

OLENA ROSINSKA

STEREOTYPICAL ELEMENTS IN THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONALLY “OTHER” IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH AND UKRAINIAN CINEMA*

Abstract. This paper researches topical Ukrainian and Poland cinema narratives related to interaction with the representatives of other nationalities in the territory of one country. The purpose of the research is to analyse changes in intercultural narratives related to the national stereotypes in contemporary films. The current development stage of the world culture requires new narratives – signals about that appear in the world and Ukrainian cinema. For Ukraine, these narratives become especially relevant after 2014. Now, the Ukrainians are thinking over their history and their relationship with those who the history united them with in a new way. This is perfectly illustrated by the films under analysis, *Why I Am Alive* (Ukrainian title: *Chomu ya zhyvyi*) (2015) and *Shchedryk* (2022), where the characters build a new discourse of their value-based existence by getting released from national stereotypes. Some stereotypes are analysed extensively in relation to films *Lessons of Farsi*, *The Pianist*, *The Jew (Żyd)*.

Keywords: narrative; stereotype; feature film; ordinary consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, new media, particularly, TV films, some of which are broadcast on open online platforms or paid film platforms, are among productive methods to shape mass consciousness. Since the audience coverage of such content is quite high, its influence on the information consumers' consciousness is doubtless. Researchers point out that the current mass media in all their forms can be an area where worldview illusions, a deformed view of life and an absolutely

OLENA ROSINSKA, PhD, Assistant Professor – Kyiv National University of Economics named after Vadym Hetman; correspondence address: Beresteysky prospect 54/1, 03057 Kyiv, Ukraine; e-mail: helenrosinska@gmail.com; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4460-0668>.

* The research has been carried out under the project “The Evolution of Images of Ukrainians in Polish Documentary and Feature Film” (POLONISTA – PROGRAM STYPENDIALNY DLA NAUKOWCÓW, Poland), grant no. BJP/PON/2023/1/00011.

artificial worldview are formed. Therefore, the analysis of film content received by a wide audience becomes even more relevant.

The aim of research is to analyse a national stereotype as a phenomenon represented at the level of ordinary consciousness and reflected in the national content, and the changeability of the narratives related to national stereotypes.

The article relies on content analysis as a systemic research method of objective description of available content of communication in media material, as well as comparison, synthesis, and narrative analysis.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The theme of stereotypes and stereotyping in the film content is under research in the world science and a range of studies unveil the nationally specific nature of this issue on the basis of national films in particular. For instance, Levent Yilmazok points out the pervasiveness of national stereotypes implemented in film content (Yilmazok, 2019). A similar research was also performed by a group of scientists led by Anastasia G. Stamou and Kornilia P. Petraki (Stamou, 2022), Jörg Schweinitz (Schweinitz, 2011), or W. J. T. Mitchell (Mitchell, 2006). Generalized perceptions of Poles and political stereotypes are analysed in the research by Paweł Kowal and Jan Ołdakowski (Kowal, 2002).

The typology of stereotypes in film content is characterised by the researchers Azadeh Eriss and Massod Khoshshaliheh.

The term “national stereotype” used in this research denotes steady concepts according to which all the representatives of one race have identical characteristics, which are mostly negative, as K. Jewell specifies.

In general, we need to define several notions – ordinary consciousness, mass consciousness, stereotype – to understand the specific nature of the ordinary consciousness stereotypes properly. A particular state of mass consciousness formed mostly by the mass media is immediately reflected on the conceptions the individual’s worldview at the level of ordinary consciousness is based on. Stereotyping, which involves generalization of the partial and its perception as common, inherent in a particular category, shapes the majority of these conceptions.

The researcher O. Boyko provides the following definition of stereotype: “In a wide meaning, this is a traditional, habitual canon of thinking, perception and behavior, a method of carrying out actions in a particular sequence, uniformity, inertia of thinking, etc.” (Boyko, 2007). Another researcher, Parkhitko, specifies that the “stereotypes accelerate data processing, but at the same time limit

the horizon of perception artificially” (Parkhitko, 2012). Thus, on one hand, at a particular level, stereotyping makes the communications implementation easier – recognition of “us” in a society, fixation of a collective experience, etc.; however, on the other hand, it slows down certain processes of cooperation, especially intercultural one, makes the perception of the surrounding reality tight, which is especially critical in a changeable historic reality.

According to W. Schulz, stereotypes are the “categories or patterns through which the complexity of the world around is decreased while data processing, and the impressions beget meaning” (Schulz, 1982). The definitions demonstrate that stereotyping creates the plane of reality simplification and its bringing to simple patterns, which, in its turn, becomes a basis for manipulation.

Hence, social stereotypes by their content are close to traditional mythologemes because in both cases these are *steady and simplified conceptions about changeable objects and processes as non-changeable, fixed, eternal*; this definition of the stereotype will be basic in our research.

W. Lippman, an American journalist, coined the concept of stereotyping as a basis of propaganda: “We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception” (Lippman, 2017).

As research shows (for example, Allen, 2010; Freud, 2021; Wojtyna, 2022), film products influence the ordinary consciousness of the information consumer, form the constructs that become a basis for ideas about the environment, a kind of substitute of an immediate practical experience. The viewer, especially of exciting films with an interesting plot, fails to see where the boundary between their own life experience and the one aesthetically lived is (as perceived through the film), especially if the film transmits the narratives attractive for the viewer.

