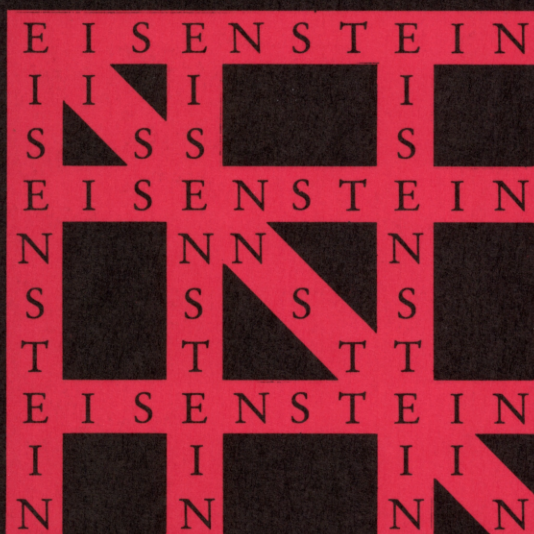


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EISENSTEIN REVISITED

A Collection of Essays



Edited by
Lars Kleberg and Håkan Lövgren

Almqvist & Wiksell International
Stockholm 1987

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Introduction

The Soviet film director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) is still, almost 40 years after his death, an enigmatic person whose films and ideas continue to stir controversy. His experiments attempting to unite art and science and his extensive discussions about the psychology of artistic creativity and form have long intrigued and provoked art historians, psychologists, sociologists, and, not the least, filmmakers and film historians.

Eisenstein stepped from a theatrical setting of frantic experimentation into film during the years following the October Revolution. Tadeusz Szczepański's analysis of the young director's stage debut, *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man* (1923), approaches his theatrical background from the complex question of how Eisenstein's passion for the circus, his interest in psychoanalysis and the radically pragmatic notion of art all helped to determine his particular metaphoric method of making films. In Örjan Roth-Lindberg's article we are presented with a detailed semiotic examination of the mechanics of this very method at work in Eisenstein's tribute to the Revolution, the film *October* (1927-1928).

The close ties between theater and film in the minds of the leading representatives of the avant-garde in the 1920s and '30s come forth in Lars Kleberg's fictionalized dialogue between Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht. The dialogue paints two opposing conceptual canvases of how works of art affect or ought to affect the spectator. The issue of the ideological and emotional consequences of particular artistic methods and the problematic relationship between Eisenstein and another theater director, Vsevolod Meyerhold, form the basis for Leonid Kozlov's persuasive hypothesis about just who lurks behind the image of the tsar in Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*.

The psycho-sexual content of art and artistic creativity is a concern of the 20th century and the Freudian school in particular. Freud's psychobiographical analysis of Leonardo da Vinci made an early impression on Eisenstein since he saw the Renaissance

artist as his prime model. Håkan Lövgren attempts to answer the question of how Eisenstein might have perceived Freud's analysis in relation to his own personality and artistic career, and what role the notion of ecstasy in artistic creativity and reception of art played in Eisenstein's theories.

Eisenstein's own biography and his early, though critical, interest in psychoanalysis did leave strong traces in his methods and works, traces that have been analyzed in a few psychobiographical works on the Soviet film director. The film *Ivan the Terrible* shows obvious stylistic influences from German expressionist cinema, but the problem of the deeper psychological significance of these influences has not been explored before. Mikael Enckell's psychoanalytical approach points to specific parallels between Eisenstein's film and Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Both films are reflective of profoundly regressive tendencies in the respective societies of Weimar Germany and post-revolutionary Russia.

The cameraman Edvard Tissé was Eisenstein's lifelong collaborator in the creation of his films. The uniqueness of this relationship and its artistic results is often mentioned. Eleonora Tissé's personally colored contribution underscores the fact that Edvard Tissé was a very independently thinking member of the team around Eisenstein and that the collaboration between the two sometimes resulted in conflict. It is against this background that the existence of two cameramen in *Ivan the Terrible* can be explained.

Six of the contributions presented here emanate from an interdisciplinary symposium held at the Swedish Film Institute in Stockholm on May 16, 1983 — a joint effort of the Stockholm University Departments of Baltic and Slavic Languages and Film and Drama and the Swedish Film Institute. The purpose was to engage a number of researchers and critics in exploring less well known or neglected aspects of Eisenstein's life and work in order to challenge or modify the commonly accepted image of the Soviet film director. Leonid Kozlov's essay (first published in Moscow in 1970) was included as an original and relevant perspective on an important facet of Eisenstein's development, his relation to Meyerhold. The hope is that all the contributions of this collection will provoke ideas and discussions about Eisenstein's far from

unambiguous role in the development of Soviet film and film aesthetics generally.

Transliteration adheres to the Common scientific system with the exception of two names appearing frequently in the texts, Eisenstein and Meyerhold.

Lars Kleberg Håkan Lövgren

Tadeusz Szczepański

The Wise Man Reconsidered *Some Notes on the Performance*

One of the most remarkable performances of the Russian theatrical avant-garde was Eisenstein's stage debut, the adaptation of Ostrovskij's *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man*, often referred to as *The Wise Man*. The performance, despite the extensive bibliography¹, still presents possibilities of further research concerning Eisenstein's later works. The following aspects of such research could be suggested: 1) defining the role of the circus as a generator of Eisenstein's artistic experiments; 2) presentation of the first metaphorical expression of Eisenstein's fascination with psychoanalysis reflecting his complexes and obsessions; 3) tracing the origin of the pragmatic concept of art, which constitutes a main leitmotif in the evolution of his theoretical system.

Let us recall Eisenstein's theatrical road to his directorial debut: after one season of attending Vsevolod Meyerhold's theater studio, scenographic practice in Nikolaj Foregger's eccentric theater and cooperation with the avant-garde groupe FÉKS in St. Petersburg, the artist returned to his mother organization — the Proletkult; this time he was given a position which assured him — or at least such was the assumption — full artistic independence. Being the leader of a section of this organization he wanted to initiate a troupe that would take performances to the workmen's districts in Moscow. Unfortunately the plan was not realized due to difficulties of transporting the equipment, but the idea itself deserves attention as it refers to the tradition of the street theater fully liberated from the limitations of a box stage. Eisenstein's group was an amateur

¹ See Regina Dreyer, "Z teatralnej przeszłości Eisenšteina" *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, No. 1958:1(29), pp. 3-24; Aleksandr Fevral'skij, "S. M. Ejzenstejn v teatre", *Voprosy teatra* 1967, Moskva 1968, pp. 82-101; Karla Hielscher, "S. M. Eisensteins Theaterarbeit beim Moskauer Proletkult", *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* No. 13, 1973, pp. 64-75 and Daniel Gerould "Eisenstein's *Wise Man*", *The Drama Review* 1974:1(61), pp. 77-88.

team typical of the Proletkult, which, other than their good intentions, had no command of any technique.

The first task of the director was therefore an intensive training of actors, the aim of which was to work out purely physical means of expression. The basic subject of the training, apart from boxing, fencing, acrobatics, jumping into water and riding horses, was biomechanics and its principles, which Eisenstein had mastered in Meyerhold's studio. "Eisenstein", recalls one of his actors, "devoted much time to the theoretical bases of the training, referring to the practice of Meyerhold's works, to *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (Diderot), to Coquelin's *L'art du comédien*, to the Kabuki theater. [...]. To us, biomechanics promised rules for the acquisition of an actor's movement, the possibility of analyzing its purpose and economy in attaining a desired effect, and pleasure from working rationally with one's partner."²

The Wise Man by Aleksandr Ostrovskij, a classic of Russian realistic drama, became the literary pretext for theatrical experiment. The critics commenting upon *The Wise Man* often emphasized the fact that the text of the play underwent numerous transformations. In spite of Sergej Tret'jakov's essential modifications (change of the time and place of the action, introduction of characters with political overtones, presence of polemical allusions concerning manners and matters of politics), which resulted in the fact that only 25 per cent of the original text was included in the version of the performance, the word was not the essential material of the play; on the contrary, its rôle was considerably reduced. The excellent critic Ivan Aksenov, Eisenstein's former teacher who conducted drama classes in Meyerhold's workshop, wrote:

This is another failure: in this case we have no more to do with novelty — Eisenstein, like many contemporary directors, is preoccupied with the visual scenario of the play. His actors' diction is so poor that in the first row of the small Proletkult auditorium one can understand nothing. The performance, intended as a dramatic parody, changes into pantomime with fragments of the text hardly audible to the audience. Where

² Aleksandr Levšin, "Na repeticijach *Mudreci*", in: *Ėjzenštejn v vospominanijach sovremennikov*, ed. R. N. Jurenev, Moskva 1975, pp. 138-139.

does the contempt for the word come from? The question has troubled me but now I seem to know the answer: the dramatic text was defective, so the director has put it away and celebrated its death. I will not argue, the text may not appeal to the director, but why make use of it then? At best we have to do with the director's indifference to the text; it is about time we recovered from this old disease. The text confuses the performance, throwing it out of balance and muddling up its effect.³

It was not literature, however, that constituted the main source of inspiration for staging *The Wise Man*; it was Eisenstein's childhood fascination with the circus. The action of the performance took place in a ring, with the whole repertoire of circus tricks. The setting was also designed in the circus convention.

According to Sergej Michajlovič's design the set ought to minimize the distance between the actor and the spectator. A construction resembling the circus ring had been designed. A round green carpet with a red hem was halfway surrounded by spectator chairs. On the opposite side yellow ramps led to a small platform. On the platform they placed two ladder-like constructions with a dark cherry red, almost black curtain hanging on them. There was another curtain under the platform, and a screen on the wall. The props included a black trick chest (the actors 'disappeared' and reappeared on the balcony), trapezes, rings for the actor playing the parrot, two yellow cylindrical columns, and a grand piano. During the performance the props were being brought in and removed by the technical staff.⁴

Such a setting arrangement was suggestive not only of the circus but also of the constructivist ideas of Stepanova's and Popova's sets for Vsevolod Meyerhold's productions in the years 1921-23. The production of *A Doll's House* marked the beginning of Eisenstein's active participation in Meyerhold's work of transforming the

³ Ivan Aksenov, "Mudrec S. M. Ėjzenštejna", *Zrelišča*, 1923:40.

⁴ Levšin, op. cit., pp. 140-141.

traditional stage into an abstract construction, "a staging machine" serving exclusively as a workshop for the actor's biomechanical acrobatics. Eisenstein draws the constructivist principles to the extreme, which somehow leads to an identification with the starting point, that is the circus. Thus the circle of inspiration is closed, since the program of reforming the theater as worked out in Meyerhold's studio was an attempt at a synthesis of emotionally active elements typical of various kinds of popular entertainment, the circus being a model example.

Using the theater to resemble the circus was one of the major trends in the development of the revolutionary Soviet theater.⁵ Its beginning can be traced to the famous production *The First Distiller* based on a text by Lev Tolstoj, staged by Jurij Annenkov at the Ermitage Theater (Petrograd) in 1919. Similarly, Sergej Radlov's (a student of Meyerhold) propaganda comedies were staged in the circus convention (The Popular Comedy Theater, Petrograd). Foregger's and FÉKS eccentric staging ideas were also an expression of this trend.⁶

The dynamism of the circus show was considered to be a carrier of certain ideological values. Lunačarskij maintained that the circus was of great importance to a revolutionary society as it incited heroic attitudes and vital social forces.⁷ Meyerhold wrote about the circus: "If I were asked what entertainment our people need now when Russia has thrown off the shackles, I would reply without hesitation: 'such entertainment as only circus showmen can provide'. The Russian people need an art which could inspire them with great courage".⁸

Besides, the circus convention was a pure embodiment of the "culture of laughter", and the need for a festive theatre expressing "the delight of the new way of life" was rather urgent at that time.

Circus elements were omnipresent in Eisenstein's production. The stage design was subordinated to the rules of the circus setting. Eisenstein developed to the extreme the tendency of minimizing the

⁵ See David Zolotnickij, *Zori teatral'nogo oktjabrja*, Leningrad 1976, pp. 221-222.

⁶ See Håkan Lövgren, "Sergej Radlov's Electric Baton: The Futurization of Russian Theater", in *Theater and Literature in Russian 1900-1930*, ed. Lars Kleberg and Nils Åke Nilsson, Stockholm 1984, pp. 101-112.

⁷ Zolotnickij, op. cit., p. 222.

⁸ *ibid.*

distance between the stage and the audience — by enlarging the proscenium — which could already be observed in his earlier set designs.⁹ The proscenium became a ring surrounded by chairs. The actors-acrobats somersaulted on trapezes over the spectators' heads. During the performance they were leaving the ring and entering it from various parts of the theater.

The plot followed the text of the play only in a general outline; it was a sort of a diving board for circus turns. The action developed with amazing speed, according to the principles of the amorphous poetics of a circus show. Ivan Aksenov wrote: "...this is action for action's sake, jumping for jumping's sake, trick for trick's sake".¹⁰

Yet there was a method in this madness; the method was later to determine Eisenstein's way of constructing film images. Eisenstein quotes a number of cases of transcending conventional realistic expression toward a literal, physical realization of a metaphor denoting a given situation. Thus a clash between the literal and metaphorical sense of a word was presented not at the level of text but at the level of movement, of the actor's behaviour.¹¹

The symbolism of *The Strike* — together with its famous epilogue "the slaughter" — is of the same provenance. "The metaphors" — Eisenstein wrote when discussing *The Wise Man* — "where subject to a development *à rebours*, they somehow 'proceeded backward' to reach the source of their formation and that is why they had a direct appeal, a comic, grotesque effect. (Such effects were characteristic of the ancient farce). In *The Wise Man* the theatrical form turned out to be very close to a circus show."¹²

Eisenstein also made use of word play: he often sought different meanings of a word or played on phonetic resemblance of neighboring words.¹³

In these linguistic experiments, consisting of an investigation in semantic transformations of words in relation to the context,

⁹ See Naum Klejman, "Transformations inhabituelles du 'Chat botte', in: S. M. Eisenstein. *Esquisses et dessins*, Paris 1978, pp. 11-18.

¹⁰ Aksenov, op. cit.

¹¹ See S. M. Ejzenštejn, *Izbrannye proizvedenija v šesti tomach*, Moskva 1964-1971, 2, p. 453. Further references to this edition will be given in the form 2/453.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Levšin, op. cit., p. 143

Eisenstein was close to formalist studies.¹⁴ A year later Jurij Tynjanov's *The Theory of Poetic Language* appeared, in which the author gave a comprehensive presentation of the semantics of poetic context. Thus from the very beginnings of his artistic activity Eisenstein was preoccupied with the mechanisms of aesthetic semiosis. A stage production became for him a workshop of many-layered artistic composition in which meanings were born through the juxtaposition of different levels of a theatrical text. "It is in the theater that I experienced this feeling of a thematic solution in various mutually overlapping dimensions, and — however strange it may seem — these various dimensions can be applied in cinema."¹⁵

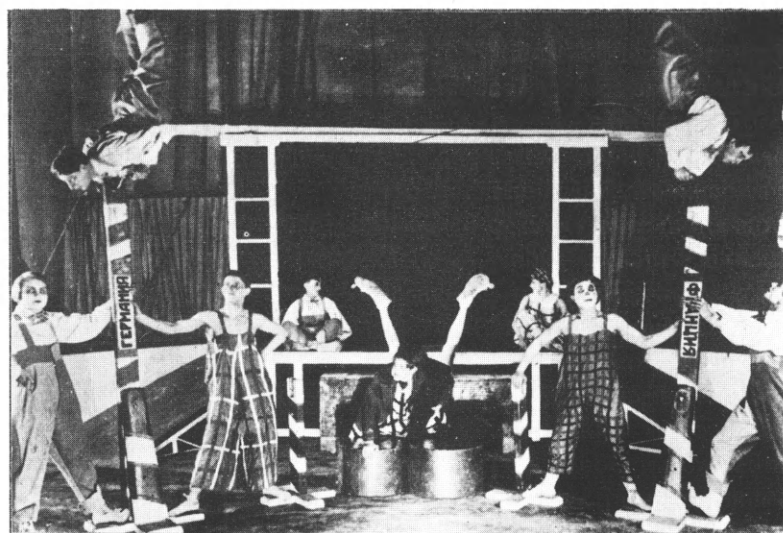
In the practice and theory of an "attractive performance" Eisenstein was more interested in composition problems than in meaning. Therefore he attached great importance to music. Aleksandr Levšin, one of the actors in the production, wrote:

The musical accompaniment formed the rhythmic base for the rehearsals and the performance. I cannot think of any scene without music. There was no music composed especially for the purpose of the production. Zinovij Kitaev, the accompanist, watched the rehearsal and — according to Eisenstein's instruction — compiled musical fragments which either accompanied the songs and dances or parodied the theme of a scene (Glumov with a pair of wings on his back was being lifted in a lunge and the pianist was playing a religious song about angels) or contrasted with it (Bizet's overture to *Carmen* before Glumov the white clown's exit) or raised the dramatic tension (an actor walking on a tightrope over the spectators' heads, accompanied by *Harlequin's Cloak*). Music was an indispensable, active element of *The Wise Man*; the actors would not have been able to play without it. The musical accompaniment gave a sense of a smooth flow to the stage narration, cemented it.¹⁶

¹⁴ See Vjačeslav Ivanov, *Očerki po istorii semiotiki v SSSR*, Moskva 1976, pp. 197-199; Tadeusz Szczepański, "OPOJAZ — film — Eisenstein", in: *Pogranicza i korespondencje sztuk*, ed. T. Cieślakowska and J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1980, pp. 271-283.

¹⁵ 2/455.

¹⁶ Levšin, op. cit., p. 147.



Scenes from "Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man"

Yet the abstraction of musically organized circus form, which fascinated Eisenstein, did not blur the thematic contours of the drama nor his ideological interpretation of it. The performance, according to Tret'jakov's and Eisenstein's intentions, was meant to be a "political buffoonery in circus style".¹⁷ The aim was to ridicule the milieu of political opposition as well as religion, to parody the style of academic theaters with which the "Theatrical October" was at war. For the authors of the performance, Glumov — the main character — was a Russian Rastignac, an embodiment of opportunism and unscrupulous careerism which were revived under a new guise in the NEP period.

Conspicuous elements of carnival poetics aimed at depreciating the ideas and rituals of the "old way of life" and at ridiculing the phenomena of the highbrow culture of white émigrés.¹⁸ A good example of carnivalisation is provided by the peculiar change of some characters; they assumed a triple role: the original one (i.e. as in the play), a political, and a circus one. For instance, an actor played the part of the merchant Mamaev with the nickname Mamiljukov-Prolivnoj (which was the allusion of the leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party and the minister of Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government) and at the same time he acted as a clown, ridiculing a well-known political personage. A scene mentioned above by Levšin, in which Glumov with "angel's wings" and a lit candle in his hand was being lifted with the rope to the ceiling was a parody of the Ascension. The wedding ceremony was conducted by the clown Manefa, who played the part of the priest performing circus tricks, and the very ceremony, in which three bridegrooms participated, became a parody of the rite.

The conspicuous motif of eroticism, difficult to miss in the performance, was also presented in the carnival convention. The presence of this motif was due, among other things, to Eisenstein's wide psychoanalytic readings; his interest in Freud corresponded to

¹⁷ Sergej Tret'jakov, "Mudrec v Proletkul'te", *Zrelišča*, 1923:38.

¹⁸ As to the role of carnival in Eisenstein's work, especially in *Ivan the Terrible*, see Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Iz zametok o stroenii i funkcijach karnaval'nogo obraza", in *Problemy poëтики i istorii literatury*, Saransk 1973, pp. 37-53; "K semiotičeskoj teorii karnavala kak inverzii dvoičnyh protivopostavlenij", *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, VIII, Tartu, 1977, pp. 45-64.

the spirit of the 1920's.¹⁹ At the time Freud's theory was a great success in the Soviet Union. In the *Psychoanalytic Library* series (edited by I. Ermakov) almost all Freud's works written up to that time were published.

Freud's theory inspired lively discussions regarding the psychological determinants of ideology. An innovatory criticism of Freud's doctrine was offered by Michail Bachtin in his book *Freudianism*.²⁰ Eisenstein read these works and acquainted himself with Freudian symbolism.

In the erotic elements of *The Wise Man* one can also notice the first expression of the inner problems of the artist whose private life was veiled by a painful mystery. The presence of the metaphorical yet easily detectable eroticism on the stage reflected a general tendency of the post-revolutionary period to challenge bourgeois conventions with eroticism and to grease up to the lower middle class audience with commercial cabaret effects. Eisenstein, who designed costumes and decorations for Foregger, did not regard the erotic elements in his own theater as mere scandalizing effects. Already at that time the sexual element was for him a powerful biological force, a fundamental manifestation of man's vegetative energy.²¹ That is from where the significance of eroticism in his theater of "psychophysiological attraction" is derived. Many scenes in *The Wise Man* contained a metaphorically disguised erotic meaning. Piquant allusions and hidden meanings were concealed in the puns of the dialogue, in the songs ironically commenting on a given situation, and in the stage movement. Aleksandr Levšin writes about other ideas of this kind:

¹⁹ See Boris Čagin, Vladimir Klušin, *Bor'ba za istoričeskij materializm v SSSR*, Moskva 1975, pp. 162-175 and Jean Marti "La psychanalyse en Russie (1909-1930)", *Critique*, 346.

²⁰ Valentin Vološinov, *Frejdzizm*, Moskva-Leningrad 1927. The book, actually written by Bachtin, was in Eisenstein's library and contained many remarks made by him in the margins; the parallels between Bachtin's thought and Eisenstein's ideas have been dealt with by V. Ivanov in his essay "Značenie idej M. M. Bachtina o znake, vyskazyvanii i dialoge dlja sovremennoj semiotiki", *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, VI, Tartu 1973, pp. 5-44.

²¹ See Vjačeslav Ivanov, *Očerki po istorii semiotiki v SSSR*, pp. 93-104; Dominique Fernandez, *Eisenstein. L'arbre jusqu'aux racines II*, Paris 1975; Tadeusz Szczepański, "Eisenstein wobec psychologii głębi" in *Eisenstein — artysta i myśliciel*, ed. T. Szczepański and W. Wierzewski, Warszawa 1982, pp. 120-138.

Eisenstein had an exceptional intuition to choose the right actor: he hit the goal like a sniper. As a result each of us acted as if it came from within himself. That is why there were moments of travesty, not that we were short of men or women but because we started from an image of a character. And we did not bother to conceal the fact that men played female parts, on the contrary: the spectator could easily distinguish a male actor playing a manlike woman. The actor was given very few feminine attributes: two ostrich plumes of gaudy red and green, a hoop skirt and a bra in the shape of a twin electric lamp with multicoloured glass (the bra was lit up from inside by a torchlight when the scene was especially passionate). And besides a man remained a man.²²

The motif of androgyny was to appear in an obsessive, enigmatic form in Eisenstein's later work: it returned in the misogynic form of the women's "death battalion" defending the Winter Palace in *October*, and in the person of Fedka Basmanov, the favourite *opričnik* of Ivan the Terrible, as well as in the artist's graphics (especially in the so-called Mexican cycle and drawing influenced by classical art).²³

The performance of *The Wise Man*, which was a genuine explosion of carnival and circus effects, a brilliant show of the force of Eisenstein's imagination, constituted an important artistic experience whose significance was decisive for his future work. His childhood love, the circus became a subject of profound aesthetic considerations in his adult life. The circus was to him an essence of art *tout court* since it revealed — in a clinically pure fashion — its effect upon man. In the unpublished work *Method* one section was devoted to the circus:

A circus show is the variety of art where only the emotional component in its pure shape has been preserved [...] the component which in all other domains of art is only a form of conveying certain ideas and meanings. That is why the circus's effect can be compared to that of a stimulating and

²² Levšin, op. cit., p. 141

²³ See Dominique Fernandez, op. cit.

at the same time tranquilizing bath. That is why it is so much appreciated by children and the so-called common people who do not seek any answers to sophisticated intellectual problems in the circus.²⁴

Through Eisenstein's approach the circus effect becomes a model of theatrical experience. In his conception the whole stream of expressive means, movement, gesture, make up, mimicry, scenery, props, music, light, sound effects and — last but not least — the word ceases to contribute to the stage realization of a dramatic text; it aims at shaping the spectator's emotions and attitudes. "The spectator himself constitutes the basic material of the theater", Eisenstein stated explicitly in "Montage of Attractions", where he defined his experiment.

The idea that the spectator be an important factor in the stage production was by no means Eisenstein's original contribution. The same idea appeared in the manifestoes of the European theatrical avant-garde, and its sources can be traced back to certain formulations of Italian futurism. In 1913 Marinetti wrote in "The Variety Theater":

The Variety Theater is alone in seeking the audience's collaboration. It doesn't remain static like a stupid voyeur, but joins noisily in the action [...].²⁵

And in "The Futuristic Synthetic Theater" (1915) signed by Marinetti, Settimelli and Corra one finds the following postulate:

Symphonize the audience's sensibility by exploring it, stirring up its laziest layers with every means possible; eliminate the preconception of the footlights by throwing nets of sensation between stage and audience; the stage will invade the orchestra seats, the audience.²⁶

²⁴ Quoted after Ivanov, *Očerki*, p. 129. When commenting on these considerations Ivanov remarks that the world of the circus is one of the most universal themes in the arts of modern times; it can be found in Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, Chaplin, Fellini, and Bergman.

²⁵ "The Variety Theater", in F. T. Marinetti, *Selected Writings*, New York, 1972, p. 118.

²⁶ "The Futurist Synthetic Theater", *ibid.*, p. 128.

Full emotional participation of the audience in the performance was a precondition for the Proletkult theater's staging of revolutionary mystery plays. Now, a couple of years after the revolution, the idea was being realized in a modified form reflecting the new functions of the theatre postulated by LEF. The Proletkult mysticism was called into question on the grounds of an intellectual conception of the theatre — a conscious shaping of the theatrical substance, intended to produce an overall effect on the spectator.

In Eisenstein's "Montage of Attractions" this trend found its most precise and suggestive formulation. In the author's learned terminology — in which it is easy to trace the concepts of Meyerhold's "theory of the performance's construction" — an attraction is the fundamental unit of the theatrical effect.

