

The Silent Cinema Reader

Edited by

**Lee Grieveson and
Peter Krämer**

2004

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

- European responses to Hollywood on a transnational level are analyzed in Higson and Maltby (eds), *'Film Europe' and 'Film America'*.
- 18 For a discussion of the arguments usually put forward in policy debates about the protection of domestic film industries in European countries, see Ian Jarvie, 'National Cinema: A Theoretical Assessment', in Hjort and MacKenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation*.
- 19 See, for example, Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), chs. 2–3; Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds), *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).
- 20 Also see David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 175–210; Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 21 Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1992), particularly 132.
- 22 See Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, chs. 2–4; Higson and Maltby (eds), *'Film Europe' and 'Film America'*; Trumpbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World*; Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*; Kerry Segrave, *American Films Abroad: Hollywood's Domination of the World's Movie Screens from the 1890s to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1997); Jens Ulff-Møller, *Hollywood's Film Wars with France: Film-Trade Diplomacy and the Emergence of the Film Quota Policy* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001).
- 23 Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, Volume 4: 1918–1929* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- 24 See, for example, Kristin Thompson, 'Dr. Caligari at the Folies Bergeres', in Michael Budd (ed.), *'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari': Texts, Contexts, Histories* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
- 25 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947). For a critique of Kracauer and an alternative historical interpretation of Weimar cinema see Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: British Film Institute, 2000).
- 26 For a discussion of the Soviet Union's overall cinematic output, of which montage films constituted only a small fraction, see, for example, Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

YURI TSIVIAN

NEW NOTES ON RUSSIAN FILM
CULTURE BETWEEN 1908 AND 1919

A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH RUSSIAN FILMS of the 1910s ca their stories seem to be moving at a wrong pace and in the wrong direct cinema out of tune with what was going on elsewhere at that time? Has this so with Russian culture at large? Such are the questions I will be looking at in the fo – not to provide a detailed portrayal of 'Russian style,' but to highlight those that set it apart from the general practice of the teens.

I call these notes new for the following reason. My first attempt at an essay place thirteen years ago in an introduction to *Silent Witnesses*, the catalogue of sur films prepared for a retrospective at the Silent Film Festival in Pordenone¹; it v (or, rather, its extended version of 1991²) that I was asked to contribute to an anthology. As I reread what I wrote I was pleased to discover how far away o field of early film studies – has got from the level of knowledge we had then. chance not to revise or rewrite, but to overwrite that old essay, correcting its challenging my own assumptions. The result is not simply a mixture of old and the facts and quotes I found worth repeating from the first version, but on the w picture is different and, I hope, more accurate than before.

Russian endings (thirteen years later)

Write the wholesome, joyous story and leave the morbid and the unple others. The temptation is strong to write the tragic plot, but the demand is f ant things. You may be impressed with *Romeo and Juliet*, but the greater appea by the heart interest story and the demand is so much more urgent for this clas that you will find it profitable to hold to pleasant things and leave the tragic to
(Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Ph*

Some people – and I am one of them – hate happy ends. We feel cheated. the norm. Doom should not jam. The avalanche stopping in its tracks a few fe the cowering village behaves not only unnaturally but unethically.

(Vladimir Naboko)

All is well that
Begins well
And has no end

(Aleksai Kruchenykh, *Victory over the Sun*⁵)

In 1918 two film press organs, one Russian and one American, made – independently of one another – an identical observation. *The Moving Picture World*, after reviewing a batch of Russian pictures that had just arrived in the USA, thus summarized the general impression of its reviewers:

As was pointed out in the first and favorable review of these films in *The Moving Picture World*, the tragic note is frequently sounded; this is in marked contrast to prevailing American methods. The Russian films, in other words, incline to what has been termed 'the inevitable ending' rather than an idealized or happy ending. That was the thing that gave the reviewers some slight shivers of apprehension as to the reception that might be accorded these films by our public.⁶

