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Ana Hedberg Olenina, ed., "Forum: Ukrainian Cinema: An Invitation to Historians and Cinephiles," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 68, no. 3 (2024), pp. 280–410.

This special issue was curated and edited by Ana Hedberg Olenina, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Media Studies at Arizona State University. Known for her research on avant-garde visual and bodily culture, Olenina has, since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, actively introduced Ukrainian cinema to wider audiences. In light of the growing international attention Ukrainian cinema has garnered in recent years, this special issue aims to highlight both the existing gaps in academic research and provide a clear overview of the current state of filmmaking in Ukraine.

As Olenina explains in the Introduction, Ukrainian cinema began to recover after a period of stagnation following the country's independence from the Soviet Union. Since the mid-2000s, a gradual revival has taken place, and following the Euromaidan revolution in 2014, filmmakers increasingly turned their gaze toward their own country's social and political transformations. As a result, their works began to attract attention at international film festivals. Yet, despite this flourishing of creative activity, a comprehensive English-language historiography of Ukrainian cinema remains unwritten. In response, this special issue brings together five interviews (four of which are conducted by Olenina herself) and two essays, offering a multifaceted exploration of Ukrainian cinema with a particular focus on contemporary filmmakers.

The first interview features Eastern European film scholar Dina Iordanova, who emphasizes that Ukrainian cinema has long been marginalized within Anglophone film studies. She calls for a reevaluation of the "Ukrainian Poetic Cinema" of the late 1960s and 1970s, arguing that it should be understood not as an offshoot of Russian cinema, but within the context of Central European film traditions. According to Iordanova, directors such as Yuri Ilyenko and Leonid Osyka missed the opportunity to be discussed alongside the great films of Central Europe, largely due to Ukraine's peripheral status in the Soviet Union. She stresses the need for in-depth research into Soviet-era censorship and the international distribution mechanisms of the time, in order to fully reassess their contributions. Such research could illuminate the systemic oppression under which Ukrainian cinema operated within the Soviet film industry.

In the second interview, Oleksandr Teliuk, Head of the Archive Department at the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Center, discusses the institution's recent initiatives—such as notable projects focusing on VUFKU productions from the 1920s—and their mission to reconstruct a cinematic history repeatedly interrupted and suppressed. The third interview is with Yuri Neyman, who worked at film studios in Kyiv during the 1960s—when Ukrainian Poetic Cinema was flourishing—and collaborated with Sergei Parajanov. Conducted by film scholar Sasha Razor, this interview offers a first-hand account of the ideological pressures that permeated the Ukrainian film industry at the time.

After these three historians highlight the importance of revisiting the past, the issue moves on to interviews with three documentary filmmakers of a younger generation—Nadia Parfan, Oksana Karpovych, and Oleksiy Radynski—who reflect on their creative processes and ongoing projects, all of which center around the changing Ukrainian society and its people. Drawing inspiration from these conversations, Olenina's essay "A Quest for the Public Sphere" examines the work of these three directors, situating their efforts within the broader context of the post-Euromaidan

boom in documentary filmmaking and civic initiatives in Ukraine. In a country that has steadily built a democratic system since gaining independence from the Soviet Union, a new generation of documentary filmmakers is emerging—artists who are actively engaging with social reality.

Finally, Eastern European film scholar Masha Shpolberg, known for her expertise on documentaries and war films, situates Ukrainian cinema after 2014 within the historical framework of war cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. She argues that Ukrainian films have played a key role in countering Russian propaganda following the 2014 invasion. By analyzing six documentary films, she explores how cinema can present alternative narratives of war that differ from mainstream media coverage, and considers the potential of film to offer new ways of seeing and understanding conflict.

One of the most notable aspects of this special issue is the participation of multicultural scholars proficient in multiple languages—including editor Ana Hedberg Olenina, who is of Lithuanian origin, and Dina Iordanova, originally from Bulgaria. As Iordanova notes in her interview, adopting a transnational approach to film history—one that challenges the Russia-centric framework prevalent among Slavic scholars—is essential to re-situating Ukrainian cinema in relation to Central Europe. This special issue provides a well-curated and insightful overview of Ukraine cinema that has long been overlooked, and yet, even amid wartime conditions, continues to produce vital and compelling works.

Yuji Kajiyama