Thus the principal function of the theater is of pragmatic nature since it emphasizes the spectator's reception of a performance. The function of the theater was to awaken the audience from the state of aesthetic contemplation which to the avant-garde artists was tantamount to inertness, stagnation, and apathy, conflicting with the postulated need of revolutionary dynamism. The aim towards which energy was directed was not defined in precise terms; the desire to restore the revolutionary enthusiasm in the passive audience had its origin — in spite of the rationalistic declarations — in a magic mode of thinking. Grigorij Kozincev recalls that "in the art of those years words were not so much uttered as fired, and one passed promptly from words to actions. The young people were using a special slang; if something happened to be unintelligible it was the very expressiveness and aggressiveness of intonation that affected".²⁷

"Montage of Attractions" was the first manifestation of Eisenstein's pre-semiotic mode of thinking. The suggested segmentation of a performance was effectuated at the level — as modern semiotics puts it — of elementary units of theater language. For Eisenstein an attraction is a theatrical sign which is dominated by the pragmatic and syntactic aspects. The meaning is of secondary importance. It was in this context that Eisenstein's *esprit manipulateur* showed for the first time; it was to become characteristic of his mode of thinking

²⁷ Grigorij Kozincev, *Glubokij èkran*, Moskva 1971, p. 44

throughout his artistic life. Attractions as units of the stage-audience interaction enter mutual relations; to denote them, Eisenstein introduces the term "montage" for the first time.²⁸

"Montage of Attractions" provided the first definition of Eisenstein's "operational aesthetics" (the term invented by Tret'jakov), which consisted of a methodological analysis of the effect of a work of art. It was to direct the audience's mental dispositions towards the effect desired by the author of an artistic message, and use art for programming human behavior. These first intuitive formulations were fully worked out in Eisenstein's later essays and studies. In his last, unfinished paper "The Emotional Sense of Colour in Film" he wrote: "...the composition of a film ought not to be based on lessening the importance of a particular means of expression or neutralizing some of them in favour of others, but rather on reasonable and appropriate favouring those means of expression which — under given conditions — directly convey the artist's meaning".²⁹ This echoes his early statement in "Montage of Attractions": "The means of achieving this are all the component parts of the theatrical apparatus (Ostužev's 'chatter' no more than the color of the prima donna's tights, a stroke on the kettledrum as much as a soliloquy of Romeo, the cricket on the hearth no less than a salvo under the seats of the spectators). In all their heterogeneity, all the component parts of the theatrical apparatus are reduced to a single unit — thereby justifying their presence — by being attractions".³⁰

In the early theory of attractions Eisenstein defined the fundamental principle of his art, an art whose aim is to shock and hypnotize the audience, to force them to watch and listen, to force them to feel what the author has intended to express. The staging of *The Wise Man* was the first experiment in this field, a performance in which "a number of artistic principles of those times were carried to the extreme and reduced to utmost absurdity. [...]"

²⁸ See Hans-Joachim Schlegel, "Eisensteins Weg von der 'Revolutionierung des Theaters' zum Revolutionsfilm. Eine Einführung in *Streik*" in: Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Streik*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schlegel, München 1974, p. 18-19.

²⁹ 3/580

³⁰ Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage of Attractions", transl. D. Gerould, *The Drama Review*, 1974:1(61), p. 78

In the production of *The Wise Man* we witness a full exposition of the structure of a theatrical performance”.³¹

The highly experimental character of the production was not — as one might believe — an expression of Eisenstein’s youthful temperament. Neither was it a skillful imitation of the fashionable avant-garde ideas of Russian theatrical life in the stormy 1920’s when nothing seemed impossible. Had that been the case Eisenstein would have fallen into oblivion like many other eccentric stage directors of the times. In his theatrical activity — undoubtedly influenced by various tendencies — one could discern a peculiar individual element, the unique core of logic which gives rise to the further work of every eminent artist. *The Wise Man* considered in the perspective of Eisenstein’s entire work seems to be the artist’s first sketch, the sketch drawn with a sure hand, with all the vigor of youth. The performance, recorded in the Moscow theater chronicles as a scandal, provided a kind of genetic code for Eisenstein’s future films, a laboratory retort in which he formed an outline of his aesthetics. In the cascade of circus turns bombarding the bewildered spectator, denying him breathing space, a close analysis of particular tricks reveals a deliberate design and a consistency of artistic realization. When in the late 1930’s Eisenstein was writing his fundamental study “Montage 1937” devoted to polyphonic montage, he referred to the staging ideas realized in *The Wise Man*.

It can be said — although it is a simplification — that theatre may be a sort of *Vorschule* for the audio-visual counterpoint, namely when the sound score combined with the script of the visual plot is in the centre of the artists attention. That was my own experience from the theater when I began making films [...].³²

Translated by Eva Forian and Eva Kziązek

³¹ Sergej Ėjzenštejn, “Teatr i kino”, in *Iz istorii kino*, VIII, Moskva 1971, p. 154.

³² 2/543.

Transformation as a Device in Eisenstein's Visual Language

In Eisenstein's film montage it often happens that objects or signs suddenly change meaning and appear as something entirely different. The unprepared spectator seldom perceives how this happens technically; the change occurs on a subliminal or pre-conscious level. It is not solely the effect of rapid cutting where one does not notice certain picture changes. Together with the surprising shifts in perspective and the montage's associative leaps, something happens to the contents of the picture. The change literally occurs before our eyes and results in our interpreting the picture in a different way. We shall henceforth call these changes — they are of many kinds in Eisenstein's work — *transformations*, or in certain significant cases, value transformations.

Let us recall a few different, representative examples in *Potemkin* and *October*.¹ From the second part of *Potemkin*, "Drama on the Quarterdeck": Captain Golikov is dealing with the insubordinate sailors who have refused to eat the putrid soup. The ship's watch is called up; they serve as an execution patrol as well. There is unrest in the ranks, most of the sailors gather around the leader, Vakulinčuk, by one of the gun turrets. A small group hesitates for an instant and is trapped by the railing. (This is also emphasized as a part of the revolutionary lesson; swift, unified action when the time comes! He who hesitates is lost!).

Then follows the ritual preparation for the sacrifice of human beings which is to preserve order. A tarpaulin is called for and is carried rolled up past the watch platoon, not unlike a lifeless body — a young man in the ranks glances at this foreboding object. In a short sequence cut with a curious, dreamlike rhythm, dark uniform-clad arms — petty officers — throw the tarpaulin into the air. It falls over the men by the railing. What happens to the image itself, now that the men are covered by the tarpaulin?

¹ For the reader who has not recently viewed the films, I will describe the action immediately preceding the transformative scene.

In the visual structure there is a shift in tonality, a focusing brightness, and at the same time an almost motionless field. Through its stillness and whiteness it stands in dramatic contrast to the movement on deck and to the rows of pointed rifles with bayonets.

But this change in the surface structure of the picture — where some people literally become invisible to us — at the same time implies a transformation which reveals a deep structure of ideas and values. By being veiled, the sailors are stripped of their human and individual characteristics; in an instant they are transformed into an amorphous mass, a thing. At the same time this real action shows how economic, political and military powers objectify people, turn them into soulless objects and instruments, interchangeable.

In this connection it is interesting that the punishing gesture, the actual covering up, acquires a double meaning; on one hand a symbolic denial or rejection, on the other a ritual premonition of extinction. The traditional role of the tarpaulin in all marine folklore demonstrates this with an ironic effect; not only as everyday equipment, but also as a funerary shroud at sea. One of the many songs about sailors and death goes like this: "Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket!" The slow sailors on board the *Potemkin* are given their last suit of clothes in advance by Golikov. At the same time they become unrecognizable to those who are to fire the shots; it is easier to extinguish someone you cannot see.²

As witnesses from a distance, we can experience a desperate situation and its resolution. When Vakulinčuk, with his cry to the platoon ("Brothers...") denies the necessity of what is happening, we understand from the totality image-text ("The guards' guns waver") that there is desperation in the platoon that is breaking down as well, the desperation that results from unconditional obedience.

What we then witness is a re-transformation from the immobile and faceless. The men by the railing throw off their shroud, regain their human features and unite with the mutineers. After a series

² On the real *Potemkin* the convicted sailors were standing on top of the tarpaulin not under it, in order not to smear the deck with their blood (according to an eyewitness, a consultant during the shooting of the film, quoted in Jay Leyda's *Kino*, London 1960, p. 199).

of quick situational shots from the mutiny, there is once again an associative shot of the tarpaulin, which is still lying on the deck. Suddenly it is lifted by a billowing, abrupt motion of a gust of wind; an insignificant detail in itself, which seems to animate the picture space with a new consciousness — that a wind of change is sweeping over the ship and giving life to the dead.

In *Potemkin* the transformative elements are relatively few and clearly limited to certain scenes; the tarpaulin, the use of the ship's doctor Smirnov's pince-nez, the crucifix which acquires a weapon-like character in the hand of the ship's priest. In *October*, three years later, similar features form an intricate weave that will only be hinted at here. Some transformative devices also function as occasional technical experiments and are not followed up later; among them is the curious series of shots early in the film, of a number of raised rifles which are dissolved into raised scythes and then again transformed back into rifles. The semi-documentary account of the events on Nevskij Prospekt also belongs here; the grimacing machine gunner who appears to merge with his weapon in euphoric, murderous happiness (in reality a metric montage of a few alternating frames which gives the effect of a double exposure). This and a number of other features of *October* could also be described as kinds of dynamic metaphors, where the very movement becomes a carrier of meaning.³ A more complex example is provided in the introductory shot sequence where the masses are tearing down the colossal statue of Aleksandr III. This event occurred in reality as well, in a similar fashion.

In order to grasp the connection between historical reality and fiction, we shall first deal with another notion, deconstruction or decomposition. Here this designates the division or break down of visual form or structure. (The word is also used in the context of other semiotic structures, especially literary texts.)

Decomposition in pictorial language can have at least two significances, one general and one more limited. The former can signify a decomposition for research purposes. The latter signifies a demolishing attack on some kind of formal language. In the first,

³ Already in *Strike* (1924) there was a use of the simple transformative effect of slow dissolves — as in the suite of transformations from animal images to police spies with aliases; the Owl, the Monkey, and the Fox).

more general meaning, it is a question of a consciously fragmented form — decomposition as a way of posing questions in relation to perception, framing of reality and visual structures. There are numerous examples of this in modern painting and sculpture (e.g. in cubism or cubo-futurism and, as Šklovskij has shown, in the montage films in the young Soviet Union). Here it is closely related to the phenomena of *deformation* and "*making strange*". Even the second more limited significance — of a demolishing attack — is also applicable to much experimental visual art. But decomposition in this sense is, above all, a usable notion in the interpretation of particular pictorial structures, critical, agitational or satirical. Used thus it indicates demonstrative, ritualistically colored counter-violence aimed at official images or forms.⁴ The target is primarily those political and religious symbols which have become associated with injustices and oppression. Both in art and reality it concerns the entire spectacular environment of monuments, sculptures and public buildings which can be summed up with the expression "*The Architecture of Power*". The image as a panegyric (e.g. a tribute to the person in power), the image as a language of force and as a vow of obedience are the first things to be destroyed in the revolutionary iconoclasm. Deconstruction as a collective rite also leaves visual traces, since every act of resistance includes a desire to publicize one's intentions and thus generate further resistance. Deconstruction in this sense is staged as a symbolic transformation of reality. Let us compare a few examples from history:

In conjunction with the Paris Commune, 1870-71, the Vendôme Column, a symbol of the emperor's power is toppled. The Communards have their picture taken in front of the destroyed column, some of them equipped with sledgehammers. This is a political trophy image, but also a call to continue the struggle.

In conjunction with the February Revolution in 1917 and during the following seven months of dual rule, the monuments of the autocracy begin to be torn down. The remains are depicted in news photography, news-reels, documentary and feature films. Even

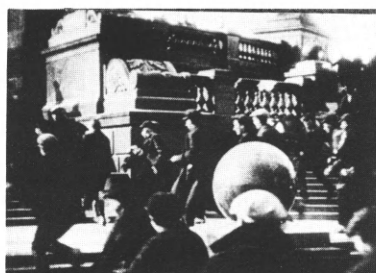
⁴ Chaplin, of whom Eisenstein wrote a sympathetic essay in "*Charlie the Kid*" (in *Notes of a Film Director*, New York 1970, p. 167 ff), uses satirical decomposition like no other creator of films; e.g. the introduction to *City Lights* (1932), with the uncovering of the Statue of Liberty, in whose lap a bum is asleep, or the mocking of Fascism's eclectic art in *The Great Dictator* (1940).

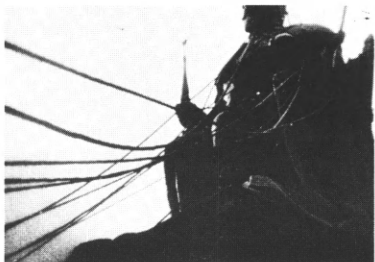
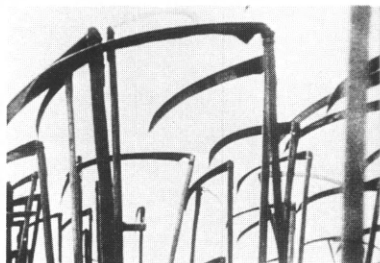
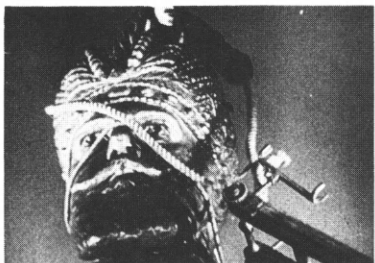
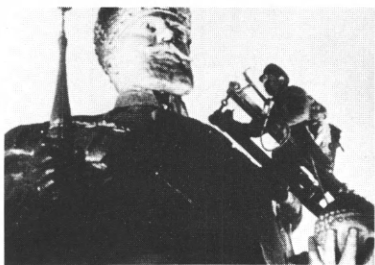
revolutionary poster art (Él Lisickij and others) is filled with transformative motion — sledgehammers, wedges, fists which are literally crushing the forms of the old order.

During the revolt in Budapest in 1956, the colossal statue of Stalin is torn down. The picture of the remaining iron boot with a Hungarian flag stuck into it is circulated in the world press.

Let us thus return to *October*, the introductory shots, to see how the decomposition and transformation, the real and the imaginary, can work together in Eisenstein's visual language. We can read this narrative montage in five stages:

1. The first shot in *October* is a crowned head, viewed from below. It belongs to a Romanov; the colossal statue of Tsar Aleksandr III. The perspective of the shot is the one intended for the statue, with the subjects looking up. In a short synoptic montage, the most important parts of the monument are accounted for: the scepter, the globe and the crown — the insignia of imperial power — all lit from below against a dark sky. Then we see the figure (medium shot, semi-profile) enthroned on a high podium (long shot). We are down below in the shadows.
2. This is the public image as a language of power. The statue fits into a long tradition of Russian pictures of sovereigns having roots in Byzantine art. The figure is built up, both the breadth and the height, with the frontal mass effect of a giant icon. The model is Christ Pantocrator, the Ruler of the World.
3. When the film has established this pattern, it is broken up by masses of people swarming into the picture. They fill the steps to the podium with violent motion. Figures rushing up cut the horizontal pattern of the steps diagonally and vertically. Through rapid cutting they appear to intercept one another's paths of motion from two directions, having the effect of giant wedges. This communicates the drama of the approach; it is obviously a matter of storming, seizing the statue.
4. Then we see people moving around on the top of the statue where they are not normally expected to be. A woman signals to someone down below. They pull up ropes, raise ladders — a heavy rope is thrown over the giant's head and gets stuck right across his face. Thus something happens to the picture. The peculiar Gulliver vision, with the tiny attackers swarming over their giant catch, suddenly stops and is replaced by an unexpect-





Shot sequence from Eisenstein's "October".

ed perspective; by addition of a new element — the ropes — all interest is focused on the statue as a human figure.

5. A change has occurred in the surface structure of the picture — the ropes over the statue's head function transformatively — one perceives the totality in a different manner:

Of course the Aleksandr statue bears the face of power, both figuratively and literally. But even as an image the human face is vulnerable to attacks and changes from the outside. When it, as here, is divided in half by ropes (pulled crosswise over the bridge of the nose, right below the eyes) it in itself becomes a sign of impotence. We get the impression of a man who is unable to move from the spot.

One could also say that the image of the sovereign as a structure of meaning is changed. This implies that certain prominent features are toned down, while other — previously secondary, or even disguised — meanings and characteristics come to the fore. Through this shift in significance "in depth" the statue loses much of its rhetorical dimension. Its suggestive persuasiveness is reduced to almost nothing. Instead the figure clearly comes across as an overdimensioned and lifeless object. The statue becomes what it has been all along in reality, beyond the symbolic dimensions, a hollow shell of metal. Soon it will be pulled apart with the help of the ropes. The fragments which earlier were emphasized individually as being of importance in the montage — the hands with the scepter and the globe — will reveal their hollowness for an instant and crash to the ground. The ritual decomposition of the formal language of power has been anticipated by the fragmentation of the montage.

If we keep the contemporary context in mind — February, 1917 — we might perceive an additional level of significance which has been added. Through the very juxtaposition of the rope and the crown (both incompatible with one another) the image will also be about a transformation in the political arena, a redistribution of power and possibilities.

But further on in the film there are transformative devices which are much more advanced and complex than in the introductory scenes. They are not part of any actual event like the toppling of the statue, but form some kind of unmediated, discursive interventions on the part of the narrator. They also contain an element of decomposition, of deconstructive attacks on established form, but

on a more intricate level than the introductory iconoclasm. Here we touch upon one of the more controversial methodological devices in the theory of montage, namely intellectual montage.

Eisenstein's own sparse exemplification of this in *Film Form* concerns the so-called montage of the gods — a rapid succession of different religious symbols and sign structures. In addition to a spectrum of deity images — from Baroque crucifixes to dance masks — it also includes forms of architecture, cupolas, spires — everything signifying very disparate notions of the divine and its locations on earth. The great disparity becomes clearly discernable in the mass of strictly conventional forms. The montage issues from the word "God" in the war cry of the troops loyal to the tsar, "For God and Country", and comments on it with a strongly ironic effect.⁵ On an almost intuitive level these quick shots seem like a satirical observation "in passing" — much like the deceptively absent-minded notice about the two generals' Te Deum in *Candide* (both armies thank God for their victory after a bloody battle). References to God's mercy have always served as a moral alibi, but according to the ironic montage, "God" obviously had not one, but many faces, and was accorded properties which ought to have been irreconcilable within one and the same being.

But the "montage of the gods" is only included as a partial structure within a larger, boldly structured montage sequence; through the choice of symbols Eisenstein shows the connection between the clerical, military and civilian apparatus of power, and the interchange between them as ideological fields, 'transformers' of the counterrevolution. That is the reason why the "God and Country" sequence (as I prefer to call the larger montage sequence) is used, in order to introduce into the discursive dramaturgy the coup general, Kornilov, and — as a new theme in the polemical

⁵ In 1928 it is still warranted, in a historical perspective, to make fun of romantic bourgeois patriotism and of the officially rhetorical and inflated expressions of love of one's country. Thus the words "Mother Country" in Eisenstein's montage is followed by flashy uniform details — braid, epaulets, medals — in the same manner as in Pudovkin's *The Last Days of St. Petersburg*, from almost the same time (1927), e.g. in the montage sequence "Your Country is Calling!". In spite of all their differences the two appear, through their ironical-satirical use of fashion and body language, as precursors in film of the 1970's critical "sociology of appearance". In Russian literary satire it was then already a tradition, through Gogol' and others.

discourse (not in the almost non-existent "plot") — the premier and commander in chief, Aleksandr Kerenskij, and his inability to handle a crisis situation (a caricature of a syndrome of hysteria and impotence, according to Eisenstein).

Thus the impact of the introductory montages (the toppling of the colossus, the orthodox mass, the front soldiers' fraternization in No Man's Land, etc.) is followed up by transformative devices further on in the cinematic process, and via them, long associative leaps are made which aid in holding together the seemingly fragmentary historical presentation. One example of this follows the "Mother Country montage" of uniforms (cf. note 5) with the text, "Hurrah!" and the well-known trick effect where the Aleksandr statue, as if by magic, seems to become whole again. By running the series of shots of its destruction backwards, the pieces seem to fly back into place again, and with a slight shaking of the crowned head, the despot is enthroned on his podium as before. The destroyed order is reinstated, a completely different and more abstract resurrection than the one we witnessed on board the *Potemkin*, when the condemned threw off their shroud.

And it is in reference to the same three ideological "transformers" — religion in its clerical form, the imperial army as an extension of the warring society, and the autocracy behind the external forms of lawful society — that Eisenstein brings together two of the film's visual themes, the image of the sovereign and the image of the deity, in perhaps the most advanced and remarkable transformative shot in *October*; a pair of small guardian deities in wood. This will serve as a last example of what we have here called transformation as device.

The ingenious ironic montage which leads up to this begins in the Winter Palace with Kerenskij, who has just occupied the tsar's office. In an analogy from political cartoons he is likened to another sovereign, Napoleon Bonaparte. The latter is presented in the form of a bourgeois decorative object, a plaster statuette. We see Kerenskij slowly crossing his arms on his chest and assuming the same pose as the Napoleon statue. An old lackey automatically stands at attention and salutes Kerenskij — but his respectful greeting through the cutting and direction of vision is actually turned toward the plaster portrait of Napoleon. What he is saluting is a decorative figure.⁶

Then we see General Kornilov on horseback; his commander-in-chief gesture with his arm outstretched is picked up in the next shot — a small equestrian statue of Napoleon in a similar pose (the model for this popular plaster figurine was David's famous painting of the crossing of the Alps).

The comparison between Kerenskij and Napoleon with crossed arms recurs, then the equestrian figure and the text, "Two Napoleons". Then follows a quick visual game using the first statuette's form — long shot, medium shot, close-up, profiles. The Napoleon figure seen from the side, with the characteristic long uniform coat, is suddenly standing at the left edge of the picture and into the empty space at right is dissolved an exact copy of Napoleon, a mirror image of his namesake. This playing with reproduction and symmetry has a devastating effect, both on the imperial symbol with its built-in eternal pretenses and on the accepted image of an individual with unique and superior characteristics. The entire associative space of the myth of fate, utopian visions and bold decisions which revolves around the Napoleon figure dies out when the statues are reflected in one another. A Napoleon has to appear in solitary majesty, otherwise there will be little left of his charismatic aura. The mirror metaphor becomes even more sarcastic through Eisenstein's earlier emphasis on the equestrian general's impressiveness in contrast to the pallid pose of the minister, but the symbol for both actors is exactly the same worthless reproduction. The ironic device is as simple as the fact that 2 is equal to 1+1; the emperor and his twin remind one of Victorian plaster dogs on a mantelpiece.

What has occurred is a value transformation in the pictorial language, and at the same time a dismantling on a psychological and ideational level; the gradual breakdown of a mythic structure. But Eisenstein thus carries this process one step further, when he places a second long shot from the "montage-of-the-gods" between two identical medium shots (the mirror imaged profiles). This shot depicts two Eskimo idols, guardian deities with magical properties,

⁶ At the same time it is a realization of two different sculptural or statue themes: the film is actually filled with statues having various functions in the discourse. In more recent research. Dominique Fernandez treats the subject in his psychoanalytical study *Eisenstein. L'arbre jusqu'aux racines* II, Paris 1975, the chapter "Statues".

who are turned halfway towards one another, simply carved wooden figures, without arms, their faces only hinted at, the image of one another. Because of their almost rudimentary form they have earlier served to conclude the god sequence where Eisenstein works with a visual decomposition from the richly complex to the simplest formal language. (Here Eisenstein uses, as so often, stills in rhythmical progressions, but without a logical or causal relationship to one another; this results in a metaphorical structure — typical of the discursive dramaturgy — as opposed to a plot structure).

The shot of the small idols passes by quickly, and for the unsophisticated viewer of *October* it probably works on a preconscious level. It is part of a montage sequence which flows by at a rate of almost one cut per second (from the mentioned initial shot of Kornilov on horseback until it ends, after a series of extremely rapid reminiscences from the montage of the gods with the equestrian image, there are 37 cuts within the scope of 48 seconds in the print that was available to us). Eisenstein's expectations and demands on the spectator made him controversial early on; the shots of the idols is just another reminder of the importance he attributed to the unconscious, in an almost orthodox psychoanalytical sense. He not only takes it into account, he addresses himself to it.

The shot of the idols, which some observers would like to dismiss as a marginal and nonsensical experiment, can certainly be interpreted in different ways. A reasonable point of departure is its character of a critical and ironic proposal; it points to a possible affinity between the reproduced sovereign image and the more genuine idol, a correspondence between two forms of magical thinking, even though the modern variant is so much more complex and sophisticated. Is there even a psychological relationship between the idol with its magical function and the guardian deities of the bourgeoisie?

In any case the montage effect in itself is an example of something that is characteristic of Eisenstein's visual language; the interchange between transformation as a device, the element of decomposition and the ironic, gradually revealing.

A closer study of this can, as these examples attempted to show, contribute to a deeper understanding of these films' specifically visual character.

Appendix

The Montage of Shots in the Sequence with Napoleon Statues and Idols in *October* (reel 3).

Immediately following the symbolic restoration (through a reversal of the filmed frames) of the demolished statue of Aleksandr III; a priest in vestments is holding a cross: Then:

- 1 LS* General Kornilov sits on his horse in the pose of a field commander, turns his head to the right
- 2 Title GENERAL KORNILOV
- 3 LS General Kornilov (as in 1) with his head still turned to the right
- 4 MS Napoleon on his horse, facing the same direction as Kornilov (small plaster statue after David's painting)
- 5 LS General Kornilov (as in 1, 3) raises his arm
- 6 CS Napoleon (turned as in 4, but closer) with his arm raised like Kornilov
- 7 BCU The crown we have seen before, a marker from one of the tsar's backgammon games
- 8 LS General Kornilov (as in 1, 3) folds his arms
- 9 MS Napoleon statue (standing plaster figure) with arms folded looking in the same direction as Kornilov in 8
- 10 Title TWO BONAPARTES
- 11 Kerenskij in similar pose as 9 with arms folded, looking left, seemingly glancing at
- 12 MS Napoleon (as in 9)
- 13 MS Napoleon astride a horse (as in 4)
- 14 MS Two standing Napoleon figures facing one another; first the left one alone in the picture, then the other is quickly faded in, a mirror image of the first
- 15 CS The two Napoleon figures
- 16 CU The two figures in 15 at closer range
- 17 BCU The two heads on screen together facing one another
- 18 BCU One of the heads in profile alone, left side of the picture
- 19 BCU The other head in profile, symmetrically opposed to the other head, right side of the picture
- 20 BCU The two heads again, facing each other in the same picture
- 21 LS The two Napoleon statues, now at a sudden distance

- 22 LS The two wooden idols (from the montage of the gods shortly before) facing one another
- 23 LS Two Bonapartes (as in 21)
- 24 CU The two Napoleon heads facing each other in the same picture
- 25 CU The left Napoleon head alone
- 26 CU The right Napoleon head alone
- 27 CU Both together again (as in 24)
- 28 MS Napoleon, astride a horse
- 29 MS Detail from the montage of the gods, an ornamented figure (I)
- 30 MS Another figure from the same montage, turned in a different direction (II)
- 31 CS Image of a saint with beams
- 32 MS God figure II (as in 30)
- 33 CS Image of a saint (as in 31)
- 34, 35, 36, (extremely rapid) CSs of different African masks (from the montage of the gods)
- 37 MS General Kornilov, sitting on his horse, raises his arms as if giving a command to march

Then there are pictures of a tank, hurling itself over a ditch, Kerenskij hysterically flinging himself on to the pillows of the tsar's divan, different fragments of a broken and crushed Napoleon figure.

These 37 shots, which present the visual context of the "idols", amount to less than 48 seconds on the screen.

In Karel Reisz's and Gavin Millar's *The Technique of Film Editing*, London 1968, a great part of the third reel is accounted for; the shots mentioned here are only summarized, however, and correspond to shots 234-263 in the book (p. 35).

*Abbreviations:

LS — Long Shot
 CS — Close Shot
 MS — Medium Shot
 CU — Close Up
 BCU — Big Close Up

Translated by Håkan Lövgren

Lars Kleberg

In the Sign of Aquarius

The train from Berlin to Moscow rolls through the night of the 8th to 9th of May, 1932. A Soviet first class compartment. Red plush, antimacassars, reading lamps with pearl fringes, mirrors above the seats. The compartment is cluttered with boxes, suitcases, Mexican blankets, books. On one of the hat shelves a skull. Through the glass doors, and behind them the window across the aisle, lights, box cars, etc. are seen flashing by now and then. In one corner Eisenstein is half reclining, dressed in a soft, bathrobe-like ulster and with his hat pulled down over his brow, apparently asleep with a book in his lap. The door is opened, Brecht enters, dressed in a suit without a tie, with a leather cap on his head and an extinguished cigar butt between his fingers.

