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Haunted by Empire:

Decentring 'Early Russian Cinema'

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Abstract: This editorial introduces the double issue (15 and 16), which began in 2021. Opening with a general overview of existing scholarship in the field of 'early Russian cinema', it outlines the issue's decentring approach to the study of cinema in the late Russian Empire and the intent to shed light on under-recognised contributors and overlooked aspects of the imperial film industry. The editorial critically reevaluates the term 'Russian' in the context of the Empire's film production, fostering discussions on national identity and categorisation, including a shift in our spelling and naming habits, both scholarly and beyond academia. The editorial encapsulates the issue's goal to inspire new cross-disciplinary and cross-national research, thereby enriching perspectives on the cinematic legacy of the Russian Empire. It offers a survey of the themes explored in the issue's twelve articles and outlines how they collectively represent a starting point in the process of decentring our view of imperial film culture and contribute to expanding our understanding of it temporally, geographically, culturally, and – albeit to a lesser extent – methodologically and theoretically. The editorial concludes with summaries of each article.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, Congress Poland, Bukovina, early cinema, cinema business, movie theatres, Russophone diaspora, screenwriting, Digital Humanities, New Cinema History, media hauntology, media archaeology, gender, decolonisation, women filmmakers, Christmas cinema, pre-cinema, panoptic gaze, panoramic view, military filmmaking, cross-dressed performances, theatrical travesty, dance films, Khlysts, sects, educational cinema, early animation.



Introduction

In the three and a half decades since the 1989 screenings of re-discovered pre-revolutionary films at the eighth *Giornate del Cinema Muto* in Pordenone and the publication by the British Film Institute of the accompanying catalogue *Silent Witnesses: Russian Films 1908-1919*, 'early Russian cinema' has become an established academic field.¹ As demonstrated by the extensive Bibliography compiled for these special issues, there exists a significant and wide-ranging body of academic work on this filmmaking tradition, pioneered by Neia Zorkaia, Yuri Tsivian, Nikolai Izvolov, Rashit Yangirov, and Denise J. Youngblood.² Using their work as a springboard for further enquiry, scholars based around the world have examined topics as varied as the historical and cultural background and reception of cinema, the periodicals used to promote new films, the studio system, the specificities of the early 'Russian' acting style, filmmakers' (and audiences') preference for tragic endings, technical and expressive developments in cinematic language, cinema architecture, the relationship between the films' narratives and late imperial society, the roles of various professionals (men and, more recently, women) – directors, camera operators, actors and actresses, set designers, production artists, screenwriters, writers for the cinema press, film theorists –, filmmakers' use of melodrama, early animations, and the feminist and psychoanalytical themes of individual films. The list of archival discoveries and rediscoveries continues to grow beyond the best-known names of Evgenii Bauer and Iakov Protazanov, and scholars have also reconstructed lost and incomplete films.

Building on these solid foundations, but also approaching them with a critical eye, this two-part

special issue – *The Haunted Medium I and II: Moving Images in the Russian Empire*, Apparatus 15 (2022) and 16 (2023) (hereafter referred to as *The Haunted Medium*) – sets out to revisit the early period of cinema in this region from new perspectives. In our Call for Papers, written in early 2021, we suggested that the title's allusion to 'haunting' invited a range of possible interpretations, from the ways in which early moving images were haunted by censors, by the snobbery of those suspicious of new technical media, by the incomprehension of those confused by the ambiguities of stasis and motion, and by the prurience of those unsettled by the 'decadent' imaginary of death and decay and the films' tragic (so-called) "Russian endings". In the post February 24, 2022 context, however, the meaning that emerges most powerfully is of early cinema as haunted by the spectre of Empire itself. It is this spectre that this issue attempts in particular to grapple with, both by including new work on the early period of moving images in the Russian Empire – some of which exceeds the cinematic and the local, and advances for this area of study a new cross-disciplinary and cross-national reach – and by seeking to stimulate alternative approaches to the study of what has conventionally been referred to as 'early Russian cinema'.

Our revision of the field has to begin with its name, however. As Volodymyr Myslavskyi notes in his contribution, "The Formation of the Film Business in Ukraine (1896–1916)", the cinema industry that emerged in the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was from the outset "labelled as 'Russian' ('ruskii')". This tendency, cemented by Soviet film scholars, has been perpetuated in work produced after the collapse of the Soviet Union, including our own monographs.³ To some extent, this is the result of translation challenges: while Russian has two adjectives – 'ruskii', which refers to the Russian language or Russian ethnicity / nationality, and 'rossiiskii', which describes a

1 *Silent Witnesses* was researched and coordinated by Yuri Tsivian and edited by Paolo Cherchi Usai, Lorenzo Codelli, Carlo Montanaro, and David Robinson.

