of the pertinent films which provide evidence for the author’s contention that secrecy ‘transformed Hollywood’s representation of American intelligence specifically, and American culture more generally; American citizens stopped trusting their government’ (6). Willmetts argues on the one hand that the CIA could be seen as a scapegoat, permitting the Pentagon free rein; and, on the other, against the myth-busting approach, which he claims suffers from epistemological brinksmanship. It is immensely pleasurable that a work which extols the significance of the archive is itself an illuminating archive of how such a profound distance has been created between a citizenry and its government and the consequent ellipsis between information and truth, fact and fiction.

As part of Edinburgh University Press’ Traditions in American Cinema series, this more than fulfils its stated remit of expressing and analysing the heterogeneous complexity of American cinema, far more radical and scattershot than institutional versions would contend. In attempting to theorise the agency of the Agency and the historicising effects of Hollywood’s official version of events in cinema’s counter-fiction, the author reminds us that the structure of State intervention in providing and hiding information has been predicated on a misunderstanding of Leopold Von Franke’s positivist exalting of the archive, itself complicated, revised and interrogated by developments within German nationalism. The existential damage to the culture is simply an outward reaction to serial acts extending Executive privilege which compromise the system of checks and balances established to maintain open democracy. We are entering a new Presidential era in the United States, which has just witnessed the greatest programme of mass surveillance in human history, undertaken by a Commander in Chief who personally directed that Bradley/Chelsea Manning be imprisoned, stripped naked and confined to solitary 23 h a day, for lifting the lid on government secrecy. Whither historiography? Willmetts throws down the gauntlet to his colleagues: cinema has raised the question, now it is the turn of the academy to respond. How pleasing that a tome which teases the scission between document and fiction should take as its organising idea that ‘history, that ‘noble cause’ that once bound up the nation, is only ever as credible as our faith in the veracity of the documentary record’ (18).

ESSENTIAL.

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Border Crossing: Russian Literature into Film
ALEXANDER BURRY and FREDERICK WHITE (eds), 2016
Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press
pp. 272, illus., £75.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4744-1142-4

Traditional rhetoric surrounding adaptation focuses on the extent to which the adaptation authentically reproduces the source text. Emphasis is placed on the
fidelity of the adaptation with respect to a perceived ‘original’. Alexander Burry and Frederick White’s edited collection, on the other hand, extends upon more recent discussions in both adaptation and translation studies to focus instead on how deviation from an original becomes a necessary component of film adaptation in regards to aesthetics, culture and politics. Consequently, in situating the collection within a study of Russian literature, the work illuminates those instances in which deviation in adaptation has proved enormously significant, not only for extending Russian literature’s global influence, but in producing new texts and new ways to approach the source text while undermining the notion of ‘originality’.

The collection features a diverse but familiar range of filmmakers, including Sergei Eisenstein, Robert Bresson, Luchino Visconti, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, among others. Of the Russian authors discussed in the book, from whom these directors find their cinematic inspirations, literary giants Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Bulgakov, and Gogol are among the more well-known, alongside other, lesser known authors such as Yury Tynianov and Ilya Ilf and Yevgeni Petrov. The editors and contributors illustrate that there is evidently a notable symbiosis between global directors and Russian literature, and the book investigates, at large, this particular relationship and how it influences the place and status of Russian literature in a global context.

Ronald Meyer’s case study on Dostoyevsky’s short story *White Nights*, for instance, discusses the phenomenon of intercultural translations, looking at the various adaptations of Dostoyevsky’s short story. ‘What happens to Dostoevkii’s narrator when he goes abroad and settles down in twentieth- or twenty-first-century Livorno, Paris, Mumbai, or Strasbourg?’ (40) Referencing notable translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, Meyer notes that film adaptation both fundamentally de- and re-contextualises the source text. *White Nights* has been adapted no less than fourteen times, including in American, Spanish, French, Indian, South Korean, Italian, Iranian as well as in Russian. The globalised reach of Dostoyevsky’s appeal is apparent, showing how crucial adaptation is in extending Russian literature’s influence across geographical – and cultural – borders.

This collection also focuses on how a filmmaker’s particular aesthetic approach works to complement the source text; in his chapter on Bresson’s adaptations of Dostoyevsky’s work, Olga Peters Hasty looks at how the director’s cinematography utterly transforms Dostoevsky’s content to actively extend upon the author’s original story. Hasty acknowledges the difficulty in translating Dostoyevsky’s dense work into the ‘passive spectatorship’ of cinema, potentially denying the viewer ‘entry into the complex issues that Dostoevskii’s densely interwoven, action-packed novels interrogate’ (66). Yet Hasty notes that Bresson’s films suppress the psychological realism of Dostoyevsky’s works in an effort to move beyond the literary, with Bresson ‘refusing to replicate’ the author’s stories, focusing instead on the ‘created world of the film itself’ (67).

