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OCTOBER

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Sergei Eisenstein

Annette Michelson

Yvonne Rainer

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe

and John Johnston

Rosalind Krauss

Carl Andre and

Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe

Notes for a Film of Capital

Reading Eisenstein Reading Capital

Film About a Woman Who . . .

E.J.M. (1830-1904)

Gravity's Rainbow and

the Spiral Jetty (Part 2)

Jasper Johns: The Functions of Irony

Commodity and Contradiction

or Contradiction as Commodity

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Hans Magnus Enzensberger's poem: *E.J.M. (1830-1904)* is published with the kind permission of Urizen Books, Inc., New York.

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CARL ANDRE is a sculptor whose work has been widely shown throughout the western world. Retrospective exhibitions of Andre's work were held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1970 and at the Kunsthalle in Berne in 1975.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN began to make notes for his project of a film of *Capital* in 1928, while in the process of editing *October*. The English translation by Maciej Sliwowski, Jay Leyda and Annette Michelson was made from the text established by Naum Kleiman, Curator of the Eisenstein Museum in Moscow and published in 1973 in *Ikusstvo Kino*.

HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER's poem about Marey is one of a collection of thirty-seven poetic portraits entitled *Mausoleum*, to be published later this year by Urizen Press, New York. It has been translated by JOACHIM NEUGROSCHER, himself a poet and co-editor of the journal *Extensions*.

JOHN JOHNSTON is a graduate student in Columbia University's Department of Literature.

YVONNE RAINER, choreographer and film-maker, is the author of a volume of documentation of her performances entitled *Work, 1961-73*, which was co-published by the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, and the New York University Press, New York, in 1974. Her new film *Kristina Talking Pictures*, was shown for the first time at the Edinburgh Festival in August of this year.

Notes for a Film
of *Capital*

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

TRANSLATED BY MACIEJ SLIWOWSKI, JAY LEYDA, AND ANNETTE MICHELSON

October 12, 1927.

It's settled: we're going to film *CAPITAL*, on Marx's scenario—the only logical solution.

N.B. Additions . . . those are clips pasted to the wall of montage.¹

October 13, 1927.

. . . To extend the line (and to explicate it, step by step) of dialectical development in my work. Let us recall:

1. **STRIKE.** The order—educational and methodological film on the methods and processes of class and of underground work. Whence—serial film structure and detachment from a specific place (in the project there's a whole series of escapes, prison life, rebellion, body-searches, *etc.*).

2. **POTEMKIN.** I'm emphasizing, just as the film's direction does, the dialectical result: a pathos of the ordinary and the psychologically concrete: tarpaulin: mourning—*par excellence*. "Suddenly" . . .² the abstract emotion of the lions:³ a [leap] from representation of ordinary life to abstract and generalized imagery.

3. **OCTOBER** Harnessed lions—speeches of Mensheviks, the bicycles, (N.B. the second derived from the car and motorcycle races that were cut into the mowing sequence of our *GENERAL*) led to a complete departure from the factual and anecdotal—the events of *OCTOBER* (in that section) are accepted, **not as**

1. The image is that of the news bulletin affixed to walls of factories and other public places.

2. "Suddenly . . .": the single word of the intertitle immediately preceding the opening shot of that section of Eisenstein's *Potemkin* known as "the Odessa Steps sequence."

3. The sequence in *October* to which Eisenstein here refers is described by him as follows in the essay "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in *Film Form, Essays in Film Theory*, edited and translated by Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt Brace and World, Inc.: "In the thunder of the *Potemkin*'s guns, a marble lion leaps up, in protest against the blood-shed on the Odessa steps. Composed of three shots of three stationary marble lions at the Aluoka Palace in the Crimea: a sleeping lion, an awakening lion, a rising lion. The effect is achieved by a correct calculation of the length of the second shot. Its superimposition on the first shot produces the first action. This establishes time to impress the second position on the mind. Superimposition of the third position on the second produces the second action: the lion finally rises."

events, but as the conclusion of a series of theses; not the fact that the Mensheviks are 'singing' while the battle is in progress (a purely cinematic method of intercutting), but the historical nearsightedness of Menshevism. Not that a sailor finds himself in the bedroom of A[lexandra] F[yodorovna], but rather the "execution of the petite bourgeoisie and that which it represents," *etc.* Not an anecdote about the Wild Division, but "methodology, of propaganda." "In God's Name" becomes a treatise on deity.

After the drama, poem, ballad in film, *OCTOBER* presents a new form of cinema: a collection of essays on a series of themes which constitute *OCTOBER*. Assuming that in any film work, certain salient phrases are given importance, the form of a **discursive** film provides, apart from its unique renewal of strategies, their rationalization which takes these strategies into account. Here's a point of contact already with completely new film perspectives and with the glimmers of possibilities to be realized in *CAPITAL*, a new work on a libretto by Karl Marx. A film treatise.

Nov. 4, evening.

In America even cemeteries are private. 100% Competition. Bribing of doctors, *etc.* The dying receive prospectuses: "Only with us will you find eternal peace in the shade of trees and the murmur of streams," *etc.* (For *C[APITAL]*.)



Stills from *STRIKE*, 1924

Nov. 23, 1927.

We must consider as a basic principle of film-making that which is all-penetrating, down to the smallest detail, a principle no less for the purely technical elements of the general, overall shape.

Such was the case for POTEMKIN in the sequence of double attack "ta-ra" in which whole emotional structures as well as 'untrimmed' montage pieces redoubled themselves in intensity. (This is all explained in detail somewhere.) An example of the first type: the waiting scene on the quarterdeck and the scene when the ship awaits the encounter with the fleet.

The de-anecdotalization principle is (clearly) fundamental to OCTOBER. The working theory of 'overtones'⁴ can literally be reduced to a single proposition. Didactically, in explaining the principles of OCTOBER, it's useful and essential, as a development of those principles, to explain the groping stage as well; for OCTOBER remains essentially a model of a two-level solution: de-anecdotalization is, in fact, a 'fragment of tomorrow', that is, the premise of the work to follow: C[APITAL].

That is, the very principle of logical reduction *ad limitum* of one fundamental detail.

N.B. Explain this in detail in connection with theme, treatment, etc.

Here are Pudovkin's observations on the technique and 'mastery' of OC-



TOBER. Thus: the "non-ordinary, life-like details" (as he puts it), manipulation of detail in montage; *i.e.*: the door opens before Kerensky "eight" times. (In untrimmed shots.)⁵

Together with the 'profit' of this device, he also cites the distributor's trick of 'getting' an audience—the so-called Boitler⁶ trick: *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* fills the cash register for a month; next month [receipts] decline. He holds the film in an almost empty house for a third month, and the audience then starts to pour in again for six consecutive months.

He describes, in similar terms, his perception (or more exactly—the audience's subconscious perception): a normal perception occurs, and then there's a break in the perception of something outside the logic of the ordinary. This moment is held, and then, at a given moment, a restructuring of ordinary perception takes place—and this is particularly powerful in its effect. *Voyez!* From a technical cut, through social interpretation, to the distribution trick, everything's part of the same. *Fabelhaft!*

For C[APITAL], a puppet theater must be shot, but only (God help us!) in

4. The use of the notion of the overtone develops at a particular stage in the extension and radicalization of Eisenstein's theory and practice of montage, that of work on *The General Line* (retitled *The old and the New*), described in Eisenstein's essay, "The Filmic Fourth Dimension" as "the first film edited on the principle of the visual overtone. The montage of *Old and New* is constructed with this particular method. This montage is built, not on particular dominants, but takes as its guide the total stimulation through all stimuli. That is the original montage complex within the shot, arising from the collision and combination of the individual stimuli inherent in it.

"These stimuli are heterogeneous as regards their 'external natures,' but their reflex-physiological essence binds them together in an iron unity. Physiological in so far as they are 'psychic' in perception, this is merely the physiological process of a *higher nervous activity*.

"In this way, behind the general indication of the shot, the physiological summary of its vibrations as a *whole*, as a complex unity of the manifestations of all its stimuli, is present. This is the peculiar 'feeling' of the shot, produced by the shot as a whole. . . . As in that music which builds its works on a two-fold use of overtones." (The musical references cited elsewhere in this same text are to Debussy and Scriabin.)

5. Pudovkin is citing a fragment of a major sequence in Eisenstein's *October*, known as "The Ascent of Kerensky" in which the shape and dynamics of the Menshevik leader's career are epitomized. This sequence, brilliant in its use of temporal and spatial distension, constitutes a visual trope of extreme irony, sharply comic in effect. Eisenstein will refer to it from time to time in these journal entries. Here is his description of it, drawn from "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," as an example of intellectual cinema: ". . . Kerensky's rise to power and dictatorship after July uprising of 1917. A comic effect was gained by sub-titles indicating regular ascending ranks ("Dictator"—"Generalissimo"—"Minister of Navy—and of Army"—*etc.*) climbing higher and higher, cut into five or six shots of Kerensky, climbing the stairs of the Winter Palace, all with exactly the same pace. Here a conflict between the flummery of the ascending ranks and the 'hero's' trotting up the same unchanging flight of stairs yields an intellectual result: Kerensky's essential nonentity is shown satirically. We have the counterpoint of a literally expressed conventional idea with the pictured action of a particular person who is unequal to his swiftly increasing duties. The incongruence of these two factors results in the spectator's purely intellectual decision at the expense of this particular person. Intellectual dynamisation."

6. Mikhail Boitler was a former comic film actor, strongly influenced by Chaplin. Forced into retirement by the importation of Chaplin's films into the Soviet Union, he became director of a theatre specializing in the presentation of American films.

the manner which first comes to mind (as in a Daumier lithograph: Louis Philippe and the parliament—*Le capitaliste et ses jouets*). Exclusively through parallelism or a device that fits the circumstances.

Jan. 2, 1928.

For CAPITAL. Stock exchange to be rendered not as 'a Stock Exchange' (MABUSE, ST. PETERSBURG), but as thousands of 'tiny details'. Like a genre painting. For this, see Zola (*L'argent*). *Curé*—the main 'broker' for the whole area. The concierge—the negotiator of loans. The pressure of concierges like these in the problem of the Sov[iet] Union's acknowledgement of debts.

The very same audience held together by a patriotic theme. The idea of Revenge is Krupp's idea through the newspaper, *Le Figaro*, financed by him. In general, France *ausschlaggebend* for petit-bourgeois, philistine material. (On Krupp—following the lecture on French press by Charles Rappoport reported in *Vecherka*.⁷)

March 8.

Yesterday thought a lot about CAPITAL. About the structure of the work which will derive from the methodology of film-word, film-image, film-phrase, as now discovered (after the sequence of "the gods").

The working draft.

Take a trivial progressive chain of development of some action . . . For instance: one day in a man's life. *Minutieusement* set forth as an outline which makes us aware of departure from it. For that purpose only. Only as the critique of the development of associative order of social conventions, generalizations and theses of CAPITAL.

Generalizations, from given cases to ideas (this will be completely primitive, especially if we move in a line from bread shortages to the grain shortage [and] the mechanics of speculation. And here, from a button to the theme of overproduction, but more clearly and neatly.)

In Joyce's ULYSSES there is a remarkable chapter of this kind, written in the manner of a scholastic catechism. Questions are asked and answers given.

The subject of the questions is how to light a Bunsen burner.

The answers, however, are metaphysical. (Read this chapter. It might be methodologically useful.) Thanks to Ivy Valterovna Litvinova.

March 9, 1928.

Yesterday's writing for CAPITAL very good. Still must find an adequate triviality for the 'spinal' theme.

Dreams about emperor. *Le Figaro* describes an interesting episode clearly illustrating the way in which the French bourgeoisie yearns for a king. The

7. VECHERNAYA MOSKVA, an evening newspaper.

newspaper draws a striking picture of the "evening ball of the First Empire" organized a few weeks ago at Baron Pichon's splendid residence on the *Quai d'Anjou*. Guns of Austerlitz roared, attracting mobs of passers-by. Torches burned. Antique coaches, conveying famous historic personalities, rolled up the driveway. At nine in the evening Napoleon arrived with his entourage. He was met in the court by the imperial guard. The Austrian envoy presented himself. Napoleon and his spouse ascended the stairs. The ball, which was also attended by Prince Joachim Murat, the Count and Countess de Massa, Albufer and other historic figures, began. The newspaper mentions bitterly that the splendor of that evening was all a show, and that the Emperor and his suite were only Pichon's friends and acquaintances in make-up. (*Vecherka*, March 8, 1928.)

March 17, 1928.

On the level of 'historical materialism', current equivalents of historical turning points with a contemporary orientation must be sought. In *CAPITAL*, for example, the themes of textile machines and machine-wreckers should collide: electric streetcar in Shanghai and thousands of coolies thereby deprived of bread, lying down on the tracks—to die.

On deity: Agha Khan—irreplaceable material—cynicism of shamanism carried to the extreme. God—a graduate of Oxford University. Playing rugby and ping-pong and accepting the prayers of the faithful. And in the background, adding machines click away in 'divine' bookkeeping, entering sacrifices and donations. The best exposure of the theme of clergy and cult.

An economic invasion and construction of new cities. *Hansa-Bund*. To be interestingly demonstrated, perhaps, through the *makhnovshchina* episode.⁸ Guliai-Pole, a lost hole, setting up jewelry stores within a week, hiding the filth of its streets with carpets and becoming, if not a little Paris, then at least a miniature Vienna. Influx of emigrants and predatory elements (from the book on Makhno). Cortezian and Pissarresque soldiery⁹ is also linked. (Or for conveying the idea from another point of view.)

March 24, 1928.

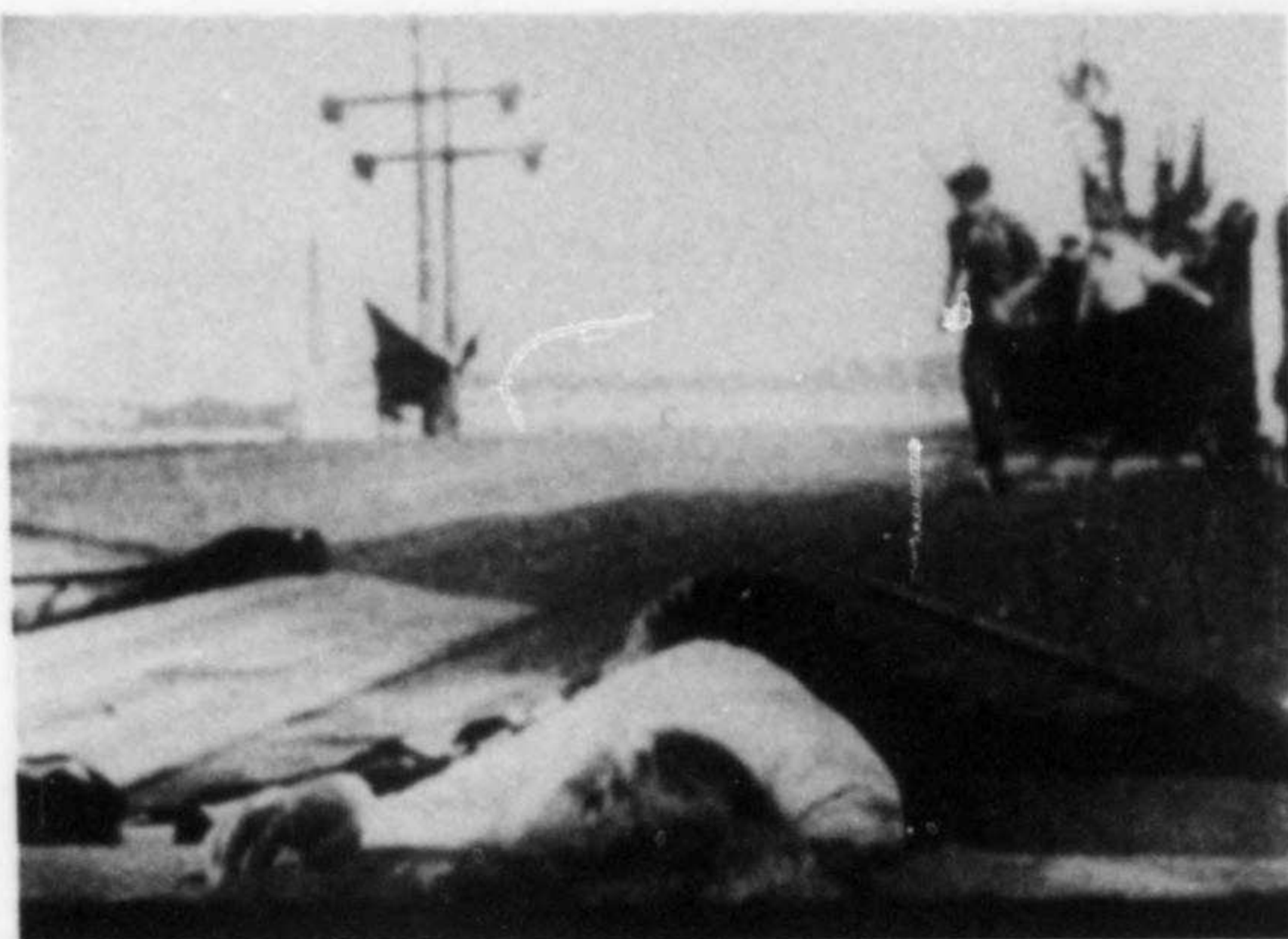
A great episode, from Paris. A war victim. Legless man on a cart commits suicide—he throws himself into the water. Told by Max,¹⁰ as recounted by some newspaper.

8. The reference is to the counter-revolutionary episodes in the Ukraine under the leadership of Makhno.

9. This would indicate an already existing interest in Eisenstein's part in the history of the Mexican Conquest. This was to flower two years later in the major, uncompleted film project known as *Che Viva Mexico*, undertaken after Eisenstein's sojourn in Hollywood and preceding his return, in 1931, to the Soviet Union.

10. Maxim Straukh, the actor, a childhood friend and frequent co-worker. Their collaboration began at the time of Eisenstein's early theatrical productions for the Proletkult Theater.

The bridge sequence from OCTOBER
(continues through page 16)



The most important thing 'in life' now is to draw **conclusions** from formal aspects of OCTOBER.

It is very interesting that "gods" and "Kerensky's ascent" are structurally one and the same: the latter—identity of fragments and semantic *crescendo* of the intertitles; and the first—identity (implied) of the intertitles "God," "God," "God," and semantic *diminuendo* from the material. Series of meanings. These are surely some kind of first indications of the method's devices. It is interesting that these things can have no existence outside the meaning, the theme (unlike, for instance, the lifting 'bridge' which can function *überhaupt*). An abstract formal experiment is **inconceivable** here. As in montage in general.

Experiment external to the thesis is impossible. (Take this into consideration.)

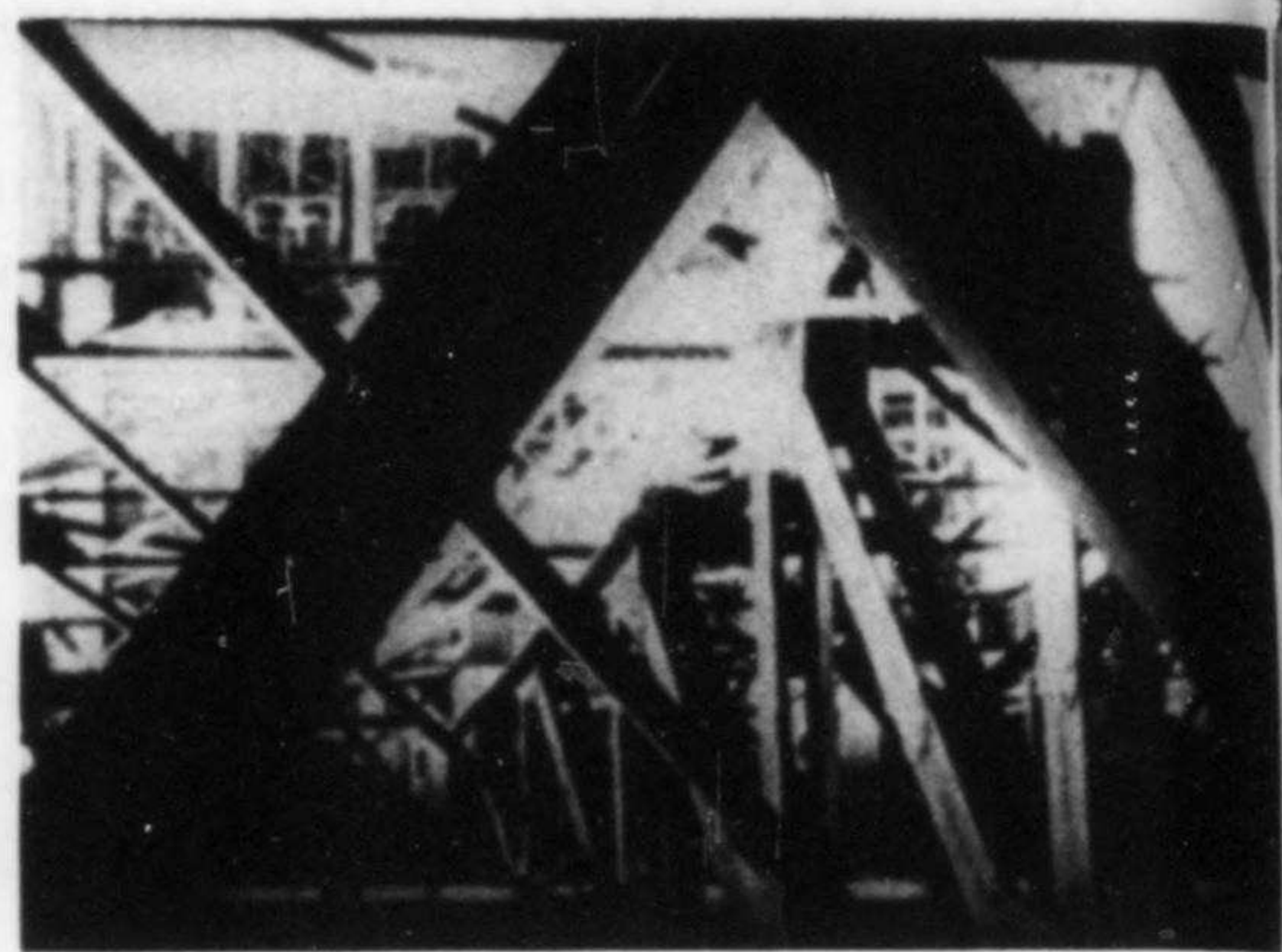
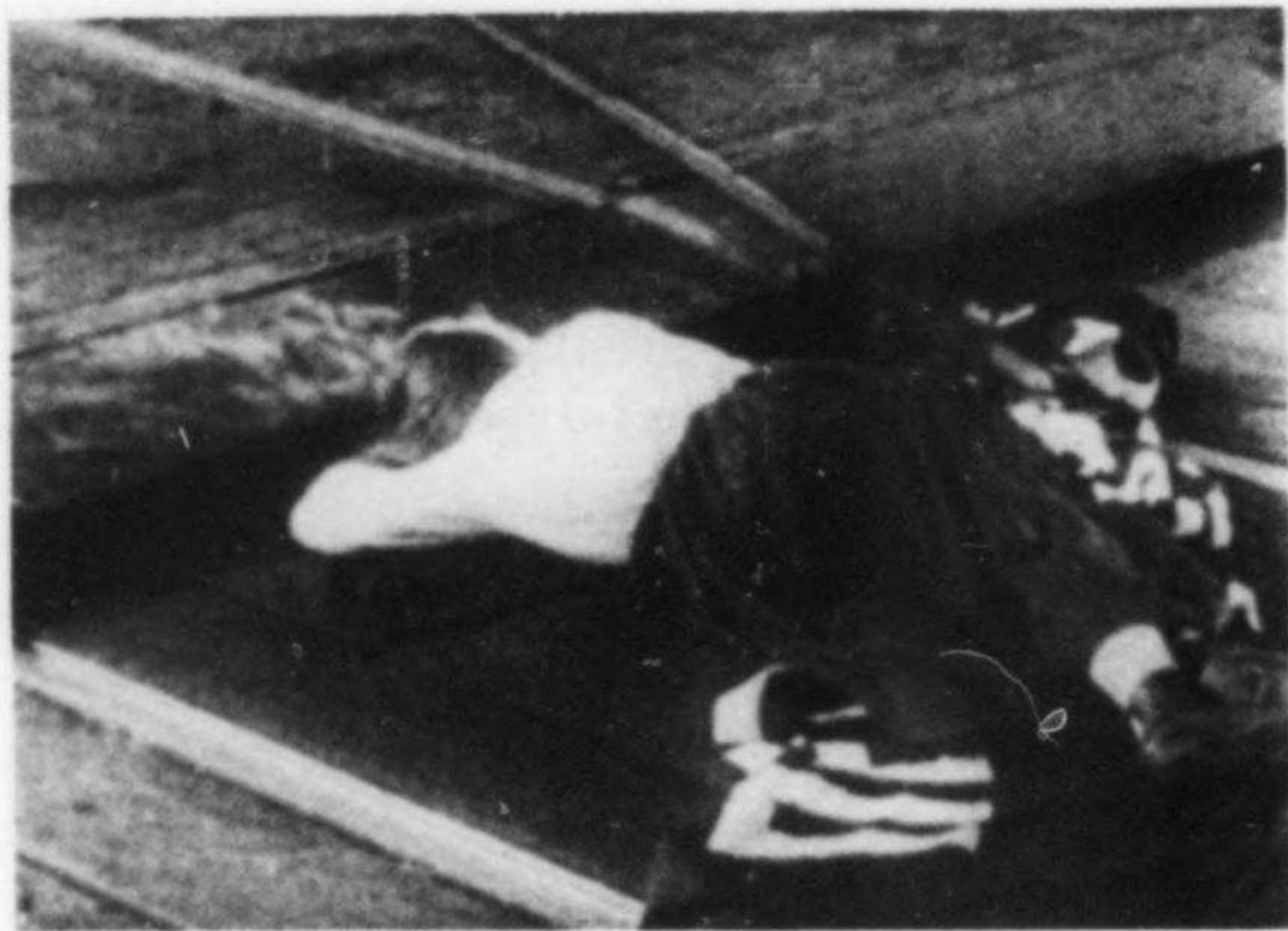
March 31, 1928. 1 a.m.

School and church are obligatory in CAPITAL. *Voyez Barbusse: Faits divers, l'Instituteur*. On the whole, an amazing book. I am ready to take back all [my] wicked remarks on Barbusse. Read for three hours on end, and at night, too. A lot of things indispensable for CAPITAL.

The form of *faits divers* or collections of short film-essays is fully appropriate for replacement of 'whole' works . . . Something that's in STRIKE has the vats episode as a wedging of pure American comedy into a great, dark work. I remember how I reasoned that after four dark sections [the audience] would be tired and one would have to offer a comic *détention des nerfs* [sic] to intensify perception of the final sections.

April 2-3, 1928, night.

Somewhere in the West. A factory where it is possible to pinch parts and tools. No search of workers made. Instead, the exit gate is a **magnetic** check point. No comment needed. (Max read this somewhere. Will go into CAPITAL.)



April 4, 1928.

"... The ironic part outweighs the pathetic one. The German romantics already knew the advantage of irony over pathos. For purposes of intensification, **pathos had to be made fantastic and hyperbolic**. The living historical material did not allow that, however. The picture therefore revealed a split." (Leningrad newspaper *Kino*, discussion on **OCTOBER**, article by M. Bleiman.)

In connection with **CAPITAL**, 'stimuli', that is, suggestive materials, should be introduced. So, for instance, that excerpt from Bleiman suggests elements for pathos in **CAPITAL** (Say, for the last 'chapter'—dialectical method in practical class struggle).