2 We hope this bibliography will also be a useful resource for scholars working on the early cinema of other regions, complementing the bibliographies compiled by Deac Rossell (2023a; 2023b; 2023c; 2023d), which include very few titles related to Eastern Europe or the Russian Empire.

3 See Youngblood (1999), Drubek (2012) and Morley (2017; 2023).

subject or citizen of the Russian Federation –, both are usually translated as ‘Russian’, which fails to capture their different meanings. This erasure of semantic difference “is not merely a lexical problem”, however (Myslavskiy 2023). The context of the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and its ongoing illegal war of aggression against that sovereign state obliges us to recognise this usage as a legacy of the Empire’s colonial mindset, which has led to the achievements of people involved in early cinema being identified as ‘Russian’, when they were not.⁴

Reacting against this imprecise English usage, Natascha Drubek (2021) proposes the neologism ‘Rossian’ as a translation for ‘rossiiskii’, reserving the use of ‘Russian’ for ‘russkii’.⁵ By encouraging a re-evaluation of the term ‘Russian’ within the context of the Empire’s film production, *The Haunted Medium*, like Drubek’s recent work in this area, raises important questions about (national) identity and categorisation. It also shows that looking beyond the blanket term ‘Russian’ enables us to discover more not only about the individuals involved in early filmmaking – subjects of the Emperor in the Russian Empire, who were not all ‘Russian’, but also Jewish, Georgian, German, Jewish, Polish, Tatar, or Ukrainian – but also about the varied origins and contexts of imperial mass culture, as well as about global early cinema history more broadly.

Taken together, the twelve articles collected in this two-part special issue investigate the Empire’s haunting legacy through the lens of early film, contributing, to different extents and in different ways, to the issue’s aims of decentring academic approaches to early cinema in the Russian Empire

in order to broaden and deepen our understanding of the origins of filmmaking in this region. Aligning with recent efforts to construct a body of de-colonised scholarship,⁶ they represent a starting point in the overdue process of decentring our view of imperial film culture and contribute to expanding our understanding of it temporally, geographically, culturally, and – albeit to a lesser extent – methodologically and theoretically.

For example, *The Haunted Medium*’s temporal span decentres the 1910s, exceeding the limitations of the established period of 1907–1918 by including contributions that explore moving images in the ‘long nineteenth century’, tracing their ideological and business contexts (Zimmermann; Myslavskiy). Likewise, its geographical range extends beyond the borders of Russia, challenging the conventional view of Moscow and St Petersburg / Petrograd as the centres of the imperial film industry and moving beyond the conventional centre-periphery dynamic to demonstrate that cinema emerged in and flourished across the multi-national territories of the Russian Empire, in the major cities of present-day Georgia (Dzandzava; Ustiugova), Poland (Pryt), Ukraine (Myslavskiy), for example, in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Tatarstan, as well as in provincial Russian towns, including Ufa, Yaroslavl, Astrakhan, Perm, and Kungur (Ustiugova). The articles fill in voids in the historical record in other ways, examining overlooked names and bringing to light the contributions both of lesser-known people involved in creating moving images in the Russian Empire and of those who worked in less-studied roles, thereby foregrounding overlooked inventors and pioneers who contributed to the cinema culture of the Russian Empire (Myslavskiy; Artemeva and Nesterenko). Other articles decentre the persistent focus on the male auteur-director, shedding light on the significant contributions made by women (Andreeva; Artemeva and Nesterenko; Korotkova). A number of articles break new ground through their use of archival ma-

4 Myslavskiy (2023) gives the example of Alfred Fedeci, hailed by the Soviet film scholar Semen Ginzburg as “a ‘pioneer of Russian cinema’”, although he was of Polish extraction, was born in Zhytomyr and worked in Kyiv and Kharkiv.

5 Drubek (2021) writes: “‘Rossiiskii’ (which I will in some cases translate as ‘Rossian’ for greater clarity) describes a state and its citizens (or empire and subjects), ‘Russkii’ refers to ethnicity and/or language which often became conflated as a description of nationality.” In this context, ‘Rossian’ is analogous to ‘British’, while ‘Russian’ is comparable to ‘English’.