By its nature, ordinary consciousness is a totality of reflections of particular conditions of life and activity of an individual, and is formed based on everyday life experience. Reality is mapped in the ordinary consciousness contradictorily. It falls behind the development of social thought, new ideas, views; instead, it is based on immediate empirical experience and is a particular system of conceptions reflecting the immediate essence of objective reality and regularities of phenomena functioning. However, these regularities are understood superficially.

A NATIONAL STEREOTYPE
IN THE STRUCTURE ORDINARY CONSCIOUSNESS

Ordinary consciousness is a product of social awareness and is taken as the one containing non-rational models of reality that depend on membership in a particular social group and determined by non-critical perception of reality. Ordinary consciousness can be contradictory due to designing the worldview from the constructs received from different sources and accepted at the different levels. However, the person may not be aware of that without the need to compare. This can work as follows: for a particular situation, a person chooses the fragments to understand their own rightness, integrity, significance. For example, as the makers of *The Injured. On Poles and Jews* (Polish title: *Skrzywdzeni. O Polakach i Żydach*) (2019) notice, the Jews put an emphasis on the fact that many of them perished in the territory of Poland. Those who survived, had lost their property which they would like to regain. The full picture the Poles offer them to show and to see is not ultimately important. The Poles also suffered owing to the actions of the German Army (“The Jews have the Holocaust, and what about us?”), then they were under the Soviet occupation for long years, after which they had to rebuild the national economy. In the documentary made by Poland, non-integrity of the worldview based on the stereotypes, partial consideration of the information is remarkably implemented in the images of the victim in the beginning and in the end of the film.



Photo 1. Two frames from TVP-produced *The Injured*. The beginning and the end

In the first frame the viewer sees only a hung Jew, the frame illustrates the perception of the tragedy by the representatives of the Jewish nation – they are victims. And this, in the opinion of the Polish authors of the film, is only a partial picture of the events. In the other frame there is a Jew, hung by German soldiers, and a Pole who tried to help him. They are both victims of the same

people. And this picture is a complete representation of what was happening, this approach pushes the discussion of the issue beyond the sphere of stereotypes.

In fact, this is a visual illustration of a particular angle of view, which underlies stereotype creation because in the film it is stressed that in Israeli media the Poles were accused of antisemitism, which became extremely offensive national stereotypes – even more traumatic for Poles because of the German and Soviet occupations they endured.

Hence, the national stereotypes are one of the components of ordinary consciousness, their appearance is usually specified by certain historic events, social experience, which become key for different nations and form their vision of each other. These stereotypes are often embedded in the consciousness as introjects (something received ready through the transfer of experience) and become rooted in it, not subject to critical examination.

Researchers notice that the ordinary consciousness can be learnt as a component of a national mentality, common for the representatives of a particular national culture. This is a set of conceptions, visions, values, etc., accrued in the process of historic experience; moreover, stereotypes concerning certain nationalities or countries are quite pervasive.

R. A. Nakonechnyy specifies: “To understand the Ukrainian national philosophy, I would like to place a special emphasis on the role of such a phenomenon as common sense of the Ukrainian nation especially. Even when Ukrainian intellectuals were in prisons or in Moloch’s service, the only one who help opposition, was “the common sense of the nation” because the philosophy is based on the systemic practice of spiritual experience” (Nakonechnyy, 1992). In this context, the notion of “common sense” determines the level of conceptions about the world, which on one hand, help to self-preserve a representative of a particular nation because they are supported by important experience and on the other hand, conserve the nation inside this world.

The media influence aims, first of all, the formation of mass consciousness constructs. Instead, ordinary consciousness cannot be identified, of course, with the mass one; however, since the activity and thus the consciousness of each individual is connected with their being in society, so their consciousness contains both individual and mass/social component.

In the film *The Injured* we can see an actually outlined mechanism of how, on the one hand, media draw conceptions from ordinary consciousness and on the other hand, generate them.



Photo 2-4. Frames from *The Injured* that illustrate the fragments of publications of careless statements about the antisemitism of the Poles based on stereotyping

Particular conceptions about another nationality are formed in the process of historic interaction or opposition, co-living in the territory of one country or neighbouring countries, and are based on generalisation of certain cases of individual experience which is being typified. Then, this structure as integral and formed one is viewed as plausible since it is based on certain mental comprehensions of themselves (real and wished) and vision of “others” through the prism of one’s own self. These constructs become especially active in the periods of crisis, in the situations of collision in different areas – state and individual. Moreover, in general, each individual as a representative of the nation can be ready to estimate particular stereotypes and generalised conceptions critically, demonstrate high level of tolerance; however, as vectors of mass consciousness, they cannot be absolutely free from them.

A NATIONAL THEME IN UKRAINIAN AND POLISH CINEMA

Whilst the study of stereotypical images at various levels is highly productive in the global film theory, Ukrainian cinema of the twenty-first century remains largely unexplored in this regard. This is specified, in part, by its powerful development and emergence on the world markets only in the last few decades. Furthermore, it has not been sufficiently studied at the intersection of media communication, media psychology, and cultural studies, whereas such a multidisciplinary approach appears to be productive.

For example, the “Jewish theme” in the Ukrainian films was explored by Larisa Bryukhovetska, who focused on films of the 1920s, the period of Ukrainian culture prosperity.