Consequently, scholars have referred to Bresson’s Dostoevskian films as ‘refractions’, ‘paraphrases’, and ‘allusions’, describing the work of adaptation as a
necessary deviation from an original. Adaptation, in this sense, emphasises change rather than replication, becoming an act of creativity in and of itself.

Yet while many of the case studies show the strategic differences inherent in the adaptations, there are also instances of the original and adaptation working in complicated cohesion to both produce something new while illuminating the ‘original’; Robert Mulcahy’s chapter ‘Chasing the Wealth’ discusses Mel Brook’s Americanisation of Ilf and Petrov’s satirical work The Twelve Chairs, arguing how Brooks carries over these satirical elements into an American-Jewish setting while not wholly relinquishing the Russian references. Mulcahy notes that Brooks personalised ‘Il’f and Petrov’s Russia by intermingling Jewish motifs with Russian and American references’ (89).

Interestingly, Mulcahy notes that Brook’s adaptation was not as critically or economically successful as the director’s other films, owing to what he sees as Brook’s attempt to ‘combine several worlds into one in order to recreate a nostalgic image of Russia and make a serious movie about overwhelming social, economic, and political boundaries’ (198).

The use of adaptation to reflect the filmmaker’s political stance becomes apparent in Dennis Ioffe’s treatment of Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s film adaptation of Nabokov’s novel Despair. Ioffe examines how Fassbinder’s work moves beyond the neutrality of Nabokov’s German setting into a Nazi occupied one, giving the film a vital political subtext. He argues that there is a ‘dramatic dialectical collision’ when ‘Fassbinder transports Nabokov’s hypotext to a different cultural territory – namely Nazi Germany’ (201). Fassbinder, Ioffe writes, was intensely preoccupied with the prevailing social issues of his time, and his cinematic activism can be seen to directly inform his work on Despair, with the director creating ‘excursions into alternate cultural and temporal spaces’ (204). By re-situating Despair in an overwhelming political context, the fundamental nature of Nabokov’s Despair is transformed, becoming a catalyst for Fassbinder’s political-cinematic interrogation. Themes of Jewishness and homosexuality are emphasised in order to illuminate the ‘degenerate’ status of homosexual Jews during Nazi Germany. Fassbinder therefore creates an alternate world from Nabokov’s work to provoke political sensibilities that were otherwise absent or non-existent in the source material.

Through its varied and intriguing case studies, this collection reveals what is perhaps an unsurprising notion that the fundamental processes of translation are contextually driven. Bresson’s ‘cinematic vision’ suitably parallels the darkly psychological work of Dostoyevsky, whereas the transition from Ilf and Petrov’s Russia to Mel Brook’s world shows the limits to which adaptation can effectively exert itself. Of central significance to this collection is the use of adaptation to reflect political attitudes, the transformation of context instrumental to a re-examination of sociopolitical narratives.

Predominantly absent from this collection is an extended discussion on Stanley Kubrick’s monumental influence in adapting Russian literature in Lolita, yet given the breadth of work on Kubrick and adaptation, this is not necessarily an issue.

The various case studies illustrate how and in what ways the source text is used to produce something new, while at the same time strengthening Russian literature’s
global standing. Crossing borders therefore becomes a crucial act in extending Russia’s literary influence in a global context; the adapted work necessarily deviates in aesthetic, cultural and political manners in order not to replicate, at all, any perceived essence of an original, but to create an entirely new text, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between the source text and the adaptation.

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**Using Film as a Source**

Sian Barber  
Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015  
pp. xiii + 174, £12.99 (paperback)

Sian Barber’s book is the first volume published in the University of London’s Institute of Historical Research new series of research guides. The series targets first-time researchers in the field of history and within this framework *Using Film as a Source* aims to provide undergraduate students – whether in the field of history, film or media studies – with a toolkit for understanding the specifics of the medium film. With this intention, Barber’s guide joins recent related publications such as James Chapman’s *Film and History* (2013) or Maartin Pereboom’s *History and Film: Moving Pictures and the Study of the Past* (2010), and complements these with its valuable tips on good scientific practice.

*Using Film as a Source* breaks down its topic in nine well-arranged chapters, guiding students from the relationship of film and history (chapter 2) to suggestions on how to formulate research questions (chapter 5) to the point of writing up the findings (chapter 9). Subchapters, unfortunately not listed in the table of contents, create a very reader-friendly environment, concise case studies illustrate possible approaches and boxes at the end of each chapter recommend further readings.

From the beginning, Barber is careful to remind the readers that films are not documents that simply present the past: ‘The past is never simply being recreated but rather it is being interpreted’ (p. 10). She understands film as text as well as cultural artefact and highlights that in order to comprehend the ways in which films interpret the past, it is the researcher’s task to go beyond textual analyses and to ‘ask how it has been created, why it has been created, and who it has been created for’ (p. 18). It is a clear strength of the book that Barber refrains from overloading the text – and potentially overstraining beginning students – with theoretical concepts of film and history. Instead she formulates a multitude of questions and intersperses ample examples to heighten the awareness for the complex