S.M. Eisenstein
Notes for a *General History of Cinema* (1946-48)

The Heir[1]

Cinema is the heir of all artistic cultures, as is the nation itself that elevated it for the first time in all history – both in estimation and creatively – to the very heights of art, and it is the heir of all cultures of the preceding ages.

Cinema is the art of the USSR *par excellence** [in French], and it is so in a natural and organic way.

It is according to this perspective that the history of cinema must be established.

1. The historical place of cinema in the history of the arts.

Its origin in the ruins of the "second baroque".

Other arts disintegrate to level zero.

"-Isms". Each based on one particular feature[2].

The collapse of bourgeois society.

Cinema begins from level zero.

Technical invention.

The social structure (USSR), seeking a type of mass art *etc*.

The social pre-condition *and [the] technical [one] coincide** [in English].

As a new totality, social and aesthetic.

2. A synthesis of the arts

A real synthesis in the technique of film, and in our aesthetics.

Taking the place of "dreams" about synthesis.

*Recurrence** [in English] of the idea of synthesis from the Greeks (at first morphological in the dithyramb) — liturgies (architecture, organ, stained

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[1] The notes organized by Eisenstein under the title "The Heir" [*Naslednik*] are dated 22 October 1946 (Archival reference: RGALI 1923-2-993, pp. 19-29). In the text, the following symbols are used with the following meaning: () round parentheses are part of the original text; [] square parentheses indicate either integrations of words that are abbreviated, or (if preceded by *) the language in which a particular expression was written (not Russian); *italics* indicate titles of works, or phrases not written in Russian; underlined words indicate phrases or words that Eisenstein himself underlined, or circled, or inscribed within a square.

[2] The term "-isms" refers to the various avant-gardes that in the 1910s and 1920s designated themselves with terms ending invariably with "-ism": Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Surrealism... In 1925, El Lissitzky published together with Hans Arp a book entitled *Die Kunstismen* (Rentsch, Zürich-München-Leipzig 1925), which presented, through a montage of definitions given by the artists themselves and images of their most emblematic works, the main avant-garde tendencies in the visual arts between 1914 and 1924 under the following headings (in German): Abstraktivismus, Dadaismus, Expressionismus, Futurismus, Kompressionismus, Konstruktivismus, Kubismus, Neoplastizismus, Purismus, Simultanismus, Suprematismus, Verismus.

glass, *plain chant** [in English], the merging of the audience with the action) — Diderot — Wagner —Scriabin — we.

In which stages do the tendencies towards synthesis arise?

In the periods of social unification.

Unity (*par exemple** [in French], the unity of Catholicism and the liturgy).

Or in the discord of unity, as a protest-dream (*par exemple** [in French], Scriabin).

Vérifier * [in French: *verify*]: the unity of Bismarckism and Wagner (*who starts with the revolutionary unity of 1848** [in English] and ends with *Parsifal*).

The aesthetics of Lipps.

La Nuance à Diderot* [in French] and the French Revolution.

The removal of contradictions

Where has it ever been more so than in our case?

Universal unity.

"Workers of the world…"

Annihilation of exploitation (XVIIth Congress)

Annihilation of national enslavement:

a community of nations *as basis for** [in English] a community of the arts!

The idea of synthesis as a *revival** [in English] of synchretism.

Hostility towards synthesis in periods of social breakdown — Nordau *against** [in English] Wagner.

A synthesis not of the mechanical copresence in pure form (that was the limit of the synthetic possibilities of the theatre).

But each [art] is embedded in a qualitatively new way, such that it cannot be organically taken out.

A further "paragraph-by-paragraph" analysis of the fate of each art and of its new quality <u>within</u> the synthesis.

The Phenomenon of Cinema

(*History of the phenomenon*)* [in English]

"Frames" and <u>the method of cinema</u>.

From the <u>mosaic</u> to <u>pointillism</u>.

A dynamic juxtaposition instead of mixing together.

Daumier and Tintoretto in *micro** [in English].

Goya, *El Maragato* in *macro* [in English][3].

Hogarth, *Mariage à la mode** [in French] in scenes.