At the same time but on the Russian side the Moscow *Kino-gazeta* was informing its readers:

'All's well that ends well!' This is the guiding principle of foreign cinema. But Russian cinema stubbornly refuses to accept this and goes its own way. Here it's 'All's well that ends badly' – we need tragic endings.⁷

It is a fact that only a handful of Russian movies ended well, but what agency was the 'we' that needed tragic endings – the nation, the audiences, the filmmakers – is still unclear. Would Russian filmgoers leave the theatre disappointed if the hero and heroine they liked stayed alive, or, worse, ended up marrying each other? No evidence (other than films) exists to blame them for that; if critical reviews can pass as factual testimony, some facts even point to the contrary. Take the case of *Jennie the Maid* reviewed in *Kino-gazeta* (the same weekly in which, a few issues later, the above credo appeared). Unlike most Russian melodramas *Jennie the Maid* (Gornichnaya Dzheny, 1918, written and directed by Yakov Protazanov) ended in a marriage; to support his approval, the reviewer appeals to the voice of the people:

It was curious to observe how passionately the public desired a happy resolution, how watchful it grew as soon as it began to scent melodrama somewhere about the middle of the film – and to hear the sigh of relief when it transpired that the hero is recovering from his wound, and that the film, after all, would not end with the harmonium huskily wailing.⁸

This could be truly what the viewing-hall mood was, for it is impossible to imagine anyone watching their touching love story (a print survives) to wish anything less than a marriage for Jenny and Georges Engère; but it is also true that cautious Protazanov set his film abroad. In a Russian setting such turn of events might have seemed forced.

Whether or not audiences were happy about tragic endings, the industry thought they were. Some time in 1912 those film companies in Russia which had a market abroad, and, reciprocally, foreign companies with an eye to Russian markets got into a practice of supplementing their films with an export ending. No print of a Russian movie with such extra tail has been identified archivally – we only know about their existence from memoir sources.

Thus, a recollection left by Sofia Giatsintova, the actress that starred in *By Her A* a 1913 movie shot by Protazanov (the same director who would, five years later, have a happy end in *Jennie the Maid*) tells us she was asked to do two such scenes in a row interior and in the same white dress: 'One ending, the happy ending, was "for export" recalls. The other, more dramatic, was "for Russia": Lidochka in her coffin.'

More than one Russian memoir testifies that Russian studios did this; but a evidence, we are luckier with Denmark (the country whose filmmaking ir depended on Russian distribution), for at least five Danish films with such lizar that we can examine to check if alternative closures were always as polarized as imaginations paint them.¹⁰ Let me dwell on Holger-Madsen's 1914 *The Life of* moment. Its hero (played by Valdemar Psilander), a former-convict-turned-min mission in making local hoodlums see the light of God. One such hoodlum, happens to have a girlfriend (Alma Hinding) driven to desperation by the way her; the point in the story when the boy sees the light coincides with the mo decides to hang herself. The first ending: the priest and the boy hurry up the to break the door leading to her room, and – the last-moment rescuers – take noose; next shot: the priest weds the couple ('For Russia' as handwritten ac lead frame sandwiched between this ending and the next): the rescuers break th second late; they take the body from the noose and put it on the bed; the girl c for the last time; as she sees her beloved in the company of the priest her eyes forgiveness, and she dies with her arms around the boy's neck. Is this what v think of as an unhappy ending? Come to think of it, 'the Russian ending' of *The is, too, a happy reunion, the reunion forever.*

Nonetheless, the variance is there, and is waiting to be explained. The i suggests itself is a cultural explanation, for isn't it plausible indeed to assume th like to see in art is defined by what they are in life; but explanations like this a than not essentialist and circular. Here is one attempt to account for Russian fi terms which was made in the United States as early as November 6, 1917 (b only a day away from the date the Socialist Revolution took place in Russia) by Bartlet, a film critic writing in *Photoplay Magazine*: 'The Slavic emotions, the wor are terrific, and these Russians have written those emotions in letters of hum: dictum is not a cultural theory, of course, but some cultural theories are much li! We go to cultures to explain their films, but don't we sometimes end up fit stereotypical image of their cultures? In the first version of this essay I did not d as I wrote:

