Ambivalent Enmity and Adolescence in a Wartime Diary (1941–1944): Historical and Psychological Perspectives

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Drawing on perspectives from psychology and history, this article evaluates the diary of Olga Kravtsova, a young Ukrainian woman who documented her experiences, thoughts, and feelings almost daily from 1941 to 1944. The diary reveals a young person shaped by Stalinism who, amid the crises and conflicts of adolescence, experienced the horror of the German war of extermination and occupation in Ukraine and the purges in the first months after the return of Soviet rule. Olga developed a highly subjective view of both dictatorships. Her diary is a fascinating source that offers unexpected perspectives on the occupation period. The reader witnesses the author's profound internal changes as well as conflicts of loyalty and identity connected to crises of adolescence and coming-of-age. According to Olga's account, the period of German occupation was a phase of accelerated personal growth, of learning, and of a broadening of horizons, including erotic horizons, for Olga and her friends, who increasingly withdrew from the control of their parents. At the same time, this period was accompanied by experiences of incomprehensible violence during the German war of conquest and extermination. The German mass crimes to which the Jewish population, Soviet prisoners of war, and other groups from the Soviet civilian population fell victim feature in Olga's diary only as marginal notes.[1]

Our reading of Olga's diary reveals the processual, relational, and deeply ambivalent nature of enmity. Her writings contain a variety of often contradictory attitudes, values, and practices,[2] which supports the conceptualization of enmity proposed in this special issue that departs from older essentializing or totalizing views.[3] From a historian's point of view,

1 On other civilian victim groups, see Tanja Penter, ed., "Vernichtungskrieg, Besatzung und juristische Aufarbeitung: Opferperspektiven," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 68 (2020): 3–4.

2 As outlined in the "Introduction" to this themed issue, the term "ambivalence" refers here to a contradictory pattern of emotions, values, and cultural habits. See Johannes Becke, Nikolas Jaspert, and Joachim Kurtz, "Ambivalent Enmity: Making the Case for a Transcultural Turn in Enmity Studies," 5.

3 Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen: Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996); and Jan-Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Post-war European Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Olga's diary clearly shows that direct contact with enemies can produce a lasting tension between rejection and attraction. It also underscores the fact that transcultural encounters with enemies can lead to necessarily ambivalent forms of cultural learning. In such a process, historical actors such as Olga acquire knowledge about their enemies as a form of meaning, but this intense engagement can also entail effects of imitation or even identification with the enemy.[4] In psychological terms, ambivalent enmity manifests itself in the simultaneous effort to get closer to a feared enemy on the one hand and to avoid it on the other, all the while keeping the enemy at the centre of attention. Contemporary developmental psychology considers adolescence as the starting point for a lifelong effort to create coherence and continuity in contradictory mental experiences. Such efforts, according to psychologists, are necessary for the subject to create identity, organize belief systems, and cope with negative effects and feelings of helplessness.[5]

The aim of this article is to draw from the fields of history and psychology to develop a mutually fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue that can explain Olga's changing opinions and attitudes. We examine in particular Olga's ambivalent feelings towards the German occupiers, which gradually transformed from hostility, to friendship, and even romantic attachment. Our approach also reflects on the transcultural processes in Olga's diary, and we aim to highlight the relationship between enmity and transcultural entanglement.[6] Through our interdisciplinary approach, a historical reading of the text can be supplemented by insights from developmental psychology into Olga's life-stage, and clinical psychological insights into the consequences of trauma; further, the insights from developmental psychology and clinical psychological can be relativized through historical analysis. This represents a particularly effective approach to the interpretation of a subjective text such as a diary. Olga's intentions and experiences must often be inferred from the material, and these inferences are likely to have been shaped by her biases and defense mechanisms, such as evasion or systematic bias on subjects that were not in accordance with her self-representation.

4 Rom Harré and Fathali M. Moghaddam, ed. *The Psychology of Friendship and Enmity: Relationships in Love, Work, Politics, and War, Vol. 1: Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Processes* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013); and Martin Aust and Daniel Schönpflug, ed., *Vom Gegner lernen: Feindschaften und Kulturtransfers im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2007).

5 Kurt Lüscher, "Menschen als 'homines ambivalentes,'" in *Ambivalenzerfahrungen*, ed. Dieter Korczak (Kröning: Asanger, 2012), 11–32; and Peter Fonagy, György Gergely, Elliot L. Jurist, and Mary Target, ed., *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self* (London: Karnac Books, 2002).

6 See Aust and Schönpflug, *Vom Gegner lernen*.

Psychological research on adolescents' diaries

The diaries of adolescents became a focus of psychological research in the 1920s, when scholars developed various methods for their evaluation.[7] According to the developmental psychologist Charlotte Bühler, the diary conveyed the problems of young people like no other source: "At one time or another, they all saw themselves as individuals facing inner problems for the first time in their lives, problems that no one could obviously help them solve. Problems of the body, of the soul, which they themselves did not fully understand, which they did not dare to talk about, which they did not understand or did not dare to present, which made them feel lonely and isolated and which they now tried to deal with in their diary."[8] The psychoanalyst and reform pedagogue Siegfried Bernfeld stated in 1931 that it was primarily the conflicts of puberty that young people sought to overcome in their diaries.[9]

Discussions of the youth diary in the various schools of German-language psychology were heated. A new subject of lasting disagreement was the function of diary writing for adolescents. While Bühler saw diaries as an expression of an adolescent need for self-reflection, Bernfeld regarded diary writing as a learned cultural technique through which one's diary entries would be aligned with a traditioned norm. Bernfeld therefore called for a historicization of diary sources and a closer cooperation between psychologists and historians, since "even the most idiosyncratic diarist remains within the circle of forms of his time and his social position."[10]

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7 See, among others, Petra Stach, "Das Seelenleben junger Mädchen: Zwei Tagebücher der Jahrhundertwende in der Kontroverse zwischen Psychoanalyse und Psychologie," *Psychologie und Geschichte* 5, no. 3–4 (1994): 183–207; Charlotte Bühler, "Die Bedeutung des Tagebuchs für die Jugendpsychologie," in *Zwei Knabentagebücher*, ed. Charlotte Bühler (Jena: Fischer, 1925), v–xiv; and Siegfried Bernfeld, *Trieb und Tradition im Jugendalter: Kulturpsychologische Studien an Tagebüchern* (Leipzig: Barth, 1931). This research was also partially noticed in the Soviet Union. For example, the *Tagebuch eines halbwüchsigen Mädchens*, published in 1919 by the Viennese child psychoanalyst Hermine Hug-Hellmuth, which dealt with the consequences of sexual ignorance, became available a few years later in Russian translation (with a foreword by Soviet Professor of the Military Medical Academy Viktor Petrovich Osipov). See Hermine Hug-Hellmuth, ed., *Tagebuch eines halbwüchsigen Mädchens (von 11–14 1/2 Jahren)* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1919); and *Dnevnik podrostki* [Diary of a teenager] (Leningrad: Vremia, 1925).

8 Bühler, "Die Bedeutung des Tagebuchs für die Jugendpsychologie," xiv.

9 Bernfeld, *Trieb und Tradition im Jugendalter*, 138

10 Bernfeld, *Trieb und Tradition im Jugendalter*, 8. For a detailed analysis of the scientific controversies about diaries in adolescent psychology since the 1920s, see Li Gerhalter, *Tagebücher als Quellen: Forschungsfelder und Sammlungen seit 1800* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 107–250.

More recent work, for example by James W. Pennebaker, emphasizes the therapeutic effect of diary writing.[11] In the face of sustained violence, the diary could become a safe place, an imaginary world, in which those affected could experience a degree of normality despite their external living conditions.[12] The diary offers the possibility of distancing oneself from traumatic experiences through various narrative strategies, of rewriting such experiences and presenting them as controllable or even as successfully mastered.[13] However, the ability to actively rewrite events creates a problem from a historical perspective; that is, without further sources, it is often impossible to distinguish between wish, storytelling, and reality in diary entries. Any interpretation of diaries must therefore apply basic rules of hermeneutics and differentiate between objective, subjective, and situational levels of understanding. It should not aim to reconstruct objective truth but rather to recover subjective forms of dealing with a given historical event. It must also attempt to identify what kind of repressed forms of mental representation are hidden in the text. These repressed forms are only accessible through depth hermeneutics using subjective impressions and reflections of both readers and interpreters.[14]

Diary entries play an increasingly important role in developmental psychology and clinical research, although here diary entries are recorded in a standardized manner, for example through topic specifications or the use of questionnaire items.[15] The advantage of daily entries or even multiple daily entries (e.g. in the context of ecological momentary assessments) is the control of retrospective memory effects and the recording of time-dependent dynamics (e.g. in the recording of mental states). In clinical research and therapy, structured diary entries are used to document the progression of symptoms

11 James W. Pennebaker, *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval* (Oakland: New Harbinger, 2004). According to James Pennebaker, writing as a self-help technique can not only help the soul but also strengthen the body, such as boosting immune system activity and alleviating depressive symptoms.

