

# РЕЦЕНЗІЇ

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## ANTHOLOGY OF UKRAINIAN FILM CRITICISM OF THE 1920s

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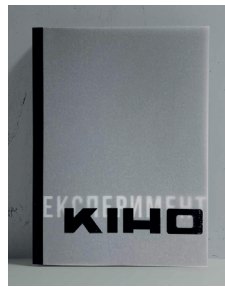
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**V. Myslavskyi. Anthology of Ukrainian film criticism of the 1920s**

**Book review:** Anthology of Ukrainian film criticism of the 1920s / edited by: S. Menzelevskyi, O. Teliuk; foreword by S. Menzelevskyi. Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Center, 2019–2021. Vol. 1 — 176 p.; Vol. 2 — 128 p.; Vol. 3 — 200 p.; Vol. 4 — 200 p.

**В. Н. Миславський. Антологія української кінокритики 1920-х років**

**Рецензія на книгу:** Антологія української кінокритики 1920-х років / упоряд: С. Мензелевський, О. Телюк; передмова С. Мензелевського. Національний центр Олександра Довженка, 2019–2021. Т. 1 — 176 с.; Т. 2 — 128 с.; Т. 3 — 200 с.; Т. 4 — 200 с.



The four-volume “Anthology of Ukrainian Film Criticism of the 1920s” continues the research activity of film specialists of the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Center. The following books were dedicated to the cinematograph of the 1920s: “Album of Ukrainian movie posters of the 1920s” (2015), “VUFKU. Lost & Found” (2019), “Mykhail Kaufman: Ukrainian Dilogy” (2020) and others.

“Anthology of Ukrainian film criticism of the 1920s” is a collection of the most interesting, original and influential film texts of the 1920s. The first volume of the anthology (Cinema / Analysis) is devoted to Ukrainian film theory. The second volume (Cinema / Experiment) is devoted to the discussion on avant-garde cinema on the pages of the Ukrainian press. The third volume (Cinema / Word) is devoted to reflections on the role of word and literature in the production, contemplation and analysis of motion pictures. The fourth volume (Cinema / Factory) is devoted to the life and activity of such an important topos of the film industry as a film factory.

The need to analyze the contribution of Ukrainian authors to the “cinematic idea” of the 1920s and

its further influence on domestic film studies and domestic culture has long been overdue. One of the first attempts to understand the themes and idea of Ukrainian film texts of the 1920s belongs to the creative team of the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Center. For many years, film experts Stanislav Menzelevskyi and Oleksandr Teliuk collected and compiled the materials that formed the basis of the four volumes of the aforementioned book.

As the compilers of the series rightly point out, “Ukrainian film theory had little time for authentic development. Only after the foundation of the All-Ukrainian Photo-cinema Administration (VUFKU) in 1922 cinema in Ukraine acquired a more or less stable institutional and economic basis for its existence” (vol. 1, p. 2). Undoubtedly, the most valuable ones are the studies of the trends and phenomena of the formation of Ukrainian film art, the problems of aesthetic categories and the creative method that arose at the beginning of the historical development of Ukrainian society, the coverage of the ideological and creative concepts of Ukrainian cinema of that time, the influence of film studies and film criticism on cinematographic practice. First of

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all, it is important to study the formation of film studies as a science.

With the beginning of the NEP, the number of artistic and literary associations and groups in the Ukrainian SSR is growing rapidly. The period from the middle to the end of the 1920s is called the period of “Ukrainian renaissance”. The desire to create creative collectives and various artistic groups was supported by the authorities and was characteristic of the era of collectivism consciousness. Such a situation helped Ukrainian artistic and literary circles to unite and use their creative potential to the fullest. In the creative discussions of the 1920s, methodological principles of the development of film art were formed, the analysis of which makes it possible to reconstruct the historical picture of the formation of Ukrainian film studies.

“Avant-garde (experimental) cinema occupied a special place in this discussion. It was in the description of various forms of experimental cinema that Ukrainian film criticism first turned to ontological questions: what is cinema and what should it be? (vol. 2, p. 2). A very important problem that was highlighted in the 1920s in Ukrainian film studies was the search for new artistic forms to embody new content, new methods of depicting reality. The constant search for new means of artistic expression, which were very common in Ukrainian art in the 1920s, is to some extent explained by the desire for innovation, the feeling that something new needs to be said in a new way. The atmosphere that was created in cinematography fully corresponded the general atmosphere that prevailed in art.

“Ukrainization of film art in the 1920s happened largely due to the involvement of writers into film production. Ukrainian writers instantly responded to the emergence of a new medium with poems, feuilletons, and other literary genres, praising the charms and condemning the defects of the new art” (vol. 3, pp. 2-3). Of great importance for the development of domestic cinema was the creation of specialized publications in which issues of film art were considered — important problems of the development of screenwriting, artistic skills, genre specificity, creative discussions were held, and extensive information was provided about the state of film art abroad. On the pages of these magazines, figures of literature, cinema, music, and visual arts systematically appeared: M. Bazhan, H. Epik, M. Maiskyi, D. Buzko, Ya. Savchenko, Yu. Yanovskyi,

H. Zatornytskyi, M. Liadov, I. Vrona, O. Dosvitnii, H. Kosynka, M. Ushakov, I. Bachelis, O. Poltoratskyi, M. Irchan, L. Skrypnyk, I. Belza.

Since 1925, a circle of authors (film critics and theoreticians) was actually defined in Ukrainian cinematography, consisting of pan-futurist writers — playwright F. Lopatynskyi, novelists L. Skrypnyk, D. Buzko, H. Kosynka, poet M. Bazhan. M. Bazhan headed the editorial office of the specialized magazine “Kino”, he contributed to the uniting of the society around the cinema to a greater extent than others. In addition to editing the magazine “Kino”, M. Bazhan also published his works in other periodicals (“Universe”, “Vaplite”, “Life and Revolution”). M. Bazhan’s interests are quite wide — the work of a screenwriter, artist, cameraman.

M. Liadov considered the script as a literary and cinematographic work, where the literary character should reveal the essence of the cinematographic idea, and the screenwriter should be able to think in frames.

D. Buzko, the writer, screenwriter and film theorist, also works prolifically in the genre of film journalism. He systematically makes publications on the pages of the magazines “Life and Revolution” and “Kino”, participates in writing articles for the collections of the VUFKU, in which he summarized his investigations and research in the field of cinematography.

The writer and critic L. Skrypnyk actively collaborated with the magazine “New Generation”, on the pages of which his theoretical articles were published.

The pioneers of Ukrainian film studies had to defend the independence of cinema among other arts. It was the pioneer researchers who felt the immense power of cinema’s influence on the formation of consciousness, aesthetic views and tastes of the masses.

The series of books “Anthology of Ukrainian Film Criticism of the 1920s” offers a reader a broad retrospective of the birth and development of Ukrainian film studies in the 1920s. The compilers have included the most interesting materials of both well-known and little-known authors of the “cinematic idea” of that time. This four-volume work plays an important role in the professional development of newcomer film scholars and will be of a great interest to experienced professionals.

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