[o]ne has to forewarn audiences of our time: like any generalization abou psychology, the notion of the gloomy Russian soul was naive. 'Russian endi into cinema from nineteenth-century Russian theatrical melodrama, whi ended badly. Unlike the Western theatrical melodrama, the Russian versi from classical tragedy adapted to the level of mass consciousness. Hence conclusion that we can draw about 'Russian endings' is one that relates mass culture as a whole: the peculiarity of Russian cinema and of Russian m is its constant attempts to emulate the forms of high art.¹²

Not that I wish to retract any of these parallels – as parallels go, they ar does what I said in 1989 differ much from the conclusion to which (another?) came after seeing another Russian movie: 'These Slavs love tragedy.'¹³ The diffe

the film historian and the film critic is that for the former history comes before culture. Rushing to Russia for help I passed by the film history question: is it really the bad endings, and not the good ones, that need to be explained? Thirteen years ago many people – and I was one of them – tended to treat happy ends for granted; that there would be a cinema biased against them looked more like an interesting anomaly to explain. Today as we are able to examine it in relation to film history the picture appears reversed. There was a time in film history when (to repeat Nabokov's *mot à propos* literary denouements) 'harm was the norm.' In the first dozen years or so endings of the kind to be later labeled as 'Russian' were much in current internationally. 'Happy end' as a program, as Richard Abel has recently shown, began to crystallize around 1908 as part of the American film industry's effort to win its home market from the *Pathé Frères*. It was then that American trade papers launched a campaign to promote what they called 'clean, wholesome' subjects, in the American tradition of 'ethical melodrama' and its 'bright, happy denouements,' contrasting those to the thumb-down ends habitual to *Grand-paignol* melodramas then fashionable on stage as in films.¹⁴ It is not cultures, as I initially thought, that give shape to film history; it is the other way round: when in need for a tool, film history resorts to culture.

The period (roughly, 1912–1914) during which the Hollywood endings became what they are, and the Russian endings became geographically Russian was linked to another film-historical process: the passage from shorts to features. This was the time when the issue of how to end the film was back on the table: having to choose only one story that would thus define the mood of your show meant that prudent film exhibitors could not any more, as many had done, balance the morbid with the wholesome. There are, I am sure, a number of ways in which the American choice can be accounted for – by linking it to general regulatory concerns, for instance (at any rate, much of the rhetoric around it was regulatory¹⁵), though straightforward societal explanations may be as insidious as cultural ones; as to the Russian choice, I think it was influenced – in a strange negative way – by its American counterpart. I will try to explain how in the next section.

The pace of the action

These films are amazing. They appear to have only two speeds, 'slow' and 'stop.'
(Kevin Brownlow, 1989¹⁶)

The essential condition of life is movement; the essential condition of thinking is pause.
(Sergei Volkonsky, 1912¹⁷)

We now turn to that other oddity of Russian film culture that amazed Kevin Brownlow (and many others who saw a selection of early Russian films shown at the Silent Film Festival in Pordenone in 1989) – the defiant immobility of their figures. But before looking into this, let me specify what I mean by Russian film culture and by film culture in general. National film culture is not (as the term may misleadingly suggest) a cinema's place on the map of its national culture, but an arsenal of cultural tools deployed by a national cinema to stake a claim on the map of international filmmaking. The Russian way of doing this was to rely on pre-existing cultural difference. 'The Three Schools of Cinematography: 1. Movements: the American School; 2. Forms: the European School; 3. The Psychological: the Russian School,' wrote Fyodor Otsep (not yet the screenwriter and the filmmaker he would soon become, but already a young trade press journalist) in an outline for a film theory book conceived in 1913.¹⁸ The book was never written, but if it were, Otsep's attempt to make use of 'psychology' in order

to dissociate Russian cinema from either of its Western sisters would look something we need psychology for our films to be recognized as Russian; for what, if not 'had brought recognition to the Russian novel; and was it not 'psychology' with Chekhov's drama and Moscow Art Theatre acting as unique?

