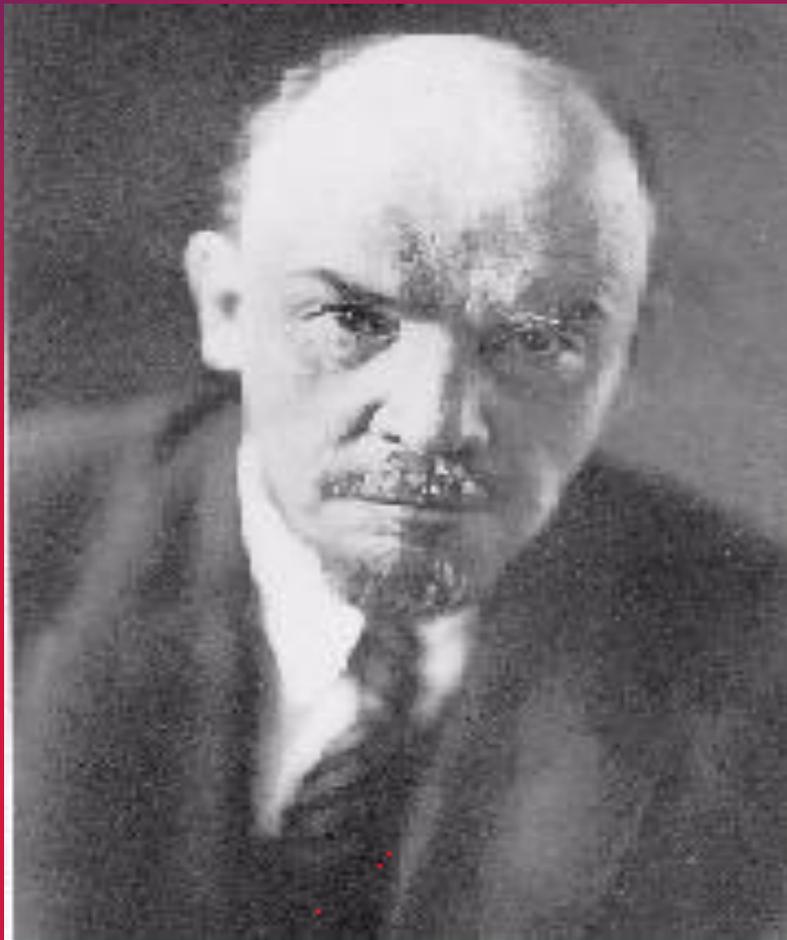


Soviet Cinema



Context Revision



“You must remember that, of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important” - Lenin

Key Films

1926:*Mother* – Vsevelod Pudovkin



*1925-27: Strike, Battleship Potemkin,
October – Sergei Eisenstein*



1929: Man With a Movie Camera – Dziga Vertov



Soviet Russia

The Basic Context

- The Communist revolution in 1917
- Many of the films are set in **pre-communist times**, specifically to show that life under Tsar Nicholas II had been oppressive
- Films set in contemporary Soviet times had to portray life as positive
- Cinematic experimentation was intended to separate communist cinema from 'bourgeois film'
- The film industry was nationalised
- Constructivism – art has a purpose