6 See, for example, the special issue *Decolonising the (Post-)Soviet Screen I* in *Apparatus* 17 (2023).

terials (Andreeva; Dzandzava; Ranneva; Ustiugova; Artemeva and Nesterenko; Myslavskiy). Some reveal previously unexamined cultural contexts of early cinema (Ranneva; Wanner; Korotkova; Kostina), while others adopt theoretical and/or methodological approaches not previously applied to imperial cinema (Tropnikova; Pryt)

In these ways, *The Haunted Medium* proposes a revised framework for rethinking the multifaceted, multi-national histories of cinema in the Russian Empire, throwing into relief the continued existence of the imperial spectres that haunt scholarship in this field. It is our hope that the expanded historical and cultural analyses contained in these twelve new articles, many written by emerging scholars, will act as a starting point for further cross-disciplinary and cross-national research on the cinematic legacy of the Russian Empire in all its diversity, thereby helping to lay to rest the spectres of Empire that still haunt it.

Moving Images in the Russian Empire

The use, in the issue's title, of the capacious term 'moving images' enables contributions that extend our temporal focus to include pre-cinematic visual media and spectacles, establishing an expanded genealogy of cinema in the Russian Empire. In "The Panoptic Gaze and the Panoramic View in and of Late 18th and Early 19th-Century Imperial Russia", Tanja Zimmermann analyses the haunting medium of the panorama, which enabled a utopian, all-encompassing gaze. Starting from the "inspection trip" that Empress Catherine II made to Crimea in 1787, Zimmermann reconstructs the close interconnection between two scopic regimes – the panoptic gaze and the panoramic view, which both required a specific organisation of space and visibility in order to establish a dual relation between the observers and the observed. Her analysis encompasses a wide range of materials from different historical contexts – descriptions and depictions in 19th-century

newspapers, travelogues, paintings, the panorama's competition with the early cinematograph in the 1900s, urban film and cinema trains during the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, and Aleksandr Sokurov's 2002 film *Russkii kovcheg / Russian Ark* (Russia), demonstrating the potential of new approaches, like media archaeology.

Volodymyr Myslavskiy's research, published in English for the first time in the Groundworks section of Issue 16, further develops our understanding of the 19th-century origins of cinema in the Russian Empire.⁷ His article, "The Formation of the Film Business in Ukraine (1896–1916)", also decentres our perspective on the cinema of this region, challenging the accepted view that Moscow was the film capital of the Empire. Myslavskiy reveals that some of the earliest film recordings in the Russian Empire took place in Kharkiv, on September 30, 1896. He provides a meticulous overview of the formation of the film business on the territory of today's Ukraine, while maintaining a broad view of the Russian Empire; he provides a detailed history of cinema-related apparatuses invented in Ukraine, information about early screenings held there, and an account of the establishment of the first movie theatres in cities such as Kharkiv, Odesa, L'viv (at the time the Austro-Hungarian Lemberg), Ekaterinoslav (now Dnipro), and Poltava, which includes descriptions of the architectural styles of the "movie palaces" and their programmes. The article also examines the establishment and growth of the cinema business in Ukraine, focusing on the organisational structures of early movie theatres and of the earliest film distribution networks.

Nino Dzandzava's article, "Simon Esadze and the Legacy of Early Film Culture in Georgia", likewise reconstructs hitherto unknown aspects of the first

7 The Groundworks section is for texts that present new information and groundbreaking research, usually from archival sources that have not been discussed in scholarship previously. An invaluable source of information for scholars working in this field, Groundworks texts advance knowledge, fill in knowledge gaps and act as a stimulus to future work in the area they bring to the attention of the scholarly community.

chapter in the history of cinema in regions far from the capital of the Russian Empire. Examining the contributions of the Georgian filmmaker Simon Esadze, the cameraman Aleksandr Shvugerman, and the director Ludwig Czerny to the development of Georgian cinema, Dzandzava offers a compelling study of war footage that draws extensively on unpublished archival materials, including censorship documents. Dzandzava's article also reveals the transnational character of early cinema networks in the context of military filmmaking.

Karina Pryt's study, "Film Exhibition in Warsaw in 1913: A Bottom-up Three-Perspectival View of Early Cinema in the Multinational Russian Empire", likewise extends the issue's geographical range beyond the borders of Russia, examining the early cinema scene of Warsaw, the capital of Congress Poland. Pryt investigates cinema exhibition in Warsaw in the year before the outbreak of World War I, focusing on three ethnic communities and providing a comparative analysis of cinema advertisements in local newspapers published in Polish, Russian, and Yiddish. Employing the methodology of Digital Humanities and Geographic Information System (QGIS) technology, Pryt conducts a detailed topo-analysis of the cinema landscape of Warsaw. This article positions local film studies within the framework of New Cinema History, utilising data systematically collected from publications and programmes to analyse and map screenings in Warsaw, showcasing the city's multilingual character in a novel way.

