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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG



Canadian Slavonic Papers: Revue Canadienne des Slavistes

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcsp20>

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Published online: 14 Apr 2015.



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To cite this article: Larysa Briukhovets'ka & Marta D. Olynyk (2014) On the Ukrainian Cinematic Tradition, the Dovzhenko Film Studio, and Ivan Mykolaichuk, Canadian Slavonic Papers: Revue Canadienne des Slavistes, 56:1-2, 7-16, DOI: [10.1080/00085006.2014.11092752](https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092752)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092752>

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On the Ukrainian Cinematic Tradition, the Dovzhenko Film Studio, and Ivan Mykolaichuk

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the Ukrainian cinematic tradition as established by Oleksandr Dovzhenko in the 1920s and 1930s and revived at the Kyiv Film Studio during the short-lived renaissance of Ukrainian cinema between 1964 and 1972. The author focuses on the three figures that led national cinema out of its provincial dead end: the film directors Volodymyr Denysenko and Sergei Paradzhanov, and the actor Ivan Mykolaichuk. The author discusses their films *Son* [The Dream, 1964] and *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, 1964] as best representing the turn from theatrical adaptations of literary classics to their creative cinematic rethinking. Mykolaichuk's acting style matched this new trend perfectly because he was a carrier of the folk tradition that the two directors were seeking to harness for new ways of artistic expression.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article aborde la tradition cinématographique ukrainienne établie par Oleksandr Dovzhenko dans les années 20 et 30 et ranimée au Studio Kyiv Film durant la courte renaissance du cinéma ukrainien entre 1964 et 1972. L'auteur aborde trois figures qui ont mené le cinéma national à outrepasser l'impasse provinciale dans laquelle il se trouvait : les cinéastes Volodymyr Denysenko et Sergei Paradjanov, et l'acteur Ivan Mykolaichuk. L'auteur examine les films *Le rêve* (1964) et *Les Chevaux de feu* (1964) comme représentations du passage entre l'adaptation théâtrale des classiques de la littérature et la réinterprétation cinématographique. Le style de jeu de Mykolaichuk correspond parfaitement à cette nouvelle tendance parce qu'il jouait le rôle de porteur d'une tradition populaire que les deux cinéastes tentaient d'exploiter à des fins d'expressions artistiques inédites.

Research on national cinematic traditions may seem irrelevant, in as much as the production of films is based on the technical recreation and reproduction of reality. Thus, film is an international cultural phenomenon in which there are more common features than not; hence there would seem to be little sense in speaking about the cinematic traditions of individual countries. However, thanks to the works of its most renowned representatives, cinematography has gained the right to be called an art, therefore becoming a cultural product with national rootedness. In terms of creativity, cinematography is in no way inferior to the other arts, and thus one can speak not only of the recreation of reality but also of the creation of an artistic reality that may constitute part of the cultural construction of a modern nation. Compared to the other arts, the dynamic and changeable art of cinematography has not existed for very long, and cinematic traditions often do not have a chance to form or become entrenched. Cinema is

constantly acquiring new features thanks to technical advances and as a result of changes in artistic values. This mutability may be illustrated by an example from French cinema in the late 1950s, when “New Wave” directors and film critics mercilessly criticized their predecessors. Of course, there were exceptions—for example, the renowned and influential French film critic and film theorist, André Bazin, who held the films of his predecessor, Jean Renoir, in high esteem.

Owing to these circumstances, traditions either on a global scale or situated within the confines of a single country’s cinematography have been poorly researched. Nevertheless, this topic is a fruitful one and it may be studied on two planes: within the confines of cinematography itself and in the space of the culture in which it is being created. It is also impossible to ignore the interplay between cinema and other artistic and social practices or the system of connections among many cultural factors that determine the contours of cinematography, particularly those that nourish cinema: theatre, music, philosophy, anthropology, literature, and folk art. In the early stages of the history of cinematography researchers were engaged in establishing how it differs from, say, a performance recorded on film, as well as in researching and determining its uniqueness. Today, when no one doubts that cinematography is an independent/sovereign art and that it has already reached the peak of its popularity, the task of defining its place in historical time and understanding the traditions on which cinematography may be based is gaining urgency. This is particularly important with respect to the cinema of Ukraine, which has produced world-class exemplars (Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Sergei Paradzhanov, Leonid Osyka, Iurii Illienko, and Ivan Mykolaichuk) yet today is experiencing arguably the worst period in its entire history.