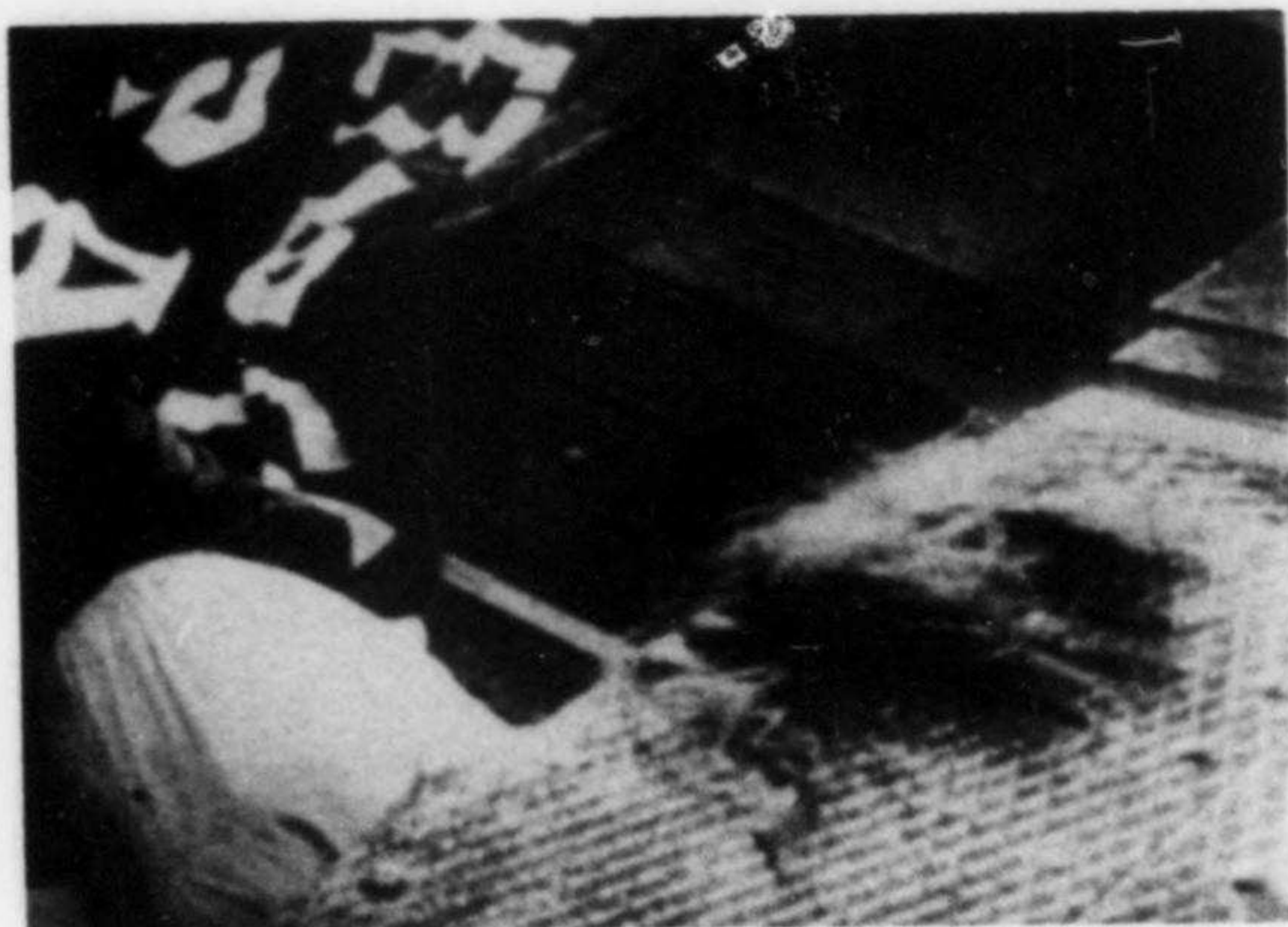
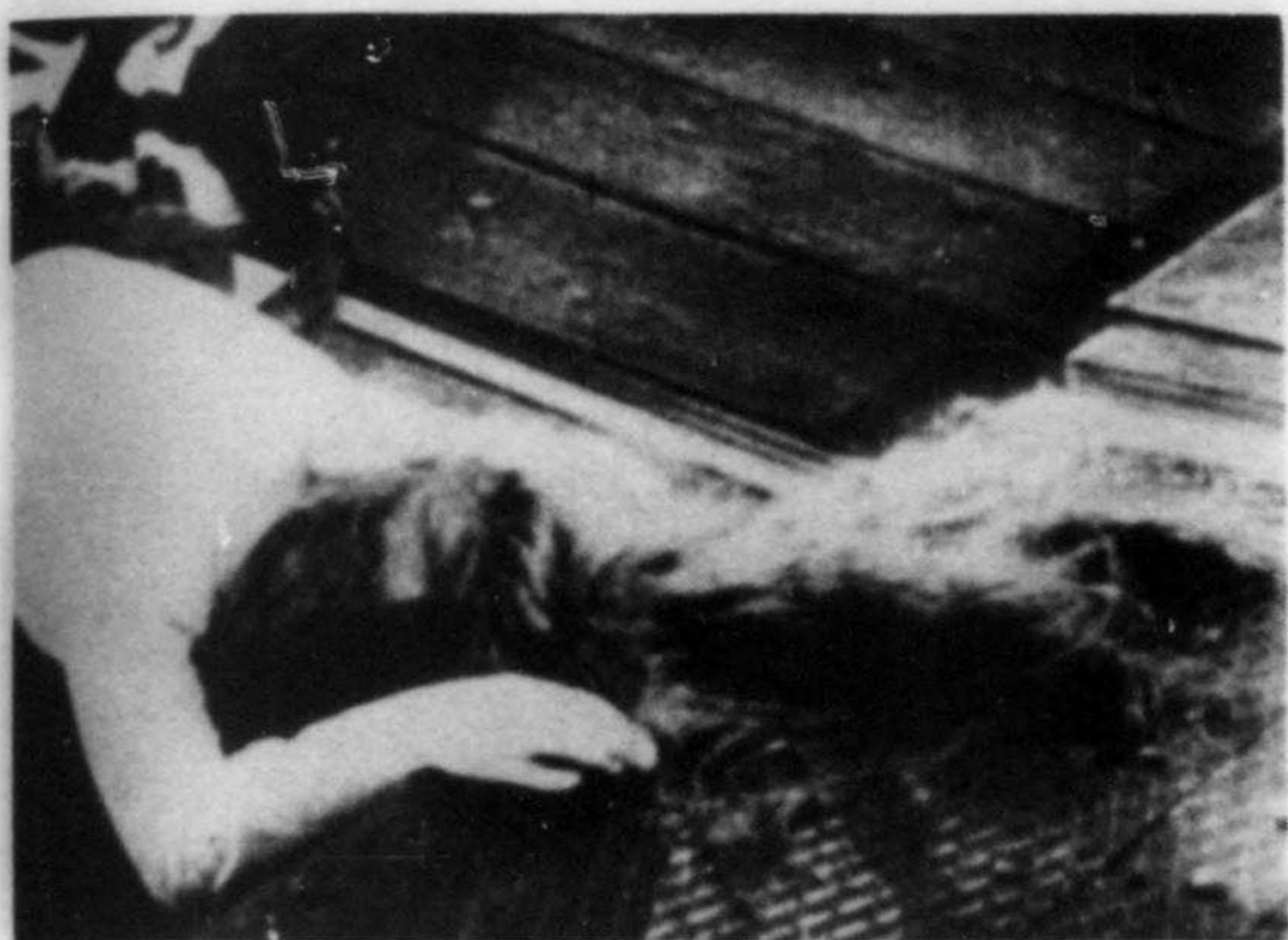
In those 'great days' I noted on a scrap of paper that in the new cinema, the established place of eternal themes (academic themes of **LOVE AND DUTY**, **FATHERS AND SONS**, **TRIUMPH OF VIRTUES**, *etc.*) will be taken by a series of pictures on the subjects of 'basic methods'. The content of **CAPITAL** (its aim) is now formulated: **to teach the worker to think dialectically**.

To show the **method** of dialectics. This would mean (roughly) five-nonfigurative chapters. (Or six, seven, *etc.*) Dialectical analysis of historical events. Dialectics in scientific problems. Dialectics of class struggle (the last chapter).

"An analysis of a centimeter of silk stocking." (About the silk stocking as such, Grisha¹¹ copied out from somewhere—the silk manufacturers' fight for the short skirt. I added the competitors—the textile masters' for long skirts. Morality. Clergy, *etc.*)

Still very complicated to think 'somehow' in 'extra-thematic' imagery. But no problem . . . *ça viendra!*

11. G.V. Alexandrov, friend and collaborator of Eisenstein, listed as co-scenarist for *October*, *The General Line* and *Que Viva Mexico*. Their collaboration ceased after their return to the Soviet Union from the United States, and Alexandrov turned to the direction of film, specializing in comedy.



It's very interesting—about size. Perfectly new inter-relation between quantity and diversity of material in relation to the footage. "Overloading of the footage." (In answer to Grisha's apprehension—"What? China and America, too?" *etc., etc.*) The same in B. Gusman's text:

"The nature of cinematic language is such that effective presentation of a brief and consequently **insignificant** event requires, more than in any other art form, a great number of visual devices. **What in literature can be indicated by a few words, is conveyed on screen by a whole series of scenes and sometimes, even, of episodes, occupying a large section of the picture.** That's why **BATTLESHIP "POTEMKIN"** makes a much greater impression than **OCTOBER** . . . Indeed, what lingers in one's memory after seeing **OCTOBER**? One should probably acknowledge the depiction of the raising of the bridge as one of the most brilliant passages. Why? Because film language is completely revealed. And, to be exact, because the space Eisenstein allots to the showing of the bridges is disproportionately large (and Eisenstein could not have done otherwise, the very essence of cinema demanded it), he lacks footage to 'cinematize' the entirety of the October Revolution's series of extremely significant and vital aspects."

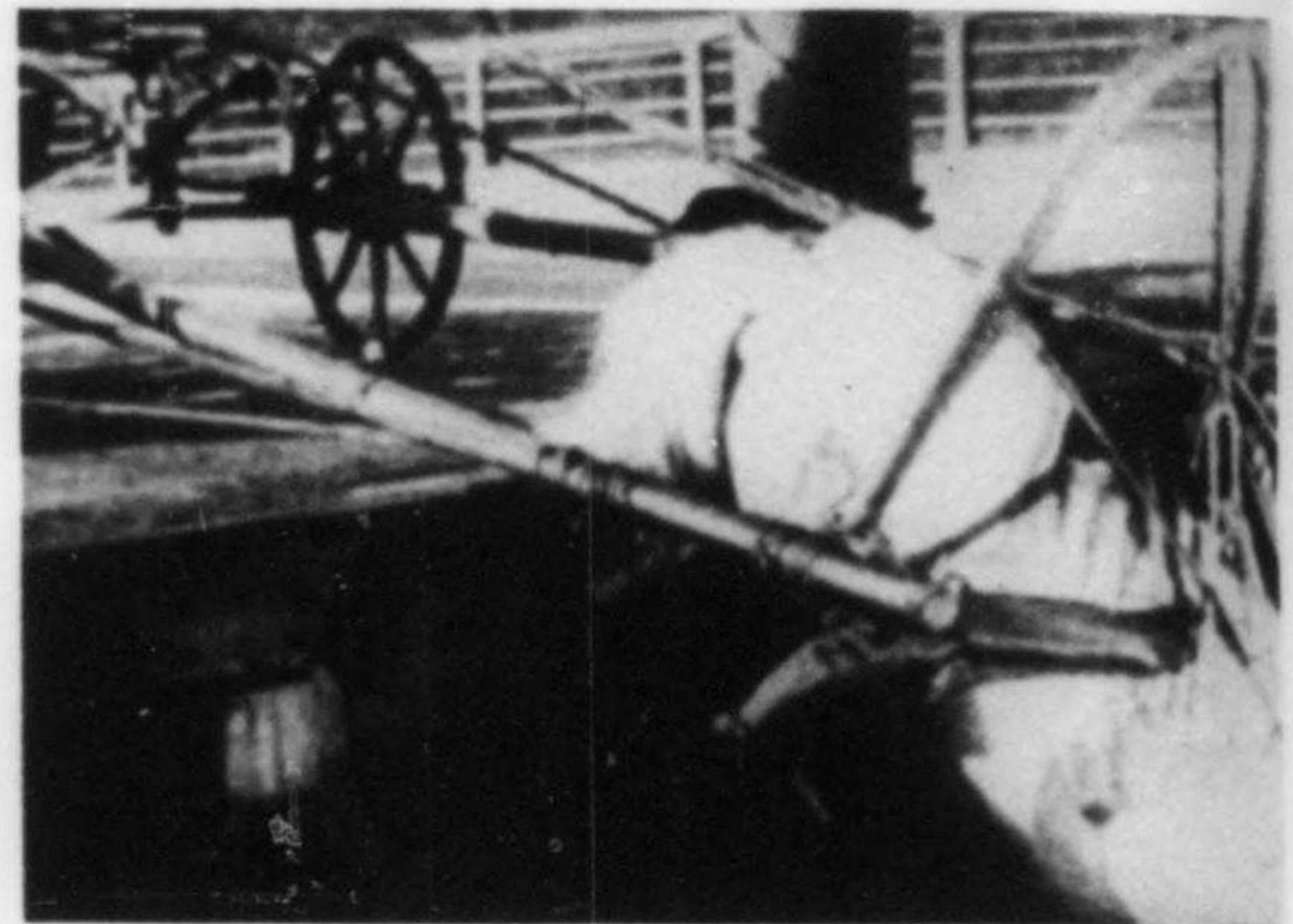
That statement about 'kilo'-footage of forceful representation of the trivial event is absolutely right. One might call them factual **units**. This is fully applicable to the **methods** of 'yesterday's' cinema.

From the point of view of **language!!** We are, after all, primarily after **economy of means** (by no means beyond our means). Where, if not in **directness**, shall we find it?)

Footage goes into effective presentation of **event unit**. Just as it will be used for disclosure ('giving shape') of the unit of **thought**. Which in terms of 'plot' corresponds to an event as unit in old cinema.

If **POTEMKIN** . . . was allowed one half or one whole event to each part (*i.e.*, mourning—meeting, flag; '*paskha*'¹²—the steps; pause—tarpaulin—mutiny,

12. A traditional Easter delicacy in the form of a cake.



etc.), then, for this project, **one idea** (and this means 'impressing', not 'chewing over' the event *entre parenthèses*—'mourning', 'pause', 'battle readiness', 'panic', *etc.*) to each part as there is one feeling to one whole or one half part, is just fine. The difference lies in the attractions¹³ directed towards stimulating one concept, condensed (in this case) in terms of class, and the attractions directed towards arousing one's class-oriented emotion, (as in the previous case).

The difference (confusing in a comparison) is that of the **area** in which the attractions (that is, the montage elements) must produce the given **single effect**.

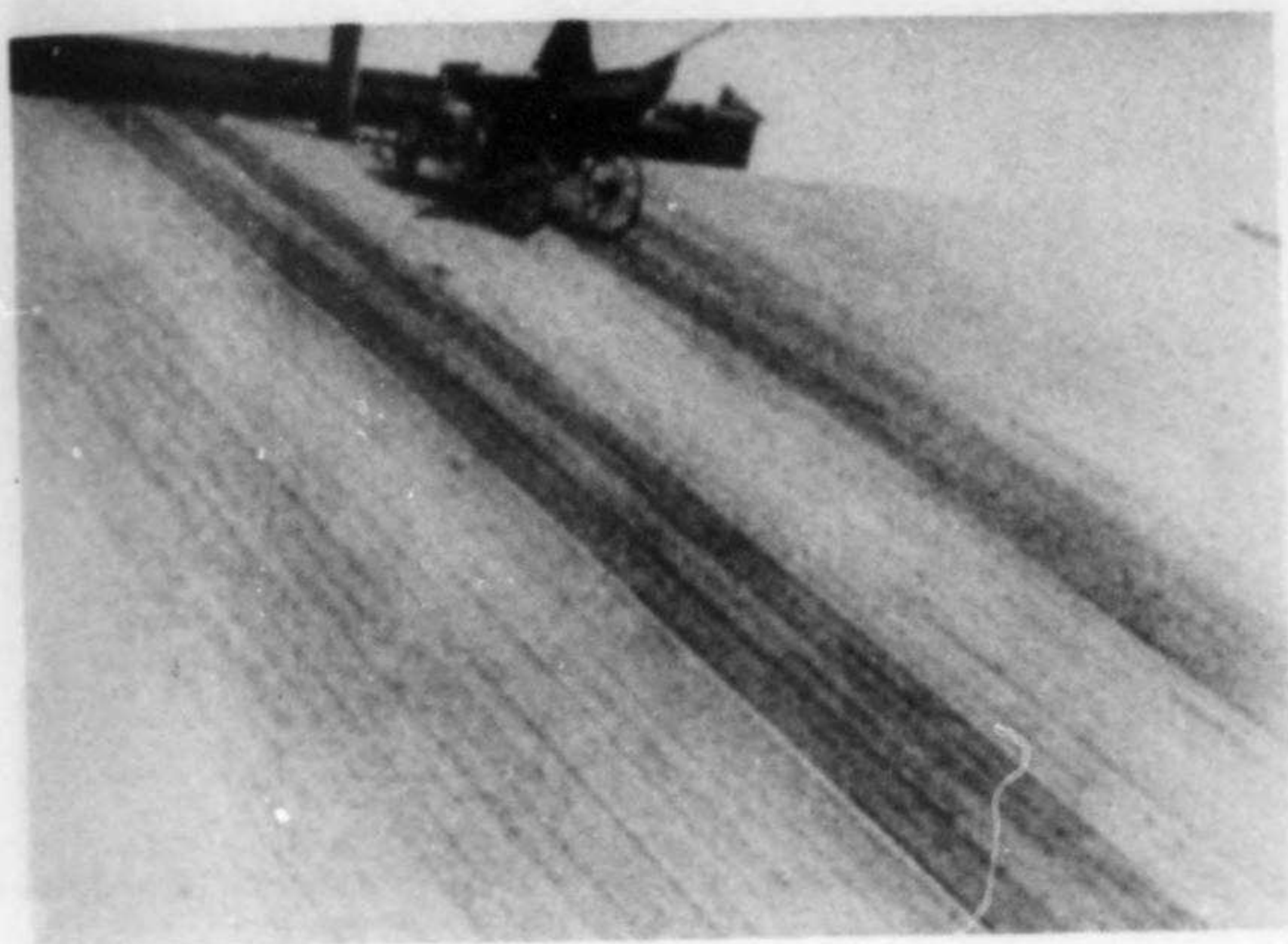
Sensuous attractions are assembled on the principle of a single emotion ("a sad old man," + "a sail being lowered," + "a forward tendency," + "fingers playing with a hat," + "tears in the eyes," *etc.*) There is a distinct 'similarity'.

The 'similarity' of intellectual attractions which go into a single piece of montage is not of a sensual kind. That is to say, it's definitely not one of appearance, either. Those fragments 'resemble' each other in terms of conditioned reflexes, *i.e.*, in terms of their meanings: baroque Christ and wooden idol do not resemble each other at all, but they do have the same **meaning**. A *balalaika* and a Menshevik 'resemble' each other not physically but abstractly.

China, pyramids, New York, all that frightened Grisha, are not really **themes**, but montage fragments for forming **thoughts**. They correspond to close-ups and medium shots of a single event.

13. The genesis of Eisenstein's theory and style of montage is presented in "Through Theater to Cinema." "I think that first and foremost we must give the credit to the basic principles of the circus and the music-hall—for which I had had a passionate love since childhood. Under the influence of the French comedians, and of Chaplin (of whom we had only heard), and the first news of the fox-trot and jazz, this early love thrived.

"The music-hall element was obviously needed at the time for the emergence of a 'montage form of thought.' Harlequin's parti-coloured costume grew and spread, first over the structure of the program, and finally into the method of the whole production." Another popular source, cited by Eisenstein and his companions of the early years, was the form of the amusement park 'attraction', whose intensity of physical stimulus he assimilated into his aesthetic of dynamic conflict, drawing theoretical support from Pavlovian reflexology.



(N.B. *Abgesehen* from rules of 'spelling', that is of the montage ABC: a single fragment of meaning = *minimum* of two in montage. One fragment is **not, after all, visible**; the first is used for surprise, the second for perception.)

We say, one shot, "China," corresponds to the 'central' shot¹⁴ of the horse on the bridge. Naturally, this will be five shots (or more). But one must remember that these are (taken) not to **explain China** but to explain one's main idea, Egypt, by use of this one shot in conjunction with the others, like those of New York: Egypt.

That shot is as unequivocal in this place as the shot of the sad old man is emotionally unequivocal.

This new outlook on things and events revealed itself with utmost clarity during a 'local' discussion:

Grisha: We will be in New York, in China, in Egypt (will expand in all directions). Mountains of material, *etc.*

I objected that we will not, after all, be seeking a **sensuous re-creation** of China or whatever, as we came to do in the case of the **battleship, factory, midday, etc.**

A sensuous re-creation calls for 'footage' (here Gusman is correct, but barbarically ascribes to it the concept of 'language').

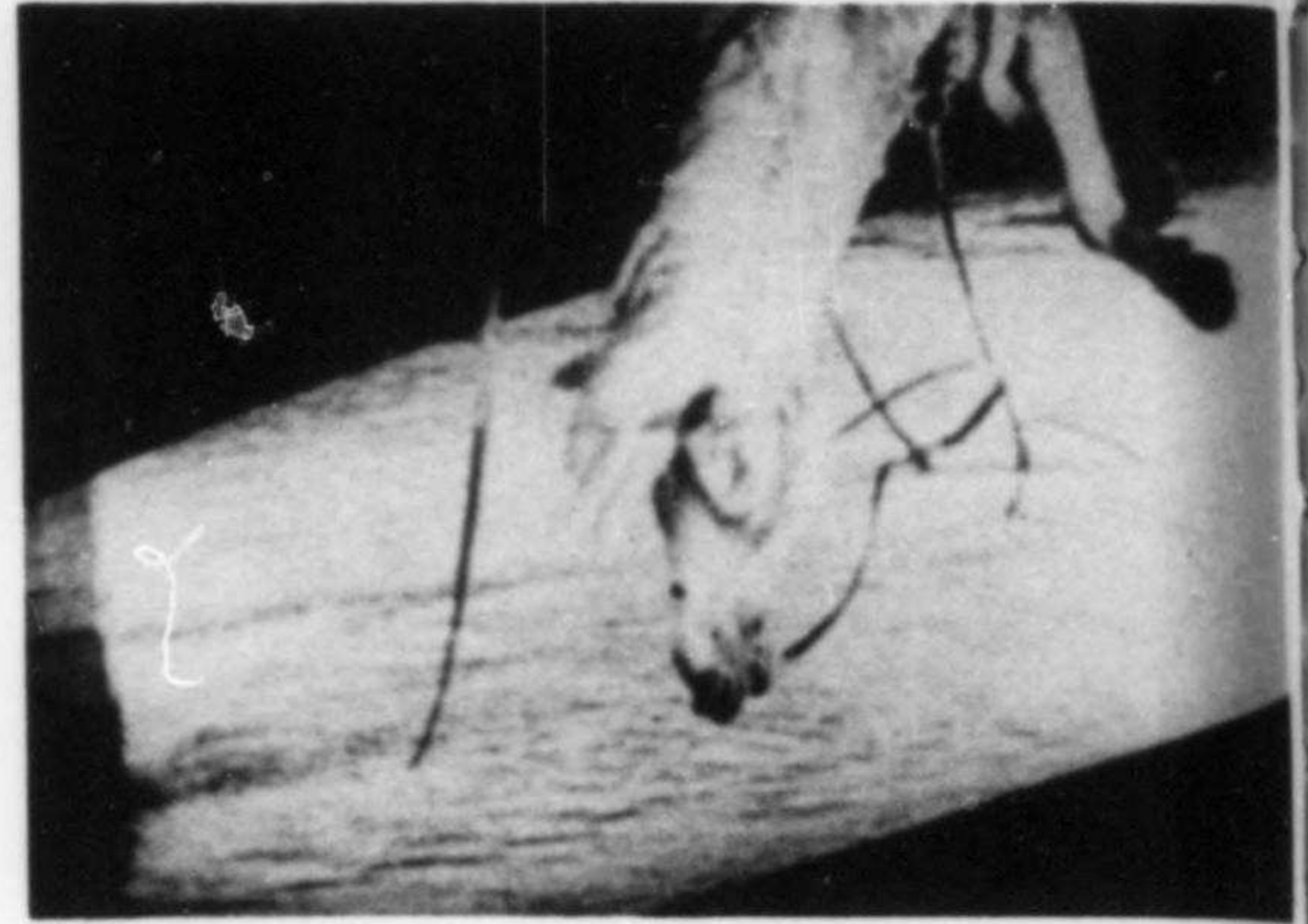
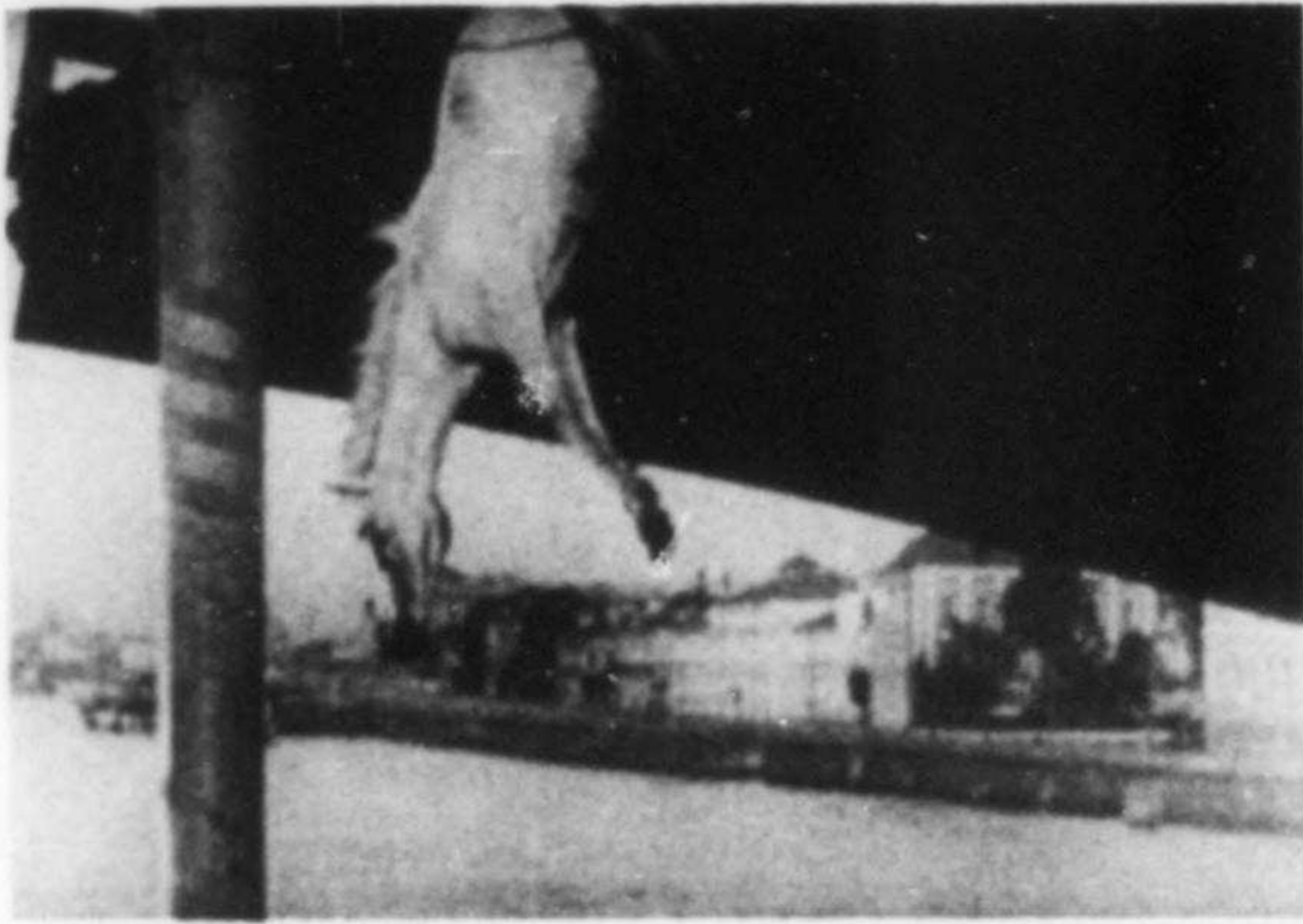
N.B. I recall how I talked about OCTOBER at *Glavrepertkom*,¹⁵ saying that Sovkino had not given 8,000 meters for additional shooting of the village and countryside. They expressed doubt: if it did not 'fit' into 500,000, how could it be done for [the other] 8? I said, the footage is not used for **meaning**. The footage is used for an emotional priming.

