THE FOLLOWING SET OF REVIEWS DOES NOT PRETEND EVEN TO SURVEY THIS BURGEONING FIELD BUT ONLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE ITS IMPORT. PLACING THEM TOGETHER IN A SPECIAL SECTION WAS INSPIRED BY TWO EVENTS. THE FIRST WAS DAVID BORDWELL'S VISIT TO TORONTO TO LECTURE AT THE RETROSPECTIVE OF EISENSTEIN'S FILMS AT THE CINEMATHEQUE ONTARIO IN 1994, WHICH COINCIDED WITH THE PUBLICATION OF HIS THE CINEMA OF EISENSTEIN. A SEMINAR WAS ORGANIZED AT INNIS COLLEGE TO DEBATE HIS BOOK AND A DOZEN ONTARIO FILM TEACHERS TOOK PART IN A LONG, LIVELY AND DETAILED DEBATE. THE OTHER WAS THE PUBLICATION OF GRAHAM PETRIE AND VIDA JOHNSON'S THE FILMS OF ANDREI TARKOVSKY: A VISUAL FUGUE (INDIANA, 1994) WHICH IS LIKELY TO REMAIN THE BENCHMARK CRITICAL TEXT ON THE DIRECTOR FOR SOME YEARS TO COME.

IN WHAT FOLLOWS, PROFESSOR PETRIE APPEARS AS REVIEWER OF THE TARKOVSKY DIARIES, TIME WITHIN TIME (SEAGULL, 1991) AND HIS AND PROFESSOR JOHNSON'S STUDY IS THE SUBJECT OF A PROBING CRITIQUE BY DONATO TOTARO. USING BORDWELL'S BOOK AS HIS PIVOT, BRUCE ELDER DISCUSSES RECENT WORK ON EISENSTEIN, NEW TRANSLATIONS OF HIS THEORY TEXTS, AND FOCUSES PROBLEMS AROUND THE DIRECTOR ARISING FROM RUSSIAN FORMALISM. PAUL KAPSOS ASSESS THE NEWEST BOOK BY ONE OF THE BEST NEW HISTORIANS OF SOVIET FILM, DENISE YOUNGBLOOD AND I REVIEW THE FINE NEW ANTHOLOGY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY ON DOVZHENKO ASSEMBLED BY THE EDMONTON SCHOLAR OF UKRANIAN CINEMA, BOHDAN Y. NEBESIO, PUBLISHED BY THE JOURNAL OF UKRANIAN STUDIES.

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REVIEW ESSAY:
Eisenstein, My Contemporary

Bruce Elder

David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

S.M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922-34.* Edited and translated by Richard Taylor. London: British Film Institute, 1988.

S.M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works Volume 2: Towards a Theory of Montage.* Edited by Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor. Translated by Michael Glenny. London: British Film Institute, in 1991/1994 cloth and paper.

Ian Christie and Richard Taylor, eds., *Eisenstein Rediscovered.* London, Routledge, 1993.

I

A *prima facie* acquaintance with Eisenstein's films suggests that his artistic career falls into two, sharply contrasting periods. The first is the period of the "mass dramas" of the Twenties that are so specifically cinematic and that rely on a more diachronic conception of montage (conflict between successive units as providing a jolt to the viewer's mental faculties). The second is the period of grandiloquent dramas focused on an individual hero that have an operatic character reflecting Eisenstein's developing interest in the *Gesammtkunstwerk,* and that rely on a more synchronic and polymorphic idea of montage. An homologous division appears in Eisenstein's theory, with the theoretical works earlier period culminating, apparently, with the notion of intellectual montage while that of the second period is encapsulated in the ideas of vertical montage and the monistic ensemble.

In 1975, David Bordwell provided the most cogent explanation of the changes in artistic style, and the deep changes of belief that produced them. In "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift" he accepted the common view that the films underwent a marked change, but he presented an uncommonly well-defined criterion for discriminating between the two periods. Bordwell claims that the earlier films and writings subscribe to a dialectical model that rests on concepts derived from reflexology while the later films and writings depend on an associationist psychology and replace the idea of the dialectic with that of organic unity.

In *The Cinema of Eisenstein* Bordwell qualifies these claims of the article. He says that the constant celebration of Eisenstein's montage cinema was the hyperbolic reaction of Western critics to discovering the Soviet Cinema and to *Film Form*'s English translations of some Eisenstein's essays of the Twenties. Bordwell argues for another, more analytic assessment of Eisenstein's accomplishment, and he is right to do so: the period of initial discovery has long since past. Now that we have the first two volumes in the British Film Institute's collection of the *Collected Writings of Sergei Eisenstein*—unprecedented achievements in Eisenstein scholarship presenting the evolution of his thought with a thoroughness and accuracy previously unavailable—we have reason to reassess and reformulate our understanding of Eisenstein's development as a filmmaker and film theorist. Toward this end, Bordwell discounts the common tendency to see Eisenstein's later work as formed by the tyrannous situation of its production and he attempts to work his way past these responses which exaggerated the differences between the two phases of Eisenstein's career.