The issue about the images of Ukrainians in the Russian films is better covered in the mass media than in academic research. For example, V. Hordienko’s “Ukrayina v rosiys’kykh fil’makh” (*Conscious*), I. Maystrenko’s “How Russia

humiliated Ukrainians in films for decades: Visual examples” (*Today*), instead, this issue requires more thorough research, and its experience will be useful not only for the Ukrainian information consumer but each film lover in each country because it will show how certain pervasive constructs, which are a part of narratives, are delivered into ordinary consciousness through film content.

Cinema is a fruitful ground both for creating stereotypes and for their demolishing through formation of critical or ironic narratives, like, for example, in the Polish film *The Jew* and positive narratives of unity, like in Ukrainian films *Why I Am Alive*, *Shchedryk*, *Chuzha molytva (87 Children)*. For the contemporary context of cooperation between cultures and peoples, the advancing of the narrative of unity, search of commonness and mutual understanding is extremely important. We can trace this tendency, in particular, in Ukrainian cinema after 2014.

A collective monograph *Enerhiya vidrodzhennya. Ukrayins'ke kino 2014-2020* (2022) is also devoted to studying issues related to the current Ukrainian cinema. Also, Y. Aliev, L. Bryukhovetska, L. Novikova, A. Tolochko and others are involved in studying Ukrainian films. However, the issue of stereotype in film content, especially in the current period, has not been researched so far.

As it was mentioned above, the stereotype is often introjected (received from external sources), adopted through other contexts, diachronic or synchronous, including through transmitting by mass media and has not been subject to critical estimation by generalized conceptions about something changeable. A telling illustration of how the images or statements generated by media entered public consciousness and became a construct of attitude to a certain issue, is a fragment from the Polish documentary *The Injured*. It presents quite an acute issue: the restitution of property of the Jews killed in the Holocaust. The journalist organises an interview with Colette Avital, an employee from the Organization of Holocaust Survivors. During the interview she provides some figures concerning the number of victims among the Jewish population in Poland. These figures are not up-to-date; she takes them from a publication in media where they were distorted to a certain degree. Instead, Colette Avital uses these data to build a concept of her approach to the issue solution. Another respondent, Dan Orbach, a historian from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, raises in the film the issues about the stereotypes transmitted in media and their influence on the peoples' interaction. In this publication we refer to this film, although it is not a core subject of our research because this film demonstrates well the reaction of some people to the conceptions about it transmitted by others, to the stereotypes reflected exactly in the media.

The Ukrainian people, going through the hard period of resisting Russian aggression together with the other nations that live both in the territory of the state and in the neighbouring countries, are keenly aware of a necessity to respect cultural values, national peculiarities of each other, and the importance of deep recognition of all moments in common history. The common experience of the aggression of the Russian Empire, then the Soviet Union, unites Ukrainians with the ethnic minorities who live in Ukraine and elsewhere, both politically and informationally because Russian and Soviet propaganda intensively built a narrative of inferiority concerning Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, trying to set people against each other and keep them under control. These processes lasted for years, that is why huge resources are needed to abolish them. It is especially important for the people that have common history even if it is not always simple. Films, with this regard, are quite a productive method because they work with emotions, ruining prejudices, forming an aspiration to refuse from stereotypic marking of the other and from opposing it in the area of ordinary consciousness through feelings involving catharsis.

Auteur cinema, on one hand, is a reflection of the author's model of the world. In particular, H. P. Pohrebniak notices: "In its turn, auteur (director's) cinematographic model of the world is a method, a form of director's cognition, his or her rendition of the worldview (emphasising their individual personal perception) using the cinema language, the main structural element of which is a frame" (Pohrebniak, 2021). However, on the other hand, author's mentality is recorded in mental parameters of the period, time, moment, national-cultural values, etc.

The national stereotype is a pervasive construct of ordinary consciousness and emerges as a method of generalising the image of the other in the national consciousness, the image implementing rather opposition than understanding and accepting. For example, L. Novikova analyses the stereotype of a Ukrainian in the consciousness of other countries (Novikova, 2009).

Polish researcher Joanna Rak determines the traits of such national stereotypes and they fully meet the general definition of the stereotype we used in our research: "They are mostly considered wrong. Undoubtedly, they are emotionally coloured. They are a mixture of what other people offered you. That is why they look rigid and change-resistant. Owing to their fixation they fulfil an important function, particularly, they put the world in order and tame it. Thus, they create an impression of safety because the simplified method of the world cognition influences the feeling of people's self-satisfaction. This creates an illusion of domination in the society" (Rak, 2013).

Based on the definition of the stereotype topical for us, the author generalises its efficiency with regard to the national stereotype about Jews: “Stereotypes relate to particular mental reductions allowing structured conceptions about Jews. The stereotype in this approach is a notion making it possible to cover a general form of the social consciousness which is an extremely simplified and simultaneously free connection between Jews. This tightly relates to a belief in the power and hidden power of Jews in the area of politics and economy, as well as is manifested to some extent, in the perception of Jews as competitors” (Rak, 2013). Thus, the national stereotype of the Jew relates to available certain stories, myths about them as “others”, “not us”, to social competition in the territory of Poland, to historic interaction.

One can find the constructs of a positive narrative about Jews as good businessmen, people of art, doctors, or a negative narrative about dishonesty, exploitation or anti-Christianity in numerous films where one or several characters are Jews (“they can do gesheft”). Let us provide just several examples.

In Roman Polansky’s film *The Pianist* (2002), the hero is a famous pianist (the historic prototype is Władysław Szpilman) who lives in Warsaw during World War II and gets into the ghetto with other Jews.