Defining a national cinematic tradition is not easy. The casual viewer does not necessarily perceive the films of the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman as part of Sweden’s cultural heritage, although the fact that he continued the creative legacy of Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller is widely recognized by film historians, just as they acknowledge his influence on the further development of Swedish cinema. The traditions of Ukrainian cinema were laid by Oleksandr Dovzhenko, and much has been written about this in histories and monographs devoted to the cinema of Ukraine, even though there is very little information on how, exactly, these traditions manifested in the creative practice of later Ukrainian film directors.¹ Here I will summarize the features of the

¹ See, in particular, Karlo Lidzani [Carlo Lizzani] and Massimo Mida, “Choho navchaie Dovzhenko,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko: Zbirnyk spohadiv i statei pro myttsia*, edited by O. Babyshkin (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury URSS, 1959) 221–226; Inessa Razmashkina, “Vplyv Dovzhenka na svitovyi kinoprotses,” *Kino-Teatr* 2 (2005): 31–33; Serhii Trymbach, “Transformatsii natsional'noi mifolohii: O. Dovzhenko ta kinoshistdesiatnyky,” in *Ukrains'ke kino vid 1960-kh do s'ohodni: Problema vyzhyvannia: Zbirnyk naukovykh statei*, edited by L. Briukhovets'ka (Kyiv: V-vo “Zadruha,” 2010) 9–19.

Dovzhenko tradition that are scattered throughout various texts. Naturally, they all contain numerous affirmations of how Dovzhenko created his own world, uniting fellow thinkers in the process, as well as to the uniqueness of the Ukrainian filmmaker's imagery and structural use of genres. (In the view of the Italian critic Roberto Manetti, the sureness of Dovzhenko's creative language is evident in the simplicity—and paucity—of his artistic devices.)² Various sources also note the philosophical nature of his creativity, linked to the transcendence of the boundaries of his time and his embrace of universal values. (Analyzing the movement image in Dovzhenko's films, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze writes that for Dovzhenko the earth is “the true inventory of time, that is the whole which changes, and by which changing perspective, constantly gives real beings that infinite space which enables them to touch the most distant past and the depth of the future simultaneously....”)³ Last but not least, film historians have remarked on the national character of Dovzhenko's oeuvre, which is manifested through its connection to a specific Ukrainian worldview and art.

In order to grasp the importance of Dovzhenko's traditions and to marvel at how robust and fruitful they are, considering their short-lived renaissance in the period between 1964 and 1972, let us recall that from the late 1920s to the late 1950s, that is, practically throughout the entire thirty-year period of Stalinist totalitarianism, the Ukrainian film industry was inexorably brought to the brink of ruin: between 1937 and 1953 only a handful of films was released every year, while between 1938 and 1944 the Kyiv Film Studio did not release a single one. Owing to the russification of Ukrainian cinematography, there were also great losses in the creative sphere: national cadres were repressed and the Kyiv Film Studio was turned into a workplace populated by Russian screenwriters, directors, and actors.

Thus, starting in 1954, the Ukrainian film industry had to be rebuilt from scratch, and a search was launched for screenwriters, directors, and people working in related cinematographic professions. Directors and actors were found in the theatre, and writers set about producing film scripts, but the situation with creative ideas was much more difficult. As the pace of film production picked up, the heads of Ukrainian film studios, striving for a balance between their creative ambitions, ideological reliability, and box-office success, gravitated primarily toward the latter; hence the preference for light, popular genres, such as melodramas like *Dolia Maryny* [Maryna's Fate, 1954] or comedies like *Pershyi parubok* [The First Fellow, 1958]; *Za dvoma zaitsiamy* [Chasing Two

² Roberto Manetti, “Tvorchi pohliady Oleksandra Dovzhenka,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko* 227.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1985) 38–39.