Similarities to the article nonetheless remain. Bordwell still attaches importance to the shift from Pavlovian to Vygotskian psychologies. He refuses the easy (but basically true) claim that it was a doctrinal shift—from the vanguardism of Lenin and Lunarcharsky to Zhadanov and Stalin's aesthetically reactionary (though, perhaps, politically progressive) Socialist Realism—that split Eisenstein's career into two parts. Instead, Bordwell insists that deeper currents steered Eisenstein's course, leading him to revise his ideas concerning consciousness, nature, and the dialectic. Consequently Bordwell reads the articles Eisenstein published in his later career ("later" being, in his case, between the ages of 32 and 49), now assembled in *Eisenstein Writings II*, and even such writings as "Pathos in Potemkin," as true expression of Eisenstein's evolving beliefs. I read them, rather, as desperate attempts at exculpation, the products of a tyrannous and threatening times and to be discounted. But we must recognize that discriminating what is sincere in the later writings from what is politically necessary is one of the great challenges of Eisenstein interpretation.

Bordwell's desire to take Eisenstein "at his word" (to recall Jacques Aumont's chapter title in *Montage Eisenstein*) can become so ingenuous as to seem like wilful blindness to the context that so greatly affected his production.

In stressing the integrity of Eisenstein's work—something the article did not—*The Cinema of Eisenstein* attempts to isolate and identify certain basic principles common to both phases of Eisenstein's career. Bordwell seeks to bring them, if not into a static identity, at least into an evolving organic unity. This makes the book something new and its methodological advantages are conspicuous. *The Cinema of Eisenstein* is the first book ever to depict Eisenstein's career whole and teachers and students have lacked such a work until now, despite Eisenstein's formidable reputation. Moreover, Bordwell's film analyses are uncommonly precise and lucid, and this too recommends the text. At last, seventy years after the production of *The Battleship Potemkin*, teachers of Eisenstein's films now have a text to which they and their students can confidently go. That value alone makes *The Cinema of Eisenstein* a magnificent achievement that helps bring cinema studies of age.

II

That said, I believe that Bordwell's study still misses what it aims at: the fundamental unity that binds together all phases of Eisenstein's theoretical work and sutures the profound rupture that cleaves Eisenstein's career into two parts. Eisenstein's most fundamental interest was in the means by which a graphic sign (and, in his later work, an iconic sound) because of its resemblance to its referent, possess natural, direct and immediate significations, can be transformed into signs possessing conventional signification and, thereby, made to open to the possibilities of narrative and drama. The importance of this question makes it the fundamental problem of film semiotics. Yet, among film semioticians, only the Estonian Yuri Lotman makes this issue central to his semiotic theory. Eisenstein recognized the crucial importance of this question and his efforts towards answering it are still unrivalled. And this makes Eisenstein, the theorist, deserve intense consideration as a contemporary aesthetician.

Eisenstein took an even greater interest than Lotman in the means of transforming an iconic sign into an aesthetic element. One view of the power of aesthetic signs considers that such power results from aesthetic signs' *lack* of communicative function—from their *not* stating something, as most signs do. This view holds that aesthetic signs have the power they do because they exert a force or a pressure on consciousness—they *do* something rather than state something. They are active. A depictive sign,

a picture, as T.E. Hulme realized, is a dead spot. Aesthetic signs, as the Futurists, the Cubists, the Vorticists *et.al.* pointed out, can be almost anything, but they must be dynamic.

How something as static as an iconic sign can be transformed into an active element is the key question of Eisenstein's film theory. The centrality Eisenstein accords this problematic explains the impact that Ernest Fenollosa's classic (and wildly speculative) essay had on Eisenstein in the Twenties. Fenollosa's essay concerns the discharge of forces that occurs as discrete pictographic elements (that themselves are verbs, i.e., are words that do something) are combined in the Chinese written character. This question arose at very beginning of Eisenstein's film theory, in the 1929 essay "The Montage of Film Attractions," *(Selected Works/I)*. Its answer is the key to *agit prop*, to which the young Eisenstein lost no opportunity to reaffirm his commitment. At the time, Eisenstein defined an "attraction" as something that exerts a measurable pressure on the consciousness of the spectator. It *does*, rather than shows, a point on which Armand is rightly insistent when he observes how consistently the early Eisenstein polemicized against "representation."

What happened to this problematic in the progress of Eisenstein's evolution? We can discover the answer in Eisenstein's 1932 essay, "Help Yourself!" *(in Selected Works/I)*. There he enthusiastically describes the montage lists he drew up for Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* under the influence of Joyce and Larbaud:

> Like thought itself they sometimes proceeded through visual images, with sound, synchronised or non-synchronized...
>
> sometimes like sounds, formless or formed as representational sound images...
>
> now suddenly in the coinage of intellectually formed words, as 'intellectual' and dispassionate as words that are spoken, with a blank screen, a rushing imageless visuality... [*The expression itself gives clear evidence that iconicity has been overcome. R.B.E.*]
>
> now in passionate disjointed speech, nothing but nouns or nothing but verbs; then through interjections, with the zigzags of aimless figures, hurrying along in synchronisation with them.
>
> Now visual images racing past in complete silence,
> now joined by a polyphony of sounds,
> now by a polyphony of images.
> Then both together.

(Selected Works/ I: 235-236, formatting, including ellipses follows original.)

