artless *tableaux* framing in the interior shots of Levko's house, assimilating his body and the wall of memories behind him into one flattened image, and the highly mobile camera that moves along a line of humans against an expressive landscape. In this latter respect, we see a similar effort to survey rural human life as Illienko presented in the Hutsul market scene at the beginning of *Shadows* (Figure 3.10). In *A Well for the Thirsty*, however, the landscape is de-familiarized to the point of total abstraction. The spectator receives little information about the spatial connections between the well, Levko's home, the apple orchard, the mill, and the cemetery, all of which constitute the film's ethnic texture. Illienko places all of these locations upon the same barren dreamscape, simultaneously existing in memory and in the present. Alongside this dreamscape, however, exist the generic features of the "national film," present in the ethnographic images of peasants constructing a house with hay and mud, the regionalism of Levko's speech, elements of the *kolkhoz* comedy, all of which further renders the film uncanny. Whereas the Carpathian landscape of *Shadows* had been a definitively unfamiliar landscape for most Eastern Ukrainians, apart from the generic antecedents of Ukrainian modernism on the one hand and the rare film like Ivanov's *Oleksa Dovbush* on the other, the Central and Southern Ukrainian steppe of *A Well for the Thirsty* constituted a landscape already familiar from Gogol', Shevchenko and Repin, and more

recently in the work of Dovzhenko, Py'rev and Savchenko. Thus, Illienko's work to discover and render the unfamiliar within such a known landscape became a more difficult task, eventually necessitating the cast and crew's journey to the Uzbek desert to complete the film (where the aging actor Dmytro Miliutenko died from the strain of shooting the film).

Only toward the final 20 minutes does a narrative emerge in *A Well for the Thirsty*, and the film's dream-space recedes. As Levko lies uncomfortably in his coffin, waiting for death, his many sons, with their wives and children, arrive. The old man grows restless with his intended "peaceful" death, clearly bored with the charade. He coughs, fidgets uncomfortably, and places kopeks in his eyes before emerging to have dinner with his family. As the large family sits at the dinner table, we hear a woman in voice-over (VO) explaining the narrative thread, that the old man had resolved to die, and invited his family, via telegram, to watch. The film ends as the old man drags a living apple tree across the orchard, apples falling behind him as a smiling Solomonia (his pregnant daughter-in-law, also played by Kadochnikova) attempts to retrieve them. As she bends to claim another apple, she enters labor, dropping all of them out of her dress. The final shot is of her leaning on the ground, holding her belly, framed against the sky (Figure 4.4).

Promotion of the film began in early June 1965 in the mass-circulation weekly, *Na ekranakh Kyeva*. Iliia Shatokhin featured Dmytro Miliutenko, who played Levko in the film, writing that the veteran Ukrainian actor "has given ample proof that his old man Levko will be filled with a humanistic and life-affirming character."¹⁴³ In August, the film crew met with spectators to promote the film in Chernihiv while shooting on location nearby.¹⁴⁴ Illienko gave interviews in October 1965 and January 1966 about the film for *Na ekranakh Kyeva*. In the first interview, he affirmed Shatokhin's notion of the transmission of "humanistic values," telling reporters that *A Well for the Thirsty* is about the "immortality of the great human heart." Yevhenia Semenova introduced a

¹⁴³ I. Shatokhin, "Novi raboty D. Miliutenka," *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, 5 June 1965, 2.

¹⁴⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 317, l. 53.



Figure 4.4. Solomonia's (Kadochnikova) death, *A Well for the Thirsty* (1966)

second interview with Illienko and Miliutenko, affirming that the film will become a “deeply emotional and philosophical work about a person who beautifies [prykrashaie] the earth and labor with his love toward it, [and] about the loyalty to his native land and responsibility for its fate.”¹⁴⁵

In watching the film, one realizes how completely different such expectations were from the actual product that Illienko would soon present to Goskino. We have to understand, however, that critics and journalists knew the plot; that the film was about an old man who desires to die. In this motif, however, they viewed the image of death in the screenplay according to Dovzhenko (*po-dovzhenkovskomu*), as a beautiful process of renewal. While the framing of the final shot, frozen as a still image, against the sky with a blissfully falling Solomonia, appears to construct such an image of transcendent death, it is impossible on a narrative level to assimilate such a death with the old man's intentions. Because *A Well for the Thirsty* fit into a definitive genre, the “national film” or “poetic cinema,” the violation of convention necessitated a response that spoke to such formal and narrative violations. Instead of the homage to Dovzhenko, as other filmmakers and critics envisioned from the screenplay, we get moments of visual parody of Dovzhenko, especially *Earth*. The latter film opens with an extended scene of an old man dying with his large extended family

¹⁴⁵ Ye. Semenova, “Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh,” *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, January 15, 1966, 2.

and neighbors looking on. The scene is serene, however, and mildly humorous as the dying old man eats an apple while another peasant says light-heartedly, “Well, die already [*Nu, umri*].” Bozhenko dies in *Shchors* in a similarly solemn yet celebratory manner. Levko, on the other hand, cannot “simply” die, honored for the role he played in life, but is forced instead to relive painful memories (Figure 4.5). The final scene of the old man carrying the apple tree is his final attempt to re-create the scene of beautiful death found in Dovzhenko, but ends, we interpolate, with Solomonias dying in labor. Instead of the transcendent death, Illienko’s film presents us with an image of grief in its persistent reproduction of loss.

In between Illienko’s two interviews with *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, Dovzhenko Studio’s Artistic Council viewed rushes and concluded that the footage contained various “miscalculations” and “shortcomings” that hindered an understanding of the old man as “the inexhaustible source of the people’s spirit.”¹⁴⁶ When official opinion had completely turned against the film by February 1966, Ukrainian Goskino claimed that the film had “significantly departed from the screenplay,” the contents of which were “deeply national.”¹⁴⁷ As with *Kyiv Frescoes*, official reaction to the film turned from positive to negative based on the same continuum. Party officials like Andrii Skaba expected a film that represented the Ukrainian people in an affirmative manner (like Dovzhenko). In this respect, the visual flourishes were not at issue yet, nor did officials ever criticize its ethnographic mode of representing the Ukrainian “national character”; rather, the film was problematic because of its hopelessness, something that emerges beyond the “life-affirming” humor contained in Drach’s screenplay.

Several individuals at the studio, however, remained in awe with Illienko’s accomplishments, including the initially weary Iakiv Bash, along with Denysenko, and Paradzhanov. Others, such as Levchuk’s set designer Vladimir Agranov told his colleagues that “egoists,” who cared nothing for the spectator, made such a film. Thus, he transformed the meeting from an analysis of the film based on its

¹⁴⁶ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1781, l. 19.

¹⁴⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 176, l. 33.



Figure 4.5. The old man dying in (left to right) Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) and Illienko's *A Well for the Thirsty* (1965)

production to a discussion of its hypothetical reception. While Vasyl' Illiashenko, who was dealing with his own problems on *Coordinate your Watches*, argued that the spectator's acceptance is not the only qualification of a film's merit, Navrotskii in particular tore into the film for its pretensions against the "average viewer." Tsvirkunov, however, concluded that the "film has emerged from the source of the national character," and wholeheartedly accepted it, with certain revisions.¹⁴⁸ On April 27th, the studio accepted the film, concluding that it had returned to the ideas contained in Drach's screenplay, with "the image of Ukraine, its beautiful and great nature, the diversity of landscapes, the fertile lands and wistful forests[...] appear[ing] before us."¹⁴⁹ Such an affirmation, of course, was divorced entirely from the pervasive image of loss contained in the film's unfertile landscape and morose hero.

At this moment, Drach was embroiled in his own controversial political activity. On the day that Dovzhenko Studio passed the completed film to Ukrainian Goskino for approval, Secretary of the L'viv Oblast Committee of the CPU issued a report on "nationalist activity and actions against it" to his superiors in the Central Committee in Kyiv. Among those arrested in August 1965 were ten individuals in L'viv oblast. Their trial on April 15 attracted the attention of several Kyiv intellectuals who were friends of several of those arrested. Drach, along with fellow poet / filmmakers Lina Kostenko and Mykola Vinhranovs'kyi, traveled to the Western Ukrainian city to protest outside the courthouse. The three, also accused of distributing "ideologically vicious" unpublished works, were in the center of a group of 30 friends of those on trial. According to the report, Drach and Kostenko showered the accused with flowers as they were led to the courthouse, hailing them with "Glory! Glory to the patriots!," while shouting at the *militsiia* and court officials, "Shame!".¹⁵⁰ The report went on, "In a discussion with the head of the Lenin neighborhood branch of the *militsiia* c[omrade] Saburov, Drach said, "You yourself are [only] scum [*podonky*], but here violence is being

¹⁴⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1965, ll. 246, 252, 259, 300-301.

¹⁴⁹ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1781, l. 5-6; TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 77, l. 57-58.

¹⁵⁰ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 24, d. 6160, l. 9-11, 13.

done to the most forward-looking Ukrainians.”¹⁵¹ Drach’s supposed statement was unquestionably elitist in his delineation of the “scum” from the “forward-looking.”

Such a seemingly intimate connection between dissident politics and film production seemed to shake authorities in Ukrainian Goskino as they discussed *A Well for the Thirsty* on May 4. Senior editor Protsenko proceeded cautiously, and suggested that they accept the film for a “limited audience,” rather than return it to the director for further revisions.¹⁵² S. P. Ivanov agreed, stating, “The film can only exist for the certain spectator. It’s impossible to release the film on the screen [*vypuskat’ fil’m na ekran nel’zia*].” While such a “limited” distribution seemed to affirm Drach’s own preference for the film’s reception, in effect it meant that, despite no official order to “shelve” the film, local UKK organs would not be encouraged to buy prints. The studio, however, would not have a mark against it in this case, as the film would then constitute a distribution concern. Moreover, the studio might have continued to anticipate a festival success, along the lines of *Shadows*, and the SKU would have permission to screen the film at their private screening hall at the October House of Culture. During the SKU Plenum two days later, at which Secretary Skaba made his condemnatory remarks, however, S. P. Ivanov opened the event with severe words. He stated that the film was one of the recent failures of the studio for its “canned lyricism” and fixation on death, which implicitly represented Ukraine in a negative light. A meeting of the SKU Presidium a week and a half later continued the argument, with Navrotskii promoting Illienko’s complete repression as a “bourgeois nationalist.” Toward the end of the month, an anonymous letter from a self-avowed “old Bolshevik” within the Ukrainian Writers’ Union accused Drach too of being a “herald of Ukrainian nationalism,” both for his appearance at the April 15 trial and for writing an “anti-Soviet film.” He went on, “But how much more similar trash will come out of the Ukrainian film studio, in which our Soviet life and our

¹⁵¹ Ibid., l. 14.

¹⁵² Ibid., l. 58.

Soviet people are shown as caricatures.”¹⁵³ Once again, the salient critique of the film concerned its improper representation of the Ukrainian ethnic community, ostensibly due to a lack of first-hand knowledge of its “character.”

Meanwhile, Syzonenko had suggested yet another revision, which would contain more landscapes and a “more *even* dialogue,”¹⁵⁴ suggesting an attempt to make the film conform to a Stalinist folkloric. To complete this new series of revisions, Drach asked for another 30,000 rubles, a sizable sum, which S. P. Ivanov nonetheless grudgingly accepted.¹⁵⁵ A week later, however, a CPU Politburo decision halted production.”¹⁵⁶ In precisely what Ivanov was fearful of, the studio was forced to repay Gosbank the 268,000 rubles spent on the production.¹⁵⁷ While the CPU shelved and condemned the film as bourgeois nationalist propaganda, *A Well for the Thirsty* nonetheless affirmed Illienko’s and Drach’s reputations as brilliant *auteurs*. 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 *St. John’s Eve* (*Vecher na Ivana Kupala*), promoted as a mix of “folkloric fantasy[...] with the *realia* of everyday life.”¹⁵⁸ At the 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 traditional Soviet adaptations of the “realist” Gogol’ of the St. Petersburg years.¹⁵⁹ While Illienko had failed to produce an image of the contemporary Ukrainian ethnoscape, he returned to the relatively safe realm of classic literary adaptation. Whereas Paradzhanov’s “moral” failure with *Kyiv Frescoes* ended his directorial career in Kyiv, Illienko remained a core member of the studio collective after his political failure with *A Well for the Thirsty*. The following section examines

¹⁵³ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 24, d. 6160, ll. 108-10.

¹⁵⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1966, l. 3-4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 8, 23.

¹⁵⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 345, l. 54.

¹⁵⁷ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 77, l. 58.

¹⁵⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1991, l. 27.

¹⁵⁹ 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, “The Overcoat (*Shinel’*),” “The Nose (*Nos*),” and *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*), suggesting in the process the writer’s own progression from Ukrainian spontaneity to Russian consciousness. Sergei Gerasimov, “Razmyshlenie o molodykh,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (Feb 1960), 23.

another aborted film from the same year, one which the studio and Goskino considered a “creative” failure, thus essentially questioning its director’s role as an *auteur*. *Coordinate Your Watches*, as a failed example of “poetic cinema,” in fact had the most lasting effect on its director’s ability to work on future projects.

Vasyl’ Illiashenko: The Failed *Auteur*

“Poetic cinema[...] easily falls into pretentiousness.”
Andrei Tarkovskii, *Iskusstvo kino*, November 1962¹⁶⁰

By April 1966, Illiashenko had been 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. Paradzhanov, while having failed to complete *Kyiv Frescoes*, remained an important figure at the studio, one whose words carried real weight in SKU and studio debates. When discussing footage of *Coordinate Your Watches* on December 1965, Paradzhanov heralded the film as “*vne kolektiva*,” but called the director’s lack of talent “criminal.”¹⁶¹ Instead of citation of *Shadows* and Dovzhenko, he accused Illiashenko of pretentious plagiarism, along with a deployment of clichés and Ukrainian stereotypes. To Paradzhanov, *Coordinate Your Watches* seemed to confirm Tarkovskii’s earlier warning that “poetic cinema[...] easily falls into pretentiousness.”¹⁶² Five years passed before the studio trusted him with another independent production, this time a mediocre industrial drama about Donbas miners entitled *Steep Horizon (Krutyi horyzont, 1971)*. This film too became a total failure, from a creative, ideological, critical, and box office standpoint.

In the production drama that developed around *Coordinate Your Watches*, Illiashenko continually mobilized discourses of film authorship, the cult of personality and generational division. Illiashenko intended his film as a tribute to

¹⁶⁰ Tarkovskii, “Mezhdru dvum’ia fil’mami,” *IK*, no. 11 (1962), 83.

¹⁶¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1783, l. 93.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, ll. 124-26, 129; Tarkovskii, 83.

three poets who died on the Ukrainian Front during World War II and were posthumously accepted into the Ukrainian Writers' Union in the Spring of 1962.¹⁶³ Writer Lina Kostenko envisioned it as a "trilogy from a spiritual odyssey," the narrative moving freely among three separate stories, connected thematically. Together, the story of the poets was to explore the multiple dimensions of the Ukrainian experience during the Great Patriotic War. As a narrator explains at the beginning of the screenplay, "[These] poets are mirrors," which reflect the "larger path."¹⁶⁴ The poets' stories begin on the eve of June 21, 1941. Kyivan Leonid Levyts'kyi proposes to his girlfriend in a cemetery; peasant Volodymyr Bulaienko (played by Mykolaichuk) marries Tonia in the village church as her dictatorial father threatens to kill them and they ride off on horseback; and party poet Fedir Shvindin wakes up in a psychiatric ward after a purge hearing that leads him to attempt suicide. After the German invasion, Levyts'kyi volunteers for the Soviet Army, and dies in battle; Bulaienko joins the Ukrainian partisans, and dies while serving as a decoy as his detachment attacks a German train; Shvindin succeeds in killing himself after the Nazi "Dr. Todt" performs horrible psychological experiments on him.

While heavy in religious and national symbolism, Illiashenko's film appears from the shooting script as a canonical example of war memorial and the horrors of the German occupation in Ukraine. While the film was re-made by Leonid Osyka as *Love Awaits Those Who Return*, the Shvindin and Levyts'kyi stories were removed for political and aesthetic reasons, and the entire film concerns Bulaenko, the peasant-poet-partisan. Apart from the refocus to the most politically acceptable of the three protagonists, Osyka's name change is significant for its direct allusion to Semen Gudzenko's poem *My Generation (Moe pokolenie, 1945)*, which emphasizes grief and loss over war heroism:

Love awaits those who return? No! The heart can't handle it,
and it's not worth dying so that the living can love them.
There are no men in the family, no children, nobody in the house.

¹⁶³ See the shooting script: RGALI, f. 2944, op. 6, d. 503, l. 1b.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., l. 2.

Will such grief really ease the sobs of the living?¹⁶⁵

Osyka removes the question mark, perhaps appealing more to irony than the seriousness of grief. While Gudzenko was born in Kyiv and wrote many of his poems about Kyiv, he was not Ukrainian and always wrote in Russian. The change in titles had implications for how the film would be read as an example of “national cinema.” Osyka, too, was from Kyiv, and spoke only in Russian.

Love Awaits begins as the camera moves through the landscape along the Right Bank of the Dnipro in Kyiv. As Gudzenko’s poem is heard in voice-over, we see a long pan across Kyiv factories and churches that line the Dnipro. We cut to a close-up of a marble engraver in Victory Park carving in death dates of fallen war heroes (1944, 1943, etc.). The camera pans across the thousands of graves in the cemetery, literally melding human and landscape in the context of death. Documentary voice-overs of dead soldiers’ mothers recount memories of their sons, with the language switching between Russian, Ukrainian and *surzhyk*. Osyka considered this merging of oral history with fiction a completely new invention, meant to complicate the conventions of Soviet cinema’s war memorialization. Moreover, in offering actual voices, Osyka believed he was authentically representing the multilingual ethnoscape of the city. While the director’s colleagues at the studio generally appreciated his film, even if they considered it unlikely to attract a popular audience, many complained of Osyka’s title, along with the linguistic “dissonance” that his attempts at authenticity evoked. Bash, whose work frequently touched upon the experience of fighting on the Ukrainian front, stated that the shift between Russian and Ukrainian, instead of affirming the “friendship of peoples,” promoted the idea of mutual incomprehensibility. He furthermore complained of the “slippage” in the Russian voice of the mother.¹⁶⁶ Bash viewed Osyka’s attempt at authenticity as a compromise with Russian. He should have established a total Ukrainian linguistic space, one which was contained in Denysenko’s *A Dream*.

¹⁶⁵ Semen Gudzenko, *Dal'nii garnizon* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1984), 32.

¹⁶⁶ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2065, l. 6.

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, one of the dominant themes of comedies such as *Gas Station Queen* was the acquisition of a literary language. Here, Osyka maintained *surzhyk* as a regional particularity in his film, thus separating the literary space of poetry (always in either Russian or Ukrainian) in the film from the speech of everyday life (what Paradzhanov called “contemporary Ukrainian”¹⁶⁷). In appealing to ethnographic investigation and the personal experience of speech behavior, Osyka, like Paradzhanov, attempted to distance himself from the heated debates about linguistic policy in Ukraine taking place in both official and dissident circles.

While particular scenes resemble Paradzhanov’s and Illienko’s work in *Shadows*, such as the exploratory pan over motionless peasants, which has the effect of locating and equating human life with a particular landscape, the look of the film relates more clearly to Illienko’s *A Well for the Thirsty*, with its expressive use of tonality (rather than color). Moreover, like Illienko’s film, the narrative is structured loosely, with only the overriding themes of sacrifice, death and loss uniting the various movements of the plot. The narrative begins as Bulaienko’s mother kisses him goodbye as he leaves for the front, changing her white headscarf to black as she watches him walk off from their thatched-roof *khata* to join his new comrades. A still cutaway to the house reveals an image identical to Dovzhenko’s boyhood home that circulated in the early 1960s, suggesting the self-reflexive *pastiche*, which constituted Osyka’s knowledge of the Ukrainian peasant. Osyka was imagining peasant life through the lens of a reproducible mythology.

The next scene, the only one in which we see actual combat, is unusual for its stylistic distance from the rest of the film. Most of it is composed of documentary images from the front, with only the final moments showing Bulaienko arguing with his commanding officer before most of the squadron is blown away by German artillery fire. Bulaienko escapes the fray with another man, soon killed from aerial bombardment. After a series of adventures within the war-torn landscape, the poet discovers and joins a partisan group. The

¹⁶⁷ See, Chapter three.

partisans resolve to hijack a German train, using the plain-clothes poet as a decoy to get the engineer to stop. As the partisans pick off the German soldiers as they exit the train, Bulaienko opens one of the cars to reveal one of the crimes of the occupation: The Germans had been exporting Ukrainian Black Earth to the West for grain production (Figure 4.6). The camera pans across thousands of gravestones in Victory Park once again as the film ends, implying without showing the poet's approaching death, as an extension of the literal abduction of Ukrainian land.