12 The “safe place” is a method of imaginative processing of trauma and is currently one of the standard stabilization techniques for post-traumatic stress situations. See Luise Reddemann, *Imagination als heilsame Kraft: Ressourcen und Mitgefühl in der Behandlung von Traumafolgen* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001).

13 Katja Bertsch, Tanja Penter, and Svenja Taubner, “Fragile Identitätskonstruktionen unter der Bedingung sozialer Traumatisierung: Selbstnarration von Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen aus dem 2. Weltkrieg und von Flüchtlingen heute,” *Marsilius-Kolleg* 2018–2019: 36–53.

14 Alfred Lorenzer, “Tiefenhermeneutische Kulturanalyse,” in *Kultur-Analysen: Psychoanalytische Studien zur Kultur*, ed. Hans-Dieter König et al. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), 11–98.

15 Shevaun D. Neupert and Jennifer A. Bellingtier, “Daily Diary Designs in Lifespan Developmental Psychology,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology* (published online March 28, 2018). https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.347.

(such as diary cards in the treatment of compulsions) and to improve self-observation skills and self-responsibility.

Current diary research in psychology has moved away from the evaluation of classical diaries in favor of standardized entries that allow additional quantitative evaluation access. For example, researchers are increasingly interested in daily social media entries of adolescents through which they gain quantitative access with the help of computer-assisted word recognition programs such as the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC).[16] Such social media posts can be understood as a kind of interactive diary that can be read and commented on by a large public. While quantitative evaluations follow the objective of a nomothetic hypothesis-testing scientific view within psychology, in recent years there has been a paradigm shift back to a complementary, more ideographically oriented perspective that could once again make the classic diary an object of psychological research in justified individual cases.[17] With a quantitative approach it is also difficult to control the influence of the measurement itself on the individual who may be led, for instance, to answer in a socially desirable way. In the case of classic diaries, this issue is less pronounced since authors typically write for their own reflection. However, we must bear in mind that the text may still be distorted and include content that mirrors conflicts and ambivalences experienced by the writer herself, which only a hermeneutical approach as the one outlined above can recover.

The practice of diary writing under National Socialism and Stalinism

As historical research on diaries has shown, diary writing experienced a boom in the twentieth century, particularly during times of social crisis, regime change, or war. Diary writers reflected precipitating events, such as Hitler's rise to power in 1933, which prompted many Germans to write.[18] Diaries can thus be seen as a response to experiences of violence and social change.[19] National Socialism and Stalinism have in common that they left behind a large number

16 Johannes Feldhege, Markus Moessner, Markus Wolf, and Stephanie Bauer, "Changes in Language Style and Topics in an Online Eating Disorder Community at the Beginning of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic: Observational Study," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 23, no. 7 (2021). https://doi.org/10.2196/28346.

17 Stefan G. Hofmann and Steven C. Hayes, "The Future of Intervention Science: Process-Based Therapy," *Clinical Psychological Science* 7, no. 1 (2019): 37–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702618772296.

18 Janosch Steuwer, *"Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse": Politik, Gesellschaft und privates Leben in Tagebüchern 1933–1939* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).

19 Janosch Steuwer and Rüdiger Graf, ed., *Selbstreflexionen und Weltdeutungen: Tagebücher in der Geschichte und der Geschichtsschreibung des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015).

of private diaries, so many in fact that some historians speak of an "age of the diary."[20] Since the 1990s, these documents have attracted increasing attention among scholars of both regimes who have produced important studies on the practice of diary writing.[21]

Diary writing also became a mass phenomenon in the Stalin era. Under Stalinism, as under National Socialism, individuals composed their diary entries with the awareness that they were living in an extraordinary historical period.[22] Many were convinced that they had to transform themselves to participate in the revolutionary reconstruction project. Diaries from the Stalin era therefore often had a dual purpose: To document the larger processes of historical change on the one hand, and to transform one's self on the other. Since the 1920s, diary writing was used in Soviet schools to promote students' linguistic expression and to strengthen their personality development into "new people." Similarly, workers on large Soviet construction sites, such as the Moscow Metro, were encouraged to keep a diary, which was intended both as a tool for self-discipline in the work process and to strengthen the workers' personal ties to the project of socialist construction.[23] The diaries of the 1930s reflected the official discourses through which individual diarists, some of whom even critical of Stalinism, attempted to inscribe themselves in the Soviet collective. Notions of individuality reached their limit in the face of these dominant notions of the collective, and in Soviet subjectivity the dichotomy between private and public space virtually dissolved. According to Jochen Hellbeck, insights into alternative worlds opposed to Soviet reality

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20 Frank Bajohr and Sybille Steinbacher, ed., *"...Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten": Tagebücher und persönliche Zeugnisse aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 7.

21 On the National Socialist period, see, among others, Susanne zur Nieden, *Alltag im Ausnahmezustand: Frauentagebücher im zerstörten Deutschland 1943 bis 1945* (Berlin: Orlanda, 1993); Steuwer, *"Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse"*; and Bajohr and Steinbacher, *"...Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten."* Diaries related to the Holocaust are comparatively well researched, see Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); and Dominique Schröder, *"Niemand ist fähig, das alles in Worten auszudrücken": Tagebuchschreiben in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern 1939–1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020). For a new edition of a source that sheds light on the private sphere under National Socialism, see *"Im Übrigen hat die Vorsehung das letzte Wort ...": Tagebücher und Briefe von Marta und Egon Oelwein 1938–1945*, ed., Johannes Hürter, Thomas Raithel, and Reiner Oelwein (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021). See also Sven Keller, ed., *Kriegstagebuch einer jungen Nationalsozialistin: Die Aufzeichnungen Wolfhilde von Königs 1939–1946* (Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015). On Stalinism, see Jochen Hellbeck, ed., *Tagebuch aus Moskau 1931–1939* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

22 Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*.

23 Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 41–55.

or competing forms of identity are rarely encountered in diaries from the Stalin era.[24]

Diaries from the two dictatorships show interesting parallels. For example, diary writers under National Socialism expressed their perceptions of being under observation and of having to conform to the new patterns of behavior and ways of thinking. Their diary entries also reflected the social adjustments and mental transformations that had to be made, which Janosch Steuwer interprets as an ideological (re-)education project.[25] Some writers reflected critically on this process, while others literally inscribed themselves in the *Volksgemeinschaft* proclaimed by the National Socialists by linking their everyday entries to the new worldview. Just as under Stalinism, under National Socialism there was a practice of collective diary writing and reading that was intended to support community building. However, the relationship between the state and private diaries in the Soviet Union under Stalin was characterized by a greater claim to control. The evaluation of private diaries of supposedly suspicious persons was declared a matter for the Soviet secret service and formed the basis for criminal convictions of alleged "enemies of the people." Thanks to this circumstance, some diaries have survived in the former Soviet secret service archives. By contrast, diaries from the Third Reich were often attributed a kind of valve function that could free the writers "from the pressure of unsaid words" and offer them a refuge of inner emigration and inner resistance.[26]

However, diary writing as a valve or coping mechanism reached its limits in the face of the Shoah. In her study of Jewish diaries from the period of National Socialist persecution, Alexandra Garbarini identified dynamic changes in the function of the diary.[27] Initially a site of refuge and self-determination during the early war years, Jewish writers came to perceive their diaries as a way to dutifully bear witness to the years of ultimate annihilation. According to Garbarini, the diary could not absorb such shattering of self and life-world, so that entries rather gave voice to hopelessness. However, diaries from the concentration camps show that, despite the commonly accepted impossibility of depicting the Shoah, prisoners were able to articulate their personal experiences through the medium of the diary, "even if these were often situated at the 'very limits of the sayable.'"[28]

24 Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 347–363.

