

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS WITH NO PLAN: BUILDING NATIONAL CINEMA IN UKRAINE, 1992-1997

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The disintegration of the Soviet empire in 1991 along national lines took Kremlin leaders and Western Sovietologists by surprise.¹ The class solidarity which, according to Soviet propaganda, united workers of brotherly nations proved to be a utopian concept insufficient to keep a multinational state together. The Moscow-based centralised system that autocratically designed the well-being of culturally varied peoples failed again.² For the first time in many decades (or even centuries) numerous nations have been defining their political, economic and, quite often, cultural identities. How does a nation with long cultural traditions start to build national institutions to preserve its culture? How can the slogans of cultural independence that win popular support be converted into reality? How can the cultural needs of a newly independent state be satisfied when its priorities lie elsewhere?

This paper looks at Ukraine, the largest of the former Soviet republics. It covers the last three years of the Soviet Ukrainian cinema (1989-91) and the first five years of cinema in independent Ukraine (1991-1997). The first part describes the state of the film industry Ukraine inherited from the Soviet Union. In the second part I explore the efforts—artistic, economic, political and organizational—undertaken to rebuild a national film industry and focus on critically acclaimed filmmakers and their films which formed the new canon of Ukrainian cinema. And finally, I discuss the thematic and generic changes that characterised Ukrainian cinema of that period.

Throughout this essay I also attempt to clarify or suggest a resolution to some of the theoretical problems one encounters when dealing with the post-Soviet space. The legacy of communism and of Russian cultural domination makes the adaptation of Western theoretical models difficult, if not impossible, for a conceptualization of the cultural phenomena one encounters there. While there is a strong temptation

to see the chaos of values in the societies of the former Soviet Union as post-modern or post-colonial curiosities, one must be careful in applying these concepts in indiscriminate fashion. Thus, I propose a bottom-up approach where the described phenomena suggest conclusions, rather than one in which elaborate theories dictate an interpretation of a phenomenon.

Any discussion of a national cinema sooner or later touches upon one or another concept of the “national.” Indeed, the study of nationalism has been a growth industry in North American academia for some time. The conceptions of what constitutes a nation have been stretched in recent years to include any group of people that shares a common characteristic (e.g., “a queer nation”). In describing a nation, post-modern scholars adopt Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined community,” often substituting the author’s “imagined” with the psychoanalytic “imaginary.” The unfortunate fictional implications arising from this term put the concept of a nation on equal footing with other products of imagination and thus divorce it from its social and political reality.³ It seems as though the difference marked within the dichotomies of “community vs. nation,” “dialect vs. language” or “cult vs. religion” lies in the institutionalisation of the former to achieve the status of the latter. Somewhat anecdotally, it has been known to linguists that “a language is a dialect with an army.” Would not the same be true for a vast majority of nations? A community or ethnic group graduates to the status of a nation by having its own army and a territory protected by it. Even as a unified Western Europe abandoned national currencies, no member state gave up its army.

This is an issue of particular importance to Ukraine. Ukraine’s nationhood has been recognised by the rest of the world thanks not to imaginary factors of communal belonging but to an arsenal of nuclear warheads and one of the largest armies in Europe. Ironically, the issues of distinct language, a millennium of separate history, and claims to a distinct culture which have given Ukrainians the status of *an ethnic group* within the Soviet Union played only a secondary role in the acceptance of Ukraine as *a nation* by the international community. It is therefore relevant to consider a national cinema as a function of activities sanctioned by state institutions for purposes deemed beneficial to the state.

The concept of a national cinema in Ukraine has been based mostly on linguistic distinction; that is, films in the Ukrainian language are considered part of such a cinema. On the other hand, this linguistic exclusiveness is modified somewhat when films in Russian made in Ukraine are successful abroad; these pictures are included in order to show the potential of the Ukrainian film industry. The same applies to the history of cinema in Ukraine. Ukrainian critics following the exclusionist path in describing Ukrainian cinema often face the following paradox: If Ukraine produces a few dozen films per year, how can only a small number of these films be considered part of Ukrainian cinema? How are we to classify the 90 percent or so of Ukrainian productions that are made in the Russian language?

A brief explanation may enable us to understand this paradox. When Ukraine lost its control over film production and distribution in 1930, cinema became the most russified sector of Ukrainian culture. All foreign films shown on Ukrainian screens were dubbed into Russian. Moreover, the production of Ukrainian language films was closely monitored and quotas were set. An upsurge in Ukrainian productions occurred only when it benefited Moscow. One such occasion arose shortly before World War II, when Stalin tried to persuade the Ukrainians to defend the Soviet “Motherland.” A number of feature films set in the Ukrainian historical past demonstrated Ukrainian military efforts, most notably Alexander Dovzhenko’s *Shchors* (1939) and Ihor Savchenko’s *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* (1941). A second upsurge in Ukrainian language productions happened during the 1960s, when Ukrainian culture found its defender in the person of Petro Shelest, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine.⁴ A number of Ukrainian language films were made during this period, notably Paradzhanov’s *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964), and films by Yurii Illienko and Leonid Osyka. Ukrainian critics often refer to this wave as the Ukrainian Poetic Cinema.⁵

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A few more factors accelerated the process of russification within Ukrainian cinema. The centralised management of the Soviet film studios was responsible for the assignment of workers to individual studios. As a result, directors, actors, and other staff assigned to Ukrainian studios were in most cases not Ukrainian. Recruited from the VGIK in Moscow, very few ethnic Ukrainians managed to return to work in Ukraine. The graduates of the Kyiv Institute of Theatre Arts (Kyivskiy instytut teatralnoho mystetstva im. I. Karpenka-Karoho) were also educated in Russian and generally had very limited impact on the development of Ukrainian cinema. Thus, only a few individuals in the Ukrainian studio system could speak Ukrainian and would be interested in Ukrainian themes.

The use of non-synchronised sound recording during production (common in several European countries) allowed management to decide in which language films were to be released long after their production had begun. With all actors able to work in Russian and only few in Ukrainian, the choice was obvious.

Nationalist critics favouring the exclusionist path for Ukrainian cinema have become victims of the nationality politics of the Soviet Union. They insist on carrying on an outdated model for delegating themes that Ukrainian cinema should be concerned with. Thus, topics or settings having anything to do with folklore or distant history define Ukrainian cinema as national. This paradigm was desirable and encouraged by Moscow in its efforts to create the ideal Soviet citizen and thus underline the maturity of Russian *culture* and *language* vis-a-vis *folklore* and the “*dialects*” of other republics.⁶ The critics, having been fed this line of thinking for centuries, exclude from Ukrainian cinema anything contemporary and anything made in a language other than Ukrainian, although for the majority of Ukrainians Russian has become the primary language of daily communication. Ukrainian society has been bi-lingual for at least two centuries; the Russian language is in many respects the

language of Ukrainian society, even if ideally that very society is striving to establish Ukrainian-language dominance in its social and civic affairs.

The need to revise the model of national cinema in Ukraine becomes clear. Such a model cannot be based on one political agenda or be limited to certain genres or themes. Modern democratic societies such as Ukraine need to take into account the reality of cultural processes rather than an imaginary or idealised archetype preferred by a narrow margin of society. Thus, I propose to look at the Ukrainian cinema from a more inclusive perspective. I consider all films produced in Ukraine as part of Ukrainian national cinema regardless of their language, genre, or theme. Ukrainian society in the 1990s was not monolithic. Of the roughly 52 million inhabitants of Ukraine, ethnic Ukrainians made up 72.7 percent (1989 census) of the population and Russians 22.1 percent. 78 percent of the population was fluent in Ukrainian and 78.4 percent was fluent in Russian. In urban areas, where most film theatres were located, 72.1 percent of the residents were fluent in Ukrainian and 87.4 in Russian (268 *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*). Although these numbers have changed slightly since 1989, national composition and linguistic realities need to be considered in order to understand the processes undergone by the Ukrainian cinema. In terms of film reception Russian language films have a potentially larger audience in Ukraine, not to mention the potential markets of the former Soviet Union.

THE SOVIET LEGACY

During the Soviet era Ukraine was second to the Russian Federation in its share of film production facilities. Three studios specialised in feature films: Kyiv Artistic Film Studio (est. 1928; also known as Dovzhenko Film Studio), Odesa Artistic Film Studio (est. 1919) and Yalta Film Studio. In addition, there were several specialised studios producing documentary, television, and propaganda films. The most prominent were the Kyiv Studio of Documentary Films (est. 1931) and the Kyiv Studio of Popular Science Films (est. 1941). During the 1970s and 1980s these five studios released on average 50 feature films and close to 500 documentary and animation shorts per year. Moreover, the requirements of television were met by Ukrtefilm (est. 1966), with its considerable annual output of drama and documentary films. Most of these studios were, in fact, self-reliant organizational entities with their own sound stages, post-production facilities, film labs, and thousands of full-time employees. The Dovzhenko Studio alone employed close to two thousand people in 1990.

Even this brief list of film studios illustrates the production potential of the Ukrainian film industry at the beginning of the 1990s. While this impressive infrastructure might have been envied by many countries, it was a curse for those attempting to reform it. The problems laid not so much in the outdated equipment and buildings in need of repairs, but mainly in the attitude of the thousands of employees fearing the unknown and resisting change.

REFORMING THE INDUSTRY

During the 1980s the programme of reform in Ukrainian cinema closely followed the changes taking place in Moscow. Always careful, the Ukrainians started implementing reforms only as a result of similar changes being adopted and approved at the centre. The key word in all discussions was “khozrozhunok”; that is, the economic self-reliance of film studios. It became clear from the discussions published in the Ukrainian press that this new economic phenomenon was a shift from centrally to locally controlled studio finances, although very few understood its consequences for the film industry. Funding would still come from the government, and a studio would be responsible for its management. As before, studios did not need to worry about revenues generated by films. In brief, “khozrozhunok” was concerned with the shift in the management of expenses rather than with financial autonomy or the responsibility of the studios.