In "The Opening of Electro-Theatres, or 'The Spectacle is Cancelled': Commerce and Control in Entertainment in Late Imperial Russia" – another article that decentres geographically our view of imperial film culture –, Vera Ustiugova locates her analysis in provincial cities in Russia and beyond, such as Kazan', Baku, Perm', and Tashkent, charting the history of film distribution and exhibition in provincial 'electro-theatres' and describing the local particularities of film screenings. Drawing on film periodicals, provincial newspapers, and archival documents, she compares early cinemas in different territories of the Russian Empire, describing their

location, their use of film screening technology, and the audience and cinema's relationship with other forms of entertainment. She also shows how the introduction of cinema contributed to changing the socio-cultural environment of small cities, factories, and rural settlements, generating demand for new forms of communication. The article, written in Russian, also introduces us to new names, those of the provincial pioneers who contributed to the development of cinema in their local towns.

Other contributors make little-known filmmakers the focus of their articles. Drawing on extensive archival sources in their Russian-language Groundworks text "Ol'ga Blazhevich, the first Russian professional female screenwriter? Reconstructing a 'Cine-literary' Biography", Ekaterina Artemeva and Maria Nesterenko excavate the biography of Blazhevich, an "unknown woman film pioneer" now considered – thanks to their research – one of the most prolific screenwriters of early cinema. They reveal the extent of her contribution as a multidisciplinary "cine-literary" figure who wrote numerous librettos and film screenplays, headed the literary department at the famous Khanzhonkov film company, edited and translated foreign films, and founded her own film distribution company. The authors meticulously chart Blazhevich's multifaceted career and provide a detailed filmography of her works, thereby solidifying her place in the annals of imperial cinema.

Anna Andreeva's German-language article, "Women's Screenwriting of the 1910s in the Russian Empire", also explores women's contributions to the early film industry, arguing that their influence began in screenwriting. Rich in detail and new information, the article provides a chronological overview of the development of women's screenwriting ("Frauenfilmdramaturgie") across the 1910s, beginning with an analysis of the work of Makarova and Tat'iana Sukhotina-Tolstaia, who both co-authored screenplays with men, Makarova with Vladimir Goncharov and Sukhotina-Tolstaia with her father, the author Lev Tolstoi. Andreeva shows that literary works by women authors subsequently

began to be used as the basis for screenplays, offering an analysis of the hit 1913 film adaptation of Anastasiia Verbitskaia's novel *Kliuchi schast'ia / The Keys of Happiness*, an early example of this development. She also illuminates the contemporary reception of the achievements of women such as Mariia Kallash, who criticised Verbitskaia's feminist approach as superficial and noted the absence of a distinct female voice in literature. Building on Vladimir Korolevich's analysis, Andreeva explains that the screenwriters of the 1910s fell into two groups: Verbitskaia and her followers vs. Anna Mar – whose screenplays from the late 1910s focused on women's societal roles, introducing a new direction to women's screenwriting – and her successors, such as Ol'ga Orlik, Ol'ga Blazhevich, Zoia Barantsevich, Vera Karalli, and Ol'ga Rakhmanova. Andreeva shows that, by the late 1910s, women screenwriters (with the exception of Antonina Khanzhonkova, who collaborated with her husband under the pseudonym "Antalek") were working independently. As the development of women's screenwriting was interrupted by the October Revolution and the subsequent Civil War, this decade-long flourishing of their work in this area is all the more significant.

Women are again the main focus in Stasya Korotkova's "Cross-Dressing Women and the Cinema of the Russian Empire, 1910-1917", which adds a new dimension to existing work on imperial cinema's representation of women through its analysis of cross-dressed performances by women, expanding and nuancing our understanding of gender expression on the early film screen. Covering around 25 films – comedies and dramas; extant films and those considered lost –, Korotkova identifies two main types of cross-dressed performance: cross-gender cast films and films featuring women characters who temporarily disguise their gender identity. She also discusses the imperial Russian theatrical travesty tradition, tracing public discussions on the topic prompted by the work of Boris Glagolin, an innovative theatrical actor and director who portrayed Joan of Arc on stage, and showing how this context influenced early cinema. Korotkova's main case stud-

ies are Varvara Ianova's performance of the eponymous role in *Portret Dorian Greia / The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Vsevolod Meierkhol'd/Meyerhold, 1915, Russian Empire) and the cross-dressing heroine of *Nelli Raintseva* (Evgenii Bauer, 1916, Russian Empire). This carefully contextualised article both sheds light on a hitherto unexplored cultural context for imperial cinema and raises broader questions about gender expression in this period, arguing persuasively that even if the examples of cross-dressing in these films were not intended as a manifestation of the characters' genuine desire to explore their gender identity, they must have served as a valuable expression of this for viewers who were receptive to such ideas.