BRECHT

Doctor Eisenstein, I presume?

EISENSTEIN

(does not react)

BRECHT

(after a pause)

Doctor Eisenstein, I presume?

EISENSTEIN

(does not react. Pause. Turns the page in the book. Another pause.) Wait. *(Continues reading, makes a note in the margin.)* Sorry, I am in the 16th century... *(Makes a note.)* You've never been there, have you... *(He suddenly slams the book closed, gets up, pushes his hat back.)* That's right. You're going to Rome too. The third Rome. *(Giggles. Courteously.)* But do sit down, there is enough space, I hope. You could live your entire life in this place. If it wasn't so damned cold. I hope you brought enough warm clothing. In the 16th century they kept it 10-15 degrees inside, at most... Once in a while though they lit some really big bonfires.

BRECHT

(sits down)

Yes, these Russian railroad cars seem solid, like in the good old days.

EISENSTEIN

The class differences between first and second class are maintained simply to help people remember what conditions were like before the Revolution. *(Pause.)* Have you been in the Soviet Union before?

BRECHT

No, unfortunately not. But I saw the film, as the saying goes. Frankly, your films have contributed immensely to the German interest in the Soviet Union. You could almost say that we in Germany know more about Soviet film than about Soviet reality. Your *Potemkin* has saved both the economy and spirit of many a party meeting.

EISENSTEIN

That's always nice to hear. But really, I'm the one who should thank the Berlin audience for its success. It was not until Eisenstein began filling the movie theaters in Berlin that our own managers dared to invest in distribution at home. It's the same everywhere: business, speculation, prostitution!

BRECHT

At the same time it's just the nakedness of this speculation that makes film such an interesting experimental field. In literature or at the theater you can still close your eyes to the commodity aspect, but at the movies you simply can't — unless you close your eyes to the film itself. Which, mind you, some critics still seem to be doing. *(Pause.)* By the way, do you think our friend Tretjakov is in Moscow now?

EISENSTEIN

I've no idea. I've been away for three years. You probably know more about what goes on in Moscow than I do.

BRECHT

He was in Berlin last year. We discussed his play *I Want a Child*, which interestingly enough had certain points in common with our film, *Kuhle Wampe*, which we'll show in Moscow now.

EISENSTEIN

(closes his eyes)

BRECHT

The notion of model, to be more exact. In opposition to the bourgeois aesthetics of *Einfühlung* both Tretjakov and I maintained that works of art should be designed like models, in analogy to the scientific ones. The model highlights certain features of reality, it's an instrument for critical examination and at the same time it can itself be critized. I hope to be able to discuss these ideas with some Soviet colleagues when we arrive in Moscow. Whom would you suggest?

EISENSTEIN

(looks up)

Do you really believe in that? It sounds like a chemistry lesson. Chemistry without magic.

BRECHT

(lights his cigar butt)

When you get an opportunity to see our experiment, *Kuhle Wampe*, you'll...

EISENSTEIN

(abruptly)

I have already seen it. That's exactly what's wrong with it. *Man merkt die Absicht.*

BRECHT

I don't think you've seen the whole film. The censors have butchered it. Very intelligently at that, pointing to the fact that the film isn't fictional but makes a whole series of allegations about society — not about any particular case but about social conditions. Our intention was also to see if it's possible to make a Marxist film

in a capitalist society. Our working hypothesis was that it couldn't be done. Artistic freedom is always in reverse proportion to the amount of invested capital and the expected size of the audience.

EISENSTEIN

(who has been absentmindedly listening and started leafing through the book)

Was this news to anyone?

BRECHT

(lights his cigar butt which has burnt out)

Certainly. Our method. The sociological experiment was very instructive to our movement, especially to the thousands of youths who paid for the film in the final stages. And the aesthetic experiment was unquestionably something new, not just in German cinema, I think. In part the technique of montage serves different purposes here than in the Soviet films. Unfortunately we haven't met with any understanding whatsoever in the party press, but that's no surprise, provincial as it is. We are very anxious to receive qualified criticism and real support for our endeavours from you and your comrades.

EISENSTEIN

(smiles, brings out a big jar of Mexican sweets in the shape of little skulls, bones, phalluses, frogs, snakes, etc., rolled in powdered sugar. He voluptuously licks one of them, puts it in his mouth, takes it out, sucks on it before he chews it up.)

BRECHT

Today reality can only be shown as a quotation. Already in theater it's extremely difficult to act these quotation marks, but paradoxically enough in film it seems even more difficult. Where the film technique has been adapted to become imperceptible we have to throw a monkey wrench into the machinery. Where film fuses the different elements into a closed synthesis we must instead *separate the elements*. Even the technique itself has to be put in quotation marks. That we are on the right road is evident from the opposition of capital to our experiments. They can no longer oppose the picture

montage as such. But when we wanted to make a small experiment with an ironic sound montage the company that has a monopoly on sound techniques in Germany offered violent resistance. They said it was impossible, that the sound equipment would be destroyed, suddenly you could make no recordings, etc., etc. The technique *must* not be liberated! The spectators must not be awakened! Perhaps they would begin to look at the company's other products with a critical eye and generally start questioning a thing or two!

EISENSTEIN

Yes, a pretty story. But, the fact that you reject illustrative sound doesn't mean that the technique has to be used with some kind of...distance? Why that's completely non-dialectical. Pure vegetarianism! No, the ends justify the means, like Loyola says. (*Giggles.*) Do you know, the only experiments in art that interest me today are the ones for which Joyce has shown the way, that is, where the experiment as such is inseparable from the work of art, where every chapter is, at the same time, a study in...

BRECHT

(*interrupts*)

Yes, and each part could be produced by different subjects so that the montage would invalidate the work's traditional...

EISENSTEIN

(*suddenly with energy*)

No, not at all, but where each part simultaneously is a study, a parody that doesn't invalidate but encloses earlier, more primitive forms on a new level. So that the text becomes a cross section of an entire consciousness with all its layers, just like our inner speech, where we are able to move instantaneously and unconsciously from one level to another. That's what's so brilliant about Joyce's inner monologue, not his or the lady's, whatever her name is who sits and shits — who gives a shit about his or her thought content, anyway — no, what's brilliant is his *vertical montage*, where you can throw yourself around like a monkey between the most regressive and the most advanced layers in the same instant, in the same image. If I'll ever be allowed to complete my Mexico film you'll see what I mean. It won't be anything like your and Tretjakov's chemistry lessons.

The question of *how* versus *what* is uninteresting, the only important question is the one of *effect*.

BRECHT

But that's the very question we Marxists attempt to pose, I hope.

EISENSTEIN

The problem is just how to achieve the greatest possible effect. I remember that when I showed *Potemkin* in Berlin in 1926, some young comrades reproached me for its exaggerated pathos. But the pathos is precisely what makes it effective! All our later efforts to make an intellectual film have only been aimed at a better *control* of the pathos. To force even a bourgeois audience to feel rage at the cruelty of tyranny and exultation at the triumph of solidarity — that is possible only if you master the organic laws of art, the structure of pathos. If you found that secret out, then you could really start making gold!

BRECHT

Gold? I don't doubt it. But several things seem unclear here. First, do you mean that the spectator is supposed to sympathize with the revolution without understanding why? Secondly, the capitalist's enthusiasm about the triumph of solidarity will probably cool off as soon as he leaves the movie theater or at least the following morning when the workers at his factory go on strike. But OK, maybe you cannot shake the bourgeois' indulgence in the pleasures of art. Thirdly, and that's more serious. The petty bourgeois or worker who sees your film may feel like a revolutionary in the movie theater but is then unable to see through how unemployment makes him a fascist. Your pathetic method transfers him from the reality to be conquered to a world of revolutionary illusions, new *Potemkin* scenes, so to speak, with a red streamer at the top. I must admit that I was taken by your film when I saw it in 1926, but it didn't make me a Marxist.

EISENSTEIN

(smiles, takes a piece of candy in the shape of a serpent out of the jar)

Is that the criterion for revolutionary art in Germany?

BRECHT

(again tries to light the butt)

Our goal is to turn the audience into an accomplice, not into a victim — not even into a victim of revolutionary sentiments. But precisely into accomplices, who together with the producer will destroy the aura surrounding the medium and, indirectly, reality itself. That is a process loaded with tension — not the kind Aristotle recommends, though. What matters in the final analysis is creating a form that the fascists cannot use for their own purposes.

EISENSTEIN

But this really is vegetarianism! Simply because a few people walk incorrectly, you don't have to force yourself to hop on one foot instead, do you? I've been in Mexico for more than two years, and I've been convinced that the best way is to walk on both feet, even though it's a terribly old method. What's so striking about Mexico is not the contrasts but that the old and the new exist intertwined and present in one and the same thing, in one and the same person. In the bottomless dark eyes of the peon you find a thousand years of humiliation. The way the children search for shade, the way the women carry their children on their backs preserve the memory of past times, every gesture is, at the same time, filled with sensuality and history, in their way of moving there is both something completely beastlike and something completely rational. *(Pause.)* I have also made, what was it you called it, a sociological experiment. In Hollywood. It was absolutely impossible to work there, of course. And then I got the chance to make an independent production — I thought. What a fool I was! *(To himself.)* Perhaps it was a trap. *(Louder.)* Mexico. Not a film about Mexico, but a film with Mexico, along Mexico, in the spirit of Mexico. Nowhere else have I felt such possibilities to make a film in which progressive and regressive principles would interact, in which the most modern, most differentiated and cerebral would be united with the pre-logical, protozoic, vertebral sides of our consciousness. The director in a fetal position, the director as a young fish. *(Giggles.)* In the method itself, that is to say. Joyce's inner monologue multiplied into an immense tragicomic choir, where the triumph of death is simultaneously the hour of resurrection.

BRECHT

(after a pause, when he looks for matches and finally manages to light the cigar butt)

I don't quite understand, what was the new that you wanted to show in your film?

EISENSTEIN

The old. The carnival, you ought to know that, being a Bavarian, right? Pregnant death, the death and resurrection of the king, the interregnum of the fool-king, all norms are overturned, man becomes woman, woman becomes man, the child a king and the fool wise. Re-vo-lu-tion in the literal sense of the word. Not the cyclical as such, that time is past, but the constantly recurring traumatic transition from cyclical to linear, from linear to cyclical. The trauma of the fish when it went ashore. The trauma of birth. To seek the water again and again and be thrown ashore — or to throw yourself ashore, when you've learnt your lesson thoroughly... *(Pause.)* Now I'm lying here gasping for air again. They withdrew the money. Just as I was finishing, they cancelled the project. Upton Sinclair and that sow, who they say has got all the money. But it was on order from Rome, make a note of that. *(Suddenly lucid.)* No, don't do that. *(Giggles.)* It was because I had found out the secret, you see. I was about to succeed in doing something no one else had done. *(Pause.)* Behind them is the inquisition. *(Whispers.)* Do you understand me, I fear for my life. *(Half to himself.)* Maybe I should have followed that Spanish marquis instead... The little buggers have taken everything away from me and said that if I simply return home they'll send the material. When it's been approved I'll be allowed to come back and finish the film. Ha! Just when you think you're free to *do it*, he's standing over your. The Shadow. Il Commendatore. The dead hand. *(Sings with a small but clear voice.)*

All of me, why not take all of me?
Can't you see, I'm no good without you?
Take my lips, I want to lose them,
Take my arms, I'll never use them.

Your good-bye left me with eyes that cry,
How can I go on, dear, without you.
You took the part that once was my heart,
So why not take all of me?

(Pause.) Do you know who wrote that? Marks. Gerald Marks. It was part of one of these awful new musical films that I saw before I left there, *Careless Lady*. They always want to take the best away from you. *(Pause.)*

All of me, why not take all of me?
Can't you see, I'm no good without you?
Take my lips, I want to lose them,
Take my arms, I'll never use them.

Your good-bye left me with eyes that cry,
How can I go on, dear, without you?
You took the best, so why not take the rest?
Baby, take all of me!

Do you know why they took my film away? I was about to discover the secret. But they were deceived, you won't find the secret in the material. I've got it with me, here. *(He points to the right side of his head with his left hand.)* I've just to start all over again. *Tabula rasa*. A clean slate. *(Picks a small skeleton out of the candy jar.)*

BRECHT

(after a pause)

You haven't thought of emigrating?

EISENSTEIN

That's a question I don't think you should ask anyone when you arrive in Moscow. *(Pause.)* By the way, who is that woman you have with you, the one with her hair in a bun? Is she your — guardian angel? *(Whispers.)* Beware of her. Don't tell her what we have talked about. *(Slightly too loud.)* No other country has the productive apparatus I need.

BRECHT

Does the Soviet Union have it?

EISENSTEIN

No, not yet.

BRECHT

So you trust the five year plan as a guarantor for the development of cinematography after all?

EISENSTEIN

Would you yourself refuse if you had the chance? Emigrate... The stars won't change because of that. (*Pause.*) You and I are rather different, don't you think? My name is alchemical: Eisen-stein. Yours mechanical: Brecht, he who breaks.

BRECHT

"Bricht" would probably be more correct.

EISENSTEIN

Brecht, Hecht, Knecht, Recht. What a language. You don't believe in that, *nomina sunt omina*? You don't believe in signs? And you are going to Moscow!

BRECHT

It's not from an interest in superstition that I'm going there. On the contrary, rather.

EISENSTEIN

Then I'll have to warn you. What you call superstition has had an enormous boom after the Revolution. Take a look at the Lenin Mausoleum when you get there. Mummification of the dead prince. It's the old Egyptian magic once again. The mausoleum itself is a pyramid construction with the peak slightly cut off. With a parapet where the priests can make their astrological calculations and the generals greet their troops. In reality it is a reconstruction of the Tower of Babel. Our best contribution to the genre, by the way, was Tatlin's tower, but it was never built, unfortunately.

BRECHT

But for Pharaoh's sake, Tatlin's constructivism doesn't have anything to do with magic!

EISENSTEIN

Don't be so sure. The tower was intended to revolve in time with the celestial bodies — the base one revolution per year, the middle one revolution per month, and the top one revolution per day. Height 398 meters — a well-known magical number. The Egyptian sun cult has had an enormous upswing in Moscow lately, I've heard... But in reality Lenin was the one to set the course. Don't you know that Campanella's *City of the Sun* was one of his favorites, a utopian republic completely governed by the laws of astrology. Not to mention the red star. The Pythagorean pentagram, a symbol of the alchemical magical stone. There you have it. Red magic. (Giggles.) Well, you've read *Faust*, haven't you. Then you'll be able to make your own observations when you arrive. (*The train suddenly starts braking, the skull on the shelf — a Mexican sugar figure of the kind sold at the celebration of All Saints' Day — falls down and is smashed to bits against the floor. Eisenstein throws himself on the floor and hastily gathers the rolled up pieces of paper and small booklets which had been hidden in the skull. He kicks away the fragments and quickly puts the pieces of paper in his coat pocket.*)

BRECHT

Magic seems to be on the rise all over the world. The other week a French film team visited Berlin and there was an actor trying to convince the sound technicians that they could record spirits' voices if they ran the recording tape at triple speed. I've seen him before, by the way. He was involved when Pabst did his damned mishmash from *The Threepenny Opera*. A specialist on Jesuits and poisoners...

EISENSTEIN

What a coincidence. I also met that madman. Artaud is his name, isn't it, Antonin Artaud. One of the really great ones. He convinced me that we're all hopelessly lukewarm and halfhearted. I was going to give an interview, you know, the future of cinema and things like

that, and had made an appointment with a journalist at a restaurant. I was sitting there explaining all the mysteries of art, it was probably all beyond her, anyway, and suddenly this madman just stood there, beautiful as a figure by El Greco, his whole being on fire. He took over the entire interview and began explaining that film is dead, it belongs to a past epoch, a remnant of the 19th century in short. Anyway, he managed to scare off that cow-eyed journalist so we ended up with the bill. But he knew how to get away without paying. He seems to be living on crusts of bread and morphine back in Paris, in some kind of surrealist clique of fakirs and magicians. Incidentally, he's written a manifesto on the alchemical theater, as he calls it. I've got it here, wait a minute, listen... *(Pulls a booklet out of his pocket.)*

BRECHT

Didn't he sell brochures on Halley's comet and sexual abstinence as well? These characters are becoming as common as the Nazi street patrols, the devil knows if they haven't got the same employer by the way. *(Lights his cigar butt.)*

EISENSTEIN

Don't be so sure. Listen to this. *(Reads.)* "A secret similarity exists between the fundamental principles of theater and those of alchemy. When one examines the nature of theater, its foundations, one discovers that it, exactly like alchemy, is based upon a certain number of fundamental principles which, in the imaginary sphere, are just as effective as those which *really* transform matter into gold in the physical sphere. Where alchemy, through its signs, is like a spiritual double — not to the immediate reality, but to another, more dangerous, archetypal reality where the Original Forms surface like dolphins and disappear just as quickly back into the murky deep..."

BRECHT

Isn't it striking how the magicians of today lack even a basic command of the language?

EISENSTEIN

But listen to the content. It's just as scientific as your and Tretjakov's model concept. It is simply a question of... a different science. Listen to this: "The Eleusian Mysteries resolved the contradictions between spirit and matter, between ideas and forms, between abstract and concrete, fusing all outward appearance into one single expression that must have resembled distilled gold." But there is no way back to the mysteries. Today, he said, only the shock is capable of captivating the audience. "Metaphysics will reach our senses only through the most violent of means — *through our skin*." The theater of cruelty, he called it, theater should be like a devastating plague...

BRECHT

Plague?

EISENSTEIN

Somehow this is the most consistent application of our theory of *effects*, much more logical than behaviorism or pathos or what have you. He's studied the oriental theater from within, he's been initiated into the mysteries, and he is convinced that it's only through cruelty you're certain to reach the audience...

BRECHT

What darkness!

EISENSTEIN

Not at all, he's come much farther. Darkness is only the initial stage, you see. *Nigredo* — that's the beginning of the alchemical process, chaos, unconsciousness, primary darkness. Then follows *Albedo*, the white stage, the cleansing, the separation of the elements, the conscious dualism. That's where you are, approximately. (*Giggles*.) Then follows the highest, the red stage, *Rubedo*. That's right. The question is whether the Red Magic doesn't belong there. (*Pause*.) Trust an old man, there's a great future in magic.

BRECHT

Old, you can't be older than I am?

EISENSTEIN

Certainly. When were you born?

BRECHT

Ninety-eight.

EISENSTEIN

What a coincidence. The date?

BRECHT

Does it matter?

EISENSTEIN

It always matters.

BRECHT

The 10th of February.

EISENSTEIN

(his face turning white)

The 10th of February? Good God. And you don't believe in signs. Meyerhold was born the 10th of February. Pushkin died on the 10th of February after the duel. There will be a catastrophe in my life on the 10th of February. *(Pause.)* So you're an Aquarius then, just like I am. I was born the 22nd of January 1898.

BRECHT

So what?

EISENSTEIN

The sign of Aquarius, that's not familiar to you?

BRECHT

(shrugs his shoulders)

EISENSTEIN

The Aquarii are seekers, love contradictions, inventions, revolution, carnival, utopianism, avant-gardism — everything under the influence of Uranus. Favorite flower — narcissus... *(Takes a phallus*

from the candy jar, sucks on it, looks hard at Brecht, takes it out.) A great interest in extravagant erotics and astrology, you simply haven't discovered it yet. (*Giggles.*) Strange that our paths should cross just now, at Christ's age, at 33 1/3, Dante's "at the meridian of life", you know... The greatest dangers face us when we want to accomplish something before due time, cross the bridge before it's finished. We are engineers, you see, architects, we've got art as an experimental field. Lewis Carroll, Mozart, Thomas More, Byron, Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Lorenzo di Pupo, Francis Bacon... Swedenborg and Strindberg — probably the only two Aquarian Swedes. But even Edison, Darwin, Charles Lindbergh. And then you. It all fits.

BRECHT

Yes, and then our new political shooting star, little Adolf, you know, the dauber. He no doubt belongs there, a real avant-gardist in his own right. Surely the only thing we've got in common is being born in January and February. A circular argument, pure and simple! *Idem per idem.* It doesn't tell you anything new.

EISENSTEIN

You're a book lover... but prefer stealing to buying, right... (*Laughs.*) The tenth of February. A certain disloyalty or indolence, a man of combat in words, doesn't mind intrigues, but no courage when it comes down to it, indeed. Big defeats are in store for both of us, but mostly for you... I'm threatened by disappointments and imprisonment. I on the 22nd, that's the Cabala, you on the 10th, that's the decimal system... But that's Cabala too really. You just wait and see. (*Puts the entire phallus in his mouth, chews.*)

BRECHT

What have you got in the jar, cocaine?

EISENSTEIN

(makes a deprecating gesture)

BRECHT

A friend of mine has told me a lot about the effects of smoking haschisch on the way you see images. *The Artificial Paradise, The Devil's Elixir*, isn't that your department?

EISENSTEIN

(swallows)

No no, I'm interested in completely different... means.

BRECHT

To be serious, there is something that disturbs me in the reports from Moscow, in Tretjakov's letters too. The scientific tendency in Marxism seems to be the underdog struggling against the ideological, the new clergy, everything you call magic. "Engineers of the human soul", what the hell is that supposed to mean? The rational system which just did away with the souls is now trying to animate those who no longer are able to trust their own reason. And not without success, as it seems. That's unacceptable, you have to agree with that at least? We have to expose the ideology which, instead of forcing people to see through the course of events, prompts them to fall on their knees in the face of the incomprehensible and honor its representatives. This has to be brought out into the daylight before it's too late. Otherwise the masses both here and there will be left more than ever at a loss.

EISENSTEIN

We'll discuss this further when we are in Moscow. *(Takes a couple of thin paper rolls out of his pocket. Pause.)* Frankly there is only one thing I like about you: you actually believe what you say. All cardinals are atheists. All politicians are apolitical. You'll never become one of them. *(Opens the door to the corridor, peeps out, closes it. Whispers quickly.)* Here's something I'd like to ask you to bring across the boarder, well, you understand. *(Slips the rolls of paper into Brecht's hand.)*

BRECHT

(looks at the rolls with reluctance.)

EISENSTEIN

(whispers)

Hide them quickly. Anywhere. Not in your cap though.

BRECHT

(sticks the rolls inside one of his thick woolen socks that have slipped down his legs)

EISENSTEIN

(picks up the book. A bit too loud)

Perhaps you wonder why I speak so much about Rome and the church? It's this story about Giordano Bruno, the escaped friar, which doesn't leave me in peace. The one they burnt at the stake. He didn't simply deny that the earth was the center of the universe and put the sun there instead, like this Pole, Copernicus. No, the Nolan, he maintained that there is no center! No wonder the Inquisition grabbed him. Science has never before or later been this revolutionary and great art has never been in the center of attention as then. Giordano wanted to create an alternative church or an alternative party or maybe an alternative world... But the prelates said there is only one and must be only one world, where the earth is in the center and Rome is the center of the earth. Just as the sun revolves around the earth, so do the cardinals revolve around the pope, the people around the priests, the man around his master, the wife around her husband. How would it look otherwise? When Giordano said:

BRECHT

(excitedly)

"Just the opposite!"

EISENSTEIN

No, he said more than that, he said "there is no center, we are in the universe and the universe is in us, our world is only one of an infinite number of possible ones" — well, he created a scandal then. He would today too, I think.

BRECHT

What a coincidence. I've also been interested in this era. Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* really was revolutionary science. Bruno, Galilei, Bacon — they all questioned everything, tested everything against common practice. They liberated science from the grip of Aristotle and scholasticism. Superstition had to give way to reason, chemistry was separated from alchemy, astronomy from astrology, art from cult. At the same time there is an interesting contradiction in the era. Why, reason was not a power in itself, it had a social base, navigation, commerce, well, you know. But the scientists then

were very reluctant to circulate their theories, Latin was still used — and that was not simply the fault of the church. Would they also have been able to release the social revolution which was imminent — or was it too early? In any case, now their revolutionary reason became locked up in the libraries. Perhaps they missed the boat and were left behind on the academic island.

EISENSTEIN

There will be more boats, at least for Giordano.

BRECHT

I think we should do something together on Bruno. A production in Moscow. I'll write and you can translate. We can divide directing between us. It would be very important for me to be able to try out some of my ideas just there.

EISENSTEIN

You and me? About Giordano Bruno? In Moscow? In that case it'll have to be an opera.

(The light in the compartment suddenly goes out. Only a blue emergency bulb is lit. A long pause during which only the noise from the train is heard. The light comes back on.)

BRECHT

(checks to see if the rolls of paper are still in his sock)

EISENSTEIN

(continues)

Opera is the only possible form to present such explosive subject matter in. Tragedy and bufoonery at the same time. Bruno's life and work provides a basis for that.

BRECHT

Opera today exists only as parody of itself. My two attempts in the genre, *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*, were aimed precisely at the genre itself.

EISENSTEIN

Quite! And the more it is being parodied the more it remains itself. I had actually intended to use Wagner in my new film on Kreuger, the match king, you know. *Götterdämmerung*, a stockmarket crash to the tones of Wagner's apocalyptic horns. But that's another story. Bruno is connected to the opera form in several ways. First of all they are children of the same era. Why, opera was invented by the Florentines who thought they were recreating Greek tragedy. They created a sort of alchemical wedding of the elements: words, music, images, dance. And almost all the operas were about this alchemical wedding: the trial, purification and union of the contracting parties, all through the power of music.

BRECHT

Is there a planetarium in Moscow?

EISENSTEIN

Yes, one that's just been completed.

BRECHT

Can you perform there?

EISENSTEIN

Yes, yes, great! Under the spherical vault of the dome, better than old Vitruvius! The theater is a universe and the Universe a theater! Everything is united when the electric circuit is closed in the magnetic magical sphere: the hero, the choir, the orchestra, the audience. And at the same time the story of the great magician's rise and fall is told here. Excellent! I'll talk to a friend who works at the planetarium as soon as we arrive.

BRECHT

(lights his cigar butt)

But the union of the elements can only occur in the extension of their separation, that is, against the background of their separateness. Well, the break with Aristotle could hardly be shown through some kind of Wagnerian synthesis of the arts where everything merges with everything else, like a culinary smorgasbord on rough sea. What I mean is that the planetarium could be seen as a model

of another kind of viewing than the old theater. In the Aristotelian theater the spectator is pulled along like a carousel, he thinks he himself is spurring the wooden horse along or steering the little boat on the carousel platform. The new type of theater which we have been working on rather resembles this planetarium: the spectator is watching the whole situation critically and enjoying his overview. In the carousel type the spectator is active, but only within the fiction, in the planetarium type he is passive, but only for the time being, within the walls of the theater. Like the new science of the times, a play about Giordano Bruno has to fix the boundaries where none existed before, differentiate in order to create access. No tautologies, but questions. The choir narrates, the hero shows, the music comments. The different elements become accessible to the spectator's knowledge in the same way as it became possible to master the world through the measurements of the astronomers and mathematicians.