“Khozrozhunok” was never fully implemented because other organisational changes took place. The bodies responsible for cinema have changed several times, though the ownership of Ukrainian cinema has remained with the state all of the time. In the late 1980s, after the dissolution of Goskino, a body responsible for cinema throughout the entire Soviet Union, cinema in Ukraine became the responsibility of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture. Dissatisfied with bureaucratic control, the filmmakers then decided to form an independent body, Ukrderzhkinofond, responsible for film production and distribution and funded by the government. Such a body was created and Yuri Illienko, one of the nation’s most prominent film directors, was elected to head it. It soon became obvious, however, that Ukrderzhkinofond had to be funded from the budget of the Ministry of Culture, and the ministry wanted to have a say in the allocation of funds. This realisation coincided with the split within the Filmmakers Union of Ukraine, a powerful organisation grouping filmmakers, screenwriters and critics, over the constitution of Ukrderzhkinofond. As a result, cinema came back under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Leonid Cherevatenko, a noted critic, took responsibility for a new section within the ministry. When Ivan Dziuba, a prominent writer, was replaced as Minister of Culture the department of cinema went back into hands of former party officials, who then reestablished themselves in the positions of power. 269

Each of these power transfers resulted in significant losses for the industry. Because of the lack of new laws governing property ownership, copyrights, and the role of government, each subsequent manager of cinema assumed the role of a property owner. This patrimonialism, characteristic of every level of government in all post-Soviet countries,⁷ resulted in the private sale of state property, the leasing of state property to private vendors and, most importantly, a lack of interest in the further development of cinema. The results were devastating. Parts of film studios were rented to private companies, often owned by studio management. Film production

was consistently reduced: from about 50 feature films funded by the government in 1990, the production of features fell to six in 1995 and four in 1996.

The new managers preferred to maintain this state of affairs and government funding. They complained about the poor shape of Ukrainian cinema due to lack of funding but have done little to make the industry more efficient. In fact, they were personally much better off by not showing any initiative. For example, there was an opportunity to film parts of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) in Ukraine. The project did not materialise, as those responsible were not interested in pursuing it (Skrypka 24-26) because it would expose their incompetence and their private dealings. The same was true for the distribution of Ukrainian films in Ukraine. State producers were interested in the sale of films to foreign buyers and making a quick profit for themselves, rather than in pursuing work that may not benefit them personally (Krasnoshchenko 55).

270 To justify their existence before the public, the department of cinema periodically published proposals on how to reform and develop Ukrainian cinema. These documents hardly suggested any vision or any concrete plan for introducing changes. As in Soviet times these documents mostly contained a politically correct rhetoric designed to secure an allocation of funds from the parliament.⁸ The disintegration of the film industry has been a direct result of the failure of the Ukrainian parliament to adopt laws regulating copyrights and private ownership and defining the role of the state.

The new law regulating cinema was signed by the President of Ukraine only in January 1998 ("Zakon Ukrainy"). Unfortunately, this document was very general in nature and failed to adopt real changes which would stimulate the development of cinema in the country. It assumed that the state had a major role in the production and distribution process as producer of films and not merely as a granting agency. Thus private companies had to compete with the state owned ones. In reality, the process promised to be marred by powerful bureaucracy and a system of bribes. The document also came short in naming government agencies responsible for cinema. In an attempt to support local production of films the new law stipulated that no less than thirty percent of screen time (this includes television as well) be filled by films made in Ukraine. Although the document did not define responsibilities for allocation of screen time nor specified what constitutes a Ukrainian production this one article was certainly an important step towards the creation of economic incentives for the national film industry.

The lawlessness of the film industry was best exemplified by its distribution system. In the Soviet Union film distribution was centralised. Moscow decided what films were shown to the public and for how long. Foreign films were carefully selected for their social relevance or their depiction of problems facing the capitalist system. The official rationale has always been that only masterpieces of Western cinema were shown to the Soviet people, thus sparing them the kitsch of commercial cinema. This explanation sounded plausible when the Soviet Union began to crumble and

independent distributors brought hundreds of films from the West. As a rule these were films made by small companies who could not compete with big studios and whose product was intended for the Third World. This coincided with the boycott of the former Soviet market (1990-1993) by big Hollywood studios in reaction to widespread film and video piracy, and played into the hands of former communists who opposed anything coming from the West as well as Ukrainian filmmakers whose films were losing out to low quality productions.

This situation changed rather quickly. Low budget, low quality productions were squeezed out by major studio releases. The theory that Western films demoralise society and contribute to increased violence, carefully advanced by the proponents of the old system, did not take hold in Ukraine. Audiences preferred family films and melodramas over high budget blockbusters. The most popular films of 1994-95 were *Beethoven* (1992), *Beethoven's 2nd* (1993), *Home Alone* (1990), and *The Bodyguard* (1992). *JFK* (1991), *Indecent Proposal* (1993) and *Robocop* (1987) did not do well, at least not in the city of Khmelnytskyi where this survey was taken (Hrabovych). High ticket prices and video piracy also resulted in much lower movie attendance. In 1989 an average moviegoer went to see movies 11.3 times; in 1996 this average dropped to 0.3 times a year. At the same time, the number of theatres was reduced by one-half (Shul'zhenko). Vast majority of films were shown outside of movie theatres. In 1996 Ukraine imported 679 feature films of which only 83 were destined for theatrical releases. The remaining ones were distributed on home video or shown on television (Kin'ko).

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FILM FESTIVALS

"Earlier films were shown in theatres and on television," one critic has observed, "now, they are shown on television and during film festivals" (Trymbach "I zatri-shchy"). While this is true for many countries around the world, the disintegrating film distribution systems in Eastern Europe have placed new demands on film festivals. In addition to their official competitions festivals became the most important venues for presenting new films on the big screen. Such a direction could also be observed in Ukraine. During the Soviet period film festivals reflected Ukraine's colonial status. International festivals were exclusively held in Moscow, and Ukraine could at best hope for a minor all-union festival like the Youth Film Festival, which has taken place in Kyiv since 1970. This situation deprived Ukrainian filmmakers of a chance to show their films to audiences in Ukraine and to evaluate their own work in an international context. It has also prevented audiences in Ukraine from seeing a wider assortment of international cinema. This situation changed in the 1990s. While the availability of foreign films increased, the number of places showing them declined dramatically. Retrospectives, organised with the help of foreign diplomatic

missions, and film festivals were the only venues showing a wide range of films at public screenings.

Molodist—Kyiv International Film Festival—has over the last decade become the major cinematic event in Ukraine. After serving for 20 years as a festival showcasing films made by the graduating classes of Soviet film schools, the festival was expanded in 1991 to include an international jury and to show films from around the world. Living up to its name of “Youth,” the competition component of the festival includes only first films by new directors. Theoretically a director can enter the festival three times: as a student filmmaker, as a director of a first short film, and as a director of a first feature film. The *grand prix* of the festival, the Scythian Deer, is awarded to the best film of the festival regardless of its length. Other prizes are awarded for best fiction, non-fiction and animation. For many directors, however, the most valuable prize is the opportunity to show their films to an international audience and to be invited to other European festivals. The presence of young Ukrainian filmmakers at the festival’s competition was not overwhelming, but noteworthy. Ukrainian critics seem to agree on the fact that Molodist reflects the most interesting events in the Ukrainian cinema of the 1990s, and that the directors debuting there—the first generation of directors not tied to the old system—are likely to be the only ones to survive the changes.

Beyond the competition, Molodist is designed to showcase the best in world cinema. The festival organisers have established contacts with major European film festivals to send their representatives to Kyiv. Each November the Ukrainian public has a rare chance to see a digest of films that won prizes at other festivals, and to attend retrospectives of major world directors.

Two more festivals that have recently acquired an international status are worth mentioning. “Krok” (Step) is a festival of animated films which takes place on board a cruise ship sailing between Kyiv and Odesa along the Dnipro River. The entries come from more than 50 countries, and the festival is mostly a meeting place for animators because of the limited space for the general public. “Proloh” (Prologue), on the other hand, is a festival limited to student films. The jury is recruited from filmmakers and critics representing several European countries, and entries reflect its international character. The prizes are also appropriate to the scale and purpose of the festival: the winners receive monetary awards and film stock (donated by Kodak and others) for future films.

In general, film festivals in Ukraine seem to favour young filmmakers at the beginning of their careers. Whether this is a coincidence or a choice, attention is focused on filmmakers who lack the Soviet experience and can more easily adapt to new realities. Festivals give them necessary exposure and for many are a springboard to the European festival circuit. These new filmmakers most often do not rely on the Ukrainian studio system and government funds, yet are able to enter co-productions or to find private sponsors. Unlike their older colleagues, these young filmmakers are

also much more aware of the needs of the viewing public. Their models are no longer the classics of socialist realism but world cinema.

THE FILMMAKERS

Three distinct groups of film directors worked in the Ukrainian cinema of the 1990s. The differences among them were mostly generational, but were also dictated by the cultural history of the past four decades. The oldest group, which I call “the sixties generation,” made their debuts during the period of relative freedom of the 1960s and later became the film establishment in Ukraine. The second group, only slightly younger, missed the opportunities of the 1960s and made their debuts in the gloomy Brezhnev years. Their work came too late to be internationally recognised and their films were often shelved for years. However, most of them continued to make films and to hold jobs at film studios. Their chance came with Gorbachev’s *perestroyka*. Well placed at film studios, and having significant filmmaking experience, these directors were eventually able to realise their often postponed or banned projects. They were also the first generation of filmmakers to see their films compete with world cinema on domestic screens. They demonstrated an ability to survive in the market economy and to make interesting and relevant films. I call this group “the latecomers.” And finally, there is a group of filmmakers who graduated from film schools during the *perestroyka* or later, and who had lacked any experience working on Soviet-style productions. This group quickly adapted to new realities. I refer to their contributions as “new voices, new images.” 273

THE SIXTIES GENERATION

The revival of Ukrainian culture (and the subsequent revival of political aspirations) during the late 1980s was led by artists and activists who came into prominence during the 1960s. Although decimated by death and long sentences in labour camps, these people were the only generation in Ukrainian society who had experienced limited freedom in the past and were willing to take chances some twenty years later. A similar situation developed in Ukrainian cinema. The need to reform and create a national cinema in Ukraine was first recognised by the generation of filmmakers who suffered the most during the 1970s and the early 1980s.⁹ They initiated early discussions and challenged the status quo of the Dovzhenko Film Studio in Kyiv. Who were these directors?