The only principle derived from past experience and now applicable as the general rule:

"That picture is cinematic whose story can be told in two words."

14. The sequence to which the cited shot is central constitutes the supreme example of spatio-temporal distension and synthesis developed in *October*. It is analyzed and discussed at length in my "Camera Lucida/Camera Obscura," *Artforum*, XII (January, 1973).

15. The governmental agency responsible for resolution of practical problems in film production.



If the picture 'articulates' one or two thoughts, cinematizes 'a method', then this corresponds to the whole part placed 'under' the dominant of grief; that is, to brilliant film-conditioning. So, having China, India and the devil knows what else is not really so terrible.

Furthermore, one realizes that without even chasing around after the flavor of Egypt, the whole of CAPITAL could be 'constructed' on a set. *Schuftan*.¹⁶ Glass. Model. It could be shot at the **Third Factory** [of Goskino]!!!¹⁷

N.B. This is obviously exaggeration to the point of paradox. *Walkenkratzer aus Vogelschau* and, on the whole, a terrific attraction of the **frame in itself** (sensuous attraction) that is, of the frame apart from its burden of meaning (intellectual attraction), is absolutely mandatory in this case. Why then, emotionalize we will; we must, *quand même*, mustn't we?

Non-fictional, then; not educational but absorbing and propagandistic.

To "Kerensky"—a maximal reaction: applause, laughter.

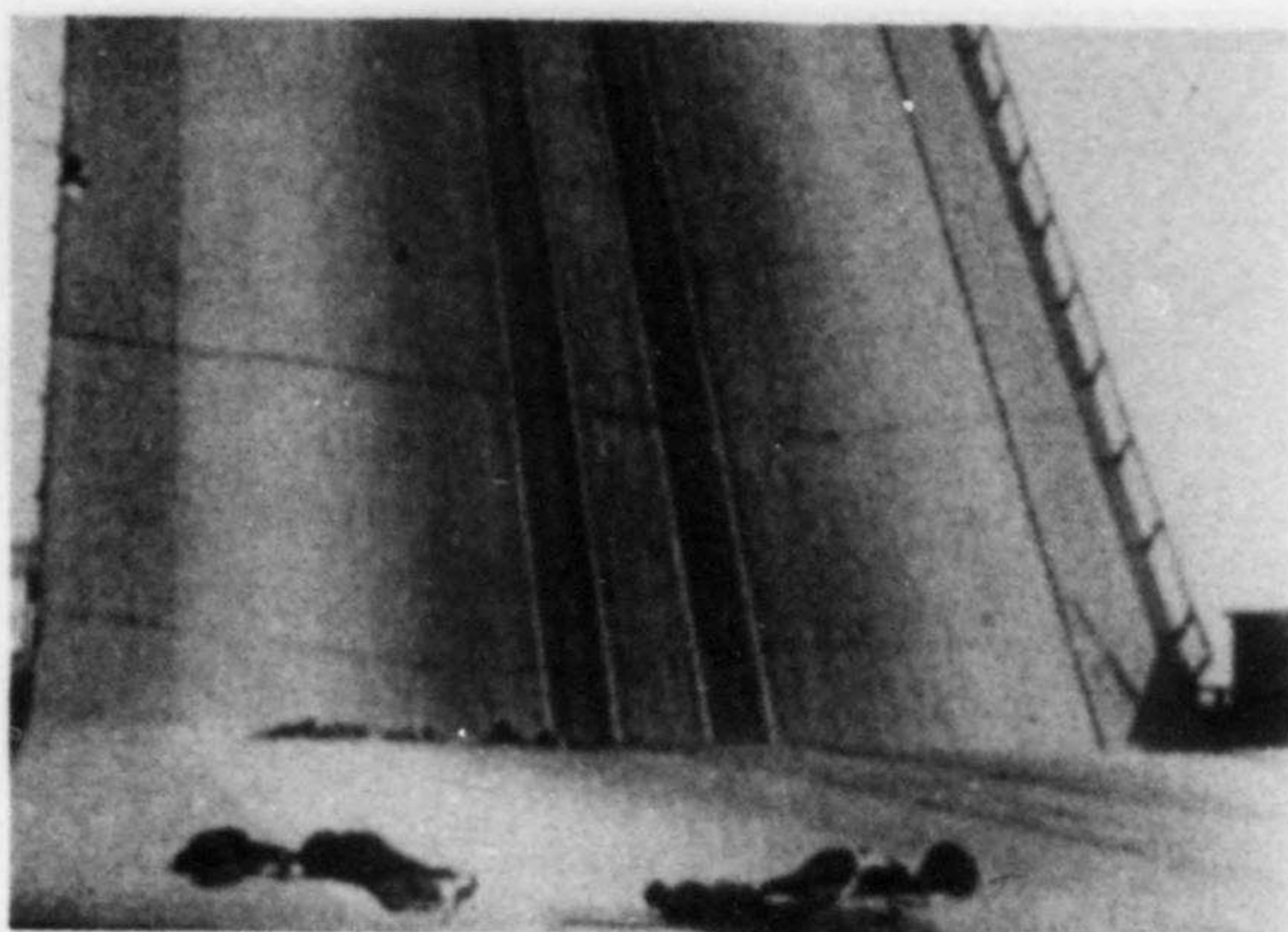
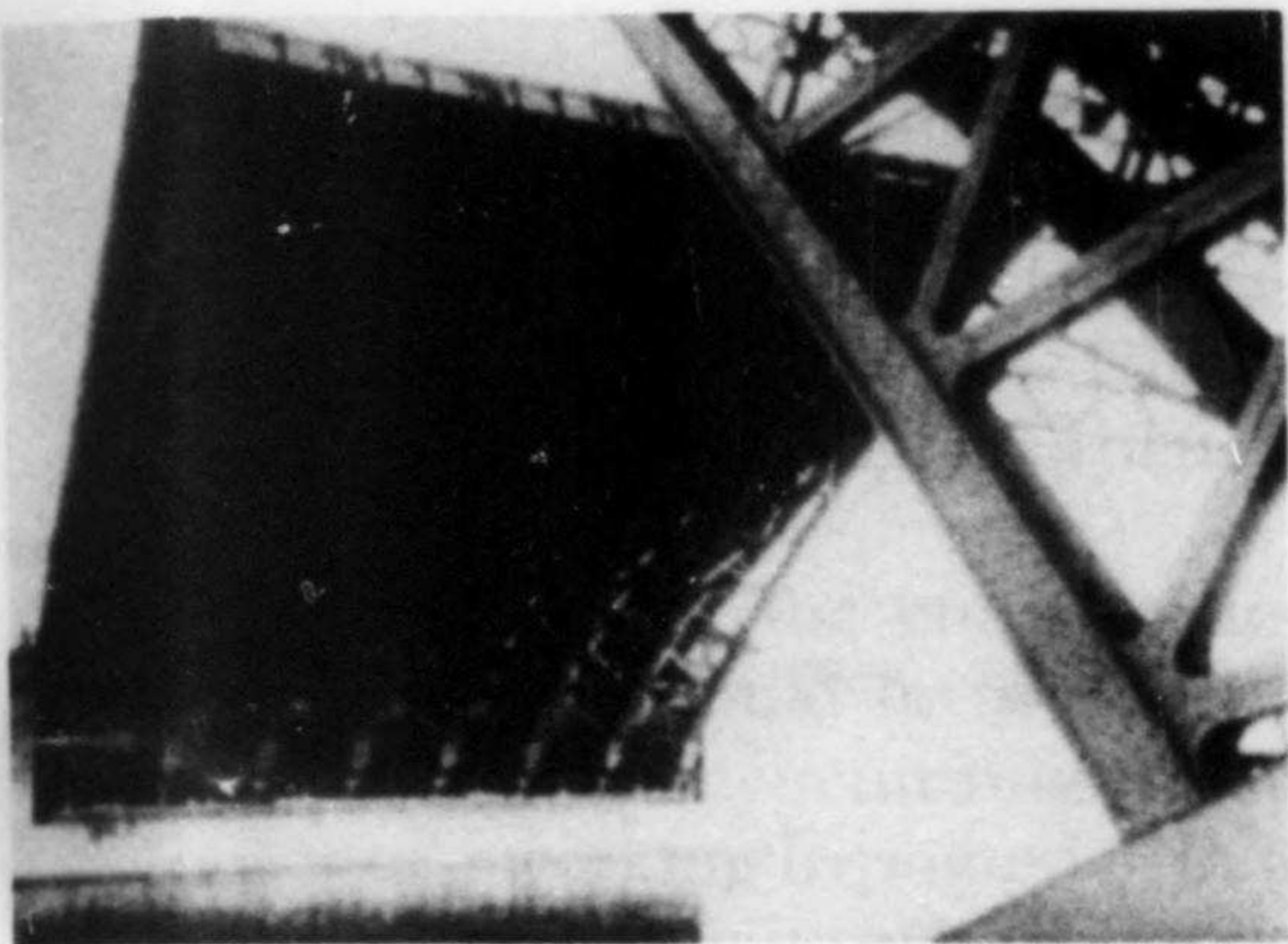
The Gods: perhaps the most sophisticated [structure] and the material which produces an effect with the most impressive image. Their formal selection (that is *abgesehen* from the 'philosophical' burden of meaning) and the formal parallelism constitute the academically brilliant, sensuously attractive montage.

Revenons à nos moutons. Film language is not **terrifying as far as footage is concerned**. On the contrary, it is the maximally succinct expressive mode; within fifteen meters the idea of Deity disqualifies itself;¹⁸ it requires, at least, much less effort to make it physiologically persuasive.

16. The Schuftan Effect, invented in 1925 by Eugene Schuftan, cameraman, is an illusionistic process designed to perfect, through the use of reduced models drawn on glass, the integration of *décor* into film. It thereby reduced the necessity of shooting on location.

17. A small and ill-equipped film studio in Moscow.

18. This celebrated sequence of *October* was conceived and is frequently cited by Eisenstein as the structural model for "intellectual montage." An account of it is given in "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form:" "Kornilov's march on Petrograd was under the banner of 'In the Name of God and Country.' Here we attempted to reveal the religious significance of this episode in a rationalistic way. A number of religious images, from a magnificent Baroque Christ to an Eskimo idol, were cut together.



April 6, 1928.

The first, preliminary **structural** draft of CAPITAL would mean taking a banal development of a perfectly unrelated event. Say, "A day in a man's life," or something perhaps even more banal.¹⁹ And the elements of this chain serve as points of departure for the forming of associations through which alone the play of concepts becomes possible. The idea of this banal intrigue was arrived at in a truly constructive manner.

Association presupposes a stimulus. Give a series of these, without which there is 'nothing' to associate. The maximum abstractness of an expanding idea appears particularly bold when presented as an offshoot from extreme concreteness—the banality of life. Something suggested in ULYSSES provides additional support for the same formulation:

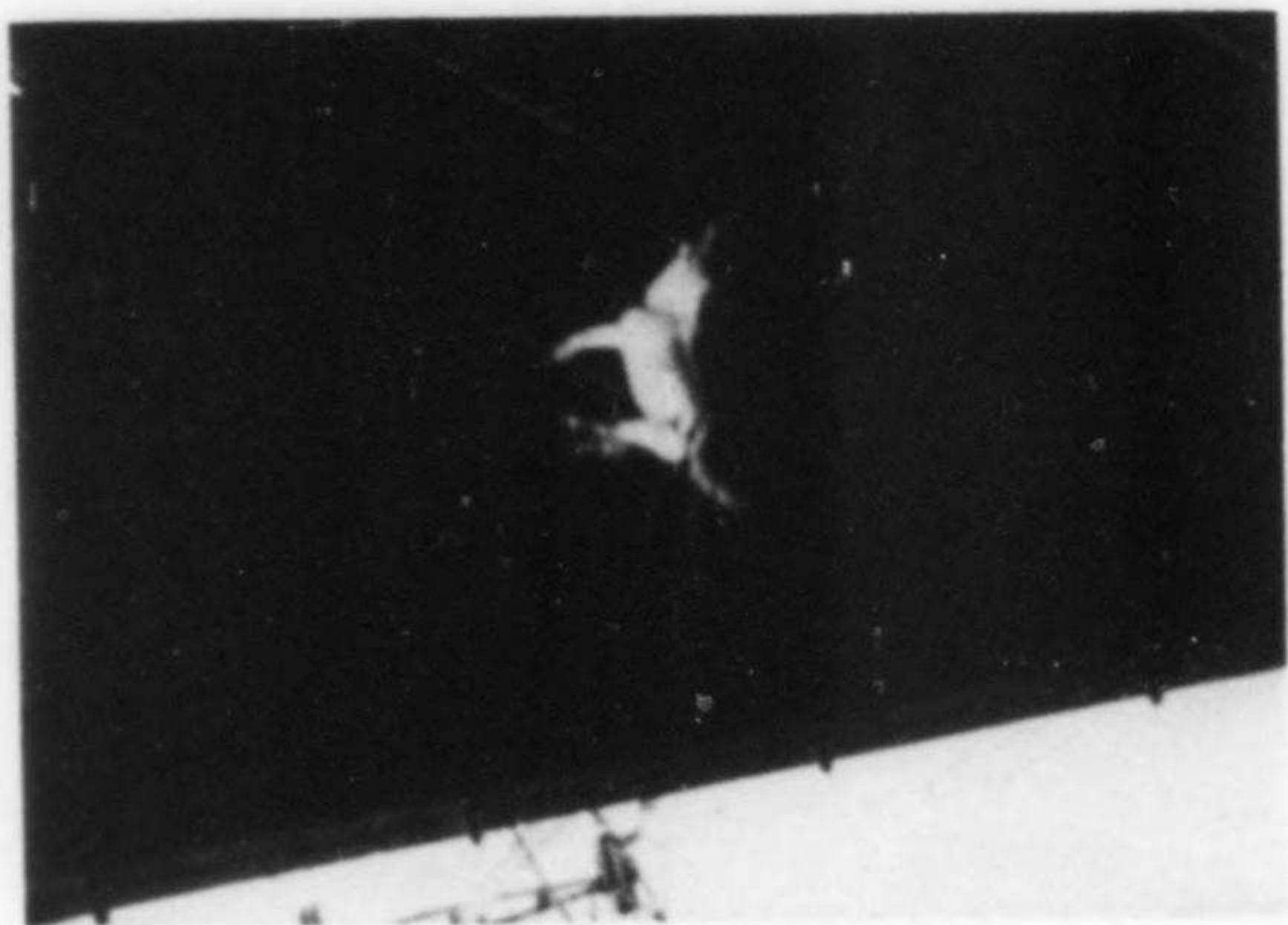
"... *Nicht genug! Ein anderen Kapitel ist im Stil der Bücher für junge Mädchen geschrieben, ein anderes besteht, nach dem Vorbild der scholastischen Traktate, nur aus Frage und Antwort: Die Fragen beziehen sich auf die Art, wie Mann einen Teekessel zum Kochen bringt, und die Antworten schwiften ins grosse Kosmische und Philosophische ab...*" (Ivan Goll, *Literarische Welt*, Berlin: taken from a prospectus on ULYSSES [Rhein Verlag]).²⁰

Joyce may be helpful for my purpose: from a bowl of soup to the British vessels sunk by England.

The conflict in this case was between the concept and the symbolisation of God. While idea and image appear to accord completely in the first statue shown, the two elements move further from each other with each successive image. Maintaining the denotation of 'God', the images increasingly disagree with our concept of God, inevitably leading to individual conclusions about the true nature of all deities. In this case, too, a chain of images attempted to achieve a purely intellectual resolution, resulting from a conflict between a preconception and a gradual discrediting of it in purposeful steps."

19. This theme was, at the time of Eisenstein's writing, entering the tradition of film. Its supreme and most complex exemplification, Vertov's *The Man With the Movie Camera* was, in fact, in the stage of completion.

20. "... Not enough! Another chapter is written in the style of books for young girls, another in the form of scholarly tracts, composed only of questions and answers; the questions are of the sort, how to bring a teakettle to the boiling point, and the answers digress into great cosmic and philosophical..."



As a further intention: the setting of CAPITAL develops as visual instruction in the dialectical method.

Stylistically, this closed plot line, whose every moment serves as a point of departure towards materials that are both ideologically defined and physically dissociated, provides maximum contrast as well.

The final chapter should certainly produce a **dialectical decoding** of the very same story **irrespective** of the real theme. *Der grössten Speisung!* By means of which the 'beautiful' stylistic organicity of the work as a whole is accomplished.

Of course, this is quite conceivable even without a series of this kind (not through plot at all, but simply connected). Paradoxically, however, a deliberate 'small step back' from the final form always emphasizes brilliance of construction. Thus, it was good that THE WISE MAN was not simply a *revue*, but revised **Ostrovsky!**

The sequential arranging of the 'distancing elements' could eventually proceed quite differently as well. The final chapter is on the class struggle; the little story should therefore be constructed to gain maximum advantage from its dialectical disclosure.

The elements of the *historiette* itself are thus chiefly those which, in the form of puns, provide the impulse towards abstraction and generalization (mechanical spring-boards for patterns of dialectical attitudes towards events). The *historiette* as a whole: the material for a dialectical disclosure through an overwhelmingly passionate final section. This, too, [should be built up] in as gray and banal a manner as possible.

I.e., just as the 'house-wifely' virtues' of a German worker's wife constitute the greatest evil, the strongest obstacle to a revolutionary uprising, given the German context. A German worker's wife will always have something warm for her husband, will never let him go **completely** hungry. And there is the root of her negative role which slows the pace of social development. In the plot, this could take the form of 'hot slop', and the meaning of this on 'a world scale'. One great danger: not to succumb to *niaiserie* through excessive 'oversimplification': "it's in the bag" . . .

April 7,

Today, with a banal relapse into the circular composition of Scheherezade, Tūt-nāmeḥ,²¹ tales of Hauff. I explained to Grisha the mechanics of the CAPITAL project in outline while in the 'A' streetcar between Strasnaia and Petrovsky Gate (or perhaps after Nikitsky—I don't remember . . .). While riding home from Shub's²² where we'd had chocolate with *paskha* and cake . . .

Voici:

Throughout the entire picture the wife cooks soup for her returning husband. N.B. Could be two themes intercut for association: the soup-cooking wife and the home-returning husband. Completely idiotic (all right in the first stages of a working hypothesis): in the third part (for instance), association moves from the pepper with which she seasons food. Pepper. Cayenne. Devil's Island. Dreyfus. French chauvinism. *Figaro* in Krupp's hands. War. Ships sunk in the port. (Obviously, not in such quantity!!) N.B. Good in its non-banality—transition: **pepper—Dreyfus—Figaro**. It would be good to cover the sunken English ships (according to Kushner, 103 DAYS ABROAD) with the lid of a saucepan. It could even be not pepper—but kerosene for a stove and transition into *oil*.²³

Chapter 4 (5, *etc.*; but the **next to the last**—comic, farcical):

Woman's stocking full of holes and a silk one in a newspaper advertisement. It starts with a jerky movement, to multiply into 50 pairs of legs—Revue. Silk. Art. The fight for the centimeter of silk stocking. The aesthetes are for it. The Bishops and morality are against. *Mais ces pantins* dance on strings pulled by the silk manufacturers and the garment peddlers who fight each other. Art. Holy art. Morality. Holy morality.

In the final section, soup is ready. A thin soup. The husband arrives. 'Socially' embittered. The hot, watery liquid—compromisingly washes away the pathos. Prospects of bloody skirmishes. And most horrifying of all—social indifference [equal] to social betrayal. Blood, the world in the flames of cataclysm. The Salvation Army. The Church Militant, *etc.* The man embraces his wife's skeleton. A neatly darned quilt is pulled over. A 'Surprise' (for sincere lyricism)—she gives him a cheap cigarette. Sentimentality that is much more awful in the context of that final horror. The quilt pulled over. Under the bed—a pot. With the handle broken off. But a pot, all the same . . .

For the time being, after Tūt-nāmeḥ, this may be revolting. Here and there, though—not bad. Diversify the parts with the **material** as sharply as is appropriate

21. Translated as *Tales of the Parrot*, these are Persian texts in the Moghul style, School of Akbar (1556-1605).

22. Esther Shub, the distinguished documentary film-maker, virtually the inventor of the compilation film. A long-time friend of Eisenstein she had, in fact, given his his very first employment in the re-editing of Lang's *Mabuse der Spieler*, for distribution in the Soviet Union. His apprenticeship under this accomplished editor was extremely important for the development of his own work.

23. Eisenstein here suggests the depiction of a process of production in reverse, adding to his store of tropes the *hysteron proteron*, so frequently and successfully employed by Vertov.

and bring them to conclusion. Of a class nature.

Problem of volume of material which can fit in. To be solved by an incredible succinctness and by treating each part entirely **in its own way**. Perhaps one part even 'acted' with two characters—*ganz fein*. Another one, all from newsreels. *Etc.*

The character of the material presented calls for economy. The 'ancient' cinema was shooting **one event from many points of view**. The new one assembles **one point of view from many events**.

N.B. What will it be like in practice?—*qui vivra verra!*

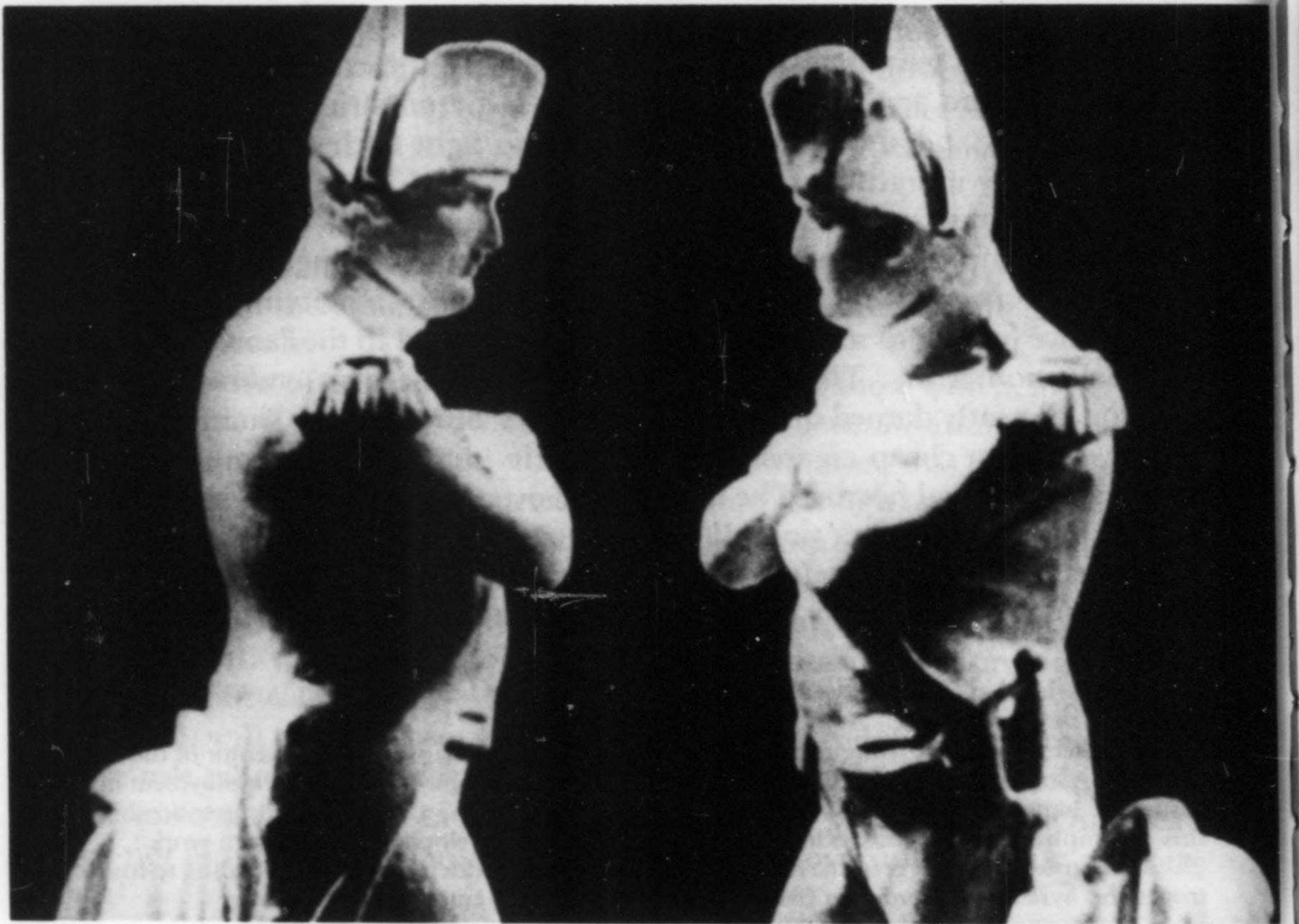
After all, "the Gods" were condensed into something like 15 meters!

N.B. Everything has been written in **monstrous** doubt. It is still very reactionary! And it may be stylistically suitable only for an individual case. Cases far more 'to the left' (like the "Gods") are needed.

April 7, 1:30 a.m.