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[3] The title *El Maragato* refers to the cycle of six panels by Francisco de Goya depicting the capture of the dreaded Spanish bandit El Maragato, in 1806, by the humble monk Pedro de Zaldivia.
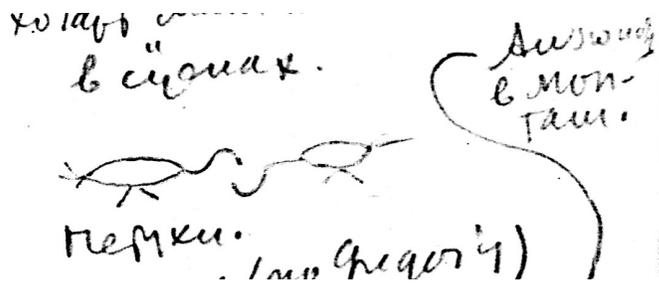
Cockerels
Egyptians (according to Gregor).

Busch and *comic strip** [in English]. *Auswuchs** [in German: *growth*]
in montage.

3. The Method of Cinema
Montage and counterpoint.
The ultimate exposure of the fundamental patterns of being.
Montage as a unity in diversity.
The universality of method:
Through art.
Through sociology (the national question and federalism).
Through science (the truth according to Marx).
Through all phenomena of nature (biology: worms).
Through pre-science: Osiris, Bacchus, Phoenix — deconstruction and
reconstitution on a *new level** [in English].
Montage as a purposeful (tendentious), socially conditioned,
ideologically tendentious reconstruction of reality in images.
(To be shown in the history of oscillation between poles: the pole of
reconstruction and the pole of reflection. The strengthening and the
weakening of [the two tendencies]: the clearness of montage and the
bareness [of reality]).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography *and the urge** [in English] to record a phenomenon.
Primärer* [in German: primary] eideticism— *lost paradise** [in
English] of the eideticism with the awakening of consciousness — the
urge* [in English] towards the substitution for the loss *through a
mechanical device (great!!!)** [in English].
The camera and the retina of the eye: the camera — a portrait of the
eye (*The Clansmen*!).

CINEMA

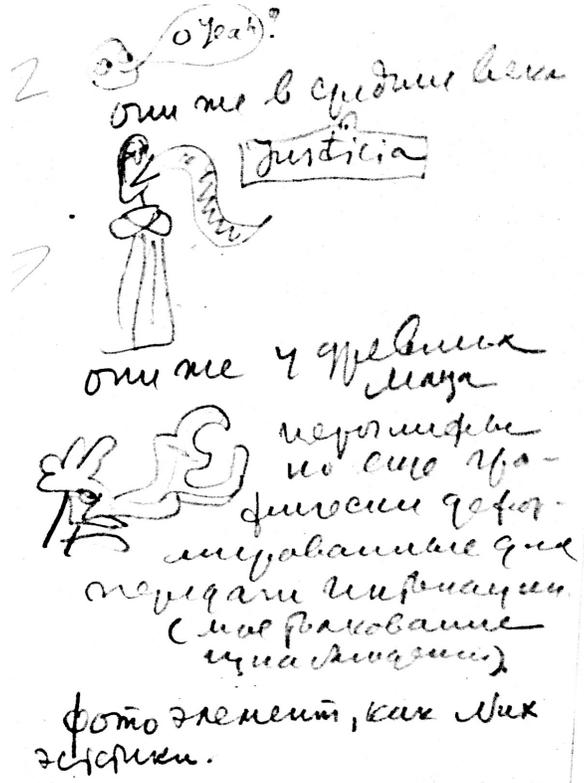**Cinema *and the urge** [in English] to record a process.**
All cine-toys.

The reason behind doll-automatons (the immortalized actor), mechanical miniature theatres etc., wind-up dolls.

SOUND CINEMA

Sound cinema *and the urge** [in English] to record sound processes.
Balloons* [in English] in comic drawings.

The same in the middle ages. Justicia [*sic*]
The same with the ancient Maya.
Hieroglyphs, but also graphically deformed for the transmission of intonation (my interpretation from observations).
Photo-element as *nux** [in Latin: *nucleus*] of aesthetics.