25 Steuwer, *"Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse."*

26 Heinrich Breloer, *Mein Tagebuch: Geschichten vom Überleben 1939–1947* (Cologne: Verlagsgesellschaft Schulfernsehen, 1984), 6; and Bajohr and Steinbacher, *"... Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten,"* 8.

27 Garbarini, *Numbered Days*.

28 Schröder, *"Niemand ist fähig, das alles in Worten auszudrücken,"* 453.

The Second World War provided a strong impetus for the practice of private writing more generally; the "age of the diary" was accompanied by a surge in the production of field post, literary texts, and other genres. This suggests that the need for writing occurs when a subject is challenged by external factors, such as the daily threat of death. Various other factors came into play during the war that promoted private writing, such as the separation from family and familiar living environments, the awareness of living in extraordinary times and witnessing historical change, and the desire to document these circumstances for posterity or for close family members from whom one was separated.[29]

This then leads us to ask: Which aspects of the history of the war and the occupation become visible in diaries that remain hidden in other sources? What is the special source value of diaries for historians? Diaries certainly "do not allow an undisguised view of the author's self," but are rather "instruments of self-constitution and world-making."[30] In the act of writing, a (provisional) formation of meaning takes place that places concrete experiences in one's own life context, "without, however, already knowing life in its entirety."[31] Nevertheless, individuals reveal their coping processes during times of upheaval, sometimes in great detail, thus allowing the reader to participate in them directly. In this way, diaries enable a systematic examination of individual appropriations of historical processes and clarify how the authors thought about the world and their role in it. Of course, individual diaries cannot claim to be representative. Rather, their appeal lies in the fact that they exhibit independent emphases with regard to the relevance and weighting of events and can thus challenge historians' usual methods. Among the surprising perspectives that diaries open to readers are dense descriptions of the trivialities of everyday life and the emotions experienced by an individual. In the case of wartime diaries, it is important to take into account the particular historical conditions under which they were written.[32]

Olga's diary

In this paper, we focus on the diary of Olga, a Ukrainian girl who was seventeen years old at the beginning of the war between the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany. Olga kept her diary from August 1941 to

29 Schröder, *"Niemand ist fähig, das alles in Worten auszudrücken,"* 438.

30 Steuwer and Graf, *Selbstreflexionen und Weltdeutungen*, 31–32.

31 Schröder, *"Niemand ist fähig, das alles in Worten auszudrücken,"* 33.

32 Christina Morina has pointed out that diaries are sometimes difficult testimonies for historians in this respect. See Christina Morina: "Schwierige Zeugnisse: Tagebuchforschung und Holocaust-Geschichtsschreibung am Beispiel der Niederlande," in *"... Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten,"* 122–141.

February 1944, i.e., the time of German occupation in Ukraine and the first months after liberation by the Red Army. Unfortunately, her diary has not been preserved in its entirety. Her entries from August 26, 1941, to April 30, 1942, have survived, and from January 4, 1943, to February 23, 1944. With few exceptions, Olga wrote in her diary daily.[33]

Olga was born on October 13, 1923, in the small town of Znamianka (Russian: Znamenka) to a Ukrainian family that included four siblings and two parents.[34] When the Germans marched into her hometown in the late summer of 1941, Olga was a tenth-grade pupil at a grammar school. The school had to cease operations following the invasion, but thanks to her good knowledge of German, and perhaps also due to connections of her family to the school inspector, Olga secured work under German occupation, first as a German teacher for the lower school classes, later as an interpreter and translator at the Reichsbahn in Znamianka, and ultimately in the railway directorate.

Znamianka was a small Ukrainian town with about 14,000 inhabitants in the Kropyvnytskyi region (formerly: Kirovohrad) during the Second World War. It was a major railway junction and an important stop for German railway traffic on the way to the front. The Znamianka railway depot was one of the largest *Reichsbahn* service points in Ukraine under German occupation. The role of the Znamianka railway junction in supplying the front led to a flood of foreigners, members of the Wehrmacht and civilian workers, into the small town, and the formerly provincial backwater experienced a rapid development into a site of increased migration and transcultural entanglement.[35]

33 See the edition of the diary in German translation in Tanja Penter and Stefan Schneider, ed., *Olgas Tagebuch (1941–1944). Unerwartete Zeugnisse einer jungen Ukrainerin inmitten des Vernichtungskriegs* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2022). The original manuscript is in Central'nyj Deržavnyj Archiv Hromads'kych Ob'ednan' Ukraïny [Central State Archive of Social Associations of Ukraine, hereafter: CDAHOU], F. 166, op. 2, spr. 4; spr. 108. Parts of the diary were first published in 2009 in a Ukrainian-language journal in Kiev (Ukr.: Kyiv), but with considerable omissions and some incorrect transcriptions: "Dnevnik. Mysli. Detali," in *Mižkul'turnyj Dialoh, Tom 1: Identičnist'* (Kyïv: Duch i Litera, 2009): 287–447.

34 See the birth certificates of Olga and her sister Lyudmila (born August 18, 1925), in Derzavnyj Archiv Kirovohrads'koï oblasti [State Archive of the Kirovohrad Region, hereafter: DAKO], F. R-7915, Op. 1, spr. 203, Bl. 313; spr. 507, Bl. 187.

35 On the concept of transculturality and the transcultural approach, see among others Daniel G. König and Katja Rakow, "The Transcultural Approach Within a Disciplinary Framework: An Introduction," in *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2017): 89–100; and Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources* (Berlin: Springer, 2011). The term *transculturación* goes back to the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who used it to describe processes of cultural reshaping in early modern Cuba in his work first published in 1940. In his view, exchange relations between groups of different cultural origins resulted not only in processes of transmission, reception, adaptation, and assimilation, but also in transformation and fusion within a new cultural synthesis. See Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Havana: Jesus Montero, 1940).

This transcultural context provided Olga and her peers with numerous opportunities for contact with foreigners, especially Germans, but sometimes also Austrians, Romanians, Czechs, French, and other Europeans. Consequently, as Olga records in her diary, the occupation period involved a personal broadening of horizons. This environment enabled Olga to temporarily break out of her confined world, previously characterized by strong social and state control, and to embrace new experiences at many different levels.[36]

Olga experienced considerable social advancement under German occupation, especially given her young age. During the months of German occupation, she made the acquaintance of many German men, Wehrmacht members, and railway men, encounters she described in detail. While Olga survived the period of German occupation relatively unscathed, she lost her mother and sister in the hail of Soviet air raids when the Germans withdrew in 1943. After the liberation of the occupied territories by the Red Army, it is highly likely that she, like many young women who had worked as interpreters and translators for the Germans, was convicted by Soviet justice as a collaborator and sent to a labor camp. Unfortunately, her post-war fate could not be clarified despite extensive research.

Coming of age

A central theme of Olga's diary is the end of her childhood and the coming-of-age process. Her carefree childhood experiences were colored by the realization that her childhood was nearing its end. For example, she reported an impetuous sleigh ride with her friends in January 1942: "Once again, I still feel like a child in this group of girls, so childhood is not quite over yet."[37] Elsewhere, Olga noted how good it was for her to just "fool around" with her friends without a care in the world, to have fun and leave all sorrow aside, reflecting at the same time that this was a privilege of childhood, free from the burden of responsibility that adults had to bear.[38] At the same time, Olga realized that the end of her childhood had already come and that she had changed physically and mentally. Her interest in the opposite sex and in romantic love alerted her to this change. Love, she said, changed everything in her.[39]

36 The Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou made this argument for the French forced laborers who had been deported to the Reich from closed village contexts, and he also emphasized the aspect of new sexual possibilities. Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

37 Entry from January 5, 1942.

38 Entry from January 30, 1942.

39 Entry from February 12, 1942.

As Olga's diary reveals, the war altered traditional family structures. Children were often forced to take on parental roles and provide for and protect the family, especially when their parents were called to military service or died. The war therefore robbed many young people of their childhoods. At the same time, however, the change of roles allowed young people a great deal of independence and to adopt increasingly important positions within the family unit. For example, Olga's positive relationships with members of the Wehrmacht and her work at the *Reichsbahn* were a major part of her family's survival strategy under German occupation. The everyday conditions of German occupation weakened the established mechanisms of social control and opened new doors for Olga and her friends, also in regards to their romantic relationships. Families in Ukraine, which had already suffered considerable disruptions as a result of forced collectivization, the great famine of 1932–1933, and the purges of 1937–1938, experienced further disintegration and reconfiguration during the war and were partly replaced by new family-like unions born out of necessity.[40]

Olga described the relationships within her family in rather negative terms. As she grew up, Olga increasingly distanced herself from her parents, especially her mother, which is known to be a typical phenomenon of adolescence. For example, she wrote in her diary about her mother: "She is so uncultured and limited! She is so badly brought up! It is not at all her place to be the mother of such grown-up children as us."[41] Olga also stated that she lacked love for her family, but at the same time, she did not cause them suffering. She noted in one entry: "Although I don't love them, I am afraid of losing them."[42] Olga's age-related processes of detachment from her parents were intensified by the new political conditions of German occupation and the accompanying disempowerment of her parents and devaluation of her culture of origin.