EISENSTEIN

Master yes, but measurements? Are we talking about the same thing? Why, Giordano had never seen a telescope! His criticism of the divine Aristotle was revolutionary, but he was not alone there. The real subversion was in his own teachings. He was a student of the great Hermes Trismegistos. He thought he would be able to master the elements with the aid of Great Art, and that became his downfall when others thought they could wheedle the secrets of the *ars magna* out of him. To Giordano the cosmos was an immense art work, written in a secret language. You can master the universe, simply by rubbing it the right way, he said. A mystical jester and a jesting mystic. The pedants have their watches, we mathematicians have our laughter, he used to say. A great dialectician, a metaphysical poet. Listen to this. It's about the unity of the opposites. (*Reads from the book.*) "Two are the kinds of the numbers, even and odd of which one is male, the other female. Two are the passions, superior and divine, inferior and vulgar. Two are the arts of life, *cognitio* and *affectio*. Two are the objects of these, the true and the good. Two are the kinds of the motion, straight, by which the bodies tend toward their conservation, and circular, by which they are conserved. Two are the essential principles of things, the matter and the form. Two are the specific differences of

substances, rare and dense, simple and mixed. Two are the primary opposite and active principles, the hot and the cold. Two are the first parents of natural things, the sun and the earth."

(The door of the compartment slides open, as if someone had opened it. After a while the door slides shut, as if someone was closing it.)

BRECHT

(checks the papers in his sock, picks up the book)

What power! What prose! *(Reads, ever more hesitantly)* "Now here is he who has pierced the air, penetrated the sky, toured the realms of stars, traversed the boundaries of the world, dissipated the fictitious walls of the first, eighth, tenth spheres, and whatever else might have been attached to these by the devices of vain mathematicians and by the blind vision of popular philosophers. Thus aided by the fulness of sense and reason, he opened with the key of most industrious inquiry those enclosures of truth that can be opened to us at all *(looks furtively at the compartment door)*, by presenting naked the shrouded and veiled nature; he gave eyes to moles, illuminated the blind..." *(Lights his butt.)* Who did this Nolan think he was anyway?

EISENSTEIN

He thought he had *magna clavis*, the Great Key to the universe, in his hand.

BRECHT

And to whom was he supposed to give it? The people? Or the new priesthood?

EISENSTEIN

If we were to make the interrogations at the Inquisition the frame of action, which would be a simple but effective solution, then the meeting with Galilei has to be an important scene. Did you know that Galilei eliminated Giordano in the contest for the professorship in Mathematics in Padua in 1592? The young mechanic beat the artful magician in a typical academic encounter with bribes and everything. All right, Bruno was better at arguing than computing. Anyway he realized that this was his last chance after seventeen years of travel which had made him famous and feared all over

Europe. His good old friend, Lorenzo di Pupo, who had lived in Moscow for a while, tried to console him with the old Russian saying... well, how would you translate it, "best that which never happens" or "best that which happens" — it can mean both. Giordano was in fact strongly inclined to go to Moscow to become Boris Godunov's court astrologer, but Lorenzo dissuaded him. Unfortunately the alternative, Venice, turned out to be no better. The Inquisition imprisoned him after a few months and thus modern physics reached a dead end. The scenes in Sant' Officio's basement could probably be very... attractive. During the seven years the Nolan was held prisoner in Rome practically all known methods of torture were tried on him — with the exception of crucifixion. In addition to such well-known turns as the lead chamber and red-hot iron rods, there are descriptions of *il polledro*, the foal, where the victim is stretched with ropes over a pyramid shaped staircase, *la corda*, hoisting up with a rope, and finally *la veglia*, the vigil, when the victim's body was pressed against a sharp wooden edge for 36 hours while his limbs were twisted. It will be a theater of cruelty that would even make the Moscow audience turn pale!

BRECHT

What do you mean by "dead end"?

EISENSTEIN

Galilei's victory over Bruno meant the beginning of the mechanicians' triumphal march. In that perspective it was no accident that Giordano was condemned to be burned at the stake on the day of Galilei's birth. The devil knows if it wasn't the 10th of February too. (*Giggles.*) Then it continued, $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 2 = 4$. The further they've reached, the duller the universe has become, and the science about it as well. But the duller nature's become, the more unapproachable it seems to have become. The portion of that which *cannot* be confined to the mechanistic and positivistic straight jacket has become larger and larger. Today Galilei is the Aristotle of our times! But from the raving Giordano with his roaring laughter the physicists have quite a bit to learn, on the contrary. He said himself that his opponents' manner of describing the universe is like when someone is asked to describe a book he's read and he lists format,

type of paper, number of pages, and typography but never reaches the content. Doesn't it sound familiar? As Giordano told the judges before he was brought to the stake: "Our dialogue will continue in infinity."

BRECHT

But Bruno's teachings about infinity were historically unproductive, something you cannot say about Galilei's mechanics. The Renaissance process of liberation created anxiety in some quarters over lost security associated with good old medieval superstition, guild spirit and coziness. A typical transitional phenomena. Bruno's ecstasy before infinity might just have been the other side of his anxiety before transience, before the possibility and necessity of trying to master and effect the elements practically instead of just conjuring them. In that case he seems disquietingly modern. There are already quite a few who have started making gold according to his recipe.

EISENSTEIN

You mean that the alchemists only conjure up reality, don't intervene in it like the mechanicians? Then why are you so afraid of what you consider empty conjurations? You're not superstitious, I hope?

BRECHT

(tries to light his butt)

EISENSTEIN

Today quantum mechanics say that maybe there are an infinite number of possible worlds in addition to the one we're now regarding. Every second something happens here, the opposite happens beside it, in another world. Every alternative course of events in turn then generates its possible continuations, so that in reality may be the universe is an infinitely branching tree of possible, simultaneously existing worlds. Which can't be proven, but can't be disproven either. Thus in another world, here next to us, you're I and I'm you. *(With the speed of lightning Eisenstein snatches Brecht's cap and puts his own hat on Brecht. The hat is much too big for Brecht's head. In Brecht's voice.)* Now if you are

a magician, Doctor Eisenstein, would you please conjure up some supper. It's time for that. Well, only vegetarian, of course. Culinary delights distract. I myself prefer eating with pointers.

BRECHT

(imitates Eisenstein, takes the candy jar)

In the meantime why don't you try these Mexican magical balls, they make it possible to travel both in time and space. Or taste this one *(Picks up a phallus-figure.)* If it's too small, I can get out a bigger one. *(Sings in a squeaky voice.)* "All of me, why not take all of me..."

EISENSTEIN

No thank you, I prefer one of these... feet. *(Take a piece of candy.)* No rule without exception. I don't eat smorgasbord, you see, but I don't mind nibbling at a fellow human being if he's got meat on his bones and there is marrow to be sucked out...

BRECHT

Yum! Regression, regression! To be allowed to feel that you still know how to wag your tail. By the way, do you know that in Bruno's ashes at Campo di Fiori they found the remains of his tail. Oh, lucky he who could have been present there to see him disappear in a halo of fire, whispering his last curses over science and progress. I would have given anything to be present, to feel the smell of burning flesh, rub elbows with the ecstatic masses, merge with them, to feel all the barriers fall... *(The train starts braking. In a normal voice.)* This must be the border. *(Red flags flash by outside the window.)*

EISENSTEIN

(still in Brecht's tone of voice)

Progress is based on the existence of somebody to step on. The problem with Bruno was that he maintained there was no center. In that case you can't differentiate between the beginning and the end. And how would you then be able to say what progress is? That question your poor Giordano did not resolve. That's why he won't do as subject matter either. Goodbye. *(Gets up. Brecht also gets up, snatches his cap, throws the hat and rushes out. Eisenstein shouts in*

a normal voice.) Remember what Bruno said: "Our dialogue will continue in infinity!"

The train has stopped, the view through the car window across the aisle is blocked by steam. Eisenstein sits down, pulls down the hat over his brow, resumes the pose in the first scene.

END

Note: Bertolt Brecht's first trip to the Soviet Union in 1932 coincided with Sergej Eisenstein's return from his major European and American tour. After more than a year's work in Mexico, which ended with all the filmed material for the projekt *Que Viva Mexico* being left in Hollywood, Eisenstein was forced to return home empty-handed. On the train he met Brecht, who was on his way to Moscow together with Margarete Steffin and Slatan Dudow to show Dudow's, Brecht's and Hanns Eisler's film, *Kuhle Wampe*. About his meeting on the train Brecht simply wrote in his diary that "Eisenstein is ill".

I have Håkan Lövgren to thank for important facts about Eisenstein's occult interests.

"In the Sign of Aquarius" is the first part of a triptych, the middle part of which is a symposium on Chinese theater in 1935 ("The Sorcerer's Apprentices", where Brecht and Eisenstein meet again) and the third part, "Ash Wednesday", yet another dialogue, set in Moscow in 1940, between Eisenstein and Michail Bachtin. The triptych will be published i Sweden as *Stjärnfall (Falling Stars)* in 1987.

L.K.

Translated by Håkan Lövgren

A Hypothetical Dedication

Sergej Eisenstein's autobiographical notes are remarkable in the extreme openness with which his creative and personal life is described. They also carry a fundamentally ironic tone, dominated as they are by the perspective of an artist who has become wise from experience. Their subjectivity is manifest above all in the pungency of his vision and comprehension of the past. That was his way of being ruthless. Those words in his recollections which have a personal-lyrical intonation also prove to be so much stronger and more important. They are not many, these words. But among them we find a unique confession of love and admiration (the only one in all of Eisenstein's writings).

And I must say, that I certainly never loved, worshiped and idolized anyone as much as I did my teacher.

Because I am unworthy of even untying the strings of his sandals...

And until my old age I will consider myself unworthy of even kissing the dust in his tracks...

And it is impossible to live without loving, worshiping, and being carried away by admiration for someone.¹

Eisenstein's teacher was Vsevolod Ėmilevič Meyerhold. These words dedicated to him are so much the more important, since Eisenstein was less prone than others, due to his particular intellect and emotions, to personify his ideals, convictions, love and hate. Yet he called Meyerhold "unique", "divine", and "incomparable".

Because Eisenstein owed no-one more than he owed Meyerhold.

* * *

¹ S. M. Ėjzenstejn. *Izbrannye proizvedenija v šesti tomach*, vol. 1, Moskva 1964, pp. 305-306. References to this work will henceforth be indicated by volume and page number (1/305-306).

The very question of whether or not to become an artist was, as we know, decided for Eisenstein by his impressions from the famous Meyerhold production of Lermontov's *Masquerade* at the Aleksandra Theater in 1917.² This festive and tragic performance — the synthesis of a Russian classic and the most original theatrical ambitions, the focus of century-old and manyfacettted stage traditions, a symbolic performance, whose harmonies of entertainment gave expression to life's fateful lack of order; a final performance, the opening of which significantly coincided with the end of the Imperial Theater and which then became the property of the people, as the best symbol of the riches and strengths of theatrical art, — this performance made a lifelong impression on Eisenstein.

After this there was simply no way in which Eisenstein could avoid meeting Meyerhold. Especially the Meyerhold who, after *Masquerade*, proposed Majakovskij's *Misterija-buff* to the former Imperial Theater; with the proponent of "aesthetic" theatricality, who had left his fortress and applied his strength to the creation of a new theater, a theater of the revolutionary era.

And when the young Eisenstein, director and set designer, who had already confirmed his position and independence, came to study at Meyerhold's GVM — The Higher State Directors' Studios — in September, 1921, he was not disappointed in the most important of his expectations. He was allowed to see how the great theater artist created. In his subsequent memories he presents an astounding list of artistic works, important people and generally well-known individuals, whom he had had the opportunity to meet in person during his life, — and adds that not a single one of these meetings "can erase from my memory the impressions left on me by those three days of rehearsals for *A Doll's House* in the gymnasium on Novinskij Boulevard".³ The picture of the Meyerholdian performance being born became the most clear and instructive lesson for Eisenstein of *how art is created* and how it communicates.

* * *

² Cf., 1/88,97.

³ 1/319.

But the relation of the student to his teacher was at the same time filled with an awareness of deep and bitter conflict.

This was a remarkable man.

A living negation of the fact that genius and villainy cannot co-exist in the same man.

Happy those who came in contact with him as a magician and sorcerer of the theater.

Pity those who succeeded in learning while watching him.

And pity those who trustfully approached him with questions.⁴

A mixture of creative genius and craftiness.

Innumerable were the pains of those, who, like me, loved him selflessly.⁵

It is not just a simple — and very understandable — disappointment here in the lack of perfection in a person you love — although Eisenstein speaks about this with a purely personal sadness.

It is a matter of — and this is particularly important — the consequences of a teacher's personal deficiencies, which Eisenstein observed and pondered over from the perspective that his general understanding of vital problems of art and the tasks of the artist provided. The double "sorrow" of Meyerhold's students also proved a double lesson to Eisenstein which he dispensed with in his further activity as a director and pedagogue and in the realization of his own principles.

In his own creative ethics, Eisenstein rejected the Meyerholdian "craftiness" in relation to his students and co-workers, who were merely looked upon as an ordinary means of realizing the master's stage designs. In theater and film Eisenstein understood and maintained agreement of opinion in the collective work as everyone's joint authorship, which was well provided for not only by the completeness of creative agreement, but also by the completeness of human trust.⁶

⁴ 1/306.

⁵ 1/418.

⁶ Eisenstein's creative ethics is no doubt a subject for special research. Of the published material relating to this theme, cf., e.g., "How Eisenstein worked with actors", *Iskusstvo kino*, 1968, No. 1, pp. 125-146.

Meyerhold's reluctance and inability to answer questions and "reveal the secrets" in practice reinforced Eisenstein in his bent for analysis and theory.

To dig down into the crevice of the problem myself, to penetrate it, attempting to investigate it ever more thoroughly, to get ever closer to the core.

Expecting no help from anywhere.

And not to hide my findings: to drag them out into the living daylight, in lectures, in the press, in articles, in books.⁷

Thus Eisenstein's relation to Meyerhold had been formed already in the 1920's: a full measure of admiration combined with a full measure of inner polemics. Eisenstein never openly and vociferously criticized his teacher: he developed his criticism within his own work, inseparably from the development and realization of his own views.

This criticism consisted primarily in a negation of some features of the individual aesthetic world view, which Eisenstein perceived as moribund, regressive and incompatible with the times and their tasks.

* * *

Here we need only pose a few questions. In order to settle these we must not only survey and understand Eisenstein's criticism of Meyerhold, but also undertake a thorough study of Meyerhold's creative method from the standpoint of the history of theater and aesthetics, study the fate of his discoveries and the inner reverses in the fate of his theater.

In 1929 Eisenstein made a short remark in one of his works: "Meyerhold remained, not as a theater, but as a master".⁸ This was a rather precise evaluation of the situation: precise in the sense that the Meyerholdian theater had begun to lose the avant-garde position and influence it commanded in Soviet art during the first half of the 1920's. The difficulties were further aggravated in the beginning of the 1930's. At the beginning of the decade a crisis was imminent in the arts, which later manifested itself in themes and

⁷ 1/310.

⁸ 2/14.

styles, as well as in the manner in which it approached the present and its understanding of the classical heritage. The principle behind the raw and directly forming influence on the material of real life which so characterized the "left" revolutionary theater of the 1920's, had already come to seem inadequate. It was supplemented and then even supplanted by the terms of realism, understood as a realism presenting a coherent picture of events in life. In this light the traditions of the Art Theater appeared more up to date than the poetic symbols and grotesques which distinguished Meyerhold's method in the 1920's.

This crucial phase meant a most serious test for the Meyerholdian theater. Although Meyerhold was full of creative energy, although he continued his quest as before, although he strove with all the might accessible to him to retain his child as a functioning creative organism and as a functioning aesthetic program, the discrepancy between the master's genius and the importance of the work at his theater became all the more obvious. There were different reasons for this. One could point to the difficulties with the repertoire (the search for contemporary dramatic material, the loss of Majakovskij, the break with Višnevskij, etc., etc.). One could also point to the constantly recurring crises within the collective.

Here the unavoidable question of Meyerhold's own fault appears — of his tragic fault — as his student, Eisenstein, saw it. Deeply revering his master, Eisenstein perceived in him an inability — paired with a rare sharpness in the perception of life through the prism of art — to examine himself and evaluate his relation to reality around him.

Meyerhold resolved all questions through his creative work. In every sphere of his theatrical and social activity he simply remained an artist, a creator of spectacles and an actor. He was not characterized by a coherent and objectified awareness of his own art: neither on the philosophical and socio-historical level, nor on the pedagogically applied level. What he wrote on theater does not do justice to the scope of his creative culture and could hardly be called his "theoretical heritage". It was a combination of reflections and idea manifestations, which, as a rule, were subordinated to the support or defense of a particular phase of his work.

The fact that Meyerhold was not the theoretician of his own system, like Eisenstein, Stanislavskij or Brecht, is one side of the

question. Another was the fact that he was not in command of a practical mind, which in different ways also characterized Brecht, Nemirovič, or, say, Vilar. The crux of the matter was that his very art — a brilliant intuitive elemental force which did not provide for a brilliant self-awareness as well — ran the risk of not finding the new and true means of realizing his brilliance when times changed. It ran the risk of losing its basis and response. It ran the risk of not catching and transmitting the "new word of life", even when it fully desired to catch and express it truthfully with all the might of its own voice. Only Meyerhold's intuition would save him in situations like these. It was indeed a salvation, but Meyerhold's other characteristics played a far less rescuing role.

Meyerhold was unable to keep a distance to himself. He perceived and understood his art as his personal creation. So what? How else? Isn't that natural? Is a truly creative act possible without the artist's internal identification of himself with his creation? Yes indeed, such identification is necessary — but the essence of creating and the fate of the work cannot be reduced to that. "The composer of the performance" — that is how Meyerhold often characterized his role in the theatrical work, and that is the way it was, too. But one might also say that Meyerhold's compositional talent was located in the psychology of a mere actor and performer. The creator was too much of a character. The personal element — a source lacking value in art — turned out to be "too human", excessively personal.

* * *

Stanislavskij's ethical principle, "Love art in yourself, but don't love yourself in art", is well known. Meyerhold did not negate this principle, because to him it hardly existed: precisely because he as an artist identified his creations with his art, and himself with his creations. Meyerhold's performing energy was the natural form in which his aesthetic philosophy found realization — but the problem was that this was a natural and inconvertible form. He acted, always and everywhere, acted with a constant brilliance under any circumstances presented by history and life. And in his life, beyond the limits of the stage, he performed innumerable "roles", great and small, elevated and base, honest and dishonest, depending on the

circumstances. But reality will seldom allow man to play with it like that. And when it presents limits to such a performance, the artistic genius, in revealing its own insufficiency, may turn into "villainy".

There is a story that when Meyerhold gathered the directors-to-become, who had come to study under him, he told them: "I fear and hate all of you".⁹ Meyerhold's students recalled several times how arbitrarily and unexpectedly the master would draw some theater associates to himself, while chasing others away. All of this was not simply characteristic of an exceptionally partial "disposition". In the brutality of changes like these the artist's relation to his own art also acquired an expression of sorts.

Meyerhold was not simply an innovator, he was a constant-renewal fanatic. He apparently did not care about consolidating that which had already been accomplished. In his creative development there was always some kind of disaster present. That was also the case in 1905 when he demanded: "Theater has to be a *monastery*. The actor must always be a *dissenter*. Always be different from the others".¹⁰ The same thing in 1936, when, recalling the scope of his realized works, he remarked: "You can't make omelettes without breaking eggs".¹¹ He lived and died; lived and died again as an artist in the process of creating and completing each of his stage works, prolonging his life while the performance was still alive. And the master's needs within the collective were limited to the needs of every separate project. Theater art, which is not fixed in its principles, poses the question of continuous development in creative culture with particular poignancy — the question of what is called "the secrets of the craft". The famous saying, "Life is short, but art endures", here acquires a problematic meaning. Generally and historically speaking, theater both survived somehow and did not forget earlier attained culture, but managed without it in order to be receptive to new impressions; one must assume that it will retain this continuity in its future development as well. But the posing of a question, which is superfluous in relation to theater in general, might appear far from unnecessary when applied to a concrete phenomenon in theatrical art. Meyerhold was such a phenomenon.

⁹ I. A. Aksenov, "Sergej Michajlovič Ėjzenstejn", *Iskusstvo kino*, 1968, No. 1, p. 98.

¹⁰ V. E. Mejerchold. *Stat'i, pis'ma, reči, besedy*, vol. 1, Moskva 1968, p. 90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 337.

The "non-codified" nature of theatrical work proved to be a profoundly dramatic problem in his destiny — because the exclusive and incomparable stage talent of this man was especially defenseless in the face of time. As we have already said, Meyerhold did not attach himself to a systematic methodology; he could not and did not desire to "reveal the secrets"; he did not worry about continuity, and thus subverted the collective to the same extent that he built it up.

Eisenstein clearly saw the purely psychological antinomy inherent in all of this: the man's personality presented just as much strength as weakness, as much virtue as vice. "The Meyerhold phenomenon" thus perceived, was initially experienced as a deeply personal trauma by Eisenstein, "I was unlucky with my fathers" — is how the story about this trauma concluded.¹² Concerned about the perpetuation of the Meyerholdian art, Eisenstein could not at the same time forgive his teacher of all that he had done to condemn his own art and his magnificent culture to extinction.

* * *

In 1931, when he was in Mexico, Eisenstein was reached by the rumor that Meyerhold had died during a trip abroad. Before the rumor had been refuted, Eisenstein wrote an obituary.¹³ Or prepared a draft text rather, in which he expressed his immediate reflections.

This is the text, with a few abbreviations, as it is kept in the Eisenstein archives (TsGALI, f. 1923):

The last bearer of true theater has died. Theater with a capital T. The theater of a past epoch. He is dead. The most complete exponent of the Theater. A Theater of century old traditions. And the most brilliant of Theaters. He is dead.

Meyerhold was a revolutionary. This would have been sufficient up to the 1920s.

It was, as we say in mathematics, necessary, but ceased to be sufficient.

To be a revolutionary is not enough.

¹² 1/306.

¹³ This is to be found in a letter from Eisenstein to M. M. Strauch, September 17, 1931. The letter is kept in Strauch's personal archive.

One has to be a dialectician as well.

I have never seen a greater incarnation of theater in a human being than the theater in Meyerhold.

Theater is not a director's art.

The director's art is cinema.

Because theater is above all an actor's art.

But theater is dualism.

And Meyerhold was a dualist from head to toe.

From being two-faced, from his dualism in the petty sphere.

When it came to personal issues, there was no craftier a schemer than Vsevolod Ėmil'eviĉ, — and how many times did things change for the people who had been blinded by the magic of his mastery, and who were literally ready to die for him.

There was never as many tears shed anywhere as within the walls of Meyerhold's theater. But there are also few places where there has been so much sacrificial devotion as within these walls. This devotion was mostly conscious and unyielding... till the next "Bartholomean Night", when the Master, like Saturn devouring his children, decided to do away with those who, for some reason, appeared to stand in his way. People left. For them Meyerhold would forever remain the only master, but the master always remained alone.

And nothing was done to preserve the legacy, the experience.

Being the director of a theater, that is almost always being an actor to everyone.

Meyerhold was the ideal actor — I've seen quite a few actors all over the world. Many at close range. In their laboratories. Chaplin holds first place on five-sixths of the earth.

I have seen him sufficiently both on screen and at work off screen.

I have seen quite a bit of Meyerhold's acting.

And for me there was no question of who was to win the laurels.

Alas, it is rolled up in the wreath on the grave of the one who was the greatest actor of those days...

Meyerhold's experience. Like the traditions of the magi, this is an example of what can only be preserved in the living experience of the collective around him.

Meyerhold's experience disappears with him, like the performances of a dead pianist.

With Meyerhold theory and practice are inseparable, but not in the sense that this is understood by dialectics.

Meyerhold had no analytical method for his own instinctive creative work.

Neither did he have a synthesis — a unification into a methodology. He could "show" anything you'd like, but could "explain" nothing.

The intensity of action always carried him away from contemplation and analysis of what had been done.

Once the "actor and the mirror" issue was settled at the GGYRM (another age-old tradition of practical experience, transmitted by word of mouth, as in an exclusive generation of high priests).

The actor was forbidden to rehearse or check the result in front of the mirror. (The question of training your coordination through inner physical control.)

To pose this question of how to make a selection from centuries of actors' preferences for practice was undoubtedly correct.

But how symbolic it also is of Meyerhold's inability to abstract a method from the performance. To look at it analytically from the side. For some reason he would refuse to look at himself in the mirror here, where a "dualism" — analytical par excellence — would have been appropriate.

This was a personal perception through and through and a way of personally reacting to any phenomenon that was equally characteristic of all of Meyerhold's other solutions.

The absence of a correct theory of knowledge made it impossible for him to bring his experiences together into a methodology.

...But tell me one single actor who could do the "blocking" — the gauging of the vertical surface of the stage — at any turn, the way Meyerhold, the actor, was able to do.

Who is going to remember this after a year, when I saw

actors working with him who were unable to grasp the "plot" of what was being acted in his brilliant demonstrations and who trampled down all his astounding technical achievements or embodiment of a particular piece of the action?!...

Meyerhold was a revolutionary.

From the Aleksandra Theater to *Dawn*.

But Meyerhold was not a dialectician.

I think that the highest tribute of respect to the teacher from the student-surgeon would be to... examine him after his death.

Goya turned out to have been buried without his head. This is a fact revealed when his body was to be returned from Bordeaux to Spain.

It has been suggested that he bequeathed his head to an anatomical institute, because of his burning enthusiasm for scientific research and discoveries.

And a feasible posthumous "dissection" of him who all his life burned with Goya's thirst for research — however anti-sentimental in the bourgeois sens that it might be — is in no way an insult to the dead, but a tribute of the highest respect and admiration.

Meyerhold's tragedy is that he never ranked among the "national treasures".

And was studied the way remarkable plants and rare animals are.

A methodological treasure-house — as such the theater will once again become needed, and within that framework Meyerhold's experience is a real fortune.

* * *

Eisenstein was able to form his opinion about Meyerhold based on the latter's own laws, on Meyerholdian laws. But he similarly also judged these very laws from his own standpoint, in the light of his own creative, aesthetic, and ethical codex. From this point of view, Meyerhold — as a phenomenon — did not enjoy complete conformity with a law. Eisenstein talked of the necessity for such an artist to be a dialectician. He demanded not simply a theory from the artist — he demanded complete self-awareness. He demanded

adjustment and strictness in the artist's relation to life, near and distant. But behind the severity of such criticism were invariably concealed an admiration and reverence for the natural creative talent of the man to be judged.

In all of this there is something similar to another controversy, which has been familiar to educated readers — Russian, at least — for a long time. We are talking about Puškin's tragedy, *Mozart and Salieri*. Its subject is not the psychology of envy in general, but the psychology of artistic envy. Except for the facts of the prototypes' biographical circumstances, Mozart and Salieri seem like stereotypical expressions of two different kinds of artistic consciousness in both Puškin's version and in their fictional relationship. Time compels us to look at these old symbols anew. It is possible to search for and find different interpretations of the meaning behind this conflict, but there is hardly any doubt about the fact that Puškin, with his brilliant and keen sense of history, foresaw much of what was to come (just like his contemporary, Balzac, in *The Unknown Masterpiece*). Puškin's Salieri, bemoaning Mozart, provides the contemporary researcher with a chance to view a conjecture about a certain new type of artist on the way to take the place of the natural "bard", about new and so far unknown artistic pains, about an art burdened by theoretical reflection. Burdened and maybe poisoned as well? The fate of many artists in Europe during this century and the last does compel one to reflect upon this problem. The fate and pains of such artists have been presented in generalized terms by Thomas Mann in his *Doctor Faustus*: we could speak about the hero of this novel as a kind of "new Salieri", who is on the verge of making a breakthrough in artistic spontaneity and freedom of inhibition, a tragically regressive breakthrough at the price of "diabolical inspiration" and poisoning of one's self (though not literally about a goblet of poison as in Puškin). "Mozartism" (in the Pushkinian sense) appears to be irretrievable, while "Salierism" (also in Puškin's sense) seems to be a progressive illness, and at best a still usable legacy for the so-called new and latest art.