There must be one chapter on the materialist interpretation of the 'soul'. The chapter on reflexes. The whole of it could be built around that woman and the

"For God and Country," sequence from OCTOBER
(continues through page 23)



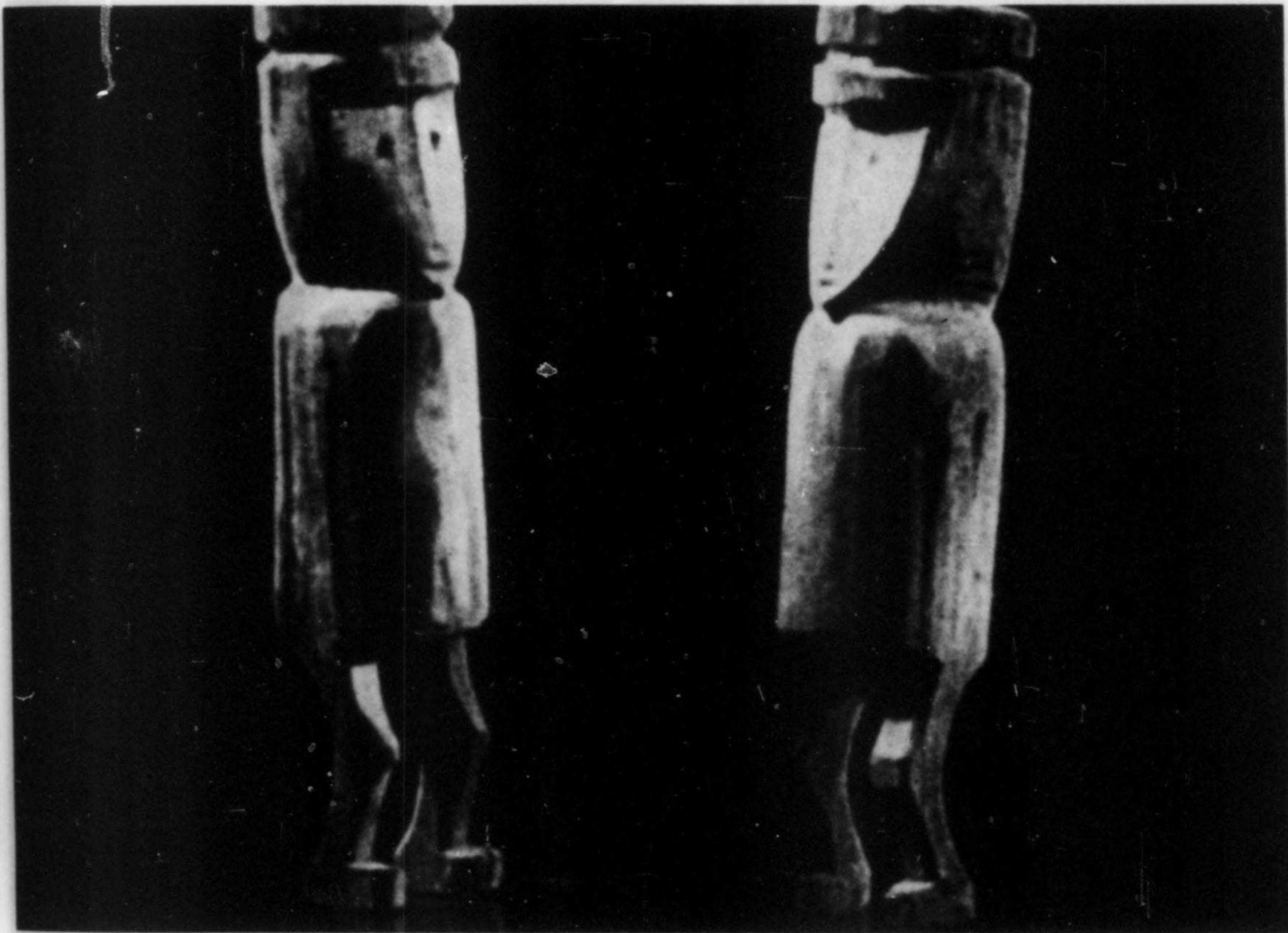
series of reflexes. Motor ones. Erotic. Purely mechanical. A complex series of conditioned reflexes. With a demonstration of the mechanisms of associative thinking, *etc.*

To expose the mechanisms of the states of a soul with, say, emotions evoked by a funeral procession. The loss of the male. The loss of the bread-winner. The heirs, *etc.* And all this cynicism is assembled in reverse to form a touching mourners' procession.

Provoke a head-on collision between a stimulus and the final link of a complex chain of conditioned reflexes. There no longer seems to be any interconnection. Terribly crude, physical stimulus (particularly bad—the erotic one!)—and, as the final link, some act of an extremely elevated (resp[ectively] sacrificial) spirituality.

N.B. It would be really funny to cast Khokhlova²⁴ as that woman. She might

24. Alexandra Khokhlova was a leading film actress of the Soviet cinema. Her exceptional talent, intelligence and versatility illuminate, in particular, the films of her husband, Lev Kuleshov, the director and theorist of montage, the consideration of whose work is, in turn, important for a thorough understanding of Eisenstein's own development.



be very amusing as someone ugly becoming a beauty.

And then, in a gathering of momentum, reproduce the mechanics of irritation. Then guide the audience through a series of film stimuli to a definite emotional effect, and then give the intertitle:

Well then, now you have reached the state . . . , *etc., etc.* To each chapter—its own principles of film adaptation. (1:45 a.m.)

April 7 evening.

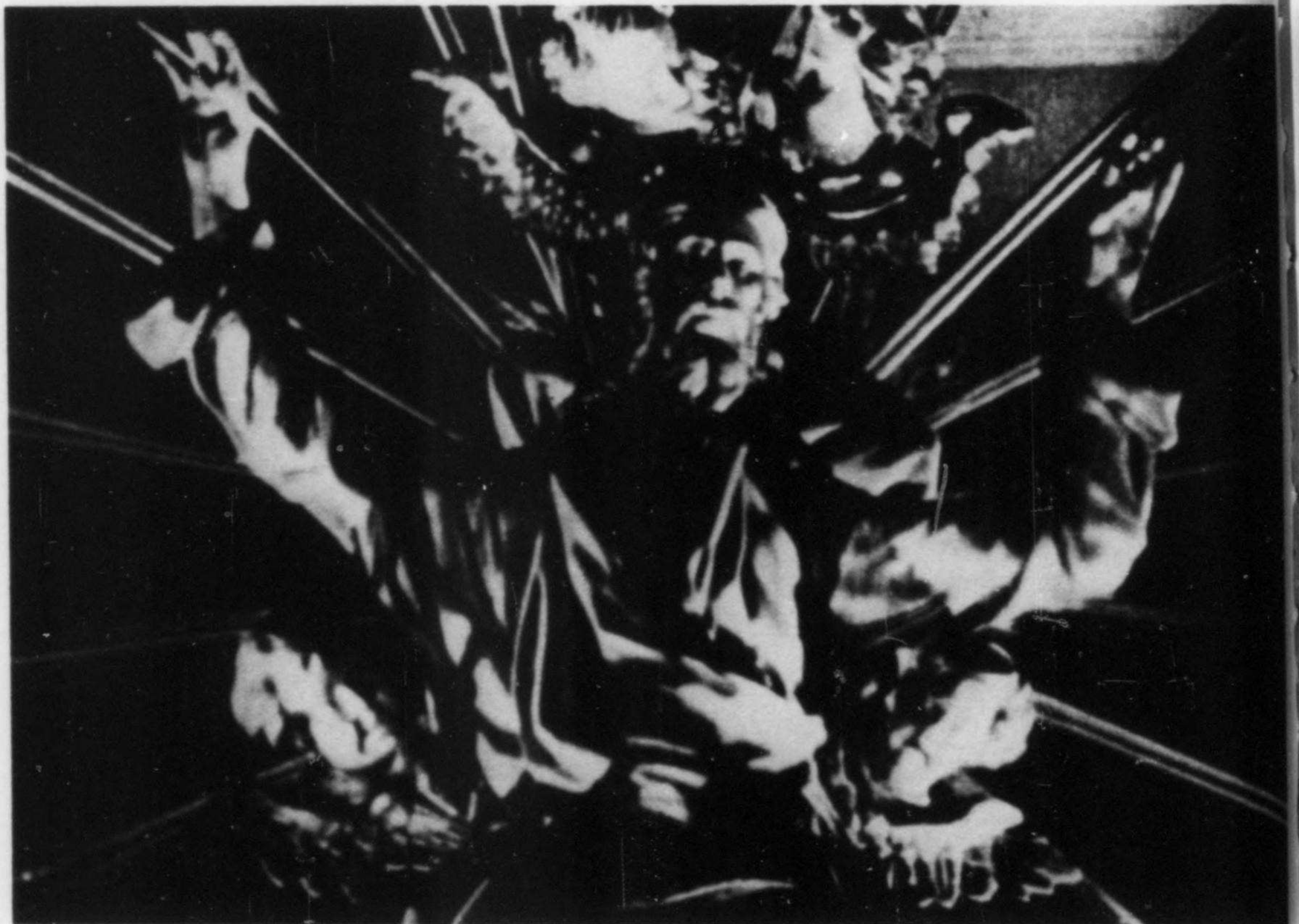
In PROJECTOR No. 14 (132), Grosz's autobiography:

"I already had a disturbing feeling at that time that I should try to express and render in painting something similar to that which Zola was expressing in his work. . . .

"I want to start a whole cycle of pictures of this sort, which, as a delightful phrase of artists' slang has it, **one would like to try with one's tongue . . .**"

And here, from the same source, for CAPITAL:

". . . it was a delightful time, when everything was saturated in the symbolism of war, when every jar of artificial honey was decorated with an 'iron cross,



second class'; when 'God Punish England!' was pasted on the back of every letter . . . When old leather suitcases were made into soldiers' boots and army 'mousse' was so corrosive that it made holes in the tablecloth. Only the human stomach could withstand all that! . . ."

N.B. It would be good to show kids guzzling the 'mousse' and its droplets eating away the tablecloth.

Here, too, (according to Ermler's stories about Berlin)—the coasters for beer mugs which read, "Germany cannot survive without colonies. Rice, pepper, *etc.*—we get everything from the colonies. England took the colonies away from us, *etc.*"

April 8.

CAPITAL will be dedicated—officially—to The Second International! They're sure to be 'overjoyed'! For it is hard to conceive of any more devastating attack against social democracy in all its aspects than CAPITAL.

The formal side is dedicated to Joyce.



The outline of events in historical order. For instance, in the farcical section, a dissolve from contemporary bishopric to Boccacciesque and La Fontainesque-Rabelaisian clergy. By no means 'sequentially' but *durcheinander*. The mannequins and costuming of the church are, after all, still sluggishly medieval, like all their teaching.

The continuity of a series should by no means be 'sequential' as in a plot—unfolding in a logically progressive manner, *etc.* An **associative unfolding**. Then the footage not frightening. Sometimes *les débris d'action* deliberately plot-like and continuous. Only not "the silk manufacturer plying a bishop with drink." Fie!!

Along the Dreyfus line. The trial shown as Daumier's *ventre législatif*. All the cardinal sins in judicial *typage*.²⁵ Or, even better, a single one, ten-fold, all-

25. The concept complementary to that of montage in Eisenstein's theory and practice. *Typage* refers to the parameter of acting, and, by extension, to the pro-filmic aspect of cinema. "I want to point out that 'typage' must be understood as broader than merely a face without make-up, or a substitution



embracing. Then, it all turns out to be hanging by strings. The hand of the General Staff or something of that sort *fait sauter les pantins*. (In *Chambre constitutionnelle* and *Louis Philippe* by Daumier!)

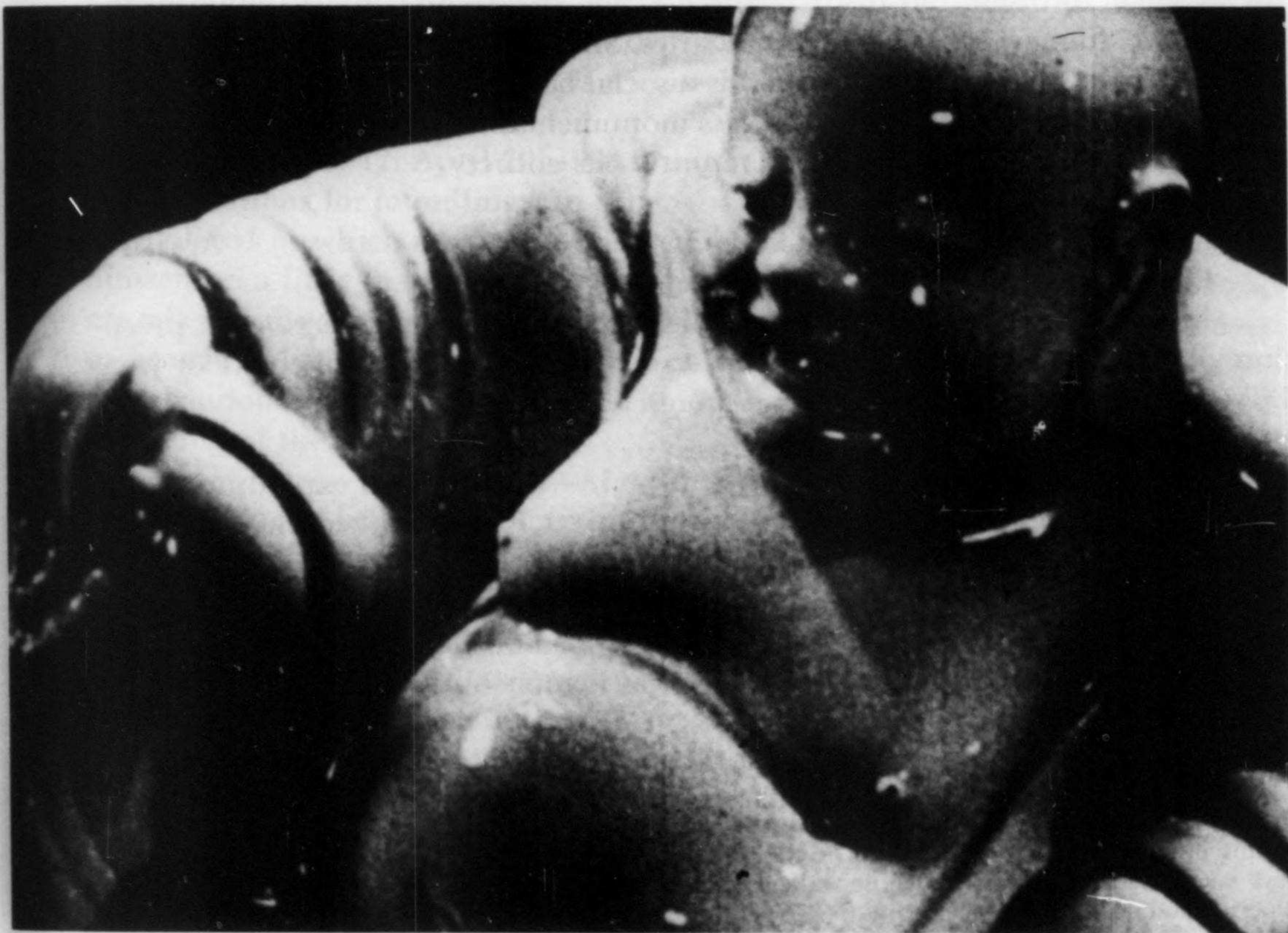
In a scheme of this sort, parallelisms—parallel currents—have been transformed into a progressively associative series. **Very important.**

It would be good to move from the marionettes to a puppet theater for children (many fine kinds) with chauvinistic puppets—training in chauvinism from the cradle—and then to the *Gott-straft-England* herd-like movement.

There are endlessly possible themes for filming in CAPITAL ('price', 'income', 'rent')—for us, the theme is **Marx's method.**

CAPITAL, in these rough drafts, does not exhaust all new possibilities. Must

of 'naturally expressive' types for actors. In my opinion, 'typage' included a specific approach to the events embraced by the content of the film. Here again was the method of east interference with the natural course and the combination of events. In concept, from beginning to end, *October* is pure 'typage'.



remember that very firmly. Perhaps, though, it should be explicated at this stage. Grisha says that our draft is still **generally accessible** in its 'virginal' state. We are therefore beginning to convert it into something accessible only *pour les raffinés*. It might therefore be reasonable not to invert everything to the very end. This should be done later, instead.

... A proper structure for the OCTOBER stage—in part, a newsreel along with two or three 'emotional' concentrations within the limits of that footage ('the bridge' and 'ascent'). Also think **about the emotional concentrations** within the sections of CAPITAL. But try, nevertheless, to make them *à la* ascent of Kerensky—using those principles and not ancient ones of the bridge.

Absolutely special will be the problem of the image and frame composition for CAPITAL. The ideology of the unequivocal frame must be thoroughly reconsidered. How, I can't yet tell. Experimental work is needed. For that, it's 'madly' necessary first to make THE GLASS HOUSE,²⁶ in which the (usual) idea of the **frame** is what happens to the **structure of things** in the fragments of OCTOBER and in CAPITAL's entire structure.

There is still another variant instead of **soup**—in case CAPITAL is restricted (in its basic 'intrigue') to the 'world scale' and the Second International to the 'pedagogic' framework of USSR boundaries. Show the way in which our slovenliness (absenteeism, hooliganism, *etc.*) is a social betrayal of the working class as a whole. True, this is very harsh and less monumental. It's therefore more important, socially, to strike the traitorous front in its entirety.

April 11.

On repetition.

In terms of dialectical analysis, that is, analysis in contradictions, a procedure of this sort is very good. We had it to some extent in "The offensive of June 18" (*nach meinem Kompositionsvorschlag*):

June 18—the victorious regiments; June 18—the horror of exploding shells; June 18—Plekhanov's patriotic demonstration at Kazan Cathedral; June 18—relentless armored cars pursue the X regiment in an attack; June 18—innumerable protest demonstrations leave the factories; June 18—the shock battalions prance, *etc., etc., etc.*; June 18—a body hanging, suspended on [telegraph?] wire.

This is obviously a model of dialectical demonstration. Not realized. Very sorry.

Notez once again the unity of the intertitles!!! Just as in "The Gods" and (in

26. *The Glass House* was a project of Eisenstein's, conceived in 1926 and developed parallel to the filming of *October* and the planning of *Capital*. The action of this satire on bourgeois society was to have taken place in a building whose walls, ceilings and floors were made of glass. In this text, one experimental possibility of the project is considered: the inclusion within one frame of several actions.

reverse) in Kerensky.

On this level, one could solve:

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—art.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—morality.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—commerce and competition.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—Indian women forced to incubate the silk cocoon by carrying them in **their armpits!**

April 20, 1928.

What happens to the 'immaculate maidens' *du moment* I start to speak about CAPITAL and intellectual attraction! The secretary of the Artistic Council of Sovkino *d'un côté* (komsomol) and an old Polish underground activist *de l'autre*. They both dissuade. Both—absolutely capable of ecstasy. They support emotionalism in my work. They speak about 'warmth which must be preserved in my work. To create . . . *Très drôle*. Those 'pure in heart'—do they speak truth?

I think that intellectual attraction by no means excludes 'emotionality'. After all, a reflex action is perceived as the so-called presence of an affect. The question of paths of influence and perspective of *des zur Offenbarung Möglichen*—possibilities in the area of the expressible—thanks to those specifically new paths. **Preservation** of the evolutionary effect is **mandatory** and not at all excluded in practice: *i.e.*, Kerensky *steigt* has its own *Lachsälven!*

April 22.

Ogonek No. 17, April 22, 1928 brought out for C[APITAL] and in general:

A mailbox for foundlings. In Athens on a street near an orphanage, a box has been placed in which mothers can leave their babies. The baby immediately finds himself on a little mattress. Every two hours the box is checked and the contents are taken to the orphanage. This perfected abandonment of babies has, in addition to its originality, certain drawbacks. Just imagine, for instance, that three babies are abandoned within two hours. The first one is not going to feel too good. [Drawing of the box.]

Absolutely brilliant material, 'compressible' to the point of 'bloody irony'. Bourgeois culture and philanthropy.

"In the domain of culture, the professional and technological achievements of bourgeois art are great. Particularly important for the proletariat are the achievements of recent decades, in which methods of planned and constructive approach to artistic creation, lost to artists as representatives of the petite bourgeoisie, have been restored and raised to the level of scientific analysis and synthesis. The process then instituting the penetration of the creative process by dialectical and materialist principles, as yet unrealized by artists, constitutes the raw stuff of a future proletarian art."

This was a major contribution to an analysis of the arts.

The tragedy of today's 'leftists' consists in the fact that the still incomplete analytic process finds itself in a situation in which synthesis is demanded . . .

On new themes. It was actually important to show tactics in OCTOBER, and not the events. The most important tasks in a cultural revolution are not only **dialectical demonstrations but instruction in the dialectical method**, as well.

Given the available data on cinema, such tasks are not yet permissible. Cinema does not possess those means of expression, since there has been, until now, no demand for tasks of that sort; only now do they begin to be defined.

*Eisenstein with Le Corbusier and Andrei Burov,
Moscow, 1928*



Reading Eisenstein
Reading *Capital*

ANNETTE MICHELSON

If, in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*

We have always known that Eisenstein wished to make a film of *Capital*, and we now know that this was no mere wish. It was a project, carefully considered, intensively discussed, partially researched, tentatively planned. The diaristic evidence of October 1927 through April of the following year should initiate a new stage of inquiry into Soviet film theory and practice of the post-revolutionary era, sharpening and confirming speculative impulses hitherto constrained by the deliberate pace of posthumous publication.¹ Eisenstein's work is not alone in question; speculations of the widest range must now be extended or re-directed. Although one cannot, in this initial stage of reflection upon a crucial document, expect wholly to survey its contours or assess the order of its consequences, one may attempt to specify that crucial quality, situating this text within the historical moment articulated and inflected by the larger text of Eisenstein.

The work notes are begun—to all intents and purposes, as we say—while he is editing *October*, commissioned in celebration of the Revolution's tenth anniversary, not ready for release until March 14, 1928. The entries continue through the aftermath of the release, when they are undoubtedly interrupted by the order to return to work on *The General Line*, begun prior to *October*, intercepted by that anniversary commission and resumed on June 20th. This film is completed, following some further interruption and critical re-orientation from Stalin, as *The Old and the New*, in February, 1929. And on August 19th, Eisenstein, charged—together with Tissé and Alexandrov—with the investigation of the new

1. We owe the recent publication of "Notes for a film of *Capital*" in *Iskusstvo Kino*, January, 1973, pp. 57-67 to Naum Kleiman, the Curator of the Eisenstein Museum in Moscow. For this and for many other intelligent and scrupulously executed instances of his scholarship, I am, like so many others, deeply grateful.

technology of sound, departs on the three-year voyage through Europe, the United States and Mexico.

October, slightly cut but swiftly passed by German censors, had opened in Berlin on April 2, 1928, under the title *Ten Days that Shook the World*, and by December of that year, Eisenstein, writing to Léon Moussinac in Paris of the misunderstandings surrounding its reception abroad, says:

"The proclamation that I'm going to make a movie of Marx's *Das Kapital* is not a publicity stunt. I believe that the films of the future will be found going in this direction (or else they'll be filming things like *The Idea of Christianity* from the bourgeois point of view!). In any case, they will have to do with philosophy. It is true that I won't get to this for another year or a year and a half, since the field is absolutely untouched. *Tabula rasa*. And it will be necessary to do a lot of sketching before trying to treat such an enormous theme without compromising it.

I'd really like for you to look at *October* more or less from the point of view I've just outlined. You'll see a multitude of this sort of step—beginning with the awkward, even vulgar, even shameful symbolism—and going to the Gods and Kerensky's Rise, which, like the battleship's lions, serves as a ladder to a completely different idea of cinema.²

Eisenstein, then, is obviously still reflecting—at a distance of eight months from the last of the work notes published here—upon the possibility of filming Marx. With *October* now completed, he is considering its implications, extending and systematizing the claims made by and for this film as "a collection of essays" on a series of themes. Cinema is now confirmed, through concrete practice, as a conceptual medium, a mode of discourse, and the freshly completed work is reassessed as the pivotal stage of a cinematic future.

We must understand this judgment in a sense that is particular and distinct from that which generally informs our understanding of the rest of Eisenstein's career. *October* will not merely yield themes, images or even strategies for future development or recurrence, such as we find in *Alexander Nevsky's* re-working of elements developed for *Che Viva Mexico*; *October* generates a formal program and a method that promise to transform existing cinema.

Warning Moussinac of the sharp break between *Potemkin* and *October* ("it is the dialectical denial of *Potemkin*"), he goes on to announce that he is ready to "overturn" his "entire system."

Thematically as well as formally. I think that we shall find our cinematography on 'the other side' of the acted film—that is, in the film

2. Léon Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, trans. D. Sandy Petrey, New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970, pp. 28-9.

as newsreel, as well as in the film as itself.³ And most amusing of all, this cinematography will be genetically ideological, for its substance will be the screening of . . . Here's a kind of *coup de théâtre*: the one essential word in all this hodgepodge doesn't come to mind, my explanation becomes a charade. And no dictionary at hand. Okay, take the German word *begriff* (concept, Idea). But there is no absolute *begriff*. They are always 'classical'. (From the word 'class' and not 'classicism'.)⁴

The consequences of that break between *Potemkin* and *October* were envisaged as momentous. The 19th century's proto-cinematic fascination with the prospect of "the philosophical toy" is to be realized and transformed in a filmic enterprise which will subject the productive structure subtending that toy, its technology and its claim of absolute objectivity to rigorous critical analysis. Film will indeed be philosophical or it will not, in any but a trivial sense, be. The function of the celebratory work just completed is discovered by its maker, reading *Capital*, to be propadeutic. The filmic translation of the *Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* that must follow will establish the level and the mode of a truly revolutionary cinematic consciousness. Eisenstein's intuition that the projected work might anticipate or confront a bourgeois effort whose function is analogous to that of Feuerbachian analysis seen in relation to that of Marx, is extremely interesting. He seems, by implication, to propose the new film as combining, for that reason, the theoretical functions of *The German Ideology* and of *Capital*. To this we shall return.

*

Throughout his working life and irrespective of the episodic deviations or reversals enforced by specific historical circumstance, Eisenstein was at pains to ground his conceptions of montage in the dynamics of the dialectic and, further, to specify the manner in which the former is the concrete film form of the latter. Although he will ultimately declare that "montage thinking is inseparable from the general content of thinking as a whole,"⁵ he works, in the 1920's toward an articulation of montage as the formal instantiation of cinema's triadic rehearsal of the dialectic. Its essentially dynamic character derives from the spectator's constant

3. I am indebted to Jay Leyda for the information that the sequence of "Kerensky's Rise" in *October* was derived from a newsreel sequence shown to Eisenstein by Esther Shub. This gives a somewhat ambiguous character to Eisenstein's remark, as one might also interpret it, within the context of the immediately preceding proclamation of being "ready to overturn my entire system," as a rejection of the techniques developed in the acted film in favour of a documentary method of the sort advocated by Vertov throughout their long, intermittent debate.

4. Moussinac, p. 28.

5. Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today," in *Film Form*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1949, p. 234.

resolution, solicited by the style of 1924-29, of "conflict" between "colliding shots." The parameters of that synthetic resolution, of those "collisions" are subjected to a constant extension, so that the rhythmic oppositions—or antitheses—of shot size, camera angle or directionality proliferate into the later all-over structure of the overtone style, in which the system of montage "built on particular dominants" is, by virtue of a totalizing principle, extended to all parameters susceptible to organization.⁶

It is, of course, this constant and progressive radicalization, together with its persistent theorization, which distinguish him not only from Griffith, but from colleagues such as Kuleshov and Pudovkin. Searching recent history for the clarification offered by some parallel endeavor, one thinks of the manner in which the Schönbergian row, as developed by Webern, was extended by Boulez in the 1950s, from the serial organization of pitches to that of timbre, attack, *etc.*

The function of montage, in the hyperbolic instances of the heroic era, was maieutic. Its strength is judged to reside "primarily in the fact that the desired image is not fixed or ready-made, but arises—is born . . . assembled in the spectator's perception."

. . . . it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along with self-same road that the author traveled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author.⁷

And for Eisenstein, as for Marx, "not only the result, but the road to it also, is a part of the truth. The investigation of truth must itself be true, true investigation is unfolded truth, the disjunct members of which unite in the result."

October had been Eisenstein's most elaborate and sophisticated effort in the direction of the radically maieutic cinema, and in at least two different ways. Its spatio-temporal distensions and syntheses had, as in the celebrated sequence of *The Lifting of the Bridge*, reordered action in a multiplicity of aspects and positions thus altering the temporal flow of the event and of its surrounding narrative structure.⁸ The result was a declared disjunction of constituents, soliciting a new quality of attention and eliciting inferences as to spatial and temporal relations. Perception of the disjunction within the distended moment and fragmented space, had to be cognitively resynthesized by the spectator into the order of an event. The recaptured unity of constituents that were experienced as discrete

6. Among the texts in which this development is discussed is "Methods of Montage," *Film Form*, pp. 72-83.

7. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Sense*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., p. 32.