First of all, they were recognised during the 1960s as proponents of the Ukrainian Poetic Cinema, a term referring to a filmmaking style rather than to a formal organisation within the Dovzhenko Studio. It began with the production of *Tini zabutykh predkiv* (*Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, 1964), which brought together film direc-

tor Serge Paradzhanov, young cameraman Yurii Illienko, and young actor Ivan Mykolaichuk. Illienko then continued as a director with *Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh* (*A Spring Well for the Thirsty*, 1965, released 1987), *Nich na Ivana Kupala* (*On the Eve of Ivan Kupalo*, 1968), and *Bilyi ptakh z chornoii oznakoiu* (*A White Bird with a Black Spot*, 1971); Paradzhanov left for Armenia; and Mykolaichuk became a generational icon by starring in many films. Later, Mykolaichuk became a director with his own *Vavylon XX* (*Babylon Twenty*, 1980). Leonid Osyka also made a strong contribution to this tradition with *Kaminnyi khrest* (*The Stone Cross*, 1968) and *Zakhar Berkut* (1971). Other names often associated with the tradition of Ukrainian Poetic Cinema include Mykola Mashchenko with *Komisary* (*The Commissars*, 1970), Borys Ivchenko with *Propala hramota* (*Lost Charter*, 1972) and Artur Voitetsky with *Z nud'hy* (*Out of Grief*, 1967).

274 All of these directors continued to make films during the 1970s and 1980s but their later work hardly matches their earlier efforts. In the attempt to destroy what censors termed “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism,” the poetic school became an easy target. Even Paradzhanov, an ethnic Armenian, spent some time in the Gulag for allegedly being a Ukrainian nationalist. Needless to say, the earlier works of these people were shelved and new projects were rejected most of the time. The Ukrainian trend initiated by these filmmakers was abandoned in favour of Russian language films promoting the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War.¹⁰ Not all of these directors lived to see an independent Ukraine and the renewed efforts to rebuild its national cinema. Ivan Mykolaichuk died prematurely in 1987, a broken man destroyed by intrigues of the secret police and the inability to work. Years in Soviet prisons also shortened the life of Paradzhanov, who died in 1990.

Yurii Illienko was a director who brought back hope for Ukrainian cinema after years of stagnation. Interestingly, it was not a current film but the release of his long-banned masterpiece that returned Illienko to prominence. His 1966 film *A Spring Well for the Thirsty* was released in 1987 as one of the first manifestations of glasnost in Ukrainian cinema. As a result, Ukrainian critics revisited other Illienko films from the 1960s and resuscitated interest in the tradition of poetic cinema. Illienko also managed to show his films in the US and Canada, taking advantage of the renewed interest in films censored by the Soviet regime. More importantly, he established the contacts that helped him realise his next project, *Lebedyne ozero zona* (*Swan Lake, the Zone*, 1990), based on a screenplay by his mentor Serge Paradzhanov.

Swan Lake, the Zone is the story of a man (Viktor Solovyov) who escapes from a prison three days before the end of his sentence. The man lives inside a monstrous hammer-and-sickle monument where he is discovered by a woman (Liudmyla Yefymenko) and her son (Pylip Illienko). The woman nurses the prisoner back to health inside the monument and they fall in love. The couple is betrayed by the boy, who is jealous of his mother’s affection for the stranger. Brought back to prison, the man attempts suicide and is pronounced dead. The doctor in the morgue discovers, however, that the prisoner is still alive. A blood transfusion from the accompanying

guard revives the prisoner. On their way back to the zone the guard faints; the prisoner takes over and voluntarily turns himself in.

The prison authorities now face a problem. By accepting blood from the guard the prisoner symbolically becomes his brother, and thus breaks the unwritten prison code. To redeem himself the prisoner must spit in the face of the guard who gave him blood and, as a consequence, spend five more years in prison or be executed together with his lover. In a moment of desperation the prisoner slits his wrists.

This rather gloomy picture of the not-so-distant Soviet past was an example of settling accounts with the Soviet era. Because of this the film received some critical attention at Cannes and enjoyed a limited run in the West. However, very few people watched the film in Ukraine: its release coincided with the opening of the market for Hollywood productions. It is hardly surprising that the audience and distributors in Ukraine preferred happy stories involving fast cars and pretty women over the still-painful memories of Soviet atrocities.

The film's style was also miscalculated. What worked for Illienko during the sixties was ill matched for the dramatic intensity of his latest subject and turned out somewhat archaic. The style of poetic cinema, so well suited for adaptations and historical films, proved inadequate for the new reality. "Poetic cinema," wrote one Ukrainian critic, "cried over the collapse of the patriarchal system, its way of thinking and feeling as well as its particular beauty and poeticism. Then, during the 1960s, [the directors] relied on very concrete life material. When, at the beginning of the 1990s, they tried to convert the 'poetic way' into a grand highway of national cinema it became obvious that these attempts were written in sand" (Trymbach "Kinorefleksii").

Swan Lake, the Zone was a financial failure for its Canadian co-producer and an artistic failure for its director. The film proved that the poetic film style which complemented and challenged the socialist realism of the Soviet cinema did not possess the expressive strength of appeal to the emotions of contemporary Ukrainian society. In light of all this, it is not surprising that Illienko has made no new films in the 1990s but focused his efforts on administrative work. He made a comeback in 2002 with a controversial *Molytva za Hetmana Mazepu* (*A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa*) but the film received no distribution due to its political undertones.¹¹

Mykola Mashchenko has also spent the 1990s as an administrator, rather than as a film director. Appointed director of the Dovzhenko Film Studio in the late 1980s, Mashchenko has been responsible for overseeing the transition from the Soviet-style studio to a modern, financially independent entity. During this period Mashchenko made one film *Vinchannia zi smertiu* (*Marriage with Death*, 1992), produced by his own company and the Dovzhenko Studio. It is a story of a NKVD (the predecessor of the KGB) officer facing a moral dilemma involving the killing of innocent people. A wedding party becomes the accidental witness to an execution by the secret police. These people must now die. By justifying the killings as necessary for the state, the film's officer protagonist (Oleh Savkin) accepts his "profession" and trusts those who make decisions. It is a story of a moral downfall, imposed by the totalitarian

system onto an otherwise respectable individual. The film was well received by critics, although some accused it of catering to popular taste. However, like many other films dealing with the Soviet past it came too late to hold the interest of viewers and to appeal to their concerns in these quickly changing times.

The most prolific of the poetic school directors has been Leonid Osyka. Unlike his colleagues, he did not turn to contemporary themes or try to settle accounts with the Soviet era; he continued to adapt literary works and made historical films for which his poetic style was better suited. *Uviidit' strazhdenni!* (*Come in, the Tormented!*, 1988) is set in a desert and concerns three characters existing outside time and space. *Etiudy pro Vrubela* (*Etudes on Vrubel*, 1989) is based on a screenplay by the influential Serge Paradzhanov. The film tells the story of the 19th century painter Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910), best known for his frescoes in several Kyiv churches. Working in the tradition of Russian symbolism, Vrubel became obsessed with the Demon figure. Paradzhanov was long interested in this painter but was not allowed to make a film dealing with religious issues during his Kyiv years. Osyka's project, like Illienko's *Swan Lake*, was a tribute to Paradzhanov's legacy in Ukraine.

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With *Podarunok na imenyny* (*A Name-Day's Gift*, 1991) Osyka returned to literary adaptations. Like the short story by Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, Osyka's film is a tale of a prison official who stages the execution of a revolutionary in order to please his ten-year old son on his name-day. The director sees a parallel between this early 20th-century story, based on a true incident, and life at the end of the Soviet Union. The film is a reminder that violence results in more violence and the accumulation of violence inevitably leads to a catastrophe. Osyka's subsequent project continued this quasi-history lesson. *Hetmans'ki kleinody* (*Hetman's Insignia*, 1993) moves back to the 17th century, when the in-fighting among the Ukrainian Cossack leadership was used by Russia to capture Ukraine. The parallels between these historical events and the Russian designs towards the independent Ukraine were quite obvious to viewers in Ukraine.

The sixties generation, exemplified by the individuals mentioned above, needs to be credited for its role in initiating the process of renewal in Ukrainian cinema during the late 1980s. As activists they managed to introduce some reforms during the times when government funding for the cinema was steady. However, as a result of their old way of thinking they failed as the administrators of a market-oriented cinema. They also disappoint as film directors. By thinking of themselves as film artists and *auteurs* they do not see the need for reestablishing contact with the audience. They still live in the bygone world of Soviet studios, making films for themselves and blaming the audience for not understanding them. The resurrection of the poetic school style also proved to be a failure. The poetic style, convenient for making indirect allusions, metaphors and hidden truths, worked fine during the 1960s when the audience was willing to participate in the uncovering of hidden meanings. In the era of openness this style appears dishonest, and possesses an aura of secrecy which the audience no longer wishes to explore.

