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THE CLOAK, or THE OVERCOAT (SHINEL) 1926. Released May 10, 1926. Adaptation of two stories by Nikolai Gogol: "Nevsky Prospect" and "The Cloak." 7 reels. Leningradkino. English and Russian intertitles. ca 75 minutes.

Scenario: Yuri Tynyanov; Direction: Grigori Kozintzev, Leonid Trauberg; Photography: Andrei Moskvina, Yevgeni Mikhailov; Design: Yevgeni Enei; Assistant director: Yuri Shpis; Director's assistants: Sergei Shklyarevsky, Vladimir Petrov, Dmitri Fishov.

Cast: Andrei Kostrichkin (Akaki Akakievich Bashmachkin); Antonina Yeremeyeva (the "celestial creature"); S. Gerasimov (swindler); A. Kapler ("insignificant personage"; also "significant personage"); Yanina Zheimo (tailor's apprentice); E. Gal (tailor); V. Plotnikov (policeman); P. Sobolevsky (official).

The version of THE CLOAK we are showing, from the Film Department's Archives, is a composite of two prints. The first, which relates the story of "Nevsky Prospect" and serves as a kind of prologue to the film's second half, is a 35mm tinted nitrate print with Russian intertitles. The second, which takes up the story of "The Cloak," is a 16mm black-and-white print with English intertitles. Due to the vagaries of film preservation this two-part version gives the impression of two separate, unconnected stories. It is an erroneous impression occasioned, no doubt, by the loss of a connecting link, on the order of an intertitle between the two parts stating that years have passed. At some point in the film's career, when the second part was severed from the first to create an autonomous English-titled version of the second part, this connecting link must have been cut. Note, for instance, that in Part I the pitiful clerk is young and the all-important cloak still new. In Part II he's old, and his cloak threadbare.

Both a synopsis of Part I and a translation of the intertitles are given below.

Synopsis of Part I

To Bashmachkin, a lowly civil-service clerk, St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospect represents glamour, excitement, a world he dares not aspire to. There one

day he encounters a mysterious beauty, a "celestial creature." From that moment on his days and nights are filled with dreams of her. Startlingly, he one day receives a summons from her. Disillusionment awaits him. The "celestial creature" turns out to be a "fallen" woman, and he is wanted for one reason only; to substitute the name of a dead man in a summons issued to one of the "celestial creature's" swindler friends. A dead man can't be tried. The substitution accomplished, the miserable clerk, first fawned upon, becomes the butt of cruel jokes. So ends his youthful adventure.

-Sonia Volochova

Translation of intertitles in Part I

- . There is nothing better than the Nevsky Prospect, at least in Petersburg...
- . Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, an official, although not a very remarkable one.
- . What strange characters are to be met with on the Nevsky Prospect! You can't help meeting swindlers on it.
- . A young civil servant, a personage not yet significant, although rather ambitious.
- . Pyotr Petrovich Ptitsyn, come to Petersburg to hush up an old business affair.
- . A personage with connections in a well-known department has arrived. You can consider your suit in the bag!
- . Bashmachkin's apartment on the fifth floor had only one room, absolutely lacking any fashionable pretensions.

(Subtitle on shot of Akaky's handwriting) And the below-mentioned retired Mayor Fedul Karpych.

(Subtitle on shot of handwriting) The celestial creature, retired Major...

In the rooming house of the foreigner Ivan Fyodorov.

--Since you are an educated man, might we not expect your cooperation?

--The whole thing's pretty simple. Wherever it says "Pyotr" in the transcript, scratch it out and write "Prov."

--He's not a general, but he doesn't yield to generals, either. Such an education and grand deeds!

Many rough and finished drafts made up the production of a certain department.

The insignificant personage returned to the boarding house.

--Is Bashmachkin able to understand such an appeal? He refuses. A real idiot, on my honest nobleman's word!

--Isn't that Bashmachkin there in the window?

--Send for Bashmachkin and when he comes, lead him on but good and then bring up the suit.

Dreaming of the celestial creature...

--The lady whom you saw on the Prospect has sent a carriage for you and summons you to her.

--Sign it, please!

--The young miss you've lately seen asks you to come to her.

A suit against Pyotr Petrov, son of Ptitsyn, by Foma Fomich, son of Vedenyapin, in the following points. On March 26, 1830, the aforesaid landowner, Pyotr.