8. For a detailed discussion of this sequence see my "Camera Lucida/Camera Obscura," *Artforum* XI, (January, 1973), 30-37.

was heightened by the apprehension of a temporal wedge, driven into the flow of narrative, a temporality exceptional, *momentous*, epic in form.

In another, more generally familiar sense (it is explicated in his writings), Eisenstein worked in *October* to develop, as "a ladder to a completely different idea of cinema," the technique which could induce a cognitive grasp, not only of abstract concepts as such, in the material concreteness of their class determination, but of the very forms and methods of discourse. This was to be the "intellectual montage" proposed in "the dance of the Gods about Korniloff," an atheological argument demanding or impelling logical deduction.⁹

Now, the common feature of these two forms of maieutic cinema is their analytic mode, developed and intensified by the varieties of disjunction facilitated by the montage style. And it is Eisenstein's emphasis on the analytic function of cinema that sustains his work—theoretical and practical—of the 1920s. The last of the notes for *Capital* records the bleak intimation that this direction within innovative cinema—and indeed, within much of the advanced art of the Soviet Union—is destined to defeat by the close of the decade: "The tragedy of today's 'leftists' consists in the fact that the still incomplete analytic process finds itself in a situation in which synthesis is demanded."

*

When one turns from Moscow to consider the larger context within which Eisenstein must be read, one discovers that his sense of film as cognitive instrument and mode of discourse is shared or echoed in the concerns and intuitions of the major theorists of bourgeois Europe at that time. It is, in fact, during this period (1920-29) during the swift re-organization and acceleration of the industry following the First World War, that unprecedented hopes for cinema crystallize in an early theoretical literature. It is then, prior to the intervention of sound, that converging expectations and achievements produce the intimation of cinema as a unique, a privileged mode of analytic investigation. The acceleration of formal and technical development within the intensified rationalization and expanded market of the film industry, is attended by a buoyant expectancy, articulated in the speculative rhetoric of that early literature. (The writings of Elie Faure are among its most euphoric instances.) The sense of cinema as a possible agent of social transformation is general and will persist throughout the crises of the next half-century. What is particular to the theoretical and critical sensibility of that time is the recognition—not by Eisenstein alone, but in the theory and practice of Clair, Epstein, Vertov, Faure, Artaud, Benjamin, Balasz, Fondane, Léger and to some extent Delluc—of a new critical instrument, facilitating an epistemological inquiry of unprecedented immediacy and power. Before settling, however, for the notion of Eisenstein as a man of his time, it is instructive, for our purposes, briefly

9. This sequence is analysed in Noël Carroll's "For God and Country," *Artforum* XI (January, 1973), 56-60.

to compare the nature and consequences of his intuition and its articulation with that of another film-maker, Jean Epstein, whose practice and theoretical efforts are exactly contemporary with his and similarly subject, once the sound barrier had been passed, to periods of stress and silence.¹⁰

Epstein had started in 1921 to produce a body of theory which was co-extensive with his film-making career. Originating, like Eisenstein, in an Eastern European bourgeois milieu, he had, before turning to film, studied medicine and then turned to a literary career. His scientific and literary culture provided the terms of the sustained theoretical endeavor which, like Eisenstein's, stands in an intimately dialectical relationship to his film-making. Like Eisenstein, he was at every point concerned to ground his speculation in contemporary theoretical developments and thereby to intensify the sense of each fresh stage of his work as a matter of present, functional necessity, while aspiring, at the same time, to the constitution of an ontology of cinema. Like the Soviet artist, he was both reserved and innovative in his attitude to sound, and his eventual use of it, involving a slowed tempo consistent with his experiment in slow motion, parallels Eisenstein's insistence on the new parameter's disjunctiveness as a guarantee of the preservation of the montage technique into the period after 1929.

Epstein is concerned to account for and to preserve the initial sense of wonder elicited by the appearance of the medium, threatened with extinction through the intensive development of the narrative codes during that decade. His insistence on the productiveness, the inventiveness inherent in this attitude derives, no doubt, from a traditionally empirical stance. He is the advocate of the revelatory power of specifically cinematic techniques and processes as such. The modifications of spatial and temporal experience provided through slow, accelerated or reverse motion will provide fresh access to the true, concealed nature of the phenomenal world. The revisions of perception and judgment impelled by that access would confirm scientific discovery and redirect epistemological inquiry. Like Vertov, Epstein is, of course, a member of the generation fascinated by developments in quantum physics and by the theory of relativity. They play something of the structural role in the formation of his thinking that Pavlovian theory assumes in Eisenstein's earlier theoretical efforts.¹¹

10. "If Epstein knew particularly hard times around 1935, as the history of his film-making shows, he learned very quickly what conclusions to draw from them. Forced to play second fiddle to men who no longer understood him, he rapidly learned how to recover, to take refuge in short features rather than to stop making true cinema. How many others have had that kind of courage?" Henri Langlois, "The Creative Work of Jean Epstein," *Cinemascope*, No. 2 (1955), trans. Bob Lamberton, New York, Anthology Film Archive. This detail of Epstein's career, contemporary with Eisenstein's difficulties as they culminated in the public humiliation at the Conference of the All Soviet Union of Film-Makers in 1935, produced similar results—the stoical decision to relocate effort in another context, less subject to the pressures and contradictions of the developing industry of the 1930's. The option open to Epstein was the short film; in Eisenstein's case, it was an intensified teaching schedule. These parallel circumstances suggest that the work—and the problematic careers—of both men must be considered as part of a larger historical moment whose contradictions were intensifying in both East and West.

11. Pavlovian theory is influential in the early development of the theory of "attractions," and in

Little or no attention has been paid until now to the many unique qualities film can give to the representation of things. Hardly anyone has realized that the cinematic image carries a warning of something monstrous, that it bears a subtle venom which could corrupt the entire rational order so painstakingly imagined in the destiny of the universe.

And the subversion of that "rational" order is seen as akin to that of science itself.

Discovery always means learning that objects are not as we had believed them to be; to know more, one must first abandon the most evident certainties of established knowledge. Although not certain, it is not inconceivable that what appears to us as a strange perversity, a surprising nonconformity, as a transgression and a defect of the screen's animated images might serve to advance another step into that "terrible underside of things" which was terrifying even to Pasteur's pragmatism. . . . Now, the cinematograph seems to be a mysterious mechanism intended to assess the false accuracy of Zeno's famous argument about the arrow, intended for the analysis of the subtle metamorphosis of stasis into mobility, of emptiness into solid, of continuous into discontinuous, a transformation as stupefying as the generation of life from inanimate elements.¹²

And Epstein's wonder—it is a kind of *terreur sacrée et savante*—culminates in a later text, of 1928, contemporaneous therefore with Eisenstein's planning of *Capital*:

Slow motion actually brings a new range to dramaturgy. Its power of laying bare the emotions of dramatic enlargements, its infallibility in the designation of the sincere movements of the soul, are such that it obviously outclasses all the tragic modes at this time. I am sure, and all those who have seen certain parts of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* are also sure, that if a high-speed film were made of an accused person during this interrogation, then from beyond his words, the truth would appear, unique, evident, written out, that there would no longer be any need of indictment, or of lawyers' speeches, or of any other proof than that provided by the deep images."¹³

Eisenstein's concern with inducing states of maximally intense response in the spectator. The transition from this concern to later preoccupations, abundantly documented in late texts such as "Non-Indifferent Nature," deserves careful study.

12. Jean Epstein, "The Universe Head over Heels," *Ecrits sur le Cinéma*, Paris, 1974, pp. 257-263. The section here quoted is extracted from a translation by Stuart Liebman to be published in issue no. 3 of OCTOBER.

13. Jean Epstein, "A Conversation with Jean Epstein," *L'Ami du Peuple*, May 11, 1928, trans. Bob Lamberton, New York, Anthology Film Archives.

This sense of cinema as revelatory of truth is, of course shared by Marxists such as Vertov. Compare with these remarks, Vertov's account of the revelation afforded by seeing himself filmed, while in a perilous leap, in slow motion, and Benjamin's observations on the same process considered as a technique for the psychoanalysis of gesture. Epstein's notion of cinema as a critical instrument is, however, couched in terms that are wholly innocent of an awareness of social or class determination. Cinema is, for him, never glimpsed as a form of production, subject to the material conditions of production. The ground of his theory is identical to that described by Marx as that of Feuerbach:

Feuerbach speaks in particular of the perception of natural science; he mentions secrets which are disclosed only to the eye of the physicist and chemist; but where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this 'pure' natural science is provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry, through the sensuous activity of men. So much is this activity, this unceasing sensuous labour and creation, this production, the basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists, that, were it interrupted only for a year, Feuerbach would not only find an enormous change in the natural world, but would very soon find that the whole world of men and his own perceptive faculty, nay his own existence, were missing.¹⁴

For Vertov, the systematic exploitation of cinematic processes (or "anomalies," as he called them), of slowed, accelerated and reversed motion, of split-screen and of superimposition, of disjunctions in rhythm and in cutting were to be put to the service of revelation—but that revelation, was a "Communist decoding of the world," inseparable from the heightening of class consciousness. Vertov wished to make films that had the same basically necessary qualities as shoes or other useful objects, films "that would clarify the relations of workers with each other."

Epstein's view of cinema's critical function is, then, in a sense clearly evident by comparison with Vertov and Eisenstein, pre-materialist. It is the clearest and most sophisticated exposition of cinema's epistemological dimension developed prior to their own work, and it does appear, in relation to their thinking and their practice, to occupy, within the historical development of film theory, a place roughly analogous to that of Feuerbach, considered as pre-Marxist. The filmmaker who developed his prime strategy of intellectual montage as a "Dance of the Gods around Korniloff" was most certainly aware of Feuerbach's importance and his limitations, and of Marx's view expressed in the opening lines of the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*: "The critique of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism. . . . The foundation of this critique is the following: man makes religion, religion does not make the man." We do not know if Eisenstein was familiar with Epstein's critical position as expressed in his

14. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, New York, International Publishers, 1970, p. 73.

theoretical writings.¹⁵ It is here, however, that we can grasp the sharpness of his hypothesis of a future bourgeois cinema in the discursively analytic mode, recapitulating the history of pre-Marxist criticism and producing, in the process, a work whose role in the development of theoretical practice will be analogous to that of *The Idea of Christianity*. The film theory and practice of the last decade do, in fact, demonstrate a development of this sort in which the critique of religion has naturally been replaced by the critique of illusionism.¹⁶ We can, at any rate, hypothesize Eisenstein's judgment of Epstein as having, in the terms of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, "only interpreted the world, in various ways," and going on to claim that "the point is to *change* it."¹⁷

The notes for *Capital*, then, are a program for the development of the cognitive instrument in the service of revolutionary change, for a film in which "the established place of the theme is taken by the subject of basic method." And the "leap," as Eisenstein likes to put it, "is made" into the materialist cinema for which *Strike* is the first exploratory preparation.

Strike was, as we know, the result of Eisenstein's propulsion from the space of theater into that of cinema, the direct consequence of his staging of Tretyakov's *Gas Masks* within the setting of a real factory. In a celebrated text¹⁸ he has described that movement of propulsion.

In *Gas Masks* we see all the elements of film tendencies meeting. The turbines, the factory background negated the last remnants of make-up and theatrical costumes, and all elements appeared as independently fused. Theater accessories in the midst of real factory plastics appeared ridiculous. The element of play was incompatible with the acrid smell of gas. The pitiful platform kept getting lost among the real platforms of labor activity. In short the production was a failure. And we found ourselves in the cinema.

And Eisenstein, whose cinema will become identified with the fixed shot as the

15. Eisenstein mentions Jean Epstein's *La Chute de la Maison Usher* in "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," *Film Form*, pp. 43-4. It is cited as a "commendable example" of the use of slow motion in contradistinction to the "formalist jackstraws and unmotivated camera mischief" of Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera*. Although he has evidently not seen the Epstein film, he remarks upon the way in which "in this film, normally acted emotions filmed with a speeded-up camera are said to give unusual emotional pressure by their unrealistic slowness on the screen." *Usher* is cited, together with Kabuki theatre, as an instance of intensified "perception of disintegrated action" in "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," *Film Form*, pp. 43-4. I have discussed the reasons for Eisenstein's use of Epstein in his onslaught against Vertov in "The Man with the Movie Camera: From Magician to Epistemologist," *Artforum* X (March, 1972), 60-72.

16. This development, in which I include my own published work, calls in turn for intensive critical analysis.

17. One recalls in this connection Eisenstein's early countering of the Vertovian notion of the "cine-eye" with that of the "cine-fist." Although apparently a response to a specifically polemical situation, it can be read as an earlier re-formulation of this thesis.

18. In "Through Theater to Cinema," *Film Form*, p. 16.

dominant component of the montage style, responded with his exquisitely vivid sense of the material and practical qualities of the immediate physical situation into which he had been thus propelled. *Strike* presents in its opening passage a sumptuous aerial crane shot which sweeps through the space of the assembly line—produced, of course, by using an industrial crane from the factory itself.¹⁹

This first film, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the revolution of 1905 and planned as part of a series “Toward the Dictatorship (of the Proletariat),” has been described as the laboratory of Eisenstein’s cinematic *oeuvre*. In its deployment of cinematic processes, its use of superimposition, animation, masking, fades, split screen and even of reverse motion, in its metaphorical prodigality, it is, of all his films, the closest to those of Vertov. And it is therefore hardly surprising that he will, in a later Janovist era, speak of it with something of the severity with which he castigates Vertov, and particularly *The Man with the Movie Camera*, Vertov’s supreme achievement, contemporary with *October* and the notes for *Capital*. To these strictures we shall return as well.

In 1925 it is *Strike* which embodies Eisenstein’s developing vision of a materialist cinema. This very first film, dealing directly with the dynamics of labor-capital relationships while exploring the cinematic processes themselves in all their variety, must now be read as the direct anticipation of *Capital* developed through *October*. It is at the center of the significant early text, “On the Question of a Materialist Approach to Form.”²⁰ We are now in a position to read that text—and to re-read others, more familiar to us (among them, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form” and “Filmic Fourth Dimension”²¹) written out of the intensive work on *October* and *The General Line*, just prior to the departure for Europe.

In the text of 1925, Eisenstein proposes *Strike* as revolutionary in terms not of its “content—the mass revolutionary movement” but rather in so far as

... it proposes a clearly determined formal procedure for approaching as a whole a large quantity of historically revolutionary material—a way of discovering the logic of production and revealing a technique of methods of struggle understood as a ‘vital’ and variable process, subject only to the conditions and power relationships of each phrase of its development. This required a montage construction

19. The history of the camera movement as generally presented in the standard texts urgently requires radical and extensive revision so as to take into account the enormous repertory developed in the films of Soviet Union’s economic reconstruction during the 1920’s. Vertov’s work (particularly in films such as *One Sixth of the World* (1926) and *The Eleventh Year* (1928)) are, of course, the richest in this respect, for in them the camera is mounted on every conceivable component of the industrial environment documented. The movements of varying direction and speed ingeniously constituted by Mikhail Kaufman and his co-workers are, moreover, frequently contrasted or counterpointed by use of split screen and superimposition.

20. Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, ed. S. Yutkevich, Moscow, Iskusstvo Editions, Volume I., pp. 109-16. A French translation by Bernard Eisenschitz and Jacques Aumont has been published in *Cahiers du Cinema*, nos. 220-21, May-June, 1970, pp. 32-6. I have retranslated this text.

21. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, pp. 45-63 and 64-71.

conceived according to the basic formal nature of the material. The new cinema is a consequence of a new type of social contract, an attempt to integrate, not the aesthetic revolution of the past twenty-five years, but immediately useful phenomena: in particular, the structural principle of presenting the processes of production within the film. This choice is important in that it transcends the limits of the aesthetic. . . . More important, from a materialist point of view, this sphere was explored. The principles of heavy industry, factory production and the forms of the process of production can alone determine the ideology of revolutionary art forms, just as they have determined revolutionary ideology in general.

Revolutionary form is the product of correct technical methods, which result in the concretization of a new vision and a new approach to things and to phenomena. The new class ideology is the authentic renewal, not only of social significance, but also of the material and technical nature of cinema, manifested in what is called 'our content.'

Eisenstein then proceeds in this text, which speaks the idiom of the *proletkult*, to point to a flaw in the "formal bolshevism" of *Strike*:

. . . the absence of material exhaustively illustrating the technique of the bolsheviks' clandestine action and the *economic premises* of the strike; this certainly does constitute a grave defect of content, a defect of both subject and ideology, although in this case it is all a question of incomplete exposition of the process of production.²²

Returning to the notes for *Capital*, we recognise in them a corrected and amplified development of a continuous project, integrating the lesson of *Strike's* most significant omission. The economic premises of class struggle are to be unpacked and integrated into the formal discourse of a *Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* in which the concrete, material premises and techniques of production and their consequences will be proposed through a structure of cinematic implications and inferences for which *October* provides basic strategies and a partial model. In the proposed key work of the philosophical cinema, the documentary footage is subjected to logical reduction of a rigor such that experiment "external to the thesis" is rendered "impossible." The film of *Capital*, building upon the techniques of "intellectual montage" will release cinema from its role of chronicle and of contemplation into that of an agent of revolutionary change. For this reason, it is a work with a "libretto" by Marx: that is to say, no cinematic rendering of a book but a filmic implementation of the structure and techniques of its analytic method. Eisenstein then casts about for solutions to the

22. Sergei Eisenstein, "On the Question of a Materialist Approach to Form," *Cahiers du Cinema*, nos. 220-221, May-June, 1970, p. 35.

complex structural problems posed. And it is at this point that he encounters Joyce.

We have always known that Eisenstein wished to make a film of *Ulysses*, but we do not know the status of this wish. We do not have evidence of it as a practical project, as a plan. We do, of course, have considerable, though fragmentary, evidence of the manner in which the impulse persisted into Eisenstein's later work. The project for *An American Tragedy* drawn up in Hollywood²⁵ and the continuing preoccupation with the psychology of inner speech²⁶ attest to that persistence.

Moreover, it has always appeared that *Capital* and *Ulysses*, must stand in inter-relation as the two central texts defining the outer limits of Eisenstein's enterprise—as if, perhaps, the analytic project of the 1920s was succeeded by the most radical of aesthetic syntheses in the rendering of the movement of consciousness itself. We know now that there was a pivotal period in which the planning of *Capital* and the reading of *Ulysses* were simultaneous. In the work note of April 8, 1928, which concludes with the realization that “there are endlessly possible themes for filming in *Capital* (price, income rent),” Eisenstein tells us that “the official dedication of *Capital* will be to the Second International (“they will be overjoyed”), while “the formal side is dedicated to Joyce.”

N. Y., 1976

(This is the first section of an essay in three parts.)

23. The incorporation of the inner monologue as derived from both Joyce and Dujardin is described by Eisenstein in “A Course in Treatment,” *Film Form*, pp. 103-107.

24. This interest is developed in numerous later texts, including “Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today,” *Film Form*, pp. 245-51.

Film About a Woman Who . . .

All of the credits are black type on white background. "IT" stands for "inter-title"; "v-o" for "voice-over"; "b" and "w" for black and white; other abbreviations are CU (close-up), MCU (medium . . .), LS (long shot), MLS (medium . . .), MS (medium shot).

SOUND

Thunder and rain begin.

IMAGE

Film About a Woman Who . . .

with Dempster Leech, Shirley Soffer, John Erdman, Renfreu Neff

and James Barth, Epp Kotkas, Sarah Soffer, Yvonne Rainer, Tannis Hugill, Valda Setterfield

Technical Assistants
Scott Billingsley, Epp Kotkas, Barry Ralbag,
Karl Schurman

Sound: Deborah S. Freedman, Kurt Munkacsi
(The Basement), Lawrence Loewinger, Titles:
Neil Murphy

Excerpts from "La Sonnambula," Vincenzo Bellini, Orchestra and Chorus of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; "Maria Elena," The Baja Marimba Band; Three piano sonatas by Edvard Grieg "Thanks," "Arietta," "Native Land" played by Philip Corner.

Photos from the Mangolte and Soffer families.

Financed in part by fees derived from performances of "This is the story of a woman who . . .," "Performance around an unfinished film," "Kristina (For a Novella)"

and also by funding from The American Theater Laboratory, National Endowment on the Arts, Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films, Change Inc.

Narrated by Yvonne Rainer and John Erdman

Cinematographer: Babette Mangolte

edited by Yvonne Rainer and Babette Mangolte

Written and directed by Yvonne Rainer
1972-1974

D, S, J, & R on sofa watching slides. (MCU)

D scratches nose.

R crosses legs.

S looks at J.

IT: agreeing . . . (w on b)

Projected slide (b on w): But only momentarily. It is quite possible that by this time he feels very bad. This stage of his life as a captive audience-for-one seems based in artifice and as such must sooner or later come to a close. He sighs to himself. "Such delicious artifice. Nowhere is captivity less painful or more complete."

*IT: (full frame, b on w) same as above.
no image*

(Sound of rain fades out.)

**Silhouetted backs of group on sofa watching slide of text beginning with "dilemma" and ending with "what else?"*

Thunder and rain continue.

Y' voice:

He feels a growing irritation. He had run into her on the way to the shooting. He hadn't seen her for a year. Some banter was exchanged. Now he is reviewing the conversation in his mind "She hasn't changed a bit," he muses to himself. His mind works in spirals as he watches the slides.

Earlier this week she saw them on the other side of the street and was surprised at her response—mild distaste rather than the rage she had anticipated. The whole thing now seemed rather sordid. It was receding. She had ducked into a shop to avoid them.

He thinks about making love, then about being in love, then about performing. Then he thinks about her: his very gaze seemed to transform her into a performer, a realized fantasy of herself. Sometimes it was almost as if she were saying "Look at me, look at me—a small price to pay for my love in return." He finds himself agreeing.

She tries to reconstruct the passage from the novel that had so impressed her. The best she can do is: "All is finally clarified. It is unspeakable, but clear. The reach of my jealousy, of my certainty of betrayal, engulfs me at every step. It is unthinkable that I live in this condition in intimacy with another person. And the possibility of living a life without intimate connections is equally intolerable. Is it any wonder that the most plausible solution is to remove my existence? I see no way through my dilemma.* I am not one to compromise; I wish I were; my life would be easier. The phone is ringing. . . . It's always been all or nothing for

me. This s
this very m
She can't re
that had fo
dire solutio
wracking h
what else,

The rain r
years old,
was sitting
five other p
woman or
about her
girl has se
Without a
shut the v
room.

She think
last night
about the
Their tal
vaginal b
back to s
herself th
between
seemed l
again," s
interactio

me. This statement is for ART, even though at this very moment I don't know where to turn." She can't remember, hard as she tries, the passage that had followed. It had suggested that such a dire solution might not be necessary. She is now wracking her brain to remember . . . What else, what else, what else?

The rain makes her think of when she was 18 years old, spending a summer in Chicago. She was sitting by an open window in a room with five other people. It had started to rain heavily. A woman on the other side of the room was talking about her baby sitter. She said, "I hope the stupid girl has sense enough to close the windows." Without a second thought she reached over and shut the window. A stunned silence fell on the room.

She thinks about the snow in Vermont and their last night in the cabin—the four of them lolling about the sleeping-loft warmed by a wood fire. Their talk had ranged over motion and phallic-vaginal body parts and illusion and comfort and back to sex-as-illusion. Again she repeats to herself the remembered phrase "Easy locomotion between comfort and discomfort." Now it all seemed like good social titillation. "Contempt again," she thinks. "But I can't help it. Social interactions seem to be mostly about seduction."

Projected slides:

S on beach.

S in field.

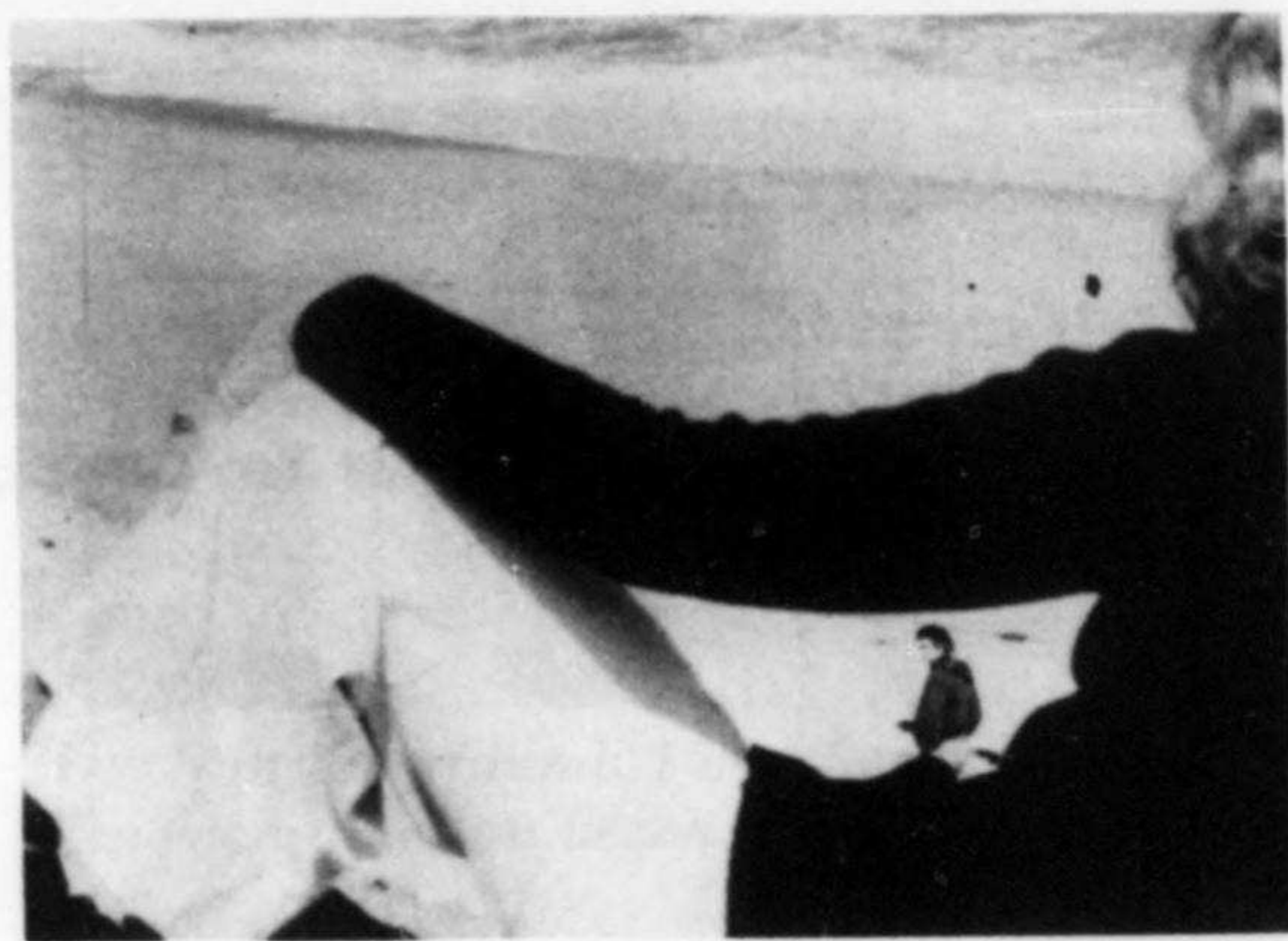
S with children.

S and camel.