Besides the above-mentioned directors and films of the poetic school, one other film deserves detailed attention. It is a picture made by Armenian director Karen Gevorkian, who is also a product of the 1960s and whose career stalled during the 1970s and 1980s. *Pegii pes, begushchii kraem moria* (*Piebald Dog Running along the Seashore*, 1991) is the name of a mountain in the Russian Far East, personified in the speech of the local people. These aboriginal people, Nivkhs, who live on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk and who number today less than five thousand, are the subject of the film. This Ukrainian-German co-production has been compared to Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) because of its documentary-like style, favouring long takes and cinematic simplicity. Despite its visual anthropological qualities, the film is a work of fiction where major roles are played by actors, none of whom is a Nivkh.

The Piebald Dog unfolds slowly by drawing the viewer to the everyday life and customs of Nivkhs rather than to a story. A man quietly moves through a dark room full of sleeping people and joins a woman to make love in this collective environment. A pregnant woman walks away from a camp and exposes her belly to the sun and freezing wind. It is not an abortion, as we may suspect, but a form of establishing contact with nature for the unborn child. We observe how the entire community celebrates the birth of its newest member. As a Polish critic notes, the director "does not limit himself to the recording of customs but enters the emotional, magical and metaphysical sphere of these peoples' lives" (Gazda 31). 277

The killing of a bear is one of the film's strongest episodes, underlining the close ties of the Nivkhs to nature. The killing lacks the violence or the sense of competition associated with the white man's hunt; it is a ritual in which the whole community participates. The skinning and eating of the bear's meat are also part of the mystic union between men and animals. The skinning of the bear signifies the bear's entrance into the human community through the removal of the most obvious difference between man and animal. The eating of the bear's meat, in the Nivkh belief system, makes man more like a bear. Man is thus not the ruler of nature but an integral part of it. For Gevorkian, *Piebald Dog* is a parable for the modern world: "What is natural for the Nivkh people has been lost in the modern world... Responsibility for the future includes a respect for nature, which takes revenge on man for his arrogance and stupidity" (Gevorkian 15).

The Nivkh attitude towards the future and the preservation of mankind is evident in the second part of the film, which takes place at sea. The story is the coming-of-age of a young Nivkh, Kirisk, who is initiated into manhood on a hunting trip. The boy and his father, grandfather, and uncle get lost at sea, first in a storm and then in a dense fog. The men realise that their supplies are running low, and to assure the survival of the youngest the men one by one commit suicide by drowning themselves quietly.

Piebald Dog received the Grand Prix at the Moscow Film Festival in 1991 and was shown at other festivals but did not receive commercial distribution. It is surprising

that in an era of renewed interest in aboriginal cultures Gevorgian's honest picture of one such culture attracted no attention, in contrast to Hollywoodisations of this issue such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990).¹²

THE LATECOMERS

Different attributes characterize the second generation of Ukrainian filmmakers. Their film debuts during the 1970s did not win them the respect they deserved. The party's renewed devotion to socialist realism not only ended all experiments towards an explicitly Ukrainian national cinema, but also made censors sensitive to all portrayals of contemporary Soviet life. A critical look at reality was interpreted as a lack of hope in the future of the socialist state and was, thus, condemned. Within such constraints young directors somehow managed to launch their careers. Their films refused to treat individuals as representatives of their social classes, as was the intent of socialist realism. These newcomers resisted placing characters in heroic situations or demand from them sacrifices in the name of society. Instead, their films focused on regular people, holding regular jobs, and facing problems of everyday life.

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Viacheslav Kryshstofovych (often spelled Krishtofovich) is well known in the West although hardly recognised as a Ukrainian director. His films, made in Russian, unmistakably belong to the Soviet space but lack the kind of national character recognised by critics. Kryshstofovych began his career in the early 1970s after graduating from the Kyiv Institute of Theatre Arts. These were the Brezhnev years; not a favourable time to launch a new career and say anything new in Ukrainian cinema. Kryshstofovych was assigned to the Dovzhenko Studio in Kyiv and made several films for television. His breakthrough, and subsequent international recognition, came with *glasnost*. *Odinokaia zhenshchina zhelaet poznakomitsia* (*Lonely Woman Seeks Life Companion*, 1987) was one of the most successful Dovzhenko Studio productions to be shown commercially around the world. The film demonstrates what Kryshstofovych does best: telling small, banal stories with unsurpassed intensity and compassion. One American critic describes Kryshstofovych's style as "the most relaxed variety of naturalism imaginable" (Hinson).

Lonely Woman Seeks Life Companion is the story of Klavdia (Irina Kupchenko), a woman in her early forties who posts a lonely hearts ad. A stranger appears at her doorstep as a result. Valentin (Aleksandr Zbruev) is a drunk, a vagabond, and a former circus performer living on a disability pension. Dismissed at first by Klavdia, Valentin turns out to be an intelligent and perceptive man. Although he tries to steal from her (and she is forced to crown him with an ironing board), they manage to develop a relationship and a trust for each other. The film beautifully captures the growth of this relationship, which one critic described as a "back-and-forth game of emotional tennis" (Hinson). Stylistically the film is a chamber work, with the

camera in close on the two principals. Kryshstofovych's experience in television helped him to extract the essence of these characters from Kupchenko and Zbruev.

The film is set against the drabness of late-Soviet life. The interaction of the two main characters with the outside world adorns the film with comic touches. People come regularly to Klavdia's cramped apartment as a result of her ad. Valentin is allowed to sleep in her kitchen, a neighbour comes to report on her new love interest, and a group of "Young Pioneers" offers to help with housework and cheer Klavdia as a part of their good-deed obligations.

Kryshstofovych's next project, *Rebro Adama* (*Adam's Rib*, 1990), did not find support in Ukraine and was completed at Mosfilm Studios. Here, the director continues his infatuation with everyday life which was accurately described by the title of his early TV drama *Dribnytsi zhyttia* (*The Trifles of Life*, 1980). *Adam's Rib* is a domestic drama dealing with three generations of Soviet women living in a small apartment. The household is led by a twice-divorced museum guide, Nina (Inna Churikova), who has a daughter from each marriage (Svetlana Riabova and Mariia Golubkina) and a bedridden mother (Elena Bogdanova) who constantly rings a bell to get attention and help. 279

The film revolves around the chore of changing the grandmother's bedpan, or, more precisely, in deciding who is going to do it. The younger daughter Nastia is a street-smart, witty and cynical young woman with connections. "Communism," she explains, "is being friends with your local butcher." Her older sister, naive but pragmatic Lida, has an affair with her married boss who promises her a vacation at seashore. The film culminates with a birthday party for the grandma, to which Nina's former husbands and a current boyfriend are invited. The men, who still adore Nina, squabble over her affection, while the fathers try to assert their parental superiority after the revelation of Nastia's pregnancy. When the men are gone, the women console themselves around the kitchen table.

Unlike many Soviet slice-of-life films of the time, both features and documentaries, there is no morbidity in *Adam's Rib*. According to Kryshstofovych, "Many films showed how we lived. This film shows how we survived" (quoted in Menashe 67). The optimistic quality of this film made it popular with Western audiences. *Adam's Rib* was shown at the Cannes and New York film festivals and grossed nearly a quarter million dollars in the United States alone.

With his subsequent film Kryshstofovych returned to the Dovzhenko Studio in Ukraine. *Pryiatel nebizhchyka* or *Un ami du défunt* (*A Friend of the Deceased*, 1997) was a French-Ukrainian co-production. A Ukrainian critic described the essence of the film as "a criminal story diluted by everyday life" (Briukhovets'ka "Kryminal"). It is the story of a young man, Anatolii (Aleksandr Lazarev), who lives in contemporary Kyiv. When he loses his job and his wife leaves him for another man, a despairing loneliness settles over Anatolii's life. He raises money to kill his wife's lover but, at the last moment, provides the killer with his own photograph instead of the intended victim's. When the killing does not take place, Anatolii changes his mind and regains

a yearning for life after meeting a young prostitute (Elena Kurikova). It is, however, too late to break the killer's contract. Anatolii hires another killer to eliminate the first one.

The film's screenplay was adapted by a Kyiv writer Andrii Kurkov¹³ from his own novel. A thriller in the original, the film conforms to the generic requirements only on the surface. As in his earlier films the director is primarily interested in the state of a person lost in loneliness and in the new post-Soviet conditions of life. Anatolii's drama is played against the background of Kyiv's streets where another more universal drama takes place. Luxury cars contrast with beggars on the street, while money buys everything and replaces relationships. "Friendship has disappeared together with the Soviet Union. Business attitudes replaced friendship," complains a character in the film. But the film is not merely nostalgia for the good old days in a socialist paradise but rather a detailed picture of a new social order. *A Friend of the Deceased* was shown at Cannes in 1997 and received good reviews. Lazarev's excellent acting was recognised by critics who saw star qualities in this 26-year old theatrical actor. The film has also been commercially successful: 35 countries purchased it for distribution and many more festivals have included it in their programmes.

