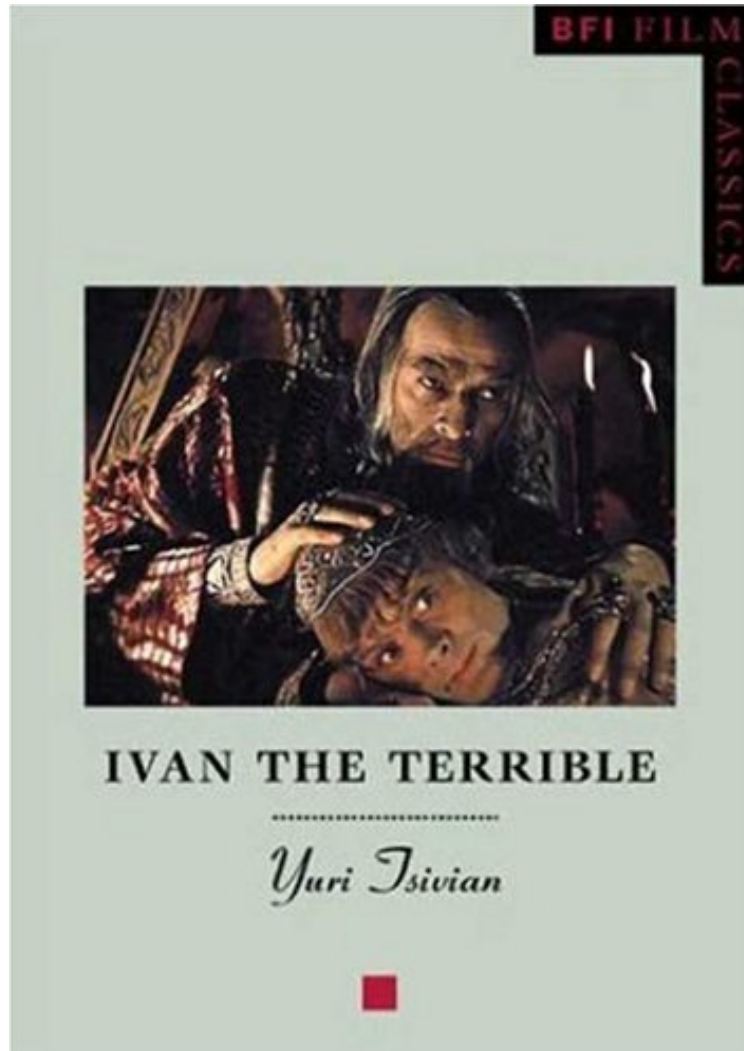


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Ivan the Terrible (BFI Film Classics)

Yuri Tsivian

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#1725945 in Books Yuri Tsivian 2001-03-29 2008-01-22Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.65 x .35 x 5.40l, .39 #File Name: 085170834X96 pagesIvan the Terrible | File size: 71.Mb

Yuri Tsivian : Ivan the Terrible (BFI Film Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ivan the Terrible (BFI Film Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy JeffGreat product, great timing.4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A psycho-historical trip through Eisenstein's last classic.By darragh o'donoghueThe story behind 'Ivan The Terrible', Sergei Eisenstein's last masterpiece, is the stuff of cinematic legend. Approached by the Kremlin to make an historical epic emphasising the paralells between the first true Russian Tsar and Stalin, Eisenstein intended his film to be a trilogy. Part 1, narrating Ivan's consolidation of absolute power, was well-received by its patrons, and Eisenstein was awarded the Stalin Prize. Part 2, which focused on Ivan's rule of terror and his increasing reliance on a ruthless secret police, so enraged the hierarchy that it was shelved until after Stalin's death. Part 3 was

