

THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY

A Journal of Ukrainian and International Affairs



The two white coffins aren't only the final resting places for Vira and Liubava; they also represent every child whose life has been stolen by Russian terror, every parent forced into the unnatural position of burying their future, and the collective trauma of an entire nation weeping together. Ukraine's tears will dry, but the righteous fury against the cursed Russian invaders who committed these atrocities will endure for generations ...

- A** • UCCA's 85th Anniversary — A Tribute to Predecessors
L • Ukraine Needs Nuclear Weapons
S • Volhynia 1943 — Beware of Greater Evil
O • Bearing Witness to the War in Nonfiction Literature
• Distinctive Features of Ukrainian Filmography

And More ...

VOLUME LXXXII • Number 2 • 2026

THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY

A Journal of Ukrainian and International Affairs

• Published since 1944 •



1944 — 82 Years — 2026

Volume LXXXII No. 2

\$15.00

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Subscription: Yearly \$50.00 • UNF Donors \$30.00 • Single Copy \$15.00

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ISSN 0041-6010

Design, layout and pre-press by New Hope Publishing LLP, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010

UQ@ucca.org

Printed in USA by Computoprint Corp., 1360 Clifton Ave., #402, Clifton, NJ 07012

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Mission

For 82 years since 1944, THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY, published by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, has provided the academic community, scholars, journalists and pundits, researchers, students, as well as government officials with credible, insightful articles and analytical commentaries about one of Europe's largest and misjudged countries – Ukraine. Our regular contributors have followed Ukraine's difficult, centuries-long quest for permanent independence while its enemies, notably Russia, ceaselessly sought to quash it.

THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY's roster of distinguished writers possess unique foresight to recognize and explore the direction of political, military, intellectual, religious, cultural and civic affairs in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, as well as the free world and beyond. Significantly, THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY has pointed out internal and external dangers to Ukraine's existence that can abrogate Ukraine's sovereign independence as well as disrupt regional and global peace, security and stability. As Ukraine and the world move beyond the monumental changes of 1991 with its Declaration of Independence, the Revolution of Dignity of 2014, and the ongoing Russo-Ukraine War of 2014-26, THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY will continue to display laudable partiality to Ukraine as the country, government and nation strive to solidify democracy, market-orientation, human rights and sovereign independence while carving out an honorable, justified and respected place for itself in the modern world.

THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY will follow Ukraine, its government leaders, scholars and educators, civil society as well as foreign supporters, allies and adversaries as the nation moves to affirm itself on the European and international arenas so that it is accepted as an equal among equals in the international brotherhood of free nations.

The 82nd year of this venerable publication coincides with the 12th year of the latest Russian war against Ukraine, which confirms Moscow's undying intention to invade, conquer, subjugate and then erase all vestiges of Ukrainian culture from humanity's memory. Its bloodthirsty cutthroats are mercilessly killing Ukrainian men, women and children while its bombs are destroying all historical and cultural artifacts that testify to Ukrainians' millennial existence. Fortunately, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have seized the blue and yellow flag and are heroically defending and safeguarding every acre of land, every building on every street, and every Ukrainian, and then taking the battle to Russian cities.

While Kyiv and the Ukrainian nation stand guard, THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY will provide truth as ammunition for the cause and in our work, as our founding editors wrote, we will strive to guide others by the words of the Gospel: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free." **I**

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

... According to United Nations and other global sources, innocent Ukrainian children have been suffering and dying due to Russia's relentless bombardments of Ukraine's cities and towns; churches, schools and shops; 530 cultural sites; apartment buildings and small rural homes. They lost their parents, families, and friends and classmates. And their young lives.

Russia callously states that its drone pilots aim at those specific targets because hidden deep inside a child's crib are instruments of war that it must destroy. Hardly a credible excuse for the Russian invader.

Official United Nations and Ukrainian government estimates verify that at least 791 children have been killed and more than 2,750 maimed in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion and killing spree began in February 2022. That's about 3,500 children who have been killed or injured in Ukraine since the start of the war more than four years ago. Both agencies emphasize that the actual number of casualties is likely to be significantly higher. Add to the suffering some 20,000 children who have been stolen by Russia and transported away from Ukraine.