The films of Kira Muratova shared much of Kryshchovych's preoccupation with the everyday and with ordinary people. Without doubt, Muratova has been the most prolific and the most internationally recognised Ukrainian director. During the 1990s she has completed three feature films at the Odesa Film Studio. Although she began making films with the sixties generation her recognition came only as a result of glasnost and the release of her *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters*, 1967) and *Dolgie provody* (*The Long Goodbye*, 1971-87) in the late 1980s. These and her other earlier films were originally either shelved by censors or given very limited releases.¹⁴

Critics consider *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*, 1989) to be Muratova's most important film. The film's title describes a medical condition of total physical and psychological exhaustion, which critics immediately identified as the state of Soviet society at the time. But the critique of this society is rendered in quite an unusual way. Accusations are not acted out on the screen but are directly aimed at the viewer, by means of disturbing the viewer's expectations, morals, and inclination towards conformity. As one critic describes it, "*Asthenic Syndrome* places the blame directly and uncomfortably on the audience itself. In its images, its language, its message and even its two-and-one-half-hour length, the film aggressively assaults its audience in a desperate attempt to rouse them from moral torpor" (Taubman "Asthenic" 802).¹⁵

In the most controversial scene a female character uses a series of four-letter words which were commonly used on the street but not in print or on screen. The shock is threefold: an obscenity, uttered by a woman, and, most importantly, not directed at another character in the film but at the audience. Even the most liberal of critics were astounded by this.¹⁶ Other scenes designed to make the viewer feel uneasy include male frontal nudity and cruelty towards animals. Muratova even emphasises

the unpleasant aspect of the experience through a black-and-white intertitle: "People don't like to look at this./ People don't like to hear about this./ This shouldn't have any relation/ To conversations about good and evil." *Asthenic Syndrome* not only shocked audiences at home but gave Muratova instant recognition in the West, in addition to a Silver Bear she won at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Although it contained many illusions to *Asthenic Syndrome*, Muratova's next film, *Chuvstvitel'nyi militsioner* (*The Sentimental Cop*, 1992) is a totally different picture: "a small, closed chamber tale and very sentimental" in the director's words. Tolik, a young policeman, finds a baby abandoned in a cabbage field. He becomes attached to little Natasha by the time he leaves her at the children's home. When Tolik returns with his wife, Klava, to adopt Natasha, the baby has already been promised to a widowed pediatrician. Tolik's subsequent battle with the bureaucracy over the custody of Natasha is also unsuccessful. The film ends with Klava confessing that she is pregnant.

A Ukrainian critic sees *The Sentimental Cop* as "the story of the pregnancy of the soul, the story of carrying to term the desire to have a child" (Rutkovs'kyi "Iahidky"). In order to become a father Tolik needs to overcome his wife's lack of a maternal instinct and the empty bureaucratic talk about love for a child rather than genuine emotion. When compared to the apocalyptic *Asthenic Syndrome*, *The Sentimental Cop* is full of hope for the future. The film was made in the last days of the Soviet Union and released during a new political order. 281

Muratova briefly continued the mood established by *The Sentimental Cop* with her next film *Uvlecheniia* (*Passions*, 1994). It is a story about the problems facing young people, and their complicated relationships and emotions. Somewhat overstylised, *Passions* is set against the active background of a hippodrome in which people and horses represent Muratova's preoccupation with the human and animal worlds revealed in her earlier films. But Muratova's turn towards sweet stories, as she calls them, did not last long. With her next film, *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*, 1997), she was back at full force in her attempt to shock the viewer.

Three Stories is a collection of three short films united by the common theme of violent death. These are not detective stories because the crimes are neither investigated nor punished. Instead, the films focus on the acts of absurd, illogical killings. In *Boiler Room No. 6* (25 min) an occupant of a communal apartment quarrels with his beautiful young neighbour and kills her. He then persuades his former school-mate (whose job is stoking the furnace in the boiler room) to dispose of the body. In *Ophelia* (55 min) a young woman gets a job in the archive of a maternity hospital. Orphaned herself, she finds the identity of her mother and swears revenge. First, she murders a young mother who has given up her baby for adoption; then she befriends her own heartless mother and throws her into the sea. *Death and the Maiden* (34 min), the most gruesome of the pack, tells the story of an old man confined to a wheelchair, who is baby-sitting his neighbour's five-year-old daughter. This unruly child scatters the man's chess pieces and argues and whines when not allowed to play

in the yard. Ultimately, she puts rat poison into his tea and waits for the outcome. The last two tales in *Three Stories* are intended as very dark comedies. Like *A Friend of the Deceased*, Muratova's *Three Stories* can be faulted for catering to popular taste, yet it may confirm Muratova's determination to make films that will find a new audience.

Muratova has continued to make films in Odesa, although she received very little or no funding from Ukrainian government sources. Ironically, she was named the People's Artist of Ukraine and awarded a state prize shortly before the Ukrainian government reduced support for cinema, including Muratova's films. They are now funded mostly by private Russian and Western producers.

282 Mykhailo Bielikov has been known primarily as the secretary of the Filmmakers Union of Ukraine, a prestigious post he held for over a decade. But he has also been a capable film director who, like many of his Ukrainian colleagues, started as a cameraman in the early 1970s. International recognition came with *Raspad* (*The Collapse*, 1990), a film that chronicles the horrific aftermath of the Chornobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine in 1986. Bielikov's documentary-like style situates *The Collapse* among a number of documentary films dealing with the Chornobyl tragedy and other ecological problems in Ukraine (see Bahry), yet it is unmistakably a fictional creation. The film's script, co-written by Bielikov and Oleh Prykhodko, is based on overheard stories detailing events that took place in the Ukrainian capital, only 70 km south of the disaster site. The film's title refers to the decomposition of atoms at the heart of nuclear reaction, but also to the disintegration of a Soviet society based on lies and half-truths.

A journalist returns to Kyiv from a foreign assignment and learns second-hand that his wife has had an affair with his bureaucrat friend. He plans to visit another friend who works at a nuclear power station, but this friend becomes one of the first victims of the explosion at Chornobyl's reactor No. 4. There is panic among government officials who arrange safe escape for their families but no official announcement is made and all rumours are denied. A newlywed couple sets off for a camping honeymoon in the forest near Chornobyl. They encounter dead animals and men in white radiation suits examining the area; still, there is no news from the government.

The Collapse was shot on location in Kyiv and in the contaminated town of Prypiat in the Chornobyl zone. Bielikov entered into a partnership with the American Pacific Film Fund which provided film stock and post-production facilities at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch in California (Wyss 67). *The Collapse* premiered at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival and enjoyed quite a successful run in Europe, where the Chornobyl disaster has not been so easily forgotten.

Bielikov's next project continued the theme of moral values in a contemporary society. *Sviate simeistvo* (*Holy Family*, 1996) is the love story of a young man and a young woman who meet in a church. As the story develops we learn that he is a contract killer and she a prostitute. Although based on a formula used by many Hollywood films, *Holy Family* shifts its focus from the unusual occupations of its protagonists to the need for a quiet family life both strive to have. The film has quite

a complex structure: the love story turns out to be a film within a film in which the protagonists are played by a real life couple going through a crisis (see Kryshchovych Jr.).

The youngest of the Illienko brothers,¹⁷ Mykhailo, has been directing films since the early 1970s but received critical recognition only in the 1990s. Although his age qualifies him as one of the latecomers, his films have little in common with those of his peers. Mykhailo Illienko combines the abstract qualities of the poetic tradition with those of contemporary or “postmodern” reality. His stories evoke fairy tales, Western film genres, and ancient pagan myths situated in a contemporary setting with an unmistakably national colour. *Fuchzhou* (1993) is a fantastic story about a young man, Orest, who is always followed by wind. This quality makes him highly desirable to mill owners and sailors, in addition to placing him in an array of adventures. Orest is in love with a young woman whom he knows only from a painting. His quest to find his beloved takes him to America where the girl of his dreams is about to marry an old rich man. It all ends happily when Orest is able to trade the old man’s boat, which he acquired after saving it in the Bermuda triangle, for his beloved. **283**

Within the framework of this fantastic adventure Illienko touches upon a topic considered taboo in Soviet times—Ukrainian immigrants living in the US and Canada. The uneasy relationship between Ukraine and its diaspora developed as a result of Soviet propaganda aimed at discrediting the largely anti-communist emigrés. With the coming of *glasnost* and independence, the diaspora became for most Ukrainians their first personal contact with the West. Moreover, the diaspora preserved older forms of Ukrainian culture and language that were long destroyed by the Bolsheviks. This merging of Western and diaspora Ukrainian cultures became a source of inspiration en route to revamping the artificial Soviet model. The songs of Braty Hadiukyny illustrated this trend in popular music. Mykhailo Illienko’s *Fuchzhou* was a similar attempt at combining the world of old Ukraine (poetic cinema, diaspora) and the new, Western-oriented Ukraine of today.

Illienko’s subsequent recent film, *S’omyi marshrut* (*Route 7*, 1996), also used Westerners to mediate a picture of contemporary Ukraine. Dmytro (Yurii Yevsiukov) is a poet who takes a part-time job as a tour guide for American tourists. He is given some freedom in selecting a route for his group, and he decides to lead the tourists along places connected with the life of a persecuted poet who perished in the labour camps. It soon becomes obvious that the places the group visits allow Dmytro to tell a somewhat mythologized history of his life. The Kyiv seen by the tourists is the city of back alleys, residential quarters, and Soviet ruins. The film consists of several independent stories. Fourteen of Illienko’s students at the Kyiv Institute of Theatre Arts are credited as scriptwriters for the film, and much of the work had been done as part of coursework. *Route 7* is an interesting development on the road to the diversification of film production in Ukraine. In the history of Ukrainian cinema there are very few films made outside of the film studio system.

NEW VOICES, NEW IMAGES

The most promising filmmaking generation, the youngest, came on the scene after Ukrainian independence. As a rule they had no or very little experience working within the Soviet system, and unlike their older colleagues they have been exposed to international filmmaking. Most importantly they made their first feature films with limited or no state support. As a result these filmmakers were more sensitive to the needs of the audience. The number of talented directors in this group was surprisingly large, although some made only short films so far. It is significant for the cause of national cinema that most of these new filmmakers were born in Ukraine and most graduated from the Kyiv Institute of Theatrical Arts. They were not appointed or assigned to film studios after graduation, but chose their place of work. Although linguistically they felt more comfortable working in Russian, their films were well connected to Ukraine by the sense of place they knew best.