Arina Raneeva's Russian-language article, "Christmas Cinema in the Russian Empire of the 1900s and 1910s", introduces another key cultural context for early cinema, one characterised by supernatural appearances and fantastical themes, ghost stories and narratives of haunting: the Christmas film genre. Raneeva considers what this genre reveals about both the era's film repertoire and its 'film life', that is exhibition practices and audience responses. Drawing on texts from December and January issues of the pre-revolutionary cinema press, including librettos and film scripts centred on Eastern Orthodox Christmas, this charming and well-researched article enables today's readers to experience the enchantment of the festive winter period.

Clea Wanner's German-language contribution, "Cinematographic Dance Ecstasy: Collective Bodies, Dance Rites of the Khlysts and 'Choreomania' in the Cinema of the Late Tsarist Empire", focuses on the intertwining of dance ecstasy, as a specific corporeal experience of religion, and cinema. Approaching dance mania, beyond the tango, as a central cultural trope of European modernity, Wanner explores how the theme circulated across cultural media and was both appropriated and significantly shaped by cinema, taking as her central case study an unusual but, for Russophone culture, formative modelling of dance mania: the 'radenie', the sectarian dance rite

of the Khlysts. Drawing on film fragments and contemporary social, cultural, and aesthetic discourse, the article examines the aesthetic potential of dance manias, arguing that while making the dancing bodies the main visual attraction, the films present the bodies haunted by movement as a form of collective psychopathology.

In “Razumnyi Kinematograf: Non-Fiction Film and the Production of Knowledge in the Russian Empire”, Anastasia Kostina sheds light on another under-examined cultural context of early cinema, exploring the early non-fiction film, in particular the phenomenon of ‘razumnyi kinematograf’, a trend that emerged at the start of film production in the Russian Empire and was intended to popularise cinema’s educational aspects. Analysing a collection of Russian-language cinema periodicals, published between 1907 and 1914, Kostina provides an overview of the major categories of non-fiction films produced before the Revolution and examines a variety of ‘razumnyi kinematograf’ initiatives in Moscow and beyond, thereby revealing how, during this brief but vibrant period, the makers of non-fiction films attempted to compete with fiction films for the attention of audiences.

Finally, Anna Tropnikova’s study adopts a new theoretical approach to early animation, suggesting that entomology can be viewed as a form of haunted ontology of cinema.⁸ Her article, “Imitation of the Nonhuman: Władisław Starewicz’s Entomological Cinema”, posits a post-humanist perspective to explore Starewicz’s pioneering but under-appreciated entomological animations, arguing that Starewicz fused entomology with the art of filmmaking, thereby transforming the cinema screen into a modern equivalent of the glass display case, encapsulating his insect subjects. Tropnikova’s study reveals how Starewicz’s animations, featuring ‘uncanny insects’ that eerily mirror human behaviours, serve as a metaphor for cinema’s ability to confront

and revive elements of human media and its apparatus.

Transliteration Standards and Naming Conventions

Apparatus adheres to specific transliteration standards for names and toponyms. For Russian and Belarusian, we employ the Library of Congress system; for Ukrainian, we follow the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine’s 2010 resolution, but we aim to represent each letter and therefore include the soft signs, represented by [']. Personal names are given as commonly recognised or as chosen by the individuals themselves, but are transliterated from Russian Cyrillic when cited from Russian-language sources (this is why some names appear in two versions). Historical names are used for places, with Ukrainian spellings employed for locations within or historically tied to Ukraine (for example, Odesa and Kharkiv); at times we added the contemporary name if required for clarity. For non-Russian names (for example, Georgian, German, Jewish, or Polish), we do not use Russianised versions or transliterations from Russian Cyrillic. Consequently, we introduce the Polish film pioneer as Alfred Feddecki, not Al’fred Fedetskii, Krause (instead of Krauze) and Schanzer (instead of Shantsler), and we use the spelling P. Thiemann & F. Reinhardt (rather than the transliteration P. Timan and F. Reingardt). In Nino Dzandzava’s article, the Georgian surnames Dighmelashvili (often written as Dighmelov) and Koniashvili (often shortened to Koniev) are reinstated in full. These spellings attempt to emphasise the Georgian, Polish, German, or Yiddish origins of the names of the film pioneers of the Russian Empire. This approach reflects *Apparatus*’s commitment to decolonising our ways of spelling and, thus, also our ways of thinking. We encourage readers to provide feedback on names and filmographies to ensure accuracy.