Despite Osyka's claim that he did not intend to "imitate" Paradzhanov and Illienko – that instead, he was working within a particular "genre" of associational poetics common to the three of them – the film lacks the sense of narrative and formal completion evident in *Shadows* and even *A Well for the Thirsty*. Instead, Osyka presents us with a series of cinematic exercises, from narrative and thematic concerns such as oral history and memorialization; a play with conventions in representations of combat and violence; experimentations with rendering space and landscape; and a further exploration of aural minimalism and juxtaposition, from the linguistic "dissonance" mentioned earlier, to the juxtaposition of jazz with Ukrainian folk songs and Soviet "front poetry." The final scene is the only coherent episode, perhaps getting at the essence of what Osyka intended with the film – an image of loss that positions land and people in fluid continuity. Bulaienko is positioned *within* the abducted earth. Viewed in its entirety, however, *Love Awaits* remains an essentially de-narrativized and formally eclectic project, in part due to Osyka's inexperience as a filmmaker, but also emerging from the process of fixing Illiashenko's "mistakes." What emerges is an ostensibly a-political, but definitively avant-garde, film, one which had no possibility of becoming either a popular film or one of the classics of "Ukrainian poetic cinema," alongside Illienko's *A Well for the Thirsty* or Osyka's future project, *The Stone Cross (Kaminnyi khrest, 1968)*.

Vasyl' Illiashenko first took up Kostenko's original screenplay after Tsvirkunov picked the young Ukrainian VGIK student during his trip to the school in 1962. Working under the venerable Sergei Gerasimov's direction, Illiashenko



Figure 4.6. Poet Bulaienko discovers the stolen Black Earth in Leonid Osyka's *Love Awaits Those Who Return* (1966)

made several shorts on Ukrainian themes, including an adaptation of Lesia Ukrainka's *Forest Song* (*Lesnaia pesnia*), some of Dovzhenko's war stories from *Ukraine in Flames* (*Ukraina v ognе*), and a documentary about Ukrainian craftsman that aired on Kyiv television in 1963.¹⁶⁸ Thus, unlike Illienko and Osyka, Illiashenko came to Dovzhenko Studio already nationally aware and conversant with Ukrainian *kul'turnytstvo*.

Movement was slow on the film, with discussions and demands for revisions to Kostenko's screenplay until April the following year. Despite such hold-ups regarding the "cult of personality" theme in the Shvindin section, Goskino recognized the film as a major event at the studio, and that the screenplay conveyed the "inner sincerity of the Ukrainian people" during the Second World War.¹⁶⁹ Inna Kokoreva, the head of Goskino's SRK stated that the screenplay was "original and interesting" and that "it's necessary to support the present tendency" of presenting the "national originality of the Ukrainian people."¹⁷⁰ After further considering the screenplay, Goskino passed it for directorial elaboration, with the stipulation that some of the errors were ironed out

¹⁶⁸ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1783, l. 184.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 16.

in the process. Kokoreva and Tarasov concluded that the “authors bravely depart from the traditional frameworks of cinema narration and resolve the screenplay in the style of poetic cinema.”¹⁷¹ Thus, Illiashenko’s film emerged as a work that Goskino officially represented as poetic cinema, a method with its own generic and stylistic codes.

In December 1965, the Artistic Council viewed rushes, with Tsvirkunov, Mykola Mashchenko, Osyka and Syzonenko – the very individuals associate with, and supportive of, “Ukrainian poetic cinema” – expressing little faith in the film. Syzonenko, in particular, complained of the “primitive *khutorians’ke* vision” at work in the film.¹⁷² Osyka, who would soon take over direction of Illiashenko’s film, stated that the acting was horrible (including that of Mykolaichuk!), but that the studio bore responsibility because they did not opt to view the rushes earlier. Osyka stated that he would have to shoot 80-90% of the material over, if he were given the project.¹⁷³ In particular, the Artistic Council was shocked at the audacity and utter pretension of a dream sequence contained in the rushes, which imagined the three poets crucified on an embankment above the Dnipro. Zemliak, in particular, who served as a partisan commander during the war, viewed such a symbol of sacrifice as completely unacceptable, and that the image itself was “annoying.”¹⁷⁴ Ignoring these complaints about the film, Illiashenko launched into an explanation of the authorial principles at work in *Coordinate Your Watches*:

I had faith only in myself. I had no intention to hide behind 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.¹⁷⁵

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

¹⁷¹ TsDAMLMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 174, l. 42.

¹⁷² TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1783, l. 98.

¹⁷³ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1783, l. 103.

¹⁷⁴ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 313, l. 60.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., l. 113.

that young director “undermined our faith in him as a person.”¹⁷⁶ Four days later, on December 25, shooting ended. Unlike *Kyiv Frescoes* or *A Well for the Thirsty*, the studio itself (rather than Goskino or the CPU) gave the order to halt production, suggesting a different conflict in play than with these other two films.

On December 28, 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.”¹⁷⁷ Paradzhanov, also present at the meeting, stated, “The director arranges [the film] incompetently.”¹⁷⁸ More damning, however, was Kostenko’s statement, “I could have expected something unpleasant, but not such serious artistic miscalculations[...] It’s tasteless.”¹⁷⁹ Kostenko proposed to rewrite the screenplay based on only one of the poets, and to shoot it all within the studio to save money.¹⁸⁰ Osyka was confirmed as the director of this re-make in January.¹⁸¹ Nonetheless, the budget and timetable for completing Osyka’s film remained the same as *Coordinate Your Watches*, necessitating that the crew shoot exclusively on the studio grounds. Consequently, the look of *Love Awaits* resembles Paradzhanov’s artless *mise-en-scène* in *Kyiv Frescoes*, with a focus on medium interior shots, and frequent cutaways of objects of material culture.

Cultural politics were extremely tense in mid-to-late-1966, with the conviction of the L’viv Ten and other Kyiv intellectuals, along with the active support of several poets like Drach, Kostenko and Vinhranovs’kyi, all of whom were employed at Dovzhenko Studio. The CPU Department of Science and Culture noted that Kostenko participated in a “nationalist” meeting at the Shevchenko statue in central Kyiv on May 22 with convicted nationalist Ivan Svitlychnyi and 150 others, and who personally argued that the *Kobzar’* was an exclusively “Ukrainian” document.¹⁸² In October, Kostenko requested that the studio remove her name from Osyka’s film, stating that nothing contained in the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., ll. 118.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., l. 90.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., ll. 93-94.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., l. 95

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., l. 95-96.

¹⁸¹ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 77, l. 49.

¹⁸² TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 24, d. 6160, l. 104.

rushes resembled her original screenplay.¹⁸³ It is unclear why she did this. Perhaps she was scared of the repercussions that would come from the film, or perhaps she was genuinely annoyed with Osyka's creative license, as she was with Illiashenko's.

Osyka's film received little acknowledgement, but received a second category rating from Ukrainian Goskino.¹⁸⁴ Central Goskino did, however, approve the film for all-Union release on December 1, 1966.¹⁸⁵ Press coverage of the film was close to nothing until this final approval, with articles not appearing in *Ranok*, *Kul'tur i zhyttia*, *Literaturna Ukraina*, and *Novyzny kinoekrana* until March 1967. The film premiered at the suburban Kyiv "Dnipro" Theater on December 10, 1967, a year after Ukrainian Goskino approved it for release.¹⁸⁶ The film disappeared once again until March 1968, with one week of extensive screenings in Kyiv and other major Soviet cities, to be followed with limited screenings throughout April.¹⁸⁷ *Iskusstvo kino* reviewed the film in March, and a final mention of it appeared during the Second Congress of the SKU on November 14, 1968, when Goskino chairman Aleksei Romanov complained of the film's poor success with Ukrainian spectators.¹⁸⁸

* * *

Two issues, in particular, emerge from Illiashenko's *Coordinate Your Watches* and Osyka's re-make: First, we see a political conflict between ideological authorities and the studio/filmmakers on a supposed correlation between Stalinism and fascism. The "cult" theme was politically dated by 1965, and the direct comparison that Illiashenko made between Stalinism and fascism in the Shvindin story was all the more problematic after Vasili Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* failed to pass the censors in 1962.¹⁸⁹ A more pertinent conflict

¹⁸³ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1782, l. 2.

¹⁸⁴ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2065, l. 9.

¹⁸⁵ TsDAMLMU, f. 1127, op. 1, d. 174, l. 206.

¹⁸⁶ *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, 9 December 1967.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1968, 30 March 1968, 6 April 1968, 13 April 1968.

¹⁸⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 450, l. 200.

¹⁸⁹ Grossman's novel viewed the Second World War as a struggle between two comparable totalitarian regimes, and similarly implicates the crimes of both Stalin and Hitler. Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, tr. Robert Chandler (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

emerged between the war generation at the studio (Tsvirkunov, Levchuk and Zemliak) and the post-war generation (Illiashenko, Osyka and Illienko) about the meaning of the war itself, Illiashenko's film viewing the poets' deaths as a sacrifice rather than as heroic martyrdom. This conflict also manifested itself in a politics of social and cultural difference at the studio. All three "war" films from 1965-66 were made by non-serving directors, whereas the studio and SKU leaderships were composed of war heroes. Each of these latter individuals were supportive of "Ukrainian poetic cinema" but took fundamental issue with the way in which local and national space was situated in relation to the war and its commemoration. Personally invested in the war narrative, the older generation of Ukrainian-speakers at the studio viewed these young Russian-speaking returnees as having much too little geographic or historical experience to deal with these monumental events that their films encapsulated, despite the ethnographic and literary research that they undertook. Thus, in the final dispute over representational knowledge, nationality was conflated with generation and questions of film style. Thereafter, studio and Goskino authorities would become more critical of the *auteurist* agenda that had characterized the studio since 1964, associated as it now was with a certain youthful dilettantism with regard to the nationality question.

Ukraine and Modernism: Questioning an "Elite" Agenda

This same generation of Soviet Ukrainian war heroes, who now occupied the positions of leadership within the SKU and Dovzhenko Studio, had been infatuated with, and to some degree influenced by, Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* as a model of "authentic" national representation. Moreover, Paradzhanov's film positioned Ukrainian cinema at the forefront of Ukrainian cultural politics and within a new conception of non-Russian cinema in the USSR. *Shadows* 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 need be so unusual and complex. Were representations of the Ukrainian people so “difficult to master,” as Levchuk once stated, or were Paradzhanov and his followers interested in their own “difficult” aesthetic questions more so than in Ukraine? With “Ukrainian poetic cinema” now 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 the journey narrative, which celebrated the *auteur* as the creator of national meaning, asking the spectator to see the film as its authors did. Moreover, in promotional materials, these films asked Ukrainian spectators to assimilate the unfamiliar as part of one’s own national identity, rather than accept the canonical objects, events and meanings contained in the “Friendship of Peoples” mythology. Many Ukrainians, like the engineer in Dnipropetrovsk, who watched *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* did not see the importance of defining Ukrainians as so fundamentally different. Did this not diminish the importance of other potential identification as Ukrainian or with Ukraine?

The dispute over Dovzhenko’s legacy and his artistic intentions encapsulates the problem here: 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 about 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, Osyka and Illiashenko the green light based on a combination of developing young talent and a commitment to an *auteurist* agenda as a means to transform the studio’s reputation. The conflict that emerged from the production of Illiashenko’s and Osyka’s debut was between different conceptions of authorship, and their commitment to both modernism and the nationality question. During their work on these projects, both Drach and Kostenko became involved in Ukrainian cultural nationalism and the interests of this movement. Moreover, their screenplays reflected the narrative and ideological concerns of the nascent dissident movement in Ukraine. By contrast, the directors were less interested in these descriptions of rural everyday life in the republic, and more so in developing a visual style that produced a de-familiarized Ukrainian ethnoscape divorced from a domesticated Stalinist folkloric and engaged with a modernist “dovzhenkoist” poetics. Their lack of commitment to either a Ukrainian dissident agenda or to more mainstream questions about language policy placed these

filmmakers in a difficult position *vis á vis* CPU ideological authorities, but allowed them to continue working, provided they reconceptualize their aesthetic ambitions and relationship to a Ukrainian and broader public.

Chapter 5

Re-Imagining Ukrainian National Cinema in the Era of Stagnation

The SKU Plenum in May 1966 was a tense event for most of its members. Since the previous Plenum in November, production was halted on *Coordinate Your Watches* and *Kyiv Frescoes*, and now it seemed certain that Iurii Illienko's film would also fail to reach distribution. Director Mykola Mashchenko stated that an "unpleasant, complex and difficult atmosphere" had descended upon the studio in the past months, and that those individuals who opposed the VGIK returnees were now gloating about victory.¹ S. P. Ivanov attempted at reconciliation, stating that the "different creative schools" emerging at Dovzhenko Studio had helped Ukrainian cinema overcome its dependence on primitive theatricality of the 1950s and early 1960s. He denounced both "rigid dogma" (i.e., the CPU Resolution that Paradzhanov's, Illienko's and Illiashenko's films were "politically dangerous") and "haphazard experimentation" (i.e., the films themselves). But his denunciation of "associationalists," as he called them, made it clear that "Ukrainian poetic cinema" would not be, as Levchuk stated in October 1964, "one of the prerequisites for the molding of our product."²

In denouncing the politics of authorship at work during 1964-1966, Ivanov stated that the *auteur* was already old news in Western Europe, and made Ukraine look provincial by comparison.³ French New Wave directors like François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard had moved beyond "*Le Politique des auteurs*" to embrace, in the former case, a sophisticated brand of commercial

¹ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 355, l. 212.

² TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1750, l. 151.

³ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 355, l. 28-29, 41-42.

cinema, and in the latter, radical collective filmmaking.⁴ From Illiashenko's pretensions in particular, it was obvious to most at the studio that Ukrainian national cinema could not survive solely "*vne kolektiva*," especially in its penchant for what Ivanov called "formalist-roguish" qualities.⁵ In the coming decade, authorities sought to reign in such excess as images of Ukrainian poets crucified on the banks of the Dnipro, while continuing to encourage such "poetic" representations of "national character," as long as a realist ideological pragmatism and a sympathetic ear toward spectators' patience tempered them. At the same time, Dovzhenko Studio sought alternatives, both to the theatricality of the Stalinist folkloric, and the "ethnographic" tendencies of "poetic cinema." With a view toward surviving in an increasingly profit-driven Soviet film industry, the Ukrainian studio had to recoup its financial losses from 1965-66 and prove to both Goskino and audiences that it too could compete with central studios without sacrificing one of its primary goals to speak to and for the Ukrainian people.

Nonetheless, Ukrainian cinema, just as cultural production in the republic more generally, was becoming increasingly provincialized by the early 1970s, and only in part the result of new ways of thinking about media consumers. Roman Szporluk has argued that a successful campaign against the Ukrainian-language press was initiated in 1972 with the purge of Petro Shelest and his supporters in the CPU Central Committee. Under Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi, whose power base was in the same Russian-speaking, Southeastern Ukrainian industrial region as Brezhnev himself, the CPU would demand that the Ukrainian branch of *Soiuzpechat'* (the state printing bureau) curtail Ukrainian-language circulation of periodicals and books, having accused the organization of artificially inflating the readership for such printed material. Thereafter, a number of Ukrainian-language scholarly journals ceased publication, and the print run for such major periodicals as *Ukraina* and *Vechirni Kyiv* shrunk, the latter reduced

⁴ James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 39-41. Roy Armes, "Ebb Tide, 1963-68," in *French Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 194-219.

⁵ From a Ukrainian Goskino Resolution of July 20, 1966. TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 77, l. 54.

from 344,550 copies in 1975 to 200,000 copies five years later. The same process predictably occurred even stronger in Eastern Ukrainian cities like Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk. While the number of titles increased during the 1970s, circulation drastically declined.⁶

In the area of Ukrainian film production, we see a similar process, with a greater proportion of films shot in the republican vernacular as the possibility to use native actors increased during this time, just as the audience for such films declined alongside UKK's increasing unwillingness to sacrifice their financial plans for a political project, in which they remained uninvested. Shcherbyts'kyi and Ideological Secretary Valentyn Malanchuk would continue to appeal to the Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia, but only on a rudimentary level, as Szporluk's figures indicate. In many respects, the studio's promotion of an *auteurist* agenda declined during the same period. With the removal of patrons like Shelest and Ideological Secretary Fedir Ovcharenko, the appeal to the *auteur's* genius was no longer a politically neutral question. More often than not, individuals like Paradzhanov and Iliencko carried the undesirably quality of independent influence in his or her self-promotional capacities as a filmmaker.

This chapter explores the several interlocked causes for, and results of, the decline of a politics of national authorship as the basis for Ukrainian national cinema. Whereas central studios were able to benefit from advances in film technology, production facilities in the republics were increasingly inferior to those in Moscow. Whereas Ukrainian *auteur* cinema could survive on more limited budgets, largely because such a mode of representation marketed to audiences the spectacle of ethnic difference, genre films – adventure [*prikliuchencheskie*], science fiction and historical epics in particular – required budgets comparable to central productions. Thus, the increasing demands to make films that paid were much more difficult for Kyiv Studio to accomplish. By the 1970s, however, the fact that films “based on national material” did not attract large audiences mattered to Goskino under the new control of Filipp Ermash.

⁶ Roman Szporluk, “The Press and Soviet Nationalities: The Party Resolution of 1975 and Its Implementation,” in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 277-297.

The decline of a Thaw-era politics of culture, which qualitatively valued “personal expression,” in place of a focus on the quantitative dimensions of audiences, had a profound effect on film directors associated with “poetic cinema” by the mid-1970s. Creatively, some continued to make minor compromises while attempting to work within the same mode of 1965, while others moved toward *zakaznye temy*⁷ or genre production. While poetic cinema managed to function very briefly within the realm of commercial cinema, the national theme found continued resonance in *zakaznye* films, which were the only types of films that were not expected to generate profit. By the late-1960s, SKU First Secretary Tymofii Levchuk became highly adept at negotiating the “national theme” within films that answered the demands of the latest party plenum.

After Petro Shelest’s ouster in 1973, however, the lack of industry support gave way to a lack of political support for Ukrainian films dealing with “national themes,” associated as they now were with an “ethnographic,” rather than a “contemporary [*suchasnyi*]” conception of the Ukrainian people. Such ethnographic imagery came to be associated with an anti-modern representation and thus outside of the main current of Soviet realism. When film director Iurii Lysenko referred during a “Creative Conference” in 1968 at Dovzhenko Studio to the “national theme [as] consist[ing] of baggy trousers or something else like that,” he was as much discussing the films of 1965 as he was those of 1939.⁸ But, in getting rid of the “morons in the pictures,” as Lysenko advocated, the question remained as to whether there was a method of representing a non-ethnographic Ukraine, which would answer both nationalities policy in the ways that Ukrainian filmmakers understood it, and the demand for industry profits.

Most at the studio, in fact, remained committed to a system of national representation, and specifically one that viewed the Carpathians as the essential Ukrainian ethnoscape. During a 1972 conference, Vasyl’ Zemliak responded to critic Dmytro Shlapak about why the Carpathians were more important than the Donbas mines and the Dnipro: “Things are preserved there [in the Carpathians],

⁷ By “*zakaznye temy*,” or “ordered themes,” are implied those films that were placed in the annual thematic plans by the party itself.

⁸ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2159, l. 62.

which are not yet destroyed, there are things there, which belong to this people.” Zemliak’s position remained unchanged from the debates of 1965: The Carpathians was a Ukrainian space that was both essentially different but also essentially one’s own. The writer’s point took on a different tone, however, when he suggested in the same speech that Leonid Osyka and Iurii Illienko did not understand either the Ukrainian language or its customs, and pointed toward the work of fellow Zhytomyr peasant and war hero Tymofii Levchuk as the model for national representation.⁹ Essential to the SKU First Secretary’s style of filmmaking was its epic quality – big budget themes taken directly from party congresses and the latest celebratory event or anniversary. By the late 1960s, however, Levchuk displayed a significant influence from poetic cinema’s content (if not style), choosing to locate his films about Honoré de Balzac, the Kotsiubyns’kyi family and partisan leader Sydir Kovpak in the Carpathians, and which featured local actors Ivan Mykolaichuk and Kostiantyn Stepankov among others.

Levchuk and his colleagues within the SKU leadership feared a “de-nationalization,” which would arise from greater focus on industry profits. Kyiv filmmakers were skeptical that their films could compete with central productions, and not only due to unequal budgets. The whole idea of box office competition with central production appeared to the studio leadership and the filmmakers alike as incompatible with the socialist mode of production, and which discriminated in particular against films that dealt with “national” subject matter. Just as Soviet critics claimed that commercial Hollywood films were “de-nationalizing” Western European cinema,¹⁰ so too was “Russian” cinema “de-nationalizing” the cinemas of the Union republics in their hegemonic role in cultural production and over audience expectations. A May 1971 letter (unsigned) sent to the SKU Presidium and Ukrainian Goskino attempted to

⁹ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2536, l. 81.