In May of this year, at least 274 civilians were killed and 1,763 injured in Ukraine, marking the highest total number of civilians killed and injured in a month since April 2022, reported the Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights.

Every death shatters the world of those left behind. Yet, when innocent children are killed, it feels like a violation of the universe's most sacred laws. It is an unnatural tragedy that demands our outrage, not just our sorrow.

This issue of THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY also raises two major issues that should be realistically discussed. One is the question of Ukraine's nuclear weapons.

On December 5, 1994, Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum, in which it agreed to accede to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state. In exchange, the United States, Great Britain, and the Russia signed the memorandum, pledging to respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and existing borders, and to refrain from the threat or use of force. However, with Russia's latest war versus Ukraine lasting for more than 12 years, some have called for Ukraine to build its own nuclear weapons stockpile.

Former Ukrainian government minister, Yuri Scherbak, in this article, strips away the diplomatic politeness that often surrounds non-proliferation discussions. By pointing out that 40 countries are quietly entering a new arms race – including stable democracies like Japan and South Korea – Scherbak grounds Ukraine's nuclear argument in cold, realist global trends rather than presenting it as an isolated, desperate demand. He makes the case that NPT is already dead, buried by Russia's invasion, and that sovereign nations are completely on their own. As he writes: "Ukraine, as the country most affected by Russian aggression, has the right to and must possess nuclear weapons – as a security guarantee for the future." We agree.

The second is Ukraine-Poland relations and their common histories during World War II. Poland has recalled that its people suffered during that war with units of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) allegedly killing innocent Poles. The issue reached the highest level of government officials in Warsaw and Kyiv, with Poland demanding the return of its highest state honor. In an unprecedented diplomatic demonstration of solidarity, Volodymyr Zelenskyy and former presidents Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yushchenko, and Petro Poroshenko returned Poland's highest state honor – the Order of the White Eagle to Warsaw.

Long-time contributor to THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY Askold S. Lozynskyj notes the danger this feud poses to regional and global security: "Consider Volhynia and other places like Pavlokoma. We cannot forgive nor forget. But we need to move on. There is a greater evil that threatens both nations even today – Russia." Indeed, in recent weeks historical experts

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OLES YANCHUK

Distinctive Traits of Ukrainian Film Since the Start of the 21st Century

This article examines the distinctive features of Ukrainian film dramaturgy at the beginning of the 21st century from a cultural studies perspective. Drawing on the examples of such films as “Assassination: An Autumn Murder in Munich,” “The Undefeated, The Iron Hundred, Metropolitan Andriy,” and “The Secret Diary of Symon Petliura,” the study traces new trends in screenwriting and the overall impact of film dramaturgy on contemporary Ukrainian cinema. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the emergence of cinematography, the peculiarities of Ukrainian screenwriting manifested in directors primarily turning to literary works. In the 1920s, while screenwriters worked within the All-Ukrainian Photo and Cinema Department (VUFKU) and prominent writers were involved in filmmaking, a shortage of experienced scriptwriters remained a persistent issue. Consequently, film directors frequently assumed this role, adapting scripts written by both established masters and amateurs. In contemporary Ukrainian cinema, the director continues to play a leading role, often acting as a screenwriter or co-writer.

Due to the processes of decolonization and the liberation of art from the grip of Soviet ideology, contemporary audiences can finally see historical events presented truthfully on screen—events that were systematically silenced during the Soviet era. Ukrainian cinema remains deeply national, a trait manifested primarily through language, modes of communication, the interpretation of historical events and phenomena, plot-figurative concepts, and the representation of Ukrainian identity based on unvarnished historical facts.

Introduction

Ukrainian cinematography of the 21st century is gaining new creative momentum and achieving widespread international recognition. Since Ukraine regained its independence, domestic cinema has traversed a thorny path from near-total collapse to winning prestigious awards at international film forums. The primary objectives of contemporary filmmaking include, first and foremost, the revival of national culture and historical memory, the eradication of the rem-

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nants of Soviet ideology with its entrenched dogmas and concepts, the pursuit of new aesthetic methods of artistic expression, the reimagining of Ukrainian history, and the development of new international co-production projects.