This line of reasoning may look neat on paper, but there remained a practical Russian film culture kept trying to resolve. Tolstoy enjoyed the advantage of descriptions for his readers to access the hero's mental life; likewise, the playwright the actor can use speech and voice to bring those matters home; but how about the silent film – that voiceless and linguistically impaired medium – a vehicle capable of characters' psychology across? The 'immobility' doctrine popular among Russian theorists round about 1914–1916 was the Russian answer to this question. 'psychology' was defined by contraries: while others invested in action and mobility and inaction were declared to be native assets: 'The [Russian] film decisively with all the established views on the essence of the cinematographic picture diates movement,'¹⁹ wrote a *Proektor* theorist early in 1916; and looking at film review trade magazine published that year we see how easy this immobility doctrine me into an appreciative category, as in a review of Aleksander Volkov's *His Eyes*: '[Particularly] the scenes that are devoid of traditional cinematic movement produce an impression'.²⁰

Another connection we can observe looking at the period's film literature is the immobility doctrine and the image of the film star. Whenever this or that broach the subject of tempo, the review was likely to slip into a discussion of the notion of national style began to gain ground in film criticism and filmmaking energetically, around 1913²¹), it was the manner of acting – more so than the tempo or scenery and sets – that beckoned people anxious to identify movies by national cinemas crystallized around national acting schools, each with its own agenda acting. American actors relied on little movements, like quick facial reactions and props; one could tell an Italian diva by her exquisite gestures of arms and hands valued pensive moods and introvert psychology; needless to say, all this had to pace, not only with the character of acting. Much as it was done in the case of Russian trade-paper pundits held up slow acting – that other programmatic of Russian films – as an example for American movies frequently slighted as slavish, for instance, in a smugly condescending review of the American movie *Busin* (1915, dir. Otis Turner) distributed in Russian under a more loaded title *The* (Raba nazhivy):

As far as the whole pace of the action is concerned, neither the director nor have managed to capture that slow tempo that is so common in the Russian film play. The actors are still too fidgety, as the Americans are wont to be; the still derives largely from the superficial, from objects and facts rather than from experiences and emotions.²²

The actor, indeed, was seen as cinema's ultimate metronome. Much as the public may have enjoyed snappy American acting (and I am sure they did), it (other than in a comedy) had much of a chance to get ahead in a Russian film. The Russian idea of good acting spelt feet and feet of stillness. To quote again from that 'repudiated movement':

In the world of the screen, where everything is counted in metres, the actor's struggle for the freedom to act has led to a battle for long (in terms of metres) scenes or, more accurately, for 'full' scenes, to use Olga Gzovskaya's marvellous expression. A 'full' scene is one in which the actor is given the opportunity to depict in stage terms a specific spiritual experience, no matter how many metres it takes. The 'full' scene involves a complete rejection of the usual hurried tempo of the film drama. Instead of a rapidly changing kaleidoscope of images, it aspires to *river* the attention of the audience on to a single image. . . . This may sound like a paradox for the art of cinema (which derives its name from the Greek word for 'movement') but the involvement of our best actors in cinema will lead to the slowest possible tempo. . . . Each and every one of our best film actors has his or her own *style* of mime: Mosjoukine has his steely hypnotised look; Gzovskaya has a gentle, endlessly varying lyrical 'face'; Maximov has his nervous tension and Polonsky his refined grace. But with all of them, given their unusual economy of gesture, their entire acting process is subjugated to a rhythm that rises and falls particularly *slowly*. . . . It is true that this kind of portrayal is conventional, but convention is the sign of any true art.²³