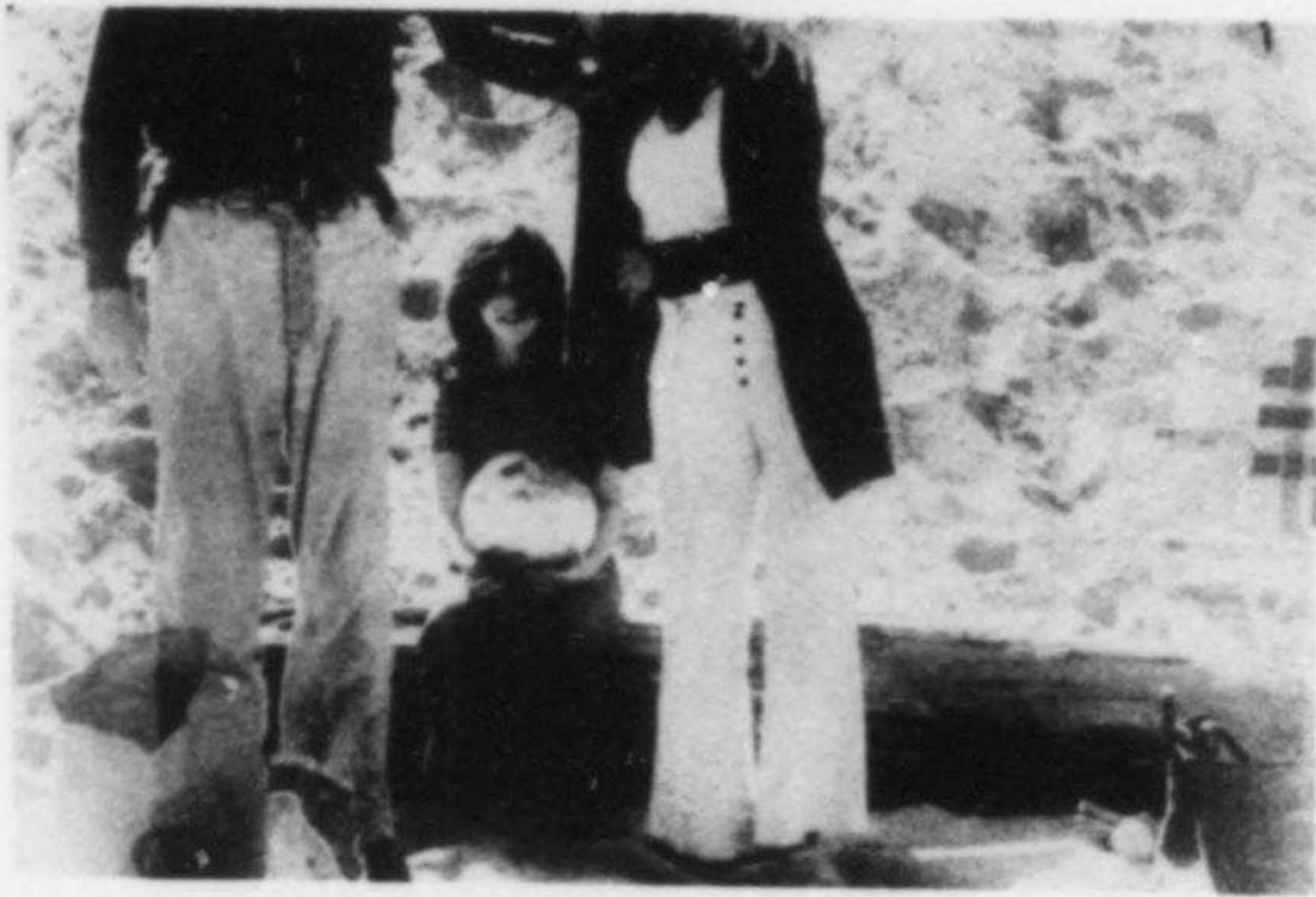
Full frame photo of S and camel.

LS J on beach.

S enters with square of glass.



S in foreground with J on beach positioning himself in spaces formed by her limbs.



MCU J, S, and Sarah pose on beach as for a still camera.

Backs of group on sofa watching slides:
 Wedding group
 Three women and baby
 Two women
 Mother and son
 Young man
 Shirley and family
 Shirley, Sarah, John
 J and R

Full frame photo of J and R as above dissolves into

IT (w on b): Events of the past rose like waves and battering against her mind threw it into a wild commotion of shame, grief, and joy.

MCU D sits watching TV. Sarah sits on floor leaning against his chair. She plays with a small clay bear. He occasionally looks at her. Camera moves in arc from right to left.

MCU J & R pose for photo.

The man danced with the three-year old child. It went on for a long time. He didn't take his eyes off of her. He manipulated her tiny soft limbs in time to the music. He bent down to her, lifted her up, turned her around under his hand, delicately balancing and manoeuvring her body, which at times his two huge hands all but concealed from view. She could not stop looking at the two of them. The sensuality of the dance fascinated her, and then as time passed it became bizarre. She began to be uneasy in the realization that he knew that *she* in particular was watching.

J's voice:

First an e
 through
 particula
 moment
 nature of
 with her
 had drag
 Yet it wa
 ball. It w
 dance th
 was still
 known,
 How mu
 was real
 conceal
 when sh
 impossi
 . . . whe
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 argued.
 seemed
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 Which
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 terrible
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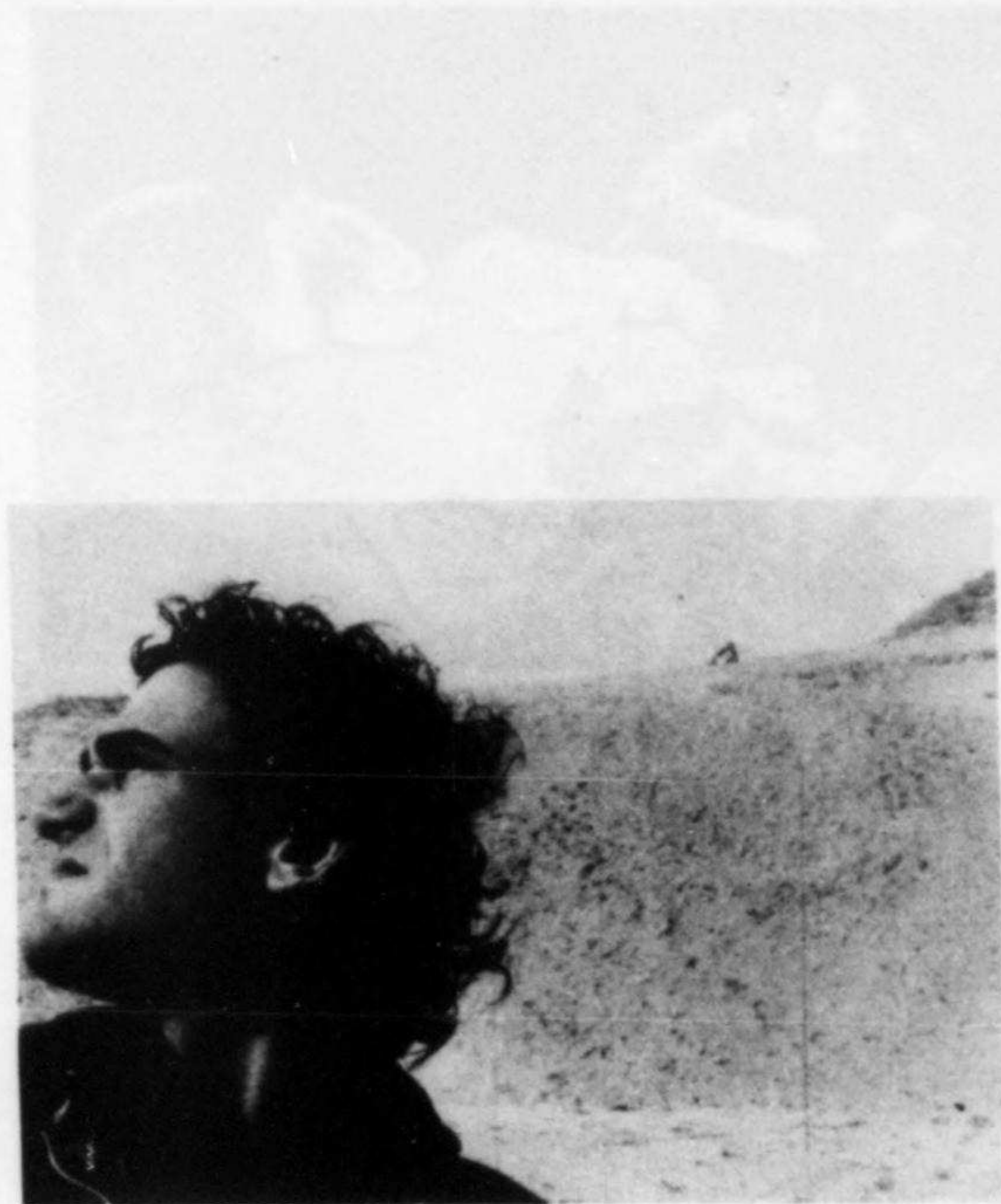
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First an emptiness like a great white bird soared through her. Then she began to think about particulars: the quality of his intelligence at the moment, his insight into the nature of her struggle, his refusal to go along with her desperate He had dragged it all out of her. Now she had to pay. Yet it was a relief that he was now carrying the ball. It was his turn to and not dance the fandango in And there was still so much she didn't know, which, if known, might have made her act differently. How much of the problem of their differences was real and how much was a smokescreen to conceal? Her mind clouded when she tried to answer. She had set him an impossible task. ". to allow me to when I need to," she had told him. He had reminded her that *she* was not so of *his* She pleaded special circumstances. They argued. His voice was hard and curt. The die seemed cast. Yet in some way she trusted him. He would They would meet again. If only he could say "But we really"

Which was all very well for *her* to say, having jumped the gun in Then that terrible accusation of his. She couldn't even repeat it, it Yet it posed another question: "Is it possible that I have really, that I will never make Only in this way survive." So be it. There are worse ways to live. Being so may very well She felt, however, little conviction. And finally, she grew calmer, almost resigned. They had both been —her terror and the —slowly eroding and regard him and pleasure.

(Silence for about 1½ minutes.)

She had dinner with him and his male lover and several of their friends. It was a noisy ebullient gathering. Some of her previous reservations about him were revived with renewed force. "He seems to be one way and then you meet his friends and you think "How can he stand them?"



J in foreground (CU), S very small on cliff. He turns his head, scans sky.



CU S in foreground. J and Sarah walk away from each other on beach.



MS S, D, and Sarah at table. S flips pages of book; D watches over bread in toaster.

IT: Madame the healer. (w on b)

MS of table from another angle. D dunks toast in coffee and hands it to Sarah.

IT (w on b): When thinking this over, she became self-critical. Finally she gave it up and went out to the museum.

Fade-up on photo of Pantheon exterior.

And then you realize that he can stand them because he is *like* them in certain disagreeable respects." And yet she didn't want to dismiss him. "It isn't that I expect him to be only . . . I want him to . . ."

"Don't waste your time over these old-fashioned faggots," she admonishes herself, "with their pendulum swings from gentle passivity to nasty aggression. The ones who still refer to each other as 'she'."

She likes him because he is so gifted and has done so much work on himself. He still thinks of art, however, as a form of self-immolation. "Why did you not write about *them*?" he had asked her. An indirect rebuke for her self-involvement. She had to admit that she really did believe that her own life was more interesting than that of anyone who might portray it in performance, or she couldn't deal with anyone else's life as interestingly as she could with her own. If this applied to her, it was equally true of him. But she didn't want to go into it at the dinner. And besides, it would have put her in a condescending position. He had never sought her advice. She didn't want to risk taking on needless responsibility with regard to him.

She had a kind of mind incapable of encompassing historical data. She could understand an event only through illustration—such as the plaster casts of people in death throes at Pompeii, the paintings at Versailles depicting

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the inflated gestures of Louis XIV. She visited the Pantheon at different times of day. She didn't respond when he beckoned to her to come over to listen to the recorded lecture on the earphones. She knew that to know who was buried there would not make the visit any more meaningful to her. She stood in the great expanse of floor and enclosed light and felt her mind soar.

By the end of the day she was sick of madonnas holding up their male infants, saints holding their bloody foreheads, martyrs holding their heads, angels holding their fingers up, duchesses holding up their robes, dukes holding their falcons, soldiers holding their spears, lions holding up banners, and virgins holding up mirrors. "Everything is about seduction or death . . ." But then she thinks of her own recent situation and the word "resignation" springs to her mind. But she knows she can't resign herself to it and must sooner or later have a confrontation or simply end it. She would not add her name to his collection of dubious friendships.

After three days in that city she began to panic. How was she to face him when he arrived? What she had not allowed to intrude on her consciousness at home was now a reality: she couldn't go on with it. Even this brief interlude was enough to make her aware of a tremendous relief and renewed purpose. She had to tell him. She felt at once anxious and happy. How had she stood it for so long?

Photo of interior.

Cluny tapestry

Etruscan fresco

Drawing of pillars

Greek relief

painting of Coliseum

painting of Roman scene

Versailles

Roman Forum

Grand Canyon

Las Vegas

Borghese Garden

Las Vegas on left, 1920's photo of woman and cat on right.

She lived there for a month without seeing anybody she knew. She talked only when buying food or dealing with tradespeople. She never heard or spoke her own language.



Ocean with (white) titles at top of frame:

In short, suddenly she found herself in a bad way.

no title. Camera pans to left.



The light from the open doorway shows a man and a woman coming from the opposite direction.

no title. Camera pans to r.

Somehow she suspects she has failed miserably again. She has failed to tell herself what she wanted. "Let him figure it out for both of us!"

no title

J's voice: She tries to go back to the earliest move that had launched this particular series of *faux pas*. Perhaps it was not too late to set things right.

(In the following section all titles are black type against a white ground.)

IT: An Emotional Accretion in 48 Steps

IT: 1 She confides to him a deep hatred she feels for someone.

IT: 2 Later she is offended when he talks at length about meeting with that person.

IT: 3

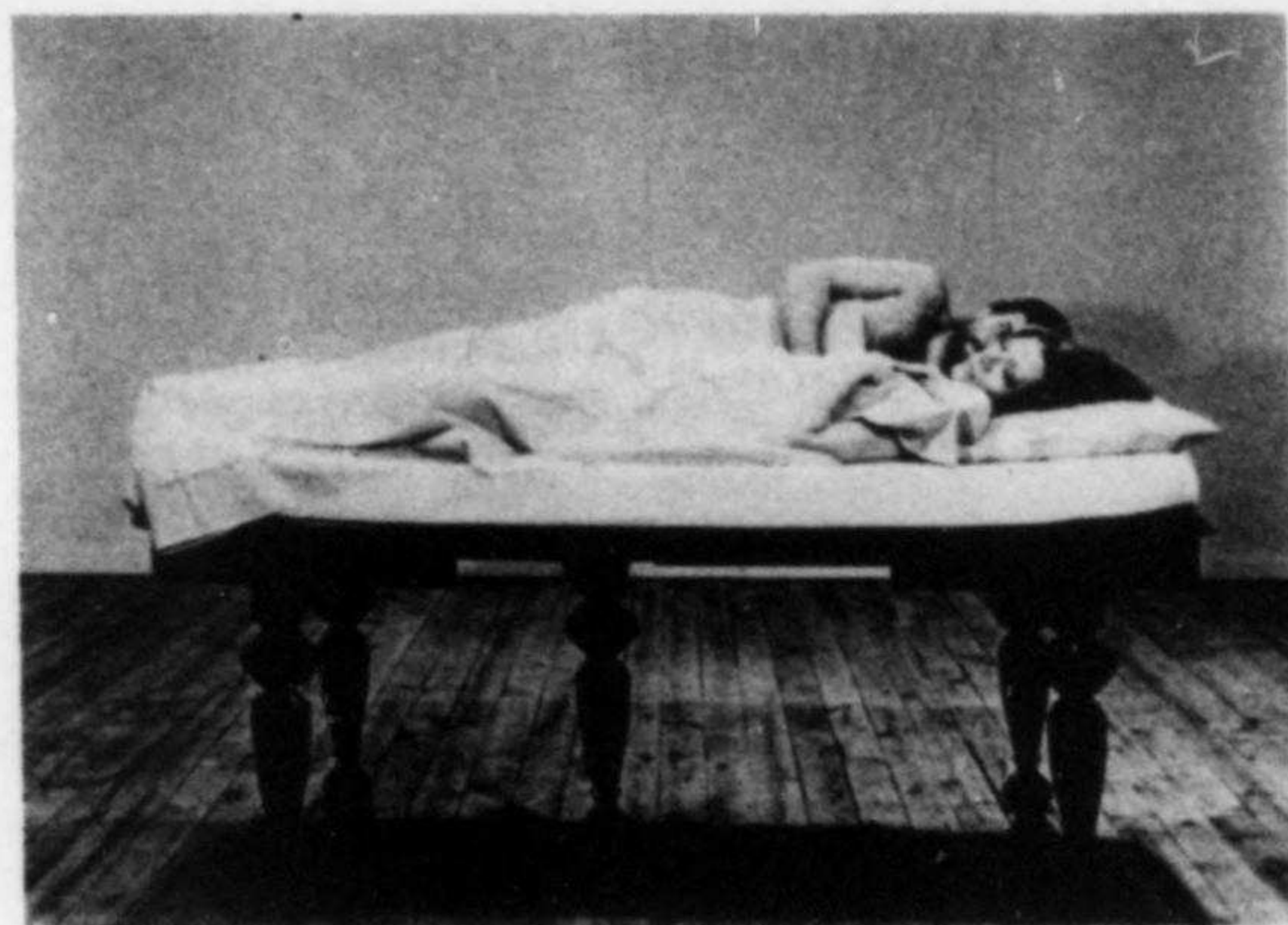
MLS D and R in bed (on table).

He is pu

She pre

R (lips

He is puzzled by her behavior.



She pretends to sleep.

IT: 4

MCU D and R in bed. His eyes are open; hers are shut.

IT: 5

MCU D touches R's hand.

IT: 6 She imagines herself telling him to go away.

IT: 7

MCU (same as above)—D withdraws hand.

IT: 8 She decides to demand his affection.

IT: 9

R (lipsync): "Would you hold me?"



IT: 10

MCU D takes R in his arms.

rest move
of faux
things

IT: 11 She tells him she's upset.

IT: 12

MCU D speaking to R.

IT: 13

IT: 14

CU D and R kissing.

IT: 15 They make love.

IT: 16

CU Kiss.

IT: 17

MCU They both sleep.

IT: 18 The next morning she gets up early and works for an hour.

IT: 19

MCU D sleeping alone in bed.

IT: 20



MCU R removes her diaphragm.

IT: 21

MCU D eats breakfast & reads newspaper.

IT: 22

J's voice: He apologizes.

She whimpers.

He congratulates himself on clearing up the matter. He becomes aroused.

She participates with pleasure, but something is still bugging her.

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He analyzes the situation. She doesn't say much.

MCU R in shower, reaches for towel.

IT: 23

She feels uneasy.

MCU D at table, looking to right and talking.

IT: 24 He continues to use the pronoun "we."
He is pleased with his clarity.

IT: 25

She agrees that "getting what you want" is the only way to proceed, but she . . .

IT: 26 He thinks the main fear "we" share is that getting gratification will result in a withdrawal of love by the other.

27
doesn't express the
annoyance she feels.
Why is he talking
about that now, and
why is he saying
"we"?

He thinks the situation is resolved.

IT: 28

Camera in hall. D comes out door and walks down stairs.

They see each other that night in a complicated social situation.

IT: 29

(Duet & chorus from "La Sonambula" begins and continues through #48.)

LS jumble of furniture and people.

IT: 30 She is on edge, but

IT: 31

MCU R with glass in hand talks and laughs. D looks at her, then whispers in her ear.

IT: 32 "Let's go to my place."

IT: 33 She agrees, but grudgingly.

IT: 34 At his place she says she doesn't feel like making love.

IT: 35

MS D & R in bed. He repeatedly "checks her out."

IT: 36 He knows something is wrong.

IT: 37

CU D and R in bed. Heads face camera. As they speak subtitles appear:

(D) I feel good with you.

(R) I'm glad.

IT: 38 Something is bugging her.

IT: 39

MCU: D and R lying in bed.

IT: 40

MCU as above—R places her hand on D's groin (on top of quilt). He removes her hand and rolls away from her onto his side. She does likewise.

IT: 41 In the morning she is hugely depressed.

IT: 42

MCU D in bed. R, fully dressed and holding coat, bends over and kisses him, then leaves frame.

IT: 43 She arrives home.

IT: 44 She is very angry.

IT: 45 She knows the crucial moment was when she said "Hold me."

IT: 46 Somehow she had betrayed herself. She hadn't wanted to be held.

IT: 47 (Do you think she could figure her way out of a paper bag?)

IT: 48 She had wanted to bash his fucking face in.

CU R's face.

Music ends in fiery blast.

R (lip-sync): "I'd like to kick your ass in!"

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About 30 seconds after IT ("Oh Christ . . .") appears, another duet and chorus from "La Sonambula" begins. The IT stays for another 30 or 45 seconds, then disappears.

Music fades down.

R's voice: "Doesn't that make you think of the movie?"

(long pause)

S (lip sync): "What movie?"

R's voice: "2001."

S (lip sync): "Oh yes, of course. Only in the movies can you send your mind away."

Y's voice: For some reason she is embarrassed about her reverie.

(long pause)

D's voice: "I don't think she really wanted to die. She just wanted to be asleep, to (lip-sync): not be alive, to stop the pain of that Saturday night."

R (lip-sync): Always it was someone's (she is now out of frame) passion that started me off.

D's voice: I'm just not going to get excited about it. I know you're distorting things for the sake of fiction; exaggerating and displacing and so forth.

R's voice: That's such a relief. I had thought you'd be angry at the way I referred to your work. I would have done it so differently.

IT (w on b): "Oh Christ," she thinks. "Now he'll never screw me again." She is determined, however, not to back off. She will take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and try again. . . . His performance was magnificent. Afterwards she wept. Then she slept. As a pool of warm water spreading in the sunlight.

no image (for 1 minute)

IT (w on b): Her thoughts drifted back to the first time she heard the music. Her brother had just begun to collect 78's and Strauss, Mahler, and Beethoven daily flooded the house.

LS from rear D & R on couch, S profile in chair at right.

CU S's profile.

LS reversal of previous LS. Camera slowly tracks in to CU of S's face during the speech.

Track ends: CU of S

CU lasts 10 seconds longer. Then

IT (w on b): "I dreamed of my mother last night, and of my husband. My husband was crying for me."

IT (w on b): She is really thinking about the way crumbs of food collect at the corners of his mouth when he eats.

LS woman in long dark gown jumping.



MCU group configuration with photo figures. Ends in fade-out.

MCU Profile R on couch looking down at lap and toying with cigarette foil. D is seated as before.

CU R's fingers playing with foil. Image is to right of frame.

MCU R on couch to left of frame. D (off-camera) gets up (the sofa cushion moves). R looks to left of frame.

MS R on sofa at lower-right corner (camera is elevated). J walks into frame from top, goes to back of couch.

MCU R at center of frame. J rests his hand on back of sofa, then leaves left side of frame.

D's voice: I'd make a few changes myself. I would have had that inter-title, "I dreamed of my mother last night and of my wife. My wife was crying for me"—I would have shown somehow that he was *really* thinking of something else.

R's voice: And I would have put some jumps in that solo, and maybe a longer fade at the end of that shot on the stairs.

J's voice: Now when she thinks of the work all she can see are the flaws. That part is too long, that too short, that too quick, that too slow.

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Y's voice: Her mind overruns with the faces of people gone from her life. This one made unreasonable demands, that one unacceptable criticism, this one let her down once too often, that one grew tired of her elusive reserve. Maybe it was true that in spite of all her protestations to the contrary, she really preferred her own company. She preferred, as Rilke said, to love her solitude and bear with sweet-sounding lamentation the suffering it caused her.

She knew that he would be back. He had to work things out his own way. And he was assured of his prior claim on her affections. His arrogance at first astounded her, then finally could be forgiven in her anticipation of the pleasure they both knew would again be shared—even if it had to be postponed a whole year.

Then she remembers what the scene had reminded her of. The sky with its leaden clouds, the wet spray of the sea, the thump of surf against the rocks. The two weeks had fled past them. She

CU R's lap to right of frame.

MCU R at center of frame. J enters from left, sits half out of frame, then moves in to look into her face, moves out again, leaving his hand on sofa cushion. She takes his hand and presses it to her lips.

Slow fade-out.

LS of street from 3rd-story window. J carries box of envelopes, which he drops as he opens a door. He goes in, closes door, comes out again, starts to pick up envelopes.

LS N.Y. harbor from War Memorial Plaza at Battery Park. Ship enters at left. When it has almost disappeared at right, v-o begins.

CU J and S on beach. J draws S over onto him.

CU previous action in slow-motion. J and S roll out of frame to left.



CU slow-motion, J lying on his side, S propped on elbows. S leaves frame to left, her legs cross to right, her shadow is seen moving toward ocean into upper right corner of frame.

didn't remember a single argument, not even the kind of manoeuvring for brief privateness that people do when they are together constantly. At this remove it seemed impossibly idyllic. Looking at those two weeks against the backdrop of later events, she was at a loss to understand the nature of his feelings. She herself felt like a fool thinking about it—deceived and humiliated. But she also felt a deep sadness. There was no denying her own happiness and sense of completion at the time. Had he ever felt such things in her presence—for even a single moment? She wondered.

LS same scene as above. S rolls over onto J at very bottom of frame. Sarah cavorts with two dogs near the sea.

Photo of Mont St. Michel

A succession of 40 stills from murder-in-the-shower sequence in "Psycho" begins.

On the way back to the city she was careful not to touch him as they sat in the back seat of the car. When he unconcernedly—or calculatingly (she couldn't tell which)—shifted his position so that his knee grazed her thigh, she carefully disengaged herself from contact. By the time they arrived in town he occupied most of the seat, and she had squished herself into a cramped tight ball. She was enraged.

She stumbles out of the theater. Her disgust with the film and actual nausea drive her body into the street. She recalls roughly the location of the hotel and starts walking in that direction. Her gut burns and she has to keep spitting out the bitter saliva that collects in her mouth. The streets are dimly lit and deserted, the houses shuttered and silent. She wonders if she will find the hotel in time. At a certain point, not having seen any familiar landmarks for awhile, she realizes that she is lost and experiences a powerful exultation. The discomfort of her body, the presence of the night, her solitude—all give her an acute sense of the moment. She finds a vacant grassy lot, gropes her way past the open door of a parked truck, and vomits. Relieved, she straightens up and sees the looming outline of a huge gas storage tank and remembers standing in

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the street across from the hotel that morning watching two men on a scaffold painting the tank orange. She then knows that she is now only a block away. Almost regretfully she goes directly to the hotel, willing to take care of her body, reluctant to terminate being lost in the sleeping town.

LS S walking in street at dawn.

same as above with Subtitle: She groans at the pros- (w on b)

Street disappears, leaving only subtitle for 5 seconds.

IT: spect of a new struggle with her prejudices. "Fuck it," she thinks, "not now, not now. The rich and the powerful really are beneath contempt." (w on b)

IT (w on b): In any case . . .



CU R at table dealing with trout, framed from mouth to top of stack of plates. D (off camera to left) drops utensil on floor. R looks, wipes mouth, picks up utensil and places it on table (off camera), begins to eat.

Sound of utensil dropping followed by mix of utensils-on-plate sounds, some in sync with R's fork and knife.

J's voice: "Yes. He said, 'Willy, say goodbye to America.'"

Sync sound.

Sound of loud chewing, not in sync with image.