The passage's use of gerunds ("rushing," "racing," and "hurrying") and of nouns that derive from actions (e.g., "zigzags," and "interjections") is revealing: artworks overcome the conventional signification through kinetic effect. In adopting this belief, Eisenstein allied himself, and very consciously, with those twentieth-century artists like Joyce and Pound who take an interest in the way the accelerated activity of an art work both reflects and stimulates the incessant, rapid flux of the manifold of consciousness.[1]

Eisenstein never changed his fundamental ideas about the way that photographic images overcome their iconic significance. He continued to argue that by becoming an element in a set of aesthetic relations, they take on an aesthetic role. Neither did he ever abandoned the question of how that transformation takes place. Nor did he forsake his conviction that this was the central problem of film aesthetics. Furthermore, he never departed from those affiliations that initially provided him with the basic terms with which he worked on this problem, reworked it, and then reworked it again. For, however much he revised this problematic, he continued always to associate the principle of aesthetic transformation with the Marxist conception of the dialectic.

In all this, Eisenstein allied himself with the extraordinarily productive and highly variegated metacritical enterprise known as Formalism. As early as 1921, in *Recent Russian Poetry*, Roman Jakobson proposed that the proper subject of literary study was *literariness*, i.e., the features that distinguish literary use of language from its practical use. Generally, the Russian Formalists suggested that extrinsic relations (relations between linguistic signifiers and the external world) had central importance in practical uses of language. However, intrinsic relations (or intratextual relations, i.e., relations amongst elements intrinsic to the work), have central importance in literary uses of language. Mukarovsky summarized the insight elegantly:

> ...in poetry, as against information language, there is a reversal in the hierarchy of relations: in the latter attention is focused above all on the relation, important from the practical point of view, between reference and reality, whereas for the former it is the relationship between the reference and the context incorporating it that stands to the fore.... As for poetic reference, the weakening of its immediate relationship with reality makes of it an artistic device. That means the poetic reference is not evaluated in terms of a extralinguistic mission but with relation to the role imposed upon it in the organization of the work's semantic unity. (In Matejka and Titunik, *Semiotics of Art*, 157.)

The proposition that relations which an element takes on when it is incorporated into a work of art alter the character of that element was a key tenet of Eisenstein's film theory as well. And this proposition worked together with another one already mentioned, that the distinguishing feature of poetic/aesthetic language is that it *does* something rather than states something. But Eisenstein, even more committedly than most Formalists, worked through the question of how the relations intrinsic to a work of art alter the elements that enter the work art in dialectical terms. He did so by applying the Marxist conception of labour.

The Marxist theory of labour is a key item in the Romantic legacy to Marx's philosophy. It viewed nature as, *ab initio*, an alien being that stands over against humans; labour (or industry) transforms material from this alien realm into an object that reflects the being of the transforming agent. Because this reflection embodies characteristics of the agent of the transformation and, because it overcomes the alienation that originally characterized the relation between human being and nature, the labour process populates nature with objects that reflect attributes of human beings. The agency of transformation has a dual character. It reflects both the humanity of the maker and the character of the implements used in the transforming process. Indeed, Marx's philosophy is enriched by the interest it takes in the interrelations between these two aspects: that is, from its understanding of the way that our nature shapes the implements we use and the way that these implements reciprocally affect our nature.

Eisenstein's film theory took both aspects of the transformation process seriously: Pavlovian (and later, Vygotskian) psychology furnished him with the concepts necessary to understand how human nature is reflected in the process. What is more, this transformation releases the object's real being for, again according to Marx's Romantic heritage, the opposition between nature and human nature is a false notion, to be overcome through history. As does the Hegelian, the Marxian dialectic uncovers the truth of beings through time, struggle and change.

The Marxist belief that the labour process has a dialectical character, and the tools used in the transforming process leave their impress on the object produced explains something that has long troubled commentators on Eisenstein's theory of film.

Eisenstein, as Bordwell complains, refers to any kind of difference as a conflict. For example, he refers to the conflict between the object in its natural existence and the object as represented through a short lens. Bordwell says that it makes no sense to call such difference a form of conflict. He writes:

> The concept of conflict is simply applied too broadly to be of much explanatory value. The term seems to denote any incongruity, comparison, or juxtaposition; it dwindles to difference. When Eisenstein insists on recasting all differences as conflicts, he extends the idea to questionable cases. In what meaningful sense does a camera angle represent a conflict between the profilmic object and the framing?... [This is hardly conflict] unless one postulates in advance that all shot changes instantiate conflict—in which case no counterexample will ever test the explanatory hypothesis. *(The Cinema of Eisenstein,* p. 130)

More than any other passage in his book, this one highlights the consequences of Bordwell's central oversight: his failure to grasp the analogy Eisenstein drew between the labour's transformation of raw materials into a humanly useful object and the transformation of the iconic signifier into an aesthetic form. The Marxist conception of labour held that exactly such a difference is the essence of creative conflict and struggle. The object in its natural existence is analogous in art to matter in its inert state. Labour, the very essence of creative wrestling with nature, transforms the natural object into something it originally was not by endowing it with new characteristics. To describe such differences as conflicts is precisely what we expect from someone whose concept of struggle arises from the Marxist conception of labour.