In the early 2000s, historical themes became highly popular in Ukrainian cinema. This period saw the release of works by prominent Ukrainian directors, such as Yuriy Illienko's "A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa (2001)," "Mykola Zasioiev-Rudenko's The Black Council (2001)," Oles Sanin's historical dramas "Mamay" (2003) and "The Guide" (2014), Mykola Mashchenko's epic "Bohdan-Zinoviy Khmelnytskyi" (2008), as well as a series of historical films directed by Oles Yanchuk: "The Undeclared" (2000), "The Iron Hundred" (2004), "Metropolitan Andriy" (2008), and "The Secret Diary of Symon Petliura" (2018).

As a mirror of society, Ukrainian cinema actively reflects major socio-political shifts. The events of the Orange Revolution were captured in several 2006 films, including Oleksandr Kirienko's "Orange Sky," Ivan Kravchysyn's action-drama "Break Through," and Alan Badoev's "Orangelove," the latter of which was presented at the Cannes International Film Festival and the Mannheim-Heidelberg International Film Festival in Germany.

A significant resurgence in Ukrainian film production began after 2010. New film festivals emerged, and domestic releases started drawing substantial audiences. Notable examples include Mykhailo Illienko's "Firecrosser" (2012), the Alioshechkin brothers' "Synevyr," and Oleh Stepchenko's "Viy" (2014). The events of the Revolution of Dignity were documented in the short film omnibus series "The Winter That Changed Us" and in Oleksiy Shaparev's television series "The Guards" (2015).

The onset of Russian military aggression in the Donbas prompted a wave of reflective and patriotic films that gained immense popularity. Among them are "Kyiv Terrorists: The Cyborgs" (2017) directed by Akhtem Seitablaiev, "Sniper: The White Raven" (2022) directed by Marian Bushan, Zaza Buadze's "Volunteers of God / Called 'Bandieras'" (2018), and Tymur Yaschenko's "U311 Cherkasy" (2019). The tragedy of the occupation of Crimea and the plight of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people were powerfully depicted in Akhtem Seitablaiev's feature film Haytarma (2013) and Nariman Aliev's "Homeward" (2019), which competed in the Un Certain Regard section at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival. Another notable work is Kostiantyn Kliatskin's documentary "Crimea. As It Was" (2016), which chronicles the Ukrainian soldiers and officers who remained loyal to their oath. In essence, contemporary Ukrainian cinema functions as the "eyes of the war," with its primary strategy being to deliver the raw truth to the global community in real time.

In this context, special mention must be made of the poignant documentary "20 Days in Mariupol" (2023), the directorial, screenwriting, and cinematic debut of Ukrainian war correspondent Mstyslav Chernov. The film earned critical acclaim worldwide. Arriving in Mariupol just before the full-scale invasion, a team of Associated Press journalists documented the siege, the relentless bombardments, the mass graves of local residents, and the systematic destruction of a thriving city by the forces of the "Russian world." Selected as Ukraine's official entry for the 96th Academy Awards, the film won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature, alongside prestigious Directors Guild of America and BAFTA

awards, accumulating over forty nominations and accolades globally.

Furthermore, at the 2024 Berlin International Film Festival, the documentary cycle “Military Intelligence of Ukraine: In the Sky, on the Sea, on Land” was showcased at the European Film Market’s Ukrainian Pavilion. Authored by AFU serviceman and documentary journalist Artem Shevchenko, and produced with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, this four-part project (“Air Breakthrough to Azovstal.” “Sky, Battle for Zmiinyi Island.” “Sea, Kharkiv Counteroffensive. Earth, and Downed Pilots of Russia”) offers an in-depth look at the successful operations executed by the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine throughout 2022–2023.

Film dramaturgy has evolved with the passage of time. Modern cinematic works grow out of stark realities, leverage national cultural symbols, and craft distinct archetypes that reinforce collective memory and preserve Ukrainian identity. All of this demands innovative approaches to screenwriting and structural transformations, such as the synthesis of feature and documentary filmmaking, a prime example of which is seen in “The Cyborgs.”