Photo 5. A scene from Roman Polansky’s *The Pianist*.
The deportation of Jews from Warsaw

Referring to a crowd of the Jews who survived in the ghetto, a German officer says, “A gesheft must be done, and you, Jews, do that well”, stating in this way a stereotypical conception about the representatives of this nations as traffickers, businessmen who can sell and receive profit. In the film, it sounds quite patronisingly, because it is a part of a narrative inherent to representatives of individual nations about the historic and social fate of them and others.

A similar sentence is found in the film *The Lessons of Farsi*, a military-dramatic film made jointly by the Russian company Hype Film, German LM Media, One Two, and Belorussian Belarusfilm in 2020 on the basis of a short story by Wolfgang Kohlhaase titled *Invention of a Language*. The hero had to invent a language and teach it to a German officer to survive, because he called himself Persian, not a Jew. Concerning Jews, the film conveys the idea that they will always find a cushy job, which sounds especially strange in the context of a concentration camp where dozens of Jews die every day.

The film adaptation of Artur Pałyga's play *The Jew* (Pol. *Żyd*), made in 2015 by Aneta Groszyńska-Liweń, is a very interesting film experiment, which self-ironically allows Poles to look at their own stereotypes concerning Jews. As we read on the state TV website (TVP), *The Jew* is an invitation to discuss stereotypes and an attempt at verifying them. The film provides a closer consideration of complicated Polish-Jewish relations concerning numerous contradictory aspects, provoking a discussion without biased judgements where the accusers become the accused and can meet the accusations brought, or underline clearly that this theme does not relate to them. The film in a funny manner raises quite serious issues related to national prejudices, stereotypes about another nation, which hide the lack of knowledge about history or culture ("How shall we welcome them – with bread and salt, matzo and salt?", "Do Jews drink coffee? – Arabica"), or unwillingness to see the things that will make them change something in their life: "We do not know anything about Israelis. We don't know what they eat, what they wear, if it is allowed to touch them... We know nothing, we only know that they have beards and side-locks. We don't know because we don't want to."

In the film, it is even actualized what can be a source of prejudices and stereotypes: "I read newspapers, listen to radios, watch TV, I hear what people say. I don't think so but people say that they are afraid of opening a can because a Jew will jump out of it. There are no better specialists in propaganda than Jews."

Stereotypical notions of another nation are scary or self-contradictory. For example, the young English teacher Dominika Kluźniak states that she "has never seen them face to face", while the senior teacher of Polish Magdalena Kuta notices that it is impossible because there were 50% of them there. Later in the talk it emerges that the young lady's grandfather owned some stone buildings the Jews used to own before. This is an unpleasant fact from which she wants to distance herself because she will have to deal with that. Moreover, Dominica sympathizes with Jews, especially much after her visit to Auschwitz: "In that Auschwitz there is something like it is streaming from the earth... I would not like to see that with my own eyes."

Instead, a young sports teacher is extremely radical. He states that without Jews in Poland “everything will be better: people will not leave, but only come back, interest rates on bank loans will be lower and higher on savings accounts – if the banks and consortiums are in our hands.” He seemingly embodies the image of uneducated strata of the population under extreme, radical tendencies of propaganda.

In the ordinary consciousness of the film characters, Jews are social competitors although in reality they did not have conflicts or problems with them: “We must understand who rules in this territory – we or them.”

Even in the comic situation where, in order to save the school, the director offers to contact a Jew who used to study there and whose father used to live there, the teachers are not ready to refuse: “The school named after Mosze Wazersztajn? How does it sound? Weird! There are limits to everything – I am not signing that.”



Photo 6. A scene from *The Jew* (2015, Poland)

The film actually becomes an intelligent illustrative material demonstrating the forms and methods of fostering national stereotypes, lack of critical thinking at the level of ordinary consciousness, people’s desire to deny anything that debunks these stereotypes because without them, their worldview would not be so safe.

For Polish cinema, the release of such a film says a lot about the nation’s readiness to think outside the box, laugh at stereotypes, and aspire to mental maturity.

A NATIONAL THEME IN UKRAINIAN CINEMA AFTER 2014

In Ukrainian cinema after 2014, in my opinion, the narratives signalling people’s desire to leave the borders of confrontation with other peoples in the

area of mentality, to comprehend its own dignity through respect to the dignity of the others became clearly outlined. The films *Why I Am Alive* (Ukrainian *Chomu ya zhyvyi*) (2021), directed by Villen Novak and made at Odesa Film Studio, based on a short story by Yevhen Mytko “Now I am Turk, not a Cossack...” (1989) and “Shchedryk” (2022) by Olesia Morhunets-Isaienko, based on the Kseniya Zastavska’s screenplay, are demonstrative in this regard. The events in both films occur during World War II, which the families of different nationalities had to face: Ukrainians and Jews in the film *Why I Am Alive*, and Ukrainians, Jews and Poles in the film *Shchedryk*. The narrative of both films is similar: this is a story about how common grievance, death and suffering wake up humanity, destroying all the oppositions that existed before. People must rescue each other because humanity becomes the greatest value. Humanity does not know stereotypes because it opposes un-human.

The narrative of the films made in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion of Russia became actualized to the maximum now when the war is threatening the whole world and awareness of value of unity and mutual understanding becomes as important as never before.