Because Bordwell does not see that Eisenstein's conception of the dialectic entails the notion of the labour process, he misses basic linkages at work in Eisenstein's thinking. He does not connect the Formalist idea of the transformation of ordinary language into aesthetic language with the Marxist idea of the transformation of the raw materials of nature into objects that have use-value. So, Bordwell fails to notice the important role the notion of the dialectic plays in both Eisenstein's earlier and his later works. In this regard, what was true of "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift," remains true of *The Cinema of Eisenstein.* It is also true of every other commentator on Eisenstein's theory.

III

Understanding the dialectical principle in operation pays rewards when it is brought to bear on the analysis of Eisenstein's films. The dialectical principle highlights the possibility of analyzing a series of shots as a differential succession interacting with each other and inflecting each other more through their syntagmatic than through their paradigmatic relations. As Tynjanov's semiotics made clear, this differential succession suffices to produce aesthetic effects without recourse to traditional plot structures. From this conception of a film—as a series of differential relations—came

what Bordwell finely characterizes as Eisenstein's "divagative" style, which mixes narrative and non-narrative modes. However, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* reads Eisenstein's early works retrospectively. Bordwell takes the vantage point of the later Eisenstein to analyze the early films. This leads him to stress their narrative features. Some of us prefer to stress Eisenstein's break with traditional narrative structure—represented for him by Griffith's cinema—and wish Bordwell depicted Eisenstein's efforts in that direction as full of promises that went unfilled. This was the line of development blocked by the tyrannical Stalinist imposition of Socialist Realism.

Throughout his career, and well beyond the Twenties, the desire to work out a dialectical theory of film—actually, to create a theory of all the arts consistent with the fundamental principles of Marx and Engels' philosophy—remained Eisenstein's lifelong project. And for Eisenstein, this continued to mean working out a theory of film patterned on Marx' analysis of the labour process. He never abandoned the Formalist model of poetic language because it emphasized the process that transforms conventional (natural) language into poetic language. But it was uniquely Eisenstein who joined the Formalist insight with Marx's idea of the transformation of raw materials into an object with use value. The film medium's industrial nature and the cinematograph's iconic nature, which ensures that the raw material of film is "a photofragment of reality"[2] made the bond Eisenstein discerned between these two notions seem all the stronger.[3]

This single project, of describing the transformation of the factual shot into an aesthetic form, was one that Eisenstein consistently modelled on the process through which labour transforms inert lumps of matter into objects that have use-value for humans. When Eisenstein began his theoretical endeavours, a mechanical conception of the dialectical process prevailed in the Soviet Union. Eisenstein, too, adopted a mechanical conception of the dialectical interrelations among the conflicting elements in a work of art. It was in this period that he famously proclaimed that he approached the problem of creating a work of art in the spirit of the engineer. He claimed that he foresaw the day when one could calculate the aesthetic structure to produce a particular change in the viewer's consciousness in much the same way that an engineer calculates the characteristics a town water-system must have to serve its intended role.

Eisenstein's early theory and practice stressed the dialectical relation of shots, a feature of his work that has never been described correctly. Bordwell comes as close as anybody in his commentary on *Potemkin*. However, because Bordwell reads Eisenstein's career backwards, his analysis of *Potemkin's* montage construction still is flawed by pressures to

render Eisenstein's Twenties practice consistent with his later ideas of organic unity and "pathos." So Bordwell struggles to see the *Potemkin's* composition as engaging the interaction of all features of one shot with all features of its successor.[4]

Actually, Eisenstein's dialectical montage aims at creating a form that, by synthesizing opposites, conforms to the pattern that characterizes the historical process. Tynjanov's and Kazansky's ideas of complex signs convinced Eisenstein that every shot is a polyvalent element that possesses plural significations. In "The Fourth Dimension of Cinema" *(Selected Works / Vol I)* Eisenstein states that "A film-frame can never be an inflexible *letter of the alphabet*, but must always remain a multiple meaning ideogram." He goes on from this to relate the multiplicity of the film-frame's meaning to its intrinsic relations: "And it can be read in juxtaposition, just as an ideogram acquires its specific *significance, meaning,* and even *pronunciation* (occasionally in diametric opposition to one another.) Eisenstein is proposing that a film's meaning (or artistic meaning in general) does not follow Aristotle's binary logic but, rather, follows a dialectical logic which is the only logic capable of holding contradictory elements in a synthesis. The film-frame's multiplicity of meanings is evidence of the suitability of dialectical logic to cinema, and its affinity for the structures of dialectical logic explain why film form should be conformed to the principles of that method.

Since a shot possesses several features, its dominant and subsidiary characteristics can conflict: a dominant movement to the left can balance a subsidiary movement to the right. The individual shot, then, can be a synthesis of opposing elements. What is more important, the dominant feature of one shot can match a subsidiary element in the previous (or succeeding) shot, while the subsidiary feature in the previous shot conflicts with its dominant feature. Such "conflict" between a subsidiary feature of one shot and the dominant feature of the next is, in fact, the norm of Eisenstein's practice, although he sometimes, in order to create especially strong jolts at the cuts, juxtaposes opposing dominants. Eisenstein believed such constructions bring the two shots into a unity because the subsidiary feature of the earlier shot matches the dominant feature of the succeeding shot. And, because the dominant features of the successive shots also conflict, this unity is a dialectical unity between opposites.