8 Derrida’s term ‘hauntology’, first coined in his *Spectres of Marx* (1993), describes an unstable or indefinable ontology of in-between.

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Bio

Oksana Chefranova is a postdoctoral Research Scholar in Film and Media Studies at Yale University. She is currently working on her first monograph, *From Garden to Kino: Evgenii Bauer and the Expanded Environment of Early Cinema* (under contract to Rutgers University Press), supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship. Her work has appeared in *Apparatus*, *Cinema & Cie*, and *NECSUS*. Most recently, she contributed a chapter “On Genealogy of Translucent Screen and the Rehabilitation of the Ephemeral: Post-Cinema, Installation, Performance” to *Apparitions: The (Im)materiality of Modern Surface* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). Oksana’s other projects focus on experimental cinema, artists’ moving image, atmosphere, post-landscape, and history and theory of camera movement.

Dr. habil. **Natascha Drubek**, an expert in Central and Eastern European literatures, cinemas, and cultures, completed her doctorate with a study on the incorporation of N. Gogol’s Ukrainian voice and body into Russian literature of the Empire, *Gogol’s eloquentia corporis. Einverleibung, Identität und die Grenzen der Figuration* (1998). In 2007, she completed her habilitation at LMU Munich with a research focus on the evolution of visual cultures from the late Russian Empire to Soviet-era cinema,

with a particular emphasis on the films of Evgenii Bauer (published as *Russisches Licht. Von der Ikone zum frühen sowjetischen Kino*, Böhlau, 2012). Her academic career includes a Marie Curie Fellowship at the FAMU Film School in Prague, where she co-developed Hyperkino, a Heisenberg Fellowship, during which she served as a scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, USHMM. She also was a visiting professor at the Peter Szondi-Institut of Comparative Literature, Freie Universität Berlin, and, most recently, a Visiting Fellow of SSEES, University College London. She is the author of the books *Filme über Vernichtung und Befreiung. Die Rhetorik der Filmdokumente aus Majdanek 1944-1945* (Springer VS, 2020), and the forthcoming *Hidden Figures: Rewriting the History of Cinema in the Empire of All the Russias*. She is the principal founder of the Open Access journal *Apparatus*, serving as its Editor-in-chief since 2015.

Rachel Morley is Associate Professor of Russian and Soviet Cinema and Culture at University College London. Her research interests span Imperial Russian, Soviet and contemporary Russian cinema, with particular focus on issues of gender, sexuality, and identity. She is the author of *Performing Femininity: Woman as Performer in Early Russian Cinema* (I.B. Tauris/Bloomsbury, 2017), published in Russian as *Izobrazhaia zhenstvennost’: Zhenshchina kak artistka v rannem russkom kino* (Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2023). Her work has appeared in *Apparatus*, *KinoKultura*, *Slavonic and East European Review*, *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* (SRSC), and numerous edited volumes. Her most recent open-access publications include a long-form article on Ilya Khrzhanovskiy and Jekaterina Oertel’s 2020 film *DAU. Katya Tanya* (*Apparatus*, 2022) and a queer reading of Anna Melikian’s 2015 film *About Love* (SRSC, 2023), both funded by a two-year Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship.

Denise J. Youngblood is Professor of History Emerita at the University of Vermont (USA) and an associate editor at *Apparatus*. A specialist in the history and cultural politics of Russian and Russo-Soviet cinema from 1908 to the present, she is the author

of seven books and numerous articles that seek to undermine the focus on high culture and art films that has dominated the field for decades and also to subvert long-established Cold War tropes about Soviet cinema as propaganda. Most relevant to *The Haunted Medium* is her 1999 book *The Magic Mirror: Moviemaking in Russia, 1908-1918*, parts of which have been abridged for inclusion in encyclopaedias and anthologies. She has also published articles on Russian cinema in and about the Great War and Revolution and on Iakov Protazanov's 1918 masterpiece *Otets Sergii*.

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