In the beginning of both films, the characters cannot come to an agreement due to the prejudices against each other, arrogance, stereotypical conceptions about others.



Photo 7. A frame from *Shchedryk*.

The meeting of the Ukrainian and Polish families at the house door

Wanda Kalinowska, a Polish woman, says discontentedly to her husband: “Will we live with Ukrainians?” She also becomes angry with the musicians living on the ground floor, because they are the Ukrainians who she did not expect to live with in the same building. The Ukrainian Sofiia Ivaniuk asks

her husband: “Have you noticed that our new neighbour behaved weirdly? She seemed to be discontented with something...” There is tension between the dwellers of the two flats, but both Poles and Ukrainians are completely unprejudiced against the Jewish family who own this building. The families of three nationalities live in one building, they have different traditions, different holidays but only children’s open-mindedness free from adults’ prejudices can unite them. The little girl Yaroslava Ivaniuk, a singing teacher’s daughter, invites everybody to a holiday dinner. A light song performed by the child helps the adults to understand each other, this is the music that gives them space of freedom from mental limitations.



Photo 8. A frame from *Shchedryk*.

The festive evening where the families of different nationalities gathered

The children in the film sing in three languages, breaking down the barriers built by adults.

The film is set in the city of Stanyslaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk), which was historically multinational, in particular, in the first half of XX century Poles, Jews, Ukrainians prevailed there, until 1939 the city belonged to Poland, and then it was occupied by the Soviet Union. Since that time, within two decades the number of Poles and Ukrainians in the city fell dramatically but the number of Russians increased.

The principal narrative of the film is the counterposing of humanity, which is higher than stereotypes to unhuman attitude to anybody, the value of life and culture of every person, resistance to the common enemy – German and Soviet terror.

The film *Why I Am Alive*, the events of which begin in prewar Mariupol, describes the period before World War II in a different part of Ukraine – in

the east. The history of this territory is different, but the common fact is that there are also different nations living close to each other, preserving their culture and trying to co-exist. According to National Population Census 1939 (<http://surl.li/hybwd>), Ukrainians accounted for 49%, Russians – 35.6%, Jews – 4.7%, of the total population was significantly different from the east of Ukraine depicted in *Shchedryk*, that is why it is absolutely clear that the narrative of “the other” relates exactly to Jews.

The narrator in the film is the youngest of the characters – a boy Zhenka whose first remark discloses the international conflict put into the plot: “Our Frosia hit the Christian heart of our grandpa the strongest.” Oleksa’s younger daughter fell in love with the Jew Lonchik and is afraid of telling her father about that.

A prejudiced attitude of Ukrainians towards Jews is articulated in the dialogue between the two in love:

Lonchik: I have a very unpleasant message for you... I am a Jew.

Frosia: Jews are also people. The main thing is for my father not to get to know about that, because he is Orthodox and does not love Jews.

Lonchik: And you?

Frosia: I do... you and all Jews in the world.

Zhenka, listening to them is thinking at this time: perhaps he is kissing her for all the Jews in the world.

The film conflict is classic, built on the juxtaposition of young people in love and the older generation. However, here it has been processed not typically – only Oleksa, Frosia’s father, sees a problem in the fact that Lonchik is a Jew. Instead, neither the girl’s mother nor Lonka’s parents pay attention to that. It is interesting that, as Larisa Bryukhovetska points out in her research, a conflict similar to the one in *Why I Am Alive* is being developed in one of the films of the 2020s, *Suburban Quarters*. A Jewish girl, Dora, fell in love with a Ukrainian boy, but the traditions and religions cannot separate them. In the same way in two countries, Jews and Ukrainians discuss the situation, but there the parents in both families persuade lovers to withdraw from the problematic marriage (Bryukhovetska, 2019).

Oleksa has quite a radical inclination, which is seen from his remarks: “Are you defending the kikes? I also have a voice... but I don’t sing in a Jewish opera,” “I don’t want to see these monsters, this non-Christian offspring, you, bitch of kikes.” It is notable that the area for his aggressive attitude to Jews is their religion (Christian – non Christians, the Crucifixion – “Tell me, a Cossack of Jerusalem, why did you crucify Christ?”), which is quite emblematic in the national propaganda. Also, he transmits the above-mentioned stereotypes about

the “cushy job” – easy work in the theatre compared to his hard physical labour, although he understands later that he was wrong. Singer Ovsii is wiser than Oleksa, he is sensible and ready to communicate patiently with his brother-in-law for mutual understanding:

Oleksa: You are still looking for where life is easier and better.

Ovsii: Everybody must do what they can do well.

Oleksa’s wife fully understands the intelligence of Lonchik’s family: “They are not vagabonds, they are intelligentsia, famous people... for entire Mariupol.” “A Jewish family of actors: an opera singer and a ballet dancer, Lonchik the son plays the trumpet.” “Intelligent people – what will they think about us?” For her it is more important what people are rather than their nationality.

Actually, in the beginning of the film an opposition not only between the representatives of different nationalities is notable but also between mental conceptions – the worldview limited with the stereotypes and openness to embrace cultural diversity. Ovsii’s remarks show his high culture, an ability to keep up dialogue and, perhaps, certainly, habitualness of stereotypical reproaches in his nationality: “We don’t have icons, but we have God.” “Did I or my relative do that? How, Basia, Lonia, who were born and grew up in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, can we be responsible for what happened long ago in the Arabian Desert...?” “Is this quarrel more important for you than our children’s happiness?”