Eisenstein further claimed that the conflict between the dominant and the subsidiary within the shot "explodes" into the more strongly marked conflict between successive shots because the same form of conflict characterizes both. Examine pairs of successive shots for direction of movement, distance. One shot might be primarily a close-up, although,

off to one side, we see through a shadowed passageway into a brighter distant element, *as though* in long shot. The next shot *will be a long shot*, or patterns of dark and light. It does not take long to recognize how schematically Eisenstein's early films express his idea that the relation between shots films involves the dialectical synthesis of opposites. The dialectical character of shot relations ensures that the relations between shots possess a dynamic impetus, and relations of the same form make up the motor that drives history itself.

This homology explains why Eisenstein prefaced "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" *(Selected Works/1)* with a quotation from Ruzomofsky's *Theory of Historical Materialism.* Eisenstein begins that article by comparing the ways that the historical dialectic projects itself into consciousness and into art. As "Dramaturgy of Film Form" shows, with its emphasis on the dynamization of perceptions, emotions and ideas, the kinetic character of the shots in Eisenstein's earlier films—which he so often "hyperbolizes" (the word is his) to the point of including implausible background actions to animate his visual forms— develops from Eisenstein's desire to create film constructions with characteristics homologous to those of the historical dialectic.

One can easily create a cartoon of the materialist conception of dialectic on which Eisenstein based his early film theory. The task was to develop an aesthetic theory and practice that conforms to the fundamentals of dialectical materialism. To create film constructions that conform to Marxist principles one must, Eisenstein concluded, create dialectic constructions. And what will clash in the dialectical struggle? One might conclude—and initially Eisenstein did—that the doctrine of materialism implies, for aesthetics, that the effects of artworks depend on the character of their material means. Hence, to create artworks that conform to the principles of dialectical materialism, one must arrange the *material* of the work into patterns of conflict. This, of course, is just a cartoon of the reasoning that led Eisenstein to the particular formulation of aesthetic materialism that his early film theories offers. But I believe that, with the necessary refinements, it could be made to depict the truth of the matter accurately.

However, Eisenstein's conclusions about the implications that Marx's materialism has for aesthetics (conclusions he shared with Constructivist artists) rests on a misunderstanding of the implications that Marx's philosophy has for aesthetics. This misunderstanding lay in a mechanical model of the dialectic, and so a misapplication of concept of materialism. Marx's dialectical materialism implies nothing about the artist's need to

be concerned for the materials of his or her medium; rather it concerns the force that drives history.

Eisenstein's later film theory rejected the mechanical understanding of materialism—as meaning the material of his medium. In its place he formulated a more adequate materialist theory of consciousness and, specifically, of the effects that artworks have on consciousness. Several conjectures have been offered concerning Eisenstein's turn toward investigating inner awareness and toward more complex ideas about consciousness. One conjecture suggests that Eisenstein's shift was influenced by changes in the philosophical climate in the Soviet Union —specifically the rise of Deborin's philosophy to official status. Though there is surely something to this claim, the changes in Eisenstein's theoretical work reflect as much necessities internal to its development as they do the vagaries of Deborin's influence in Soviet philosophy. Eisenstein came to recognize the limitations of positivist psychology and the problems inherent in a mechanistic conception of the dialectic.

IV

But what accounts for the centrality that Marx' theory of labour has in Eisenstein's film theory? Eisenstein's earlier theory and practice depended on the Marxist conception of art as ideology, especially the notion of ideology expounded in *The German Ideology.* There Marx writes: "Consciousness can never be anything than conscious being *(das bewusste Sein)* and human's being is their actual life process." In all ideology, men and their relations appear upside-down, as in a *camera obscura*; this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life processes. As the Enlightenment thinkers did, Marx distinguished between *eidolon* and *ontos on*, separating all that is derivative from whatever is originative, shadow from reality, illusion from truth. He considered that art, along with religion and morality, belongs to ideology. That which is truly originative is what derives from the production of means to satisfy material needs. This idea combined with the legacy that the Romantics left to Marx and which instructed him that nature and human nature are potentially one. It is labour that returns human being to nature and so confers on human being the identity of origin. Art based in the labour process does not veil truth. Nonetheless it prepares the way for the overcoming of art—for the time when the installation of a town water system will be the occasion for self-enjoying production.

The notion of the overcoming of art is everywhere implied in Constructivism. Take, for instance, its famous emphases on integrating art

and life and on using the contemporary technologies of production in artmaking. However, the constructivist tendency of Eisenstein's earlier theory produced a contradiction at the heart of his theoretical endeavours. On one hand, his Formalist convictions led him to affirm the uniqueness of aesthetic experience and the difference between aesthetic forms and the forms of ordinary objects. On the other hand, his commitment to Marx' theory of ideology led him to conceive art as a product that belongs to the long period in human history in which the truth was veiled, a period that would be overcome with the dawning of the communist era. In the communist era all productive activities would become artistic practices. This contradiction—between the belief that artworks provide unique experiences that ordinary objects cannot and the belief that artworks are simply the products of a phase in human history—propelled Eisenstein into an examination of consciousness.