Another central theme in Olga's diary is her first erotic experiences with mostly German men. In describing her encounters, she details her perceptions and feelings. Olga's diary was by no means unique in this respect: as other examples show, detailing erotic experiences and problems is typical in diaries of young people, but the details are to some extent subject to cultural conventions.[43]

40 Yuliya von Saal, "Familiäre Gemeinschaften: Kriegsbedingte Familientrennungen und Neukonfigurationen in der USSR," in *Familientrennungen im nationalsozialistischen Krieg: Erfahrungen und Praktiken in Deutschland und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945*, ed. Wiebke Lisner, Johannes Hürter, Cornelia Rauh, and Lu Seegers (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022), 335–365..

41 Entry from August 8, 1943.

42 Entry from January 8, 1943.

43 Charlotte Bühler spoke in the 1920s of how the "sexual crisis" in puberty largely displaced all other interests, which virtually failed "against the stronger force of the physical process."

Anne Frank's diary also contains many passages with sexual connotations, which were later edited out with a view to possible publication.[44]

Olga's descriptions of her sexual experiences not only reveal important facets of her personality, but open interesting insights into the way a young Soviet woman dealt with eroticism and sexuality. This is a particularly important feature of her diary because the Stalin era was characterized by puritanical views of physicality and sexuality. At the end of the 1930s, sex was not even addressed in biology classes, and the sexual maturation of adolescents during puberty was shrouded in silence.[45] A certain prudishness was also part of the moral code of the Soviet Communist Party Youth League, to which Olga belonged, because sexuality was perceived by Soviet leadership as a potential threat. The Soviet state therefore propagated norms of behavior that were meant to suppress sexuality. However, a distinction was made between young men and young women: While men were seen as possessing a difficult to control sexuality, women with explicit sexual interests were condemned as "prostitutes."[46] The ideal of gender equality, which the young Soviet state claimed to embrace, was still far from being realized at the beginning of the 1930s.

Olga's diary conveys a strong ambivalence about her sexuality. Against the background outlined above, it is striking that Olga was so self-determined in experiencing her changing romances. On the other hand, however, she remained deeply entrenched in the traditional roles that required a young woman to preserve her virginity. Olga's inner turmoil between her desire to experience sex on the one hand, and to live up to social and family expectations on the other, is a frequently recurring theme.

In addition to the physical changes of puberty, adolescence is a period of changing psychological and social demands. In this process, the significance a young person attributes to their relationships is shifted from primary caregivers (e.g., parents) to non-family persons such as peers. Detachment from parents can be accompanied by de-idealization. Born out of diary research, the notion of adolescence as a period of *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) was popular in psychology until the 1970s. However, subsequent research has

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See Bühler, *Die Bedeutung des Tagebuchs für die Jugendpsychologie*, xii. At the same time, Bühler was of the opinion that sexuality is described in youth diaries only in exceptional cases and interpreted such descriptions as signs of pathological developments. See also Stach, "Das Seelenleben junger Mädchen."

44 *Anne Frank Gesamtausgabe: Tagebücher – Geschichten und Ereignisse aus dem Hinterhaus – Erzählungen – Briefe – Fotos und Dokumente*, ed. Anne Frank Fonds, translated from the Dutch by Mirjam Pressler (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2015).

45 Catriona Kelly, "Die Entdeckung des Tinejdžer: Sowjetische und postsowjetische Adoleszenz," *Osteuropa* 63 (2013): 5–22; 11–12.

46 Corinna Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden: Die Formierung der Sowjetjugend 1917–1932* (Essen: Klartext, 2005), 151–163.

relativized this understanding, since the majority of adolescents cope with the developmental tasks of this transition without great turmoil, often while maintaining a close relationship with their parents. The task once attributed to adolescence—forming a stable and unique identity—has meanwhile been shifted to the decade of life following adolescence, "emerging adulthood."[47]

Self-reflections in culture and transcultural entanglements

As Olga discusses in her diary, literature, music, theatre, and cinema were important aspects of her everyday life and became important independent spaces of experience. An increased significance of culture is one of the well-known transformations of adolescence;[48] adolescents raise internal and family conflicts to a cultural level and search for literature and art that mirrors their own experiences. In this way, adolescents externalize inner states (such as strong affects and ambivalences or conflicts) to make them manageable. We witness such a process in Olga's diary.

In general, Olga's regular visits to the theatre represented an escape from her dreary everyday life: "Here, when I listen to the music, I forget everything! Today I am particularly intoxicated by music. … sometimes I sing softly to it, sometimes something bursts from my chest with enthusiasm."[49] But the individual diary entries reveal an interesting change during the occupation period: In 1941 and 1942, Olga mainly referred to common Soviet cultural products of the 1930s, such as film music, operettas, and popular songs by the Soviet composer Isaak Dunaevskiy. In 1943, her cultural consumption became more international. Olga embraced the contemporary German films screened for members of the Wehrmacht. She wrote enthusiastically in her diary about *Gabriele: 1, 2, 3* (1937), *Das himmelblaue Abendkleid* (1941), *Hochzeitsreise zu dritt* (1939), and the love film *Annelie* (1941). These films shaped Olga's positive image of a cultured, wealthy Germany. As she wrote about the revue film *Wir tanzen um die Welt* (1939): "I like these beautiful girls, I feel envious of their life, such a dignified and cultivated one. What do I see here in Znamenka? Oh, how tired I am of such an existence! But I still hope that one day I will live better, that only I must be patient."[50]

Olga's cinema experiences also included anti-Semitic propaganda films. These included *Robert und Bertram* (1939), by the director Hans H. Zerlett,

47 Hermann Staats and Svenja Taubner, "'Wirklich Erwachsen-Werden?' Die Entwicklungspsychologie des 'emerging adulthood,'" *Psychodynamische Psychotherapie* 14, no. 4 (2015): 203–213.

48 Mario Erdheim, "Adoleszenz zwischen Familie und Kultur: Ethnopsychoanalytische Überlegungen zur Funktion von Jugend in der Kultur," *Psychosozial* 17 (1983): 104–116.

49 Entry from January 24, 1942.

50 Entry from January 23, 1943.

which she considered a "very funny film,"[51] and the feature film *Heimat* (1938) with Zarah Leander, a tearjerker with a star-studded cast that the National Socialists considered to be of particular artistic value. *Heimat* told the story of a daughter who left her father and went abroad, which reminded Olga of her own fate. The film made her worry that she too might be taken away from her family: "Can it really be that the same fate awaits me one day? Because at the moment I am of the opinion—not to stay in Russia."[52]

The daily reading of fiction constituted an integral part of Olga's everyday life. In addition to classic nineteenth century Russian authors, such as Ivan Goncharov and Mikhail Zagoskin, Olga read works by French authors, such as Stendhal, Alexandre Dumas, and Guy de Maupassant. Through the German members of the Wehrmacht, Olga also had access to German literature, for example, dime novels that the soldiers carried with them and passed on to her. Olga often compared herself to characters from these novels and wrote that she wanted to be a bit like Mathilde from Stendhal's novel *Red and Black*, but not at all like Vera from Goncharov's *The Gorge*. At certain points, she used passages from novels as models for her diary, coupled with the admission: "I don't know how to write all this better."[53] Olga's diary entries often make tangible the everyday cultural transfer between occupier and occupied, for example, when she quotes from the German version of the popular song *Du schwarzer Zigeuner* by Fritz Löhner-Beda or mentions the Wehrmacht soldier Franz whistling a song from the Soviet film musical *Happy-Go-Lucky Guys* (*Vesyolye rebyata*) by Isaak Dunaevskiy.