Such was Russian film culture viewed from the side of its theory. To get a glimpse of the practical side let us look, once again, at Protazanov's 1918 *Jenny the Maid*. This film, we recall, was made in Russia and set in France; its ending was happy, its tempo Russian. As it happened, many years after the film had been released two of its principal players – the former Moscow Art Theatre actress Olga Gzovskaya that did Jenny (the same Gzovskaya whom the excerpt above credits with inventing the 'marvelous' concept of 'full scenes'), and her partner Vladimir Gaidarov who played Georges – remembered the making of *Jenny the Maid* in their memoirs written, respectively, in 1948 and 1966 – so strong must have been the impress of Protazanov's voice behind the camera telling them what to do next or, to be more to the point, how long to wait before doing it. Writes Gzovskaya:

Protazanov was keen on the actor's eyes and liked to work with the glance of a character. Among all the directors only he could catch in an expression of the eyes a transition to the next step in the action, for he felt the exact duration of a glance. His famous signals during rehearsal: 'pause – looks closely – looks closely – pause – remembers – pause – pause – pause – lowers eyelids' were not prompts or dictates as to what the actress or actor must carry out but rather a perfect merger with the internal life of the performer.²⁴

And this – the following quote – is from Gaidarov; his report dwells on a specific scene in which he, as convalescing Georges, is shown sitting in the armchair while Gzovskaya (Jenny the maid) is reading to him. The 'inner' action that underpins the 'outer' business of this scene was to be revealed through this by-play of glances:

Protazanov insisted on this scene being acted at a reduced pace as he dictated his famous pauses – for example, when Georges's glance lingers for a while on Jenny. There we were, face to face, and . . . pause, pause, pause . . . Jenny lowers her eyes . . . pause . . . she gets up quickly, turns and goes to leave. . . . Georges calls to her. . . . She lingers in the doorway without turning round . . . pause, pause . . . and then she turns and says, 'I must get your medicine. It's time for you to take it!' Pause

. . . she turns and leaves . . . Georges is left alone. He looks after her . . . again, pause, pause. . . . Then we see his elbow resting on the arm of the chair, bowed towards his hand, and Georges thinking to himself, 'What a strange man!' Pause, pause . . . and . . . iris.²⁵

Surely, this pause-pause-pause pace of action was an acquired taste, which refused to succumb to. Not by chance, it was scoffed at in reviews that appeared in section of the stage theatre periodical the *Teatralnaya gazeta* – even though (or per in turn-of-the-century Russia, stage acting too was predicated on pausing. But so Maeterlinckian, Chekhovian, Stanislavskian – did not necessarily entail immobility made of silence, not of stillness. Yevgeni Bauer's *Silent Witnesses* (Nemye svitki) 'moved at about three miles an hour,'²⁶ the *Teatralnaya* sneered; a year later the paper what was wrong about the slow pace of Bauer's (unpreserved) *Boris and Gleb* (1915):

The whole film is imbued with an irritating and unnecessary slowness. Unbecause the psychological climax emerges on screen in opposition to the not through delays and pauses but, on the contrary, through accelerations. long drawn-out 'psychological' scenes allow the audience to start guessing they have no difficulty in working out the subsequent course of events and denouement.²⁷

Projectionists – that fifth column within the Russian film industry – were a of people impatient with the slow Russian style. All over the world projectionists for their tendency (particularly strong during the last picture show) to project film they had been shot, but I wonder how many actors other than those in Russia who and act as Ivan Mosjoukine (aka Mozzhukhin, the star remembered for his long whose open letter published in *Teatralnaya gazeta* in 1915 called on filmgoers 'to protest known by banging their sticks and stamping their feet, etc.':

The poor innocent actors jump and jerk about like cardboard clowns and innocence, which is unfamiliar with the secrets of the projection booth, stigmatised for their lack of talent and experience. I cannot convey the feeling you experience when you watch your own scene transformed at the whim of a mere boy from movements into a wild dance. You feel as if you were being slandered in everyone and you have no way of proving your innocence.²⁸

Hard to tell on whose side audiences were in this debate; however, a phrase exists in the teens to yell at hasty projectionists – *Nie goni kartinu!* (Don't speed the picture exists in colloquial Russian, now meaning simply 'Not so fast!')