Petrov, son of Ptitsyn, being my best friend, visited me, Foma Fomich Vedenyapin.

--Trade me your wench for a brown sow and see if she doesn't bear you piglets by next year.

--You're a brown sow yourself, Pyotr Petrovich. A sow can't do what a wench can!

Having received a refusal in the request for my serving wench Agrafena, he, Foma Fomich Vedenyapin, attempted violence against me, but was driven from my household by my huntsmen.

--And so in place of me, you've indicated the late Prov, and you can't expect anything from him!

There are at least four other versions of THE CLOAK:

LE MANTEAU (France/German Democratic Republic, 1951). A pantomime by Marcel Marceau that, as Georges Sadoul conjectures, may have been influenced by the FEKS film.

IL CAPPOTTO (Italy, 1952). A modernized "neo-realist" version, directed by Alberto Lattuada, with the action transferred to a village in northern Italy. In this version the ghost of the luckless clerk haunts the callous official who underpays his clerks and succeeds in reforming him.

THE BESPOKE OVERCOAT (Britain, 1955). This featurette, which was Jack Clayton's first film, is an evocation rather than an adaptation of Gogol's story. It is a semi-fantasy depicting the ruminations of an imbibing tailor and the imagined ghost of his late pal, a clerk for a wholesale clothier.

SHINEL/THE OVERCOAT (USSR, 1959). The latest Soviet version, directed by Alexei Batalov, returns to the original story, with stylistic overtones of the FEKS film.

Sonia Volochova

The Russian stage after the Revolution became a hot-bed of formal experiment whose results are still visible in the intense theatre activity of the U.S.S.R. Vsevolod Meyerhold was the standard bearer of the social theatre and his experiments in new forms and in audience participation were admired and imitated by youthful groups all over Russia, particularly in Petrograd and Moscow. These formal and audience experiments were carried into the Soviet film during its formative period by several young individuals and groups. The most important film-maker developing from this theatre practice was Sergei Eisenstein, and the most important group was that of FEX.

FEX, or the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, was an ambulant studio-theatre in Petrograd organized by Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg, and including Sergei Yutkevich as designer. Their purpose was to introduce circus and vaudeville methods, old theatre forms were to be broken and forgotten, and their manifesto (this was a period of art manifestoes) declared, quoting Mark Twain, "It is better to be a young June-bug than an old bird of paradise." The critics registered violent objections to their "desecration" of Gogol's "Marriage" which FEX produced as "a trick in three acts," and their topical satire "Foreign Trade on the Eiffel Tower." Encouragement from workers' club audiences led to their next step. In 1924 they persuaded Sevvapchino (later Leningradkino and Lenfilm) to let them try a film-satire, and their first attempt, *The Adventures of an October Child*, was close to their "Eiffel Tower" production. It concerned a fantastic, but symbolic attempt by Curzon, Poincaré and Coolidge to rob the State Bank, and the robbers' frustration by a pre-school age Young Pioneer.

More important than its subject was its use of eccentric film action from American slapstick and adventure films. The *October Child* was followed by a mild juvenile comedy, *Mishka vs. Yudenich* (1925), and a more ambitious drama of the gangster bands that preyed upon Petrograd during the Civil War — *The Devil's Wheel* (1926). The search for stylized techniques and the sacrifice of all convention characterized the group's work.

Jay Leyda, Museum of Modern Art, Film Notes

Four more FEX films followed THE DEVIL'S WHEEL: THE CLOAK (SHINEL), 1926 (to be shown November 2, at 5:30), BRATISHKA, 1927, S.V.D., 1927 and THE NEW BABYLON (NOVYI VAVILON), 1929.

"We organized FEKS (the Factory of the Eccentric Actor). I was then sixteen. Although we had absolutely no material means, we decided to mount a production. Serge, the talented circus performer, together with a few cabaret artists and some amateurs who had come from somewhere or other, threw themselves into our projects. Our first production, Gogol's Marriage, was extremely bizarre, for our own period was violently reflected in it. The play ended with Gogol himself dying in despair upon the stage. It was a case of trying to demolish all the usual theatrical forms and to find others, which could convey the intense sentiment of the new life. Unless this last point is recognized, our creations of that period would become incomprehensible. All these experiments, all these quests for new forms came because we had an intense feeling of an extraordinary renewal of life. We felt profoundly the impossibility of translating this sensation of the marvel and the importance of events through the means offered by the art of the past, which to our eyes appeared dreadfully academic and naturalist. Thus, in our production of Marriage, a preponderant place was accorded to rhythm, because the novelty of things was initially felt not in themes nor in characters, but in rhythm. Art had changed rhythm. The new epoch had found its first expression in rhythm. This was extremely interesting, because there was a sort of contradiction in it; and that is why all comparisons made between the avant-garde movements of the West and ours, seem to me to be false, and not merely in respect of the conditions of our life.