Inner conflicts of belonging and identity

At the beginning of the German occupation in 1941, Olga was a Soviet patriot and member of the *Komsomol* (Soviet youth organization). In the 1930s, the *Komsomol* had developed into a mass organization highly effective in integrating young citizens into the state. Many *Komsomol* members saw themselves as the avant-garde of the young Soviet state and thus played an important role in shaping both the image of Soviet youth and the state's youth culture. Researchers argue that this generation of Soviet youth played an important role in shaping early Stalinism—in return, the system rewarded them with new opportunities for advancement.[54]

51 Entry from April 4, 1943.

52 Entry from April 18, 1943.

53 Entry from January 14, 1943.

54 Corinna Kuhr-Korolev, Stefan Plaggenborg, and Monica Wellmann, ed., *Sowjetjugend 1917–1941: Generation zwischen Revolution und Resignation* (Essen: Klartext, 2001); Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*; Seth Bernstein, *Raised under Stalin: Young Communists and the Defense of*

Olga thus belonged to a generation whose youth were marked by strong mobilization, ideologization, and militarization under Stalinism. The militaristic organization of the *Komsomol* coincided with a high willingness to resort to violence among young people in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, many Soviet youth, attuned to heroism and sacrifice, volunteered to serve in the Red Army.[55] Loyalty to Stalin was so great that young people sometimes even renounced their own parents if they were suspected of being "enemies of the people."[56]

At the end of 1941, Olga proudly proclaimed in her diary: "Happiness means feeling love for one's homeland and hatred towards the enemy. No! I can't be re-educated; before, I didn't even notice how tightly the *Komsomol* educated me."[57] In several places in her diary she even reminded herself to live up to her role as a good *Komsomol* member.[58] Olga's diary is therefore similar to other diaries of young Soviet citizens during Stalinism, in which constant work on oneself was a guiding theme.[59] The practice of self-criticism served as a disciplinary technique, as a constant reminder and incentive to achieve the ideal of a heroic, socially useful, and ideologically consolidated Soviet person. The diarists became "engineers of their own souls."[60] Thus, the revolutionary imperative structured the thoughts and feelings of Soviet youth.[61]

Her increasingly intimate contacts with the Germans plunged Olga into an inner conflict, which became visible in her diary entries. In her entry of December 16, 1941, she warned herself to never forget that she was surrounded by enemies whom she could not fully trust. She was concerned that her attitude towards the German occupiers was slowly changing and no longer reflected

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Socialism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017); and Monica Wellmann, *Zwischen Militanz, Verzweiflung und Disziplinierung: Jugendliche Lebenswelten in Moskau zwischen 1920 und 1930* (Zürich: Pano, 2005).

55 Bernstein, *Raised under Stalin*.

56 Nina Kosterina, *Das Tagebuch der Nina Kosterina*, translated from the Russian by Helene von Ssachno (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1981), 31. It is not entirely clear whether this is a fictitious diary.

57 Entry from December 14, 1941.

58 Entry from March 24, 1942.

59 Nina S. Lugowskaja, *Ich will leben: Ein russisches Tagebuch 1932–1937*, translated from the Russian by Christiane Körner (Munich: Hanser, 2005); Véronique Garros, Natalija Korenewskaja, and Thomas Lahusen, ed., *Das wahre Leben: Tagebücher aus der Stalin-Zeit* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1998); Hellbeck, *Tagebuch aus Moskau*; and *Das Tagebuch der Nina Kosterina*.

60 Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*.

61 Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

what Soviet society expected of her. Saddened, she stated: "I am becoming a stranger to myself."[62]

About a year later, Olga's change of loyalties was complete and she noted (not without critical self-reflection) in her diary: "I can't imagine such a time when we will again live liberated from the Germans. Yes, even now I don't exactly feel like a slave, after all I love Heinz and would go with him to the end of the world. How I would love to live there. … Now I'm not happy that our people are already nearby. … Oh! What a betrayal of my own thoughts! Only a few months ago I wrote that I would not renounce our traditions—ever! How carelessly I wrote down this in every respect terrible word. Is a former *Komsomol* member allowed to think like that? But I haven't seen anything beautiful in Russia."[63]

Olga expressed an increasing internal distance from her native culture during German rule. The process of separating from one's own parents that normally characterizes the phase of adolescence overlaps in her diary with the new power relations and become quasi-politically charged by them. Olga queried these inner processes of change throughout her diary, for example, when she asked in July, 1943: "Why can't I see the Germans as my enemies? I even feel close to some of them."[64] A few weeks later she said: "The Germans have become more familiar to me than anyone else. They are good people after all."[65]

Shortly before the return of the Red Army, she wrote: "It hurts me to say goodbye and that word 'forever!' again. And my last *'auf wiedersehen!'* My last. … No! These are people with whom my fate is linked. No! This is not my final word. We will meet again, even after the war. But I will go to Europe, to the West! That's where all I have is! These cultured people are literally calling me to them."[66]

What happened to Olga during those few months under German rule? What was the reason for her shift in allegiance and her identification with the enemy? How could she so ignore the horrors of the German war of extermination that were taking place before her eyes? It is clear from many of her diary entries that Olga elevated the Germans to idealized romantic partners and sought an identity in the German peer group that was independent of her parents. This search was accompanied by a spirit of optimism and the desire to free herself from the shackles of the previous

62 Entry from December 16, 1941.

63 Entry from January 25/26, 1943.

64 Entry from July 30, 1943.

65 Entry from October 23, 1943.

66 Entry from December 8, 1943.

generation, to acquire a new world view, and to create a new culture. The longing for the idealized, behind which lay the desire to move in the shadow of an idealized other and thereby stabilize one's own self-worth, is characteristic of the adolescent susceptibility to seduction and was a frequent theme in her diary.

Olga's search for identity played an important role in her diary, as it does for many young people. Olga repeatedly asked herself the question: "Who am I really?"[67] The war offered new forms of identity, such as the Ukrainian national card, which Olga was ambivalent about. The German occupation initially raised some hopes for an independent Ukrainian state. Olga, who had Ukrainian nationality, was aware of the Ukrainian identity proposition and reflected on this question in her diary several times. Although she of course knew the Ukrainian language, she wrote her diary in Russian. This can be seen as a result of the general Russification policy that was pushed again under Stalin and can be interpreted as an indication of Olga's acculturation to the Russian language and culture. Shortly after the German invasion, she, as a convinced Soviet patriot, resented her affiliation with the Ukrainian people and wrote in her diary: "People rant about Stalin and the Soviets and send greetings to Hitler. What a wicked people the Ukrainians are! For this reason, I cannot love this people, although I myself belong to them."[68]

Elsewhere, she vehemently defended the Ukrainians to her German superior at work and objected to the latter labelling the Ukrainians as "even more uncivilized than the savages."[69] At the same time, Olga repeatedly invoked her affiliation with the Soviet people and stated: "I don't think I'm a Ukrainian, I'm a Soviet!"[70]

Further new possibilities through which Olga could explore her identity were opened up by the more liberal religious policy under German rule and the accompanying revival of the churches, with which the occupation authorities wanted to distance themselves from Stalin's policy of atheism and win sympathy among the population. The guidelines for Ukraine issued by Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, provided for religious tolerance,[71] and a report by Army High Command 4 (AOK 4) in March 1942 explicitly stated: "The religious question must be resolved

67 Entry from July 28, 1943.

68 Entry from September 3, 1941.

69 Entry from January 12, 1943.

70 Entry from February 18, 1943.

71 *Richtlinien für die der Ukraine gegenüber zu verfolgende Politik* [Guidelines for the policy to be pursued towards Ukraine], in Bundesarchiv Berlin [German Federal Archives Berlin, hereafter: BArchB], BArchB, R6, 206, Bl. 133.

generously: Such a solution costs us nothing and earns us the confidence of the population."[72] Churches were reopened everywhere in villages and towns, and church buildings that had been converted into sports palaces or granaries under Stalin were returned to their original purpose. Tens of thousands of people were baptized or married in church.[73] The occupation authorities followed the church calendar and forbade work on Sundays or holidays. The clergy, many of whom had suffered reprisals under Stalin, were grateful to the new regime for the religious renaissance, to the point that some churches even displayed portraits of Adolf Hitler.[74]

This religious revival seemed to influence Olga, but her religious affiliation was apparently not of central importance to her. Olga mentioned "God" eighty-three times in her diary, mostly in an idiomatic sense ("Oh, my God!"). However in 1943, which was a dramatic year for her, she appealed to God several times and asked for forgiveness for her sinful thoughts.[75] Olga trusted a higher justice in the form of divine providence and noted in her diary: "God always does it the way it is better or the way it should be, the way you deserve it!"[76] Olga writes that there was a picture of God hanging on the wall in her family's house in 1943. Only once did she report a visit to a church, which was to attend a wedding.[77]

The fact that religion and church rituals were far from her mind is also clear from her description of Easter in 1942: "People celebrate the Holy Easter, and this day also affects us somehow. I can hardly pin it down to anything, but one feels that this is a special day. How quickly people change their minds! Many people flocked to the church."[78] Although religion was apparently not of central importance to Olga, her diary reveals dynamics of change and a growing openness to religious ideas and themes that was linked to the occupiers' more liberal religious policies. Overall, Olga's self-reflections on her identity show that she did not understand identities as

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72 Armeeoberkommando [Army High Command] 4, Ia/Ic, *Vorschläge zur Behandlung der Bevölkerung in den eroberten Ostgebieten vom 12. März 1942* [Proposals for the treatment of the population in the conquered Eastern territories of 12 March 1942], in BArchB, R6, 429, Bl. 18.