Film as propaganda – ideological message

Agit-train



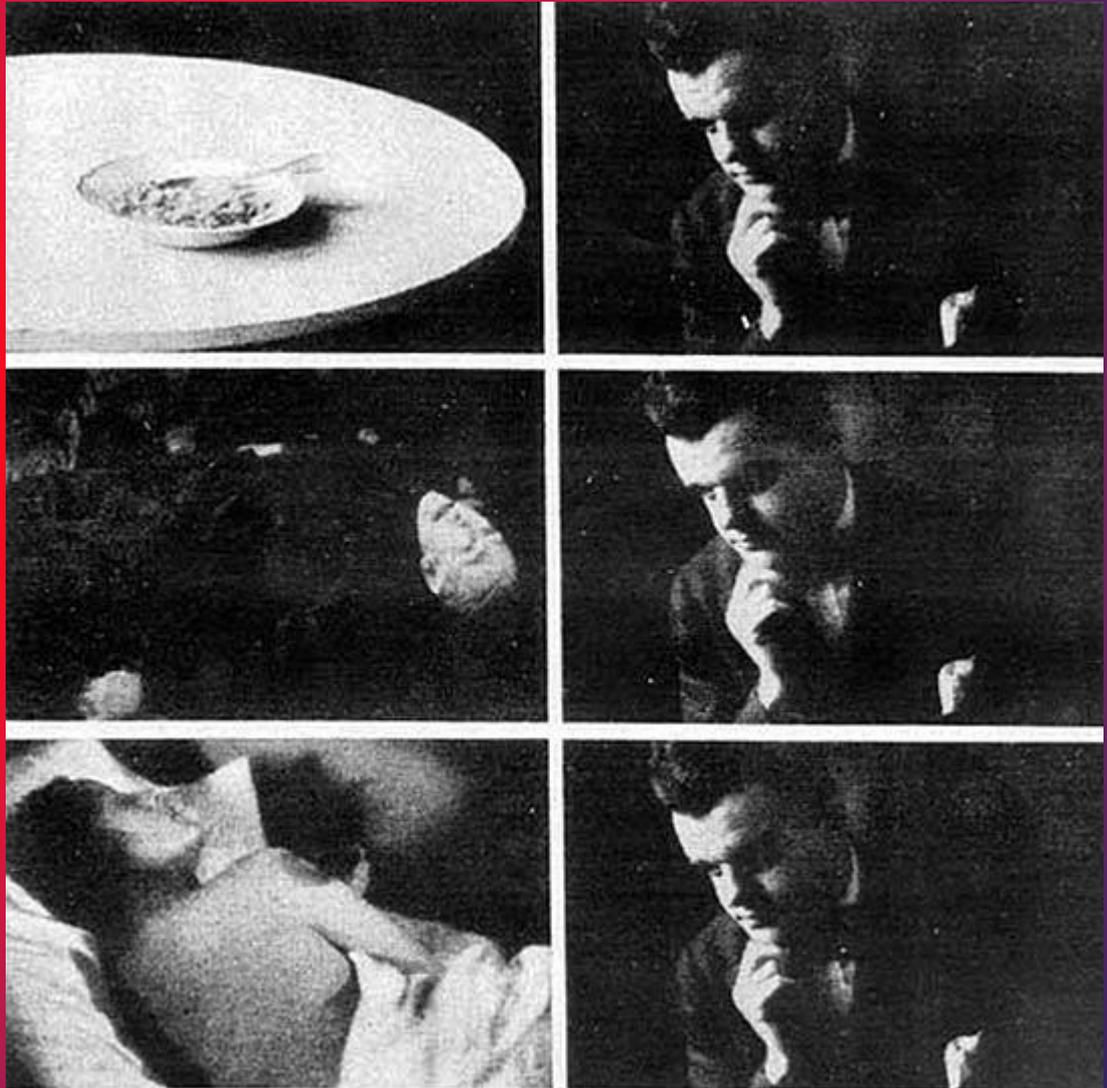
Aelita, Queen of Mars
– crude propaganda



The Kuleshov effect

Leading the spectator to assume spatial or temporal continuity from the shots of separate elements

The filmmaker built up a space and time that did not exist.



Applying context to a scene from Mother – the Kuleshov effect



Political context and film form

Bold images of
communist
martyrdom –
propaganda
value to
domestic and
international
audiences



Construction of film as Soviet in form



Symbolism – the Tsar
presides over the
court scene

The Father/Mother/Son
as symbolic of
old/current/future
Russia

More symbolism



Breaking ice – a ‘Soviet spring’

The mother’s journey
from drudge to
martyr

Constructivism

- Art has a **purpose** in society
- Influence of Alexander Rodchenko and photomontage
- The 'Russian cutting' as it was known in Hollywood gave a distinctly Soviet character to the films

Ideology in film form

Sergei Eisenstein's rules of montage:

- Intellectual: how editing generates 'meaning' from juxtaposition
- Metric: editing tempo
- Rhythmic: compositional contrasts (movement, e.g. order/chaos)
- Tonal: compositional contrasts (image, e.g. intersecting lines across the edit)
- Overtonal: the emotional pull of the above three

Also in Eisenstein

- The shocking image
- Typage
- Performance style difference in proletariat/bourgeois characters
- Location shooting
- Dynamic cinematography
- Negative portrayal of religion



Dziga Vertov's Kino-Pravda

- Ideology of documentary over fiction
- Dismissal of narrative, performance, etc
- Focus on the act of shooting the film itself as 'truthful'



What is the relationship between visual style and the subject matter of the films you have studied?