CHRONICLE

If we follow along the line of the *urge** [in English] to secure phenomena (chronicle, photography, document), impressions (*travelog*[ue]) * [in English].
"Objectively": Homer

Later: tendentiously (*par exemple** [in French], the figures of pharaohs and ordinary mortals already in disproportion).
Later: emotionally.
The Tale of Igor's Campaign.
Les désastres de la guerre, Callot
(as a <u>sequential</u> newsreel film).
Later: patheticized.
Los Desastres de la Guerra, Goya
(as non-sequential patheticized impressions)
Later: dramatized, i.e., by the means of <u>staged</u> delivery, being true to the essential facts.
Mysteries
poeticized — the chronicles of Shakespeare.
("Garbling" — for ex., *The Horrors of Kalish*, shot in the courtyard of the Nirensee Building, 1914).

ANIMATION

I. As *nec plus ultra** [in Latin] of the graphic-stroke tendency
II. as *Auslauf** [in German: *development*] of the tendency of the "animal epos":

I. <u>Petroglyphic [drawings]</u>.
Linear woodcuts of the early Renaissance.
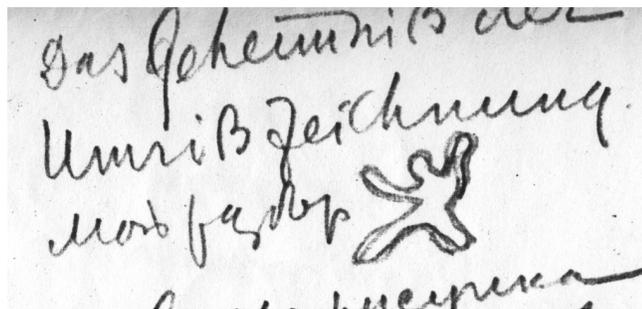Linear engravings of the Japanese.
Tolstoy (19th c.)
Graphics *der Jahrhundertwende** [in German: *of the turn of the century*]:
Olaf Gulbransson
Beardsley
*Das Geheimnis der Umrisszeichnung** [in German: *The Secret of the Contour*] - my analysis

All types of line drawing as derivatives from this [secret] with a weakening *des primären dynamischen Effektes** [in German: *of the primary dynamic effect*] and with an increase of new attendant circumstances (as with eideticism — the more photographism declines, the more an identifiable *Gestalt*-ship increases).

An "ossification" in the rectilinear elements. Breaks of contour, ruptures, etc. New ways of dynamic effect.

Eugène D'Ors on Rembrandt and Watteau — a "flickering" fabric of small strokes, etc.

II. <u>The animal epos</u>.
Disney —
              Andersen —
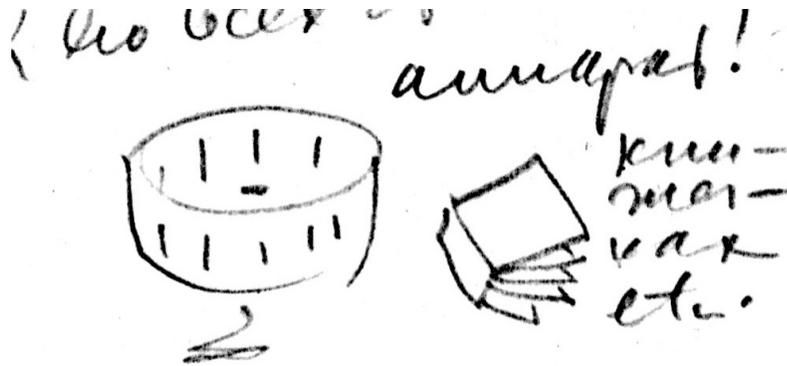   Lafontaine —
                        Reynard the Fox —
Aesop —
          *Totemism** [in English in the text]

(*d'après ce que j'ai fait au sujet de Disney* 1940-1941) * [in French: *according to what I have done on Disney*]

NB. *We duly put him in the beginning, for this kind of drawing is primär** [in English and German: *primary*:] in the visual arts. And drawn cinema precedes other types

(on all these apparatuses! booklets, etc.)

Then here and in the remnants of the thematics— in the animal epos and so on — *basic laws** [in English] of visual impact, of mythological remnants etc.