embrace "people in the process of moral transformation," Kustanovich threatens the integrity of his classification and his structuralist approach.

Kustanovich's reading of Aksenov has two sides: the semanticising and the contextualizing. In spite of the former, which, through structuralism is directed toward a sum, he uncovers a wealth of relationships, explaining, for example, the historical events that have a bearing on The Burn. In the same manner, he discusses the gestures and speech habits of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, pointing to their embodiments in Aksenov's characters. On his way to establishing the determinants of the plot, he turns to Aksenov's siuzhet. Here he discovers the crossroad of Aksenov's experimental writing. It is at this crossroad that Kustanovich explores the elusive Aksenov: the etymologies, hypostases, metamorphoses, and Aesopian possibilities. Through such exploration, however, Kustanovich does not champion Aksenov's avant-garde elements, but his "stability of meaning," the kind of stability that is found in all structuralist criticism.

Walter Kolonsky


These two books deal with the history of Soviet cinema, particularly in the post-Stalin period. Each, of course, has strengths and weaknesses, but together they constitute a careful, scholarly analysis of cinema's place in the arts and its role in society. Anna Lawton is to be congratulated especially for her ability to put the film industry in its proper cultural and social context.

The collection edited by Lawton is less intellectually satisfying than the monograph she herself wrote. The chapters in The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema were originally papers presented at the Conference on Soviet Cinema at the Kennan Institute in September 1986. The principal problem is the lack of a unifying theme or general conclusion to bring the essays into a coherent whole. This book is organized chronologically, beginning with the films of the 1920s and ending with those of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. There is virtually nothing about the cinema of the Gorbachev era, a subject which, by contrast, is the focus of the second study under review. Still, despite its flaws, this work is a solid scholarly achievement.

In examining early Soviet cinema, Kristin Thompson regards 1924 as the year of recovery for the film industry, which was made possible, she argues, by German-Soviet dealings. Contrary to common assumption, she holds that the
Soviet government failed to provide direct subsidies for purchases of cinematic materials and films abroad. In her view, most purchases abroad were made on credit. Richard Taylor continues in this fashion by pointing out that during the 1930s Soviet cinema finally established its own conventions and traditions. In his rendition, it became the primary means by which ideology was transmitted through popular culture. Denise J. Youngblood completes the section on early Soviet cinema by claiming that Fridrikh Ermler was the most important director in Soviet film history. In her judgment, his *Fragment of the Empire* was one of the greatest accomplishments of the silent cinema in general.

Peter Kenez contends that Soviet films of World War II must be understood as part of the total mobilization of society. He indicates that the Soviets were ideologically better equipped to mobilize film making than the other belligerents. His conclusion that the war represented a “small oasis of freedom” in the film history of the Stalinist years is supported by other authors as well. Moving forward, John B. Dunlop regards *Siberiade* by Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovskii as one of the best Soviet films of the post-Stalin era. While most of the authors in this volume concentrate on Russian films, Lino Micciche correctly describes the Southern Republics, particularly Georgia, as a significant pillar of the late Soviet movie system, both with respect to structure and attendance.

If the main emphasis in *The Red Screen* is on the early history of the Soviet cinema, by comparison, in *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in our Time*, Lawton analyzes the film industry from 1975 to 1990, but especially during the Gorbachev era. As she acknowledges, her focus once again is primarily on Russian films. Lawton argues that cinema was the “least stagnating” art of the Brezhnev period, as directors expressed opposition using “Aspen language.” In her view, cinema took the lead in the arts by forecasting the political events associated with perestroika. She is quite familiar with the documentaries and nonconformist films depicting the Stalinist and Brezhnev years. According to Lawton, the expose of social ills reached its height in *This Is No Way To Live*. But her favorite film seems to be *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, directed by Aleksei German.

Lawton cogently describes the impact of khozraschet on the film industry. On the one hand, perestroika enabled filmmakers to express themselves freely, while, on the other, the law of the market sometimes stifled artistic freedom more ruthlessly than the state censor. Audiences quickly tired of chernukha, the naturalistic depiction of social problems with constant gloom, and wanted entertainment. The blockbusters of the glasnost’ era, such as *Intergirl*, were devoid of ideology, but this was insufficient. Lawton astutely asserts that during the 1990s filmmakers must combine entertainment and quality to halt a general decline in attendance. Given overall economic difficulties, she is skeptical about such a prospect, a prediction which has thus far proved to be true. Beyond this, the author is almost nostalgic about the films of the 1970s and the 1980s, essentially praising them for their high artistic achievement and implying that Soviet directors were at their best in portraying dissent and social alienation.