never made, and Eisenstein, never directing again, died two years later. This is not the story Yuri Tsivian chooses to tell in his study of 'Ivan' - he is not interested in its historical context (conceived in the heat of World War 2, finished as the USSR emerged as one of the world's two superpowers). He does not discuss 'Ivan' in terms of Soviet culture at the time, the contemporary world of art, or film history in general. He doesn't even really place it within Eisenstein's oeuvre. 'Ivan', though much admired, is probably Eisenstein's least popular film. Its apparent staticness, pictorialism and theatricality seem precious compared to the dynamic energy of silent films like 'Strike' or 'Battleship Potemkin'. Tsivian attempts to galvanise that staticness, to show how the film moves - not by a conventional, linear story, but through ideas, motifs, patterns, correspondances. By using Eisenstein's diaries, notes, production memos, sketches and essays, he traces the contours of the two 'Ivan's' - the complete one envisaged in Eisenstein's head, and the abandoned one left to posterity. This book is too dense to synopsis in a couple of sentences, and the very act of reading it (preferably with the film at hand, although the book is impeccably illustrated) provokes the act of understanding. But there are three basic ideas: 1. Each frame in 'Ivan' has a number of sources from Eisenstein's intellectual canon, be it the writings of Rabelais, Shakespeare, Balzac, Freud or Bakhtin; the art of the Renaissance or Russian murals; the traditions of folklore, alchemy or the carnivalesque; or American films by the likes of Chaplin. These sources feed into the complex system of correspondances that comprise the movie, each character, gesture, location, lighting set-up or composition repeated again and again, but always transformed. Despite this formidable cultural arsenal, the audience is not expected to intellectually grasp all this in one sitting; rather, the film, as all art should according to Eisenstein, uncovers 'primitive' memories buried in our own and in the collective unconscious. 2. Although it is nominally a historical epic, dramatising the major events and characters of their time, and their relationships to one another, 'Ivan' is truly a 'monodrama', Ivan's 'inner monologue', with all other characters and events functioning as doubling aspects of Ivan's self, persona, symbolic matrix or whatever. Tsivian works through Eisenstein's complex theories about bisexuality, language, prenatal memory etc. to explain how this works. 3. Eisenstein's old practice of montage, where contrary elements were bound together by editing to create new meaning, is replaced by montage within the image, where contradictions are held in tension in mise-en-scene and acting style. 'Ivan' is a dense and difficult film, and this study is a dense and difficult book, reliant on bold speculation and seemingly capricious connections. If you are new to the film or Eisenstein, I would advise you to start with something more user-friendly (e.g. David Bordwell), and then come back to it. Tsivian is eager to analyse the film's mechanisms and origins rather than its meaning, giving his reader the tools with which to 'work' this forbidding film. In spite of his valiant effort, though, his approach actually makes the film appear even more static: by focusing on the various steps leading up to each frame and its components, he makes it seem like one of those 16th century paintings full of recondite emblems that have to be decoded by an expert before you can understand them. It makes 'Ivan' seem like fine art, not cinema; and, to be frank, that is the experience of watching this awesome but dislikable film. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Deeply insightful! By findkeep@eburg.com At the opening of this book Tsivian cites "Ivan the Terrible Parts I and II" as one of the most complex films ever made. By its end, he has justified that statement. His book is a dense, incisive, and deeply insightful look at a great film. Also, it is a very fast read (I received and finished it in a period of a few hours). Above all the book serves as a telling detail of Eisenstein's brilliance. He was, after all, a director whose films were always difficult to approach, harder still to understand, but hardest to appreciate. If only Tsivian would write a similar companion piece to "Alexander Nevsky."

Ivan The Terrible (1944/46) was envisaged by its director, Sergei Eisenstein as a trilogy. But, Eisenstein died before beginning the third part. Part One had been a resounding success, winning a Stalin prize, but Part Two met with the Kremlin's disfavour and was eventually banned until 1958. Using research gathered from Soviet archives, Yuri Tsivian offers an insight into Eisenstein's grand project. He reconstructs the director's "mental film" that underlies the finished work. The book attempts to follow the train of thought that connect the aesthetic construction and visual design of the film to Eisenstein's knowledge of iconography and painting, psychoanalysis and philosophy, Shakespeare and Balzac - and much more.

From the Back Cover Ivan The Terrible (1944/46) was envisaged by its director, Sergei Eisenstein as a trilogy. But, Eisenstein died before beginning the third part. Part One had been a resounding success, winning a Stalin prize, but Part Two met with the Kremlin's disfavour and was eventually banned until 1958. Using research gathered from Soviet archives, Yuri Tsivian offers an insight into Eisenstein's grand project. He reconstructs the director's "mental film" that underlies the finished work. The book attempts to follow the train of thought that connect the aesthetic construction and visual design of the film to Eisenstein's knowledge of iconography and painting, psychoanalysis and philosophy, Shakespeare and Balzac - and much more. About the Author Yuri Tsivian was born in Latvia and received his Ph.D. from the Leningrad Institute of Theatre, Music and Cinema in 1984. He is Professor of Art History and Cinema Studies at the University of Chicago and author of *Silent Witnesses: Russian Films, 1908-1919* (1989), *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception* (1994), and, in collaboration with Yuri Lotman, *Dialogues with the Screen*

(1994).