¹⁰ See, G. Bogemskii, “Kinematograf ‘obshchestva potrebleniia.’ Razmyshleniia ob ital’ianskom kommercheskom fil’me,” in *Mify i real’nost’: Zarubezhnoe kino segodnia* 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), 107-137; I. Vaisfel’d wrote in 1967, “Cinema’s appeal to national aesthetic values became one of the obstacles on the path toward its subordination to a commercial standard.” I. Vaisfel’d, “Natsional’noe – internatsional’noe.” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 9 (Sept 1967), 19.

garner official support in opposition to a central Goskino report from two months prior on the “project for the transfer of film studios to a new system of planning, and economic and material stimulation.” The letter argued that a new system of economic stimulation, along with the film industry’s reorganization “dependent on the economic results of distribution” would severely hurt national cinema. The author’s first complaint was that distribution organs attempted to fulfill their own economic plans without concern for political objectives. Consequently, UKK showed as many imported genre films as was possible without arousing the suspicions of authorities in the cultural section of the Central Committee. Such bottom-line distribution planning would hurt all of Soviet cinema, the letter argued, but republican studios in particular. The author admitted that films from the republics, “based on national material,” could not compete with Mosfil’m production, and certainly not with foreign cinema. Thus, “national films” would be in danger of disappearing from the repertoire. The letter continued: “It would be criminal to deprive the 47 million people of Ukraine of a national and socialist film art.”¹¹ In this allusion to the audience, however, the report did not imply that these 47 million were the intended audience; or rather, it did not suggest that such a number *only* corresponded to the size of the audience. In identifying the population of the republic, the letter articulated that the Ukrainian film studio effectively represented this constituency, whether or not they chose to see any films that it produced. Moreover, the author argued that the industry’s reorientation toward profit and the size of the audience over the quality of the audience would cause a flight of cadres to the central studios. Thus, the letter reasoned, such a *perestroika* of the industry would send Soviet cinema “down the bourgeois path of development,” and erode filmmakers’ “moral” responsibility before the spectator.¹²

Such a project for “material stimulation” would undo not only the politics of national authorship that dominated the studio in the mid-1960s, but also the

¹¹ Volodymyr Denysenko made the same claim about a Ukrainian public at the SKU Second Congress in November 1968 when he stated that 15 films per year were not enough for 50 million people. TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 450, l. 123.

¹² TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 581, l. 22-25.

infrastructural developments that Tsvirkunov and S. P. Ivanov worked hard to establish in the early part of the decade. Nonetheless, such an exodus of personnel never occurred from Dovzhenko Studio to the central studios, largely because its staff had few desirable qualities for Mosfil'm or Gor'kii studios. From the other direction, it became rarer for Moscow actors and directors to come to Kyiv for temporary work, in part because it became less lucrative to do so, but also due to the nepotistic quality of the studio collective, which routinely protested such import of temporary personnel. In a sense, the "problem of cadres" at Dovzhenko Studio had been solved by the late 1960s, but only at the further cost to the studio's reputation and its ability to attract audiences.

The Search for a Ukrainian Blockbuster

What were Dovzhenko Studio's options (and those of other "national" studios) after the rejection of "poetic" experimentation from a political standpoint, on the one hand, and film commodity "exploitation" on the other? Certainly, neither the Ukrainian film industry management, nor those involved in the creative end, desired a situation in which only Ukrainians constituted the audience for republican productions, despite efforts to gear marketing and promotion toward such an imagined community of film consumers. Indeed, as industry officials made clear, they considered the limiting of films to republican distribution a punishment and insult to the work itself, not to mention a violation of Soviet nationalities policy. In September 1968, for example, Tsvirkunov and Ukrainian Goskino SRK head Kostiantyn Kudiiivs'kyi wrote to Aleksei Romanov with a complaint that Ukrainian-language films were more often distributed only within the republic. "After all," they stated, "the Committee doesn't consider the republican screen to be a second or third tier screen in the country."¹³ Language itself, after all, did not limit a film's distribution to the linguistic community due to the extensive directives governing film translation in the Soviet Union. At issue were films whose authors believed it aesthetically necessary to shoot in

¹³ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 524, l. 126.

Ukrainian, for the purpose of maintaining the national subject matter's authenticity. Thus, central Goskino's decision to limit certain Ukrainian-language films probably had little to do with linguistic comprehension and more to do with what they perceived as the difficulty of comprehending a non-Russian ethnoscape and "formalist" experimentation imbued with the mark of an "author."

To some degree, we can see how Paradzhanov, Drach, Illienko and other Ukrainian *auteurs* brought such limits upon themselves when they continually answered critiques about their elaborate symbolic language to the effect that those for whom the film was intended would understand. Industry and party officials would interpret this notion of the knowledgeable audience, of course, as a clear sign of intellectual snobbery. The actual decision to limit certain "national films" to "knowledgeable" republican audiences demanded that the studio prove that Ukrainians not only understood but desired to see such films. In January 1967, Romanov reported on a "strange situation" during a SK Plenum, whereby films produced at "national studios" performed more poorly in "their own" republics than in the USSR as a whole.¹⁴ During the Second Congress of the SKU in November 1968, Romanov returned to the same topic, stating that films like Leonid Osyka's *Love Awaits Those Who Return* performed better in Moscow than in Kyiv, despite the "national theme" of the film. "These Ukrainian films," he stated, "not only ran poorly in Ukraine, they ran worse [there] than in the whole [Soviet] Union."¹⁵ Romanov's reasoning was instructive: "The success of a film in the republic [in which it was made] provides an indication for its general success[...]"¹⁶ The chairman's counterclaim to the specificity of ethnic knowledge was that national difference did not exist on the level of patterns of film consumption, and he dared his Ukrainian colleagues to prove otherwise.

"National films" had to perform on two stages: They had to be successful with a particular spectator (one in the republic) and a "mass" spectator (i.e., it had to generate profit). The search for a Ukrainian blockbuster involved several

¹⁴ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 70, l. 56-57.

¹⁵ Romanov stated that Osyka's debut attracted only 613,000 people (1.4% of the population) in the Ukrainian SSR for the four months, during which it screened. TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 450, l. 199-200.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

production strategies, from attempts to market a “realist” poetic cinema, to work within established popular genres like war, melodrama and *detektiv*. For the purposes of realist narration, Ukrainian filmmakers set such films within a particular republican landscape, but, in de-emphasizing the iconicity of landscape, made little attempt to produce meaning about the nature of it as an ethnic space. In such attempts to draw audiences to Ukrainian films, space was pushed into a recognizable background. Humans, meanwhile, act independently of the landscape. They are neither beholden to it nor identified with it. Several of the most popular films produced in Kyiv during the mid-1960s, however, had absolutely nothing to do with a “national” theme. At the same time, such films could demonstrate that Dovzhenko Studio had the same production possibilities as central studios, and could shoot with its own cadres and budgetary restrictions.

* * *

After *A Dream*, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, and his brief work on Illiashenko’s *Coordinate Your Watches*, Ivan Mykolaichuk entered a different stage in his career, one seemingly at odds with what he had come to signify during his student years. After graduating from KITM in the Spring of 1965, the actor immediately received a role on his instructor Viktor Ivchenko’s new production, *The Viper* (*Gadiuka*, 1965), based on the 1929 Civil War novella by Aleksei Tolstoi. In Ivchenko’s film, Mykolaichuk played his first of only two villains during his career, this time a White officer who rapes the heroine Ol’ga Zotova. The gripping action and high production values made *The Viper* Mykolaichuk’s greatest popular success. In 1966, 34 million people saw this historical film about the daughter of a merchant who, after being raped, fights in the Red Cavalry. After the war, she returns to her ravaged village to find her family murdered. She has difficulty assimilating into a civilian life, trading her soldier’s rifle for a bureaucrat’s typewriter. In the end, Ol’ga becomes the further victim of corrupt officials, but maintains her essential idealism and ideological commitment.

Ivchenko directed the film in a classic realist manner, which stood at odds with his earlier “theatrical” aesthetic in *Ivanna* (1959) and *Forest Song* (*Lisova pisnia*, 1961).¹⁷ Visually, nothing stands out in *The Viper* when compared to these earlier eccentricities, but production values were high and the acting was professional. *The Viper*’s narrative presents a linear, but psychologically complex story of the daughter of a “class enemy.” Mykolaichuk’s role as the White officer, however, carries no subtlety, signifying pure evil in his sole purpose to prey on the innocent and seemingly helpless. In performing in his instructor’s film, Mykolaichuk sought a degree of job security within the safe haven of a “mature” filmmaker’s work. He was not playing “himself,” the “romantic Hutsul,” and thus was not required to answer for the authenticity of a Russian White Guardist. He told *Novyny kinoekrana* in January 1966, “I wanted to play the villain. Work on the role of the White Guard officer Val’ka Brykin was for me extraordinary and at the same time interesting.”¹⁸ He did not identify with his role here, but merely found it “interesting.” *The Viper* screened regularly in Kyiv from mid-March 1966 to early January 1967. After Ivchenko won the Shevchenko Award for the film two months later (*The Viper* was chosen instead of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, despite Ivchenko’s own support for the latter), it returned for a week of screenings at the Druzhba Theater on Khreshchatyk, and an additional private screening at the Kyiv Officer’s Club.¹⁹ *The Viper* had the longest run for a Ukrainian film during the entire 1960s, and routinely came back to movie theaters and factory clubs in honor of various anniversary events.

The very fact that the film had nothing to do with Ukraine allowed Mykolaichuk to establish himself as a genuine actor, over and above his identity as a “genuine Hutsul.” Several other Ukrainian actors starred in the film, including Ivchenko’s student Raisa Nedashkivs’ka, in addition to other KITM

¹⁷ Vasyl’ Illiashenko calls *Forest Song* on the border of theater and cinema. Vasyl’ Illiashenko, *Istoriia ukrains’koho kinomystetstva* (Kyiv: ArtEK, 2004), 191.

¹⁸ Ivan Mykolaichuk, *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 1 (January 1966); quoted in Larysa Briukhovets’ka, *Ivan Mykolaichuk* (Kyiv: Kino Teatr, 2004), 75.

¹⁹ *Na ekranakh Kyeva*, March 14, 1966 – January 17, 1967, March 30, April 21, 1967; *Novyny kinoekrana*, no. 5 (May 1967).

graduates Kostiantyn Stepankov and Oleksandr Movchan.²⁰ Despite its non-Ukrainian thematics, Ivchenko shot the film in *Hutsul'shchyna*.²¹ With *The Viper*, we find a different attempt to create “national cinema” in Ukraine, one based on the studio’s independence from borrowed personnel and landscapes, and one which competed with central productions for spectators. For his role in this film in particular, Mykolaichuk was distinguished as an Honored Artist of the Ukrainian SSR, and won the prestigious Mykola Ostrovs’kyi Award.

Between 1964 and 1974, Dovzhenko Studio produced only 15 additional films that attracted 20 million or more spectators, and most of these productions related only marginally to Ukrainian themes. As we see in Figure 5.1, war films, specifically combat films dealing with the Great Patriotic War, carried the most box office successes. Both Tymofii Levchuk’s *Two Years above the Abyss* (*Dva roky nad propast’iu*) and Anton Tymonishyn’s *They Knew Them Only by Face* (*Ikh znali tol’ko v litso*) dealt with Soviet counter-intelligence operations during the Nazi occupation in Kyiv with the former, and in a generic “Russian” port city in the latter (probably Sevastopol’). Tymonishyn continued his lucrative career by making *Doctor Abst’s Experiment* (*Eksperiment Doktora Absta*), a non-comedic take on the theme that Kubrick explored in *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) about a Nazi mad scientist who contributed to the United States’ acquisition of the atomic bomb. Despite being a director that contributed several “leaders in distribution” to the Kyiv studio, CPU member and KITM graduate Tymonishyn garnered little respect there or within the SKU for his continual use of non-Ukrainian actors, and little regard for contemporary representational politics in the republic. The single mention of him in industry and Union documents, apart from the standard orders for production, was a statement from Zemliak during a 1967 SKU Plenum: “Here is a man who looks better when he is silent. Oleksandr [sic] Tymonishyn has found a theme for himself.”²² Tymonishyn’s work at the studio was, thus, another

²⁰ Dovzhenko Studio’s statement about the completed film praised its use of KITM graduates as a positive feature of its production. RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 720, l. 105.

²¹ TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 44, l. 260.

²² TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 400, l. 105.

Figure 5.1. List of Ukrainian “Leaders in Distribution,” 1964-1974²³

Year	Title	Director	Screenwriter	Genre	# of tickets sold, in millions
1964	<i>Keys from the Sky</i>	V. Ivanov	I. Stadniuk	Comedy	22.3
1966	<i>The Viper</i>	V. Ivchenko	G. Koltunov	War	34
1966	<i>Two Years above the Abyss</i>	T. Levchuk	L. Trauberg	War	30.6
1966	<i>They Knew Them Only by Face</i>	A. Tymonishyn	E. Rostovtsev	War	40.7
1967	<i>The Gypsy</i>	E. Matveev	E. Mytko	Melodrama	55.6
1968	<i>Annychka</i>	B. Ivchenko	B. Zahoryl'ko	Melodrama	25.1
1968	<i>Doctor Abst's Experiment</i>	A. Tymonishyn	A. Nasibov	War	29.4
1968	<i>Spies</i>	O. Shvachko	E. Onopriienko	War	34
1969	<i>Long-Distance Romance</i>	E. Matveev	D. Khrabrovyts'kyi	Hist-Rev	21
1970	<i>The Prisoners of Beaumont</i>	Iu. Lysenko	Georges Juribida	War	20
1971	<i>Inspector of Criminal Investigations</i>	S. Tsybul'nyk	M. Makliars'kyi	Detective	40.9
1971	<i>Nina</i>	O. Shvachko	S. Smirnov	War	21.6
1973	<i>Everyday Criminal Investigations</i>	S. Tsybul'nyk	M. Makliars'kyi	Detective	27.3
1973	<i>Only the Old Go to Battle</i>	L. Bykov	E. Onopriienko	War	44.3
1973	<i>The Black Captain</i>	O. Lentsius	Iu. Lukin	War	21.9
1974	<i>The White Bashlik</i>	V. Savel'ev	Shynkuba	Hist-Rev	20.8

type of “*vne kolektiva*” production. He performed a certain function for Ukrainian cinema in his successful ability to work within established popular genres, but at the expense of participation in “Ukrainian national cinema” itself, and thus at the expense of his reputation as an artist. Whether or not Tymonishyn cared to participate is beside the point; rather, the lack of interest in him and his films demonstrated that the studio collective and the SKU continued to be driven by the development of native cadres and the promotion of national authorship. Whenever possible, most filmmakers attempted to integrate one or both of these concerns when approaching the problem of audiences.

While Oleksii Shvachko’s *Spies (Razvedchiki)* located his counter-intelligence film in a non-Ukrainian space – a stretch of the Danube in Hungary – he peopled it with Ukrainian intelligence officers and employed studio actors to

²³ “Leaders in Distribution” was the Soviet term for films that sold more than 20 million tickets. Data is cited from Raisa Prokopenko, ed., *Natsional'na kinostudiia khudozhnikh fil'miv imeni Oleksandra Dovzhenka: Anotovanyi kataloh fil'miv, 1928-1998* (Kyiv, 1998).

play the major roles, including Mykolaichuk as the hero Captain Kurganov,²⁴ Andrii Sova as Corporal Cherniak, Stepankov as a Hungarian partisan, and Leonid Bykov as Sergeant Makarenko. The film's plot, a common motif for Soviet cinema in the mid-1960s, finds Soviet intelligence officers rendering humanitarian aid to a village whose supply lines were cut off by the retreating Nazi occupiers. Intended for the growing youth audience, *Spies* is full of action and suspense, with little of the psychological exploration of Ivchenko's *The Viper*. Here again, however, the film provided more visibility to Mykolaichuk as a talented actor. By 1969, he had demonstrated his ability to play in Ukrainian and Russian literary roles (Shevchenko and Val'ka), as the authentic self in "Ukrainian poetic cinema" productions (Ivanko), and now in a genre film as Kurganov. If, in 1964-66 we saw Mykolaichuk in neckties with embroidered folk patterns and a Hutsul *keptar'*, we now saw him on the cover of *Novyny kinoekrana* as a professional actor able to transcend his ethno-national identity, and as a machine-gun toting adventure hero (Figure 5.2). Released at the beginning of Soviet schoolchildren's summer recess, UKK sold almost 35 million tickets for *Spies*, demonstrating the administration's growing conversance with marketing films appropriately.²⁵

Of the "leaders in distribution" listed in Figure 5.1, however, only L. Bykov's *Only the Old* and Sulafim Tsybul'nyk's *Inspector (Inspektor ugolovnoho pozyska)* could be considered Soviet "blockbusters (*boeviki*)." While other films attracted an above average number of spectators, these two films dominated movie theaters in 1971 and 1973, respectively, each sparking sequels later in the decade (Tsybul'nyk's *Everyday [Budni ugolovnoho pozyska]* in 1973, and Bykov's *One-Two Soldiers Went [Aty-baty shli soldaty]* in 1976). While the two films were shot in Russian for the most part, and in no way pretended to be "national films," "Ukraine" and "Ukrainians" appeared in both.

²⁴ Initially, the studio had chosen Ihor Sambors'kyi to direct the film, who had Moscow actor V. Grachev playing Kurganov. When Shvachko took over the production in February 1968, he replaced the Russian with Mykolaichuk, crediting the latter with more "skill" in such a role. See, TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2151, l. 81.

²⁵ See, *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, April 21-June 9, 1969. UKK worker V. Poltavtsev wrote about seasonal considerations in marketing particular genre films in his *Iskusstvo kino* article, "Prokatnaia zhizn' fil'ma," *IK*, no. 10 (Oct 1972), 115.

Tsybul'nyk's well-crafted *detektiv* follows a group of Kyiv *militsiia* officers who are tracking down a murder suspect. The film concludes as the detectives' pursuit takes them to the Carpathians, after they discover that the suspect has returned to his native mountain village. They visit his mother's *khata* on an unpeopled mountainside, where she tells them in perfect Russian that her son has just left. The detectives call in assistance from a helicopter to track his movements through the nooks and crannies of the Carpathians, where they eventually find and catch him. Here, the Carpathians functioned not so much as an ethnic fountain of youth; rather, the landscape becomes a tactical prop, whose characteristics were determined, not by Ukrainian *kul'turnytstvo*, but by the emergent *detektiv* genre. The one inhabitant we see in these mountains is an old peasant woman, who represents, not "national color," but generic backwardness.

Leonid Bykov, a popular actor at the Kharkiv Theater during the 1950s, moved to Lenfil'm in the 1960s to become famous in primarily comedic roles. In 1973, Bykov returned to Ukraine to direct *Only the Old*, the story of a "multinational" Soviet air squadron operating in German-occupied Ukraine, assigned to what they understood as a suicide mission. Bykov plays the commanding officer, Lieutenant Titarenko, who, while speaking flawless Russian, calls his comrades "*khlopsy*" rather than the Russian equivalent of "*rebiata* (guys, buddies)," and, when alone with Airman Kuznechyk (played by KITM grad Sergei Ivanov), speaks Ukrainian. Managing assistant director of Dovzhenko Studio Hlib Shandybin wrote to the new head of Ukrainian Goskino Vasyl' Bol'shak in September 1973 asking that the Russian original *not* be dubbed into Ukrainian, on the basis that it would ruin the film's *multinational* character and "ruin" the film's "dramaturgy."²⁶ While similar to Paradzhanov's argument against a Russian dub for *Shadows*, the shift from a discourse of "color" to one of "narrative" or "dramaturgy" represented a new stage in the representational politics of Soviet nationalities policy, one which sought to locate nationalities outside of both folkloric and ethnographic sites of exploration, while continuing to

²⁶ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2574, l. 23.

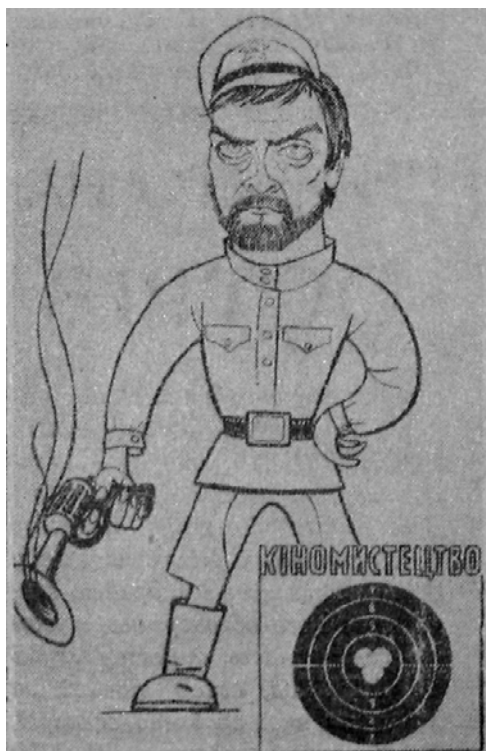


Figure 5.2. Ivan Mykolaichuk in *Za Radians'kyi fil'm* and *Novyny kinoekrana* during 1968-69: (l-r) A caricature of the actor hitting the bull's-eye of "cinema art" by E. Sheikin in the November 5, 1969 issue of *ZRF*; and drawn within the letter "П" for a review of *Spies* in the February 1969 issue of *NK*.

acknowledge their existence. In this way, *Only the Young* represented the visual and aural components of line four on Soviet citizens' passports, neither condescending nor exoticizing, but merely revealing contemporary reality within a comprehensible, yet truthful, narrative about the tragedy and heroism of those who fell in the Great Patriotic War.²⁷ While denying the natural connections of ethnic subjects to particular landscapes found in "Ukrainian poetic cinema," the film also removed the domesticated folkloric spectacle of the non-Russian found, for example, in the opening segment of Pyr'ev's *Tractor Drivers* (see Chapter 1).

The Viper, Spies, Inspector and *Only the Young* in particular, represented successful attempts from Ukrainian filmmakers to remain relevant after the crisis of 1965-1966, as Dovzhenko Studio attempted to save itself from the stigma of *Kyiv Frescoes*, *A Well for the Thirsty*, and *Coordinate Your Watches*. At the same time, as S. P. Ivanov's statement about "different creative schools" indicated, the studio continued to promote its *auteur* geniuses, and attempted to cash in on the respect from intellectuals that "Ukrainian poetic cinema" had provided the studio.