284 One of the most interesting directors to emerge in independent Ukraine was Natalia Andriichenko.¹⁸ With two shorts and one feature film to her credit, she has proved to be an original voice among the youngest generation of Ukrainian filmmakers. In the opinion of many critics Andriichenko's *Shamara* (1994) signalled a yet-to-be-defined new wave in Ukrainian cinema. For this film Andriichenko received the Dovzhenko State Prize in 1996, a considerable achievement for a 30-year old director. The story of *Shamara* revolves around Zina Shamarina (Iryna Tsymbal) and her relationship with her husband Ustyn. Ustyn is one of eight men who raped Shamara (Zina's nickname); she later married him in order to exact revenge. It is a bleak story of a woman set to destroy. A critic described *Shamara* as a "chronicle of love's excess, which takes place in a woman's soul. It is presented in innovative visual images which simultaneously reflect the traumatic worldview of the protagonist while carrying the intimate message of the author, and preserve the fragile screen surface that can be created or destroyed by the lens" (Rutkovs'kyi "Zradlyvi").

Shamara's originality stems not from the story itself but rather from a very subtle handling of the material. On the one hand the film avoids intellectualising issues the ordinary working-class characters face and, on the other, avoids the brutality of the "necro-realism" found in contemporary Russian cinema. In contrast to characters moulded by the social values of Soviet cinema, *Shamara's* are fully developed individuals. They refuse to "return to the collective and to herd-like values" (Trymbach "Nova").

Natalia Andriichenko considered herself part of women's cinema but with some reservations. In her opinion, "women's cinema is called upon to cross a threshold of feelings, not with violence but with immodesty" (Andriichenko, Interview 56). However, *Shamara* was not popular with feminist critics for, according to its director, it suggested that "a woman can also be dangerous and not necessarily weak and unprotected." Furthermore, Andriichenko does not see herself as an activist. "[Art] is

not an aspirin,” she has stated, “I don’t think art is capable of correcting something” (Andriichenko “Mii fil’m”).

Undoubtedly, one of the most discussed Ukrainian film of the 1990s was Serhii Masloboishchikov’s *Spivachka Zhozefina i myshachyi narod* (*Josephine the Singer and the Mice People*, 1994). This film, loosely based on Franz Kafka’s short stories¹⁹ (including “Josefine, die Sängerin oder das Volk der Mäuse”), has been described as “a documentary from an imaginary world.” This world is populated by adults and children who live in a theatre and take pleasure in the sound of piercing squeaks similar to those made by mice. Among the inhabitants of this bizarre space are the local diva Josephine (Alla Serhiiko), who can produce higher-pitched squeaking sounds than anybody else; a young boy, Joseph (Zhenia Medovoi), who is on a hunger strike and does not share everybody’s appreciation for Josephine’s art (as in Kafka’s “Ein Hungerkünstler”); the philosophizing Jeremiah (Vadym Skurativsky); and cynical Joshua (Oleh Isaiev).

In the tradition of Kafka the actions of the film’s characters hardly have a justification or a coherent story line. Neither do they seem to matter to the director. The film presents itself as a journey into the world of dreams unspoiled by rationality. It is not the plot that moves the film forward, but a carefully planned mise-en-scene and sound design. The visual dynamics come from the constant movement of children and their restless games within the frame. The soundtrack, full of squeaking background noises, multilingual dialogue and music by Yefim Hofman, gives the film its relentless rhythm. A critic noted that the film’s world of “human kindergarten” is “united only by rhythm, by an insane catastrophic speed with which its fragments rise, its top mixes with the bottom and its beauty with ugliness [...]” (Lemesheva 126).

Unlike other film adaptations of Kafka, Masloboishchikov’s film is not a bleak, light-and-shadow play of black and white but a beautifully shot film which takes full advantage of colour. An unmistakably Kafkaesque atmosphere of irrational chaos combines with sun-filled settings of gold and yellow. Oleksandr Shumovych proved to be an excellent director of photography, presenting a consistent colour scheme throughout the film. Shumovych had also worked on Masloboishchikov’s short films, *The Village Doctor* (1988, also based on Kafka) and *The Different One* (1989), both of which received recognition at several film festivals. The tragic death of Shumovych brought an end to this promising collaboration between the cameraman and the director.

Serhii Masloboishchikov, who has earned himself the title of a Ukrainian Buñuel, came to the cinema as an established artist and theatrical set designer. It is thus not surprising that sets and objects in general play a paramount role in his film. *Josephine* was shot in an old theatre in Chernivtsi which dates back to the Austro-Hungarian empire and has an ambience similar to the richly decorated theatres of Vienna and Prague familiar to Kafka. Knowing the director’s expertise in set design, one is pleasantly surprised at his masterful handling of dynamic elements. The hundreds of

children constantly running around, and the many characters talking to each other (and to themselves) and moving in this closed world of the theatre are managed with superb taste and attention to the pictorial beauty within the frame.

Andrii Donchyk was another young film director who started making films when the Soviet Union was crumbling. His short debut *Zahybel bohiv* (*The Fall of Gods*, 1989) brought him instant recognition. The film was based on an unfinished short story by Alexander Dovzhenko. It is an ironic take on communism in a Ukrainian village during the 1920s. Donchyk's rendition of the story preserves Dovzhenko's wit and style. The director's feature debut is a more personal film based on his experiences in the Red Army during the early 1980s. Donchyk wrote the script for *Kysnevyi holod* (*Oxygen Starvation*, 1992) together with well-known avant-garde poet and writer Yurii Andrukhovych. The film was produced jointly by Kobza International of Toronto (Canada) and Victory FF (Ukraine). Interestingly, the Ukrainian partner was not a film studio but a state farm.

286 *Oxygen Starvation* is about the progressive demoralization of Roman Bilyk (Taras Denysenko), a Ukrainian conscript in the Red Army. After a grandiose swearing-in ceremony Bilyk is stationed in a distant forest where he is initiated into the reality of army life. It is not just the hazing we know from American films, but outright cruelty. Bilyk is repeatedly advised by older soldiers: "You should hang yourself." Help comes from a sergeant who proposes that in return for protection Bilyk become an informer whose duty will be to examine other soldiers' mail and report if necessary. When Bilyk refuses, rumours are spread that he is indeed an informer, which sets the other soldiers against him. This results in an even fiercer humiliation for Bilyk, who at first does not retaliate but with time grows desperate and becomes aggressive. A series of intrigues and humiliations leave Bilyk isolated and at the mercy of his immediate superior, Koshachy. When Koshachy seeks revenge after rumours emerge that Bilyk has informed on him, the latter is unable to withstand the pressure and kills his superior.

The film was shot on location at a Soviet military base amid the ruins of missile launchers and in military zones that were kept secret during Soviet times. This authentic documentary-like setting serves as a background to the dismal state of the Soviet army and to the moral decline of individuals in every rank. The film reflects the harsh reality of Soviet propaganda bent on transforming young men into obedient servants of the system. Moreover, it helps one understand the lasting imprint military service had on the psyches of many generations of Soviet men. Andrii Donchyk's feature debut proves that the director is capable of handling his material not only with a sure and firm touch but also with great humanity.

The gap between the 1960s generation and young filmmakers was bridged by Vasyl Dombrovskyi with his feature debut *Judenkreis, abo vichne koleso* (*Judenkreis, or the Eternal Circle*, 1996). The director admits to being influenced by the Ukrainian Poetic cinema but at the same time distances himself from its aesthetics. The film is full of allusions to the poetic tradition but allows itself to view the stereotypes cre-

ated by this tradition with humour and irony. *Judenkreis, or the Eternal Circle* turns to World War II in order to show the paradox of Ukrainian history. The events in the film take place between 1939 and 1944 in the city of Chernivtsi near the Carpathian Mountains. During that period Chernivtsi is still very much under the spell of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but changes hands rapidly: from Romanian to Soviet, from Soviet to German, and then back to Soviet. Although the occupying forces cause turmoil, people's lives nevertheless go on as before. The film focuses on the forces within society that make the continuation of life possible despite external unrest; or, in one critic's words "the *perpetum mobile* of a nation" (Rutkovs'kyi, "Kokhaitiesia" 75).

Judenkreis is a collection of stories built around characters rather than a single narrative. The characters are vaguely familiar from literature, the Bible and other sources. For example, Marichka (Svitlana Krut') embodies Kateryna (a tragic character of Taras Shevchenko's romantic poems), the Virgin Mary, and the Old Testament's Eve; a Red Army officer resembles Don Juan and is desired by all the women in town. There are many references to and direct quotations from world cinema. Marichka is seduced by a Russian soldier in a movie theatre while watching *Veselye rebiata* (*Jolly Fellows* [Jazz Comedy], 1934), a Stalinist musical; the German occupation is full of references to the films of Liliana Cavani and Luchino Visconti. Through referentiality *Judenkreis* breaks with the monolithic, closed character of Ukrainian cinema often modeled on Soviet Russian prototypes, and attempts to place Ukrainian topics in a much wider cultural context. The film also achieves what many may consider national blasphemy by removing the aura of adoration from many cultural stereotypes: Ukrainian cinema has always lacked the ability to treat its revered history and culture with humour.

Humour also characterizes the filmmaking efforts of another young filmmaker, Vadym Kastelli. His short film *Posylka dlia Margaret Thatcher* (*A Packet for Margaret Thatcher*, 1989) retells a real-life story about a package of Ukrainian Easter eggs sent to the British prime minister but intercepted by the KGB. His feature film debut, *Vpered, za skarbamy hetmana* (*After the Hetman's Treasures*, 1993), makes fun of an old legend about gold deposited in a British bank by the Ukraine's Hetman Polubotok. At a time when Ukrainian historians seriously argued in the press about the possibility of claiming the treasure, and adventurous politicians wanted to create an international scandal, the young director turned the legend into an amusingly funny thriller. An heir to the hetman's fortune is found in a small village and numerous secret services try to win him for their respective countries. The film is a mixture of styles and references to popular culture and cinema, of which the agent 007 is just one example.