Hares, 1961]. Eventually, the Moscow-based Soviet political leadership began to grant more artistic freedom for the drafting of thematic plans, and the Kyiv Film Studio began to acquire an increasingly Ukrainian face. This process took place thanks to several screen adaptations of performances of the classic literary repertoire by the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre in Kyiv, such as *Nazar Stodolia* [1954]; *Sto tysiach* [A Hundred Thousand, 1958]; *Svatannia na Honcharivtsi* [Matchmaking at Honcharivka, 1958], and the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka Theatre in Chernivtsi (*Zemlia* [Earth, 1955]), as well as the adaptation of other Ukrainian classics by Ivan Franko and Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi and contemporary works by Oles' Honchar, Mykhailo Stel'makh, and Iurii Dol'd-Mykhailyk. In 1956 even the Odesa Film Studio, which specialized in industrial and detective genres, released a *portmanteau* of two short films based on two short stories by Kotsiubyns'kyi titled “Koni ne vynni” [The Horses Are Not to Blame] and “Pe-koptior” [On the Stove]. This gravitation toward theatre and literature stemmed from a lack of national film cadres, which were simply not being trained in Ukraine at the time (the film institute that had functioned in the 1930s was closed down). After Stalin’s brutal critique of Dovzhenko’s screenplay *Ukraina v ohni* [Ukraine in Flames] in 1944, the director was banned from working in Ukraine. In 1951 the Ukrainian director Ihor Savchenko, toward the end of his life, made *Taras Shevchenko*, a biographical film about the life of Ukraine’s national poet. The work on this biography of a key Ukrainian figure required extraordinary efforts to avoid the violation of numerous Soviet ideological taboos. After Dovzhenko’s death the Kyiv Film Studio was renamed in honour of the late director, but many people realized that the films being produced there did not justify this name change. What is worse, this state of affairs became stabilized. Hence it was necessary to introduce radical changes which would ensure that Ukrainianness did not act as a brake on the development of the republic’s film industry and which would lead the national cinema out of its provincial dead-end, help usher it onto the European scene and, finally, rise to the level of Dovzhenko’s magnificent cinematic masterpieces.

Long-awaited change finally arrived in 1964–1965, thanks to two directors from the Dovzhenko Film Studio, Volodymyr Denysenko and Paradzhanov.⁴ Denysenko was an informal pupil of Dovzhenko’s: while still a schoolboy, he was introduced to the great director by his mother, who worked at one of Kyiv’s hospitals with Dovzhenko’s sister Pavlyna (Polina). The director took the

⁴ The distinguished Ukrainian literary critic Ivan Dziuba reacted swiftly to the release of *Son* [The Dream] and *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors], calling it a significant event. In a Russian-language article entitled “Den' poiska” [The Day for Searching], published in the Moscow journal *Iskusstvo kino*, Dziuba argued convincingly that qualitative changes were taking place in Ukrainian cinematography. See Ivan Dziuba, “Den' poiska,” *Iskusstvo kino* 5 (1965): 73–82.

talented young boy under his care and Denysenko enrolled in the Kyiv Theatre Institute. Dovzhenko later hired him to work on his film *Poem of the Sea*, which, unfortunately, was not completed in Dovzhenko's lifetime. Paradzhanov, meanwhile, completed his studies at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow under the tutelage of Savchenko. Together with some fellow graduates he moved to Kyiv, where he became fascinated by Ukrainian culture and struck up a friendship with the distinguished cameraman Danylo Demuts'kyi, who had filmed Dovzhenko's masterpieces in the late 1920s. Clearly, both of these directors associated themselves more or less with Dovzhenko's traditions and were familiar with the master director's self-exigency in his creative quests. Both already had a few films under their belt, but their cinematic efforts differed little from what was being produced at the Kyiv Film Studio.

At this juncture, Ukrainian literature helped foster their directorial successes. As the hero of his film, Denysenko chose Taras Shevchenko, while Paradzhanov based his film on a famous novel by Kotsiubyns'kyi. The two directors had two different personalities and they came from different backgrounds: Denysenko was born in Medvyn, a village in the Kyiv region, while Paradzhanov, of Armenian parentage, was born in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. Their education and life paths could not have been more dissimilar. However, they had one thing in common: both of them were well acquainted with Soviet prisons; Denysenko had been imprisoned during the Stalinist period and Paradzhanov was jailed under Brezhnev. Although they had different directorial styles, they were bound together by one, arguably the most important, circumstance: to a significant degree each of them achieved success thanks to the distinguished Ukrainian actor Mykolaichuk, who had played the leading role in their films. Mykolaichuk was truly a momentous discovery in the cinema of Ukraine; indeed, he was its shining star. Despite his youth, he was fully able to safeguard Ukrainian cinema's artistic stability, at least for the duration of its "golden age" (1964–1972). It was precisely during this period of creative freedom that he was able to take the fullest advantage of artistic liberty and, together with his like-minded colleagues, to bring to fruition a considerable number of projects, including Illienko's daring film *Bilyi ptakh z chornoii oznakoiu* [White Bird with a Black Mark, 1970], into which Mykolaichuk, as a co-screenwriter, introduced many personal details from his own life.