During the late 1960s, republican Goskino and studios believed that the industry was still committed to expanding production, and provided justification that such a plan made sense in terms of the successes of Paradzhanov and Illienko in Ukraine, Rezo Chkheidze and Tenghiz Abuladze in Georgia, Tolomush Okeev in Kirghizstan, and Vitautas Zhalakiavichus in Lithuania among other "national" *auteurs*. An increase in production would not only allow republican studios to compete economically with central studios, bringing much needed funds to expand and modernize production facilities, but also to justify their very existence alongside of them, rather than subordinate to them. At the Second Congress of the SKU, several speakers mentioned increasing production by 125% to 30 full-length feature films annually. Similar proposals appeared before Goskino from republican studios throughout the latter part of the decade.²⁸ CPU

²⁷ Even Vasyli' Illiashenko writes in his recent history of Ukrainian cinema that *Only the Young* was one of the most honest films about the experience of the Second World War in the Soviet Union. Illiashenko, 236.

²⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 450, l. 123.

First Secretary Shelest attempted to use his weight in the party to compel the industry to move on this issue. In a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU in early 1969, he argued that the “conservative program for the release of feature films... leads, on the one hand, to a rise in the cost of producing films and, on the other hand, to the lengthy inoccupation of creative workers.” While rejecting the possibility of 30, he recommended the modest increase to 15 films per year.²⁹ As we see from Figure 5.3, by 1968, production on full-length feature films for non-television release at Dovzhenko Studio had already stabilized at around 12 films per year. In the 1970s, this number constituted official Goskino policy, and which the studio maintained until 1993.³⁰ The industry saw no further need for an increase in production, and viewed 12 films per year as the top level that the market could handle. Even at this level, only one-two films annually were profitable, and the industry continued to subsidize the bulk of production.³¹

For authorities in central Goskino, then, the question of increasing production provoked other questions about how many more Ukrainian-themed films Soviet audiences would pay money to see. During the decade between 1968 and 1978, authorities in Goskino promoted audience research as a way of understanding patterns of film consumption. As Hollywood had done beginning in the late 1930s, the Soviet film industry now appealed to the language of public opinion polls, rather than propaganda, as the idiom through which it understood “the audience.”³² Within this idiom, audiences became a multitude of “taxonomic collectives,” to whom the industry could direct its marketing. Sociologists studying film audiences determined that adventures and comedies were the

²⁹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 31, f. 3689, ll. 60-61.

³⁰ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 788, l. 15; After 1993, production fell off as Goskino completely dissolved. Dovzhenko Studio was suddenly forced to find private funding for production, as well as alternative means of distributing their films. See, Prokopenko.

³¹ Marat Vlasov, “Kinoiskusstvo i epokha zastoia,” in Vlasov, ed., *Sovetskoe kino semidesiatykh – pervoi poloviny vos’midesiatykh godov: uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow: VGIK, 1997), 9.

³² See, Joshua First, “From Spectator to ‘Differentiated’ Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965-1980)” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 317-44. On Hollywood audience research, see, Susan Ohmer, *George Gallup in Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Catherine Jurca, “What the Public Wanted: Hollywood, 1937-1942,” *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 3-25.

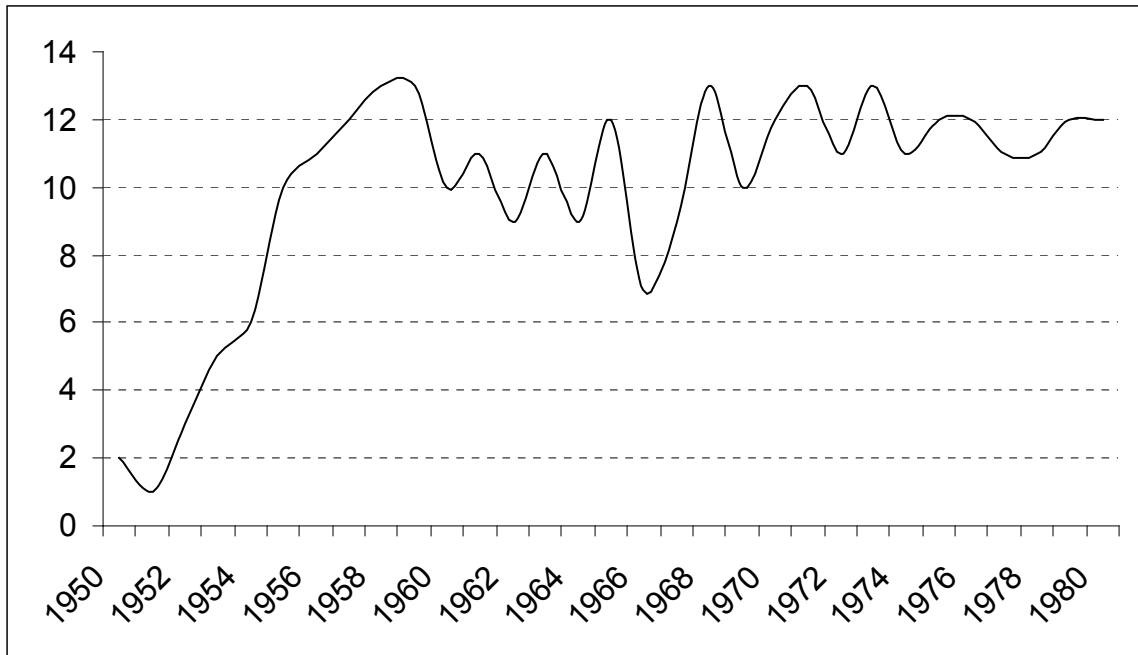


Figure 5.3. Number of Feature Films Produced Annually at Dovzhenko Studio, 1950-1980. The data set excludes shorts (films less than 50 minutes long), filmed plays, concerts, operas and ballets, in addition to films made for television. Data cited from Raisa Prokopenko, ed., *Natsional'na kinostudiia khudozhnikh fil'miv imeni Oleksandra Dovzhenka: Anotovanyi katalog fil'miv, 1928-1998* (Kyiv, 1998)

kinds of films that most spectators enjoyed watching, and that they preferred foreign productions to domestic, and central productions to those from the Union republics.³³ In August 1972, CPSU Ideological Secretary Ermash replaced Romanov as Chairman of central Goskino, and came to power with a definitive policy of further reducing production budgets for studios that did not generate profits.³⁴ One representative of central Goskino told the SKU in 1976 that Ukrainian filmmakers had to find their “special group of film spectators,” or risk becoming irrelevant to Soviet cinema. He mentioned that the chairman wanted

³³ See, Lev Kogan, *Kino i zritel': Opyt konkretno-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968).

³⁴ See, Filipp Ermash, “O khode vypolneniia reshenii XXV s’ezda KPSS po usileniiu roli kino v ideinom, npravstvennom i esteticheskom vospitanii trudiashchikhsia, po povysheniiu ideino-khudozhestvennogo urovnia vypuskaemykh kinofil'mov i uluchsheniiu kinoobsluzhivaniia naseleniia,” *IK*, no. 7 (1978), 20.

each studio to have “its own form of contact with the spectator. [...] The value of this reorientation is [there is] a film for each audience.”³⁵

In fact, Ukrainian Goskino along with the SKU was firmly committed to appeal to an imagined Ukrainian spectator, particularly after film sociologists demanded that the industry understand audiences as “differentiated” according to age, sex, nation and education categories. The circulation of the Ukrainian-language film press – constituting the monthly magazine *Novyny kinoekrana* (Screen News) and the weekly newspaper *Na ekranakh Ukrainy* (On Ukrainian Screens) – continued to grow into the early 1970s.³⁶ The latter, moreover, listed as their goal, to advertise the best of Soviet cinema, but “Ukrainian cinema in particular.”³⁷ A sociological study conducted with spectators in the republic in 1972, however, determined that Ukrainians were largely indifferent to such promotion of Ukrainian films. Audience researchers discovered that Ukrainian spectators enjoyed Bykov’s *Only the Young*, but then, so did everyone else. After hearing the dismal results of the study, Dovzhenko Studio’s SRK head Petro Kuvyk stated that they were “dangerous to publish,” especially in light of Romanov’s statements to the effect that republican films had to perform well at home to ensure approval for broader distribution.³⁸ Predictably, such promotional focus on Ukrainian production did not correspond to how distribution organs chose to act. The head of Ukrainian UKK, in fact, told the SKU that they needed to de-emphasize Ukrainian films during the annual Cinema Days event in 1973 to guarantee a larger turnout.³⁹

Ermash’s Goskino proposed that republican studios could survive only provided they undertook further economic restructuring. In order to save money on personnel, Dovzhenko Studio was forced to introduce the practice of hiring directors on contract rather than working for a salary.⁴⁰ Dovzhenko Studio,

³⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 788, l. 182-83.

³⁶ *NK* had a stable circulation of 500,000 throughout the 1970s. Compare this to the circulation of the all-Union equivalent *Sovetskii ekran* (The Soviet Screen), which had a print run of 1,700,000 during the same period.

³⁷ TsDAVOU, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 925, l. 19.

³⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2536, l. 7-19, 127.

³⁹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 665, l. 60.

⁴⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2806, l. 8-9.

under the management of Al'bert Putintsev since 1973, tried ever harder to make films that sold, while answering the increasingly difficult political demands to make *zakaznyi* films that did not. From 1965 to 1975, the average film released from Kyiv attracted 50% fewer spectators, a drop from 11.2 million to 5.3 million people.⁴¹

Zemliak stated in the mid-1970s that Ukrainian films were now little different from central productions, except that the former were not as good. While attendance was declining everywhere in the Soviet Union,⁴² films from Kyiv experienced this decline to an unprecedented level. Most of the post-65 generation of studio directors moved to the growing field of television production, discovering in it more money and more creative support than for feature filmmaking. While Dovzhenko Studio began to produce films made for television by the early 1960s, it was organized separately from features, with much greater input from Mosfil'm's television studio Ekran, and central Goskino. In late 1971, Zemliak complained that this shift to television impoverished screenwriters due to the practice of using Moscow writers for television. In a sense, Zemliak believed, television was "de-nationalizing" for its refusal to support Ukrainian writers, the latter constituting the very root component of national culture itself.⁴³ In accepting this notion, however, the problem was much greater than Zemliak articulated it, as Dovzhenko Studio employed Moscow screenwriters not only for television production, but also in growing numbers for feature films. Of the screenwriters listed among the "leaders in distribution" in Figure 5.1, only three were members of the screenplay studio. At the same time, the composition of directors, actors and other creative personnel working on Dovzhenko Studio productions continued to be drawn from its permanent base of cadres, largely because this was an economically sound practice. Yet, as story and narrative became the keys to increasing attendance, Goskino found it no great expense to hand out screenplays from Moscow to the Union republics, and in the process to give up on solving the problem locally. As Larysa Briukhovets'ka writes,

⁴¹ Vlasov, 9.

⁴² See my data on film attendance in First, "From Spectator to 'Differentiated' Consumer," 327.

⁴³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2426, ll. 11-12.

The screenplay problem was never seriously analyzed or untangled. But if there is an analogy with social life, then in Ukraine the highest authorities also did not have their own 'screenwriters,' but 'fulfilled the roles' behind the screenplay created in Moscow.⁴⁴

Thus, Goskino had solved the "problem of national cadres" superficially, with a mind toward efficiency, and without, in the end, disrupting the main line of industry policy, oriented toward profitable genre productions and *zakaznye temy*.

"National Character" Between Realism and Visuality

Despite this growing orientation away from the principle of authorship toward audience politics, the issues surrounding "national cinemas" in the Union republics and the problem of representing "national character" dominated Union and industry discussion from the late-1960s to the mid-1970s. While the "problem of national cinema" emerged in the press during the earlier part of the decade, the issue coalesced in early 1967 during a SK Plenum dedicated exclusively to the "condition and problems in the development of national cinemas in the USSR." In his opening address to the Plenum, Kirghiz writer and screenwriter Chinghiz Aitmatov told the delegates: "Today in all the Union republics, their own cinemas are being made and are functioning."⁴⁵ He noted that "national studios" made over 60% of the films produced in the USSR, and that "national films" were appearing at international film festivals "as the best works of the year." From this, he concluded, "National cinema is becoming the problem number one" within the industry. Yet, in the absence of agreement or even a solid definition of "national character" that came out of these debates, the issue was determined to be a problem of "realism." This resolution was in distinction to "Ukrainian poetic cinema's" articulation of ethnic difference. While the discourse surrounding "realism" functioned within audience politics – as in, "the masses demand a realist art" – it also served the goals of demanding a

⁴⁴ Larysa Briukhovets'ka, *Prykhovani fil'my: Ukrains'ke kino 1990-kh* (Kyiv: ArtEk, 2003), 28-29.

⁴⁵ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 67, l. 11.

representation of non-Russians divorced from a spectacle of folkloric backwardness or ethnographic curiosity.

Such debates about “national character” emerged in film criticism simultaneous to the “poetic / prosaic cinema” debate. In his resolution to this latter debate, Efim Dobin examined Dovzhenko’s cinema poetics in terms of a rendering of folklore and landscape, which was compatible with the heroic and patriotic narrative. The function of the image, however, worked within the realm of metaphor, assimilating the human subject with the landscape, which served to make sense of the particular Ukrainian experience during the Revolution and Civil War, industrialization and collectivization (Dovzhenko’s subjects). The question remained as to how Soviet cinema was to interpret the ethnographic features of the human landscape (or, ethnoscape, as I here refer to it) as it was defined in relation to a particular people or nationality.

Soviet critics in the 1960s rejected “faceless” cosmopolitanism, demanding that the human subject “carry” the features of his or her nationality, lest he or she become, in Vissarion Belinskii’s oft-quoted words, an “abstraction.” As I explored in Chapter one, within the folkloric mode of representing the non-Russian, this demand worked itself out literally in the sense that Cossacks wore embroidered shirts, Khmel’nyts’kyi carried his *bulava*, and his hair was cut in the iconic *khokhol* style. In a February 1964 article in *Iskusstvo kino*, Ukrainian critic Borys Buriak argued that, in examining the elements of national particularity in film, Soviet filmmakers and critics needed to move past outward features, that is, characteristics, and attempt to understand aspects of “national character.” In this way, he disagreed with Mikhail Klado, who wrote that the national could only be revealed in a work’s artistic texture after the generally human or the social aspects are revealed.⁴⁶ Buriak stated that such a conception has led to a film being nationally “dressed” in later directorial treatment, while not located at the work’s origin. In other words, “national character” was not simply the local expression of a mobile folkloric form of representing the non-Russian.

⁴⁶ See my examination of Klado’s article within the “theatricality” debates in Chapter 1. M. Klado, “Natsional’noe – v konkretnom,” *Druzhba narodov*, no. 6 (June 1959), 169-180.

Buriak stated, “A real artist sees the national first of all in the sphere of the spiritual, the laboring, and the psychical, and not only in the folkloric and ethnographic.” Following Bulgarian philosopher Tikhomir Pavlov, Buriak argued that the nation constituted a “collective individuality.” Although he suggested that socialist nations would begin to exhibit similar common features as they came together in harmony [*sblizhenie*], he did not accept that “the ideal” of “national character in our time is already corresponding to the ideal of the communist character.” In other words, Buriak stated that “national character” (i.e., Russian, Ukrainian, etc.) and “civil character” (i.e., Soviet) continued to provoke different sentiments in films, despite some convergence of the two. Just as Dobin found in his examination of Dovzhenko’s poetics, so did Buriak discover “national character” in Vasyl’ Bozhenko. For the same reason, Buriak noted that one of the problems with Vera, the heroine in *The Cranes are Flying*, is that she resembled a woman of any nationality more than she embodied the specific features of a Russian woman.⁴⁷

In this comparison between Veronika’s and Bozhenko’s national character, language plays a minor role. After all, Bozhenko speaks Russian in *Shchors* but “spiritually” embodies the Ukrainian national character, while Veronika, who also speaks Russian, fails to do the same for the Russian national character. In this way, he disagreed with the position that, without the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian national cinema could not exist.⁴⁸ To counter the language argument, Buriak offered the example of the early Gogol’. He stated that in the Russian language of the latter, there is also “the originality of Ukrainian speech.” Buriak did not intend to promote the use of *surzhyk* as “Ukrainian poetic cinema” did, but attempted to delineate an “internal” dynamic of “national” speech, its non-syntactic, and indeed, non-semantic quality.⁴⁹ As with Dobin’s work, in Buriak’s efforts to mediate between an excess of signification (association, metaphor, visuality, essentialization) and its denial (narrative, plot, *literaturnost’*, civic over

⁴⁷ Boris Buriak, “Internatsional’noe – ne beznatsional’noe,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (Feb 1964), 26-36.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Mykola Makarenko, “Gliadia v koren’,” *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, no. 1 (1961), 115.

⁴⁹ Buriak, 26-36.

national consciousness), his criticism loses its instructive content. Apart from mere example, he failed to demonstrate how Soviet filmmakers could convey the features of “national character,” or even general principles of how roles could embody nationality.

Such open questions about national representation did not go away. Despite Sergei Gerasimov’s comments in December 1966 not to disturb the “swamp” that was national cinema lest it become, in the articulation of it as a “problem,” an “active power in the enemy’s hands,” the Union of Cinematographers met in a January Plenum to address specifically the issue of “national character.”⁵⁰ In Gerasimov’s comments on a draft of Aitmatov’s speech, he feared the barrage of complaints from republican filmmakers that would inevitably emerge from such a Plenum. In turn, such acknowledgement from non-Russian filmmakers in the Soviet Union that the “nationality question” had not been resolved might be mobilized to justify contemporary charges emanating from the US and Western Europe about the “imperial” nature of the Soviet state in relation to its national minorities.⁵¹ Film critic and cultural apparatchik Aleksandr Karaganov was concerned more specifically about the implications for Ukrainian nationalism after hearing Aitmatov’s contentious speech in December. He blurted out at the end of the meeting that he perceived “a minor manifestation of nationalism [in Aitmatov’s speech], which might be the object of investigation at a party meeting.” He stated that giving Aitmatov such permission to speak about the “problem” of non-Russian representation in an open forum “could bring a Ukrainian under the yellow flag.”⁵²

Nonetheless, the Central Committee and Goskino permitted Aitmatov to give his speech during the January Plenum, during which he took up the problem of defining and representing “national character.” In his distaste for films

⁵⁰ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 50, l. 17.

⁵¹ See, David J. Dallin, *The New Soviet Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951); *The Soviet Prisonhouse of Nationalities* (Calcutta, 1955); Jan Librach, *The Rise of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

⁵² RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 50, l. 38. The yellow flag was identified in connection with Ukrainian nationalism during the Civil War and during World War II. When Ukraine declared independence in 1990, leaders of the new state chose a yellow and blue flag, the same one that flew during the Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1917-18.

“deprived of national features,” which were “accomplished in a faceless space, and in the atmosphere of ‘statistical-mean’ people,” Aitmatov extolled the ethnographic position, one in which land and people were inextricably and primordially linked.⁵³ The writer laid out the basis for a discussion of the problem, explaining that the concept of “national character” came down to the question of “embodying national originality.”⁵⁴ Here, however, he took a step back, stating that “national originality” should not become “an end in itself [*samotse!*],” which would take a work down the road of “exotic stereotypes and stylizations” (i.e., the problem that Dovzhenko Studio identified in Illiashenko’s footage). He identified two incorrect positions in this debate: “One affirms that national character is almost a doubtful concept, almost a prejudice, and another fetishizes national character, and elevates it to a dogma like an age-old and constant quality.” In attempting to answer these straw-man positions from a materialist perspective, Aitmatov, like Buriak, continued to straddle both: “Of course, national character *exists in nature* [*italics mine*] as psychological characteristics of a people, and formulated in the movement of socio-historical development.”⁵⁵ Aitmatov took us back to square one in denying the applicability of the folkloric / ethnographic mode of representation as a “prejudice,” while affirming the “natural” quality of nationality, which was nonetheless “socio-historically” determined.

At this point, Aitmatov relied on example to convey his argument, stating that Rezo Chkheidze’s hero in *Father of a Soldier* (*Otets soldata*, 1965) represented the height of Soviet cinema’s exploration of national character. At once a plot-driven vehicle that uses a similar mechanism of travel between “home” and “front” as Grigorii Chukhrai’s *Ballad of a Soldier* (*Ballada o soldate*, 1959) to convey the effects of war on ordinary people, Chkheidze’s film was also preoccupied with the “national originality” of the title character, an elderly Georgian wine grower Georgii Makharashvili. The old man leaves his village in

⁵³ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 67, l. 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

the waning days of the war to search for his wounded son, eventually convincing the Soviet army to enlist him as a soldier so that he can travel to the Eastern



Figure 5.4. The Georgian talks to grapes in Chkheidze's *Father of a Soldier* (1965)

Front as it entered Germany. Makharashvili makes it to the Reichstag during the Battle of Berlin where he finds him among the famous 756th Rifle Regiment as the soldiers take control of the building. The two spot each other, but before uniting, a dying German soldier shoots the son in the back, killing him. The film ends as Makharashvili weeps over his son's body.