73 Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 232–239; Karel C. Berkhoff, "Was There a Religious Revival in Soviet Ukraine under the Nazi Regime?," *Slavonic and East European Review* 78, no. 3 (2000): 536–567.

74 Tanja Penter, *Kohle für Stalin und Hitler: Leben und Arbeiten im Donbass 1929–1953* (Essen: Klartext, 2010), 266–267.

75 Entries from January 26, 1943; June 26, 1943; and September 2, 1943.

76 Entry from July 5, 1943.

77 Entry from November 17, 1941.

78 Entry from April 5, 1942.

immutable categories, but as more dynamic, fluid, and situated than historians sometimes do.

According to Erik Erikson, personal identity is regarded in psychology as a fundamental organizing principle that allows one to distinguish between oneself and others.[79] Identity formation is a lifelong process that takes the form of psychological work and performance; it is a fundamental effort to create a sense of continuity within oneself. It is possible for identity formation to fail, such that no delimited idea of uniqueness emerges. In the clinical conception of personality disorders, great importance is therefore attached to the formation of identity. Adolescence is considered to be a period of life characterized by high degree of independence and a great striving for autonomy on the one hand, and a fragile construction of identity on the other. People in adolescence are therefore particularly vulnerable.

The search for identity and belonging and the corresponding fear of social exclusion is universal, regardless of age, gender, and personality.[80] The forms of coping with social exclusion vary, however, and range from aggressive to self-injurious behavior. A dysfunctional coping mechanism that became apparent in studies on social exclusion is increased social receptivity, which helps to understand Olga's transformation processes. That is, it explains Olga's chameleon-like behavior towards the changing representatives of power, which continued after the withdrawal of the Germans and the return of the Red Army. Olga tried to adapt to the dominant social offers in order to gain affiliation. In the historical conditions in which Olga lived, this process seems particularly conflict-laden and thus ambivalent. Olga's diary displays unconsciously acting defence mechanisms typical of adolescence that, according to Anna Freud, include sublimation, identification with adults and peers, intellectualization, and ascesis.[81]

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79 Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959). Erik Erikson's theory of identity development has had a significant impact on psychology, but it has not been immune to criticism. Critics argue that his model simplifies identity by suggesting fixed stages and linear progression, neglecting gender influences, lacking empirical support, overlooking social factors, and possibly misaligning with actual age experiences. These critiques emphasize the necessity of a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to understanding identity development. Despite this, Erikson's concept remains influential in psychology due to its historical significance and practical utility for researchers, clinicians, and therapy.

80 Chris H. J. Hartgerink, Ilja van Beest, Jelte M. Wicherts, and Kipling D. Williams, "The Ordinal Effects of Ostracism: A Meta-Analysis of 120 Cyberball Studies," *PLOS ONE* 10, no. 5 (2015): e0127002. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127002.

81 Anna Freud, "Adolescence," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 13, no. 1 (1958): 255–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1958.11823182.

The retreat of the Germans and the return of Soviet rule

In 1943, Olga's diary became increasingly dramatic, as the front edged closer to Znamianka. The German retreat was accompanied by immense brutality and mass robberies; abductions, murders, and destruction occurred once more on a massive scale.[82] Trains with refugees, freshly mobilized soldiers, and material for the front, as well as returning trains transporting the wounded rolled through Znamianka. The town was overcrowded with soldiers and evacuated Soviet citizens looking for accommodation.

Olga recorded the hasty departure of the Germans in her diary, noting that they were retreating with as much speed as they had marched in before.[83] She registered that the mood of the population was changing and likened it to a snake shedding its skin. Young women who had been romantically or sexually involved with members of the Wehrmacht were now looked at in askance.[84] Rumors circulated that interpreters and translators who had worked for the Germans would be shot by the Red Army, which worried Olga so deeply that she had to cry: "I imagine the image of being led to be shot and my eyes filled with tears and yet I desperately want to live … Oh, it scares me so much!"[85] Still, Olga continued to meet with German men, even when her parents openly disapproved and threatened her with consequences.

On the night of October 19, 1943, the first heavy bombardments of Znamianka were carried out by the Soviet air force. The railway station in Znamianka and a passing hospital train were heavily hit; the attack left sixty-five dead and countless more wounded.[86] Olga reported in her diary that there was panic in Znamianka, but that she herself did not feel any fear during the bombardments. Her diary entry indicates her retreat into an inner exile: "I don't know when I became so indifferent to everything around me, the only thing that interests me is spending time well. Even the bombs don't scare me."[87]

On the following day, Olga experienced further bombing in the company of a German tank driver named Paul. While the hail of bombs fell on Znamianka and the window panes in the flat shattered, Olga lay on the bed with Paul in

82 Johannes Spohr, *Die Ukraine 1943/44: Loyalitäten und Gewalt im Kontext der Kriegswende* (Berlin: Metropol, 2021).

83 Entry from September 22, 1943.

84 Entry from September 19, 1943.

85 Entry from September 21, 1943.

86 See the notes of the Austrian *Reichsbahn* employee Heinz Reiter, aged sixty-nine. The original manuscript is in the collection of Mykola Petrov in the literary museum "Karpenko-Karoho" in Kropyvnyskyi (formerly Kirovohrad).

87 Entry from October 19, 1943.

an intimate embrace with mouths "united in a frozen kiss."[88] The interplay of lust and the fear of death, which Olga described vividly, has been analyzed in personality psychology as *Angstlust*.[89] Fear of death and lust are equally strong physical states of arousal, which overlap here, such that this violent situation became an erotic experience.

Olga analyzed her feelings and actions in her diary during this period in her usual manner; the only change being that she sometimes referred to particularly terrible events several days after they occurred. She repeatedly commented on her lack of fear: "I can't explain my behavior. But I live in the day! Why am I not afraid, even when one should be afraid?"[90] What might explain Olga's lack of fear? And is the description of her condition here to be taken literally? If one understands diary writing as a practice of reflection and processing, then the author's insistence on her fearlessness can be interpreted as an attempt to write against worries and fears. Another explanation, which assumes that Olga is accurately recording her psychological state, is offered by anxiety research, which understands fear as a basic emotion that usually appears only briefly as a warning sign to remove oneself from a situation. A person cannot be permanently afraid even in the case of an ongoing threat since that would be extremely stressful and thus paralyzing. Instead, in traumatic life-threatening situations, a kind of dissociation of affective experience sets in. Those affected describe this as an emotional numbness, a feeling that reality becomes unreal (derealization), or that they themselves become unreal (depersonalization).[91]

Olga, as if in a state of shock, threw herself into her romance with Paul, the German tank driver. She waited eagerly for him and decided to forget everything around her and give herself completely to him. Exuberant outbursts of emotion and declarations of love overlaid the everyday threat of death in her diary. When the pair met for the last time, however, Olga was disappointed. Paul had changed in her eyes. Scarred by the war, she no longer found him attractive. She compared him to "yesterday's newspaper" that no longer had anything to offer her.[92] This passage possibly has a deeper meaning and relates to Olga's disappointment at the hasty retreat of the Germans and the feeling that she had allowed herself to be swept away by them. In this moment of disenchantment with the previously idealized Germans and the confrontation

88 Entry from October 20, 1943.

89 Michael Balint, *Thrills and Regressions* (London: Hogarth, 1959).

90 Entry from November 28, 1943.

91 Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (New York: Norton, 2012).