Ukraine's youngest filmmakers did not coalesce into a school or a wave. Rather, they were separate voices who brought to the Ukrainian cinema the vision of their generation. The most important attribute of their films was individuality associated with Western ideas; these directors broke the communal or "herd-like" ways of thinking that characterised their Soviet predecessors. These new filmmakers were

also more familiar with Western cinema, especially the European art cinema, and were willing to quote and enter into dialogue with world cinema, thus breaking their isolation. And lastly, they were willing to look at themselves and at society without the seriousness of self-important state-supported artists.

THE FILMS

288 The acclaim that the films and directors mentioned above have received from critics did not necessarily translate into popularity with audiences. Soviet critics always distinguished between two kinds of cinema, *auteur* cinema (avtors'ke kino) and genre cinema (zhanrove kino), and treated them as polar opposites. The films by Kryshchovych and Muratova attempted to link the two and proved that *auteur* cinema can be rooted in established cinematic genres. It would be, however, difficult to divide Ukrainian films produced during the 1990s into clearly defined generic categories familiar to the Western viewers. For practical reasons it seems more useful to group these films into thematic categories, intended for specific audiences but including generic diversity.

PLAYING IT SAFE: LITERARY ADAPTATIONS

During Soviet times literary adaptations guaranteed the approval of a script and a better chance that it would be produced. Ideologically, it was safer to pursue an adaptation than to film an original script. Adaptations of literary classics had an added bonus of providing censors with an easier task. An author approved for Soviet schools and held as an example of Soviet virtues could not be dangerous; therefore, a screen adaptation of his/her work was ideologically harmless.²⁰ In Ukraine this had double importance. A classic author approved by all levels of the party bureaucracy could not be suspected of the worst deviation—Ukrainian nationalism. Recall that even during the “liberal” sixties, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was released because it was based on a novel by a classic author, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, while *The Spring Well for the Thirsty* was banned because its scriptwriter, Ivan Drach, was not yet an approved author. *Glasnost* and the first few years of Ukrainian independence did not change the perception that adaptations were safe. After all, there have been liberalizations in the past and the brave ones always suffered later. Keeping this in mind, many directors have carefully watched for developments in literature in search of approved authors. Once the “white spots” in the history of Ukrainian literature were filled with “forgotten” names and titles, thus making them officially approved, filmmakers started adapting such works for screen. If things went wrong the filmmakers could always plead that they relied on literary experts.

The legitimacy of adaptations has also received support from those concerned with the task of rebuilding the national cinema. What could be closer to the national than the works of national literature? There is nothing new in this thinking; there have been numerous cases of this throughout the film histories of many nations. In Ukraine the films based on literary works appealed to directors and audiences mostly because of their novelty: these were writings that were banned for over half a century and their authors excluded from the literary history. Often directors turned to works written during the 1920s which examined the moral dilemma between the social and the personal popular with authors after the October revolution. Reverse political situation prompted writers and directors of the 1980s and 1990s to seek solutions to similar problems in their own time. Another popular trend sought new interpretations for the 19th and the 20th century literary classics. The official Soviet class-perspective readings were quickly replaced by those unpopular with the Soviet regime. In practice this usually entailed a psychological motivation for characters' behaviour, quite often explicitly sexual.

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Two adaptations of literary classics ignited particularly lively discussions among the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The films were of average quality but still managed to demonstrate that what people learned in Soviet schools was not necessarily the only possible interpretation. *Vid'ma* (*The Witch*, 1990) directed by Halyna Shyhaieva, was based on the Romantic story "Konotops'ka vid'ma" (*The Konotop Witch*) by Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko, while *Kaminna dusha* (*The Stone Soul*, 1989), directed by Stanislav Klymenko, revived for the screen a novel of the same title by the modernist writer Hnat Khotkevych. Both films were rich in the kind of folkloric and ethnographic material that served as the basis for their literary prototypes. This aspect certainly appealed to those who favoured restoring the roots of national culture and cinema. Far less appealing for purists was the introduction of sexual themes and motivations to these works. Although this aspect was heavy-handed from a cinematic point of view, its presence as a result of glasnost signalled that the days of unvarying interpretations of literary classics were over. For example, *The Stone Soul* downplayed the social motivation of Dmytro Marusiak (Anatolii Khostikoiev), an outlaw who stole from the rich and gave to the poor, by foregrounding his passionate affair with Marusia (Maryna Mohylevska), a priest's wife. Incidentally, the erotic aspect also lay at the centre of the novel but had been denied by Soviet critics who preferred seeing Marusiak as a victim of a class struggle and Marusia's attraction to him as a fascination with the underprivileged.

The sexual revolution came to Ukrainian screens in the form of Western European erotica and North American soft-porn. In reaction to this very popular trend, films were made locally in similar genres. A noteworthy example was a serial made for television based on works by classic Ukrainian writers. *Ostriv liubovy* (*The Island of Love*, 1996) directed by Oleh Biima, was an adaptation of short stories and novels written at the beginning of the 20th century by disparate authors and covering a wide range of topics and genres. The cinematic renditions of these literary works have been

praised by critics as a successful attempt to popularize Ukrainian literature. The stories received quite a faithful interpretation but with extended love scenes that might have been only suggested by the writers. According to critics, these films were done tastefully with a great attention to costumes and other production values. They featured well-known Ukrainian actors and had a significant edge over shabby Western productions.²¹ This combination of high culture (literary origin) and low popular genre satisfied a wide range of Ukrainian audiences. It seemed that the makers of the series found a solution to an effective propagation of Ukrainian literature, one which satisfied those concerned with national culture and, at the same time, managed to compete with foreign films.²²

290 Oleksandr Muratov took upon himself the difficult task of bringing to the screen the prose of Mykola Khvylovyi, one of the most talented and tragic figures in Ukrainian culture, who committed suicide during Stalin's repressions in 1933. Muratov's *Tango smerti* (*Tango of Death*, 1991) and *Val'dshnepy* (*Woodcocks*, 1996) attempted to recreate the atmosphere of the late 1920s on the eve of Stalin's terror. The former, based on Khvylovyi's *Tale of the Sanatorium Zone*, takes place in a sanatorium for the mentally ill. The patients come from different walks of life and all have a difficult time adapting to life in a socialist state. The latter, *Woodcocks*, has been hailed by critics for its visual beauty. The director's task was complicated by the fact that Khvylovyi's novel was not finished, and the director had to refer to secondary sources to recreate the author's intentions.

There was also a renewed interest in the stories and plays of Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a modernist writer and politician who lived in exile since the 1920s. Vynnychenko's plays and prose tackled the moral problem of his generation: the consistency of human behaviour with the morality of the new revolutionary man. Yuri Liashenko's adaptation of *Zapysky kyrpatoho Mefistofelia* (*Notes of Pug-nosed Mephistopheles*, 1995) was about a "progressive" lawyer who introduces a new moral order to his life after the revolution of 1905. By experimenting with his family life the protagonist constructed a world where lies and hypocrisy reigned. Such universe was easily recognizable by the more contemporary witnesses to the changes in a social order.

SCREENING THE PAST

The return to history through literary adaptations was merely one route in an attempt to build a national cinema. Another, more direct way of fostering a collective memory of the nation was the popularisation of history through feature films based on historical events. In Ukraine, where national history has been denied for many years, historical topics gained significance and popularity after independence. Although documentary cinema assumed the main burden of informing Ukrainians about their past²³ many feature films attempted to do the same. First of all, these films tried to

address the so called “white spots” in Ukrainian history; that is, periods and events that were excluded from the official history taught in Soviet schools. One such painful event was *Holodomor*, the artificial famine created by Stalin in 1933, during which an estimated seven to ten million Ukrainians died (see Conquest). The task of recreating this national tragedy was taken on by a young director Oles Yanchuk. *Holod 33* (*Famine '33*, 1991), based on a novel by émigré writer Vasyl Barka, told the story of a family affected by the tragedy. It was a tale of death and unparalleled suffering in which once proud villagers were forced into cannibalism to survive in a country often referred to as the breadbasket of Europe (see Trymbach “Fil'm Holod-33”). This film, along with the Canadian-made documentary *Harvest of Despair* (1984), was shown on Ukrainian television, revealing for many Ukrainians for the first time events which were not allowed to be mentioned before.²⁴

Yanchuk's film, although important for Ukraine, did not have the kind of dramatic qualities that would appeal to international audiences. In fact, foreign audiences were left puzzled by the incoherent story and the symbolism decipherable only by Ukrainians. Yanchuk's debt to the poetic school and particularly to Yurii Illienko, with whom he worked, was obvious but ill-suited for the subject. But Yanchuk was quick to learn. His next film continued to fill in gaps in Ukrainian history but the style was more appropriate. *Atentat—Osinnie vbyvstvo v Miunkheni* (*Assassination—An Autumn Murder in Munich*, 1995) was produced by Ukrainian émigré organizations in North America. The film touched on another taboo subject in Soviet history: the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which fought the Soviets, the Germans, and the Poles during and after WW II. *Assassination* focused on the killing of one of its political leaders and ideologues, Stepan Bandera, by a KGB agent in Munich in 1959. 291

The Ukrainian participation in WW II and particularly the UPA was the subject of several feature films. The negative aura created around these events during the Soviet era, primarily to discredit Ukrainian émigrés, motivated many directors to revisit this chapter in Ukrainian history which was still fresh in the memory of many. M.Fediuk's *Nam dzvony ne hraly koly my vmeraly* (*The Bells Did Not Toll for Us When We Were Dying*, 1991), Vadym Illienko's *Ostannii bunker* (*The Last Bunker*, 1991) and Hryhorii Kokhan's *Stracheni svitanky* (*The Lost Dawns*, 1996) were all examples of rebuilding the national cinema by bringing to the screen events crucial to national history.