Even this move did not produce a complete rupture in his theoretical endeavours or in his filmmaking, although, before Bordwell's work, this was a commonly held assumption. Eisenstein remained sure that consciousness, as a natural (material) process, operated according to the laws of the dialectic. The attempt to discover a unity that coordinates diverse phenomena and gives life to consciousness. Struggle and conflict, the clash between opposites, produce consciousness. At first, under the influence of the classic Pavlovian theory, Eisenstein restricted his interest to how the more abstract contents of "mind" can emerge from concrete experience. He hoped to remain consistent with a materialism which insisted that the so called "higher faculties of mind" arise from concrete, physical experiences. The pictographic character of Japanese (or Chinese) language provided him with a model for understanding the process. And this is what language remained for Eisenstein: an indication of the powers of the mind and nature of mental processes. The mental processes that make possible the production of meaning follow dialectical laws. Eisenstein concluded, that figures of speech reveal figures of thought. However, his famous comparison of film with language was more indirect than it is commonly taken to be, for his questions about cinema's relation to language really concerned how artistic constructs generate meaning. He seized on the idea that the juxtapositions of concrete terms produce a concept and reveal the existence of an underlying mental process/physical activity which synthesizes the juxtaposed terms.

In time, Eisenstein realized that the mind's capacity to form a general idea for particular representations (or, more generally, from the experience of particulars) was an inadequate basis for his theory of artistic meaning—not the least because Pavlovian reflexology, to which he petitioned for an explanation of this phenomenon, left the mind out of account

entirely. He subsequently adopted a genetic approach to fathoming the mind's construction of meaning. He consulted the work of the psychologists Vygotsky and Luria and, based on what he found, he framed notions that anticipate the recent shift in psychological paradigms from Skinnerian behavioursim to Chomskian cognitive psychology.[5] Like Chomsky, Eisenstein turned to examine the processing that goes on within the black-box that is the mind and conducted that examination by considering what the nature of that processing must be to make possible the production of artistic meaning.

One aspect of Eisenstein's evolution on which Bordwell is enviably precise is that Eisenstein's theory evolved towards a more organic idea of unity that could accommodate and reconcile greater diversity. However, he fails to emphasize sufficiently how much this is involved with an expanded notion of the dialectic. This should have been evident, for in "The Filmic Fourth Dimension" (Selected Work/II) Eisenstein presents a taxonomy of montage types that is based on a dialectic principle of the process (cf. Hegel's Concept) assimilating ever more features of shots (cf. Hegel's Nature) into itself. Furthermore, the principle of organic unity extends, but does not lead Borwell to reject, the transformational principle that forms the enduring centre of Eisenstein's film aesthetics.

The principle of organic unity depends upon the belief that aesthetic relations are "internal relations", relations in which the relata are internally changed by the new relations they assume. As the earlier theory of transformation did, this concept attempts to explains how a natural signifier (either an icon sign or a natural language signifier) takes on new, aesthetic significance when it becomes part of a work of art. The principle of organic unity provides an alternative account of the same phenomenon that Eisenstein's earlier transformational principle also explained. Moreover, the concept of organic unity is consistent with Eisenstein's later, revised, understanding of the dialectic. The idea that new significances emerge through the construction of complex relations echoes Deborin's claim that dialectical advance produces emergent properties.

Because Bordwell fails to trace the evolution of Eisenstein's conception of the dialectic towards a more Hegelian understanding, he does not connect Eisenstein's move towards an more organic conception of the dialectic with his shift towards a more flexible and comprehensive understanding of consciousness than reflexology can provide. The Cinema of Eisenstein doesn't dig far enough into Eisenstein's theory and practice to enucleate the fundamental dialectic principles that constitute its core and that unify Eisenstein's body of work. This failure leaves Bordwell unable to connect Eisenstein's ideas about the sort of mental processing that must

go on within the black box we call the mind with Eisenstein's account of the production of aesthetic effects through the transforming power later critics called irony. Bordwell's failure to see that Eisenstein continued to take a dialectical approach throughout his career seems a particularly American failing, and this failing is actually more conspicuous in *The Cinema of Eisenstein* than it was in "Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift."

If Bordwell misses the unifying principle that subtends Eisenstein's work, he also, according to true dialectical logic, fails to describe the progress of this concept and the way its evolution altered the fundamental nature of Eisenstein's aesthetic ideas and his filmmaking. The ideas of the earlier Eisenstein were tied to a narrowly circumscribed psychology that, in its turn, was tied what amounts virtually to a scientific positivism akin to that of the Wiener Kreis. The aesthetic outlook of the earlier writings is close to Enlightenment ideals. This is shown by Eisenstein's efforts to discover the universal and inviolable laws of art—even, to derive all aesthetics from a single principle as the Enlightenment aesthetician Boileau strove to do—to establish aesthetics as a rigorous and exact science based on rational principles, to understand artworks as Diderot did, as constructs of relations.