92 Entry from October 30/31, 1943.

with a previously denied reality a certain cruelty became visible: Paul was thrown away by Olga like an old newspaper, and she expressed no empathy for his suffering. However, her cruel rejection of Paul may also have been a strategy to repress feelings of disappointment and rejection.

During further bombing raids at the end of November 1943, tragedy struck Olga's family: Olga's younger sister Lyudmila was killed and her mother seriously injured. At this moment, Olga was wrenched into adulthood, forced to bury her own sister, and care for her badly injured mother. In her diary, Olga apologized for only being able to provide a very simple grave for her sister with a plain coffin and a blanket. As a farewell, she sang a song that the sisters had always sung together and urged herself to be brave. She hoped that her mother would survive her injuries. As she wrote in her diary, "I have to stay strong. I still have to nurse mum. I am not crying!"[93]

In the midst of this difficult situation, Olga received help and support from Nik, whom she had met by chance on the street and described in familial terms as a "second dad."[94] Nik became the most important person for Olga during this time: "The fact that I haven't completely lost my courage and strength is solely thanks to Nik. He supports and holds me."[95] This relationship demonstrates how, during the war, even people who were not connected by family ties took responsibility for each other. In times of need, new family-like unions were formed.

A short time later, Olga's mother succumbed to her injuries. After her mother's death, Olga went into a kind of shock, which, for the first time, led to her being at a loss for words. In her diary she wrote: "Dear Mama! Forgive your daughter! I was an unbred daughter, I didn't listen to you, but, Mama, forgive me! I can no longer write."[96]

The front line now ran through the middle of Znamianka. Olga openly expressed her fear, resignedly stating: "We live in the moment. A question that used to seem strange is now normal: Will I survive today? What awaits me? Here it is—the front line … It's scary. It is terrible!"[97]

On December 9, 1943, Znamianka was recaptured by the Red Army, and Olga once again switched allegiance. She observed how other young women who had worked for the Germans were now being arrested. As a translator and interpreter for the Germans, she was interrogated several times. She cooperated with the Soviet counter-espionage and domestic intelligence services, but did

93 Entry from November 30, 1943.

94 Entry from November 30, 1943.

95 Entry from December 1, 1943.

96 Entry from December 3, 1943.

97 Entry from December 7, 1943.

not like her new role, on which she reflected critically in her diary: “I am back with the counter-intelligence. It disgusts me to sit here and talk about others, about their affairs. But I do it. What’s the point? It’s a disgusting state of affairs.”[98]

Olga struggled to reintegrate into the Soviet system, and she saw her country through different eyes, almost as if she had returned from abroad. As she noted in her diary: “Oh, how could I not have realized before how strict and stupid it was here?”[99] Similar struggles were reported by people who had been deported to the Reich for forced labor as children and young people. After their repatriation, they found it difficult to resettle into their old school, especially in the villages, and to accept the authority of Soviet teachers, most of who had seen much less of the world than they had.[100]

Olga’s home continued to be a site of diverse encounters. Instead of Germans, it was now Red Army men and women who were billeted with Olga and her ailing father whom Olga had to care for after the death of her mother. Young men continued to express interest in Olga—this time members of the Soviet army. Olga described these men with a certain sense of superiority, as simple-minded, “coarse and without poetry.”[101] Olga’s disappointment at the return of Soviet rule manifested itself on a cultural level as she and her friends continued to attend cultural events. In her diary, she described the propagandistic performances of Soviet artists and musicians and their constant homage to Stalin as boring and bumbling.

In February 1944, Olga’s diary abruptly ends. In one of her last entries, she described the Germans’ rule in Znamianka as a dream that had now come to an end but would remain in her memory forever. From her point of view, it had been a “good dream, full of hardship and impassability, but also with the most beautiful minutes” of her life.[102]

Olga’s fate remains unclear. Presumably, like many other women who had worked as interpreters and translators for the Germans, she fell victim to the state’s post-war purges. This looming threat was hinted at in Olga’s diary; she described her neighbors whispering about her, multiple interrogations by the secret service, and the arrest of some of her friends. Olga openly commented on the mistrust she faced and the accusation of treason: “We Ukrainians have betrayed our homeland. That means that THEY managed to sow more trust in two years than ours did in twenty-five. I don’t know

98 Entry from December 16, 1943.

99 Entry from January 14, 1944

100 Penter, *Kohle für Stalin und Hitler*, 432–433.

101 Entry from November 3, 1943.

102 Entry from February 2, 1944.

why I still talk about ours. Because they don't count me among them. I am their prey, their trophy! Or should I perhaps blame myself—for the sake of justice? But for what?"[103]

In her final entries, Olga described the growing fear that characterized her everyday life. Her diary, which had been her "irreplaceable friend" for months,[104] became a danger to her in this atmosphere of mistrust as private diaries were commonly used by Soviet intelligence as evidence for prosecution and conviction. Olga herself began to increasingly distrust her diary: "How I have begun to fear everything lately. Even my diary is no longer as trustworthy as it used to be."[105]

Conclusion: Ambivalent enmity and adolescence

Olga's diary contains sometimes dizzying changes of perspective. It is important to place the text together with her actions and thoughts in historical context. The inhumane crimes of the German war of extermination in occupied Ukraine, though relegated to marginal notes in Olga's diary, must not be forgotten.[106] Although Olga's wartime experience is not representative

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103 Entry from February 10, 1944. It was not only Ukrainians who collaborated with the Germans, but also ethnic Russians and other Soviet nationalities (according to their share of the population in the respective regions), as court records of convicted collaborators show. See Tanja Penter, "Local Collaborators on Trial: Soviet War Crimes Trials under Stalin (1943–1953)," *Cahiers du monde russe* 49, no. 2–3 (2008): 341–364; Tanja Penter, "Collaboration on Trial: New Source Material on Soviet Postwar Trials against Collaborators," *Slavic Review* 64 (2005): 780–790; Sergey Kudriashov and Vanessa Voisin, "The Early Stages of 'Legal Purges' in Soviet Russia, 1941–1945," *Cahiers du monde russe* 49, no. 2–3 (2008): 263–296; Franziska Exeler, "The Ambivalent State: Determining Guilt in the Post-World War II Soviet Union," *Slavic Review* 75, no. 3 (2016): 606–629; Aleksandr E. Epifanov, "Organizatsionnye i pravovye osnovy nakazaniia gitlerovskich voennych prestupnikov i ich posobnikov v SSSR, 1914–1956gg" [Organizational and legal basis for the punishment of Nazi war criminals and their accomplices in the USSR, 1914–1956] (Moscow: Iuniti-Dana; Zakon i Pravo, 2017); Diana Dumitru, "An Analysis of Soviet Postwar Investigation and Trial Documents and Their Relevance for Holocaust Studies," in *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses*, ed. Michael David-Fox (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 142–157; Jeffrey Burds, "'Turncoats, Traitors, and Provocateurs': Communist Collaborators, the German Occupation, and Stalin's NKVD, 1941–1943," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 32, no. 3 (2018): 606–638; Wolfgang Schneider, "From the Ghetto to the Gulag, from the Ghetto to Israel: Soviet Collaboration Trials against the Shargorod Ghetto's Jewish Council," *Journal of Modern European History* 17, no. 1 (2019): 83–97; and Oleksandr Melnyk, "Stalinist Justice as a Site of Memory: Anti-Jewish Violence in Kyiv's Podil District in September 1941 through the Prism of Soviet Investigative Documents," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 61, no. 2 (2013): 223–248.

104 Entry from January 19, 1943.

105 Entry from February 8, 1944.

106 On the German atrocities against the Jewish population and the Soviet prisoners of war in Znamianka as well as the violent deportations of forced laborers, see Tanja Penter, "Olgas Tagebuch (1941–1944): Doppelte Diktaturerfahrung, ambivalente Feindschaft und transkulturelle Verflechtung inmitten der Adoleszenz," in Penter and Schneider, *Olgas Tagebuch (1941–1944)*, 10–77; 28–34.

of the fate of all women in Ukraine under German occupation, many of whom suffered brutal violence at the hands of the Germans, her experience reveals the ambivalence of many wartime biographies, in which the roles of victim, supporter, and, in some cases, perpetrator intersected. Olga profited from and assisted German rule, but she was also a victim of it: She faced the constant risk of deportation to Germany for forced labor and lost her mother and sister to the war.