The aim of this article is to characterize the impact of modern film dramaturgy on screenwriting, identifying the new features inherent to contemporary Ukrainian cinema.

Literature Review

This study utilizes cultural, art historical, and cinematographic sources from both Ukrainian and international scholars. Ukrainian film critic Larysa Briukhovetska defines film dramaturgy as a branch of literary and cinematic creativity resulting in a screenplay—a literary work that incorporates the specific technical possibilities of the screen and serves as the foundation of a future film. The question of whether a screenplay belongs to mainstream literature remains a subject of debate; it is frequently labeled a “semi-finished product.” Some directors caution that literature should not impose its own figurative system on cinema, lest film lose its unique artistic autonomy (Briukhovetska, 2013).

In her article “Ukrainian Film Dramaturgy: The Real and the Possible,” Briukhovetska observes that the lack of quality screenplays has been a chronic issue in Ukraine: fiction writers show limited interest in collaborating with the film industry, and for a long time, higher education institutions did not train specialists in this specific field (Briukhovetska, 2003). Nevertheless, she highlights the prominent screenwriter Vasyl Portiak, whose scripts formed the basis for films like “Cherry Nights,” “Whose Truth, Whose Wrong,” “Assassination: An Autumn Murder in Munich,” and “The Undeclared.”

Lexicographical sources define a “screenplay” as a “work of film dramaturgy intended for subsequent realization on screen; the verbal prototype of a film” (Cherednychenko, 2007). In her study “The Screenplay as an Object of Linguistic Research,” O. V. Skobnikova notes that the screenplay possesses a dual, dialectical nature: it acts simultaneously as a pre-text for cinematography and as a self-contained literary text capable of existing independently of the film (Skobnikova, 2016). She also employs the concept of “cinematic discourse,” defining it as a dynamic process of interaction between the author and the recipient occurring across interlingual and intercultural spaces via film language.

The structural components of film dramaturgy are explored by H. Kurinna, who examines the concept of construction within the American screenwriting tradition as the arrangement and synthesis of individual elements into a cohesive whole, a term synonymous with composition (Kurinna, 2011). Modern transformations of Ukrainian cinema amid contemporary socio-political challenges are analyzed by S. H. Kalantai, who emphasizes that appealing to real-world events and national cultural symbols helps society preserve its identity and counter disinformation (Kalantai, 2024).

International scholars, such as Professor D. Bashwiner, identify three primary modalities through which cinematic meaning and dramaturgy are constructed: the speech stream, the visual image, and the musical score, each possessing its own form and meaning (Bashwiner, 2007). Similarly, S. Kozloff underscores the importance of non-verbal components, asserting that acting, cinematography, editing, and sound effects are inherently intertwined with the verbal text (Kozloff, 2000). In "Screenwriting," Andrew Horton and Julian Hoxter comprehensively analyze contemporary screenwriting, highlighting its dual nature and emphasizing that societal issues remain central themes, processed and reimagined through the narrative world of the script (Horton & Hoxter, 2014).

Main Body and Discussion

Following the restoration of independence, Ukraine embarked on a profound process of cultural decolonization. Liberation from the imperial legacy of Soviet censorship allowed the creative intelligentsia to engage with historical themes that had been suppressed for decades. This new era of Ukrainian cinema demanded not only a shift in narrative focus but also entirely different algorithms for screenwriting.

The practical experience of the author of this article serves as empirical evidence of these shifting dynamics. The historical drama "Assassination: An Autumn Murder in Munich" (1995), which the author directed and produced, covered the volatile post-World War II period from 1947 to 1959. The screenplay focused on the armed breakthroughs of UPA insurgent units across the border and the assassination of Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera in Germany by KGB agent Bohdan Stashynskyi. The script meticulously detailed the socio-political climate and the preservation of national identity within the diaspora.

The subsequent film, "The Undeclared" (2000), represents an early example of successful Ukrainian-American co-production. The dynamic plot centers on the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, General Roman Shukhevych (known among his fighters as Taras Chuprynka). "The Undeclared" marked a new milestone in modern Ukrainian cinema, utilizing artistic tools to present historical truths about the wartime and postwar resistance movements in Western Ukraine.