I cannot think of a better way to end the notes on Russian film culture than with an existing description – even if this means that I must burden the page with a bulky quotation. Unlike most of the writings quoted so far, the essay I am going to come from the period, and is not authored by a filmmaker or a film critic: it is by André Levinson, an émigré ballet critic living in Paris, as late as 1925 – some of the Russian cinema he remembered ceased to exist. Russian pre-Revolution Levinson tells in his vivid postmortem,

created a style that was completely divorced from European and American experiments but enthusiastically supported by our own audiences. The scripts were full of static poetic moods, of melancholy and of the exultation or eroticism of a gypsy romance. There was no external action whatsoever. There was just enough movement to link the long drawn-out pauses, which were weighed down with languorous day-dreaming. The dramaturgy of Chekhov, which had had its day on stage, triumphed on the screen. The action of these intimate emotions was not played out against the expanse of the steppes or the steep slopes of the Caucasus, even though the steppes were as worthy as the pampas and the Caucasus as majestic as the Rocky Mountains! Russian characters dreamed 'by the hearth'. (True, at that time the sentimental heroes of the American Vitagraph film were doing the same, abandoned by their brides, making out figures from the past through a light haze of smoke.) Vera Kholodnaya and Polonsky came back from the ball in a car, facing the audience in close-up, each immersed in their own private pain; they did not look at one another and they never moved. It was in this immobility that their fate was decided. This was the drama. Nobody chased after their car. It did not gather speed. Nothing beyond its windows existed. It did not roll down a slope because the denouement did not need chance as its accomplice. However, in those years Tom Mix was already jumping from a bridge on to the roof of an express train. The 'adventure' script had triumphed. But the Russian product was preoccupied with feeling, with the vibration of the atmosphere surrounding motionless figures. The relationship between patches of black and white, the concepts of chiaroscuro were more expressive than an occasional gesture by the characters. . . . Sometimes the banality of the attitudes and ideas was striking, but only to the Russian eye. To a Western audience this banality was something inscrutably and irrationally exotic. It is for this reason, rather than technical backwardness, that the style remained a localised phenomenon – and soon afterwards war broke out.²⁹

Yes, immobility looks like a strange program for the medium of motion pictures, particularly if viewed from 1925, for by this year (after the first feature-long pictures by Kuleshov, Vertov and Eisenstein) the cutting rate and acting speed of Russian films had swung to the opposite extreme, beating the fastest American movies on their own racing track, as it were. This turnabout was not an isolated phenomenon – it dovetails with an overarching makeover of taste that began to sweep Russia around 1900 when, to use John E. Bowlt's felicitous phrase, 'Russian culture moves from slow to fast lane'.³⁰ But, tempting though it may seem to connect film and culture causally, it is exactly at this threshold that we must watch our step. Causal explanations – vague at their best, essentialist at their worst – will creep in each time the junction is left unattended, be it between the slow pace of Russian films and Russian imperial culture, or between the cult of speed peculiar to Russian modernism and the fast-cutting craze that set in around 1924. I wish I could offer a neat workable theory of how it happens between film and culture, but at least I have a picture of how it does not. We – myself included – are often trapped into picturing a particular cinema vis-à-vis the particular culture in which it is nested as a passive, derivative, filial agency; we either picture national cinemas as 'sponging up' their respective cultures, or look for some sort of cultural genus (the mental image that I must have had in mind when I wrote, in the first version of this essay that 'the peculiarity of Russian cinema and of Russian mass culture is its constant attempts to emulate the forms of high art'), or, as I did in 1991, compare cinema to a compass needle whose dip points to where deeper things are buried:

A peripheral offshoot of the mainstream of world cinema history might be a way to describe . . . the features of Russian cinema that I have dealt with in this. In fact, on the map of the world Russian endings, the immobility of the figure, the predilection of Russian cinema for titles and film recitations would all appear as anomalies. But, just as a magnetic anomaly leads the geologist to deposits of ore, the anomalies of Russian cinema allow us to evaluate deep-rooted layers in the psyche of Russian culture.³¹

This trope, I am afraid, is misleading. Cinema is not a culture's needle, nor is it a symptom, psychological or otherwise, but rather, an active, aggressive, manipulative force which may, when needed, use a culture as a means to an end. Likewise, the filmmaker is not a geologist interested in deeper layers of culture. Culture is useful insofar as it helps us to understand films, not the other way round. In the back-and-forth between film and culture, it is film that has the first serve.

In other words, there is no such thing as 'grass-root' cinema, American, European, or Russian. Cinema is architecture; culture is its wallpaper. Early Russian film culture was a blotter that absorbed the ink of Russian theatre and literature to eventually become a pale likeness; a better term to describe the workings of film cultures is not 'absorption' – cinema works forcibly and aggressively to annex culture's traditions, to capture and enslave its innermost topoi, and does so with an eye to an 'export market'; a better image to understand cinema's cultural policy is to think of those science fiction aliens endowed with a gift to take the shape of terrestrial beings, with the aim to be like them, but in order to rip them off.

Notes

- 1 *Silent Witnesses: Russian Films, 1908–1919* (Pordenone/London: British Film Institute & Imagine, 1989).
- 2 'Some Preparatory Remarks on Russian Cinema', in: Ian Christie & Richard Taylor (eds) *Factory* (Routledge: London, 1991).
- 3 Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay* (New York: The Moving Picture World, 1918), p. 75.
- 4 Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), pp. 25–26.
- 5 Aleksei Kruchenykh's avant-garde opera libretto *Victory over the Sun* (1913), in: Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Long Poems, Novels, Opera* (St Petersburg: Akademicheskij proekt, 2001) p. 404.
- 6 *The Moving Picture World*, 1918, Vol. 35, No. 5, p. 640. I thank Kristin Thompson for providing the source.
- 7 *Kino-gazeta*, 1918, No. 15, p. 5.
- 8 A. Ostroumov, 'Jennie the Maid', *Kino-gazeta*, 1918, No. 8, p. 3.
- 9 Giatsintova's interview with Tatyana Ponomareva (preserved at Ponomareva's personal archive in Moscow).
- 10 *Ablaze on the Ocean* (Et Drama paa Havet, 1912, dir. Eduard Schnedler Sørensen), both in Kevin Brownlow's TV film *Cinema Europe: the Other Hollywood*; August Blom's *Atlantis* (second, 'Siberia' ending has been identified and restored by Margaret Engberg in 1992); *Society* (En Fare for Samfundet, 1915, dir. Robert Dinesen) and Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Letter from a Unknown Woman* (Blade af Satans Bog, 1919) whose variant endings have been described by Casper paper 'The Presentation of Variant Endings' given at the 2002 conference at the University of Copenhagen on 'Cinema and Its Multiples'; there is also my own find, the 'Russian ending' made for *The Life of a Priest* (Evangelieemandens Liv, 1914, dir. Holger-Madsen), identical copies preserved at George Eastman House in Rochester and at Gosfilmofond in Moscow). I thank Casper Tybjerg for helping me with this list; and I will be thankful to those who will help me to make the list longer.