We are not talking about envy as such, of course; rather we are dealing here with a "historical" envy of the giants of the past. In either case it finds expression in the pains of "algebra" over "harmony" which are so familiar to many of us today, and which Puškin assigned the name of Salieri.

As we know, Eisenstein was not indifferent to this character and — joking aside! — sympathized with the trials and tribulations he had had to suffer. Eisenstein apparently felt a lot in him that was similar to his own self.¹⁴ But the ease and magnanimity with which Eisenstein spoke about Puškin's villain were based on the fact that he had found a certain ground for a solution to the problem in his own artistic consciousness. A kind of Mozartism, not poisoned by Salierism, but strengthened by and in control of it, is how one could describe the essence of his solution.

It was as though Puškin's antithesis had been re-enacted. It appears transformed in a dialectical way. Meyerhold in Mozart's role and Eisenstein in Salieri's. But here the question of the compatibility of genius and villainy, which in Puškin's version is addressed to Salieri, is reversed in direction. In the final analysis, it is the very spontaneity and sanguinity of artistic genius, the very naturally and boundlessly developing personal elements, refusing to give way to anything, which turn Meyerhold into the person he is: "A living negation of the fact that genius and villainy cannot co-exist in one and the same man".¹⁵

Mozartism carried to its full conclusion turns into a tragic dualism. "Mozart" proves to be inadequate and defenceless without the "Sailierian" view of himself from without.

The new "Salieri" turns out to pose essentially the same question as he does in the Puškin version:

What use if Mozart still were living
And even higher peaks would reach?
Would art be raised in such a manner? No;
As soon as he is gone, again it falls:
No heirs would he be leaving us.
What use is it? Like a cherub,
He'd bring some songs to us from heaven,
To stir up wishes without wings in us,
We creatures of the earth, then fly away?

¹⁴ 3/33-34.

¹⁵ 1/306.

Eisenstein was hardly any less severe towards Meyerhold. Only the meaning of this severity was quite opposed to the conclusion Puškin's Salieri drew from what he had said:

Then fly away, the sooner, well, the better!

* * *

The 1930s were a transitional time for Meyerhold, a time of complex and varied pursuits. These were years of a new desire for the classics, a new approach to musical theater, and a new — and on a regular basis prepared — rapprochement with Stanislavskij. This was the time when the construction of Meyerhold's new theater dragged on, while the temporary hall, which had been overfilled with people during the very last performance of *The Lady of the Camelias*, now housed an ever declining audience. The time when Meyerhold decided to start all over from the beginning — only to have his artistic, and later his private life broken. It was Eisenstein who had to save and preserve his teacher's personal archive to be able to carry out the "posthumous examination" he himself had demanded. At this time the "examination" really proved to be posthumous. Michail Bulgakov would now hardly have consented to a repetition of his joke, published some fifteen years earlier:

The theater of the deceased, Vsevolod Meyerhold, who, as is well known, died in 1927, when the trapezes with naked boyars collapsed during the staging of Puškin's *Boris Godunov*.¹⁶

In one respect, however, Bulgakov turned out to be prophetic: during the last years before his disaster Meyerhold was preoccupied with the idea of staging *Boris Godunov*. This production was conceived over a long period of time, gradually; it was prepared with pauses which sharpened and deepened it in the manner of the Aleksandra Theater production of *Masquerade*, — even the music by Sergej Prokof'ev had already been written — but all was destroyed.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Vstreči s Mejerchol'dom*, Moskva 1967, p. 460.

In the beginning of 1940 there was a conference of film workers and historians in Moscow on the questions of the historical genre in film. Eisenstein gave a speech. He spoke about the ties between the past and the future, about the necessity of speaking to the heroes of past eras "on equal terms", and about the importance of an elevated historical comprehension of reality. And here he turned to Puškin:

What is the task before us, when it comes to working on a film? Puškin formulated this task well in his own time. He said: 'What happens in a tragedy? What goal does it have? Man and the people. Man's fate and the fate of the people.' The last holds true even today.¹⁷

And further, speaking about the scope and significance of historical events, Eisenstein again returned to Puškin:

What should the historical film teach about? I think *Boris Godunov* is an excellent example to study — a popular drama about Tsar Boris, where we find two models for the depiction of character: the monologue, "I have reached the highest power", and the famous, "The people are silent". In this scene one can interpret the scope and limits of how the soloists and choir are to work, while "the people are silent", in three of four different ways. I don't care to elaborate on how this stratified image of the masses, which appears at the end, is distributed between all the possible types of *dramatis personae*, who pass through a tragedy.¹⁸

A few weeks later — on March 6, 1940 — Eisenstein prepared a film script for the same monologue/confession in *Boris Godunov* that he had spoken of in his lecture. A long sequence of drawings reveals how this monologue would have had to sound and look on the screen.¹⁹

In January, 1941, Eisenstein was offered to produce a film about Ivan the Terrible. The first scene born in his imagination was a direct continuation of the theme of *Godunov's* monologue: this was

¹⁷ 5/116.

¹⁸ 5/117.

¹⁹ Cf. *Iskusstvo kino*, 1959, No 3, pp. 111-130.

the scene with the tsar's confession in the cathedral, against the background of his reading the book of deceased, the *sinodik*.²⁰

And if we examine the film script for *Boris Godunov*, prepared a year earlier, we will find that many motives of the story and composition are directly repeated in *Ivan the Terrible*.

* * *

In the winter of 1943, during a break in the shooting of *Ivan*, Eisenstein wrote down some theoretical reflections. They concerned the fact that the artist's inner psychological aspirations inescapably participate in — and inescapably frame — the consolidation of the conception of the art work: these aspirations, decidedly individual, are in one way or another tied to the innermost personal experience, to the process involved in shaping the artist's character. "That is to say, the factor which also determines the 'difference' in results from the artistic treatment of one and the same realistic, incidental, factual, etc., material by different artists."²¹

In its development this "treatment" looks like this, according to Eisenstein:

The process of assimilating the material, i.e., making it 'your own', is realized at the point when, meeting with the material of reality, it begins to distribute itself along the coordinates of outlines and contours in that particular structure which is the manifestation of the forming consciousness...

Sometimes destroying the structure and contour of reality to please the outline of an individual wish.

Sometimes violating the individual self in order to 'synchronize' it with the demands of that which it has encountered.

Incidentally, I cannot recall any examples of the last case from my own practice...²²

And turning directly to *Ivan the Terrible* from this point of view, Eisenstein wrote:

²⁰ 1/197.

²¹ *Voprosy kinodramaturgii*, vyp. 4, Moskva 1962, p. 383.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 384.

Both material and plot structure are just as consciously selected means of embodying an idea as the metre and rhythm of a poem, or the selection not only of tempera, oil, water color, gouache or pastel, but also of the model for the realization of one's artistic conception.²³

What Eisenstein has said about his main character, Ivan Vasil'evič the Terrible, in a different context, is no doubt connected to these general reflections. He stated that the picture of Ivan is the artist's self-apology in disguise. A reservation has to be made here, by the way: we are not talking about the film, but about the script, "since some of the ideas for Ivan's childhood scene were never used in the film".²⁴ What we have in mind is the childhood theme as a womb of future "adult" psychological traits. Eisenstein really perceived this theme autobiographically and with great acuteness... Not only the young Ivan, but the grown-up tsar, whose fate is described in Eisenstein's film, had his own *psychological model*. It was the creator of the film's, in all respects, very "own" autobiographical model, because this was a film about the man Eisenstein called his second father. Because the model was Vsevolod Meyerhold, the great actor and creator of performances, Eisenstein's beloved teacher and the subject of his intense and merciless criticism.

Such is the hypothesis, which is substantiated through numerous indirect — and even quite straight-forward — testimonies from Eisenstein himself.

* * *

This hypothesis was based first and foremost on a purely physionomic foundation.

It is, for instance, sufficient to place a few photographs of Čerkasov without make-up next to photos of him in the role of Ivan, and beside these some photos of Meyerhold.

In the gallery of film characters portrayed by Čerkasov, Ivan the Terrible held a special place. It is obvious to any spectator familiar with the fantastic richness of this actor's roles, that he was endowed

²³ Op. cit., p. 385.

²⁴ 1/85.



Nikolaj Čerkasov in the rôle of Ivan the Terrible.



Vsevolod Meyerhold. Photograph dedicated to Eisenstein on June 22, 1936. The text reads: "I am proud of my student, who has already become a master. I love the master, who has already established a school. To this student, to this master, Sergej Eisenstein — my congratulations."

by nature with a particular facial distinction which was always more or less discernible behind any make-up. In Ivan's appearance it underwent an extreme transformation plastically and in the way it was lit. The sculpturing of the face, somewhat split up and fragmented, not completely in proportion to the size of the figure, seemed to have been re-fashioned somehow, just as did the contour of the head. The actor's dark eyes look light. Narrow by nature, they are wide open here. In "The Non-indifferent Nature" Eisenstein wrote about the painstaking searches for the "one-and-only", essential appearance of Ivan, in order to avoid physiognomic associations to the figures of Christ, Judas, Uriel Acosta, as well as Aleksandr Nevskij. In addition there were unavoidable associations to all the other characters portrayed by Čerkasov as well. Archival photographs from the make-up tests give a very clear sense of the inaccuracy of the early variants, next to which the cogency of Eisenstein's final incarnation (settled on together with the make-up artist, Gorjunov, and the cameraman, Moskvín, who managed the lighting of the character) becomes especially obvious. The struggle with the unsuccessful conceptions visible in these photographs is just as evident and instructive as the famous viewing of the actors' tests in Fellini's *8 1/2*... And if Ivan the Terrible suddenly and for a moment begins to "look like" Tsarevich Aleksej, Nevskij, or somebody else from the gallery of his roles (and there are numerous such incidents), then this has the ring of dissonance or imperfection. It is beyond doubt that Eisenstein imagined and very clearly felt the appearance of his hero in advance. There are many suggestive sources: from portraits by El Greco, Byzantine icon faces monk figures by Magnasco (for the general outline of Ivan's figure), all the way to the involuntary tangle of tree branches, joined together in the manner of some kind of strange profile, which Eisenstein drew in Alma-Ata. It is impossible to determine or prove how much and to what extent Meyerhold's appearance dwelled in Eisenstein's consciousness during the period of this portrait work, — or whether such an influence existed at all. But it is important to note that the effect of likeness never arose with Eisenstein through a literal "copying" of the original's external features. And it is also very important to note that the appearance of Čerkasov's Ivan, his expressiveness in general, seems sufficiently close to Meyerhold's appearance.

In photographs of Meyerhold we also find a certain regality, — the way he carries himself, in the turn of his shoulders, the manner of holding his head and gazing, — and a kind of "animal" appeal, a misanthropic gloominess, a certain fiendishness and traits of self-centered hypochondria, which nevertheless do not exclude his generally tsar-like character. And in the photographs from different years one particular feature does not change with age, does not disappear, but becomes even more striking, a special note in the Meyerholdian kingliness: a note of confusion, indecisiveness, of being at an inner crossroads. This Hamlet-like note is perceptible, above all, in the look of his bright eyes: the questions of being are not resolved, still not resolved, again not resolved... The sense of harmony, open to this man and expressed in the handsomeness and plastic ease of his entire appearance, never seems contended. This harmony is never completely closed. In the portraits from his early years this man somehow has the appearance of a romantic prince, and the most amazing thing is that this clearly shines through in the very last depictions of the "venerable" Meyerhold as well. The Hamlet-like indecisiveness glimmers forth from under the traits of gloominess and pain, intelligence and refinement, anxiety and exclusion, fiendishness and craftiness...

The physiognomic effect resulting from these depictions is in many ways akin to the impact of Ivan the Terrible's appearance, as it is presented by Čerkasov in Eisenstein's film.

But regardless of whether one agrees with this parallel or not, the most important issue is not located here.

* * *

We shall take a good look at the Meyerholdian character traits, reflected in Eisenstein's memories, in this case. The negative traits. Craftiness. Perfidy. Imbalanced disposition. Slyness. Roguish reticence. Ironic estrangement. Inner discord. And again: a craftiness that condemns to hellish torments.

We may also remember what was said in the "obituary", which has left time behind:

"Crafty schemer". "Bartholomean night". "Throughout his personal perception and response to every occurrence".

Out of this entire tangle of traits, two basic qualities, two complexes one might say, rose to prominence. Eisenstein designates them with the names of Saturn and Lucifer.

What does "Saturn" mean?

Here are the words from the "obituary": "...Like Saturn devouring his children, the master dealt with those whom he, for some reason, perceived as standing in his way by throwing them out".

Here is the characterization (which emerged from association to Freud and his school) of Meyerhold in the memories:

This is how the great old man in the center of attention is.

Boundlessly charming as a master and crafty and perfidious as a human being.

Such distinction through the mark of brilliance and such a tragic break and disintegration of initial harmony...

Such a circle of fanatics from the students surrounding him.

Such an enthusiastic rise of individuality around him.

Such impatience at any sign of independence.

Such methods of 'spiritual inquisition'.

Such ruthless destruction.

Repulsion.

Excommunication of those who were simply guilty of allowing their own voices to begin speaking in themselves...²⁵

And the second — "Luciferian" — complex:

Where, in what poem, in what legend, did I read about how Lucifer — the first of the angels to stand up against Sabaoth and to 'be brought down', continues to love him and 'sheds tears', not because of his own downfall, but because he is deprived of the possibility to behold him with his own eyes?...

... perpetual hurlings, quests, downfalls and flights...

... it invariably appears that he again and again repeats performances of his own trauma from the break with his own first teacher in his approach to students and followers...

... experiencing anew his own gnawing disappointment in the excommunicated; becoming the tragic father Rustem in excommunication, the stricken Zoroba, seemingly searching

²⁵ 1/417-418.

for an excuse for and addition to that which happened in his own youth...²⁶

So this is "Saturn-Lucifer". Presented in this fashion, the basic dynamic plan is obvious: to tear down and destroy that which is grooving around — as a reflection and expression of his own dissolution, his own falling away.

But this is precisely how the image of the main character's psychological development is presented in the film, *Ivan the Terrible*!

The gradual falling away of comrades-in-arms, followers, favorites, is completed in the finale (according to the script), when the only close human being, actually the unsuccessful tsar murderer, walks out toward the sea together with the old, stooped Ivan...

In one of the drawings done by Eisenstein for the "meeting-the-sea" episode, we find the text, "ALONE?", under Ivan's black figure. "One, but alone" is how Eisenstein characterized the film's basic psychological conflict. This sounds exactly like a variation on or paraphrase of something written much earlier about Meyerhold: "... He remained forever unique, but... was always a solitary man".

And the "threat", which tsar Ivan hurled at everyone around and at the boyars in particular, is lawfully prepared for (in the script) by the harshness of the original rejection which Ivan was exposed to already during his childhood in the bosom of his next of kin, the boyars! Out of this then develops the psychological Saturn-theme: the cutting off and destruction of those around him. Ivan IV's actual murder of his own son has for a long time been seen as a symbol — in history as well as in art — of this Saturnian theme.

As far as the Luciferian theme of flights and hurlings, quests and downfalls, is concerned, this theme — the theme of constant rejection — is just as clearly followed up in the film. What is more, one of the musical themes for Ivan in the film, composed by Prokof'ev, was ordered under the general heading of "Lucifer".²⁷

This theme was especially intended for the already mentioned scene with Ivan's confession. In this scene the tsar questions Sabaoth who is depicted in the fresco, and when he does not receive an answer, he hurls his staff at the picture of the god. (This very

²⁶ 1/418-419.

²⁷ Cf. *Voprosy kinoiskusstva*, vyp. 10, Moskva 1967, p. 243.

staff, the tsar's famous staff, is above all associated with the murder of his son through historical and legendary sources: a "Saturnian" implement, it here transcends the situation in a Luciferian manner, as a summons to the god, and this "change of addresses" that Eisenstein accomplishes, emphasizes the fact that "Saturn" and "Lucifer" are of the same breed.)

* * *

Thus there are definite grounds for the view of Eisenstein's teacher having served as a model for the image of Ivan the Terrible, for the view that the "dynamic chart" of the inner contradictions in Meyerhold's character was the clue to the solution, treatment and reconstruction of the image of the tsar.

Of course, it would be rather banal to conclude from what has been said (unfortunately, it would not be possible to completely exclude this from our common quasi-scientific approach), that "behind the appearance of Ivan the Terrible Eisenstein has presented... Meyerhold, just as he is supposed to have been"... We repeat, it is a matter of a basic psychological model, which provides a foundation for the principles behind the inner characterization. And this is far from exhausting any artistic content or historical meaning in the presentation of Ivan the Terrible in Eisenstein's film.

Nevertheless, we should note that the psychological model presented in our hypothesis is not without ties to the actual historical content associated with the name of Ivan IV, and whom Eisenstein also undertook to interpret, in the tradition of many historians and artists.

Let us begin with the fact that Eisenstein was not the inventor of "Lucifer" as applied to Ivan. In introducing this symbol, he appeared to be a follower of a certain tradition in the handling of Ivan the Terrible. Already Belinskij called this tsar "a fallen angel".²⁸

And using Meyerhold as a model — if we agree that this is what happened, — turning to the artist-actor, to this aesthetic and artistic

²⁸ Cf. Belinskij, V. G. *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*, vol. 2. Moskva 1953, p. 110; vol. IV, p. 505.

model, is also something that makes sense. We recall that the tsar appears time and again during the entire film as a skillful actor and even director, that he time and again "acts" and performs in front of those around him, changing faces all the time; we recall one of the leitmotives presented in the script, — "The tsar loves to disguise himself, he loves to dress up others". And we also recall that there are traditions (based on a number of curious facts) in Russian historiography regarding Ivan IV, above all, as an aesthetic, and just because of that, immoral character.²⁹

And furthermore. Eisenstein conceived of his film as a picture of the Russian Renaissance.³⁰ In his understanding of the Renaissance he placed the problem of personality in relation to history in the foreground:

Before the spectator will pass images of Russian feudal princes and boyars, who are not inferior to Cesare Borgia and Malatesta, princes of the church, who are equal to the Roman popes in power, equal to Machiavelli and Loyola in political intrigues, Russian women, who are not inferior to Catherine de Medici and Bloody Mary.³¹

At the beginning of his script Eisenstein also listed — as personalities of the epoch — contemporaries of Ivan, such as Charles V, Philip II, Henry VIII, and the Duke of Alba. It is also definitely possible to mention King Erik XIV (1533-1577) in this connection — an astounding figure, an entire complex of personal traits and actions which presents a direct parallel to the "riddles" of Ivan the Terrible and has given rise to just as many mysteries for Swedish historians and writers.

Eisenstein was fascinated by the historical caliber and exciting expressiveness of such figures. But he was also preoccupied with something else: personality as a problem. The Renaissance gave rise to many such heroic figures, drastically individualistic, but also tied together in an important community. They are particularly characteristic of the late, crises-ridden Renaissance, of the "Macbeth-

²⁹ Such an interpretation has most directly been presented by Kavelin, whose expression, 'poet of the idea of the state', was used several times by Eisenstein when he talked about Ivan the Terrible.

³⁰ 1/189-196.

³¹ 1/194.

Hamletian" era, when the Renaissance consciousness and self-perception of man as a personality and "creator of his own fortunes" and as the "crown of the universe" fell into a crisis, and the magnificent unity which had been conceived by the consciousness of the Early and High Renaissance, after spreading and consolidating, is split into astounding contradictions. Then appeared a constellation of "crowns of the universe", whose royal aestheticism was especially stained with blood. This personality type displayed its richness, grandeur, baseness, and its monstrous contradictoriness in these "crown" characters. These people, who gave rise to a mixture of admiration and terror, provided material for the arts for centuries. Many volumes of prose and dramatic literature have been devoted to them. The fact that they turned into characters in art with such ease is no accident. Not simply because a comprehension of them demanded "a poetic solution" (in Lev Tolstoj's terminology), as well as a scientific one. But also because, in demanding the privilege of being the "creators" of history, as had been their actual historical roles, they more and more often became its fated characters, its actors.

For a long time Eisenstein had been deeply fascinated by the question of the personality's potentials, of the relation between its will power and objective historical lawfulness. In *Ivan the Terrible* he openly dealt with this problem.

And here we might recall the man, who Eisenstein presented as the symbol of "the problem of personality" — Meyerhold, with his inner contradictions, with his irreversible "personal reactions", with his brilliant creative talent, confined to a form of purely actor-oriented awareness of reality. One could say that Meyerhold inspired Eisenstein to the creation of Ivan the Terrible's image, that he aided Eisenstein in the creation of this image through his own being.

But it is not purely a matter of a psychological model.

* * *

Because — as we would suggest — Meyerhold is present in Eisenstein's film not just with the features of his personality or character, not only as an object of analysis and criticism.

One of the witnesses to Meyerhold's creative work remembers:

For instance, he recounted the scene with Hamlet's meeting his father's Ghost in a production he was imagining...

The lead-grey sea. The hazy Nordic sun behind a fine shroud of clouds. Hamlet walks along the shore, wrapped in a black cloak. He sits down on a rock by the shore and stares into the distance across the sea. And then the figure of his father appears in the distance. The bearded warrior in silver armor walks across the sea towards the shore. As he gets closer and closer, Hamlet rises. The father steps ashore, and the son embraces him, seats him on the rock and, to shield him from the cold, removes his cloak and wraps it around his father. Under the cloak he wears the same silver armor as his father. And here they are sitting beside one another — the black figure of the father and Hamlet in silver...

Hamlet covers the Ghost with his cloak so that he won't get cold...³²

During the period of all his work on *Ivan the Terrible* Eisenstein never abandoned Meyerhold. In a sense he accepted him into himself, for a new life. Eisenstein kept his teacher's archive, which had been brought from Moscow, in his workroom at Alma-Ata. Here Eisenstein, in starting his memoirs, wrote the chapters called "Teacher" and "Treasure".³³ Even later, in his Moscow notes from 1946, Eisenstein returned to Meyerhold. Knowing that his still being alive after a serious heart attack was a miracle, feeling that a denouement was approaching, and being unable to foresee the future fate of Meyerhold's discoveries in the world of art, he could not refrain from saying what he thought:

And until the day I die I will consider myself unworthy of even kissing the dust in his tracks...

But could Eisenstein consent to the disappearance of the tracks or traces of *Meyerhold's art*? Could he reach the despairing conclusion of Puškin's Salieri: "As soon as he is gone, again it falls: No heirs will he be leaving us"?

And here another question arises.

³² Cf. Gladkov's account in *Vstreči s Mejerchol'dom*, p. 502.

³³ 1/626-627.

Was not Eisenstein's film, *Ivan the Terrible*, — with its unbelievable richness in visual culture, with its musical structure, with its special plasticity of the actors' art, with the enormous amount of, as it seems, inconceivable innovations and solutions for the art of film — was not this film a resurrection of the Meyerholdian heritage, of Meyerhold's experiences anew and on a new level? And is not the so-called, and as yet unexplained, "theatricality" of this work further explained by the fact that Eisenstein's film art here absorbed Meyerhold's theater, by making it harmonize with the laws of cinema?

Many peculiarities of this film speak in favor of this question, in favor of a positive answer to it.

It would nevertheless be a mistake to rush the issue. The answer can only be given through the careful research of this film, its visual laws, its stylistics, its expressive techniques. The approach and methods of such research, capable of combining Eisenstein's cinema with the theater of Meyerhold, have yet to be discovered. That is already a subject unto its own.

Translated by Håkan Lövgren

Håkan Lövgren

*Trauma and Ecstasy:
Aesthetic Compounds in Dr. Eisenstein's
Laboratory*

Sergej Eisenstein's evolutionary conception of cultural and artistic development, i.e., his Hegelian and Marxist conviction that art and culture, broadly speaking, follow and are obliged to follow the progressive development of society, was seriously complicated by his concurrent view of art — art as the creation of form — as a fundamentally regressive phenomenon, a phenomenon that had its source in the most "primitive" and original state of the human mind. This state was presumably characterized by an "undifferentiated" or pre-logical/emotional perception of the world, which through human social development was gradually suppressed and supplanted by man's "higher faculties", the capacity for logical thinking. Thus, the basis of our psychological life is constantly affected by a "central trauma" — "the transition from emotional to logical thinking",¹ which manifests itself in momentary and often trivial conflicts and considerations in our daily existence.

Eisenstein's dualistic conception of art (artistic form as an essentially regressive manifestation of the human mind, pressed into service of a socially induced development of the human mind's rational capacities) seems replete with overtones from romantic philosophy. This does not mean that he sided with the romantics in their preference for that which had been suppressed and tamed by rationalism. On the contrary, Eisenstein was, or strove to be, a rationalist who could conquer and utilize these "primitive" forces behind the creation of artistic form. This was an undertaking that appeared to involve some sort of extraction and purification of the "ecstatic structure", the invariant "emotional backbone" found in all true works of art.

¹ V. V. Ivanov, *Očerki po istorii semiotiki v SSSR*, Moskva 1976, p. 65.

The Notion of Ecstasy

For being a Marxist, it seems, Eisenstein was remarkably preoccupied with the idea of *ecstasy* and the various guises it took. "I am interested in the problem of religious ecstasy as a partial problem of pathos", he explained in his memories.² The "pathetic effect" of the art work as a totality was dependent on the "ecstatic state" of all the constituent elements in this work of art. "And everywhere, regardless of person, period and place, we detect one and the same formula, according to which the basic ecstatic eruption, which underlies the pathetic effect of the whole, is accomplished" (3/199). And consequently: "If a work, from whichever field of art, is not designed according to the detected 'formula of pathos', the particular psychic state, which gives color to the theme of the art work and causes it to vibrate with what we call pathos, will not be able to occur" (3/200).

Religious ecstasy and the mystical sense of union with a Divine Essence is associated with names like Teresa of Avila, Juan de la Cruz, and Ignatius Loyola, who all lived and worked in the 16th century during the Late Renaissance. Eisenstein gave considerable attention to the method of the Jesuit founder Loyola and the diary from his Manresa period which described the spiritual exercises that had enabled him to reach states of profound religious ecstasy.³ Before his encounter with Loyola's spiritual exercises, however, Eisenstein had discovered the life and works of another great Renaissance personality, an artist who in some sense appears to have given him a key to the significance of both the religious and psycho-sexual aspects of ecstasy. About this artist Sigmund Freud had written:

² Sergej Ėjzenštejn, *Izbr. proizv. v šesti tomach*, Moskva 1964 (1, 2, 3), 1966 (4), 1968 (5), 1971 (6); tom 1, p. 342 (henceforth all quotes from this work given in the text in the form 1/342).

³ Cf. 1/342: Eisenstein turned down an offer to make a film about the early Jesuit fathers in Mexico, according to Seton (cf. Marie Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein*, London, 1978, p.161). This could not have been from a disinterest in Loyola and his organization. The remainder of Eisenstein's personal library, which constitutes the larger part of the collection at the Eisenstein museum in Moscow, contains a sizable row of books related to the subject of religious psychology and mysticism, with a distinct over-representation of books by and about Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits. Loyola's method in *The Spiritual Exercises* interested Eisenstein as a means of, among other things, inducing ecstatic states of the persons practicing them, and as an approach with possible ramifications for the creation and efficacy of art.