While the narrative represented little that was new to the Soviet war film during the Thaw, its novelty for spectators was the character's otherness. With Makharashvili's awkward, enormous body and thick mustache dominating almost every shot, his comically broken Russian speech, and organic attachment to wine, Chkheidze's hero constituted an ethnic stereotype placed within a common Thaw-era Soviet narrative (Figure 5.4). In its method of pasting trans-historical "national color" onto a hegemonic plot of martyrdom and victory in the Great Patriotic War, *Father of a Soldier* functioned as a Thaw-era re-working of the Stalinist folkloric. While positioned as a protagonist who never sheds his ethnic otherness, Chkheidze refuses to treat this as a failure to conquer backwardness. Nonetheless, Makharashvili functions as static spectacle within the film, and a

protagonist who merely watches the historical narrative of the Second World War play itself out. While Aitmatov celebrated the popular Georgian film,⁵⁶ based on this union of “national character” with a realist plot, Mikhail Kalatozov, himself Georgian by nationality, complained of the “fetishization” of the “Georgian national character” in *Father*. He told Aitmatov in December that the film “should not have become the echelon of Georgian cinema. It’s evidently necessary to specify this, because otherwise a dogmatic treatment of the nature of [national] character will appear.”⁵⁷

Aitmatov responded that he could not explain what exactly composed “national character,” and that one could only understand it within oneself. In an attempt to get around this problem – to deal with it practically – he stated that “national character had nothing in common with an idealization of a certain national trait or custom; rather, part of a film’s realism necessitated a correct representation of national character.” Kirghiz director Tolomush Okeev responded to Aitmatov’s speech in affirmation of the “realism of national character.” In this formulation, “accuracy [*tochnost*]” was more important than a poetic form of “authenticity [*podlinost*].” Here, Okeev stressed similarity within difference: “We also love, we also suffer and also die, like everyone, but we take different paths to this. So allow us to talk about it. It’s not necessary to cut us all with the same scissors.”⁵⁸ Yet, the principle that Aitmatov and Okeev articulated in fact denied the importance of *Father of a Soldier*, because he failed to acknowledge the contrivance of the hero’s journey, along with the fact that Chkheidze forces his hero to embody his nationality over his personality, which is then spectacularized as Makharashvili moves among ethnically neutral Soviet soldiers.

Much of what constituted the visuality of “national character” was under attack for its lack of realism. In fact, “national character” seemed as hard to define visually, as it was to deny narratively. The January Plenum shifted focus

⁵⁶ For a Georgian film, *Father of a Soldier* became a box office hit with 23.8 million tickets sold in 1964. See, *Domashniaia sinematika: otechestvennoe kino, 1918-1996*, eds., Sergei Zemlianukhin and Miroslava Segida (Moscow: Dubl’-D, 1996), 310.

⁵⁷ RGALI, f. 2935, op. 4, d. 50, l. 22-23.

⁵⁸ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 70, l. 5.

by the second day, to tangible questions of production facilities, budgets, salaries and problems with distribution. Many of the representatives from the republics spoke about the increasing impoverishment of “national” studios, and harangued Goskino for its “extreme centralization,” and lack of attention and condescension to “the periphery.”⁵⁹

With this focus on “realism” as the basis of national character, studio authorities demanded closer attention to screenplays. The Resolutions to the January Plenum complained of the “poverty of the screenplay portfolio” at republican studios, along with the “inoperativeness of resolving questions about including screenplays in the thematic and production plans.” The Resolutions mentioned nothing about the discussion of “national character,” precisely because the Plenum resolved nothing. Instead, republican studios were blamed for releasing “superficial and weak films, provoking the legitimate dissatisfaction of spectators.”⁶⁰ An event initiated as a forum for republican filmmakers to discuss the “problem” of national cinemas in the USSR ended with an indictment against the very people who articulated it as such. For Goskino, if the problem was a lack of realism, the solution could only be the further scrutiny of the “literary basis.”

The “screenplay problem” had its origins much earlier, and was the reason that many republican studios – Dovzhenko Studio and Gruziiia-Fil’m in particular – established a staff of salaried writers in the early 1960s. Yet, complaints about the exorbitant cost of maintaining these writers emerged almost instantly. Moreover, a common concern during the crisis of 1965-66 was that director-*auteurs* were diverting from the screenplays to engage with formalist poetics. In this exclusive attention to the screenplay problem, however, we see a corresponding attack on visuality. Iurii Illienko and set designer Volodymyr Tsyrlin were particularly concerned about these implications when the “screenplay problem” reemerged in the later part of the decade, precisely because it meant that authorities had rejected the “visual” dimensions of

⁵⁹ See, esp. Sharshen Usubaliev’s remarks on the third day of the Plenum: *Ibid.*, I. 20.

⁶⁰ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 71, I. 2.

representing “national character.” During a March 1968 studio conference, Tsyrlin broached the topic of the increasingly underrepresented topic of “*izobrazitel’nost* (visuality)” in cinema. Illienko assented, 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.”⁶¹

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. The former opened the debate on October 8th with “The Problem of Visuality and the Tendency of Criticism,” where he argued that, while Ukrainian cinema has 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.⁶² In a somewhat self-serving gesture, Illienko continued the discussion on October 22nd in his article, “Triunity,” where he referred to the profession of cinematographer as the most important of a film’s three “authors,” alongside the director and screenwriter.⁶³ Pointedly calling the cinematographer turned director turned screenwriter a “*samoznavets*’,”⁶⁴ film critic Iu. Levin countered in the November 19 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 kolektiva*” authorship. Just as Truffaut understood in 1954 when he wrote “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” for *Cahiers du cinéma*, 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

⁶¹ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2159, l. 92.

⁶² V. Tsyrlin, “Problema zobrazhennia i tendentsiia krytyky,” *Za Radians’kyi fil’m*, October 8, 1969, 2.

⁶³ Iurii Illienko, “Tryiednist” *Za Radians’kyi fil’m*, October 22, 1969: 2.

⁶⁴ The Ukrainian word, “*samoznavets*” literally means, “a scholar of oneself.”

the homogenization of film narrative and structure.⁶⁵ The delineation of a “screenplay problem” was seen in the late 1960s as an official policy meant to undo, not only the principle of film authorship of the mid-60s, but also erode studio independence.

Illienko would not have necessarily had to read French in order to possess the words to identify the “screenplay problem” in the 1970s as a move against visuality and thus the “poetic” principle of national representation itself. In 1967, Il’ia Vaisfel’d wrote – in relation to Hollywood, of course – about the “struggle for saving cinema’s national self-dependency against the expansion of capitalist film monopolies with their ideology of ‘commercial realism.’”⁶⁶ Within the present climate of increasing centralization and renewed appeals to “realism,” such statements could not but ring a bell with republican filmmakers. In removing visuality from the question of “national character,” suggesting instead that it constituted a problem of “realism,” authorities consciously affected the ways that filmmakers could articulate nationality. While the promotion of “national cinemas” in the Union republics remained official policy, with articles on the topic appearing in *Iskusstvo kino* and *Voprosy kinoiskusstva* throughout the early 1970s, the content of these pieces represented little of interest on the topic, with the only significant development being a discursive shift from the plural “national cinemas” of the 1960s to the singular “multinational Soviet cinema.” For the most part, these articles merely conveyed the standard narrative of republican studio construction, a description of the major works within the canon of each of the republics,⁶⁷ and affirmed the party’s commitment to both internationalism and “multinationality.”⁶⁸ Multinationality would remain little more than an abstraction, and increasingly devoid of a “realist” content. After all, if the social reality of

⁶⁵ François Truffaut, “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema,” in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. 1, ed., Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 224-236.

⁶⁶ I. Vaisfel’d, “Natsional’noe – internatsional’noe,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 9 (Sept 1967), 21.

⁶⁷ In Ukraine, this canon would have included Dovzhenko’s major work beginning with *Earth*, Savchenko’s work from *Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi* onward, Denysenko’s *A Dream*, and Paradzhanov’s *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.

⁶⁸ L. Mamatova, “Letopis’ bratstva,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 12 (Dec 1972), 104-133; Armen Medvedev, “Veter veka: Zametki o problemakh i fil’makh mnogonatsional’noi sovetskoi kinematografii,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 6 (June 1973), 1-25.

Ukraine was that the majority of Ukrainians not only knew Russian but were also conversant in it, what principle dictated the continued promotion of Ukrainian-language culture?

“De-Nationalization” in the Post-Shelest Era

Ivan Dziuba, in following the logic of 1920s Ukrainianization framers Oleksandr Shums'kyi and Mykola Skrypnyk, identified the problem of Russian-speaking Ukrainians as enforced de-nationalization, and that the purpose of vernacular culture was not to reflect contemporary reality necessarily, but to help such Russified Ukrainians come to self-consciousness. The principle that grounded these assumptions was Leninism itself, in addition to socialist realism in its forward-looking and pedagogical function. In fact, CPU First Secretary Petro Shelest, in addition to Iurii Illienko and, oddly enough, Sergei Paradzhanov, were individuals who came to “national” consciousness within the particular cultural politics of Ukraine after Stalin. Each of these individuals shared the assumption that “de-nationalization” was a real danger to Ukrainians, and accepted that promotion of national culture took precedence over the free-market principle of representing the “reality” of national character, a component of which admitted the absence of a unique Ukrainian public.

As these developments were occurring within the Soviet film industry, Ukrainian politics took a potential turn for the better for members of the nationally conscious Kyiv intelligentsia. While 1968 had definitive implications for how the party interacted with filmmakers and other members of the creative intelligentsia, with Josephine Woll calling this year the end of the Thaw, Brezhnev considered the CPU under Shelest as nothing if not loyal. Shelest had been the most vocal member of the Politburo in support of intervention in Czechoslovakia, and as such, Brezhnev continued to give him some leeway in his choices for appointments in the CPU apparatus. As Andrii Skaba relinquished his position as CPU Ideological Secretary to head the Institute of History at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in 1968, Shelest replaced him with chemist Fedir

Ovcharenko. Known as having liberal tendencies with regard to questions of nationalities policy, Paradzhanov wrote to the Secretary in 1969 on the importance of counteracting Goskino's developing policy of sabotaging republican studios, and his own work in particular. Written in Russian, and translated into Ukrainian by Dziuba, Paradzhanov identified himself as the director of *Shadows*, a film, he claimed, that was the "first in many years to bring international prestige to Ukrainian cinema." He stated that his film sparked the "original Ukrainian poetic cinema of the 1960s, the Kyiv school of poetic cinema."⁶⁹ Unfortunately, he claims, the "school" was now "paralyzed" from bearing its "mature fruit." He stated, "Such searches are oh so necessary today, because art cannot survive on mass commercial products or on the average, generally accepted level [of production...]"⁷⁰ Paradzhanov appealed to Ukraine's "poetic" traditions contained in the "experimental" work of Oleksandr Dovzhenko, a man who took "risks" in his use of symbols and metaphor. In admitting that he was Armenian rather than Ukrainian, he stated that he stayed in Kyiv despite offers to work at Armen-fil'm, because he "fell in love with Ukrainian culture, I grew with it as an artist and I cannot conceive of my work without it." Paradzhanov, in the end, appealed to Ovcharenko to step in to help him make his adaptation of Kotsiubyns'kyi's *Intermezzo*, which he was having difficulty getting off the ground.⁷¹

After his letter, Shelest offered Paradzhanov an audience, during which the First Secretary offered the director an opportunity to work on a *kolkhoz*-themed screenplay entitled *Earth, the Earth Once Again* (*Zemlia, shche raz zemlia*). The element of thematic repetition present even in the title must have turned off Paradzhanov and he declined. After the studio finally put the skids on *Intermezzo* in early 1972, the director left for Moscow with the hope of working with Viktor Shklovskii on a made-for-television adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's *Miracle in Odense*. He returned to Kyiv only once more during his

⁶⁹ "Lyst Serhiiia Paradzhanova Ovcharenku," in L. Briukhovets'ka, ed., *Poetychne kino: zaboronena shkola* (Kyiv: ArtEk, 2001), 270.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 272.

life, after hearing that his son, Suren, had contracted typhus in December 1973. While waiting at the station for his train back to Moscow, Kyiv *militiia* officers arrested him. By this time, Ovcharenko had returned to life as an apolitical chemist at the Academy of Sciences, and Shelest was living on a pension in Moscow, forced into early retirement. In this letter to Ovcharenko, unthinkable under Ideological Secretary Valentyn Malanchuk and First Secretary Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi, we find Paradzhanov attempting to speak to both Ukrainian nationality politics of the 1960s, which increasingly found support among certain top-ranking members of the party, and to concerns about Soviet cinema's commercialization. Essentially, Paradzhanov saw these two problems as necessarily linked. Moreover, we see the director perhaps opportunistically appealing to a Ukrainian nationality politics in 1969, something absent from his 1957 letter to the studio director and the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture (see Chapter 2). In this earlier letter, Paradzhanov appealed exclusively to the cultivation of personal expression and "*vne kolektiva*" production, indicating that the nationality question was no longer linked to the Thaw-era problematic of personal authorship. Instead, Paradzhanov appealed exclusively to his contribution to a system of national representation, which had its origins in Dovzhenko's work.

Into the late 1960s, Shelest too began questioning cultural policies emanating from Moscow, and as such was both fearful of Paradzhanov the individual, but remained proud of his work in and for the republic.⁷² Around the time that Paradzhanov wrote to Ovcharenko, Shelest complained in his diary of certain "political figures in Moscow, who are scared of anything non-Russian, who treat it with a certain distrust, even contempt, and reveal flagrant [*makhrovyi*] great-power chauvinism."⁷³ Shelest identified CPSU Ideological Secretary Mikhail Suslov as first among these "chauvinists." In appropriating such a language directly after discussing a campaign to discredit Ivan Dziuba, we cannot help but wonder if the dissidents' ideas had made an impression on the

⁷² [cite Steffen here]

⁷³ "Spohady i shchodennykovi zapysy Petra Shelesta," in Iurii Shapoval, ed., *Petro Shelest: "Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedu"* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2003), 310.

First Secretary. After all, Dziuba identified the same fear of the non-Russian in *Internationalism or Russification?* when he argued that any mention of “National sentiment, consciousness and duties” necessarily entailed the label of “bourgeois nationalism” in the Soviet Union, despite the sound Leninist principles that underlie these notions. Yet, as is evident in Shelest’s implementation of Dziuba’s language, “national sentiment, consciousness and duties” remained at the root of mainstream cultural and political discourse into the late-1960s. Dziuba was attacked, not because he chose to criticize recent interpretations of Leninist nationalities policy, but because he “played into the hands of the enemies” by airing his concerns, and refusing to acknowledge the positive work that LNP had done for Ukraine. In a letter to the CPSU Central Committee, Shelest addressed Dziuba’s and others’ critique, not with mere condemnation of the very mention of Ukrainian national sentiment, as Dziuba might have expected, but with arguments that disputed his claims, while specifying further work in developing certain areas of cultural life in the republic that essentially would respond to the substance of his petition.⁷⁴

In his diary, Shelest registered increasing annoyance with what he perceived as an anti-Ukrainian bias in Moscow. On one occasion, he wrote that Brezhnev had asked him why Ukrainians still insist upon speaking Ukrainian. To Shelest, Brezhnev was questioning the very basis of Ukrainian nationality in the Soviet Union, and now believed that he had to respond in an official capacity to this claim from the center. The result, *Oh Ukraine, My Soviet Land (Ukraino, nasha Radians’ka*, 1970) addressed a number of general historical and geographical sites of importance for justifying the Ukrainian nation, primarily located in a pre-revolutionary and non-Russian Ukraine.⁷⁵

Simultaneously, Vitalii Fedorchuk was appointed Ukrainian KGB head, with the support of Shelest rivals under Shcherbyts’kyi within the CPU apparatus. According to Borys Lewytzkyj, Fedorchuk was responsible for spreading anti-Shelest propaganda within the Central Committee of the CPU and CPSU,

⁷⁴ TsDAHOU, f. 1, d. 24, d. 5991, ll. 118-19.

⁷⁵ Petro Shelest, *Ukraino, nasha Radians’ka* (Kyiv: Politychna literature, 1970).

suggesting that the First Secretary was attempting to promote the dissident and nationalist movements, in addition to the removal of Brezhnev. In April 1971, Shelest was removed from his posts as CPU First Secretary, and Chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, in addition to his spot on the CPSU Politburo. Shcherbyts'kyi took his place in all three arenas. Brezhnev made it clear when Shelest asked him the reason for his removal that it was based on Fedorchuk's and Shcherbyts'kyi's efforts.⁷⁶ In 1973, Shelest was removed from all official duties, and went on a pension.

While Shelest did in fact accept some of the principles of the dissident movement, as he rose in his political career within the same cultural milieu, the accusations that led to his removal were preposterous. After all, Shelest lived the rest of his life in Moscow, and even refused to endorse Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1990. But Paradzhanov and others involved in the Ukrainian film industry addressed Shelest and his people in the CPU Central Committee within the idiom of the development of Ukrainian culture and the assertion of a personal ideological commitment to such a project against the rising tide of "de-nationalization" emerging in the form of Soviet cinema's commercialization.

Trudnye fil'my and kassovye fil'my

Within this increasing emphasis on the quantitative dimensions of audience politics, "poetic cinema" directors had to speak to broader concerns beyond the principle of national authorship. Yet, Iurii Illienko seemed to move in the opposite direction with his adaptation of Gogol's *St. John's Eve* (*Vecher na Ivana Kupala*, 1968), an eclectic mix of Ukrainian folkloric motifs and encounters with the supernatural, visual humor and farce, a story of forbidden love, and couched political critique. Stylistically, the film contains frequent narrative lapses, jump cuts, a moving camera, and *tableaux* images. Employing a film solarization technique that Illienko used in the fight between Ivanko and Iurko in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, *St. John's Eve* distinguishes between the "real" and the

⁷⁶ Quoted in Iurii Shapoval, "Petro Shelest u konteksti politychnoi istorii Ukrainy XX stolittia," in *Petro Shelest: "Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedy,"* 13.



Figure 5.5. Translating the early Gogol' to the screen in *St. John's Eve*: the devil as Cossack (top) and the possessed hero, Petro (bottom).

world of the supernatural with different color schemes. Some scenes are viewed through a negative print, and others contain only tones of blue or orange (Figure 5.5). By the second part, as witches and devils possess Petro, the hero, the film degenerates into absurdist constructions, as if the spectator were experiencing the same process. In mixing the symbolic world of Ukrainian folklore and the presence of Cossacks and other historical / mythological figures with such a dynamic and de-familiarized literary terrain, Illienko's film functioned as a complex, intellectual parody of the Stalinist folkloric.

Written by Illienko himself, and shot by his older brother Vadym (who previously worked on Viktor Ivanov's *Oleksa Dovbush*), *St. John's Eve* was to be a completely "vne kolektiva" and author-driven production. When he and Ivan Drach (who had taken the film on as screenplay editor) proposed the Gogol' adaptation, they imagined it as a second chance to establish a national cinema based on the "mark" of intellectual authorship. This time couched behind the language of classic literary adaptation, however, Illienko found an audience at the studio and within the CPU leadership largely receptive to the project, despite the director's political failure with *A Well for the Thirsty*. Critic Mikhail Bleiman, who reviewed politically questionable screenplays for central Goskino during the late-1960s and early-1970s, gave the go ahead, stating, "Illienko 'finds' his theme in Gogol', and in my opinion, he finds it convincingly." While discovering "shortcomings" in the second half of the film, which significantly "departed from Gogol's literary basis," Bleiman concluded, "Iu. Illienko is a talented man and works seriously. It seems we see the same thing in the screenplay written by him. Thus, it is possible to have faith in its author and director."⁷⁷ From the importance that Goskino placed on Bleiman's opinions, we may assume that the industry continued to promote the principle of individual authorship. With *St. John's Eve*, however, we begin to see the very significance of the industry's drive toward selling a profitable commodity. While Illienko's 1968 production was his most experimental film before restrictions were lifted during *glasnost'*, it signaled the growing divide between what critics were calling "difficult" films (*trudnye*

⁷⁷ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 1206, l. 9.

fil'my) and commercial productions (*kassovye fil'my*). As in Western Europe after the emergence of Italian Neo-realism, the French New Wave, and New German Cinema, the Soviet film industry was losing its own claim to represent the cultured middle.⁷⁸

Osyka too had successfully played the adaptation card to receive permission to make his author-driven film, *The Stone Cross* (*Kaminnyi khrest*, 1968), based on two short stories ("The Stone Cross" and "The Thief," both published in 1900) by Galician novelist Vasyl' Stefanyk.⁷⁹ The Russified Osyka initially proposed an adaptation of an Andrei Platonov story, but Tsvirkunov reportedly told Osyka, "In Ukraine we have our own Platonov, one who is closer to us."⁸⁰ Thereafter, the director found a Russian translation of Stefanyk, coincidentally with commentary by Platonov, believing that with this he had found the "Ukrainian Platonov."⁸¹ Having discussed Stefanyk's significance for Ukrainian culture with Osyka, Drach then agreed to write the screenplay. Stefanyk's *oeuvre* included 59 short stories, many of them only a few pages long, and which attempted at a description of "slice of life" events in the lives of poor Galician peasants.⁸² With his extensive merging of dialect with literary Ukrainian, Stefanyk became an ideal author to adapt in light of the success with this method in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. Drach's narrative merge of "The Stone Cross" with "The Thief" with the same protagonist of Ivan Didukh attempted at a more complete literary form than Stefanyk had originally established with them. Yet, as was Osyka's penchant for stylistic eclecticism, the two stories remain

⁷⁸ For an example of this claim, see Aleksandr Karaganov, "Kino i zritel'," *Sovetskii ekran*, no. 14 (July 1965), 3.

⁷⁹ While the Soviet Ukrainian government attempted to woo Stefanyk to their side with the promise of a life-long pension, he rejected it due to Soviet repressions against Ukraine. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union continued to herald his work and published extensive volumes throughout his life and after he died in 1936.