R looks to left and smiles. Camera pans to left and down over table, passing smoldering cigarette in ash tray, rests on cheese and crackers. Hands come into view, spread cheese on cracker, camera follows cracker to J's mouth. He chews, pauses, looks to his left. Hand comes into view, wipes corner of J's mouth, camera follows it to ashtray, then the cigarette to D's mouth. He inhales, exhales, looks to right. Camera pans to right to original framing of R.



R is in MS in upper left. Track ends.

CU J's hand moving fork.

Pan begins to right.

5 seconds after "woman" R's hand resting on table comes into view. As camera arrives at original framing of R's mouth, she speaks.

R (lip-sync): This? Oh, this was given to me by a friend of my brother's when I was 15. He and Ernie had practically been raised together. Then I didn't see him for a long time until Ernie discovered that he was living with his mother only a few blocks from us. He started showing up at our house. I guess he always had been homosexual. I remember him as a very young boy running around in his mother's nightgown with pears stuck in the bosom. By the time I saw him again he extraordinarily handsome. Then he went to Mexico. And brought this back with him. It must have been the very first necklace I ever owned. I had a huge crush on him. I would cast long lingering looks his way. He was very gracious about it, although I remember that when he presented me with the necklace his hand trembled slightly as he withstood the ardour of my gaze. Ernie saw him very infrequently during the next four years, and only when he invited him to his house. By that time my brother was married and had a

(no pause in soundtrack)

remember him as a very young boy running around in his mother's nightgown with pears stuck in the bosom. By the time I saw him again he was extraordinarily handsome. Then he went to Mexico. And brought this back with him. It must have been the very first necklace I ever owned. I had a huge crush on him. I would cast long, lingering looks his way. He was very gracious about it, although I remember that when he presented me with the necklace his hand trembled slightly as he withstood the ardour of my gaze. Ernie saw him very infrequently during the next four years, and only when he invited him to his house. By that time my brother was married and had a baby. Sometimes I would be invited to dinner and he would be there. I remember—it might have been the last time I ever saw him—we left Ernie's place together one evening. (pause) He told me that by the time I was thirty I would probably be a very beautiful woman.

R (lip-sync): I think the primary distinction has

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Y's voice: She finds herself looking at the other woman with curiosity. She has a way of talking—delicate, precise, and lilting—that reminds her of women she has had disdain for in the past. Effeminate women. Yes. Yet this woman's assertion emerges in spite of the style, and not unpleasantly. She is intrigued and self-conscious. The three of them talk about sexual fantasies. She keeps thinking about privacy. No, it isn't hard to talk about these things. It is almost too easy, almost meaningless, almost absurd. "What will I say to her when we meet for the second time?" she thinks. Then she realizes that the subject of conversation has come up because there are three of them. "An intimate revelation to her alone might demand a comparable gesture," she reasons. "With an audience of two my revelations are reduced to gratuitous display. I become a performer."

IT (w on b): "I think the primary distinction has been between the teeth and the tongue," she says. There is a silence. The discussion then resumes without taking her pronouncement into account.

CU Pan back and forth across 3 women's faces. The title

Who is the victim here? appears at the top of the frame during the first complete left-to-right pan. The women are engaged in conversation, which is not heard.

MLS S and D stand in back of sofa, R in front. S & D walk to front; all 3 start to sit.

MCU All three standing in front of sofa, heads out of frame.



They sit. S and D carefully disrobe R, one article of clothing at a time, from gloves to blouse.

CU midsection of R and D, standing. She is wearing black skirt. D starts to untie drawstring.

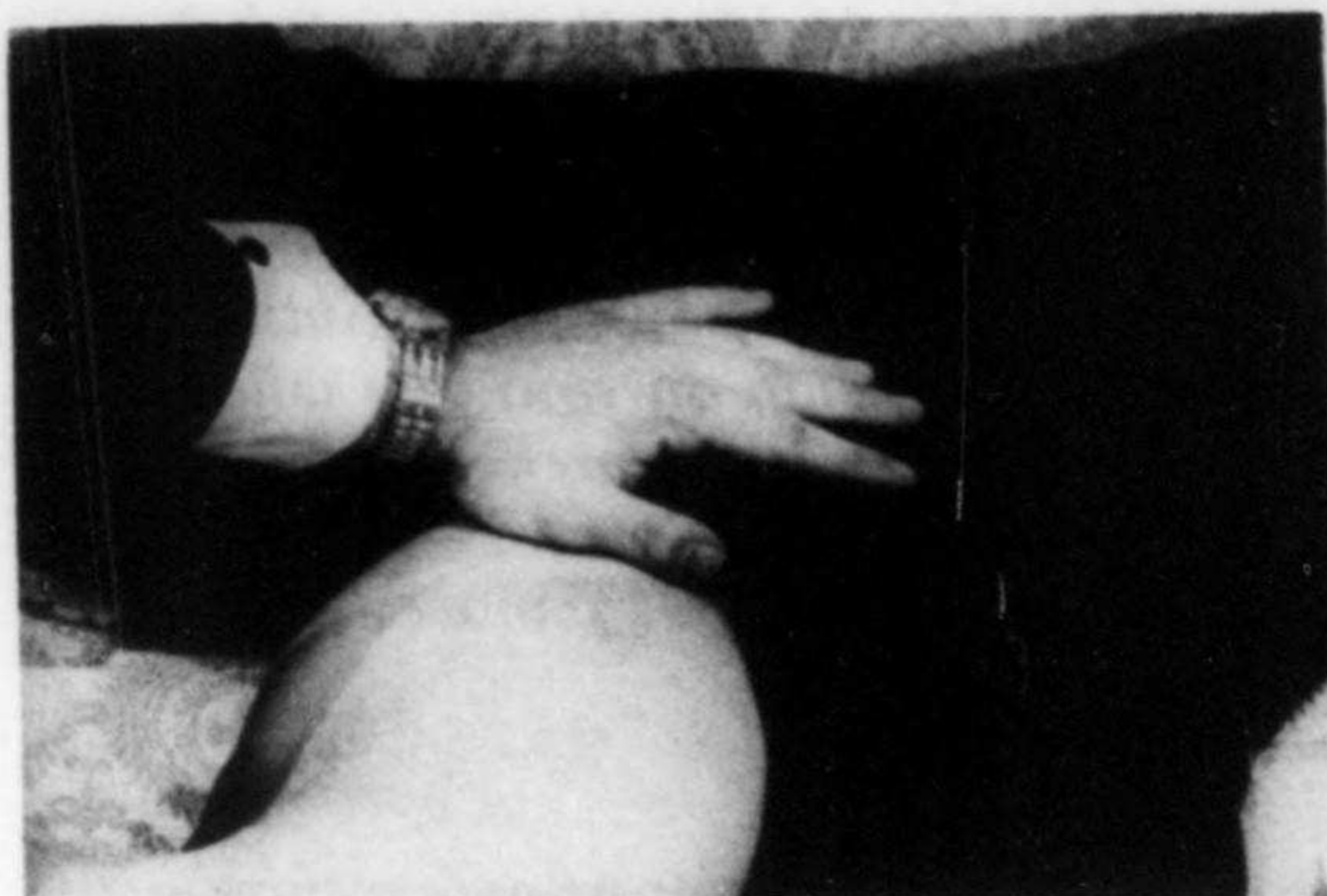


She covers bow with right hand and presents him with her left hand, from which he proceeds to remove three bracelets which he slips into the pocket of his tuxedo. The skirt is then pulled down by 2 pairs of hands (S has entered frame), followed by the panties. R sinks below the bottom of frame to lie on the sofa. S and D meet at back of sofa where he gives S the bracelets. They hover behind sofa, facing camera and seen only from neck down. D slides hand down surface of sofa and slowly brings it back up, which action is matched by R's knee rising then sinking.

CU R's nude body on couch framed from neck to hips. She lies on her back. D's hand slides over her belly, breast, and down her left arm.

CU R's torso and head, same posture as above. She toys with medallion, sits up, moves out of frame by leaning forward, lies back down.

MS R lying on sofa with black skirt pulled up above bosom, S leaning elbows on back of sofa. Both of them watch D, who is seated in chair on wheels. He slowly slides his hand from R's ankle up over her calf, along her thigh, coming to rest at her crotch on top of the velvet. Camera has slowly tracked in, keeping the hand in center of frame, ending in CU.



Starts in CU—R's hips center, D's face to right, his hands grasping the top of the black bloomers she is wearing. As the camera dollies back, he slowly pulls down the bloomers. Both sides of the sofa come into view. S sits on the right, Y on the left, her face disfigured by peculiar patches. When the bloomers are almost to the floor

no image for 30 seconds.

Track resumes. Bloomers are now on the floor. Camera begins to track forward as D pulls R's pants slowly up over her legs. (He looks straight forward at the camera the whole time; Y and S keep their eyes on the pants.) Camera veers to left toward Y's face as the pants arrive in place.



The patches on her face begin to be recognizable as newsprint. One is on her forehead, another on right cheek, another on chin, and two on her left cheek.

Dissolve into extreme CU of first clipping

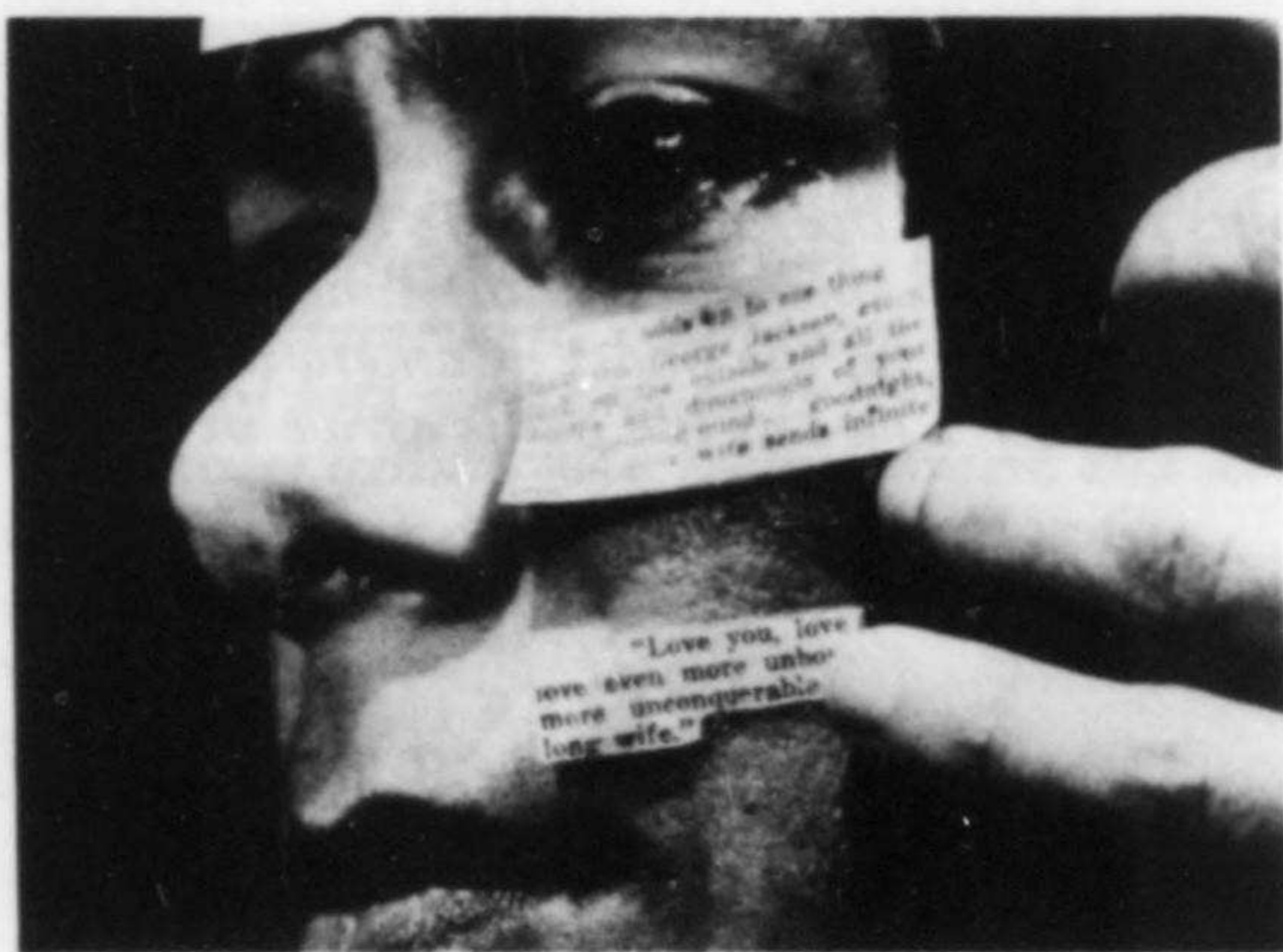
"I'm still floating drunk full of you. Do you mind if I indulge myself for a few minutes and recall those things which make me laugh all over? I like your long, unruly hair and the way it was sticking up in the front, that childlike mischievous expression on your face when I pushed it down over your forehead."

Dissolve into previous CU. Y moves chin into view.

Cut to extreme CU:

"I'm totally intoxicated, overflowing with you and wanting you more than ever before."

Cut to previous CU. Y lowers face to show forehead. (This one is read aloud by Y's v-o.)



Y raises face to bring left cheek into view.

Dissolve into CU:

"It all adds up to one thing: I love you George Jackson, every inch on the outside and all the depths and dimensions of your awe-inspiring mind . . . goodnight, George, your wife sends infinite love."

"Love you, love you with love even more unbounded, even more unconquerable. Your life-long wife."

Y's voice: An hour and a half since the last embrace . . . you're still here, I see you, we are one, and this indestructible togetherness they'll never be powerful enough to wrest away from us . . . That so much love could exist anywhere, in any two people, even between us, I never realized. It makes me feel all fluttery and kind of weak, not enough though in the sense of succumbing to weakness, for it makes me feel so much stronger . . . my life-long husband.

Y's voice
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Y's voice: She catches herself snorting gleefully at the scene of the two women being totally bitchy to one another. She remembers a similar scene—was it Dorothy Lamour, or Betty Grable?—in a movie she saw when she was no more than 9 or 10. One woman had ripped another woman's dress off. She had stayed in the movie theater long after her friends had left until that scene came around again. She had laughed louder than anyone around. And she must have felt guilty about it, because she never told anybody, not her mother, nor anybody.

Phone rings four times, followed by footsteps drawing closer and receiver being picked up. Then Y's voice: "Hello? Oh hi, hi . . . Yeh, I just got it in the mail. You want to hear it? Well, I'll try, but your handwriting is sort of hard to read . . . OK, here goes: 'This is the poetically licensed story of a woman who finds it difficult to reconcile certain external facts with her image of her own perfection. It is also the same woman's story if we say she can't reconcile these facts with her image of her own deformity.* She would like to engage in politics, but she can't decide whether to join the big women or the hunchtwats. The big women have a lot to offer, but she has discovered* essential weakness in their proposal to use wads of counterfeit money for . . . doorstops? What is this . . . boxstops? Oh . . . *boxstops. Neither is she attracted to the naive notion of the hunchtwats that every connection brings bed-chains. Not that it's a matter of victims and oppressors. She simply can't find alternatives to being inside with her fear or standing in the rain with her self-contempt.* How long can you go on this way, mmm? You still think it's all going to come out right, don't you? For instance, if you get up in the morning and feel your feelings well enough you will receive the right gifts from heaven without ever having to ask for them or even define them. It

Slow fade-out.

Photo of elderly woman in field.

Dissolve into slow-motion fight between S and R. MLS

Camera speed changes 4 times during fight—16 f/s to 24 to 48 to 24.

Fight lasts 5 minutes. V-O begins after 2 minutes of silence.

Titles appear at top of frame:

**They thought her shit was more important than she was.*

**Her shit got more attention than she did.*

**box-stops*

**Sit tight.*

**Is she for or against herself?*

**She feels like a fool.*

**(no more titles)*

Sequence of shots dealing with Sarah in bed and her real and imagined nightmares. The first image and subtitle appear simultaneously with crash of thunder.

Subtitles:

How bad can it get? Listen:

- 1 *I appear to self-sufficient.*
- 2 *I can behave as though you don't exist.*
- 3 *My face conveys a congealed intelligence.*
- 4 *You think, therefore, I have silent wisdom.*
- 5 *If I were wiser life might be unbearable.*
- 6 *I am a stern and unrelenting judge and critic. I do not forgive.*



- 8 *I refuse to compromise with a world to which I have been a total stranger from the beginning.*
- 9 *And if I make occasional concessions, I will not grant this privilege to others.*

should be smooth sailing now, right? Just deciding which side you're on should insure that all the best things in life will beat a path to your door. Right? After all, you've paid your dues, haven't you? What do you want? Her pretense of innocence must end.* Nothing is new anymore, thank god. Now at last she can use her head and her eyes. If the mind is a muscle then the head is a huntress and the eye is an arrow.* Thanking you for your immediate attention to this matter, I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience. Respectfully . . . blah, blah, blah, blah ' Yeh, I think it's pretty good. I think they'll get the message."

Crash of thunder. Thunder continues until #7 of the following 17 subtitles.

D (lip-s
looking
she has

About
voice: A
there a

End of
of rage
clothing
and wh

R (lip-

Y's vo
of the
heartb
that sh
life. S
murde

D (lip-sync): . . . because she has younger-looking breasts than you. (repeats) . . . because she has younger-looking breasts than you.

About 10 seconds after beginning of shot D's voice: *I'll leave. I don't want you to go down there alone this time of night.*

End of shot, Y's voice: Propelled by an avalanche of rage, her limbs catapulted her body into her clothing. She hardly knew what she was doing, and when her voice came out, it surprised her.

R (lip-sync): You're not moving fast enough.

Y's voice: He lost no further time and bolted out of the door. Then she became aware of her heartbeat. When it had settled down she thought that she had never been that angry in her whole life. She thought she knew how someone could murder.

- 10 *It is time for me to be silent, methodical, resentful, gloomy.*
- 11 *You are a sap to feel close to such as me.*
- 12 *I despise you.*
- 13 *I shall remove myself from your offerings.*
- 14 *I shall appear self-sufficient.*
- 15 *I shall appear to need nothing, YOU LEAST OF ALL, SAP.*
- 16 *I shall become still, feign death.*
(Frame goes black during #16.)
- 17 *One false move and the jig's up.*

CU *D's face looking at camera.*

MLS *R "rushes" into her clothes in slow motion.*



CU *R's face.*

no image

• *MS J, S, R, D cavort on sofa. At bottom of frame is subtitle:*

DUMMY! My life is such a mess.

IT (w on b): She grieves for herself.

Backs of J, S, R, D on sofa looking at slide of Luxembourg Gardens.

MS 4 people clambering on sofa as before.

Luxembourg Gardens as before.

IT (w on b): It was impossible to face him. Everytime she turned to face him he changed his position so that they were always side by side in a 45° angle.

People clambering on sofa.

MLS J and R on sofa. He talks and smokes. She remains totally still. (Shot continues for 10 or 15 seconds after v-o ends.)

People clambering on sofa as before. Shot lasts 3 seconds.

LS D in snowfall walking toward corner of building.

**no image*

**Camera in car moving backwards shooting past CU of J to LS of R walking on other side of street. She goes into a diner. He stops car,*

Y's voice: The places for sitting in the Luxembourg Gardens are individual chairs rather than benches. So one can make small adjustments in placing oneself in relation to a companion or the total view:

(pause)

She sees him and tries

to turn away, but it is too

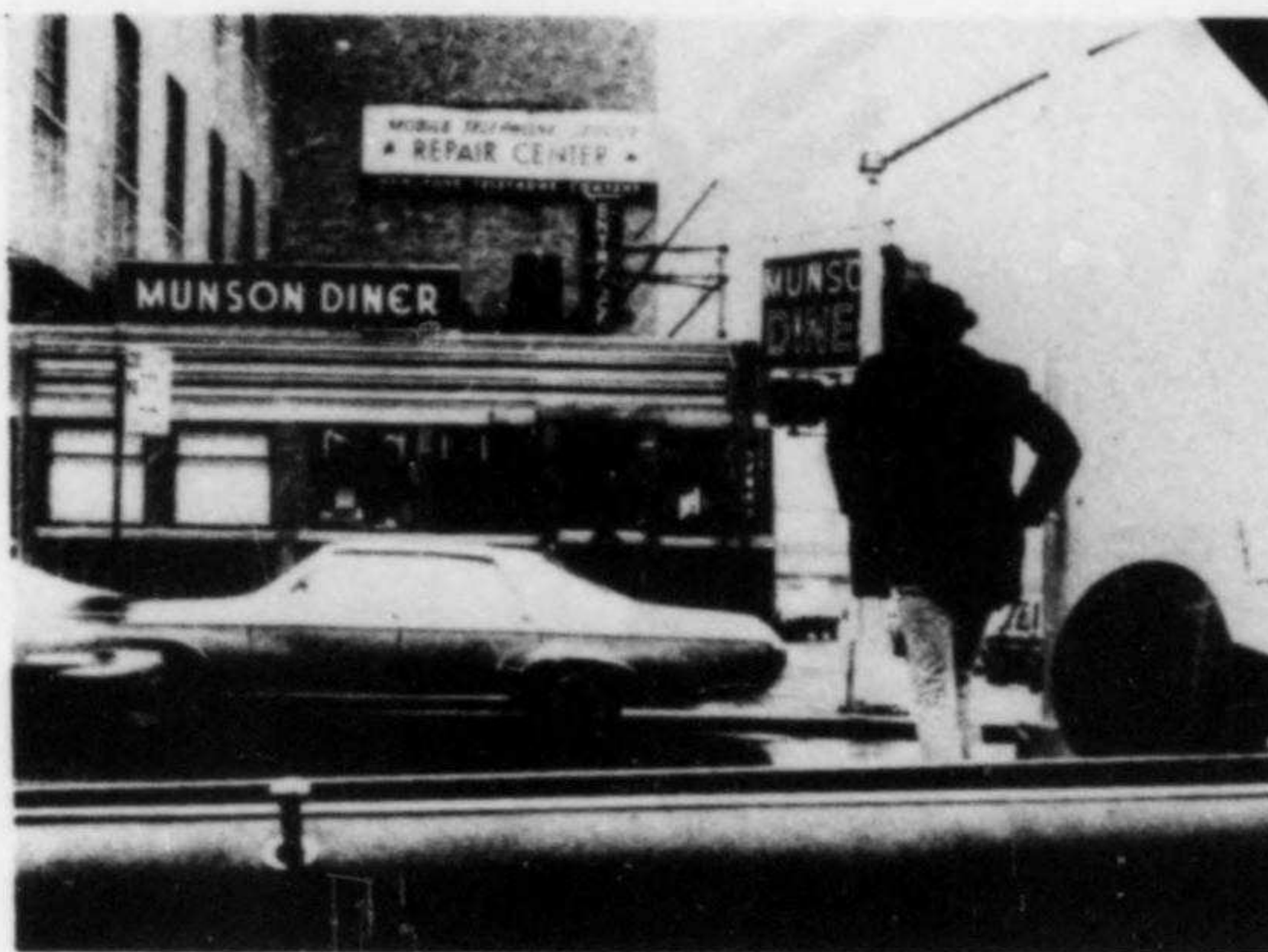
late. He has already caught sight of her.

He tells her about his eidetic

images. She listens intently, watching his darting eyes, the mouth moving, pursing, curving, opening, the slender fingers curving around the cigarette. Her eyes devour him. Her mouth becomes hollow with expectation. She moves her knees cautiously so that they are further apart. He doesn't notice, or pretends not to. She holds back, continues to listen, and the sensations pass.

What was it like for him when he was with her? Images with oily outlines waver in her reverie. She sees them eating together, but not the place; she sees them talking, but not their expressions. One of them may have just smiled in response to the other. She can't quite make it jell.* But she feels her jealousy acutely. The knowledge of their past urbanity and mutual congratulations releases slivers of jealousy* through her mind in a slow drip.

"Maria Elena" begins.



gets out, crosses and goes into diner.

IT (b on w): In her fantasy she speaks to his penis. Contingent on what she says it enlarges and decreases in size. The man does not otherwise move in his reclining position. Neither does he speak.

last notes of "Maria Elena"

D, S, and Y in subway train. Y hands S a piece of paper which makes her laugh uproariously.

"Thanks" begins.

"no image" is intercut with R, J, and S running back and forth in the rain, then with a woman's and man's feet running back and forth indoors.



The four protagonists are seen from the rear observing a dance performed by Epp Kotkas and James Barth.

"Arietta" (Dance moves in and out of sync with music.)

LS of Barth running in circle at previously seen Battery Park location.



Intercuts of LS and fragmented CU's of Kotkas and Barth performing from 20 poses derived from photos and drawings of Isadora Duncan.

CU R's face.

Ocean with titles at top of frame:

Several years later she would ask him, "Where were you when I was giving birth to your child? After all, I did it for you." He hit her across the face.

ENOUGH!

He laughs out loud.

Now she is thinking of his penis again.

no title (ocean remains)

She sighs with relief. Now that she knew the truth about her feelings she was free to love him again.

no title

You could always have an ocean ending.

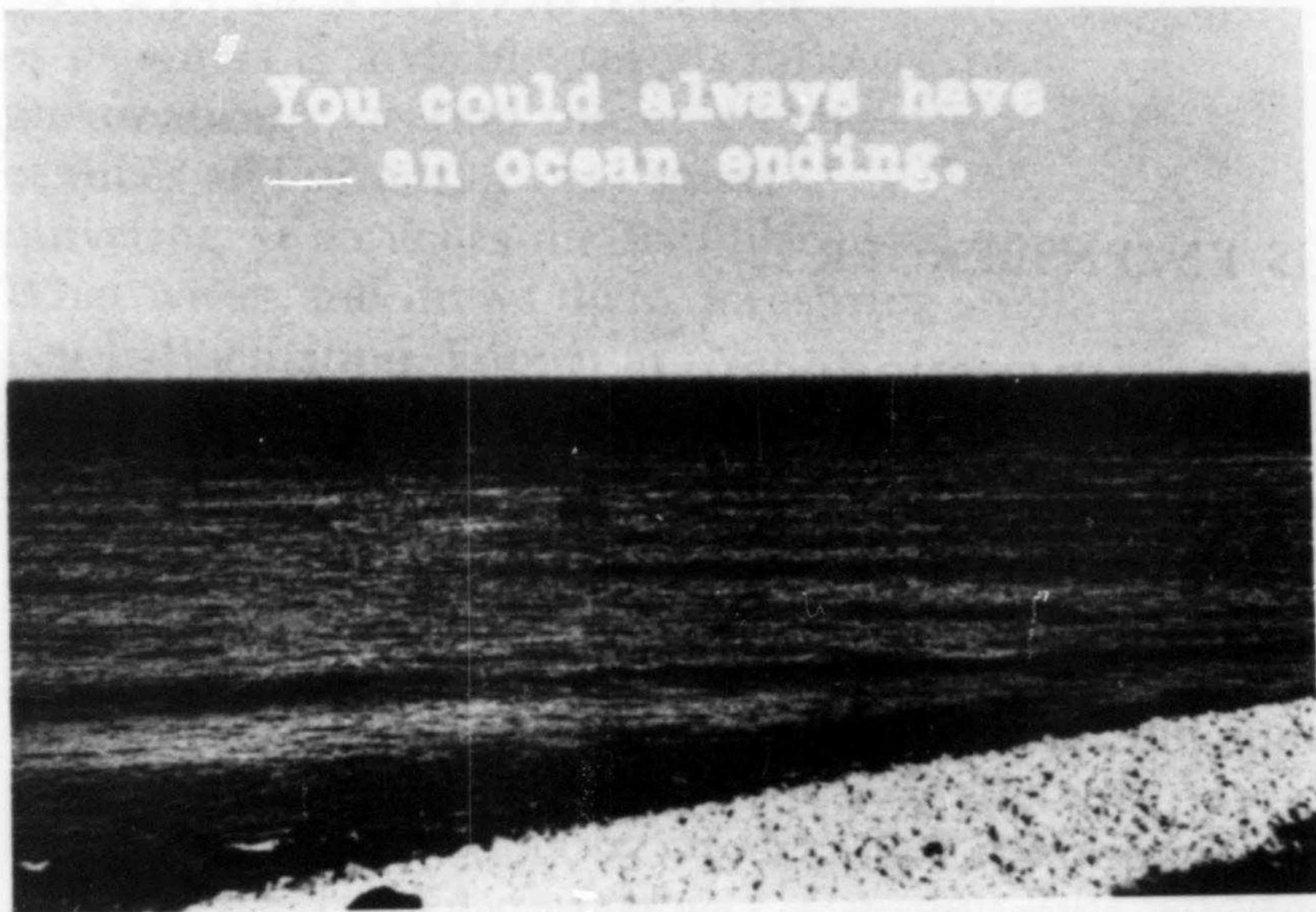
(Ocean fades out.)