He had merely converted his passion into a thirst for knowledge; he then applied himself to investigation with the persistence, constancy and penetration which is derived from passion, and at the climax of intellectual labour, when knowledge had been won, he allowed the long restrained affect to break loose and to flow away freely, as a stream of water drawn from a river is allowed to flow away when its work is done. When, at the climax of a discovery, he could survey a large portion of the whole nexus, he was overcome by emotion, and in ecstatic language praised the splendour of the part of creation that he had studied, or — in religious phraseology — the greatness of his Creator.⁴

This description in a quasi-sexual, metaphorical language of how the Renaissance painter, Leonardo da Vinci, sublimated his "passions" and "instincts" into artistic and scientific work and religiosity is very characteristic of the whole book from which the quote is taken. Freud's *Eine Kinderheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* published in 1910 was a revelation to Eisenstein, and the quote could, with the exception perhaps of the reference to the Creator, be more or less directly applied to Eisenstein himself. Probably, as is the suggestion of this paper, it opened his eyes to the meaning of "artistic sublimation" and "ecstatic construction" in art, especially in Leonardo's meticulously composed and structured canvases and cartoons.

Freud and Da Vinci

We do not know exactly when Eisenstein's interest in the Italian painter and *uomo universale* began. It is probable, however, that the thorough study of Renaissance art he undertook as a student of architecture and engineering in Petrograd in 1916 also involved a good deal of in depth attention to Leonardo's life and work. But he could have encountered the Italian artist even earlier in works like the widely popular fictional-biographical "triptych", *Christ and Anti-Christ*, written around the turn of the century by Dmitrij Merežkovskij, A. L. Volynskij's *Leonardo da Vinci* (1900) (which

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, New York, 1964, pp. 24-25.

he refers to at a later date) or Freud's booklet which was translated into Russian in 1912.

Eisenstein himself said, that it was not until early 1918 that he came into possession of a copy of Freud's psychobiography, which made a very strong impression on him at the time.⁵ Marie Seton, however, presents an interview which seems to support the conclusion that Eisenstein read the book before the Revolution:

... and then suddenly "the memory of childhood" exploded like a bomb in the middle of his consciousness. He was staggered. A new sun was on the horizon. All swollen with love; it was a revelation. He threw himself headlong into the "Libido" which carried him into the most somber regions, into the most distant territories of the human soul. He would go to Vienna in order to follow the courses of the learned professor, but October 1917 was not far off.⁶

Freud's line of reasoning in *Eine Kinderheitserinnerung* is based on rather sparse empirical material, on a "significant fragment". Leonardo's "childhood memory", in reality a fantasy as Freud saw it, is a sort of *pars pro toto* fragment, a prism through which a solution to the entire mystery of Leonardo's personality could be gleaned. This is how Leonardo described his memory:

It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips.⁷

In accordance with his psychoanalytical theory, and its emphasis on understanding early childhood memories as vectors indicating the direction of the individual's further (sexual) development, Freud maintained that Leonardo's conscious memory fragment had to be interpreted from a sexual-ontogenetic perspective, and not simply as an expression of Leonardo's subsequent lifelong interest in the

⁵ Cf. Sergej Eisenstein, *YO! Ich selbst. Memoiren*, Berlin, 1984, p. 423.

⁶ 'M. A.' in *Cinemonde*, Paris, Dec., 1929, quoted in Seton, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷ Freud, op. cit., p. 32.

flight of birds, which the artist himself thought had been provided by fate.

To Freud the bird tail that opens Leonardo's mouth is both a phallic symbol and a symbol of the breast. By identifying the vulture with the goddess Mutt in ancient Egyptian mythology, and by assuming that Leonardo was sufficiently familiar with books on natural history to know that vultures were always considered to be female and presumably self-fecundating, Freud proposed that Leonardo perceived himself as a "vulture child", i.e. as a child without a father. In addition, the bird tail was firmly linked to the early pleasures of the mother's breast and, by association, to the Virgin Mary and the Jesus child. Freud felt that Leonardo must have identified himself with this child, who played the role of comforter and savior to more than one woman. Freud's conclusion was that Leonardo's strong mother fixation had produced what he called an "idealistic homosexuality" which, instead of causing a neurosis, was so successfully sublimated that its energy was completely transferred into unique artistic and scientific achievements.⁸

Of interest here, however, is not the actual validity of Freud's analysis, but the impact it had on Eisenstein and his lifelong fascination with the Renaissance *Universalgenie*. How did Eisenstein, then, perceive this analysis of the great artist and how did he relate Freud's psychoanalytic interpretations to himself? He had not been a fatherless child, but his parents had separated when he was still a young boy. His father was an authoritarian and distant person, who had been exceedingly successful in intimidating his son. But he had also failed in the responsibility of initiating him into 'the facts of life', as Eisenstein explained in "Wie sag' ich's meinem Kind":

⁸ Freud's psycho-sexual analysis was soon severely criticized. The "vulture" turned out to be a mistranslation of the word for "kite", causing his Egyptian mythological line of reasoning to collapse. Critics pointed to the outrageous reductionism in Freud's effort of trying to explicate the entire life of such a complex artistic personality as Leonardo's on the basis of a single memory fragment. Leonardo's early separation from his father — a major premise of the analysis — was seriously questioned through new biographical revelations about Leonardo. Some critics even maintained that Freud's endeavour was an attempt to postpone or avoid dealing with his own mother-fixation and bi- or homosexual tendencies. Cf. Jack Spector, *The Aesthetics of Freud*, New York, 1974, pp. 53-65; H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, New York, 1958, p. 127. For a most damaging critique of Freud's analysis, see David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History*, Oxford, 1980, pp. 3-31.

... the sharpest of rebuffs to Papa? To Papa, who'd hidden 'secrets' from me; who hadn't initiated me into them, to Papa, who'd let me drift with the current and in one way or another drift on to my own discovery of the facts of life. Of course, this is one way to teach you how to swim. To simply throw you into the water. (1/304)

According to Seton, Eisenstein suffered greatly during the liberated post-revolutionary 1920's, when he was ridiculed because of his romantic love for an actress and his awkwardness in sexual matters; his disgust with the games and crudities of sexual relations is supposed to have reached the level of Leonardo's revulsion of the same phenomena.⁹ Had his father been and acted differently, his own sexual development might have taken another, more positive turn. When he criticized his father in "Wie sag' ich's meinem Kind", Eisenstein appears to have thought that.

When reading Freud's hypotheses in the Leonardo biography about conditions leading to male homosexuality —

... I was more strongly impressed by cases in which the father was absent from the beginning or left the scene at an early date, so that the boy found himself left entirely under feminine influence. Indeed it almost seems as though the presence of a strong father would ensure that the son made the correct decision in his choice of object, namely someone of the opposite sex.¹⁰

— Eisenstein might have felt certain parallels to the circumstances of his own growing up. But he had lived with his father after his parents' separation, and occasionally gone to stay with his mother, to whom he maintained strongly ambivalent ties¹¹. Eisenstein's childhood was permeated by conflicting feelings towards both parents and it was far from any psychological carbon copy of Leonardo's. Eisenstein himself must have recognized this fact and rejected conclusions which would have been too "pan-sexually" reductionistic, i.e. making his psycho-sexual make-up the sole

⁹ Cf. Seton, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ Freud, op. cit., p. 49.

¹¹ Cf. Seton, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

determining factor in his life. Freud also admitted that Leonardo's human and artistic development was not completely explainable within the parameters of psychoanalysis:

We are left, then, with these two characteristics of Leonardo which are inexplicable by the efforts of psycho-analysis: his quite special tendency towards instinctual repressions, and his extraordinary capacity for sublimating the primitive instincts.¹²

Thus, without drawing any definite conclusions about Eisenstein's "idealistic homosexuality" (as Seton does, for instance), I would suggest that Eisenstein perceived sexual (libidinal) forces generally, and his own inclinations in particular,¹³ as a threat to his budding social and artistic identity, a threat that demanded a strong measure of self-control. This self-control could best be effected by, or had to consist of, some form of sublimation, for which Freud's Leonardo study may have provided the most suggestive point of departure. If the artist succeeded in suppressing and sublimating his "primitive instincts", his genius would be safeguarded and the continuity of his creative powers guaranteed.

The "defusion" of sexual content in his own life and in art was, of course, no easy or unambiguous operation. In a presentation, called "On the Essence of Art" (1929), written in German and given during the beginning of his European trip, Eisenstein explained that the sexual instincts should not be abandoned but "delocalized" in the creation of art: 'Die Erotik ist eine allzu grosse Macht um sie nicht zu gebrauchen. Sie wird "delokalisiert". Nicht *Liebessituation*, sondern *Bearbeitung des Unterbewusstseins*'.¹⁴ This implied that all the (artistic) archetypes Eisenstein set out to reconstruct, had to be "desexualized", or at least "emptied" of their exclusively sexual cathexis, before being allowed to play a part in his own works of

¹² Freud, op. cit., p. 86.

¹³ Eisenstein subscribed to Freud's idea of a psychological development corresponding to the "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" theory in biology, the individual's development recapitulates the development of the species as a whole. To Marie Seton he had explained that homosexuality was a "retrogression", '— a going back to the state when procreation came with the dividing of the cells. It's a dead end. A lot of people say I am a homosexual. I never have been, and I'd tell you if it were true... I think I must in some way have a bi-sexual tendency — like Zola and Balzac — in an intellectual way' (Seton, op. cit., p. 134).

¹⁴ Quoted in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 97.

art. This would provide for a socially more effective and useful channeling of the primitive instincts, of the pre-logical and unconscious layers of the human mind, which Eisenstein, in accordance with Freud's view and quite obviously not without ambivalence, perceived as the fundamental source of artistic creation. It is also against the background of this conceptual framework, I believe, that Eisenstein's numerous discussions of pathos and ecstasy — an ecstasy preferably without either sexuality or religion — have to be viewed. It was also in the context of *ex-stasis*, "to go out of one's self", which was the central means of reaching an "efficient" art, an art of "pathos", that Eisenstein dealt with Leonardo's works.

The Platonic and Neoplatonic Framework

To explain Leonardo's "process of transformation", his religious ecstasy as a culmination of intellectual labor, Freud cites the Italian Leonardo biographer Solmi to the effect that all Leonardo's manuscripts are permeated by a "transfiguration of natural science into a sort of religious emotion [...]"¹⁵ Eisenstein, who did not deny that his own creative efforts frequently resulted in ecstatic feelings, approached the issue of ecstasy in the reverse order of Leonardo so to speak, trying to transform religious and ecstatic emotion into a science, into a "psycho-technique". Behind his aesthetics one can discern the idea of some sort of "immanent structure" which is shared by the human psyche and the work of art, producing the effects of ecstasy and pathos, analogous structures inter-acting through a kind of self-amplifying resonance phenomenon (cf. 3/274). Segal has pointed to the similarity of this "immanent structure" to the "idea" or "archetype" in Plato's philosophy: "In some sense Eisenstein's unquestioned immanent substance of aesthetic phenomena is reminiscent of the Platonic Idea".¹⁶

The dominating religious and philosophical framework within which Leonardo da Vinci and his Renaissance colleagues worked was the revived philosophy of Neoplatonism. This philosophy

¹⁵ Freud, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶ D. M. Segal, "Problema psihologičeskogo substrata znaka i nekotorye teoretičeskie vozzrenija S. M. Ėjzenštejna" in Karl Eimermacher (ed.), *Teksty sovetskogo literaturovedčeskogo strukturalizma. Texte des sowjetischen literaturwissenschaftlichen Strukturalismus*, München, 1971, pp. 465-470.

emphasized Man as a co-creator, potentially equal to God, since Nature and its highest manifestation, Man, were pale but perfectible reflections of the Divine or Original Essence. In the state of ecstasy Man was in direct contact with the Original Essence, and thus God's equal. Martin Kemp has noted that there is a strong current of Neoplatonic idealism in da Vinci's writings, specifically influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*. Leonardo meant, that the harmonies of proportion underlying God's Design of nature were innately accessible to man himself:

Everything participated in this harmony: the heavens moved according to a divinely orchestrated pattern, the so-called 'music of the spheres'; and although each individual man varied from the norm to a greater or lesser extent, the underlying principle of human beauty, the 'archetype', the 'essence', the 'idea' [...] reflected in miniature the harmonies of the cosmic design. Man was [...] a microcosm or 'lesser world'. And man, in his microcosmic way, should design his works according to the same principles of harmony as the Almighty had used in his creation of the universal macrocosm.¹⁷

Leonardo's perception of man's relationship to the universe finds an echo in Eisenstein's pseudo-pantheistic "Non-indifferent Nature" (3/35-433), the name of a planned and partially realized collection of aesthetic essays, which, among other things, explored mathematical and geometrical relations, such as the so-called golden section, i.e., mathematical invariants, and their functions in aesthetic and natural phenomena. To Eisenstein the proportion of the golden section was the most perfect mathematical expression of the unity between the part and the whole as well as of the logarithmic spiral, which in turn symbolized natural, organic growth. The golden section was perceived as a divine proportion by the Neoplatonists since it could not be described by a rational number, just as the idea of God was beyond the conceptual powers of rational language. This proportion had been thoroughly researched by the mathematician and monk Luca Pacioli, who issued a

¹⁷ Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci*, London, 1981, p. 114.

booklet on the golden section illustrated by Leonardo da Vinci in 1509.

Eisenstein defines his "non-indifferent nature" as a "musical component", generated by that "emotional landscape" which constituted the "ecstatic" basis for his silent films, '*Potemkin*', for instance. The "inner plastic music" of this emotional landscape is above all a matter of creating "resonance" through "repetition" and "chiming" (*perezvon*). Discussing the repetition of visual motifs in art as the equivalent of an echo or chiming, i.e., auditory occurrences, Eisenstein drew the conclusion that art approaches a fundamental mode of interaction among natural phenomena — resonance. "By using the idea of 'chiming' instead of the notion of 'repetition', we are laying bare the dynamic basis, in the very essence of these terms, of an actually perceptible natural phenomenon — the occurrence of resonance, which becomes repetition when it ossifies into a device" (3/274). Thus, the "emotional landscape" in Eisenstein's silent films and in the other works of art analyzed by him, is based on a primarily auditory/tonal and temporal phenomenon in nature, resonance, which is abstracted into an artistic device, the repetition of motifs at certain visual/ formal (and, in film, temporal) intervals.

The application of similar "musical intervals", the geometry of Pythagorean harmonics, as explained by Alberti, was commonplace in Neoplatonically influenced Renaissance art, the best example perhaps being Botticelli's *Primavera*.¹⁸ It is certainly no accident in this context that Eisenstein chose to analyze one of Čiurlionis' "sonatas", a painting called *Pyramids*, in which he perceived some of the "musical" principles of traditional Chinese landscape painting refined to "symphonic abstractions" (3/272). Čiurlionis' aesthetics was permeated by Neoplatonic philosophy, which no doubt also accounts for the enthusiastic interest in his works by the "high priest" of Russian symbolism, Vjačeslav Ivanov.¹⁹

Against the background of this discussion, Eisenstein's description of his reactions to Leonardo's painting *Madonna of the Rocks*,

¹⁸ Cf. C. Bouleau, *The Painter's Secret Geometry*, 1963, quoted, in Fred Gettings, *The Occult in Art*, New York, 1979, pp. 57-64.

¹⁹ Cf. James West, "The Poetic Landscape of the Russian Symbolists", in C. J. Barnes, *Studies in Twentieth Century Russian Literature*, Edinburgh, 1976, pp. 11-12.



Leonardo da Vinci, "Madonna of the Rocks".

on display in the Louvre, appears a veritable catalogue of Neoplatonically inspired artistic devices and strategies. During his European trip 1929-1930, Eisenstein visited Paris and the Louvre. To Jean Mitry, who accompanied him, he explained why and how this work affected him:

'Look', he said, 'I know that the feelings of balance, harmony, and perfection this work arouses in me depend in part on the geometrical organization of lines and forms, on the spatial arrangement of characters and setting. But I should have to use a compass and straight edge before I could be absolutely certain of this, I should have to analyze the basic design. Now, my knowledge of how the painting works does not make me feel any the less the intense emotion, the ecstasy which overwhelms me and seizes all my being. Reason enlightens me, but it does its job after the fact. It does not destroy feeling, it illuminates it. Nevertheless, unconsciously, as if by a reflex action, I transfer to the canvas — to the represented thing — all the feelings awakened in me by the representation, thus making those feelings part of it.'²⁰

Here the structural principles are secondary to and only supportive of the primary process, ecstasy, which dominates Eisenstein's experience of the painting. And the symbolism of the pictorial elements are just as, if not more important in sustaining the effect of Leonardo's canvas:

'Add to this mathematical operation the more or less obscure appeals made by the symbolic side of the work: the transfigured, idealized characters are no longer characters but ideas incarnate. And everything is a symbol: the look is a symbol, the gesture is a symbol, the positions are symbols. Even the setting participates; its hidden meaning gushes into the character of the representation, with which it harmonizes, as a secondary tone. Forgetting for the moment the pictorial qualities, the grace of faces and perspective, which are important as well, we still have the symbolism of the rock; that

²⁰ Jean Mitry, *S. M. Eisenstein*, Paris, (1956) 1978, p. 140-141, quoted in Leon Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, New York, 1970, p. 87.

of the spring spurting from the rock; that of the grotto; that of the crags through which light penetrates to struggle with shadow; and that of the background, which is always present in Leonardo's work: the tall glaciers, the faults and the dark lakes, the light struggling with the shadow and conquering it, the ice melting into water, are so many 'harmonic resonators', so many figurations, so many 'singular moments' which illuminate in our subconscious the meaning of the painting but which, perceived and received without at first being really understood and ordered, leave unease and disquiet in the mind of the one receiving them. And since everything (the general impression, the emotion) is instinctively transferred to the content, it is easy to see what richness of feeling immediately permeates the content.²¹

If we assume this quote to be reasonably authentic, Eisenstein's later analysis of another Leonardo painting *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* is puzzling in its technical coolness and lack of symbolic penetration. Of course, his aim was to illustrate a principle, a "formula of ecstasy", by pointing to formal and structural peculiarities, and in so doing he was undoubtedly being consistent with his own view of art as *formotvorčestvo*, as primarily dependent on the creation and manipulation of form for its emotional impact. Just what were these structural peculiarities in the process of ecstatic build-up?

Pandora's Box and the Kangaroo Formula

One of the sections in "The Non-indifferent Nature", dealing with the technique employed by the "ecstatic" artist, is called "The Kangaroo". This section presents a number of metaphorical explanations of a kind we could call "Chinese boxes", i.e., a box within a box within another box, etc. The symbolism of these metaphors carries sexual overtones, as is the case when Eisenstein talks about understanding "the norms of their [the primitives'] emotional thinking, as a Pandora's box, which hides the entire syntax of the language of artistic form" (3/218). The mythical Pandora's box is not simply a symbol of all the evils befalling mankind, when the box

²¹ Ibid.

is opened. The box itself is also a "feminine symbol which can refer both to the unconscious and to the maternal body itself [...] The myth of 'Pandora's box' appears to allude to the significance of the unconscious, particularly in the special sense of its unexpected, excessive, destructive potentialities. Diel relates this symbol to 'imaginative exaltation'."²² This characterization accords well with Eisenstein's ambivalent, Faustian perception of the "emotional thinking" (*čuvstvennoe myšlenie*), of primitive man's "undifferentiated mind", the sense of dark and diabolical forces lurking in the process of artistic work that relies upon this type of thinking.²³

Eisenstein develops his discussion along the lines of a womb symbolism, which is in no way accidental, when he explains the significance of the kangaroo simile: "It is difficult to imagine a more 'literal' interpretation (i.e. a reverse transference from a figurative to a literal sense) of the formula 'to go out of one's self' ", he writes, "than the kangaroo, which jumps out of the 'pocket' of another kangaroo — [...]" (3/219-220) This metaphor contains the three important stages in Eisenstein's conception of the ecstatic built-up: 1) the image of a womb with an embryo (the pouch with the baby kangaroo), 2) the sudden burst/birth (the crawling out of the pouch), 3) resulting in a new individual of the same species (another kangaroo).

The "kangaroo formula", Eisenstein maintains, is also the basic principle governing the "ecstatization" of Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*. While Freud saw this constellation of two women and a child as a reflection of Leonardo's psychological relation to the two most important women in his life, Eisenstein interpreted the group as a most original and playful expression of the relationship between three generations: "From a purely physical standpoint we are here dealing with three figures — representatives of three generations, — of whom each is tearing away from the embraces — from the lap (*Schoss* which in German means both 'bosom' and 'lap' in the direct sense of 'womb') of the older person [...]" (3/231). This composition of the painting results in an "unusually dynamic image of growth" (3/232), in a vivid picture of one generation succeeding the other, Eisenstein dryly concludes.

What about the iconography and symbolism of the painting? Is

²² J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, London, 1962, p. 30.



Leonardo da Vinci, "Madonna, Child, St Anne and a Lamb".

that completely irrelevant for the sense of ecstasy that the painting presumably generates? Eisenstein could not have been as naive as to believe that the feeling of *raptus*, a Renaissance synonym for ecstasy, was merely a formal matter. It is remarkable that he does not discuss the mastery of dramatic built-up with which the religious theme and symbols are handled by Leonardo, all of which, of course, act in unison with the compositional and structural facets to create a total effect. Is this not a rather obvious case of conscious or unconscious suppression, of Eisenstein's trying to suppress an organically integrated religious theme?

From this perspective, the subtle symbolism and drama of Leonardo's "Madonna and Child with St. Anne" would in some sense seem to become even more emphasized or insistent in Eisenstein's reductionist interpretation of the three successive generations. What is the meaning of the painting's "cesurae" in the chain of generations, the Jesus child embracing the little lamb, which Eisenstein completely ignores? Of course, in the Biblical context, the lamb is the child's "double", the symbol of Christ's coming Passion. The child is embracing his fate, the fate of suffering for Mankind, of enduring crucifixion for the sake of our sins. The madonna's gentle pull to loosen his eager grip around the lamb, to dissuade him from this wholehearted embrace of fate, seems to indicate a reverse motion to that of Eisenstein's "kangaroo", a "collapse" of the different generations, a motion back into the "pouch" or the "womb" away from the traumas of the world.²⁴

The Vessel of Secrets: Mutterleib and Mutterleibsversenkung

Eisenstein was deeply fascinated by the the symbolism of birth and by the symbolic and mythological expressions of the return to the womb, *Mutterleibsversenkung*, in German.²⁵ The entire *Mutterleib*

²³ Cf. V. V. Ivanov, "Doktor Faustus", *Russia/Rossija*, 4, Torino, 1977, p. 142.

²⁴ Eisenstein was undoubtedly well aware of this religious symbolism. The central Christian icon, the crucified and suffering Christ, was not abandoned as an archetype, as a "pictorial structure" in post-revolutionary Russian art. Neither was the idea of suffering for Mankind, or its substitute, the working class. The heroes of Eisenstein's film are often suffering on account of the collective, and sometimes even assuming crucifixion-like postures (Vakulinčuk's death in *Potemkin*; the sick and prostrate Ivan in *Ivan Groznyj*) and also resemble the classical depictions of Jesus (cf. Čerkasov in the role of Aleksandr Nevskij and Ivan Groznyj).

²⁵ Cf. Ivanov, *Očerki*, p. 93ff.

or womb complex had been psychoanalytically elaborated upon by some of Freud's students, such as Otto Rank and Hans Sachs. Rank had maintained that the event of birth was the central traumatic experience of man, that entering the world and the light of day marked us all with a deep sense of anxiety. Anxiety was thus something dependent on biological, rather than psycho-dynamic preconditions; it is interesting to note that Rank considered art triumphant in relation to this dependency, i.e., through art man is able to transcend his anxiety. Rank also saw the artist as having greater control over his *Ich* than the average man.²⁶ Eisenstein shared Rank's view in a general sense, i.e., he saw man's central trauma as the loss of "emotional thinking", as the transition from undifferentiated to differentiated, logical thinking, and this trauma was very much symbolized by birth, by our being thrown into a cold and essentially hostile world. This expulsion from the womb, the symbol of Paradise, may also have reminded Eisenstein of childhood and youth experiences, of being banished from the bosom of the family through his parents' separation and, later, of being brutally and unpreparedly confronted with liberated sexual relations (to be thrown into the water in order to learn how to swim, as he expressed it in "Wie sag' ich's meinem Kind") in post-revolutionary Russia.

Perhaps these experiences were traumatic enough to block or inhibit his thinking about certain basic human relations, the one between mother and child in particular. My suggestion here is that Eisenstein's "ecstatic" analysis refrained from mentioning the last element, or phase in the chain of successive generations which Leonardo presented in his painting, *Madonna and Child with St. Anna* — the child-lamb relation — primarily because of personal psychological and possibly unconscious reasons. The perceptible threat to Maria's love and care for the Jesus child, posed by the implicit theme of the father, God, demanding that the child be torn away from the mother and sent out into the world to be sacrificed on the Cross, was conceivably too personally sensitive an idea for Eisenstein to deal with as a thematic climax of an "ecstatic construction".

Otto Rank's notion of the fundamental problem of art being "a

²⁶ Cf. Spector, op. cit., p. 107.

problem of form"²⁷ is striking in its similarity to Eisenstein's central concern — pre-logical thinking as the source of all creation of form. In Rank's view, "all 'form' goes back to the maternal vessel, which has become to a large extent the content of art; and indeed in an idealized and sublimated way, viz., as form, which makes the primal form, fallen under repression, again acceptable, in that it can be represented and felt as 'beautiful' ".²⁷ To Rank the *Mutterleib* was a psychological image of Paradise, that mythical place of eternal peace and harmony, which was also the destination of Eisenstein's spectators. In notes for a planned series of lectures on the psychology of art, Eisenstein elaborates on this destination: "Where to we are plunging them back. To paradise. *Na stadiju nedifferencirujušćego myšljenija. No ešće doklassovuju stadiju.* And here in lies the fascination".²⁹

Eisenstein's "fascination" was probably not limited to the prospects of plunging his spectators back into a paradisiacal state. The stage and vistas this approach opened up for his own "aesthetic indulgencies", for his "playing with fire" and playing "both ends" of his aesthetic archetypes, were equally important ingredients in this fascination. The (sexual) ambiguity of these archetypes must have tickled his particular sense of irony and the grotesque. His numerous drawings on the theme of the crucifixion, many of them parodies based on Mexican cultural features (bull fighting, for instance), are examples of this violent urge to paraphrase, parody and distort in an outrageous and blasphemous way. This urge probably served the purpose of creating a kind of *Verfremdung* effect vis-a-vis the religious content of the "ecstatic" art works he so fervently analyzed, but also of anticipating criticism for dwelling too intently on the problem of ecstasy, a phenomenon with connotations of both Paradise and Hell, according to whichever human activity and context this ecstasy was attached.

Heaven and Hell were doubtless proper *loci* for a man with Faustian pretensions like Eisenstein, who seems to have read the

²⁷ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, New York, 1973, p. 160.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Psichologija processov chudožestvennogo tvorčestva*, Leningrad, 1980, p. 196. The quote is an example of Eisenstein's "multilingual" notations. The Russian sentences can be translated: To the stage of non-differentiating thinking. But still a pre-class stage.