The feature film "The Iron Hundred" (2004), directed by Oles Yanchuk with a screenplay by Vasyl Portiak, was based on the autobiographical book "In the Whirlwind of Combat" by veteran Yuriy Borets, serving as a co-production between Ukraine and Australia. The narrative unfolds in the Zakarzonnia region – ancestral Ukrainian ethnic territories where the postwar Polish communist regime, backed by the USSR, carried out a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing

known as Operation Vistula. Commenting on the film, Larysa Briukhovetska noted that “the heroic cinematic narrative did not become a dry illustration for a history textbook,” because the creators successfully maintained the psychological truth of the characters, avoiding the superficial profanity that often plagues historical genres (Briukhovetska, 2004). The film performed a vital educational role, restoring the memory of the insurgent company led by Mykhailo Duda (nom de guerre Hromenko).

The 2008 biographical drama “Metropolitan Andriy,” co-written by Mykhailo Shaievych, Oleksandr Shevchenko, and Oles Yanchuk, can be considered a modern classic. The screenplay, dedicated to the life of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, underwent thorough review and was formally approved by Vatican authorities, testifying to its high level of historical accuracy and scriptwriting mastery. The central leitmotif of the film is the spiritual fortitude of the Metropolitan, a descendant of an ancient noble family who renounced a promising military and secular career to devote his life to Christ and the protection of persecuted peoples under totalitarian regimes.

A distinct dramaturgical innovation was employed in “The Secret Diary of Symon Petliura” (2018; written by M. Shaievych, O. Shevchenko, and O. Yanchuk). The central narrative device – the writing of a personal diary by Petliura during his exile in Paris (which the Head Otaman did not actually keep in reality) – allowed the creators to expand the cinematic space. This device seamlessly shifts the audience from 1920s France back to the turbulent events of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921. During the script’s development, the author discovered a rare 1929 monograph titled “The Paris Tragedy” in a British archive. Written by an eyewitness just three years after Petliura’s assassination by Samuel Schwartzbard, the text provided concrete details that allowed the filmmakers to transform dry historical protocols into a deeply emotional, dramatic narrative driven by Petliura’s internal reflections on why statehood could not be sustained.

However, creating historical fiction films involves a complex balancing act between creative vision and harsh financial realities. Cinematography is inherently capital-intensive. A lack of adequate funding frequently forces a director to abandon advanced technological tools, which can reduce a deeply felt artistic concept to a mediocre, unpolished execution.

In this regard, profound gratitude must be extended to international partners, particularly the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), which was led for many years by the prominent attorney Askold S. Lozynskyj. The UCCA Film Committee provided financial backing starting with “Assassination,” and stepped in to support “The Secret Diary of Symon Petliura” during its early development phase in 2009. This enabled the production team to conduct extensive archival and location research across Europe and North America. As the fourth collaborative Ukrainian-American project for this creative team, the production scale was well understood. Nevertheless, the sincere desire to create non-commercial, ideologically significant historical cinema driven by personal conviction instilled a sense of creative optimism.

Throughout this process, a director cannot operate blindly; he must maintain complete control over every stage of production, constantly balancing the

emotional temperature of the actors' performances with the production budget. Occasionally, during filming, the imagination suggests simpler technological solutions that prove to be more emotionally powerful within the dramaturgical fabric than the original, complex plan. Ultimately, however, practical experience confirms that work on large-scale historical film projects should commence only when stable and guaranteed funding is fully secured.

Conclusions

Modern film dramaturgy is a distinct branch of literary and cinematic art, the ultimate output of which is the screenplay. A screenplay is not merely a technical framework or a basic retelling of events; it functions simultaneously as an independent literary work of high artistic value.

Contemporary Ukrainian film dramaturgy is evolving dynamically, adapting to the cultural, societal, and technological challenges of the 21st century. It relies on a powerful synergy of visual imagery, sound, music, performances, and special effects. The current phase of development in Ukrainian cinema is characterized by a diversity of genres, polystylism, a heightened role for the director as a co-creator of the text, and a distinct synthesis of feature and documentary filmmaking techniques—a development directly necessitated by Ukraine's historical past and its present reality. **І**