What we were doing then we were doing in the cold and famine of a devastated country. The conditions of life were very hard. The State, occupied with a full-scale Civil War, was undergoing enormous difficulties. Yet the dominant sentiment was the affirmation of life. The young artists felt life in all its richness and colour, and artistic forms seemed naturally to take on the artistic forms of a great popular carnival. In the middle of every kind of privation a sort of fair was going on. The young artists bore the common fate gaily, so fine did the time in which they lived appear to them. If this atmosphere is forgotten or neglected, then the art of those times remains incomprehensible. --Grigori Kozintsev, interview conducted in Moscow in July 1965.

(simultaneous translation by Irene Koryutukov)

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With the advent of sound and official emphasis on "socialist realism" Kozintsev (March 22- revised Russian calendar- 1905-May 11, 1973) and Trauberg (January 17, 1902) had to reorient their thinking and rechannel their imagination. Their first sound film, ALONE (ODNA), 1931, was unsuccessful and criticized for ideological errors and pessimism. But their next effort, the Maxim trilogy--THE YOUTH OF MAXIM (YUNOST MAKSIMA), 1935; THE RETURN OF MAXIM (VOZVRASHCHENIYE MAKSIMA), 1937; and THE VYBORG SIDE (VYBORGSKAYA STORONA), 1939--brought them acclaim at home and abroad. Parted by the second World War, they resumed their collaboration in 1945 with the luckless PLAIN PEOPLE (PROSTIYE LYUDI), banned as unrealistic. The year 1946, when the film was due for release, is notorious for its suppressive tactics in all the Soviet arts. It was the year when the films of two other masters of the Soviet cinema were banned--Pudovkin's ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV and Eisenstein's IVAN THE TERRIBLE, Part II. All three films were eventually released (in revised versions), ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV in 1946, PLAIN PEOPLE not until 1956, IVAN THE TERRIBLE not until 1958.

After PLAIN PEOPLE Kozintsev and Trauberg pursued separate careers. Alone, Kozintsev made FIGHTING FILM ALBUM NO.2 (1941), one of a series of war propaganda shorts, PIROGOV (1947) and BELINSKY (1951), both biographical films. A Shakespearean scholar, he then worked on the stage for several years. He returned to films in 1957 and is today best known as the director of DON QUIXOTE (1957), HAMLET (1964), and KING LEAR (1970), all shown in the United States to critical acclaim, and all far removed from the stylistic exotica of the great FEX period. (KING LEAR was premiered by the Film Department in December 1972.)

Trauberg, who contributed a scripting rather than directorial talent to his collaboration with Kozintsev, did not fare as well. Along with other prominent directors (Eisenstein, Kozintsev, Yutkevich) he was victimized by the intensified postwar straitjacketing of the arts and the newly invented "anti-cosmopolitanism" campaign. Specifically, he was accused of asserting "that the Soviet cinema had been influenced by Americans, French and Germans during its development and of criticizing Soviet films while neglecting to attack those made in Hollywood." (Paul Babitsky and John Rumberg, The Soviet Film Industry, p. 319). Hence, after a single script, LIFE AND CITADELS (ZHIZN I TSITATELI), 1948, his career languished. It was not resumed until 1956, after the thaw initiated by Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech. Since then he has concentrated mainly on scriptwriting. Up to date he is known to have directed only two films: MARCH OF SOLDIERS (SHLI SOLDATY), 1959, and DEAD SOULS (MYORTVIKE DUSHI), 1960, an adaptation of Gogol's classic.

The FEX Trauberg (Leonid) should not be confused with his younger brother, Ilya Trauberg, director of CHINA EXPRESS (GOLUBOI EKSPRESS), 1929.