Photo 9. A frame from *Why I Am Alive*. Ovsii and his wife

Finally, a talk at the wedding, an atmosphere of common festival, thoughts that he could not be a singer in the theatre (a funny scene where Oleksa imagines himself on the stage), reconciles the Ukrainian with the fact that his relatives now are Jews. The men declare: “Kikes – Ukes: draw”. It is interesting that in this definition they both call themselves stereotypic and humiliating names in the Ukrainian cultural context, i.e. in fact, they signal that they stand near in the mental area.

Thus, both films actualize the possibility of a stereotypical perception of representatives of the other nationality. In the film *Why I Am Alive* this is an attitude of a Ukrainian to a Jew, and in the film *Shchedryk* – of a Polish woman to Ukrainians. The context is a little different, the historic realia are different to some extent, but in both films the plot unfolds later in such a way that different people will have to unite to resist the terror, unhuman destruction, Nazism.

Shchedryk shows how in the beginning the Soviet regime comes to Stanislaviv and begins to kill Poles (the Polish family leaves their daughter Teresa with the Ivaniuks), and then Germans start chasing Jews (the Jewish family is also hiding their daughters with the Ukrainian family).

Germans also come to Mariupol and start killing the Jewish population. The Soviet terror in the film is just outlined: Oleksa's neighbour blames him at the meeting that the man believes in God, people around are shouting that he has to be sent away because it is not in the Soviet way. After Mariupol was freed from the Nazi army, the Soviet officers arrest Frosia because she had lived with a German to protect her Jewish daughter from shooting. It is illustrative that the family's neighbours who denounced them either to Germans looking for Jews ("Why are you, Orthodox, hiding kikes?" "Who airs the kike's child?") or to the Soviet officers, because Ovsii gets baptized and he has a Russian surname, Honcharov. The language in both films, in general, becomes an area of understanding or non-understanding. For example, in *Shchedryk* Ukrainians and Jews speak Ukrainian, and Poles speak Polish, and they understand each other. In *Why I Am Alive* characters speak Ukrainian, and only the representatives of the Soviet regime speak Russian. In both films only Russian speaking representatives of the Soviet regime demand to speak Russian as if they do not understand other languages.

The frames of families' staying in the cellar in both films are impressive – they are important visual constructs of national unity narrative before the destruction of people's values.



Photo 10. A frame from *Why I Am Alive*.
A scene in the cellar during bombing



Photo 11. A frame from *Shchedryk*.
A scene in the cellar during bombing

The war has ruined all the national counterposing, take down available stereotypes, only humanity remained a value. That is why the Ivaniuks and then only Sofia herself hides and raises three children of other people – a Pole and Jews. That is why the Ivaniuks are ready to venture their lives to rescue a little girl of other people. This story is a wonderful illustration of the experience which became topical for Ukrainians after 2014 – a new understanding of World War II, resistance to genocide, re-consideration of their own history, which is to be purged of the Soviet propagandistic interpretation.

The genocide the Jews suffered during World II is shown in both films as a horrible tragedy, a crime against humanity. In the film *Why I Am Alive* Ovsii, as an intellectual, doubts that it is possible in general: “The civilised people from Europe cannot have shot others only for being Jews.” His wife cannot also believe in the possibility of this attitude to people of other nationality: “Newspapers did not write about that – look, in Moldova and Belarus Germans have already been for two months but we haven’t heard about such a thing.” There are many brilliant and excruciating scenes that force the viewer to feel this tragedy again, for example, shooting naked people at the edge of a ravine and the tender touch of the married couple’s hands of each other before death.



Photo 12. A frame from *Why I Am Alive*.
The shooting of Jews

The scene is based on real events, because the shooting of Jews in Mariupol was described in the diary of Sarra Gleih titled *Mariupol* (<https://www.yadvashem.org/ru/education/resources/testimonies-texts/ukraine/sarra-gleih.html>).

It is demonstrative that both for Poles and Ukrainians historic co-existence with each other is completely habitual, formed during the centuries, and the same long stereotypic narratives have been formed in common consciousness. It is the above-mentioned conceptions about Jews as the one who have particular business peculiarities (Rak, 2013), or there is a stereotypical model of interpretation of Jews described by H. Hrabovych: “On one hand, there are the images of comic, often helpless and cowardly Jews from the interlude of the 17th and the 18th centuries; on the other hand, more importantly for us, folklore and verbal versions of historic events and historic experience” (Hrabovych, 2003).

These are the stereotypes of Poles with regard to Ukrainians described by Ukrainian philosopher and publicist Petro Kralyuk: “Ukraine remains for Poles an ‘uncivilized state’, from which they should keep distant” (Kralyuk, 2019).

Modernity proves that the period of resisting to aggression must change something in these historical layers of ordinary consciousness. First of all, mass media must work at that, including through film content which influences stronger due to its emotional nature.

That important mental experience Ukrainians have been experiencing due to the beginning of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is imprinted in the narratives of the Ukrainian films, influences the narratives of the films by the directors from other countries, because this is not so much Ukrainian experience but an experience of struggle between humanity and people’s values with totalitarianism and genocide.

CONCLUSIONS

The publication analyses substantially the nature of national stereotype and its peculiarities and nature in the ordinary consciousness of people. The stereotypes related to other nationalities are embedded in specific contexts of intercultural interaction.