Christian artistic heritage like the Devil is said to have read the Bible, i.e., for useful hints and suggestions as to how this heritage could be subverted and assimilated into the art of the new era and society, cinematography. Eisenstein's description of the polar nature of art is appropriately "spatialized" so as to fit both the *topoi* of Christian dogma (Heaven and Hell) and the hierarchic metaphors of psychoanalysis (conscious and sub- or unconscious):

The influence of an art work is based on the fact that in it you have a simultaneous double process going on: a swift progressive ascent along the line of the most developed ideological level of consciousness and at the same time a descent through the structure of form down to the deepest layer of emotional thinking. The polar cultivation of these two lines of aspiration creates the remarkable tension in the unity of form and content, which characterizes the true work of art (2/120-121).

The Pandora's box of "emotional thinking" was thus to be cautiously opened, and even entered if need be. But the dark labyrinth of this female vessel required a deliberate approach and an Ariadne's thread for safe return after the subduction and slaying of the Minotaur, *čuvstvennoe myšlenie* (emotional thinking). Because in the final analysis, Eisenstein's was a slain version of the monster, or at least a creature beaten into conformity and put on an ideological leash to serve the art of "progressive" socialist society. Armed with the "developed" red thread of Marxism and the ideas of psychoanalysis, Eisenstein wanted to retrieve the treasures of the un-differentiated human mind, fish the emotional "resonators" out of the dark depths of our prehistoric past, and tame them in a synthesis of all art forms, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, that would transport its beholder into a state of ecstasy.³⁰ That Eisenstein actually fell short of this vision and created works of art that were often convincing and moving, sometimes labored and pathetic, instead of generating multiple "ecstasies" and "ideological conclusions", is possibly something to cheer rather than lament.

³⁰ "In its psychological aspect ecstasy is a form of 'complete mono-idealism', the full concentration of the attention on one single thing. It is thus an extreme form of contemplation, the difference being that though the will may play a part in producing the state of ecstasy it is incapable of suspending it." — John Ferguson, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mysticism*, London, 1976, p. 51.

Mikael Enckell

A Study in Scarlet *Film and Psychoanalysis (II)*

I

Why shouldn't we use a little art jargon. There's the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein in life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose each inch of it.

Sir A. Conan Doyle in A Study in Scarlet

One can observe clear signs of a reluctance to treat separate, concretely individual motives both in esthetic and psychoanalytical texts of today. This trend could perhaps be regarded as an expression of a Victorian anti-sensual movement to be compared with non-figurative painting, a movement towards the non-representative and abstract, away from the sensual and imagination-stirring. The anti-motive approach compels us to restrict and elucidate the expression, *inter alia* alleging that the ideal message in most of life's situations — also in scientific contexts — is one which appears as unambiguous as possible. As soon as we seriously dedicate ourselves to the study of different motives, we enter the realm of ambiguities where the traditional scientist is easily bewildered, and in order to overcome this state of bewilderment, wants to split the different parts of the motive into various, mutually exclusive contexts. It is not enough that the motive can be infinitely varied, and that it thus can transmit mutually exclusive messages; it is also almost impossible to trace the different versions to their incontrovertible source; which part of the motive originates with whom?

On the other hand, it is obvious that the disciplines which investigate the most sensitive and multifarious elements of human life — art and poetry, for instance — must preserve and be provided with the same ambiguous and chameleon-like disposition which is inherent in their objects. Naturally, the same also applies to psychoanalysis, which like other domains leaves nothing more to be

desired regarding the multitude of theoretical models and concepts. The striving for uniformity is here just as necessary to counteract a total confusion as it is predestined to remain illusionary in relation to the ultimate objective.

However, although science of today seems to prefer to investigate formal aspects rather than content studies, due to the relative stability of forms — the conceptual structures are to a greater degree regularly recurrent and constant than conceptual contents — there is one domain where the content has remained unchanged during the past thousands of years despite all drastic changes in the historical surroundings. And not only, that it is characteristic of the myths — it is, of course, the myths which are referred to here — that they are dispersed in closely related versions among different peoples.

It appears probable that the content of the myth, more so than that of the tale or saga, is organically tied to a formal element in its course of events as well as in our own conceptual world, which contributes to its persistence, making it resistant and universal. A similar interpretation also arises on the basis of Jung's theory of archetypes, which, however, loses a considerable part of its fascination because the central concept of archetype is left without substance, and seems more to be gliding over than revealing the essential.

A related, but more substantial viewpoint was presented by George Steiner at the international writers' seminar in Lahtis in the summer of 1981. Steiner claimed that the myth can be distinguished from the legend and the saga in that it is more-or-less universal, actual myths are consequently few in number, and that they all represent a transitional stage in human thinking. He mentioned as an example the myth of Narcissus, which according to him reflects the stage in human evolution when man has learnt to distinguish between the first and the second person singular, but still staggers in the use of his newly acquired skill. The Oedipus myth on the other hand tells about the endeavour of man to determine his own identity, and bewildered, to contemplate it.

When man contemplates his own identity, he will sooner or later find himself in a field of tension in the psychoanalytical sphere of experiences which is more or less dominated by some version of the Oedipus myth. The power of the myth over our conceptual world

is still today both profound and comprehensive. We seldom make it clear to ourselves to how great an extent this is the case. It is true that in psychoanalytical work while listening, we can see how mythically described constellations appear constantly more clearly in what we hear and in our own thoughts and concepts. We can claim that in our work we endeavour all the time to penetrate deeper until we are confronted with the individual version of the myth, in the same way that Steiner describes when he talks about the level where the constellations of our thinking are originally formed.

However, even if we are more or less aware that the *content* of our work is ultimately formed according to the same constellations as in the myths, we are considerably less conscious of how the myths also seem to have participated in the formulation of the theoretical patterns into which we place our experiences on a more abstract level. In other words, we meet the myth on two diametrically opposite poles, as the core of the content of our own work, but also as the most developed form in which we ultimately arrange our observations.

For instance, it is obvious and confirmed by Freud that his vision of the organic world in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) is a late version of the cosmic-mythological model of Empedocles in which he, five hundred years before the Christian era, taught that the universe is ruled by two antagonistic forces: love and hate. When the latter is dominant, evolution is directed by confusion and chaos, while love leads the world towards unity and harmony. The analogy of the Eros-Thanatos-dualism is apparent, and although some analysts have regarded *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* as an excessive speculative extension of clinical discipline, it gives food for thought to know that Freud regarded this dualistic principle as indispensable to his own thinking during the 1920's and 1930's.

More interesting than this parallel between ancient cosmology and the psychoanalytical pattern of ideas are the analogies, pointed out by Bergmann (1982), between Plato and Freud, or rather between the mythical metaphors which Plato used as a basis for his reflections and which Freud also has related to in his thinking. Among these, there is the picture of the soul as a two-horse carriage with a driver, a possible preamble to the structural model (Bergmann seeks support for his theory in Freud's metaphor, where the

ego is compared with a driver steering an untamed horse, and in Freud's knowledge of Plato). Among them we also find the myth of how Zeus split man into two halves as a punishment for his conceited insubordination, and of how love is the attempt by these unhappy halves to be reunited.

The mythological conceptual sphere is part of the substratum which our original mental life represents to our thinking, and consequently also a part of the world to where we constantly want to return in order to be invigorated and nourished. When deprived of the contact with this fundament, our mind ends up like Antaeus in the struggle against Heracles: prevented from touching his mother earth he lost his power and was crushed by the antagonist. One dilemma of our time is that we lack an immediate contact with this world in our consciousness; we need this contact but we have also been irreversibly separated from it. Ricoeur (1969) points out in an essay on the hermeneutic circle: "You have to understand in order to believe, but you also have to believe in order to understand", that this secondary naiveté is a sign of modern man's problematic relation to the Holy as well as a possible relief for the painful and unavoidable alienation: we can believe by interpreting, as no interpreter comes near the content of what is interpreted without living in the midst of its network of interrelated meanings.

There is no doubt that psychoanalysis occupies an important place among the disciplines which investigate this field of the original, half-forgotten and partly despised concepts which mankind despite all longs back to and recreates: patterns of the Good, the Holy, but also of the Evil. And in this scientific work, it is not necessarily decisive that we know *whose* concepts we are studying or what other external realities are surrounding this network of meaning which, more or less, speak to all of us.

II

There are two ways of renouncing the devil, he said, and the difference is perhaps the deepest chasm in modern religion. One is to have a horror of him because he is so far off; and the other to have it because he is so near. And no virtue and vice are so much divided as those two virtues.

G. K. Chesterton

The artistic, and to a still larger extent the mythical, expression can be complimented for being experienced and understood without being linked to a specific external situation or to some specific known media. Just as Ruskin, or after him Proust, did not need to worry about the identities of the authors when they studied the ornaments of Medieval French cathedrals, it is not necessary for us to know from whom the impressive detail in the mythical tale or in the collective work derives.

Still, it may be recommended that one base the reflections relating to mythical or artistic elements in these overall human, more or less, eternal themes on specific individual expressions. Otherwise we can easily be misled into the too general, and fail to notice the powerful meaning of *one* human being talking to another human being, even if it may be imaginary, or if both speakers remain anonymous.

In the following text I will discuss a theme with mythical associations, the vampire theme, and then specifically on the basis of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's film *Nosferatu* from 1922. A few years ago a new interpretation of it was given by Herzog, with Klaus Kinski in the leading role. Murnau's film, which is based on Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* from 1897, belongs to the golden age of German motion pictures during the Weimar Republic. German cinema of this period had its roots in the prevailing expressionistic movement, and represents not only a never reattained golden era in German motion picture history, but also the only truly impressive golden era of horror films. Compared with this movie, today's rich supply of the same genre is only a sequence of mechanically repeated decadent phenomena.

The common feature in the horror movies influenced by expressionism is that they are based on concepts which in some way or another are foreign to our every day conscious inner world, a kind just as extraordinary as strange visitors in it. They often constitute formalized, unchangeable and rigid, but recurrent and overall human bits or fragments of complicated psychological processes, while at the same time they build up new fantasies. In their relative persistence, they appear like clichés, once and for all established, hardly subject to influences or psychological analysis as a genre. The more they develop into mere catalysts of terror and are used as such, without leaving an opening or link which enables

us to associate them with more elaborate fantasies, the more empty-handed they leave us. The monotonous character is the common denominator of these cries of warning. It is their monotonous character which explains their unique purpose and function: attention! attention! Regardless of whether the warning signals are the call of a fire sentry, the bell of a leper or a modern ambulance siren, all these calls for attention are in themselves motionless warning signals designed to prepare us for a situation announcing chaos. The highly formalized form of the warning is in complete contradiction with the danger which it foretells.

However, the German expressionist films of the 1920's did not deteriorate like today's horror movies into mechanically projected sequences of terror effects. Film directors like Murnau, Lang and Wiene, and scriptwriters like Carl Mayer created a cinematic world related to the world of Edgar Allan Poe and E. T. A. Hoffmann in which the spectator is reintroduced to his own nightmares. The most famous and trend-making movie was Mayer's and Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* from 1919, which is also expressionist in the sense that it operates with a theatrical set: distorted, ghost-like scenes constantly emphasize how the external reality of the movie in fact reflects an inner reality.

The film describes how the hypnotist Caligari uses his assistant, the hypnotized young somnabulist Cesare, to submissively kill those who stand in the way of Caligari's plans. The hero in the movie follows the hypnotist, the path leads to an asylum, where it turns out that Caligari is the head doctor and the follower a patient. Lang's Mabuse-movies have many points in common with Wiene's last movie before Lang's emigration. *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* paved the way for *die Herrschaft des Verbrechens* and was immediately forbidden by the representatives of the Hitler government.

A proof of to just what degree these films are derived from a fairly homogenous archaic view of the world is given by Kracauer (1947) in his analysis of German cinema in the 1920's where he gives a consistent presentation of it as a forerunner of the Third Reich. Regardless of the differences between the personalities of the film directors, photographers and actors who supported this strange period in motion picture history, they all focused around a similar pattern, the pattern which eventually received its political expression in the national-socialist movement and in the worship of Hitler. Kracauer writes:

Self-righteous Caligaris became the witch masters of numerous Cesares and ordered them to commit murder. Insane Mabuses were left unpunished for horrible crimes, and crazy despots invented terrible forms of torture. In the midst of this death dance, scenes which had been tested in the film were carried out in real life; at the Party Congress in Nürnberg, the same ornamental pattern appeared that had been used in the Nibelungen movies, magnified many times; people standing in geometrical patterns, and a lot of banners.

In this context more than anywhere else, we seem to find a realization of Oscar Wilde's paradox that life imitates art.

It is from the earth of this temporal atmosphere and these (viewed by posterity) prophetic fantasies that Murnau's *Nosferatu* springs forth. The course of events is briefly as follows.

First we see the text: "Nosferatu! The name alone makes my blood shiver. Nosferatu! Was it he who brought the plague to Bremen in 1838? During my investigations as to its cause, I have come across the young innocent couple Jonathan and Nina Harker." Then the young couple is presented in their newly acquired idyllic happiness. Young Harker, anxious to make a career to consolidate his domestic welfare, accepts an offer from his strange employer Renfield to go to Transylvania to settle a real estate deal with the wealthy Count Dracula. Hopeful, with the brilliant but at the same time ambiguous prospects outlined by Renfield before him, Harker sets on his way on horseback. The landscape changes character gradually and becomes more desolate, the people more primitive. When Harker has almost reached his destination and announces where he is going, the people are stricken by undisguised terror. However, he tirelessly continues his journey and comes to a road crossing where his followers leave him at the border of "the land of spirits and ghosts". He is met by the Count's carriage, driven by a strange coachman with a cadaverous head, half concealed by a broad collar.

The Count, who is identical with the coachman, welcomes him in the darkness of the night to his decaying castle, completely isolated and abandoned. At night, Harker becomes the victim of the Count's attacks; during the daytime, the Count lies in his coffin in the mortuary chapel. A desperate race back to Bremen commences

between the two combatants: Dracula on a raft with a row of earth-filled coffins down a river to the port town of Varna by the Black Sea and Harker, weakened and ill, travelling by land to save his loved one from the Count who had commented on her picture with a lustful: "What a lovely neck!"

The ship which the count had leased in Varna lost its whole crew during the voyage. Like a Flying Dutchman it glides into the harbour of Bremen one early morning. With one coffin under his arm and followed by a pack of rats, Dracula settles down in his newly purchased house opposite the Harkers' and begins his ghost-like courtship at the same time that Jonathan arrives in town. Nina Harker, overwhelmed by the knowledge that the only escape from the curse of the vampire, which is to be neither dead or alive, is the love of an innocent woman, gives herself to Dracula, who, after a night full of vampire orgies dies in the rising sun.

Briefly, this is the external course of events in the movie, a somewhat simplified version of the plot in Bram Stoker's novel. We can, however, regard Murnau's film from the point of view of the analogies between film and dream. Both are visual presentations portraying the outside reality of regressively handled thoughts, segments of original fantasies which later, secondarily, are formed into more coherent entities. And thus we can recall two questions which we use in clinical work in order to better understand the individual dream, namely the first question, "What has produced the dream?", and the second question, "What is the mood, the feeling in the dream and to what does it relate?"

The first question requires thorough knowledge of the biography of the dreamer-director in order to arrive at an even approximate and speculative answer, an answer such as the one that I outlined in my treatment (1982) of Luchino Visconti's last film from 1976, *L'Innocente*. For the time being, we have to leave this question unanswered. The second question concerning the mood can best be answered by stressing some features of Murnau's directorship in the movie.

In the introduction, the film declares itself to be a film of horror, *Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, but the farther it proceeds, the more clearly we can discern another tone than that of terror and horror. It is true that we can see fear and anxiety reflected in the desolate landscape scenes, in the enclosure with the wild, restless horses, in

the irresolute jackal or in the Count's carriage hurrying along, but in reality it seems as if the director, with these scenes, only wants to prepare us for the inconsolable melancholy in which he veils the character and destiny of Count Dracula, rather than fill us with horror. It seems to be Murnau's wish to emphasize the desolate side of nature, and once again he thus puts the eternal question: How is it possible that a nature which is called blessed, and a God who is regarded as completely good and almighty allows the existence of such utterly unhappy and damned destinies, situations and creatures? One could say that the movie is more a cry of despair than a cry of horror.

This change of mood in the film, from horror to despair, is linked to another shift of emphasis. The vampire is transformed from a completely estranged evil enemy of mankind into a deplorable outcast, with whom we, like Nina Harker, can identify ourselves. He becomes an incarnation of the part in ourselves which is excluded from a sense of community, an unhappy and regrettable victim of a heartless world order, just as we have felt ourselves to be. But just as we in our imagination have tried to pull ourselves up from this state of humiliation with the help of magic and superstition, Dracula appeals to the forces of evil and allies himself with wolves, rats and batmen. This interpretation of Murnau's film is also in conformity with Kracauer's interpretation of the dynamic centre of German cinema of the 1920's: the tendency to replace the dethroned patriarchal authorities with new, more primitive ones, which demand a still more unconditioned obedience and submission due to their more original and regressive character. Count Dracula, the vampire, is, like the psychopathically regressive, paranoically disformed and bisexually inclined, evil tempting father figures, the Doctors Caligari and Mabuse, an exponent of the overthrown but rediscovered and re-established, and thus primitivized father authority. And we, like Kracauer, can see in him a forerunner to Hitler. By shared misfortunes and humiliations he appeals to our compassion and seduces us into an unlimited submission, just as Jim Jones led his thousand faithful to collective suicide in the jungles of Guyana in 1978.

But if Jones and Hitler used their suggestions of shared misfortunes as an excuse for a common collective Ragnarök in which paranoid illusions of malicious conspiracies are an important

ingredient, Murnau's *Dracula* found his appeal for compassion in the awareness of a tragic burden and a coming disaster shared by all human beings. The vampire, the half dead, represents death itself and the journey to Transylvania is a journey to the kingdom of death. Here, Murnau's traveller represents *Odyssey*, who, while visiting Hades, was forced to serve blood to the departed soul. The spectator feels guilty compassion for the dead outcast who, as Freud wrote in *Totem und Tabu* (1913), enviously follows the living, trying to deprive them of their vitality. What at first appears as compassion is closely attached to a feeling of guilt for the dead whom he, by the deathwishes in his fantasy, believes he has helped to the other side. His own impending death stands out much more clearly and more terrifyingly due to its rôle as a coming unavoidable punishment, an expulsion from the group of the living, whereafter he, like the vampire, sneaks about near the living, forever expelled and damned.

III

Siegfried Kracauer's analysis of the expressionistic German cinema during the time between the two World Wars points to a special case of an often discernible paradox in cultural history, as well as in human life. Only when a phenomenon, a character or a force has definitely been banished from the conscious life is its influence on the human mind, channeled through disguised, hardly recognizable messages or through deep, completely concealed sources, the greatest. In the German example of this overall human phenomenon, we see how patriarchal authority, denied and expelled, re-emerged during the final revolutionary convulsions of World War I in a more primitive, regressive and bisexually inclined form, first in the cinematic, imaginary reality in the shape of *Caligari*, *Mabuse* or *Nosferatu*, later in the political reality of Adolf Hitler. The attempt to fundamentally change the social order of imperial Germany and free it from its monarchic-religious, irrational cornerstones, and ultimately its faith in God and in the Emperor by divine right, led first of all to a victory of still more irrational and regressively destructive Messianic ambitions.

There are parallels with these events which have not been

subjected to an equally thorough cine-psychological analysis as has German cinema. The goal of the Russian revolution to free man from the chains of irrational concepts, which the ruling classes had used in order to preserve their power and influence, was to a considerable extent a struggle against religious superstition and priestly power. The working masses were to be liberated from oppression, which *inter alia* was derived from unscientific, magical concepts, and the revolutionary cinema was to assist in this liberation work. For intellectuals outside the Soviet Union, including those who had been sceptical towards Marxism-Leninism and hostile to the consequent oppression of dissidents, it has still seemed natural for many reasons to relate positively to what has been regarded as a historically significant struggle for liberation. This desire to defend the pace of progress has made us blind to the regressive and ancient concepts which have sneaked in by the backdoor into the gospel of revolutionary art and cinema as reactionary doubles of the revolution.

The lack of consideration for the completely opposite background elements of revolutionary films has led to an under-estimation of the significance of the Christian message in Eisenstein's movies. We have preferred to focus on the anti-church tendencies in, for instance, the parodic portrait of the ship's priest in *Potemkin*, in the child-murdering German knights in *Alexander Nevsky* and in the rôle of the church in *Ivan the Terrible*, rather than notice how Eisenstein presents his heroes, representatives of the proletariat's "soul", based on the example of Christ.

In the portrait of the mutiny leader Vakulinčuk in *Potemkin*, this trait is not yet clearly developed. His martyr's death for the people and the line of mourners passing by the tent where his body lies, are more a way of describing how the religious sentiment of the people has been projected towards a true champion of the proletariat, than they are an identification of the revolutionary man, "the soul of the people", with Christ. In *Alexander Nevsky*, the reincarnation of Christ in the hero of the film is already much more clearly presented, *inter alia* in the beginning of the film when the master is leading a draught of fishes illuminated by an almost supernatural light. In the struggle against the Baltic knighthood orders, whose banners bore the sign of Christ, the cross, and the white colour of innocence, it is the successors of Christ who

represent Antichrist, as in Dostoevskij's *The Grand Inquisitor*, and the chief adversary of the church Aleksandr Nevskij becomes the champion of the weak, oppressed and burdened. One can say that *Potemkin* and *Alexander Nevsky* both represent an unproblematic (with Christianity partly interwoven) idealization of the revolutionary prologue in Russian history.

In *Ivan the Terrible*, the emphasis in the psychological presentation is on another level. In addition to presenting visual fantasies more clearly than before, with obvious and intense autobiographical associations (Seton 1978) in his presentation of individuals and events, Eisenstein has returned to a pre-revolutionary ambiguity not only in the form of presentation, but also in the thematic content. The conflicts have moved from the forms and surface of the content deeper into the soul and the personality of the individuals.

The identification of Ivan with Christ is obvious in many respects in the film, not only in the Christ-like mask which Eisenstein used in Čerkasov's character of Ivan. The lone struggle of Ivan to unite the Russian realm under the sovereignty of the small Grand-Duchy of Moscow, which was dependent on its Tatar neighbours, is a clear parallel to the sufferings of Christ, when ever more alone, he creates the conditions for the salvation of mankind and his own road to Golgotha. Disbelief, disloyalty and irresolution among those who should support these Prophets of mankind threaten to expose them to Despair and Failure, while the ordinary man risks throwing himself into Hopelessness. It is evident that Christ as well as Ivan are the great all-embracing characters who can detect and carry out the Idea of man, in the former case on the religious-mythical level and in the latter case on the political-mythical level.

It is perhaps controversial to claim that Eisenstein attempted in *Ivan the Terrible* to outline a mystery play mixing politics, history and mystery rather than to outline, as in *Alexander Nevsky*, a historical-political allegory with associations to the topical problems and tasks of the Stalin era. It is, however, a fact that Eisenstein at the end of the second part of the movie paints in colour — red and gold — a terrible but voluptuous party where he clearly associates with the Roman saturnalia and its Jewish and Babylonian equivalents, models and forerunners of the Christian passion story. According to Dio Chrysostom's description:

They take one of the prisoners condemned to death and seat him upon the king's throne, and give him the king's raiment, and let him lord it and drink and run riot and use the king's concubines during these days, and no man prevents him from doing just what he likes. But afterwards they strip him and scourge and crucify him.

Or to cite Frazer (1920):

If it be asked why one of these temporary kings should bear the remarkable title of Barabbas or "Son of the Father", I can only surmise that the title may perhaps be a relic of the time when the real king, the deified man, used to redeem his own life by deputing his son to reign for a short time and to die in his stead. We have seen that the custom of sacrificing the son for the father was common, if not universal, among Semitic peoples: and if we are right in our interpretation of the Passover, that festival — the traditional date of the crucifixion — was the very season when the dreadful sacrifice of the first-born was consummated. Hence Barabbas or "the Son of the Father" would be a natural enough title for the man or child who reigned and died as a substitute for his royal sire.

When, during the party, Ivan appoints his imbecile cousin Vladimir to jest as king and vests in him all the signs of imperial power, only to let him become the victim of the attack planned by Vladimir's mother against Ivan, the film director follows precisely the mystic rites upon which the Christian passion story is based. It is also characteristic of Eisenstein's fascinating, split attitude towards Christianity, that all this takes place with the active participation of men of the church and within the framework of its activities. This is also an allusion to the cruel ingredients in Christianity and a reminder, intensified by the anxiety in Stalin's Russia, that every deeply rooted ideology will unavoidably express human cruelty in some form.

A consistent theme throughout *Ivan the Terrible* — which, considering the topic of the film is both logical and self-evident — is Eisenstein's attempt to come to terms with death and the problematic rôle of death wishes in his own life, in Stalin's Russia, and as a constantly active background factor during our entire existence. This is not the first time that death forms a central theme

in one of his films; in the Mexico film it was supposed to play an important rôle, although in a more compliant framework. In *Ivan the Terrible*, death appears as murders and executions and it never evokes any real mourning, only feelings of desperate abandonment, desolate sentiments of despair or even hollow insanity as when we see Vladimir's mother embracing her murdered and sacrificed son in the final pictures of the film. We constantly move in a magical universe where the events are dictated more by historic and cosmic forces than by natural processes or human actions. The Marxist vision of the huge wheel of history moving, irrevocably and independently of individual action seems to be joined here with a cosmic, metaphysical perspective. The impression of being in a non-human or super-human world is strengthened by Eisenstein's decor which explicitly stresses the magical-cosmic trait in the film's depiction of reality.

It is this trait, in addition to others, which brings Eisenstein's last film close to the German expressionistic cinema from the time between the World Wars. In both cases we have moved away from the ordinary, human reality and entered into an existence which, on the one hand, is ruled by cosmic forces and produces terrifying experiences, but where, on the other hand, everything is in a state of flux and nothing is definite. It is a dehumanized, magical, one could almost say a psychotic conception of the world and of reality.

Analogous to the fact that the events take place on a comparatively original level of experiences, is the fact that death has changed its character. It is for instance no longer primarily a source of grief as in our conscious adult life. Instead, death is almost reversible, as in primary process thinking, in magic and religion. *Ivan the Terrible* also shares this feature with the German expressionistic films from the 1920's, their magic influenced by E. T. A. Hoffman and Edgar Allan Poe.

It is easy to point out the socio-psychological background factors in these intense denials of the individual death. The dissolution of the social orders in Russia and Germany led to regressive and destructive processes which mobilized annihilation fantasies, death wishes and — as a cure — magical images of the spiritual supremacy over reality. The numerous victims of World War I, the civil and intervention wars in Russia also contributed to making the deaths and the losses incomprehensible, and produced attempts to

avoid tragedies which would be too massive to be understood by those affected by them. An intensified need to deny and belittle that which had happened was again discharged by the accelerating terror in Stalin's Russia. The Soviet citizen, unaware of the details of the terror regime, was inevitably influenced in a sneaking, unclear, but terrifying way by the terrible suspicions which trickled through the prison walls. It is astonishing how comparatively little importance has been attributed to the great terror exercised during Eisenstein's lifetime as an influential background factor in his works, probably a concession to the understandable tendency not to notice the incomprehensible tragedies that the bestial sides in our fellow human beings and ideological allies have achieved in our own time.

There is a significant parallel between the German cinema of the 1920's, in particular as presented by Kracauer, and *Ivan the Terrible* in the fact that both films reflect magically rooted reactions to violent social upheavals in which destructive impulses have been freed and rebound in more regressive conceptual structures. In the emerging alarming situation, death (whose presence has been emphasized) is denied in a more determined way than ever before; it becomes reversible, it is fought with the help of fantasies of eternal life, religious rites, symbols and traditional patterns in general, or, as Ivan, at the beginning of the film, at his coronation, declares with a self-assured desire for eternity: "There have been two Romes, Rome and Constantinople, and the third, Moscow, will sustain".