- 11 George Pratt, *Spellbound in Darkness* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1973), p. 126.
- 12 'Some Preparatory Remarks on Russian Cinema' op. cit., p. 8.
- 13 'The Cloven Tongue', *Photoplay*, April 1918, p. 109.
- 14 Richard Abel *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), p. 99; see also p. 122. It is instructive to mention another bloomer found in my 1989 essay. I then assumed that Protazanov's 1914 *Drama at the Telephone* (Drama u telefona) was a remake of Griffith's 1909 *The Lonely Villa* with its rescue ending replaced by a Russian one, and was wrong. As Tom Gunning has more recently (and more correctly) shown, *The Lonely Villa* story is not of Griffith's invention; it stems from a French *Grand-guignol* theatre drama of 1901 whose hero, powerless to rescue his wife and children, ends up listening over the phone to the sound of them being killed (Tom Gunning, 'Heard over the Phone: *The Lonely Villa* and the De Lorde Tradition of the Terrors of Technology,' *Screen*, Vol. 32, Summer 1991, pp. 184-196.) As it appears, Protazanov's *Drama at the Telephone* was made after a Russian adaptation of De Lorde's one-acter by N. Arbenin (typescript preserved by the All Russia Theatre Society library in Moscow.)
- 15 'There simply must be a moral ending', wrote Henry Albert Phillips in his screenwriting manual in 1914; 'stories in which the good element is overcome by the bad, thus placing the premium on the bad, are unmoral.' *Photodrama* by Henry Albert Phillips (New York, 1914), p. 89. Compare this phrase in the quoted *Photoplay* review of the Russian film *The Cloven Tongue*: 'there is little trace of what an American producer would regard as a safe picture to offer the tender public which he is careful to shield from unhappy thoughts'.
- 16 Kevin Brownlow in an intervention at the round table on early Russian cinema in Pordenone, October, 1989.
- 17 Sergei Volkonsky, *Vyrazitelnyy chelovek. Scenicheskoe vospitanie zhesta po Delsartu* (The expressive man. Education of stage gesture according to Delsarte) (St Petersburg: Apollon, 1912), p. 69.
- 18 F. Otsep, *Kinematograf* (Cinema) (Plan for a book), Russian State Archive for Literature and Art, 2734/1/72.
- 19 I. Petrovskii, 'Kinodrama ili kinopovest?' (Film Drama or Film Story?), *Proektor*, No. 20 (1916), p. 3 (italics in the original).
- 20 *Proektor*, No. 19 (1916), p. 11.
- 21 See a good overview of the process in Tom Gunning's 'Notes and Queries about the Year 1913 and Film Style: National Styles and Deep Staging', 1895, October 1993: 'L'Année 1913 en France' (edited by Thierry Lefebvre and Laurent Mannoni), pp. 195-204.
- 22 *Proektor*, No. 9 (1916), p. 15.
- 23 Petrovskii, p. 3.
- 24 Olga Gzovskaya, 'Rezhisser - drug aktera' (The director, the actor's friend) in: *Iakov Protazanov. Sbornik statei i materialov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1948), p. 259.
- 25 V. Gaidarov, *V teatre i kino* (In Theatre and Cinema) (Moscow: 1966), pp. 101-02.
- 26 *Teatral'naya gazeta*, No. 19 (1914), p. 11.
- 27 *Teatral'naya gazeta*, No. 43 (1915), p. 16.
- 28 I. Mozzhukhin [Mosjoukine], 'V chem defekt?' (Where Lies the Defect?), *Teatral'naya gazeta*, No. 30 (1915), p. 13.
- 29 A. Levinson, 'O nekotorykh chertakh russkoi kinematografii' (Some Characteristics of Russian Cinema), *Poslednie novosti* (The Latest News) (Paris), No. 1512, 29 March 1925. I am indebted to Roman Timenchuk for this quotation.
- 30 John E. Bowlt, 'Velocity' (work-in-progress pathway for the distance learning project 'Russia: A Modernist Perspective' sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation and University of Southern California).
- 31 'Some Preparatory Remarks on Russian Cinema', op. cit., p. 30.