Olga's diary also makes tangible the experience of back-to-back dictatorships, which was shared by many Soviet citizens in the occupied territories. Readers partake of the internal conflicts of belonging and identity that Olga experienced during both dictatorships. That is, Olga's conditioning under in the 1930s influenced her perceptions of and attitudes towards German rule and, after the liberation of Znamianka and the return of Soviet rule, her experiences during German occupation changed her view of the Soviet Union under Stalin. We can follow Olga's inner transformations in minute detail, particularly her gradual rapprochement with the Germans and alienation from her society of origin, and then her strategies of adaptation and survival as she makes efforts to reintegrate after the return of Soviet rule. Olga's diary is thus an intimate portrait of the relationship between an individual and state power.[107]

For historians, Olga's diary is a document of special value because it reveals the interior life of an individual in an extreme situation. It allows us to witness the everyday experiences of war, and the internal conflicts, emotions, and psychological processes of dealing with two dictatorial regimes. The specific challenges of war and occupation overlapped with the general problems of adolescence, which Olga almost always presents as more important than the events of the war. The resulting effect of alienation makes clear the significance of age and generational imprinting for the perception of historical events, and this must be taken into account when researching the experiences of adolescents in war.[108]

Olga is not an uncomplicated heroine, in part because the inhumane conditions in which she lived left little room for heroic deeds. She remains sympathetic, however, as she reliably and self-critically reflected upon her various moral dilemmas. The diary as a medium is characterized by a high degree of self-reflection that is typical of adolescence, for it is precisely these years of life in which reflective abilities, especially meta-cognition, that is,

107 On the relationship between the individual and power under Stalinism, see Sandra Dahlke, *Individuum und Herrschaft im Stalinismus: Emel'jan Jaroslavskij (1878–1943)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009).

108 For an innovative approach, see Yuliya von Saal, "Mehr als Opfer: Kriegskinder und ihr Überleben in den Kinderheimen im besetzten Belarus," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 68, no. 3–4 (2020): 403–431.

thinking about thinking, increase enormously. It is understandable that Olga, given her youth, expected more from life, and dreamed big. Driven by curiosity, she strove to explore the opportunities that were available to her under German rule, including contact with the opposite sex and foreign cultures. Again and again, she amazes us with her eagerness to learn, her thirst for knowledge and her constant striving to broaden her own horizons. Literature, theatre, film, and music were important to Olga, and she wrote about them almost daily. On the one hand, this is reflective of Olga's personal education and the status of her family, but it also reflects the great importance of culture in adolescence.

Olga's embracing and, in part, appropriation of German cultural products illustrates the centrality of transcultural entanglements during the war, which is too seldom recognized in historiography.[109] Such cultural transfer is not limited to the Soviet civilian population, however, but can also be observed among members of the Wehrmacht.[110] For both sides, alongside the terror and violence, the war and the occupation allowed for cultural experiences that could sometimes change their view of the individual and their respective societies. The war created unexpected new sites of transcultural connection: Due to its wartime importance as a railway junction, a provincial town like Olga's hometown of Znamianka could suddenly develop into a center of increased migration and transcultural encounter. In its reflection of transcultural processes, Olga's diary offers illuminating insights into the relationship between enmity and transcultural entanglement.

A reading of Olga's diary additionally reveals the inherent ambivalence of enmity. It sharpens our view of the phenomenon of collaboration andcooperation with the enemy, and invites the reader to become more aware of the contingency, relationality, and processuality of inimical relations. The loyalties of the local population changed due to the war, the experience of occupation, and the for the future. However, the attitudes and actions of the population seem to have been determined less by political or national convictions and ideologies than by the struggle for survival and the attempt to settle into shifting circumstances. In the occupied territories, we encounter complex wartime biographies, which were often characterized less by clear boundaries between collaboration with the Germans or loyalty to the old

109 This interweaving is most visible in Olga's diary in the increase in German terms and phrases that Olga interspersed in her Russian text. We should also note that Olga's language has numerous borrowings from Ukrainian.

110 On German cultural policy and the reception of the Soviet population in occupied Ukraine, see Dmytro Tytarenko, *Kul'turni protsesy v Ukraïni u roky natsysts'koï okupaciï (zona vijs'kovoï administratsiï)* [Cultural processes in Ukraine during the Nazi occupation (Zone of Military Administration)] (L'viv, Donec'k: Instytut Ukrainoznavstva imeni Ivana Kryp'iakevicha Natsional'noi akademii nauk Ukrainy, 2014).

regime and more by situations of "choiceless choice,"[111] moral grey zones,[112] and the intermingling of different roles (as victims, followers, resisters, collaborators, and sometimes accomplices).[113]

As an adolescent, Olga was particularly vulnerable to changes in belonging and identity, and her ambivalent perception of enmity seems to be characteristic of that phase of her life. Her adoption of the enemy's attitudes can also be explained by what has been designated as vicarious mentalizing or co-mentalizing, in which ideas about others are changed based on the perceptions of others.[114]

Olga's diary also illustrates the situation of women and girls under German occupation, who were particularly vulnerable to German violence, German hunger policies, and deportation to forced labor. For women and girls, cooperation with the Germans was often the only way to survive, especially if they had children to care for. As the example of the female interpreters and translators sentenced after the war demonstrates, the vulnerability of women was not acknowledged by the Soviet post-war justice system, such that (alleged) female "traitors to the fatherland" could expect the same severe punishments as male defendants. The harshness of the Soviet courts in this regard is particularly shocking in the cases of convicted women who (like Olga) were still minors at the beginning of the German occupation and were not infrequently sentenced to longer prison terms than many Nazi perpetrators by the courts in the Federal Republic of Germany.[115]

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111 On the concept of "choiceless choice," see Lawrence L. Langer, *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982).

112 In his paradigmatic essay, the Italian Holocaust survivor Primo Levi spoke out against moral condemnation of victims who had chosen to cooperate with their persecutors in order to survive. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1988).

113 Tanja Penter, "Die Ukrainer und der 'Große Vaterländische Krieg': Die Komplexität der Kriegsbiographien," *Die Ukraine: Prozesse der Nationsbildung*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), 335–348.

114 Haiyan Wu, Xun Liu, Cindy C. Hagan, and Dean Mobbs, "Mentalizing during Social InterAction: A Four Component Model," *Cortex* 126 (2020): 242–252. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2019.12.031.

115 See the dissertation by Irina Makhalova, who analyzed the court records of 25 convicted female collaborators in Crimea: Irina Makhalova, *Kollaboratsionizm v Krymu v period natsistskoi okkupacii (1941–1944gg.)* [Collaboration in Crimea during the Nazi Occupation (1941–1944)], PhD dissertation (Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2020). See also Daria Rudakova, "Soviet Women Collaborators in Occupied Ukraine 1941–1945," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 62, no. 4 (2016): 529–545; Regina Kazyulina, *"Socially Dangerous" Women: Accommodation, Collaboration, and Retribution in Soviet Ukraine, 1941–1945*, PhD dissertation (Boston: Northeastern University, 2018); Vanessa Voisin, "The Soviet Punishment of an All-European Crime, 'Horizontal Collaboration,'" in *Traitors, Collaborators, and Deserters in Contemporary European Politics of Memory*, ed. Gelinada Grinchenko and Eleonora Narvselius (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 241–264; and Vanessa Voisin, "Spécificités soviétiques d'une épuration de guerre européenne:

Finally, we hope to have demonstrated that diaries provide important insights into the history of perceptions and experiences of everyday life under German occupation as well as into the manifold forms of transcultural exchange between occupiers and the civilian population. Analyses of diary texts can contribute to a broadening of perspective on major questions of German-Soviet-Ukrainian intertwined history in the first half of the twentieth century. Approaching this material from the perspectives of history and psychology not only allows for a greater and more sympathetic awareness of historical and cultural conditions but expands the disciplinary boundaries of both scholarly fields. In this way, the interdisciplinary study of a diary serves the current ideographic turn in the life and health sciences: The move away from purely objectifying experimental research towards a stronger personalization and contextualization. Olga's self-observation and self-reflection represents a particularly rich source in this respect. Working together on such a source text can therefore sharpen the understanding of alternative explanatory approaches for both history and psychology.

La répression policière de l'intimité avec l'ennemi et de la parenté avec le traître," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 61, no. 2 (2013): 196–222. For impressive examples of convicted female interpreters and translators, see Penter, "Olgas Tagebuch (1941–1944)," 62–69.