⁸⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 400, l. 176.

⁸¹ Ivan Drach, "Tvorchi plany ie i, iakshcho Boh das't, ia ikh zdiisniu..." *Kino Teatr*, no. 5 (2002), 34. Osyka was never very interested in Ukrainian literature. During a SKU Presidium meeting in 1972, he complained once again that adaptations of Ukrainian literature did not adapt well, and that he would prefer to work on adaptations of Russian literature. Denysenko and Goskino Chairman Vasyl' Bol'shak were upset, accusing him of defaming "our Ukrainian literature." See, TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 632, l. 124.

⁸² See, D. S. Struk, *A Study of Vasyl' Stefanyk: The Pain at the Heart of Existence* (Littleton, CO: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1973).

noticeably cut off from each other. The overarching narrative, however, tells of an impoverished Galician peasant, who is forced in his old age to leave his home and set out with his children for Canada in search of work. The bulk of the story deals with his going away party, at which his entire village makes an appearance. In this first scene, taken from "The Thief," Didukh discovers a thief in his barn, whom he stabs in the leg with a pitchfork before inviting him to drink with his neighbor. After drinking and discussing the contemporary state of politics and the reasons for Ukrainians leaving their native land, Didukh beats the thief to death. The going-away party is less realist in style, incorporating local song and other elements of ethnographic spectacle and local ritual, as a mobile camera surveys the guests wishing Ivan farewell. As the Didukh family prepares to leave at the end of the party, they change out of their "native" clothing into urban formal wear. The film ends as they pass a stone cross on a hillside.

As was now a standard-bearer of "Ukrainian poetic cinema," Osyka shot the film in Stefanyk's native Pokuttia village of Rusiv, using actual residents as extras. In a language that should be familiar, Ukrainian critic Liudmila Lemesheva wrote, "Stefanyk's fellow countrymen did not perform in this film, but seemingly continued to live their ordinary lives." In *The Stone Cross*, Lemesheva posited, "Life, seen and constructed according to artistic rules, coincided with real life."⁸³ Yet, as with the claim that associated contemporary Hutsuls with those represented in *Shadows*, authorities would have been hesitant to agree with such a trans-historical claim because it denied the principle of development. As the Hutsul who wrote to *Novyny kinoekrana* (cited in Chapter 4) implied, these images were "not us." Although Lemesheva probably did not intend to imply this, but in her affirmation of the collision of the "constructed" and the "real," we understand that the "not us" only became "us" when the cameras were rolling.

In attempting to present the realism of "national character," the first scene of *The Stone Cross* constituted a realist film, with its emphasis on dialogue and traditional framing techniques. Only the minimalism of the narrative and the

⁸³ Liudmila Lemesheva, *Ukrainskoe kino: Problemy odnogo pokoleniia* (Moscow: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR Biuro propogandy kinoiskusstva, 1987), 42.

seeming lack of character motivation in killing the thief, stand out as elements of experimentation.⁸⁴ The film follows a standard narrative development, in which the camera is invisible, and cinematic conventions of continuity are not broken, for the most part. The scene, during which the three drink, particularly accepts realist convention, even while it serves the function of coloring in the film's nationality with the use of Pokuttia dialect and local costume. Similarly, the thief sings to the others after finished drinking, and the on-screen music is within the narrative, rather than being performed as a self-contained spectacle, as in Pyr'ev's and Paradzhanov's work. *Osyka* fixates particularly on the land, but not for its beauty. In fact, the land is infinitely gray, dry, and only intriguing insofar as it is uniform and inhospitable. But the hero's tragedy is not the social aspects of poverty itself (what the studio sold the film as to Goskino), but the disconnection between land and human subject, which further posits that human misery emerges out of natural or biological conditions rather than social conditions.

As a film that addressed the problem of "realism" and "national character," *The Stone Cross* garnered serious accolades at the studio and in Ukrainian Goskino in February 1968. Nonetheless, *Osyka's Stone Cross*, like Illienko's very different *St. John's Eve*, remained a "difficult" film, in part because few non-Ukrainians (or Ukrainians for that matter) were familiar with Stefanyk's work. *Osyka*, as I suggested, had never heard the name until Drach helped him along his journey to Ukrainian literary consciousness with the Russian translation. Thus, organs of distribution were more reluctant than ever to risk not fulfilling their plans with regular screenings of *Osyka's* film. Consequently, *The Stone Cross* failed to draw even the abysmal 3.5 million spectators that his directorial debut did, the latter perhaps possessing some draw based on marketing the film as part of the Victory Day commemorations of the mid-1960s. In fact, both Illienko's *St. John's Eve* and *Osyka's Stone Cross* sold under 1.5 million tickets

⁸⁴ Lemesheva, however, wrote that we can understand the "severe" nature of the murder within the severity of the Pokuttia ethnoscape itself: "People are severe, not because they are bad [zlye] – [the murder] is not [done] from a natural and unguided impulse of anger. Simply, they are obligated to carry out the law of the community. But this law is simple: The thief caught on the spot of the crime must be beaten to death." Lemesheva, 6.

each, with close to a third of these in Ukraine.⁸⁵ SK First Secretary Lev Kulidzhanov mentioned *St. John's Eve* as a film that succeeded on the “festival circuit” but did nothing to help “solve the problem of the spectator.”⁸⁶ In a reprise of the Dnipropetrovsk engineer’s letter regarding *Shadows*, one spectator wrote to the Central Committee after viewing *St. John's Eve*, calling it an “unwholesome phenomenon.”⁸⁷

The pattern of screening the two films, which coincided with each other in spring 1969, demonstrated that UKK had more in mind than simply limiting its time in theaters. *The Stone Cross* ran in four different theaters in Kyiv from April 21 to May 4, and *St. John's Eve* in three theaters from April 24 to May 25. Interestingly, the venues for both films also coincided: Ukraina, Leningrad and Dovzhenko.⁸⁸ These theaters were also the venues that showed *Shadows* and *Love Awaits Those Who Return* for the longest period. Thus, in consciously directing such “difficult” films toward particular movie theaters, UKK was acting in accordance with Western film distribution principles of differentiated marketing of “popular films” and “art films.”⁸⁹

Despite doing nothing to “help solve the problem of the spectator,” *St. John's Eve* and *The Stone Cross* were “good” adaptations, each receiving first-category ratings, and praise from major Soviet critics of all persuasions.⁹⁰ They succeeded in conveying the unique style of the early Gogol’, with his mix of Ukrainian folklore, comedy and social critique, and the dismal mood of Vasyl’ Stefanyk’s work. While the films of 1965 came out in answer to the demand for images of the Ukrainian “contemporary,” it was in this ethnographic style of representation, which the regime understood as firmly located in the pre-socialist past, that they perceived an anti-Soviet position. Illienko’s and Osyka’s response to 1965, then, became a return to the “actual” past, where such “negative”

⁸⁵ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 539, l. 143.

⁸⁶ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 305, l. 61.

⁸⁷ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2354, l. 8.

⁸⁸ Illienko’s film also screened briefly at Kinopanorama, the largest theater in town, but only to showcase its widescreen format. *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, April 24-May 25, 1969.

⁸⁹ See, Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 183-95.

⁹⁰ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 1991, l. 14; d. 1992, l. 38; TsDAVOU, f. 4754, op. 1, d. 137, l. 99.

imagery would be allowed, even if it continued to be discouraged to work on non-contemporary themes.

Yet, as Kulidzhanov suggested, Illienko and Osyka continued to refuse to participate in the new audience politics, and “Ukrainian poetic cinema” came to be the clearest indication that Soviet cinema more broadly was divided between “*trudnye fil'my*” and “*kassovye fil'my*.” In an article for *Sovetskii ekran*, critic Tatiana Ivanova identified in Illienko’s recent work the high-water mark of the “difficult film.” According to her definition, the “difficult film” was one in which an “obviously high level of artistry” did not meet with a “wide success with the spectator [*zritel'skii uspek*].”⁹¹ In her argument, while Paradzhanov’s *Shadows* constituted a “difficult” viewing experience for many spectators, *St. John’s Eve* developed the “genre” of the “difficult film” to its extreme. Thus, while she did not deny that he adapted Gogol’ correctly, the results perhaps suggested that this was not a useful story to adapt in the first place. On the other hand, when writing in “Triunity,” Illienko considered Gogol’s evocation of visuality in his early work to be an indication that it was ideal for adaptation, precisely due to its lack of *literaturnost'*. Ivanova concluded that a division now existed in Soviet cinema between the “difficult” film and the “commercial” film, to which filmmakers needed to mend.⁹²

The next films that Illienko and Osyka made – *White Bird with a Black Mark* (*Bilyi ptakh z chornoiu oznakoiu*, 1970) and *Zakhar Berkut* (1972), respectively – were historical epics, slotted to become major box office successes. In accepting that Illienko and Osyka were the two most talented directors at Dovzhenko Studio in the early 1970s, authorities in Ukrainian Goskino and the Central Committee believed that, if the two accepted that an appeal to actual spectators was important, their abilities could be harnessed for the continued benefit of Ukrainian cinema. When Illienko began working on his Great Patriotic War film set in Bukovyna in late 1969, he was the youngest member of the collective to hold the prestigious position of director-producer,

⁹¹ T. Ivanova, “Trudnoe – eshche trudnee – sovsem trudno...” *Ekran 69-70* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970), 90.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 95.

highest category (*rezhiser-postanovshchik vyshchoi kategorii*). *White Bird* was to be the showcase film from Ukraine for the 25th Anniversary of Victory Day, while Osyka's story of medieval Carpathian tribes uniting against a Mongol invasion cost the studio close to 1.5 million rubles, by far the largest budget for any one-part film made at Dovzhenko Studio to date.⁹³

In many ways, Illienko's *White Bird* was his most successful and accessible film thus far. Iurii Lysenko, no longer fed up with the "morons in the pictures," commented that *White Bird* represented the first time that the "new methods" were used for a "civil theme."⁹⁴ Iurii Novykov noted the beginning of a "new cinematic phenomenon [of] an amalgamation of poetic and realist cinema."⁹⁵ The Dovzhenko Studio Artistic Council called Illienko's completed film "traditional" in terms of plot development and narration, but "innovative" in terms of the "directorial treatment,"⁹⁶ here suggesting the positive role of its "visual culture." He had definitively moved away from the avant-garde experimentation of *St. John's Eve*, and made a Great Patriotic War epic about the Zvonar' family in Bukovyna, each member of which goes in a different ideological direction. The screenplay's co-author, Mykolaichuk, played the role of Petro, the social hero who joins the Soviet Army, while Bohdan Stupka, a young actor at L'viv's Shevchenko Theater, played his brother Orest, who joins Bandera. The third brother, Heorhii, wavers between the two until their sister Dana is raped by Banderists, and afterwards becomes a committed communist. The locating of ideological divergence within the family is a persistent motif in Ukrainian literature, emerging, for example, in Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba*, Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora* and Iurii Ianovs'kyi's novel *Riders (Vershnyky)*, the latter most famous for Savchenko's 1939 adaptation.⁹⁷ While such a narrative trope defines a "good" brother and a "bad" brother, it does so while maintaining the comprehensibility of the "bad" brother's motives. This was the problem that was

⁹³ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2322, l. 43; RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 1931, ll. 34-35.

⁹⁴ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2324, l. 106.

⁹⁵ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2262, l. 38.

⁹⁶ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2324, l. 91

⁹⁷ I examine this narrative trope of ideological divergence as locating in the family in *Taras Bul'ba* and *Zvenyhora* in Chapter 1.

the basis of Illienko's film: Orest's character remains the most compelling personality, while Mykolaichuk's Petro is superficially drawn, almost unbelievable in his seemingly natural commitment to communism. Members of the CPU Central Committee immediately perceived this possibility in the screenplay, and Goskino refused to approve Mykolaichuk for the role of Orest, for whom he had written it.⁹⁸ While the film won the Grand Prize at the Moscow International Film Festival in 1971, local authorities, especially the L'viv *miskom*, called the film "socially harmful" for its assessment that the Banderist movement was not aligned with Nazi Germany.⁹⁹ Shelest, however, liked the film tremendously upon viewing it privately and permitted its distribution in Ukraine.¹⁰⁰

The film's narrative, which takes place during World War II and the struggle between Nazi collaborators, the OUN, and Soviet partisans, follows a standard plot found in many post-Stalinist Soviet war films that focus on everyday life and suffering during the war,¹⁰¹ but serves to nationalize the conflict, making it specific to the particular experience of Bukovynian peasants. Apart from the narrative we find the essential questions, which the film addresses: the reconciliation of a folkloric and ahistorical past with the needs of a materialist worldview. The film is not really about ideas; rather, it is about the presentation of various facets of rural life in Western Ukraine; the dialogue is frequently poetic or lyric in quality, and the characters both inhabit and perpetuate the folkloric. Objects from everyday life fill the scenes, and constitute the film's spectacle. This is emphasized by placing humans and objects self-consciously within frames, constructed out of the fabric of the scene.

White Bird possessed many of the same features as *Shadows*, evident in its emphasis on color and camera techniques directly in line with Illienko's work on Paradzhanov's film. Moreover, the film contains frequent breaks in the narrative to accommodate the presence of folkloric display (dance, diegetic

⁹⁸ Vitalli Borshchov, "Pid tiaharom 'serpa i molota': tvoryv svoi naikrashchi fil'my Iurii Illenko," *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, April 18, 1996: 3.

⁹⁹ "Protokol vid 22 bereznia 1971 roku," in *Poetychne kino: Zaboronena shkola*, 291.

¹⁰⁰ See, Illiashenko, 186, 206.

¹⁰¹ See, Denise Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2000* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007), 107-141.



Figure 5.6. Ethnographic survey of Bukovynian peasant faces in Illienko's *White Bird with a Black Mark* (1971)

music, and *tableaux*). *White Bird*, nonetheless, remained more of a complex psychological investigation of the main characters than any prior work of “Ukrainian poetic cinema,” and its narrative followed classic norms in its emphasis on continuity and motivated action.¹⁰² In many respects, these two aspects of the film are sharply distinguishable: Spectacle is delineated from narrative content, and the rhythmic flow of the camera contrasts with the static framing devices that owe much to the style contained in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.

Authorities at Dovzhenko Studio engaged with new “consumerist” audience politics when attempting to find both a differentiated audience (locally in the Carpathians and nationally in Ukraine) and a mass audience for Illienko’s *White Bird*. This was the first film that Ukrainian Goskino test marketed in the republic before sending it to Moscow for all-Union release. Before the Russian dubbed version was even completed, Dovzhenko Theater near the studio screened the film twice in March 1971.¹⁰³ The following week, *White Bird* made its controversial appearance at the 24th Congress of the CPU, after which the film was pulled from distribution owing to the concerns of several Western Ukrainian *obkom* Secretaries about the nationalist implications of the film.¹⁰⁴ Over the summer, Illienko’s film was released in several key spots in the republic as part of a traveling “National Film Festival [*narodnyi kinofestival*]” that showcased Dovzhenko Studio productions.¹⁰⁵ S. P. Ivanov wrote to the Cultural Section of the CPU that, during the test release of the film in Ukraine, the film performed extraordinarily well in the Western Oblasts, offering the “remarkable” figure that 50% of the people in L’viv oblast’ saw the film.¹⁰⁶ In distinction to earlier works of “Ukrainian poetic cinema,” letters in the studio archive were entirely positive

¹⁰² David Bordwell defines “classical narration” in terms of its “psychologically defined individuals,” who encounter a series of conflicts, which become resolved by the end of the film. Bordwell contends that character “motivation” and “causality” are the principle ingredients that drive classical narration. David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1985), 157.

¹⁰³ *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, March 13, 1971.

¹⁰⁴ “Protokol,” 291.

¹⁰⁵ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2262, l. 5.

¹⁰⁶ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 32, d. 585, l. 148.

about *White Bird*.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, during a 1971 sociological study conducted at the Kyiv aircraft construction plant, audiences evaluated Illienko's film highly during a private screening.¹⁰⁸ During the 2nd Congress of the SK, Kulidzhanov finished his speech about the "problem of the spectator" with a positive word about *White Bird*, suggesting that it was a film that attempted to reconcile the growing divide between "*trudnye fil'my*" and "*kassovye fil'my*."¹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, with Shcherbyts'kyi's rise to power in late 1971, the film continued to have a highly limited distribution. In Kyiv, *White Bird* played only at the Ukraina throughout September and October, and then briefly at Kinopanorama after the wide-screen version was released in January.¹¹⁰ According to the test marketing, *White Bird* could have been at least a minor box office hit, but the Shcherbyts'kyi regime was clearly concerned with other problems of an exclusively ideological nature. In fact, it appears that, in this case, it was the film's very potential for popular consumption that turned CPU officials against it.

Leonid Osyka's *Zakhar Berkut* (1972) represented a further attempt at melding the visual techniques and Ukrainian classic literary material of "poetic cinema" with an objectively determined set of criteria that would appeal to Soviet audiences. Based on stories contained in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle and the 1883 novel by Ivan Franko, Osyka's film was a big-budget national-historical epic about the title character who unites the Carpathian tribes against the Mongol invasion of 1241. The production of the film was incredibly taxing on both the studio's resources, and on Osyka himself (who began drinking heavily at the time). In fact, *Zakhar Berkut* did not seem to fit with his style of making small, "quiet" films like *Stone Cross*. In October 1969, S. P. Ivanov wrote to Aleksei Romanov on the possibility of increasing the studio's overall production budget from 3,480,000 to 3,922,000 rubles, owing to the anniversary year productions

¹⁰⁷ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2605, l. 58-59.

¹⁰⁸ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2536, l. 12.

¹⁰⁹ RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 305, l. 62.

¹¹⁰ *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, August 30-October 27, 1971; TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 32, d. 585, l. 148.

and the “extremely complicated” production of Osyka’s film.¹¹¹ *Zakhar Berkut* was to be a mainstream historical epic – an “Americanization of Franko,” as one contemporary critic put it¹¹² – along the lines of *Oleksa Dovbush* in its genre-driven iconography, but which would employ the “new methods” of “Ukrainian poetic cinema” to explore the Carpathian ethnoscape. In fact, the historical epic, to which Osyka’s film most strived to emulate was the work of Romanian director Sergiu Nicolaescu, whose elaborate historical epics *The Dacians* (1966) and *Mihai Viteazul* (1970-71) offered comparable national origin myths emerging from the union of pre-national Carpathian tribes against invaders from the East (Mongols in Osyka’s case and Turks in Nicolaescu’s films).

Key to both Illienko’s *White Bird* and Osyka’s *Zakhar Berkut* was the industry’s re-investment with visuality, but in the latter case only as a means to cash in on what authorities in Goskino saw as a successful model through which Hollywood recouped its profits after the late-1950s and early-1960s losses. The most obvious example of epic filmmaking in the Soviet Union was Sergei Bondarchuk’s mammoth four-part adaptation of Lev Tolstoi’s *War and Peace* (*Voyna i mir*, 1965-67). Bondarchuk’s next film, *Waterloo* (*Vaterloo*, 1970), was a sprawling historical epic about Napoleon’s final battle, which featured Rod Steiger as the title character, Orson Welles as King Louis XVIII, and 20,000 extras. While a phenomenal box office flop upon its release in 1971, during its production Dovzhenko Studio viewed Osyka’s film as means to prove that Ukraine could be trusted to deliver a similar product for domestic and international consumption. From the very beginning, however, Kyiv filmmakers realized that, despite the extraordinary budget Osyka commanded, Goskino had bigger fish to fry. Resentfully, Levchuk stated during a meeting of the studio Artistic Council, “If Bondarchuk had 1200 horses, then Osyka should have 1500 horses!”¹¹³ Authorities at Mosfil’m, however, continually ignored the film’s production manager’s requests to use Bondarchuk’s horses after he was done with them. Eventually responding that they couldn’t transport the animals to

¹¹¹ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 1931, l. 7.

¹¹² Serhii Trymbach, “Chomu zh ne nashym dniyam sudylosia?” *Kino Teatr*, no. 1 (1997), 30.

¹¹³ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2324, l. 40.

Osyka's desired location in the Carpathians, Bondarchuk's production crew refused. This refusal infuriated Osyka and the studio, because Bondarchuk himself was in the process of shooting a battle scene for *Waterloo* in the trans-Carpathian city of Uzhhorod around the same time.¹¹⁴ In the end, they had to shoot *Zakhar Berkut* in the unlikely location of the Tian Shan mountain range of Central Asia, an area that resembles the Ukrainian Carpathians about as much as the Appalachians resemble the Rockies, and Osyka had to make due with horses rented from local *kolkhozy*.¹¹⁵ Osyka was livid with such privilege that central directors received at the expense of those on the "periphery," especially as Bondarchuk had initially made a name for himself as an actor at Kyiv Studio in the 1950s, playing such prestigious roles as Taras Shevchenko in Savchenko's 1951 production and the title character in Levchuk's *Ivan Franko* in 1956. When Bondarchuk expressed a desire to make Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* at Dovzhenko Studio as a co-production with Mosfil'm and Vidino de Lerentis studio in Italy in 1972, Osyka blurted out during a studio meeting, "Now Bondarchuk will exploit all of us. We will work like we are in Hollywood."¹¹⁶

While the studio and Ukrainian Goskino offered the film praise, and audiences liked it for the most part,¹¹⁷ the shifting political situation in the republic at the time of its release limited its distribution. After Ovcharenko's ouster, his replacement as Ideological Secretary Fedir Malanchuk demanded a total halt to historical themes, on the basis that they had ceased to be relevant to Ukraine.¹¹⁸ During a CPU Plenum in May 1974, First Secretary Shcherbyts'kyi finally ended all discussion of "Ukrainian poetic cinema:"

¹¹⁴ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 609, l. 13.