Eisenstein's Enlightenment outlook changed. Increasingly, as Bordwell shows, archaic levels of consciousness intrigued Eisenstein and he increasing believed that artworks derive their strength from their close relation to such archaic strata. The impetus for this, as I argued above, derives partly from the logical demands of his theory. Now that, at last, the first two volumes of the British Film Institute collections of Eisenstein's writings are available, we can formulate a more adequate picture of the stages of Eisenstein's progress towards comprehending archaic consciousness—and towards opening his film work towards those states. The interest reveals itself, in incipient form, in the idea propounded in "The Fourth Dimension of Cinema (1929)" *(Selected Works/I)* of the correspondence between visual and aural overtones. He develops it in the ideas on internal monologue in "A Course On Treatment" and "Help Yourself!" As though realizing that his new theories had gone beyond anything that could be explained within a causal/materialist psychology, he used his correspondence with Wilhelm Reich (1934, see *Screen* 22 no.4 (1981): 79-86) to extend his ideas on the topic by developing his famed notion of ecstasy. This notion has now received a fine exegesis from Aumont *(Montage Eisenstein*, pp 58-60). Eisenstein later, in his curious, if not appalling monograph on Walt Disney, defined ectasy as "a sensing and experience of the primal 'omnipotence'—the element of 'coming into being'—the 'plasmaticness' of existence from which everything can arise."

(Eisenstein on Disney.) His thoughts on archaic consciousness were extended by linking the concept of pathos with that of ecstasy (see especially "On the Structure of Things (1939) and "Pathos (1947)" in Herbert Marshall, ed., *Non-Indifferent Nature* and, especially, "Pushkin the Montageur (1939)," [*Selected Works/II*]). He took them farther yet with his idea of the *Urphänomen* of cinema that he sets out in "Laocoön (1937)" *(Selected Works/II)*, a most important text that has now been scrupulously translated and annotated by Glenny and Taylor. In that text, Eisenstein described the *Urphänomen des Films* in a manner satisfactory to the materialists, as the capacity of consciousness "to bring together *two separate phenomena* into a *generalised image*: to merge two *motionless* phases into *an image of movement*" (emphases in original.) But he also went on to relate its dynamic principle to what is "deeper than the prototype of 'form as structure', deeper than that 'structural law'" and even to discuss "the preconditions [which I take to be the mental capacities that make this *Urphänomen* possible]…that underlie the principle of that *Urphänomen*, and for which cinema form in all its ramifications is only the most coherent and naked variant." Eisenstein characterized it as a dynamic principle which finds expression in the "philosophical concept of the dialectical interaction of unity and multiplicity, and which in artistic terms are most tangible in what we have called the *Urphänomen des Films*."

Eisenstein related this principle to Shakespeare and to Joyce, both *Ulysses* and the book that at the time was appearing as *Work in Progress* (i.e., *Finnegan's Wake.*) Not only that, but Eisenstein also tied the *Urphänomen* of film to the dialectical synthesis effected alike by the operations of mind and the evolutionary processes of nature. There he even attributed a role to "*undefined* imageless stages between two reasonable combinations." Eisenstein here used the term "image" to refer to the product of the imagination's synthesizing activity and he believed that an image has already transcended the condition of raw particulars to acquire some general features. Along the same lines, in "Yermolova (1937)" *(Selected Works/II)*, Eisenstein attributed the capacity to produce complex and structured images out of indeterminate units as the work of imagination. Reading Eisenstein on the imagination by this point in the evolution of his thought, one comes to a startling realization of how little his conception of the imagination had to do with that of the great philosopher of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant.

Recent commentators have begun to appreciate Eisenstein's interest in the archaic dimension of human consciousness and several of them have contributed to *Eisenstein Rediscovered.* York University's N.M. Lary, in an interesting article on Eisenstein and Shakespeare offers some insightful and

very suggestive remarks about Eisenstein's notion that "the magic attraction" of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* derives from its ability to penetrate to and allow "the deepest level of protological, sensuous thought come into play." Lary also develops a fascinating capsule description of Eisenstein's commentary on Deval's having caught the primitive, sensuous dimension of Shakespeare's mental capacities in *L'Age de Juliette*. That so much of "Laocoön," a key text for understanding Eisenstein's notions on the archaic dimension of consciousness, is given over to a discussion of Shakespeare makes Lary's comments even more revealing. Edoardo G. Grossi's "Eisenstein as a Theoretician: Preliminary Considerations," depicts Eisenstein's interest in prelogical thought as central to his theoretical project and also sees it as typifying a Russo-Slavic interest in developing a science of semiotics along lines that would unify various fields of research, including psychology, linguistics, ethnography, anthropology, and psychology. Unfortunately Grossi focuses his commentary on Eisenstein's Disney text, showing how it draws on anthropological ideas of animism and totemism. Even I have to acknowledge that *Eisenstein on Disney*, as absurd as the subject may be, is nonetheless a key text if one wishes to discern where Eisenstein carried these ideas. Yuri Tsivian's "Eisenstein and Russian Symbolist Culture" provides, in its insightful analysis of specific passages, a fine example of the way inner monologue structures sequences in Eisenstein's *October*, and evidences the importance that the "archaic stata" of human thought had for the project of Eisentein as a film-maker and a theoretician. (And we can imagine this even more now, with the recently rediscovered typescript for the film, a version never realized).