Interestingly, both Denysenko and Paradzhanov had initially intended to cast other actors in their films—Russian ones, in fact—but fate intervened and they ended up choosing Mykolaichuk, a third-year student at the time. The newcomer simply amazed the prizewinning Ukrainian cameraman Illienko, who during Mykolaichuk's screen tests witnessed the wonder of seeing something awe-inspiring taking shape before his very eyes. He was also stunned by the young actor's supreme professionalism. The fledgling actor had already

graduated from the Chernivtsi Music College and the theatre studio at the Olha Kobylians'ka Theatre (also located in Chernivtsi), and had completed two years at the studio run by the talented pedagogue Viktor Ivchenko. Ivchenko, too, had entered cinema via the theatre, but he was profoundly aware of the need for film education, and he eventually became one of the founders of the Film Department at the Kyiv Institute of Theatrical Arts, where Mykolaichuk was among the first students to be admitted.

As we can see, intersecting Mykolaichuk's life and career were two lines that defined the character of Ukrainian cinema at the time, which may be tentatively called "theatrical" and "cinematographic." The theatrical line was represented by a significant number of directors who had become professional theatre directors or actors; in Denysenko's case, he was both an actor and a director. And even though these directors knew that cinema has its own specific features, which they were in the process of mastering, their films were nonetheless reminiscent of filmed performances; a typical example is the famous play by Ukraine's premier female writer Lesia Ukrainka, *Lisova pisnia* [Forest Song], which Ivchenko filmed in 1961. However, in the early 1960s many professionals with diplomas from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow flocked to the Kyiv Film Studio, among them Osyka, Vadym and Iurii Illienko, Rolan Serhiienko, Mykhailo Bielikov, Valerii Kvas, and Suren Shakhbazian, who thought in cinematic categories and were not only familiar with the latest innovations in foreign cinematography but had also mastered them. Changing professions became a notable trend and several cameramen switched to film directing, eventually achieving considerable success.

Mykolaichuk became a kind of link connecting the past decade of Ukrainian cinema, with its penchant for the Ukrainian literary classics, both prose works and plays, which had never disappeared from theatre stages, with the next phase which, without breaking with literature, would confirm the departure from literature even in film adaptations of literary works, and in which the triumph of a new trend in directing would be consolidated. Denysenko, in particular, like his teacher Dovzhenko, believed that cinema was an independent art, and he preferred to write his own screenplays or in collaboration with a co-writer, as in the case of his biographical film about Taras Shevchenko, *Son* [The Dream, 1964]. Furthermore, his films were weighed down by the style that had been forged in the film studio during the "literature-centric" period and which was far removed from the *avant-garde* and the expressionistic quests of the early Dovzhenko, whose lessons were being mastered more in Western Europe than in Ukraine. In his earlier film *Roman i Francheska* [Roman and Francheska, 1960], Denysenko had cast the popular Soviet Ukrainian actress Liudmyla Hurchenko, and as part of his strategy for achieving directorial success he used the obligatory element of lyrical songs to create hummable soundtrack themes; on this film he worked with the young songwriter Oleksandr Bilash.

The Dream is conceptually linked with the works of Shevchenko, who wrote four poems with this title. This was a semantic key, borrowed from the great bard, for interpreting not just nineteenth-century reality but also the period in which Denysenko was living. The oneiric form was determined by the need to break through the curtain of tsarist censorship, even though ultimately this did not save this great nineteenth-century Ukrainian poet from the brutal reprisals of the punitive organs of the Russian Empire. But neither the device of a dream nor the workings of the imagination were able to conceal the sarcasm and anger of the poet tearing the masks off those who dripped with “silver and gold”—the dream was altogether too realistic and familiar, and the mighty of the world do not forgive poets who speak such truths about them. In Denysenko’s film Ivan Mykolaichuk plays the role of a multi-dimensional Shevchenko: Shevchenko the serf, Shevchenko the thinker, Shevchenko the artist and poet, and Shevchenko the rebel. This multi-dimensionality is connected with the scale of the personality of the very character.