¹¹⁵ RGALI, f. 2944, op. 4, d. 1931, ll. 19-29.

¹¹⁶ TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2426, l. 14.

¹¹⁷ A letter from a spectator in Kryvii Rih who had seen the film stated that the image of the Carpathians was "very authentic." TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2454, ll. 52-53.

¹¹⁸ Putintsev stated this directly in August 1975, but it was discouraged beginning in 1972. TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2997, l. 31.

Some time ago, examples of so-called “poetic cinema” with its stress on abstract symbolism and sharply accented ethnographic ornamentation were treated by individual filmmakers almost as the leading principles of the development of cinema art in Ukraine. These views, it is necessary to say, have been overcome.¹¹⁹

The First Secretary’s remarks about “poetic cinema” in particular were printed in all the major Ukrainian-language newspapers and journals dedicated to literature and art (*Kul’tura i zhyttia*, *Literaturna Ukraïna*, *Novyny kinoekrana*, *Radians’ka kul’tura*). While Moscow critics continued to discuss “poetic cinema” in the central press after Shcherbyts’kyi’s speech, the problem had been “overcome” in Ukraine, and it was no longer a topic in republican-level discourse. During the *Malanchukshchyna* of the mid-to-late-1970s, both historical directors and those who regularly worked within “national” thematics found it difficult to find work. Most affected, however, was Mykolaichuk, whose health and career took a nose-dive. For five years, he played nothing except bit parts in Ukrainian films, in addition to a few small roles at Mosfil’m and in a Bulgarian production. Central Goskino in fact deliberately sabotaged his career, as they halted production on an informational bulletin on the actor, meant for popularization purposes in 1974, directly after Shcherbyts’kyi’s speech.¹²⁰

In September 1974, Vasyl’ Bol’shak sent an order to Sovetsportfil’m to remove both *White Bird* and *Zakhar Berkut* from future distribution abroad.¹²¹ At this point, even the possibility of generating revenue from these two celebrated syntheses of “poetic” and “realist” Ukrainian cinema proved too dangerous for the mature period of Shcherbyts’kyi’s stagnation regime.

Tymofii Levchuk and the Poetics of Stagnation

The new head of Ukrainian Goskino’s SRK, Carpathian highlander Petro Kuvyk, announced in 1972 that the studio thematic plan for the next four years

¹¹⁹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 2, d. 101, l. 37-38.

¹²⁰ Liudmyla Lemesheva, “Deshcho z osobystoho zhyttia krytyka,” in *Poetychne kino: zaboronena shkola*, 306.

¹²¹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 32, d. 878, l. 156.

had only three “directions [*napriamky*],” in which filmmakers could work: The first field included the ubiquitous yet ambiguous category of “our contemporary.” Second, Ukrainian directors could work in the realm of “adaptations of Russian and Ukrainian classics.” Finally, Kuvyk mentioned adventure films. Fresh from the trying experience of *Zakhar Berkut*, Osyka stated that he saw nothing to work on in the next four years.¹²² During a subsequent meeting about the 1974-1975 plan, Levchuk noticed that there was only one film on a “Ukrainian theme,” his own Ukrainian partisan epic, *Carpathians, Carpathians (Karpaty, Karpaty, 1976)*.¹²³

A decade before this dismal meeting, in the midst of debates about “poetic cinema” and the “revelation” of Paradzhanov’s *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, critic Mykola Berezhnyi gave the First Secretary of the SKU a slap in the face with his statement, “We don’t need to produce Levchuks at the studio, but Dovzhenkos, because it’s a bad soldier who doesn’t want to be a general...”¹²⁴ In 1941, the recent graduate of the Kyiv Film Institute and assistant director on Ihor Savchenko’s *Riders*, had enlisted in the Soviet Army on the day after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviet press wrote about his exploits on the Ukrainian Front, and he was awarded the highest medal for combat, Hero of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, Levchuk remained a petty officer at the war’s conclusion, while Dovzhenko, who had no combat experience, left the service with the rank of *polkovnyk* (Colonel), and who spent the war organizing documentaries in Central Asia and Bashkiria, only briefly appearing on the front.¹²⁵ Thus, Berezhnyi’s statement was not entirely fair, especially since Levchuk did in fact make a number of Ukrainian-themed films during his long career, including a three-part history of a family of Arsenal factory workers and their children, and a bio-pic on the life of Ivan Franko. As a member of the Verkhovna Rada, he traveled to New York, Paris, Munich, and Winnipeg to speak to Ukrainian émigré communities, embodying a role different from that of

¹²² TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 632, l. 120.

¹²³ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 705, l. 28.

¹²⁴ TsDAMLMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 285, l. 49.

¹²⁵ See, George O. Liber, “Dovzhenko’s War,” in *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film* (London: BFI Publications, 2002), 186-212.

Mykolaichuk, but nonetheless served as an important messenger from the *batkivshchyna*. As the First Secretary of the SKU, Levchuk gave strong support to both Paradzhanov and the promotion of a *dovzhenkovskaia poetika* throughout 1964-1967. He, nonetheless, believed in the party, and blindly accepted CPU policy, giving the order to expel Paradzhanov from the SKU as soon as he was arrested, citing the director's lack of involvement in Union activities as justification.¹²⁶

Moreover, his work during the first half of the 1960s seemed strangely out of touch with the cultural politics and aesthetic interests of Dovzhenko Studio during this time. In 1962, he made *The Law of Antarctica (Zakon Antarktida)* about Soviet Antarctic explorers who rescue a team of Belgian geologists; in 1964, *Cosmic Alloy (Kosmicheskii splav)* about a factory that produces rockets for space travel; and in 1966, *Two Years above the Abyss (Dva goda nad propast'iu)*, about Ivan Kudry and the Kyiv underground during the Nazi occupation. Apart from the latter film, which dealt with a "local" topic and became a "leader in distribution" with 30.7 million tickets sold in 1967, Levchuk appeared to his colleagues as a "zakaznyi rezhiser," a director who took on films that the CPSU ordered directly, without consideration of the particular goals of the studio or the potential audience for such films.¹²⁷

Perhaps in an attempt to re-assert his relevance at the studio, Levchuk fought hard for his next project, his long-term dream to adapt Ukrainian novelist Natan Rybak's *Honoré de Balzac's Mistake (Oshibka Onere de Bal'zaka, 1968)*

¹²⁶ While the central Union of Cinematographers cited the reason for his removal, "due to a criminal case," Levchuk wrote a long justification: "From the very beginning, S. Paradzhanov did not show interest in the Union. He took a long time in filling out his questionnaire for entry, and paid his dues after a long period of having forgotten. He did not participate in any of the work of the Union." TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 738, l. 7-8.

¹²⁷ Nonna Kapel'horods'ka argues that *Two Years* was a complete failure in terms of Levchuk's directing, and everyone at the studio realized this at the time. She writes that it "could have become a real event in the artistic life [of the republic] if [its] fragmentariness were not felt..." In terms of the content, she argues, "A number of other moments in the movie did not satisfy spectators. Kyivans had to deal with the [notion] the Hitlerites destroyed Kyiv, and not Soviet miners..." Other atrocities committed by Kudryi himself were also not mentionable in the film, and the older residents of the city were all too aware of the falsifications in it. See, Kapel'horods'ka, *Renesans vitchyznianoho kino: Notatky suchasnytsi* (Kyiv: Avdi, 2002), 81. The only negative press on the film was Iurii Shelest's review in *Ranok*, for which he lost his job (Kapel'horods'ka, 8).

about the French writer's journey to the Russian Empire to re-ignite a love affair with Polish noblewoman Ewalina Hańska, whom he goes on to marry five months before his death in March 1850.¹²⁸ In early 1967, Levchuk provided an explanation of the screenplay, in which he stressed Balzac's relations and knowledge of the Ukrainian people as he traveled around the countryside. He wrote that the "film permits a spontaneous and [...] deep revelation of the picture of life of our people [...]. In comparison to the novel, the screenplay has significantly expanded Balzac's acquaintance with the Ukrainian people, not only in Verkhovyna, but also in Kyiv." The film begins in Paris, with Balzac arranging travel to the Russian Empire, as much to evade his creditors as to see Hańska. As Levchuk implied in his explanation, however, the narrative motivation for the famous writer is but a weak device to establish the fictional connection between Ukraine and the founder of "critical realism," at once a celebrity association written upon the entire nation and a view of that nation read through the eyes of a famous tourist. As the writer passes through customs into the empire, he is greeted with a singing troupe of four men dressed in *keptari* and highlander hats. Balzac pauses to watch the spectacle, before moving on. We cut to a wide-angle mountain view as the narrator speaks: "There she is, Ukraine, a mysterious and unknown land." Balzac gathers Ukrainian dirt into his hands, pressing it against his face with pleasure. He immediately meets a Kyiv professor of archeology, who shows him "wealth under the Ukrainian earth." The film constantly forces its hero to recognize the beauty of Ukraine's landscape, people and history, which remains unmotivated in the narrative, and furthermore absent in the Stalin-era novel, from which Levchuk adapted *Balzac's Mistake*.

In his explanation, however, Levchuk was clear to emphasize that his "Balzac in Ukraine" story, as he called it, would not be a work of "Ukrainian poetic cinema," as he stressed the strength of the actors over the "succulence of material accessories."¹²⁹ Balzac's relationship with Hańska is, in fact, de-emphasized in *Mistake*, with the man who erected the "bridge between critical

¹²⁸ Levchuk and Rybak first proposed the film in 1956. See, TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 777.

¹²⁹ TsDAMLMU, f. 670, op. 1, 1889, ll. 17-25.

realism and socialist realism”¹³⁰ traveling through Ukraine as a privileged tourist, first making stops in the “mysterious” Carpathians and heading East toward Kyiv to see Saint Sofiia (Figure 5.7). While in Verkhovyna, Balzac makes friends with a young serf of the Hańska family, Levko, played by Ivan Mykolaichuk. While a minor character in both Rybak’s novel and his updated 1965 screenplay, the violin-playing and highly literate (he claims to read Balzac’s work, in addition to that of Pushkin and Shevchenko) prodigy Levko took center stage in both Levchuk’s narrative and in promotional materials on the film. Rather than the hulking and rather ugly Viktor Khokhiarkov as Balzac, *Na ekranakh Ukrainy* and *Novyzy kinoekrana* featured stills of Mykolaichuk in the film.¹³¹ When the SKU nominated the film for a Shevchenko Prize, they stated that ultimately the film was “about the Ukrainian people.”¹³² Nonetheless, *Balzac’s Mistake* is not “poetic cinema,” but not necessarily for the reason that Levchuk cited above, with his statement about the “succulence” of material culture. The director made the film in a classic realist style, with its folkloric material properly motivated, if not through the narrative, then essentially through the spectator’s ideological alignment with the hero and his vision. The film does not present the Carpathian exotic directly to the spectator (see Figure 5.6); rather, its consumption contains a diegetic origin in the figure of the Balzac-tourist.

In 1973, Levchuk began work on *The Ballad of Kovpak* (*Duma pro Kovpaka*), his most extensive and expensive project of his life, which was to commemorate the heroic sacrifice of the Ukrainian partisan movement during the Great Patriotic War. General Sydir Kovpak was an ideal subject, in which to explore this topic, first due to his impeccable record during the Civil War, serving under the real Vasiliï Chapaev, and during the second world war, where he became one of the most decorated non-Russian officers, awarded Hero of the Soviet Union twice, and the Orders of Lenin, *Krasnoe znamia*, Suvorov, and

¹³⁰ Natan Rybak, interview in *Ekran-67* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967), 159.

¹³¹ *Novyzy kinoekrana*, no. 1 (Jan 1969); *Na ekranakh Ukrainy*, 11 Jan 1969.

¹³² TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 442, l. 206.



Figure 5.7. Balzac, the celebrity tourist in Ukraine in *Balzac's Mistake*: (top) listening to Hutsuls sing in the Carpathians; (bottom) listening to a *bandurist* on Sofia Square in Kyiv

Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi.¹³³ Moreover, Kovpak was one of the few ethnic Ukrainian civilians who had led Ukrainian partisan forces during the war, the majority of whose leaders were appointed from among Red Army officers in Moscow. Thus, the image of Kovpak possessed both a legitimate political meaning for the Brezhnev-era USSR, and a safe ethnic meaning for Ukrainian cinema after the denouncement of "Ukrainian poetic cinema" under the Shcherbyts'kyi regime. Levchuk's trilogy followed Kovpak's group from their inception in the Sumy region of Northeastern Ukraine in late 1941, to actions in the central Ukrainian Kyiv and Zhytomyr provinces in 1942, to their major raid of the Carpathians in 1943, the latter of which helped destabilize the German occupation of Ukraine.

The *Ballad of Kovpak* essentially occupied Levchuk for most of the 1970s, with the final part released in 1978. The trailer for the final part of Levchuk's film, *Carpathians, Carpathians (Karpaty, Karpaty, 1978)*, is instructive for its juxtaposition of historical / mythological time grounded in the Carpathophilia of the previous decade, and "the contemporary," the latter represented by the mobile tourist. The trailer's narrator begins in voice-over:

Far away under the sound of the *trembita's* voice. The boundless expanse of the Carpathians is opened before one's gaze. The mountaintops swim in hazy fog, the rugged forests, and the green cover of the mountain-valleys [ukr]. Tiny little houses in valleys [rus], emerald sparks of the waterfalls of the mountain streams...

We hear the distant sound of the *trembita* and then silence. The trailer cuts to the sharp bend of a contemporary highway. Cars and tourist buses fill the screen. One of the buses stops on the edge of the highway, and people dressed in modern clothing exit to get a glance at one of these "eternal" mountain valleys. The narrator returns: "This is the Carpathians. A colorful corner of Soviet land, a region of fairy-tale beauty, and hospitable and talented people. Come and see the beauty... listen to this silence and for once recall those who obtained it for

¹³³ The Order of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi was the only military distinction during the Great Patriotic War that referred to a non-Russian, and went exclusively to ethnic Ukrainians during the conflict. Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 35.

us...” Another group of tourists finds themselves in a picturesque glade, and we hear laughs, cries of delight, juxtaposed with amateur photographs and home movies. The trailer ends with an image of a monument to Kovpak located in the Bukovyna city of Chernivtsi and then cuts to the partisan leader’s grave in Kyiv. Unlike the narrative teleology contained in the Stalinist folkloric, Levchuk’s cinema epic and the corresponding trailer does not end with a message of Ukrainian-Russian union, but of continuity between Eastern and Western Ukrainian space, the trailer offering further contextualization for the contemporary viewer with its suggestion that they owe their present consumer abundance to the generation that its director comprised.¹³⁴

Both the Kovpak trilogy and *Balzac’s Mistake* established a Carpathian imagery within an aesthetics of stagnation, an aesthetics which normalized the space as a tourist destination for an all-Union audience. At the same time, these two works, along with *Zakhar Berkut*, were pricey endeavors for Dovzhenko Studio, for which it lost hundreds of thousands of rubles when they failed to turn out audiences, and contributed to the impoverishment of the studio by the end of the decade.¹³⁵

Like many directors who themselves were participants in the Great Patriotic War, Levchuk made war films for personal reasons. Vasyl’ Illiashenko, who had an unusual soft spot for Levchuk in his ordinarily bitter heart, reads into the First Secretary the role of a new 1970s *auteur*, one who was equally concerned with personal expression as with answering the ideological demands of the Brezhnev era. “For such artists,” Illiashenko writes, “the theme of the war was an inner necessity for them, the essence of their work, and there was a continual need for them to speak about it. [Levchuk’s] friends who did not return from the battlefield belong to the director’s creative conscience.”¹³⁶ Illiashenko calls the story “authentic, realistic, and original.” The attention is on the soldiers themselves, and even the leaders are hardly distinguished from the infantry.

¹³⁴ A transcript of the trailer is in TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2580, l. 34-38.

¹³⁵ *Carpathians, Carpathians* alone cost the studio 900,000 rubles. TsDAMLUMU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2580, l. 47.

¹³⁶ Illiashenko, 233.

Whereas the cult of the Great Patriotic War was increasingly localized by the 30th Anniversary of Victory Day in May 1975, with more monuments constructed celebrating and commemorating the local dynamics of both heroics and suffering, mainstream filmic representation was characterized by Iurii Ozerov's *Liberation* (*Osvobozhdenie*, 1970). Ozerov's five-part epic deals with the five "great battles" of the war, from Stalingrad, Kursk, the Dnipro, Minsk and Berlin. *Kovpak* screenwriters Igor' Bolgarin and Viktor Smirnov, themselves Russians working in Moscow, perceived their film as a direct response to Ozerov, with the latter's aesthetic of placeless epicality, which narratively foregrounded the march toward victory. They viewed the *Kovpak* trilogy as a localized tribute to the Great Patriotic War, in which real people – not just leaders – carried on their everyday lives in the midst of fighting behind enemy lines, initially as the losers of the conflict. While appealing to such a Thaw-era "cult of the little guy," the *Ballad of Kovpak* also aimed at a nostalgic rehabilitation of Stalin and Stalinist culture. *Carpathians, Carpathians* begins, for example, with Kovpak and his men watching Vladimir Petrov's famous historical-biographical film *Kutuzov* (1944) about the Russian general's defeat of Napoleon in 1812.¹³⁷ And the relationship between the folksy Kovpak and the politically knowledgeable commissar Semën Rudnev consciously evokes the central relationship in the Vasil'ev Brothers' *Chapaev* (1934). Moreover, *Levchuk* features Stalin himself prominently in the film, serving as the cerebral center of the Kovpak group's activities. In its retro agenda, the film attempts at re-familiarizing Ukrainian space through a recognizable plot of Ukrainian partisan victory in the Great Patriotic War. At the same time, the film does not return to a domesticated notion of a Stalinist folkloric, as even the ethnographic techniques of "Ukrainian poetic cinema" find their appearance in *Levchuk*'s occasional treatment of Carpathian partisans. The camera frequently pans across partisan faces, presenting them as both Soviet soldiers and local attraction (Figure 5.8). *The Ballad of Kovpak* appeals to the classics of the war genre – from the Stalin era – but locates the conflict in a

¹³⁷ The screening of *Kutuzov* in the film is anachronistic because its release was in September 1944, while the third part of the *Kovpak* trilogy occurs in late 1943.



Figure 5.8. Ethnographic survey of partisan faces in Levchuk's *Carpathians*, *Carpathians* (1976)

canonical Ukrainian “poetic” ethnoscape. The promotion of the film returns us full-circle to the tourist view, but in this case, it is one mediated through the window of a fast-moving vehicle, with only brief spots to park and look at mountain vistas, rather than the close gaze on authentic life that *Ranok* promised its readers over a decade earlier with *Camp Hutsul'shchyna*. The only space for historical exploration is in the nostalgically familiar space of Levchuk's film.

The End of “National Cinemas” in the USSR

With the decline of a studio-supported *auteurism* by the early 1970s, along with a declining space for national representation, the *auteurs* themselves turned inward, and suffered a number of personal crises. Sergei Paradzhanov went to prison in 1974; Illienko and Kadochnikova divorced while shooting *To Dream and To Live* (*Mriiaty i zhyty*, 1974) during the same year; and Osyka turned increasingly to the bottle, eventually abandoning experimental cinema entirely for steady work making *zakaznye fil'my*. One of the major debates of the mid-1970s in the SKU Presidium was not about film at all – the Union had long since determined that they would have no creative input at Dovzhenko Studio – but about their disappointment with their Union hall, Budynok Kino. Filmmakers complained of bad food and poor service in the cafeteria, prostitutes at the bar, and a general unsightly appearance to the place. The projectionist at their exclusive theater frequently showed up for work drunk. When the manager of

Budynok Kino appeared before the Union to answer for this state of affairs, he blamed the lack of funds.¹³⁸ They couldn't pay the standard wage for restaurant employees and projectionists, and so many of them left at the first opportunity, with only the bad apples remaining behind. With the SKU budget correlated to the box office performance of Ukrainian films, the Presidium had to cut costs significantly as audiences declined during the 1970s. The Union continued to recoup some losses with the mild profits garnered from publication of *Novyny kinoekrana* and such blockbusters as Leonid Bykov's *Only the Old Go to Battle* and Sulafim Tsybul'nyk's *Inspector of Criminal Investigations*, but apparently not enough to maintain the respectability of the Union hall.

During a speech delivered in Minsk in December 1971, Paradzhanov stated, among many other "demagogic" comments that attracted the KBG's attention that day,¹³⁹ "The audience doesn't understand my films, and I have no desire to apologize to them. It seems to me that the time has come when the audience should apologize to the artist."¹⁴⁰ This hypothetical and largely discursive audience that did not understand Paradzhanov, who had written pages of letters heaping all manner of insults upon his work, was now ruining his career. This "audience" would not let him work in Ukraine, and he demanded that they feel sorry for him as an *auteur*. The cynicism with which Kyiv filmmakers treated "the audience" was also evident in the growing lack of involvement many of them had in public activities like the annual Cinema Days event in early September.¹⁴¹ From the classic narrative style of Illienko's *White Bird with a Black Mark*, we see that he in fact attempted to approach the new

¹³⁸ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 788, ll. 1-7.