IV

When the scientist talks about a type, he never means himself, but always his neighbour; probably his poor neighbour. I don't deny the dry light may sometimes do good; though in one sense it's the very reverse of science. So far from being knowledge, it's actually suppression of what we know. It's treating a friend as a stranger, and pretending that something familiar is really remote and mysterious. It's like saying that a man has a proboscis between the eyes, or that he falls down in a fit of insensibility once every 24 hours. Well, what you call "the secret" is exactly the opposite. I don't try to get outside the man. I try to get inside —.

G. K. Chesterton in The Secrets of Father Brown

There seems to be a more specific connection between *Ivan the Terrible* and Murnau's *Nosferatu* than the common points of reference between Eisenstein's last film and the expressionistic German cinema. Both characters, sometimes inhumanly tall and unnaturally famished-looking, evoke the image of their common model among the foremost martyrs of mankind: Christ.

However, in neither case are we confronted with an unproblematic "successor of Christ" but with a Christ who has accepted the devil's offer in the desert, an angel who has fallen like Lucifer, the Son of Man who once again has left his original condition of innocence behind and re-entered the world of evil and mediocrity. Both Ivan and Dracula seem to bear foremost the burden of attempting to achieve good, man's deliverance and salvation by employing evil, destruction and extinction as their weapons. Their destinies are dictated by a renewed and, perhaps, worse Fall. There are also historical links between these two in as much as Russian folk tradition has identified Ivan with Dracula (Oinas, 1982) due to the unprecedented cruelties performed by them both (Oinas, 1982). For instance, it is told that those emissaries who did not bare their heads sufficiently humbly in their princely presence had their headdresses nailed to their heads. An identifying link between them can also be found in their rôles as heroes in the struggle for national sovereignty against Muslim neighbouring peoples, the Tatars and the Turks.

More significant than these similarities between Tsar Ivan and Count Dracula in a theological and historic perspective, however, is the deeply rooted relation between Eisenstein's and Murnau's visions of them. They see and emphasize the profoundly human and tragic in these undeniably sadistic torturers of man. Both portraits of princely cruelty include a cry for clemency, mercy and salvation, an intense desire for those who have been expelled and isolated from the community because of their evilness to be readmitted.

Like so many who we believe have made the wheels of history move a little faster, the two princes, of Moscow and Valachia, have simultaneously become their own prisoners, or rather prisoners of their own differentness, of their power positions and desire to embrace the world, and thus appear as non-human characters comparable to the tools of Satan; they are also ambassadors of a to-date invisible reality, and in this respect they resemble the artist.

To a certain extent we can understand Murnau's and Eisenstein's depiction of their feared and hated leading characters as emissaries of a reality beyond the present one. Despite the differences, in that the historical visionary presents his view of fulfillment with the help of thousands of bodies, and in that the artist sacrifices only himself (or at least mainly himself) in order to fulfill something which is predestined to remain halfway between fantasy and objective reality, in other words a vision shared by us all, they both fight against something which people around them regard as self-evident and incontestable.

Another common element is the myth of the outcast taken as a starting point. In his film, Eisenstein describes first and foremost the suffering derived from serving unconditional historic development in a hard regime, for the blessing of the people and the future. In the suffering derived from being evil, we can find another theme; the pattern of the unavoidable sacrifice of the individual, of the Son of Man, which is common to the long tradition of majesties and jester kings, the god and his son, the scapegoat driven into the desert. The Christian Passion Story has many remnants of the tragedy of the outcast: the disciples' inability to wake with their Master, Peter's denial of the Master before the cock crowed thrice, and finally the painful cry of Christ on the cross; all images of expulsion, of having to bear the sins of the world on one's shoulders and therefore of being expelled as a unique bearer of the evil — one of the starting points of Eisenstein's as well as Murnau's film.

Dracula the vampire shares with the despot of the Russian empire the destiny of being an outcast. He is even excluded from the community of the dead. The tradition of the vampire depicts the fear of the dead which Freud speaks of in *Totem und Tabu* (1913), a consequence of the guilt feelings of the living towards the dead and a reflection of projected aggressive impulses. The vampire shows how all safety precautions fail, how the repressed returns, despite everything. The dead rises up in his coffin, sweeps away the stones and overcomes all obstacles, stone walls and locked gates, defies all ritual conspiracies of "from dust thou art, to dust shall thou return", to persecute the living.

However Murnau has in his film — as Eisenstein in his — slightly changed the prospect of the cruel and blood-thirsty. In their films they emphasize how the executioner and the victim belong together,

how they are two painful sides of the same thing. The separation which tradition and convention have tried to establish and maintain between them is questioned in Murnau's and in Eisenstein's vision of the outcast, two fairly similar cries for companionship, cried out from the inconsolable feeling of solitude of two souls who have felt a deep kinship with the Man of Suffering. As backgrounds to these pathetic appeals, we see Ivan implore Fëdor Kolyčëv, the newly appointed abbot and old friend, not to abandon the lonely man on the throne, despite the bitter struggle between the church and the secular power, or the small bewildered jackal that Murnau suddenly shows to be an exponent of the expelled and deplorable in Dracula's world.

It is easy to link Murnau's and Eisenstein's presentation of an intense feeling of being expelled with the fact that they both were more or less homosexually inclined (Seton 1978; Eisner, 1964). In *Nosferatu* and *Ivan the Terrible*, they describe a tragic aspect of their inner — and outer — situation, a desolate side for which they both have created counterpoles in the descriptions of happy and innocent, original natural conditions, Murnau in *Tabu* and Eisenstein in some sections of his incomplete *Que viva Mexico!*. In these nostalgic and idyllic complements where happiness before the fall of man is presented in sharp contrast to the desolate damnation depicted in *Nosferatu* and *Ivan the Terrible*, we meet the whole range of goodness, beauty and innocence with which mankind has tried to make life bearable. Still, it seems as if this motive, or rather this polarity, though universal of course, comes out particularly strongly in works by homosexually inclined artists. We only have to think of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* where this theme, the expulsion from Paradise, the outcast's desolate damnation and final return to the starting point, runs all through the whole novel.

If it is true that "the golden age", "Atlantis", Paradise before the Fall, exercise a strong attraction for some male artists and poets with homosexual inclinations, and that the tendency to idealize this promised yet at the same time eternally lost time is hardly unique for them, but rather characteristic of them, could it be explained by the fact that the Oedipal decree not to approach women has influenced them with extreme intensity? And that the innocent

garden of Eden turned into a desert when the angel of the Lord drove away the woman and made her unreachable for the man?

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*Some Notes on the Work of
the Cameraman in "Ivan the Terrible":
The Visual Construction of the Film
Image Form*

If a cameraman, like any other cinematographer is forced to film 'at the orders' of Mr. Director so to speak, then our firm conviction is that an impressive and creative success is impossible to reach. We demand maturity in every detail and a unity in the totality which penetrates all individual parts.

*Edvard Tissé*¹

The year 1939 was a year of celebration for both of them — 25 and 15 years in the movie business. Despite the fact that they were almost the same age (Eisenstein was a year older²), Tissé jokingly called him "the old man". But Tissé had ten more years of experience, among other things from documentary and feature films. When Eisenstein wrote and talked about their joint films and their co-operation he used the form "we". I have thought about the reason for this for a long time, and I believe that the cause was neither exceptional modesty nor a general idea about film as a collective work of art, which, by the way, both men gave expression to a number of times and also sought to realize through their methods of practical work.

I'd like to quote something Eisenstein said, which I hope might give a better explanation of their partnership and the spiritual affinity that once existed between them:

¹ *Filmtechnik* 1927:6, quoted from the Russian version, "Na tom my stoim", *Iskusstvo kino* 1979:2, p. 101.

² Eisenstein said in the article, "25 i 15", that Tissé was a year older than himself, but Tissé has corrected that piece of information in his copy of Ėjzenštejn's *Izbrannye raboty*, Moskva 1956, p. 125, by writing *naoborot* (quite the contrary) in the margin.

Such 'synchronicity' of vision, sense and experience, that binds me and Tissé together, has hardly existed anywhere and anytime before... Finally it is thanks to this creative closeness that we have managed to reach the important and to us most useful method of shooting our films...³

Eisenstein also clarified that it is impossible to draw a line between where Eisenstein begins and where Tissé ends⁴

But this does not mean that they were completely alike, or were some kind of mirror images of one another. On the contrary, they were as different in as many ways as people can be, exactly like a plus and a minus. Precisely this combination of all the very particular methods of work meant that their alliance was especially fruitful and created a completely unique atmosphere in their films — credible, vibrating, exciting with strong forms of expression which held more than one meaning. For this reason I believe that their films continue to live and that the dialogue once begun between them is not yet over.

Here are the main points in their methods of work, as Edvard Tissé conceived them:

- a) A spiritual unity is the starting point for the creation of something artistic. The work proceeds on the basis of friendship and loyalty.
- b) The main weight of the work is placed on the preparations for filming (for instance, two years for the film, *Ivan the Terrible*, from 1941 to 1942 — the shooting started first at the beginning of 1943).
- c) A permanent director's team (after Aleksandrov started on his own, Elizaveta Teleševa became director of the acting from *Bežin Meadow* and onwards).
- d) "The cameraman is an equal creative and artistic member of the director's team"⁵, "since upon him is laid the task of plastically realizing the compositional intention."⁶

³ Sergej Ėjsenštejn, *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya v šesti tomach*, Moskva 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971; 5/424.

⁴ Shorthand notes of Eisenstein's lecture at the film Academy (ARK) in Leningrad, May 5, 1935.

⁵ Tissé, *op. cit.* p. 101.

⁶ Eisenstein's lecture at the State School of Cinematography quoted by Vladimir

- e) No dictatorship on the part of the director.
- f) A voluntary self-discipline for the members of the collective without the usual personal ambitions and vanity.

In order to understand how such principles could work, one has to look at their films from the perspective of the premises used by the filmmakers themselves. Then the films themselves reveal much more.

A film is precisely that which everyone is able to see on the screen via the camera. A camera is simply an instrument in the hands of the cinematographer, and has nothing to do with his personal ability. It is the film photographer's attitude, his personal, inspiring attitude which transforms, builds up and executes a great number of coloristic light-plastic compositions in the film.

Edvard Tissè determined the basis for his creative film work, and the roads he had to follow. The basic premise was to maintain the totality of the conception. This meant building up the film shots dramaturgically from a simple shot to a totality of the cinematic image — and this he called pictorial dramaturgy.

Into their co-operation Tissè brought the principle of the shot as editing, in opposition to Eisenstein, who put the main emphasis on editing (the discussion with Béla Balázs). "To film in a montage manner, to film in a way that would make one frame graphically continue into another, make all the elements of the composition become organized into a unified style — that ought to be the goal toward which our creative ideas should industriously aim", Tissè wrote.⁷

Vladimir Nil'sen — film theoretician and cameraman — also writes about the same principles in Tissè's work. He points out that Tissè brought this principle into his films already during his documentary period.⁸

To create an organic transition of the perspective from one shot to the next, Tisse made use of the entire light-tonal spectrum. I

Nil'sen, *Izobrazitel'noe postroenie fil'ma*, Moskva 1936, p. 211; English transl. V. Nilsen, *The Cinema as a Graphic Art*, London 1936 (reprint New York 1959), p. 214.

⁷ Tissè, "Lecture at the Seminar of Mosfilm Studio Cameramen, April 27, 1956", *Iskusstvo kino* 1979:2, p. 106.

⁸ Cf. Nilsen, *op. cit.*, chapter III/6.

would like to explain this closer with an example from the film, *Ivan the Terrible*, — the scene of Ivan's coronation.

The whole scene is divided into three different levels of light-tonality, each with different qualities and with their own characteristic lighting.

The compositionally artificial perspective is built up vertically and in depth by a calculated diffusion and softening of the depth of field.

The light-tonal composition is coloristically varied. The cathedral is full of sunlight and sunbeams. Tissè was called the photographer of sunlight, and that was no coincidence. It is one of his stylistic characteristics.

Solemnity is the key word for the pictorial impression of the film scene and for the dramaturgical content. The scene introduces, opens the film. The entire film is to be tuned, according to Tissè, like a tuning fork. But we must not forget that the introductory prologue itself — Ivan's childhood — had already been filmed as it was presented in the script.⁹

The pictorial impression of a solemn atmosphere is created through different means of pictorial dramaturgy.

The First Level.

a) Point of view

Tsar Ivan's entire figure is compositionally placed at the height of one man above the mass of people, and it is the central focus of the lighting and the spectators.

According to Edvard Tissè it was the fixed point for the pictorial dramaturgy as well as the dramaturgical fixed point.

b) The divineness of the tsar is emphasized light-tonally — he is an emitter of light (the two crossed spotlights behind him were typical of Tissè's lighting), his portrait image is a little out of focus — as well as rhythmically. Time is extended. The shooting is done with a camera speed of about 32 frames/second. There is an endless rain of gold over his head and body. Yes, the realization of a film is definitely the construction of illusions of reality.

c) The solemnity is also emphasized through the ascetic, strict, and architecturally vertical composition. Crossed straight lines of sunbeams give an added impression of depth and width, and fill

⁹ Ёјзенштейн 6/203-215.

the space of action with air, create a dynamic element through the composition and give a feeling of significance to the scene.

Already in the 1930's the critics wrote about the effects of volume in Tissè's film images — the stereoscopic effect.¹⁰ Tissè himself said that his aim was "for every element of the chiaroscuro in the frame to be logically motivated and to enable a more profound exposure of dramaturgical problems".¹¹ This is a sort of nerve string in the pictures that is simultaneously both visible and invisible and that is capable of adding a completely new psychological aspect to the dramaturgical development of the pictures.

The Second Level.

This is the nearest group of people with a new coloristic atmosphere, with a new contrast and new rhythmical points. The smiling faces of the women are sharp, full of contrast, earthy, like the peasant women — the peasant madonnas — in the church in the film, *Bežin Meadow*.

The Third Level.

This is a long shot of the church interior itself. It is the musical introduction, the musical keynote of the very space of action.¹²

The pictures are filled with airy space. The constructed architectural perspective is identical to the one under c).

"I have always looked for, and attempted to find, a unity of style with the finest shades and nuances through the creation of a unified light-tonal spectrum, which concretizes the cinematographer's dramaturgical approach", Tissè said in his lecture on April 27, 1956.¹³

When we see his films, where the rhythmical and light-tonal illusions remain unbroken, implying that the illusion of reality is intact, we may sometimes wonder how this really has been achieved. But it is precisely in the easily understood and apparently realistic form that the borderline between professionalism and art is hidden.

Edvard Tissè told me that behind the shots of "Ivan's Coronation" there was much experimental work and several not

¹⁰ Nilsen, *op. cit.*, ch. III.

¹¹ Tissè, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹² On the "musical basis", Tissè refers back to the work on *The Battleship Potemkin*, *op. cit.*, p. 106 ff.

¹³ Tissè, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

completely successful attempts to create the atmosphere which exists in the scene. The greatest problem was to realize the effects of the sunbeams, which shine down from the upper windows in the cathedral on the masses of people. In the film we can clearly see all the trials, including the last and most successful. Tissè was a perfectionist and a master at creating illusions of perspective.

For instance, a small picture — not more than 1.5 meters in original size — of an angel in the ceiling above Ivan's head in the prologue, "Ivan's Childhood", gives the optical impression of a gigantic fresco in the film.

There is a tendency to underestimate the contribution to the film of the scenographer, Josif A. Špinel'. Tissè told how important this co-operation was, and how inspiring it was to all three of them as partners. Špinel' was a very creative and hardworking person, and just as modest. He drew at least 300 sketches for the interior and exterior decorations. The sketches accepted for the production were, by the way, signed by either Eisenstein or Tissè.¹⁴

The architectural sketches for the decorations were calculated after the horizontal and vertical angles of the lenses, which Tissè had picked out for the shootings to come. To compute these Tissè especially made angled rulers which corresponded to each individual lens in the collection.

This means that, during this kind of thorough preparatory work, concrete plans for the shooting and the accompanying artistic realizations were already decided long before the shooting started. There existed no grey zones.

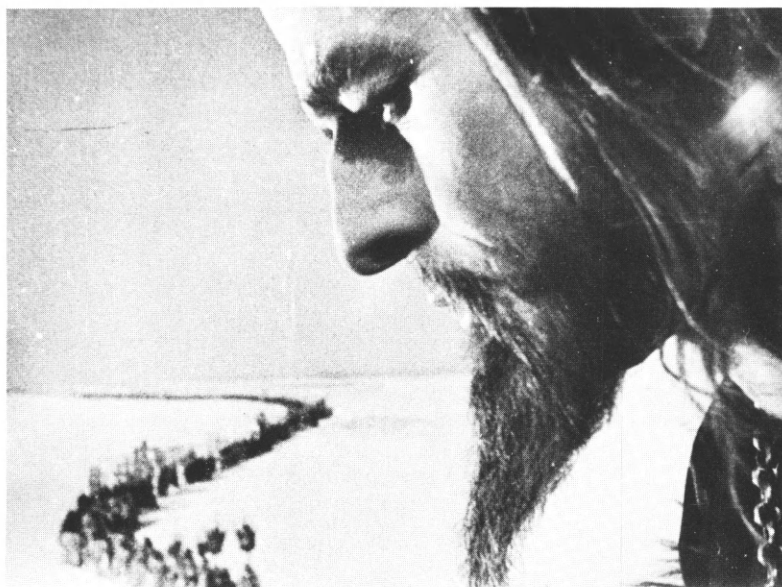
I have to add that Tissè had good organizational capabilities and was always very quick at the shootings — "with lightning speed on the highest artistic level", Eisenstein noted.¹⁵ Tissè was the only one in Russian film who could work this effectively and productively: the film, *Aleksandr Nevskij*, for instance, was shot in the scope of three summer months.

¹⁴ It is the very existence of Eisenstein's signature on Špinel's pictures that has made later falsifications possible and this has been taken advantage of by certain Eisenstein "scholars". Špinel' confessed his deep disappointment (when a similar surprising discovery was made at a memorial one-man show of Eisenstein pictures in the "old" Dom Kino at Vorovskij street in Moscow in the mid-sixties) during his last day of lectures to the cinematographers in 1969, which I attended as a student.

¹⁵ Ėjzenštejn 5/423.



Ivan's coronation.



Ivan in the Aleksandrov Palace.

In the well-known scene in *Ivan the Terrible*, "In the Aleksandrov Palace (*sloboda*)", — Ivan's voluntary exile — the spectators' focus was very concretely governed by the pictorial dramaturgy.

- a) The surface of the film image is snow-white, and is crossed diagonally by a dark-clad mass of people who are approaching Ivan's residence. The line stretches all the way to the horizon, where it merges with the line of a forest in the far distance.
- b) The sharp profile of Ivan's head, dressed in the black *monomach* fur cap, slowly breaks into the picture surface. At the same time the inner pictorial composition acquires a new dimension and a new dynamic rhythm. (The composition is built around two crossed diagonals.) Ivan's dark profile dominates the entire picture surface and takes up about 2/3 of it. In psychological and dramatic terms the pictorial content changes through the composition. Edvard Tissè called this "inner pictorial editing". He formulates it thus: "A sharp intervention into the narrative of the picture with a supplementing tone (here black into white) creates a new inner element helping the dramatic realization, and it creates a particularly forceful spectator reaction".¹⁶ The entire composition is stylistically very simple, exact and rational.
- c) The actual time is extended rhythmically within the image. The pictorial dramaturgy is based on the principles of the silent film.

Eisenstein did not use a shooting script. This is an example of how Eisenstein and Tissè supplemented each other in their co-operation.

The way in which the scene was realized musically is especially interesting. "In Prokof'ev we have found a third sympathizer", Eisenstein wrote.¹⁷ When it came to working with Prokof'ev, Tissè told that the scene was first filmed according to plans. Then Prokof'ev was shown a work print. Only after the musical score had been written, could the film be edited. It was the music that determined the cutting.¹⁸

In the scene, "In the Aleksandrov Palace", I perceive two contradictory tendencies within the same image: The first is within

¹⁶ Tissè, *op., cit.*, pp. 108–109.

¹⁷ Ėjzenštejn 5/425.

¹⁸ Cf. Tissè's comments in the margin of Eisenstein's article, "PRKFV", in *Izbrannye trudy*, Moskva 1956, p. 136: "Prokof'ev's music determined the editing and the editing was done after the completion of the score".

the dramaturgical plot. It is Ivan's schemes against the boyars. The Russian people are coming to ask him to return to the Moscow throne. The second is within the pictorial dramaturgy. The helpless masses follow as if mesmerized by the tune of the magic flute, straight in to the traps that are laid for them.

I see these two tendencies as expressions of the difference in historical clearheadedness between Eisenstein and Tissé, of two principally different attitudes of the filmmakers. Here the dialogue that was not finished then is perceptible.

And this is not the only scene that is ambiguous. For instance, the scene with the Russian warriors dressed in grey before the attack on Kazan'. Long, endless rows of warriors are slowly crossing through the picture, from edge to edge of the picture surface (the shooting is done at about 32 frames/sec.). The image lacks one single strong tone. All is grey. The people are like a grey wall, without power over their own fate, just following orders.

Such is the pictorial dramaturgical approach of Tissé.

But from a purely dramaturgical point of view, it is the time of waiting — a kind of rhythmical pause — for a new dramaturgical act, the campaign against Kazan'. In Eisenstein's cinematic conception this act means the defense of the Russian Empire, but historically it was an act of conquering in the name of the Russian state.

It is my conviction that we have an example here of how the positive role of Ivan III was confused with that of Ivan IV, called the Terrible, in the film. It is a known fact that such a mix-up also occurred in people's memory.¹⁹ As I know from Tissé's written notes, he was not in total agreement with Eisenstein about the evaluation of Ivan's historical role. Tissé was always preoccupied with historical facts and their credibility.

The work on the film, *Ivan the Terrible*, began in 1941. The war interrupted the preparatory work. The Mosfilm studios were evacuated with its staff to Alma Ata. During 1942 Tissé made

¹⁹ Ivan III was the original unifier of the Russian State. He was not concerned about conquering new land, but about uniting the Russian nation, and creating security for the people with strong concentrated forces by defending the country from a number of enemies. His campaign against Kazan' in 1467 was an act of war intended to support his friend, the Tartar prince, Kazim. Ivan IV's campaign against Kazan' took place in 1552, when he besieged the city in order to conquer an insubordinate state.

several longer visits to Moscow and collected historical information, facts from documents, archives, libraries and books and brought them back to Alma Ata. There was a lot of work being done to find the proper equivalents to the Russian Middle Ages. Nechvolodov's Russian history in four volumes, with its great, rich collection of pictorial material served as a basis for the story in the script.²⁰

I imagine Eisenstein was most impressed by Ivan IV's grandfather, Ivan III. But Eisenstein decided to ride on the "correct" historical wave. Maybe Eisenstein's attitude created a break in the relationship with Tissè, which one day in November, 1943, ended with the latter arriving at the shooting of the interior decorations to find the photographer, Moskvín, behind his camera.

This happened without any prior notice whatsoever. What the consequences would be for Tissè at that time, is impossible to understand for an uninitiated reader. He had to spend nearly a year far away from Alma Ata...

It was a simple matter to present Tissè as the photographer of exteriors only, as the credits in part I of the film did: Moskvín (interiors), Tissè (exteriors). Only luck saved Tissè from experiencing Vladimir Nil'sen's fate of being crossed out in favour of the B-photographer in the film comedy which he had shot together with Aleksandrov, at the same time as his books were confiscated or disappeared.²¹ Even today when I see the film and hear Ivan the Terrible's words to the Metropolitan, Filipp: "No one is condemned unjustly",²² I start to shudder.

From that moment, the shooting went slowly and sluggishly, and as Eisenstein himself admitted, he was not used to Moskvín's ways

²⁰ A. Nechvolodov, *Skazanie o Russkoj Zemle*, izd. 4-e, Moskva 1913.

²¹ In *Kinoslovar' v dvuch tomach*, t. 2, Moskva 1970, col. 214, the year of Nil'sen's death is given as "unknown". But a group of contemporary Soviet "Eisenstein scholars" has managed to create a new "film history" during the last twenty years. Edvard Tissè's associates, his assistant photographer and assistants, changed their status to the same level as his. The film's main and credit titles were altered and given new content, "restored", as it is called. Some films disappeared from the Gosfilmofond archives, for instance, *The Red Presnja*, Eisenstein's indepent experiment in filming 1905 with Levickij and others. Through such falsifications Tissè's creative and historical role was reduced. In this connection Eisenstein's name was severed from his closest collaborators, and their role was nearly obliterated.

²² *Ėjzenštejn* 6/307.

of working. Again and again, up to 5-6 times, the same object was being filmed, in spite of the fact that the work of the film photographer was excellent.²³

During the spring, summer and fall of 1943 Eisenstein and Tissè had filmed half of the original script. As has already been said, they worked very effectively together. In 1944 the first part was released. It completely corresponds to the script, with the exception of the prologue, which was filmed by Tissè in *Alma Ata*.²⁴ But the second part, which was also partly filmed in Moscow, corresponded only by one third to the original script.²⁵ In order to cover up his artistic failure, Eisenstein presented the idea of an originally planned part III of the film. With Moskvín as a photographer a new style was being introduced — the pictures became stiffer, lost their inner dynamics, and became more pedantic in a painterly way (for instance, the scene with the messenger from Kazan' or the scene with the astrolabe in Ivan's study), and looked more like an opera performance.

In his diary Eisenstein noted that it was in the fall of 1943 that he decided to kill himself by work.

Eisenstein had an illusionary hope of getting Tissè back to film the third and last part of the film, and already in 1944 he did his best to repair their relationship. (I own a copy of the script, *Ivan Groznyj*, Moscow, 1944, with a dedication, "To my dear Kuz'mič [Tissè's patronymic] from the Old Man 9.X.1944"). In the second part of the film the parentheses with the film photographers' specific roles — Edvard Tissè (exteriors), Moskvín (interiors) — were removed to cover up the split between the two old partners. Tissè did not like to talk about this the most complicated period in his life, and therefore remained silent.

²³ Already after his arrival in Moscow, and despite the conflict, Eisenstein sought to contact Tissè under different pretexts and visited him in private on an almost regular basis to discuss the shooting to be done during the day. One day Edvard Tissè's wife irritably told Eisenstein that he was not welcome in their home and asked him to leave them alone. This had no great effect.

²⁴ I once saw the prologue as a separate part of the film together with Edvard Tissè in the late 1950's.

²⁵ Cf. Eisenstein's original script for *Ivan the Terrible*, published by Goskinoizdat in Moscow, 1944, which consisted of the prologue — Ivan's childhood — and parts I and II.

In 1939 Eisenstein had written an open letter to Tissé:

Only You and I know how much I owe You for Your loyal and unique — at times even heroic — friendship. From the first day of our collaboration You assured me after my first failed takes that You would assume the responsibility of making a film director out of me.²⁶

After 1943 these words sound somewhat ironic. But Edvard Tissé remained an idealist who believed in the inherent force and language of the screen. Ambition and vanity were foreign to him, and he was convinced that, "The screen should speak for itself".

Translated by Håkan Lövgren

²⁶ Eisenstein refers to the fiasco of the shooting of *1905* with the cameraman Levickij. — Eisenstein's open letter to Tissé May 29, 1939, later published in *Iskusstvo kino* 1962:2.

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