The screenplay also contributed to this striking polyphony by means of profoundly mastered historical material that revealed Shevchenko’s time, effective dialogue and internal monologues, and the natural accretion of rebellious, poetic lines taken from real-life situations of injustice and oppression. To everything else, the film’s creators added the inner life, the life of the hero’s consciousness and imagination, which are invisible yet equally crucial to creativity and to destiny itself, to wit, the dialogue with Shevchenko’s forefathers and the polemic with those who shed their blood for their native land. How the Ukrainian people ended up in the bonds of slavery after all those bloody battles and wars for their liberation is the painful question to which Shevchenko the poet and thinker seeks an answer. The hero of Denysenko’s film not only sees his ancestors but easily enters the tragic space of Ukrainian history, which is smelted into powerful lines of poetry. To a significant degree Denysenko’s film achieved success thanks to Mykolaichuk’s prodigious talent and naturalness. “Unlamented wholly by my own/In exile I shall die, in grief uncheered”—the intonation with which the actor pronounces these two lines from this well-known poetic masterpiece penetrates the awareness of the viewer, who believes that these words are being created before his very eyes. There is no excess of pathos, no self-aggrandizement; the actor plays a living, breathing person. He is simultaneously both himself and Shevchenko. In Denysenko’s film the traditions of Ukrainian culture and philosophical thought acquire living flesh and enter the viewers’ consciousness, restoring feelings of national dignity to them.

Paradzhanov, who had the good fortune to discover Kotsiubyns'kyi’s novel *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, 1911; film version 1964] and to acquaint himself with the splendid landscape of the Carpathian Mountains, was also afforded the chance to echo Dovzhenko’s remark that “the

presence of scenery in film pleases me very much.”⁵ And if one adds scenery to the folk art of the Hutsuls, the Ukrainian mountain people of the Carpathians, who fascinated Paradzhanov and whose culture was well known to the director, then it becomes instantly clear that Dovzhenko’s traditions were not only being adopted but also developed and deepened. Mykolaichuk, a native of Ukraine’s fabled Bukovyna region, was the carrier of the artistic and cultural traditions of his land, which was replete with the most diverse artistic crafts, musical folklore, and performing arts. His professional training, handsome exterior, and innate talent combined to produce a phenomenally charismatic actor.

Mykolaichuk was also supremely aware of the need to safeguard Ukrainian folk traditions, and he considered cinematography an art that could easily connect with them. It is to this that he devoted his short life, starring in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*; *Annychka* (1968); *Kaminnyi khrest* [The Stone Cross, 1968]; *White Bird with a Black Mark*; *Propala hramota* [The Lost Letter, 1972], and *Babylon XX* (1979). He was also *cultivating* traditions when he composed the musical arrangement for three of these films and wrote several screenplays that were not filmed in his lifetime: *Kaminna dusha* [The Stone Soul, 1989], based on a romantic novelette about the Hutsuls by Hnat Khotkevych, *Nebylytsi pro Ivana* [Fables About Ivan, 1990] and *Ostriv sliz* [Island of Tears], which was never filmed.

Mykolaichuk also instilled a love of Ukrainian folk art in his colleagues. As Osyka recalled,

Mykolaichuk knew how to create a carnivalesque atmosphere on shoots. Cinematographers know that it is not easy to endure a lengthy shoot and to avoid losing the creative tone. We shot *Zakhar Berkut* (1971) at the Serechnii Veretsky Pass in the wintertime, when there were hardly any people around. Actors were coming and going, as is customary, and every arrival and leave-taking was transformed into a small performance, where there were no viewers because one way or another everyone was a part of it. The apotheosis was Mykolaichuk and Kost' Stepankov’s beautiful rendition of the folk song “Ikhav kozak za Dunai” [The Cossack Rode Beyond the Danube]. To be more precise, they were soloists and at the same time choir conductors, directors, magicians, shamans—whatever you like [...] The closer the end of the shooting the smaller the choir became, until Ivan and Stepankov were the only two left, but this in no way affected the flawlessness of their singing, that special magnetism that they sought and radiated.⁶

In 1980, a year after Mykolaichuk wrote, directed, and starred in *Babylon XX*, he spoke with the Russian film specialist Valerii Fomin. When the conversation turned to folk traditions and their prospects for surviving the

⁵ Zhorzh Sadul' [Georges Sadoul], “Dovzhenko,” in *Oleksandr Dovzhenko* 212.