¹³⁹ Paradzhanov's speech in Minsk on December 1, 1971 was transcribed by security operatives assigned to the Belorussian Komsomol. KGB chairman Iurii Andropov then sent the speech to Ideological Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Suslov. Petro Shelest and the Belorussian Central Committee were also informed of the speech. See, James Steffen, "Sergei Parajanov's Speech in Minsk before the Creative and Scientific youth of Byelorussia on 1 December 1971," *Armenian Review* 47, nos. 3-4, 48, nos. 1-2 (2001-2002), 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Mykola Mashchenko's comments on the eve of Den' kino-73: He complained that filmmakers were not as interested in the day as they used to be. To increase the level of participation, he suggested that it be mandatory that shooting should stop on Den' kino so that all the filmmakers could take the time to meet with spectators instead of working. TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 665, l. 56

audience politics of the Soviet film industry at end of the 1960s, but political changes at the top of the CPU prevented him from being successful in this order. It seemed evident to Illienko in particular that “popular cinema” alone was not what the new studio and Goskino leadership wanted from him; rather, they expected him to start making films like everyone else, so that his very image as an *auteur* would disappear. After all, *auteurs* produced expectations with spectators, which could not be controlled by thematic, production and distribution plans. As an *auteur*-driven project, “Ukrainian poetic cinema” carried meaning above and beyond the films contained with its *oeuvre*, to the very people associated with it, and the people associated with them. By 1972-74, this not only included a number of convicted Ukrainian nationalists, but also Paradzhanov himself, whose very name disappeared from print until his return to public life in 1983. While the Shelest period included an official outlet for promoting Ukrainian difference, the Shcherbyts’kyi regime delineated all Ukrainian-language cultural activity as at least suspect. Nonetheless, the CPU First Secretary continued to promote the separate status of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, even if he promoted the cultural status of Ukraine as Russia’s “little brother.”¹⁴²

While Ukraine experienced a sharper rise from a completely disrespected studio to one of the most innovative spaces of Thaw-era cultural production in the 1960s, Dovzhenko Studio also experienced a much sharper decline than Moscow during the following decade. By the mid-1970s Kyiv Studio had very clearly become peripheral to Soviet cinema. In August 1975, the relatively young Volodymyr Denysenko said during a meeting to discuss the thematic plan: “I read the prospective plan and thought that it’s time for me to go on a pension,” indicating the close of an era that he in part initiated with the production of *A Dream* in 1964.¹⁴³ During the Third Congress of the SKU in 1976, amid dutiful praise for Brezhnev and other rote speechification, the minutes of the Congress made note that Union members cheered loudly for the first time as screenwriter

¹⁴² Jaroslaw Pelenski, “Shelest and His Period in Soviet Ukraine (1963-1972): A Revival of Controlled Ukrainian Autonomism,” in Peter J. Potychnyj, ed., *Ukraine in the Seventies: Papers and Proceedings of the McMaster Conference on Contemporary Ukraine, October 1974* (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1975), 296.

¹⁴³ TsDAMLNU, f. 670, op. 1, d. 2997, l. 62.

levhen Onopriienko read a proposal that the Union intended to submit to the Central Committee. The proposal sought to place the SKU on equal footing with the Union of Cinematographers in the Russian Federation, the members of which “had the right to an additional 20 meters of living space.”¹⁴⁴

During a December 1980 Plenum of the Union of Cinematographers, Chinghiz Aitmatov returned to the topic of “national cinemas” in the USSR. This time, however, he offered a much grimmer picture than in 1967. Instead of the excitement, mixed with caution, that he expressed 13 years prior, now he stated:

Today, the condition of national cinema provokes definite anxiety. Recently – during the second half of the 70s – a significant receding of the wave of cinema’s development has taken shape in the provinces [*na mestakh*] [...] The brilliance, expressiveness, originality and specificity of national pictures are increasingly fading, and more often a certain general graded tendency toward leveling makes itself felt, both within the content and in the form of national art’s appearance. Facelessness is knocking at the doors of the national studios...¹⁴⁵

While only diagnosing the problem, Aitmatov’s words conformed to earlier anxieties about the “de-nationalizing” effects of commercial cinema. The previous year had seen the release of the two largest box office successes in Soviet history – the adventure film, *Pirates of the 20th Century* (*Piraty XX veka*, Boris Durov, 1980), which sold 87.6 million tickets, and Vladimir Men’shov’s famous melodrama, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (*Moskva slezam ne verit*, 1979), selling over 84 million.¹⁴⁶ The “national” studios had failed to find their “mark” in this new profit-minded industry, nor was such an industry even interested in cultivating the “national theme.” The CPSU of the late 1970s viewed non-Russian representational politics as increasingly disconnected with a quantifiable “mass audience,” on the one hand, but also in line with the now-defeated nationalist movements in the Union republics, most notably in Ukraine, on the other.

¹⁴⁴ TsDAMLUMU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 932, l. 69.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Valerii Golovskoi, *Mezhdru ottepel'iu i glasnost'iu: Kinematograf 70-kh* (Moscow: Materik, 2004), 80.

¹⁴⁶ First, “From Spectator to ‘Differentiated’ Consumer,” 342.

Conclusion

Ukrainian Cinema and the Limitations of National Expression

“The explosion will not happen today. It is too soon... or too late.”¹

Historians like explosions. For good reason, prior historiography on the nationality question in the Soviet Union was centered on the explosive events of the first half of the twentieth century. Beginning with Stalin’s 1913 tract, “Marxism and the National Question,” the Bolsheviks began to define and re-define their policy toward the non-Russian minorities in the Russian Empire to reflect their beliefs about the rights of nations within multinational states. Historians Richard Pipes, Terry Martin, as well as 1960s Ukrainian dissident Ivan Dziuba and many others, have shown that the practice of governing a multinational state differed greatly from Lenin’s principle of “national self-determination.”² A combination of the Bolsheviks’ own imperial ambitions and the contingencies of revolution, war, and the massive social upheavals that emerged from large-scale industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture, in addition to ideological disputes within the party leadership and between Moscow and the national republics on the nationality question, often eroded such a lofty principle. Yet, as Yuri Slezkine has argued, the core assumptions behind Soviet nationalities policy—that nations possess their own cultures and contiguous territories—contributed to the disintegration of the Soviet Union along national lines. In posing the “national question,” the Soviet regime never sufficiently resolved the tensions between particularistic identities and allegiance

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, tr. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1976), 7.

² Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

to a centralized state and an ideology that eschewed nationalism as a holdover of bourgeois societies.

This project, which looks at the nationality question in Ukrainian cinema during the long 1960s, has had a more modest aim in addressing the problem of representing national difference. In so doing, however, I hoped to point to the ways that the Soviet Union, with its entrenched and seemingly impenetrable political culture, engendered new ways of thinking about nationality. It was during these more peaceful times, I have suggested, that Ukrainians could consider what it meant to belong to a particular nationality, apart from the legal category on line four of Soviet internal passports. I began with the question of whether or not nationality even mattered, but if so, how and why it mattered. The question seemed important because most scholars now affirm that nationalities policy was the principal context from which to view the national independence movements of the late-1980s. Whereas earlier scholars highlighted the history of discriminatory and repressive policies against non-Russians in the Soviet Union, historians now spoke of the state's cultivation of "ethnic particularism." Slezkine, for example, writes, "In a country free from social conflict, ethnicity was the only meaningful identity. This was the legacy that Stalin bequeathed to *his* successors and that survived 1984 to haunt Gorbachev and *his* successors."³ In this claim, he asks us to take him at his word. After all, we know what happened to the USSR. Suny also argues for continuity of nationalities policy between Stalin and Gorbachev, highlighting the continued presence of indigenization practices, albeit alongside Russification measures. Under Brezhnev in particular, Suny finds that Moscow/republic relations were stabilized with the placement of loyal leaders within republican party apparatuses; First Secretaries, who nonetheless knew how to speak to local concerns when necessary.⁴ In my examination of Ukrainian cinema, however, I have discovered other questions related to nationality besides these explicitly political concerns over the nature of

³ Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism" *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 449.

⁴ Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 102-24.

power between center and periphery, and the negotiation of state concerns and national concerns, issues which arose with the formation of the Soviet Union as a federal, multinational state.

Rather than examine the level of national consciousness that Ukrainians had, or for whom identity mattered, this dissertation has sought to investigate the very problems of representing Ukraine on film. For a new generation of Ukrainian artists, writers and intellectuals who grew up after the formation of nationalities policy, in the urban “factories of Russification,” as Dziuba called eastern Ukrainian cities, Ukrainian identity could not be assimilated unproblematically. Instead, the 1960s appear as a period during which cultural producers had less certainty about what it meant to be Ukrainian in the first place. This feeling of alienation that 1960s filmmakers in particular felt from their ascribed nationality and their subsequent desire to re-discover an ethnic identity contributed to the style of modernist self-expression that characterized what was called “Ukrainian poetic cinema.”

At the Oleksandr Dovzhenko Feature Film Studio in Kyiv, its new leadership under Vasyl' Tsvirkunov, Vasyl' Zemliak and Sviatoslav Ivanov, embarked on a project to revive a declining film production facility. To do so, they believed their task was not only to create a financially independent enterprise, with its own native-born staff, but also to renew respect for Ukrainian cinema more broadly. The studio believed that such respect would only come with a new image of the republic and its people. A legitimate “national cinema” would only emerge if filmmakers could reject the familiar image of Ukrainians as backward peasants in folk costumes presented on the screen for popular amusement. In the studio’s desire for aesthetic sophistication, Tsvirkunov sought a new cohort of young Ukrainian directors, cinematographers and screenwriters educated at the All-Union Film Institute in Moscow. These young cosmopolitans – Iurii Illienko, Leonid Osyka and Ivan Drach among others – were initially more invested in the cultural politics of the Thaw more generally than they were in the particular problem of Ukrainian identity. In engaging with the Ukrainian theme, these young filmmakers also had to learn what it meant to be a specifically

Ukrainian filmmaker and the demands that such an ascribed identity placed on them.

Thus, this generation of Ukrainian filmmakers and writers who worked at Dovzhenko Studio were more interested in personal expression than national independence for Ukraine, even if their cultural interests brought them into contact with dissident nationalists. And while many of these filmmakers would later support the nationalist party, Ukrainian People's Movement (*Narodnyi rukh Ukrainy*), during the late 1980s, they proudly called themselves "Soviet" during the 1960s. Yet, in calling themselves "Soviet," they nonetheless rejected what they considered as the homogeneity of contemporary life in the country. For them, the filmic exploration of Ukrainian nationality was an attempt to highlight the maintenance of diverse cultures within the Soviet Union. Consequently, they attempted to show, not the canonical ethnic spaces and character types – "those notorious attributes," as one Ukrainian writer called them – that emerged in Stalinist Ukrainian cinema, but a new and unfamiliar imagery of the republic and its people, an imagery they believed was more "authentic."

Nonetheless, the very means through which the Stalinist state reduced the meaning of nationality to the safe space of folklore became the basis of this new interest in national identity during the 1960s. Ukrainians became knowable in Stalin-era cinema through folkloric spectacle – costumes, songs, dances, the Cossack *khokhol* – and Ukraine itself through a bucolic imagery of thatched-roof houses, sunflowers, the steppe, and the Dnipro River. At the same time, the Stalinist Ukrainian hero was able to transcend narrow alignment with nation and landscape to become a historical and political actor, thus firmly dividing a timeless Ukrainian space from a modern Soviet (or Russian) space. The plots and imagery of 1960s Ukrainian cinema frequently returned to folklore for its material, locating Ukraine within a colorful pastoral. This similarity adds considerable weight to Serhy Yekelchuk's claim that the Stalinist vision of Ukrainian history remained hegemonic throughout the Soviet period, with even

dissidents mobilizing its imagery.⁵ This later interest in folklore in Ukrainian cinema, however, had different intentions. Instead of Ukraine as a comedic space, filled with familiar and colorful peasants, filmmakers in the 1960s sought to render rural Ukraine as an unusual space, and called attention to the specificity of Ukrainian folklore. For urban and “Russified” sensibilities, a representation of an “authentic” Ukraine would have to be strange, unfamiliar and somehow “savage.”

In appealing to an ethnographic and authentic style of modernist representation, Paradzhanov, Illienko and Osyka conceived of their audience differently than Stalinist directors like Ivan Pyr’ev. Whereas the latter’s films were clearly intended for popular consumption, in its mobilization of common comedic stereotypes to render non-Russians on screen, the “poetic” directors addressed their “difficult” films toward an educated and Ukrainian audience, one whose tastes in film dovetailed with European art cinema. But these filmmakers too were implicated in new conceptions of a mass media-consuming public. These filmmakers went from having a conception of an elite and knowledgeable audience for their work, to cynicism over the existence of a specifically Ukrainian public at all.

This dissertation has posited a multidimensional cause for the re-emergence of the nationality question after Stalin, which was located in Thaw-era discourse on personal expression, authenticity, and resistance to conformity. Moreover, the search for meaning in nationality through cultural production did not aim to destroy the Soviet system; it merely made a claim for recognition of both national difference and of the artist as the producer of national meaning. In this way, we cannot look for a direct continuation from the Stalinist folkloric to “Ukrainian poetic cinema” to the independence movement of the late 1980s. The latter had much more to do *political* developments in the USSR more broadly, whereas the cultural concerns of the 1960s involved a search for meaning in

⁵ Yekelchuk argues in his conclusion that the sixties generation – the *shestidesiatniki* – were mere products of “Stalin’s empire of memory,” which “failed to produce a non-national” means for interpreting Soviet society and history. *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 160.

national categories. But what we can say about the period in Ukraine is that cinema established new expectations about the role of the individual in making nationality meaningful, outside of political negotiations. In this case, national difference, a collective identity, became encoded in the politics of individualism and authorship that characterized the cultural Thaw as a whole.

* * *

2004, the year that I began thinking about the topic of this dissertation, briefly saw Ukraine in newspaper headlines around the world, as hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Kyiv to protest an apparently fraudulent election. In what came to be known as the Orange Revolution for the color that opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko had chosen to represent his party, the mass protest forced a reelection, which was monitored by international observers and eventually confirmed the opposition's victory. Perhaps because I had my mind on 1960s cinema, I did not have a very clear conception of what seemed to me as Yushchenko's vague political platform, with its mix of free market liberalism, soft nationalism, and a pro-Western populism. His campaign slogan, "I believe I know we can," or, in its shortened form, "*Tak!* (yes)," seemed like a good youth marketing campaign, however, and the words adorned orange coffee mugs, scarves, pens, and other "revolutionary" memorabilia for sale on any block in downtown Kyiv during and after the historic events. While Yushchenko's opponent, Viktor Yanukovich, responded with his own color (blue), the products were not forthcoming, and his vastly outnumbered supporters relied on hand-made sashes to convey their allegiances. More than a consistent political ideology, Yushchenko was able to mobilize imagery attractive to young voters who considered their country to be a legitimate member of the European community. At the same time, the opposition leader's name was attached to the familiar objects of a nationalist agenda, and supporters adorned *keptari* and Cossack hats, while Yanukovich's base performed their regional and ideological allegiances wearing miners' hard hats.

Some of the top names in Ukraine's nascent pop music scene contributed to the best-selling soundtrack to the revolution, *Orange Songs (Pomaranchevi pishni)*, including five-times Platinum recording artist and 2004 Eurovision Song Contest winner Ruslana Lyzhychko. An avid Yushchenko fan, Ruslana's video for her hit single, "Wild Dances (*Dyki tantsi*)," includes images of attractive and shirtless Cossacks mock fighting and dancing with battleaxes, Hutsuls playing *trembity* against the backdrop of a Carpathian vista, and protesters on the Maidan, rapidly juxtaposed with Ruslana and a group of male dancers self-consciously evoking the visual presence of Britney Spears.⁶ Such an MTV folkloric mode of Ukrainian consumer culture inserted these iconic images from a mythical past and present into the conventions of the music video. Moreover, in this culture of affirmative politics and fashionable abundance, Ruslana successfully resisted a reduction of the meaning of these images to the level of a national kitsch. In the lack of irony attached to their popular consumption, such iconography associated with both a Stalinist representation mode and 1960s "Ukrainian poetic cinema" became important elements of a contemporary Ukrainian mass culture.

Nonetheless, this dissertation is about people who failed, and who wrote and made films about failure and loss. Dissident Ivan Dziuba's *Internationalism or Russification?* was not a nationalist rallying cry to resist Russian "colonialism" or Soviet "empire;" rather, it was a melancholic and deceptively personal meditation on what he called "de-nationalization." None of the works of "Ukrainian poetic cinema" during the decade between 1964 and 1974 provide us with any sense of hope for such an affirmative Ukrainian mass culture. Even the celebratory atmosphere that surrounded *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was odd, considering that it very directly addressed a lost people, implicitly juxtaposed against the sterility of a modern and inorganic Soviet society. Ukrainian poetic cinema, as well as the dissident movement itself, was produced by people who were part of a Soviet mobile society, *auteurs* or "*samoznavtsy*"

⁶ In the Ukrainian version of Ruslana's "Wild Dances," she speculates that, if not for the example of "the beautiful Britney," she could not have been a singer.

who were themselves “de-nationalized,” but who were forced to work within the idiom of national representation.

Within this interplay of the production and reproduction of images, Ivan Mykolaichuk was able to function as an ideal embodiment in Ukrainian cinema, wherein the nationalist potential of Cossacks and Hutsuls could be ascribed the value of personal expression. Mykolaichuk died of a “prolonged illness” on August 3, 1987, at the young age of 47. The SKU Secretariat and Dovzhenko Studio immediately resolved to cover the costs of a monument to the actor and burial in the prestigious Baikova Cemetery in Kyiv, a space where the major political and cultural leaders of the republic were interred. The union also funded a memorial plaque to be placed on his modest apartment at 5 Serafimovych Street, and asked the Chernivtsy Oblast Party Committee to establish a school and film museum in Mykolaichuk’s native Carpathian village of Chortoryiia in his honor. Finally, the SKU promised to provide “personal assistance” to the actor’s son, Taras Ivanovych, until he came of age, and to give an additional 5000 rubles to Mykolaichuk’s destitute wife, Marichka.⁷ Despite the desperate conditions, in which the actor seemingly spent the last years of his life, 1987 marked the reemergence of “Ukrainian poetic cinema” in public discourse. Russian critic Liudmila Lemesheva published the first monograph on the topic, *Ukrainian Cinema: The Problem of One Generation*, after which a flurry of memoirs, critical analyses, documentaries, poetry and biographies dedicated to the actor followed, in addition to ones dedicated to Paradzhanov, Illienko and Osyka. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, film culture in Ukraine seemed to be thriving in the absence of actual films, and solely on the momentum of memorializing the 1960s-era Ukrainian *auteur*.

Despite the canonization of “Ukrainian poetic cinema” and its *auteurs* by the *glasnost*’ generation of Ukrainian film scholars, and the popularization of its imagery, the younger cohort who graduated from KITM after independence now speaks of moving away from “shadowism [*tinizm*],” an explicit rejection of the ethnographic imagery of the 1960s. In a statement reminiscent of that very

⁷ TsDAMLNU, f. 655, op. 1, d. 1685, ll. 15-16.

period, however, Columbia University Ukrainian literary scholar, Yuri Shevchuk, recently stated, “Ukrainian cinema does not begin and end with the poetic cinema of Dovzhenko, Paradzhanov, Osyka, [...] Illienko[...].”⁸ Shevchuk expressed a similar lack of comfort with narrowing the possibilities for “Ukrainian national cinema” to a rural vision of the now independent nation. While admitting that Odessa filmmakers were uninterested in the politics of Ukrainian national identity during the Shelest period itself, Shevchuk now seemed all too willing to examine their work within a newer, more inclusive notion of Ukrainian national cinema, precisely because such individuals were not interested in these problems. Perhaps the mark of a modern nation, he implies, was the ability of its artists and writers to simply ignore its meaning-producing qualities and canon of national images. In the absence of a Soviet culture industry that promoted folklore as the essence of “national character,” the imagery of Ukrainian poetic cinema appears hopelessly outdated, even though its *auteurs* continue to be celebrated icons of a nascent Ukrainian cultural movement.

Yet, without the historical presence of Soviet Ukrainian cinema’s specific visual qualities, I do not believe that Yushchenko and Ruslana could have mobilized such an imagery in contemporary Ukraine. These images of Cossacks and Hutsuls remain images to be inhabited and performed, rather than lived and experienced. They continue to be exotic tropes of self-expression, rather than the basis for a long-term political project. After all, the Orange coalition quickly disintegrated after taking power in early 2005 when it became evident that, within the political imaginary of the revolution existed highly divergent ideas about Ukraine’s economy and foreign policy.

I find it striking that filmmakers and critics continue to debate many of the same issues in an independent and capitalist Ukraine as they did in the 1960s, not only between “poetic” and “realist” modes of representing the nation, but also concerning the source of financing film production and questions of linguistic

⁸ Yuri Shevchuk, “The Bold Vision of Kira Muratova and Its Distorted Reflection in New York,” *Maidan: An Internet Hub for Citizens Action Network in Ukraine*, accessed online: <http://eng.maidanua.org/node/235>: June 1, 2008.

policy. Most striking, however, is the question of how to maintain Ukrainian cinema in the first place, in the absence of a centralized state that had the power to maintain a certain level of production apart from the direct constraints of consumer demand, and a state that considered cinema a necessary political project, apart from the pointed mobilization of a familiar national imagery.

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