National stereotypes as generalised conceptions about ourselves and other nations as about “us” and “them”, on the one hand, are grounded on a natural need for national, cultural, religious, etc. identity (i.e. formation of integrity), and on the other hand, on a need to detach nations from each other in order to deepen self-awareness and understand national otherness more

simply. That means that initially it is an absolutely healthy mental procedure, which later becomes a factor warping the real picture of the world.

Cinema as a means of mass communication is a powerful tool both for creating stereotypes and for their abolition through formation of critical or ironic narratives like, for example, in Polish film *The Jew*, or positive narratives of unity like in films produced in Ukraine, for example *Why I Am Alive*, *Shchedryk*, *87 Children*, through an attempt of serious comprehension like in the documentary *The Injured*. For the modern context of interaction between cultures and peoples, the promotion of a narrative of unity, search for commonality and mutual understanding is extremely important.

Despite the fact that national stereotypes are quite strong in the consciousness of every nation, the analysed material of Polish and Ukrainian feature films and documentaries demonstrate a strong tendency to their overcoming through actualization and other re-consideration, self-ironisation and formation of the images that show unviability of these stereotypes. Both Ukrainian and Polish cultural fields in artistic and scientific discourses demonstrate these tendencies, which does not mean that the stereotypes can be overcome very quickly because they are deeply embedded into the structure of ordinary consciousness but positive tendencies give the hope that this work will lead to cultural rapprochement of different peoples, formation of new consciousness of unity, especially before inhumane values (war, ruining, disuniting narratives).

In ordinary consciousness of modern people, disintegrating tendencies are becoming weaker. However, the aspiration to unity and removal of inter-ethnic contradictions is becoming more visible, which causes these issues to be more present in documentary and feature films. For example, by appealing to the fact that a stereotype is based on a non-integral worldview, filmmakers draw attention to the distortions it causes (*The Injured*).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen R. (2010), *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Berg C. R. (2002), *Latino Images In Film & Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*, Akron: University of Texas Press.
- Boyko O. D. (2007), *Anatomiya politychnoho manipulyuvannya*, Nizhyn: Milanik / Бойко О. Д. (2007), *Анатомія політичного маніпулювання*, Ніжин: Міланік.
- Bryukhovets'ka L. (2019), *Yevreys'ka tema v ukrayins'komu kino 1920-kh rokiv. Yevreys'ka kul'tura v Ukrayini (druha polovyna XIX – persha polovyna XX st.): muzeyni kolektsiyi ta*

- teatral'ne mystetstvo: dopovidi ta povidomlennya Mizhnar. nauk. konf. (Lviv, 19-20 April 2018)*, pp. 99-113 / Брюховецька Л. (2019), *Єврейська тема в українському кіно 1920-х років. Єврейська культура в Україні (друга половина XIX – перша половина XX ст.): музейні колекції та театральне мистецтво: доповіді та повідомлення Міжнар. наук. конф. (Львів, 19-20 квіт. 2018 р.)*, с. 99-113; <https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/items/6661b9ee-5d39-4142-ab2c-e2b02574211f>.
- Bryukhovets'ka L. (2022), *Enerhiya vidrodzhennya. Ukrayins'ke kino 2014-2020*, Kinematohrafichni studiyi 13, Redaktsiya zhurnalu "Kino-Teatr" / Брюховецька Л. (2022), *Енергія відродження. Українське кіно 2014-2020*, Кінематографічні студії 13, Редакція журналу «Кіно-Театр».
- Eriss A., Khoshsaligheh M. (2023), *Stereotypes in a Multilingual Film: A Case Study on Issues of Social Injustice*, Languages: New Trends, Challenges and Discoveries in the Translation of Multilingualism in Fiction, no. 8(3), p. 174.
- Freud S. (2021), *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, Hamburg: Nikol.
- Jewell K. S. (1993), *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond*, London: Routledge.
- Hordienko V. (2022, 2 May), *Ukrayina v rosiys'kykh fil'makh*, Svidomi / Гордієнко Віталій (2022, 2 Травня), *Україна в російських фільмах*, Свідомі; https://svidomi.in.ua/page/02_05_2022_074412
- Hrabovych G. (1997), *Polish-and-Ukrainian Literature Interrelation: Issue of Cultural Perspective. Do Istorii Ukrainskoj Literatury*, Kyiv: Osnovy, pp. 129-156 / Грабович Г. (1997), *Польсько-Українські літературні взаємини: питання культурної перспективи. До історії української літератури: Дослідження, есе, полеміка*, Київ: Основи, с. 129-156.
- Kowal P., Ołdakowski J. (2002), *Nie jesteśmy ukrainofilami. Polska myśl polityczna wobec Ukraińców i Ukrainy. Antologia tekstów*, Wrocław: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej.
- Kralyuk P. (2019, 11 June), *Ukrayintsi i polyaky. Moskvi vyhidni nehatyvni stereotypu*, Radio "Svoboda" / Кралюк П. (2019, 11 червня), *Українці і поляки. Москві вигідні негативні стереотипи*, Радіо «Свобода»; <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27066864.html>.
- Lippman W. (2017), *Public opinion*, New York: Routledge; <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/j6075/edit/stereo.html>.
- Maystrenko I. (2022, 3 April), *Yak Rosiya desyatylitnyamy prynyzhuvava ukrayintsev u kino: naochni pryklady*, S'ohodni/Майстренко І. (2022, 3 квітня), *Як Росія десятиліттями принижувала українців у кіно: наочні приклади*, Сьогодні; <https://stars.segodnya.ua/ua/stars/zarubezhnye/zombirovanie-i-vrashchivanie-kompleksa-nepolnocennosti-fakty-kak-rf-desyatiletymi-pokazyvali-ukrainu-v-kino-1612650.html>.
- Mitchell W. F. T. (2006), *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Nakonechnyy R. A. (1992), *Filosofiya i natsiya: dialektyka vzayemov'yazku ta vzayemozalezhnosti*, Problemy filosofiyi, no. 94, pp. 15-18 / Наконечний Р. А. (1992), *Філософія і нація: діалектика взаємозв'язку та взаємозалежності*, Проблеми філософії, № 94, с. 15-18.
- National Census of 1939*; https://web.archive.org/web/20150417173907/http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_39_ra.php?reg=418.
- Novikova L. (2009), *Kinematohrafichnyy imidzh Ukrainy u ukrayintsev: zakhidna skladova*, Naukovyi Visnyk Kyivskoho Natsionalnoho Universytetu Teatru, Kino i Telebachennia Imeni I. K. Karpenka-Karoho: zb. nauk. prats'. Kyiv, nos. 4-5, pp. 202-215 / Новікова Л. (2009), *Кінематографічний імідж України й українців: західна складова*, Науковий вісник Київського національного університету театру, кіно і телебачення імені І. К. Карпенка-Карого: зб. наук. праць. Київ. Вип. 4–5, с. 202-215.