⁶ Leonid Osyka, “Bylytsi pro Ivana,” in *Bilyi ptakh z chornoïu oznakoiu: Ivan Mykolaichuk: Spohady, interv"iu, stsenarii*, edited by M. Mykolaichuk (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1991) 133–134.

effects of urbanization, Mykolaichuk said, “Is it necessary to take some sort of special care in order to save traditional culture? I think not. You have to save the soul of the people, the soul of one’s nation. All the greatest values reside in the heart of the people. If we safeguard spiritual health, then its traditional culture will not be lost [...] The inevitable course of existence leads us away from many traditional values. But I believe that we will definitely return to them.”⁷

In order for everything—Paradzhanov’s resourceful directing, the professional aerobatics of his chief cameraman Illienko, art director Heorhii Iakutovych’s extensive knowledge of pictorial art and visual beauty, and Myroslav Skoryk’s folklore-rich musical score—to merge into an organic whole in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, and in order for this canon-shattering film to achieve world-class status without imitating any existing examples and by proposing its own original cinematographic reality and real life at one and the same time, an actor like Mykolaichuk was just the answer: he was both a carrier and an admirer of Ukrainian folk traditions. He did not need to study them in museums or through literature, as his perception of the world was already formed by the traditional culture of the Carpathians.

Amidst the variety of imagistic forms in both these films it is easy to spot the gravitation toward the poetic form of expression as well as a penchant for creating universal and solid characters, like Uncle Ivan, a slave-like servant, who says: “I sold and will sell,” or Engelhardt and Prekhtel in *The Dream*, who characterized the reality of their time, as well as the contemporary reality, that is, as something that is eternal and unchanging. This is not at all surprising if we remember that Shevchenko was a poet of genius, while Kotsiubyns'kyi was a poetic genius in the genre of prose. Neither *The Dream* nor *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* is limited to a romantic interpretation of concrete historical facts. The lyrical approach in them is linked with analytical thinking and psychological depth. For such a combination to emerge in the images of the main characters, their equivalent—in the person of the performer of those roles—was called for. And that person was Mykolaichuk.

Mykolaichuk was a supremely gifted actor. In *The Lost Letter*, adapted from a short story by Nikolai Gogol' / Mykola Hohol', he proved himself once again, this time as a superb comedic actor, who knew how to be natural within the folk carnival element and how to create allusions to contemporary life, while evoking the most diverse associations. While treating the classics with respect, he belonged to a circle of cinematographers who stood far from literalism, who valued cinema for its dynamism, and who were capable of creating a paradox: they distanced themselves from primary literary sources in order to draw closer to them.

⁷ Valerii Fomin, “A poky budut' sny...,” *Kino-Teatr* 1 (1997): 37.

Mykolaichuk did not absolutize his poetics. On the contrary, he was always different from film to film, and in his thirty-seven roles he never once repeated himself. He often found that scripts were too constricting for him and did not allow much room to spread his wings. At those times his literary talent came to the rescue, and his imagination came to be embodied in the film script. To be sure, writing film scripts was not an accidental occupation for him but an entirely normal one. He shared Dovzhenko's conviction that a director must be the author of his own films, not an interpreter of other people's ideas. This conviction led naturally to writing the screenplays for *White Bird with a Black Mark*; *Na poklony!* [Take a Bow, 1973] (the film was eventually released as *Mriiaty i zhyty* [To Dream and Live, 1974]); *Fables about Ivan* and *Island of Tears*.

Regrettably, Mykolaichuk never had a chance to develop as a director: he managed to make only two films, even though he had plans to make many more. His life was cut short, too soon: like his hero Shevchenko, he lived until the age of forty-six. This circumstance reveals another tradition, one that is enduring, unfortunately: geniuses leave us much too soon, at the very moment when their creative forces are in full bloom. Yet, during the brief period when Mykolaichuk worked at the Dovzhenko Film Studio as an actor, film director, and screenwriter, he affirmed the existence and vitality of the Ukrainian cinematic tradition.

Translated from Ukrainian by Marta D. Olynyk