Straddling the border between history and myth was the Cossack period of the 16th to the 18th century which served Ukrainians as a source of cultural identity over the last two centuries. Soviet history saw the Cossacks merely as a peasant revolt against the Polish aristocracy and used these freedom-loving fighters as symbols to promote the “unification between brotherly Ukrainians and Russians.” With renewed historical interest in this period, filmmakers also tried to examine the Cossacks as a topic for film. Although Cossack history had the potential of becoming a truly national subgenre within Ukrainian cinema, like the Western for the Americans, Cossack films made in Ukraine generally disappointed. More often than not, they were adap-

tations of literary sources and relied too much on dialogue. These “Easterns,” as they were often called, tried to resolve historical disputes at the expense of entertainment and mass appeal.

Three films tried to revive the Cossack genre as adventure films: *Kozaky idut'* (*The Cossacks are Coming*, 1991) and *Doroha na sich* (*The Road to the Sich*, 1995), both by S. Omelchuk, and *Trymaisia kozache!* (*Don't Give up, Cossack!*, 1991) by V. Semaniv. All three were adventure stories which paid more than adequate attention to historical detail. They contained the usual elements of romance, wild chases, and fights. They starred attractive young actors and had suspenseful stories to match. They disappointed, however, because they lacked the cinematic craft needed to turn them into a marketable product: for example, beautifully choreographed fights were poorly shot, stories had continuity gaps, and suspense was lost in the most undesired of moments.

THE EVILS OF COMMERCIAL CINEMA

In Ukraine films that succeed in attracting audiences have always been looked upon as a betrayal of the cinematic art. Directors educated in film schools—the only certified practitioners of the profession—have seen themselves as artists (like painters and writers) rather than craftsmen. Consequently, cinema has always been viewed as a medium for self expression and not a commercial product for audiences to enjoy. If only a few people liked a film, this meant it had deeper meaning. The *auteur* cinema has frequently been understood as something created for a small circle rather than as a set of stylistic traits distinguishing a director. This preconception has not changed with economic and geo-political realities, and has always emerged in discussions on how to save Ukrainian cinema from “foreign trash.”

Audiences saw the problem quite differently. They liked melodramas, thrillers, crime stories and other attractions of Western genre cinema which they had not experienced before.²⁵ Western cinema, even the second-rate, gave viewers an opportunity to see the West. At first, the primary attraction was to peek at houses, cars, clothing and other forbidden fruits of the capitalist economy. Film genres and film quality did not seem to matter. When the novelty wore off after several years, and Hollywood moved in with better films, advertising campaigns and big stars, the tastes and preferences of the Ukrainian public began to normalise. Today, they do not differ significantly from those in other countries.

Local producers and filmmakers tried to compete in this open and chaotic market with mixed results. Generally, they were usually late. Even a well-made thriller in the early years could hardly compete with a poor American film of the same genre, just because the audience preferred to see the streets of Los Angeles than those of Odesa or Kyiv. There were, however, quite successful films in genres that directly appealed to viewers in Ukraine and found a place in the market. For example, *Dyka*

liubov (*Wild Love*, 1993) directed by Vilen Novak was a very successful melodrama, though often described as cruel. It was a love story between a young girl from an orphanage and a boy from a “good family.” Abandoned for an American girl, the film protagonist shot her lover. Despite the clichés the film managed not to be sentimental becoming, in fact, quite moving. In the fiercely competitive action thriller genres, Oleh Fialko’s *Imitator* (*Copy Cat*, 1992) and V. Balkashinov’s *Vykup* (*Ransom*) were considered fairly successful.

The popularity of erotic cinema in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union created a market niche for local productions. In addition to eroticised literary adaptations like *Island of Love* and *Kil’ka liubovnykh istorii* (*A Few Love Stories*, 1994) by Andrii Benkendorf there were many productions equivalent to B-movies. *Strasti po Anzhelike* (*Angelica Passion*, 1993) and *Kumparsyta* (1993), both directed by A. Polynnikov, were good examples of what has become a small industry in Odesa (see Lavrent’ev).

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CONCLUSIONS

The cinema in Ukraine between 1992 and 1997 can be briefly summarised as the effort to re-establish a state owned and controlled industry, similar to the Soviet film industry it was replacing. However, unlike the closed Soviet one, the Ukrainian industry found itself within the world economy and faced competition. All attempts at reforms failed, mainly due to the managerial incompetence of both the idealistic nationalists and the corrupt Soviet-style bureaucrats. The absence of national laws defining copyrights and trade, as well as protection for cultural industries, contributed to steady disintegration and inevitably led to the end of this outdated model.

A positive development in this bleak picture was the emergence of new talented filmmakers and the efforts of the state to encourage them. Film festivals promoted young, first-time directors by giving them the opportunity to compete in an international environment. Occasional state support for several successful productions by young directors was an encouraging sign. Andriichenko, Donchyk and Masloboishchykov proved that cinema in Ukraine can distance itself from national and linguistic stereotypes and begin life anew. By far the most successful filmmakers were those who missed the opportunities of the 1960s but emerged with *glasnost*. The international success of Muratova and Kryshtofovych, unparalleled since Dovzhenko, has put Ukrainian cinema back on the world map and, at home, has helped redefine the national cinema.

The movement away from “art cinema” towards commercial films can also be seen as a positive development in changing the outlook of Ukrainian cinema as a whole. The identification of areas in which Ukrainian-made films can compete with foreign blockbusters signals a significant change of attitude. Contrary to past experiences and prejudices, filmmakers have begun to take into account the tastes and preferences of the viewers. Ukrainian audiences, who for various (mostly economic)

reasons did not frequent movie theatres as often as before, were still willing to watch locally-made films.

A modified Library of Congress system of transliteration has been used in the text and the full system in the endnotes. The names of places and proper names of people are transliterated from Ukrainian in accordance with new, internationally accepted standards. Thus, Ukraine not the Ukraine, Kyiv not Kiev, Serhii not Sergei, etc.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Ironically, a few days after more than 90percent of Ukrainians voted in favour of independence in a referendum on 1 December 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to convince the Ukrainians in a television address that they are part of the Russian nation. On the failure of Western Sovietology to consider national factors see Subtelny.
- 2 In the early days of the Soviet Union the Bolsheviks tried a centralised government similar to the tsarist's but had to abandon it quickly in favour of nationally rooted local governments that lasted until the end of the 1920s.
- 3 A shift from Anderson's "imagined" (or "imagining") to "imaginary" is a direct result of the appropriation of Anderson's term by psychoanalytic and Marxist critics, particularly the followers of Lacan and Althusser. For a detailed discussion of these concepts and their relevance to the studies of national cinemas see Walsh.
- 4 During "Khrushchev's thaw" (Khrushchev was a former first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine), Shelest managed to win many concessions for Ukrainian culture. He was behind the publication of the very influential *Internationalism or Russification?: A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem* by Ivan Dziuba. For an account of the Shelest years see Krawchenko.
- 5 See, for example, Briukhovets'ka *Poetychna khvyliia*.
- 6 The Russian empire and, subsequently, the Soviet Union had a long tradition of either outlawing or discouraging things other than Russian. Tsarist decrees of the 19th century banning the use of the Ukrainian language and Soviet russification efforts exemplify my point.
- 7 Under patrimonial rule political authority is seen as an extension of the rights of property. See Jensen.

- 8 One of many proposals signed by the Ministry of Culture was titled: "The Concept of Preserving and Developing Cinema in Ukraine." See "Kontseptsii zberezhennia...."
- 9 On the contribution of the 1960s generation see Nebesio.
- 10 An official Soviet term used exclusively in reference to World War II.
- 11 The film revisits the troubled Russian-Ukrainian relations under Peter the Great and was shown at the Berlin Film Festival. Amid calls for its ban in Russia, the producers under pressure withdrew the film from circulation and as a result it was seen by very few people.
- 12 For other Russian and American reviews of this film, see Donets and Horton.
- 13 Andrei Kurkov is one of the most prominent authors who emerged from the post-Soviet space. Although he writes in Russian, he considers himself a Ukrainian author. His 1996 novel, *Death and the Penguin*, has been translated into 22 languages.
- 14 See an overview of Muratova's early films in Bozhovich and Taubman "The Cinema...." The question of Muratova's disputed membership in Ukrainian and Russian cultures as well as her entire career are outlined in Taubman *Kira Muratova*.
- 15 See also Taubman *Cinetek*.
- 16 See the defence of *Asthenic Syndrome* in Yampolsky.
- 17 His older brothers are the well-known Yurii and the lesser-known Vadym, both film directors.
- 18 Her name is sometimes spelled "Andreichenko." Because of that she is often confused with the better known Russian actress Natalia (Natasha) Andreichenko.
- 19 Kafka's prose had special appeal for directors in the former Soviet Union. In addition to Masloboishchykov's film there were two adaptations of Kafka's *The Castle* by D. Dzhanelidze (Georgia, 1993) and by A. Balabanov (Russia-France, 1994). See Kharitonov.
- 20 The roots of this way of thinking can be traced to the Stalin's 1930s. Writers, or "the Engineers of Human Souls," suffered the most. They were considered fully responsible for the film's content. Writers were executed or sent to gulag during the purges while film directors' lives were spared.
- 21 For closer descriptions of films included in this serial, see Briukhovets'ka "Ie vichna zahadka....," and Pol'shchak.
- 22 Biima's film follows the success of a similar adaptation based on Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. *Kil'ka liubovnykh istorii* (*A Few Love Stories*, 1994), directed by Andrii Benkendorf, have also used leading Ukrainian actors to tell erotically charged stories tastefully. See Musiienko.
- 23 For example, a quarter of the state budget for cinema in 1993 was allocated for documentary films about prominent figures in Ukrainian history.
- 24 Ukrainian government was careful with the official recognition of *Holodomor* for over a decade and only the Post-Orange Revolution politicians recognized the event during the solemn commemorations in November 2005.
- 25 With this generalization I omit Bollywood Indian melodramas shown on Soviet screens even prior to glasnost.