- Parkhit'ko O. (2012), *Stereotypy amerykans'koho kino yak zasib formuvannya masovoyi svidomosti (na prykladi oskaronosnykh fil'miv)*, Media-komunikatsiya, no. 15, pp. 175-187 / Пархітько О. (2012), *Стереотипи американського кіно як засіб формування масової свідомості (на прикладі оскароносних фільмів)*, Медіа-комунікація, № 15, с. 175-187.
- Pohrebniak H. (2021), *Rezhysers'ki modeli avtors'koho kino v suchasnomu festyval'nomu prostori. Part 1. Fiction Films of the Ukrainian Directors-Authors in the Context of Intercultural Diplomacy. Chastyna 1. Ihrovi fil'my ukrayins'kykh rezhyserv-avtoriv u konteksti mizhkul'turnoiy diplomatii*, Ekranni Mystetstva, no. 29, pp. 36-43 / Погребняк Г. (2021), *Режисерські моделі авторського кіно в сучасному фестивальному просторі. Частина 1. Ігрові фільми українських режисерів-авторів у контексті міжкультурної дипломатії*, Екранні мистецтва, № 29, с. 36-43; <https://doi.org/10.34026/1997-4264.29.2021.248730>.
- Rak J. (2013), *W pogoni za katharsis, czyli „Bękart wojny”: stereotyp Żyda w kulturze polskiej*, Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 41-54.
- Schulz W. (1982), *Ausblick am Ende des Holzweges? Eine Übersicht über die Ansätze der neuen Wirkungsforschung*, Publizistik, no. 27(1-2), pp. 49-73.
- Schweinitz J. (2011), *Film and stereotype: A challenge for cinema and theory*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Stamou A. G., Petraki K. P. (2022), *Istanbul Greek identities film discourse*, Popular Communication, no. 20(2), pp. 77-90.
- Ukrayina – Pol'shcha: istorychna spadshchyna i suspil'na svidomist'.* Materialy mizhn. nauk. konf. Kamianets-Podil'skyi, 29-31 May 1991, Kyiv: Lybid 1993 / *Україна – Польща: історична спадщина і суспільна свідомість. Матеріали міжн. наук. конф. Кам'янецьПодільський, 29-31 травня 1991 р.*, Київ: Либідь 1993.
- Wojtyna M., Micelli B., Zgierska R. (2022), *Reading Contemporary TV Series: Aesthetics, Themes and Reception*, Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Yilmazok L. (2019), *Persistent othering in Turkish cinema: The stereotyped and gendered Greek identity*, Turkish Studies, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 120-139.

ELEMENTY STEREOTYPOWE W NARRACJI O LUDZIACH NARODOWOŚCIOWO „INNYCH” WE WSPÓŁCZESNYM KINIE POLSKIM I UKRAIŃSKIM

Streszczenie

W publikacji badane są aktualne narracje kina ukraińskiego i polskiego dotyczące interakcji z przedstawicielami innych narodowości na terytorium jednego kraju. Celem badań jest analiza zmian w narracjach międzykulturowych związanych ze stereotypami narodowymi we współczesnych filmach. Obecny etap rozwoju kultury światowej wymaga nowych narracji; sygnały o tym pojawiają się w kinie światowym i ukraińskim. Dla Ukrainy te narracje stają się szczególnie aktualne po 2014 roku. Teraz Ukraińcy zastanawiają się nad swoją historią i relacjami z tymi, z którymi historia ich zjednoczyła w nowy sposób. Analizowane filmy *Dlaczego żyję* (ukr. „Chomu ya zhyvyi”) (2015) i *Shchedryk* (2022), w których bohaterowie budują nowy dyskurs swojej wartościowej egzystencji poprzez uwolnienie się od narodowych stereotypów, są tego znakomitym przykładem. W szerszej analizie wybranych stereotypów uwzględniono filmy *Lekcje perskiego*, *Pianista*, *Żyd*.

Słowa kluczowe: narracja; stereotyp; film fabularny; świadomość potoczna.