But Eisenstein's theorization of the archaic dimension of human thought provides only half the story. Just as important was Eisenstein's Mexican adventure. Even the hard-headed Aumont relates the shift in Eisenstein's work to Eisenstein's trip to America. Mexico, then as now, demolishes rosy Enlightenment beliefs and opens one up to far more terrifying realms of experience. This appears, the commentators agree, to have happened to Eisenstein as well.

No artist can function in the realm of the purely rational; an artist must contact the archaic strata of our being. To the chagrin of those who have impeccable taste, the means by which artists get in contact with these lower centres are often provided by the silly syncretist religious claptrap peddled by various woolly-minded occult bands. Eisenstein was too much the Enlightenment philosopher-cum-engineer for that. What his scientism could not withstand, however, was his Mexican experience which opened Eisenstein to strata of our being he had long avoided. After encountering Mexico he could no longer abide the superficialities of his Enlightenment

aesthetics or the superficialities of a positivist psychology. As he opened himself to these terrible realms, to which his mathematical disposition had previously forbidden him access, the classical perfection of his early films gave way to the flawed sublimity of his later works.

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NOTES

1. The kinetic theories presented in the later writings develop themes already present in the earlier. Thus, as I point out below, Eisenstein's interest in kinesis had roots in Marxian theories about the historical dialectic. Furthermore, Eisenstein's early films use movement thematically. In both *Potemkin* and *October*, movement along parallel horizontals and verticals correlate with repression, diagonal movement or movements askew from one another correlate with real (usually progressive activity) and movement in circles correlates with tumult or with uncontrolled activity that has not yet found a direction.

2. Aumont did the valuable service of pointing out that Eisenstein's word for fragment, *kusok*, means something like "lump" or "bit" or "slice." See his *Montage Eisenstein*. (London: British Film Institute, 1987), p. 30.

3. Eisenstein also understood the activity of aesthetic images through the concept of labour as well, by relating their use value to the work they do in transforming the spectator consciousness. Here again, Eisenstein joined Formalist ideas with strict Marxian ideas. The work that images do is to transform consciousness. This is also the function of a work of art in Shklovsky's classic formulation of the Formalist position, "Art as Technique", where art has the function of vivifying awareness.

4. Aumont's *Montage Eisenstein* (pp. 72ff.) makes the same mistake in exactly the converse way. His analysis of montage in *Old and New* isolates a single characteristic of each shot, its dominant.

5. The common claim that Eisenstein expounds the belief that film has logomorphic form—that Eisenstein draws parallels between the shot and a word (or, under another variant, a sentence), between a sequence and sentence (or paragraph)—is false. In his famous dispute with Kuleshov and Pudovkin he pointedly dismissed such models. However, Eisenstein's interest in comparing language and cinema was strong, and some Soviet linguistics have explained it better than any film theorists. Following up on Eisenstein's belief that language and meaning reveal the character of mental processes explains why some contemporary semioticians such as A. Zholkovsky,

working in the wake of Chomsky's transformational grammar, have claimed Eisenstein as one early exponent of an intuitively developed generative grammar.

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Filmmaker Bruce Elder has recently completed the cycle The Book of All the Dead. *He is also the author of* Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture *(1989).*

Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue.* Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, 331 pp.

The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue is the fourth English-language book on the late Russian director, preceded by Peter Green's *Andrei Tarkovsky: The Winding Quest* (1983), Mark Le Fanu's *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* (1987) and the translation of Maya Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry* (1989). It is also by far the most exhaustively researched and critically rigorous. The book can be counted as part of a recent "new auteurism" which differs from the old school in greatly enriched biographical, historical and cultural contextualisation. This trend was, ironically enough, pioneered by Chris Faulkner's avowedly "anti-auteurist" *The Social Cinema of Jean Renoir* (1986).

Vida T. Johnson, a Russian specialist, and Graham Petrie, a film critic whose last book, *History Must Answer to Man* dealt with Hungarian cinema, have divided their study into three parts. Part one provides the book's historical grounding and includes a biographical section ("A Martyred Artist?"), a discussion of Tarkovsky's aesthetics ("Shaping an Aesthetics of Cinema") and concludes with an overview of Tarkovsky's working methods. This section is built up from nearly fifty personal interviews and existing reminiscences from colleagues and peers. Part two, the longest section (122 pages), is a complete film-by-film analysis and treats the films as part of the director's stylistic and thematic development. Each chapter begins with a production history, a summary of its reception at home and abroad, and then moves to a close formal/textual analysis. Part three is an overview of Tarkovsky's stylistic and thematic elements divided up into four subjacent areas: form ("Imprinted Time: The Development of a Style"), iconography ("The Image: Indivisible and Elusive"), theme ("Life as Appearance, Life as a Dream), and Tarkovsky's relationship to other arts ("A Dialogue with Art").

Especially useful for research purposes is an appendix which supplies a detailed film synopsis of every film except *Mirror*. *Mirror* is excluded because of the exhaustive treatment it receives in Part two, although given the notorious complexity of its plot, this is regrettable. From the standpoint of presentation, the authors' decision to use frame enlargements rather than