Biographical Information

The heady years of the Soviet silent film developed not only great directors but great cameramen as well. Andrei Moskvina (February 14, 1901--February 28, 1961) was one of them. An early member of the FEKS (FEX) group, he worked closely with Kozintsev and Trauberg, whose theories he shared. For them, during his FEKS days, he photographed THE DEVIL'S WHEEL, 1926, THE CLOAK, 1926, S.V.D., 1927, THE NEW BABYLON (NOVI VAVILON), 1928, and ALONE (ODNA), 1931. Reversing his theories, most likely because of official condemnation of experimentation and the introduction of "socialist realism," he later adopted a more realistic approach to filming, as did Kozintsev and Trauberg, for whom he photographed the Maxim trilogy: THE YOUTH OF MAXIM (YUNOST MAXIMA), 1935, THE RETURN OF MAXIM (VOZVRASHCHENIYE MAKSIMA), 1937, and THE VYBORG SIDE (VYBORGSKAYA STORONA), 1939 (previously shown at the Museum). His most notable achievement of this period is Eisenstein's IVAN THE TERRIBLE (IVAN GROZNY), Parts I (1944) and II (1946); Released 1958 for which he photographed the interiors. Especially outstanding is the

color sequence in Part II.

Sergei Gerasimov (May 21, 1906--), the heavy of THE DEVIL'S WHEEL, S.V.D., and THE CLOAK, later became a prominent director. One of the original members of the FEX group, he made his acting debut in Kozintsev and Trauberg's second film, the two-reel children's comedy THE MISHKAS VS. YUDENICH (MISHKI PROTIV YUDENICHA)*, 1925. In addition to the FEX films listed above, he also appeared in the group's BRATISHKA (1926), THE NEW BABYLON (1929), and ALONE (1931). Later, when already an established director, he played in still another Kozintsev and Trauberg film, THE VYBORG SIDE (1938). Among the films he appeared in for other directors, the most noted are Ermler's FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE (OBLOMOK IMPERII), 1929, and Pudovkin's DESERTER (DEZERTIR), 1933.

His first directorial efforts were TWENTY-TWO MISFORTUNES (DVATSAT-DVA NESCHASTY), 1930 (co-directed with Sergei Bartenev); THE HEART OF SOLOMON (SERDTSE SOLOMONA), 1932; and DO I LOVE YOU? (LYUBLYU LI TEBYA?), 1934. These films were still the efforts of a promising novice. The promise began to be fulfilled with his next three films: THE BOLD SEVEN (SEMERO SMELYKH), 1936; KOMSOMOLSK, 1938; and THE TEACHER (UCHITEL), 1939. His most noted films are THE YOUNG GUARD (MOLODAYA GVARDIYA), 1948, and the three-part AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON (TIKHI DON), 1957-58, an adaptation of Mikhail Sholokhov's epic, first filmed by Olga Preobrazhenskaya in 1931. His last recorded film is BY THE LAKE (V OZERA), 1969.

*This title is usually mistranslated as MISHKA VS. YUDENICH, whereas all Russian sources checked list the title as MISHKI VS. YUDENICH. Mishka, the diminutive of the name Misha, is singular; Mishki plural.

Ludmilla Semyonova, the feminine lead of both THE DEVIL'S WHEEL and S.V.D., is best known as the wife in Abram Room's BED AND SOFA (TRETYA MESHCHANSKAYA), 1927 (to be shown November 3, at 5:30). Her life is a mystery. Though she appears in the credits of sixteen films listed in the Russian catalogue Soviet Fiction Films, there is no record of her in the Soviet film dictionary Kinoslovar, nor therefore, in the Western reference sources checked. One can only conjecture that at some point in her career she incurred the displeasure of the Soviet authorities, a "crime" punished by the expungement of her name. The fact that no films are credited to her for the years 1934 to 1947 (the Stalin years) tends to corroborate such a conjecture. As partial remedy of this neglect of an important actress we list below some of the more noteworthy films she played in, in addition to the ones indicated above: Kozintsev and Trauberg's THE NEW BABYLON, 1929, Ermler's FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE (1929), Alexandra Khokhlova's SASHA (1930), Alexander Zarkhi's and Iosif Heifits' MY NATIVE LAND (MOYA RODINA), 1933, Gerasimov's THE YOUNG GUARD (1948). Her last recorded film is THE GIRLS SOWED FLAX (POSEYALI DEVUSHKI LYON), 1956, directed by a woman, N. Brilliantshchikova.

-Sonia Volochova