(Final title fades out.)

"Native Land"

Final bars of sonata:

Music fades down.



You could always have
— an ocean ending.

THESE ARE THE
 THINGS THAT
 THE BOY WHO
 WAS DEAD
 A POINT IN
 BUT NOT UP
 BE TO THE
 THE BOY WHO
 OF THE BOY
 OF THE BOY

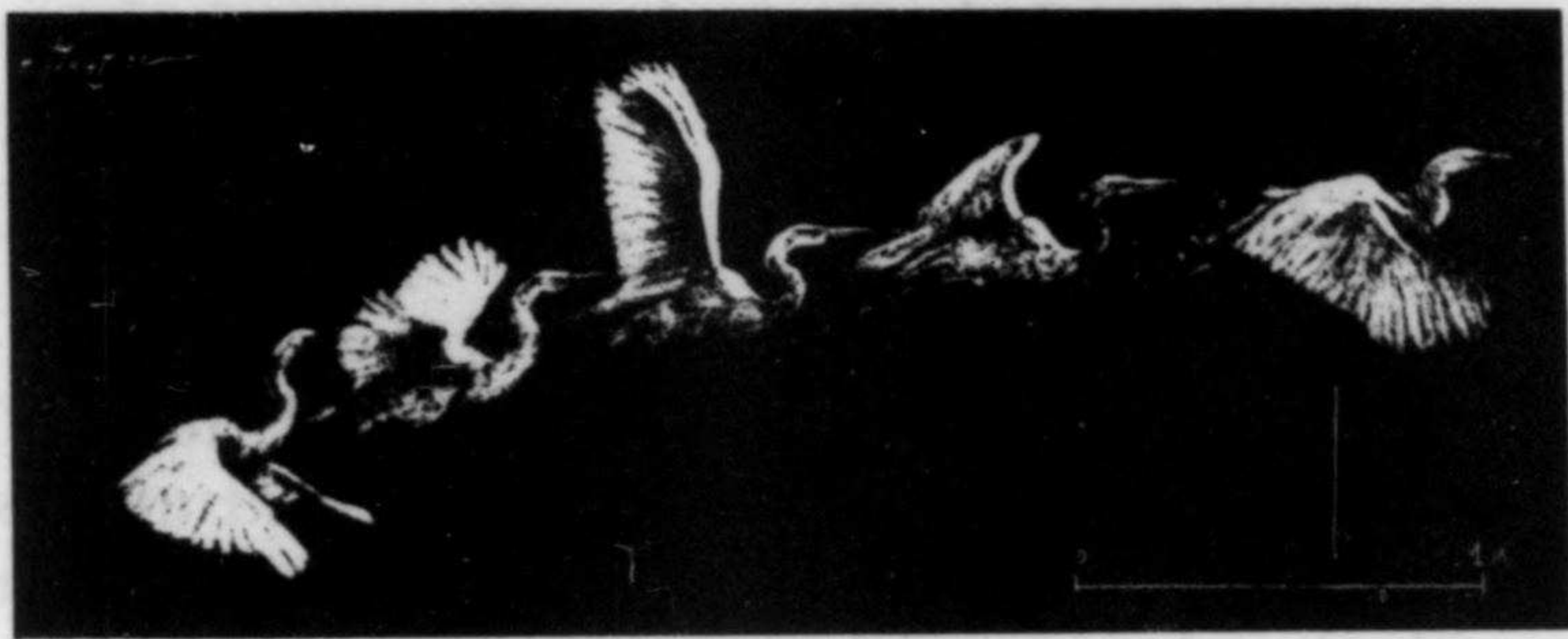
E. J. M.
(1830-1904)



HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER

TRANSLATED BY JOACHIM NEUGROSCHER

His drug was facts. Always proper,
a wine-dealer's son from the Côte d'Or, portly,
a positivist in a square collar, a pince-nez,
buttoned-up behind his apparatus,
he lay in wait, immobile, for any motion, hunted
the fleeing quarry: *the very language*
of phenomena, a phantom. On Rue
de l'Ancienne Comédie, a new spectacle was mounted.



The professor rented a stage, auditorium, dressing-rooms.
Partitions, hastily put up: the small parlor
with the piano, the mechanical workshop, and
(to be reached by breakneck stairs) a study,
a bed, an archive. What was left was an enormous room,
the ring, waxed to a shine, in which,
before black and white cloths, on swings,
on strings, in lamplight, the facts revealed themselves.

The pigeon, tied to the jib of a merry-go-round—
does it fly, or is it flown? The trail
of its wings is invisible: yet it's followed by,
pneumatically steering through a chaos
of tubes and drums, a steel spike;
quivering, it scratches the soot-blackened paper.
What writes and draws there, measuring itself,
is a hallucination, known as 'Nature'.

Patterns of mathematical elegance, relationships
between frequency and tonus, temperature
and pressure: undulations, oscillations, leaps.
All variables of locomotion: *La machine animale*.
In air and in water. The eel, the pianist,
the mollusks, the salamander's heart: the tractrix,
the cissoid: curves (banking, intersecting, enveloping),
vortices, trajectories, diagrams. . . . In short, 'the world'

is an optical illusion: We see nothing
'as it is', whatever reveals itself, conceals itself.
Ever more subtle snares, more clever instruments,
ever more abstract weapons. The physiologist aims
with the photographic *rapid-fire gun*:
the shutter opens sixteen times a minute,
and the white seagull in front of the black curtain
leave *an infinitely radiant image* behind.

He tinkered, designed, built the first movie camera
in the world. Not to film: he wanted to see.
On the Champs-Élysées, a man gets off
his bicycle; no one knows how.
Only slow-motion shows all. So he invented it.
His theater filled up with astrophysicists, physicians,
the shining lights of science. (Way in the back,
there sat, unnoticed, a certain Edison, a capitalist.)

To study an insect, I have to construct insects.
So the researcher became a demiurge: he counterfeited
abstract hearts, propeller-driven birds,
machines that could breathe. It crept across the waxed
parquet: the facsimile of a snake. He cast in bronze:
the seagull's flight. A fantastic creature:
four-dimensional fluttering, curdled locomotion,
flowing stasis. Time we can touch.

A fool whose hand turned anything into an artifact,
idolater of the science of exploitation,
innocent lamb who blazed a trail for Taylor's terror,
unwitting forebear of Hollywood, an artist
on the side, an inventor against his will, Mallarmé
by mistake, a genius of reproduction: Motionless,
the eye of the Great Observer gazes at us,
matte-violet, a blind iris of silver bromide.

Gravity's Rainbow and the Spiral Jetty (Part 2)

JEREMY GILBERT-ROLFE AND JOHN JOHNSTON

Science and History are the Muses of our time.¹

When the Nazis came to power, Leonard and Stark, both Nobel prizewinners, maintained that there were two types of physical science: an Aryan, empirical science which is true and fruitful, and a Jewish, theoretical science which is subversive and nonsensical.²

P.S. If you or Sargent can pick up any handbook *cheap* of Freemasonry or any ragged, dirty, smudged, torn, defiled, effaced, dogeared, coverless, undated, anonymous misprinted book on mathematics, or algebra or trig. or Eucl. from a cart for 1d or at most 2¼d tant mieux. J.J.³

The type of literature that, in accordance with the tenets of commitment but also with the demands of philistine moralism, exists for man, betrays him by traducing that which alone could help him. But any literature which therefore concludes that it can be a law unto itself, and exist only for itself, degenerates into ideology no less . . . Even in the most sublimated work of art there is a hidden 'it should be otherwise'. When a work is merely itself and no other thing, as in a pure pseudo-scientific construction, it becomes bad art—literally pre-artistic. The moment of true volition, however, is mediated through nothing other than the form of the work, whose crystallization becomes an analogy of that other condition which should be. As eminently constructed and produced objects, works of art, even literary ones, point to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life. This

1. Gustave Flaubert, quoted by Robert Smithson, in "The Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," *Art International*, XII (March 1968), 24.
2. A.E.E. McKenzie, *The Major Achievements of Science*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1969, p. 312.
3. Richard Ellman, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, New York, Viking, 1975, p. 279.

mediation is not a compromise between commitment and autonomy, nor a sort of mixture of advanced formal elements with an intellectual content inspired by genuinely or supposedly progressive politics. The content of works of art is never the amount of intellect pumped into them: if anything it is the opposite. Nevertheless, an emphasis on autonomous works is itself socio-political in nature.⁴

At the time of writing, the *Spiral Jetty* is entirely submerged, the water level of the lake having risen to an unusual height which it is expected to maintain for some time. The integration of the space of convention—of sculpture—into that of nature has been accelerated by the latter in a way that sounds like a humorous exaggeration of the weathering process always expected and planned for in works made for exterior installation. Weathering is the combined result, mostly, of exposure to the sun and rain. The *Spiral Jetty* is getting special treatment, which consists of being saturated in a giant lens.

Built to register physical change rather than to proffer an image of time's denial, the *Jetty* is an object which, in accordance with Mallarmé's example,⁵ requires more than one reading—the recognition of more than one process of bifurcation. It is a work whose success depends on its being a structure whose legibility may only be improved—illuminated by complication—by the intervention of the technically unpredictable or unanticipated. (Not that the submersion of the *Jetty* was entirely unforeseen; it wasn't. But still it's clear that what happens to the piece in the way of salt encrustations and the like in even the foreseeable future is about as far away from the predictability of the effects of weathering on, say, a work made out of *Cor-Ten* steel, as you could get while still having an object.)

One rereading the work encourages is of a kind that analogizes the experience of contemplating—focusing on—a landscape with the act of thinking historically. This is the subject of the present section of this essay, in which we are going to elaborate the suggestion, which we think is implicit in what's gone before, that *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* are stridently apolitical—uncommitted—works which demand a response that it is proper to call ideological.

They are, indeed, "eminently constructed and produced objects," whose apolitical character resides most obviously in their allegiance to the (traditionally modernist) dictum that art depicts rather than instructs. That is to say, *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* seem to coincide with Adorno's hypothesis insofar as they suggest that art clarifies the everyday, locates the *status quo*, by pointing to the extent to which the contradictions that define life-as-it-is are also the stuff out of which the individual makes sense of intuited notions of value. That it is in

4. Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," trans. Francis-McDonagh, *New Left Review*, nos. 87-8, (September-December 1974), 89.

5. See the first part of this essay, *October*, no. 1 (Spring 1976), 67.

things-as-they-are that the statement "it should be otherwise," is given its most succinct expression, and that to repress that expression is one of the daily tasks of common sense and social intercourse in general.

Gravity's Rainbow and the *Spiral Jetty* depend on an ordering—the spiral, the mandala—which survives the disintegration and transformation it envelops. Their dialectic of constancy and mutation is one that invokes an ideological response because it is manipulated in a way in which neither side of the formula contains anything that could reasonably be called value-free. An incidental price paid for the lucidity of that insistence is a refusal to point hopefully towards the future, any future, in the course of presenting a digressive interation between the present and the possibility of contrasting it with its past. And doing so through a procedure in which one doesn't lose sight of the fact that the terms involved are on both sides qualified by their point of origin.

Both works, in being concerned with retrieval—with what it is to use something that's received as a device through which to review the terms of its reception—take a fundamentally different attitude to their material than André Breton did in his novel *Arcane 17*, with which *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* have been, in another respect, compared here. Breton, in identifying the disintegration of language with authoritarian ideology, retains the possibility of maintaining a stand against it at the personal level. This is, explicitly and implicitly, not the case for either Pynchon or Smithson. Breton, having said that the military dictatorship must be pleased to note their success in attenuating semantic value, goes on to describe this decline in terms of the failure of ideas to sustain a general applicability: "And ideas, through which man attempts to maintain a definite relationship with other men, these ideas could be preserved no longer: ruins again, only facades remained standing, the surrounds of the tower of Babel. The words which designated them, such as law, justice, liberty, had taken on meanings which were localized, contradictory."⁶ Repression, sublimation, are entirely institutional affairs; they are clearly understood for what they are: "The local newspapers, which relate the news of Europe in a style that is docilely apocalyptic, abound moreover in information which their presentation on a full page renders dissonant . . . alternating with items of a sybilline aspect. All this constitutes, in an admittedly limpid air, a screen of protection against the madness of the hour. . . ."⁷ In *Arcane 17* escape, or at least clarification of the situation at large and personal revelation with regard to one's relation to that situation and to one's destiny, is to be obtained through love.

Breton's desire, in 1935, to promote "dialectical-materialism as a general theory of knowledge,"⁸ seems, over the succeeding decade and during the course of his wartime exile, to have mutated into a postulate whereby insight consists in

6. André Breton, *Arcane 17*, Paris, Union générale d'éditions, 1965, p. 76.

7. *Arcane 17*, pp. 9-10.

8. André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1969, p. 237.

noting the capacity that Eros has for keeping up a stand-off with Thanatos.

It isn't a question of whether Breton became less of a materialist during that time. But it is to the point that, insofar as all materialism is by definition a criticism of Idealism—or of itself for being idealist—his notion of it as a “general theory of knowledge” seems to have stopped short of imagining that the personal might be wholly interpenetrated by the impersonal. Breton, or at least the Breton of *Arcane 17*, isn't prepared to conceive of the individual participating in the disintegration he sees in the world around him. For Breton, ideas may lose their applicability but free-will doesn't lose its meaning. Individual salvation therefore involves most of all a resuscitation of ideas, through which a world may be reborn, even if that world is to be resurrected as a kind of solipsism, an elaborate attribution of coherence to the tower of Babel.

In this sense collapse, and the retrieval of significance in the midst of collapse, occurs as a very different kind of process in *Arcane 17* than in *Gravity's Rainbow* or the *Spiral Jetty*. Certainly the differences may be partly accounted for in terms of the change in climate between the 1940s and the very recent past. When Adorno wrote his text on commitment he felt it possible to say, without qualification, that the “curmudgeons whom no bombs could destroy” were motivated in their assault on advanced art by a fear of enjoyment which reflected a “petit-bourgeois hatred of sex.” Perhaps though, in a capitalist society where sexual liberation is an accepted cliché—a sign of good taste—it might be more useful to talk less of a hatred of sex than of its displacement. In American letters no stand-off is possible between Eros and Thanatos because this is the country where Freud is used to suppress Marx.

In Pynchon's novel hatred of sex is displaced metaphorically into a technological pun, the book is after all an American novel concerned with the search for a “black instrument” of dangerous potential. But that displacement is more than a humorous equating of Protestantism's repression of the individual with that lurking fear of the capacities of an imported preterite which has also been a definitive social fact in American life. (Pynchon's only published piece of non-fiction is “Journey into the Mind of Watts.”⁹) It is also a device that promotes the absolute domination of the impersonal on which *Gravity's Rainbow's* plot depends. *Gravity's Rainbow* depicts a situation in which the individual's participation, as a transitive agent, in a process experienced as destructive, is inevitable, and that what this means is that only destructive change is conceivable. Technology, in that imagined scheme, is sublimation. Sublimation, that is, within and without. Technology contains its own message, but this is by no means exclusively the property of the Other, as Breton denotes it. As the product and producer of its culture, technology might be seen to announce that circumscription of the individual in the interests of the many which Freud describes (therein expressing, from some points of view, his compatibility with Marx). For Pynchon and

9. *New York Times Magazine*, (June 12, 1966), 34.

Smithson, technology exists to preclude recall. Always both co-opted and at the same time uncontrollable, technology is defined by its failures, which are what provide respite from its dominance and, simultaneously, offer the possibility of placing the culture which it produces into some larger context, albeit one which is the product of, is perceived through, that same culture's language. Unlike Breton, Pynchon and Smithson tend to present a world in which ideas like 'Justice' might never have existed. Instead they suggest that it's better to think in terms of one kind of justice and another, in short that local meanings might be more useful than universal ones. In this their position is truly the inverse of Breton's and this inversion may be expressed in the following way. *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* suggest that the solipsistic coherence that is for Breton a means through which the individual might make sense of the world is in actuality experienced as an as it were 'institutional solipsism' through which given cultures impose a certain sense on that world to which their own technology is a response. For Smithson and Pynchon technology is industrial capitalism, whose domination remains unquestioned in their depiction of things-as-they-are. But that depiction proceeds in accordance with an implied maxim that might be paraphrased as follows: things generate ideas and it is in the ruins of things that one finds the limits of those ideas, as well as a sense of what it is to go beyond their limits; further, ruins represent the demise of a system of sublimation which became indefensible at the same rate that it achieved sophistication:

... a wind Tchitcherine will never remember. Any more than he can now connect this raw jumble of forty alkaloids with the cut, faceted, polished, and foiled molecules that salesman Wimpe showed him once upon a time, one by one, and told the histories of . . .

"Oneirine, and Methoneirine. Variations reported by Laszlo Jamf in the ACS Journal, year before last. Jamf was on loan again, this time as a chemist, to the Americans, whose National Research Council had begun a massive program to explore the morphine molecule and its possibilities—a Ten-Year Plan, coinciding, most oddly, with the classic study of large molecules being carried on by Carother's of du Pont, the Great Synthesist. Connection? Of course there's one. But we don't talk about it. NRC is synthesizing new molecules every day, most of them from pieces of the morphine molecule. Du Pont is stringing together groups such as amides into long chains. The two programs seem to be complementary, don't they? The American vice of modular repetition, combined with what is perhaps our basic search: to find something that can kill intense pain without causing addiction.

"Results have not been encouraging. We seem up against a dilemma built into Nature, much like the Heisenberg situation. There is nearly complete parallelism between analgesia and addiction. The more pain it takes away, the more we desire it. It appears we can't have

one property without the other, any more than a particle physicist can specify position without suffering an uncertainty as to the particle's velocity—"

"I could have told you that. But why—"

"*Why*. My dear captain. *Why?*"

"The money, Wimpe. To pour funds down the latrine on such a hopeless search—"

A man to man touch then on his buttoned epaulet. A middle-aged smile full of Weltschmerz. "Trade-off, Tchitcherine," whispers the salesman. "A question of balancing priorities. Research people come cheap enough, and even an IG may be allowed to dream, to hope against hope . . . Think of what it would mean to find such a drug—to abolish pain rationally, without the extra cost of addiction. A *surplus* cost—surely there is something in Marx and Engels," soothe the customer, "to cover this. A demand like 'addiction', having nothing to do with real pain, real economic needs, unrelated to production or labor . . . we need fewer of these unknowns, not more. We know how to produce real pain. Wars, obviously . . . machines in the factories, industrial accidents, automobiles built to be unsafe, poisons in food, water, and even air—these are quantities tied directly to the economy. We know them, and we can control them. But 'addiction'? What do we know of that? Fog and phantoms. No two experts will even agree on how to define the word. 'Compulsion'? Who is not compelled? 'Tolerance'? 'Dependence'? What do they mean? All we have are the thousand dim, academic theories. A rational economy cannot depend on psychological quirks. We could not *plan* . . ."

What premonition has begun to throb in Tchitcherine's right knee? What direct conversion between pain and gold?

"Are you really this evil or is it just an act? Are you really trafficking in pain?"

"Doctors traffick in pain and no one would dream of criticizing their noble calling. Yet let the Verbindungsman but reach for the latch on his case, and you all start to scream and run. Well—you won't find many addicts among us. The medical profession is full of them, but we salesmen believe in real pain, real deliverance—we are knights in the service of that Ideal. It must be real, for the purposes of our market. Otherwise my employer—and our little chemical cartel is the model for the very structure of nations—becomes lost in illusion and dream, and one day vanishes into chaos. Your own employer as well."

"My 'employer' is the Soviet State."

"Yes?" Wimpe did say "*is* the model," not "*will be*." Surprising they could have got this far, if indeed they did—being of such different persuasions and all. Wimpe, however, being far more cynical, would

have been able to admit more of the truth before starting to feel uncomfortable. His patience with Tchitcherine's Red Army version of economics may have been wide enough. They did part amiably. Wimpe was reassigned to the United States (Chemnyco of New York) shortly after Hitler became Chancellor. Tchitcherine's connection, according to the garrison gossip, ceased then, forever.¹⁰ (*author's elisions*)

... There's a word called entropy. These are like kind of entropic situations that hold themselves together. It's like the Spiral Jetty is physical enough to be able to withstand all these climate changes, yet it's intimately involved with those climate changes and natural disturbances. That's why I'm not really interested in conceptual art because that seems to avoid physical mass. You're left mainly with an idea. Somehow to have something physical that generates ideas is more interesting to me than just an idea that might generate something physical ... Conceptual art is a kind of reduced object down to a notion of ideas that leads to idealism. An idealism is a kind of spiritualism and that never seems to work out ... Lévi-Strauss suggested that they change the word anthropology to entropology, meaning highly developed structures in a state of disintegration. I think that's part of the attraction of people going to visit obsolete civilizations. They get a gratification from the collapse of these things ...¹¹

Smithson's sense of disintegration seems, in fact, to be directly indebted to that of Lévi-Strauss. Particularly to the Lévi-Strauss of *Tristes Tropiques*, where culture is described as an entropic enterprise defined by the elaborateness of the decay produced by the complexity of its social organization. (It seems odd, in this connection, that the obligation always to see social and linguistic situations through their achievement of disintegration, while refraining from the pejoration implicit in having to describe things in such terms, which is, obviously, a primary thesis of the great anthropologist's, shouldn't be reflected or acknowledged in *Arcane 17*, given the wartime friendship of Breton and Lévi-Strauss.) Complexity, in *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty*, is a consequence of their committing what is referred to in the above conversation between two character's in Pynchon's novel as "the American sin of modular repetition."

We have said that in both works it is repetition that permits and qualifies the occurrence of its opposite, accumulation.¹² Accumulation, that is, in the sense of the development and proliferation of signification. The construction of the *Spiral Jetty*—its use of one truck load of dirt and rocks after another to reach the center of a spiral, combined with its not being really a 'true' (*i.e.*, geometrically progressive)

10. *Gravity's Rainbow*, pp. 348-9.

11. Robert Smithson, in S. Pettena, "Interview," *Domus*, (November 1972), pp. 21-2.

12. See above, *October* no. 1, 77.

spiral, since its curvature has been adjusted so that the gap between water and *Jetty* remains more or less constantly metonymic as one reads across the piece—is clearly consistent with an aesthetic of non-climactic repetition. It proposes an aesthetic structure which gets its spectator from one place to other without signaling catharsis, but also without seeming to make the beginning and the end of the process *interchangible*. This theme, of a demystified sculpture built on the premise of “one thing after another,” had been elaborated throughout the decade before the construction of the *Jetty* by such sculptors as Carl Andre and Donald Judd. And in thinking about this aspect of the structure of the *Jetty* it seems worthwhile to note that the antecedents for it in Smithson’s own work include, beside the *Site: Nonsite* pieces already discussed, a series of glass ziggurats that may be said to have something to do with the development of modularity already undertaken by those two artists.

Andre’s sculpture often consists of a series of superficially identical—same size and shape—units placed in a row; Judd’s of a line of boxes mounted along or up a wall or on the floor. Smithson’s ziggurats are made out of layers of glass of equal thickness, identically shaped, which decline in size towards the top by an amount equal on all four sides to the thickness of the glass. As in the *Jetty*, each part has a synecdotal relationship to the whole. It’s a model of accumulation in which lateral and vertical extension are made synonymous, insofar as they are both functions of the repetition of the same measurement.

This notion, of an equivalence between horizontal and vertical extension, has a well-established history in modernist thinking. One need go no further than Alan Tate on John Donne¹³—*i.e.*, one doesn’t have to look beyond what is known as the Anglo-American school of modernism—to see it applied in terms of an *extensive* control of *intensive* signification; and this seems to be the premise in Smithson’s thinking too. Modular repetition at the surface level is taken to imply an equal—accumulative but non-hierarchical—arrangement, in terms of their legibility, of layers of sedimentation which that surface order makes accessible. One is back to Cézanne’s grid, here, to modular repetition’s attribution of equality to different depths or spaces.

The following two series of examples of modular repetition in *Gravity’s Rainbow* show how different thematic recurrences, returned to every hundred pages or so, transmit, within themselves, the parabolic journey of the plot as a whole. They also spell out quite fully the novel’s concern with Thanatos as opposed to Eros, with, that is, the “ubiquity of non-erotic aggressivity and destructiveness,” which Pynchon identifies with technology, the “destructive instinct” which we customarily associate with civilization.

On page 20, Slothrop is introduced—his existence has already been noted but this is his first appearance—as one of several technicians called in to look at a site where a rocket has just fallen. On page 120, Slothrop’s seduction of Darlene, Mrs.

13. Alan Tate, “Tension in Poetry,” *Essays of Four Decades*, New York, William Morrow, 1970.

Bloat the candy-store owner's daughter, comes to fruition as "the rocket's rush comes swelling, elevated express down, away into ringing silence. Outside glass has been breaking, long, dissonant symbols up the street." In the last sentence of this passage we are told that Slothrop is being watched: "And who's that, through the crack in the orange shade, breathing carefully? Watching? And where, keepers of maps, specialists at surveillance, would you say the next one will fall?" On page 223, during a conversation between Slothrop and Katje Borgesius, a (Dutch) double agent, there is the following passage, in which Thanatos parallels Eros and is seen to invite the individual's participation by both dominating the latter and adopting its terminology:

She was pleased, once, to think of a peacock, courting, fanning his tail platform, scarlet, orange, iridescent green . . . there were Germans, even SS troops, who called the rocket Der Pfau. 'Pfau Zwei.' Ascending, programmed in a ritual of love . . . at Brennschluss it is done—the Rocket's purely feminine counterpart, the zero point at the center of its target, has submitted. All the rest will happen according to laws of ballistics. The rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over. Something beyond what was designed in.

Katje has understood the great airless arc as a clear allusion to certain secret lusts that drive the planet and herself, and Those who use her—over its peak and down, plunging, burning, toward a terminal orgasm . . . which is certainly nothing she can tell Slothrop. (*author's elisions*)

While on page 320, following a summary description of Christianity as a religion of death, there is the song "Sold on Suicide," which comes in the middle of a conversation between Enzian, leader of the Schwartzkommando, and his adjutant Joseph Ombindi of Hannover. The Schwartzkommando is a unit composed of Blacks, which British Military Intelligence thought they had invented to arouse German public opinion but which turns out early in the novel to have existed in practise: Hereros trained in rocketry who are involved in the same quest that occupies Slothrop and Tchitcherine. These men are, however, the only ones explicitly seeking to commit tribal suicide. At the bottom of that page, Enzian's companion says to him: "'Ahh, do I see your cock growing, Nguarorerue? . . . no, no, perhaps you are only thinking of someone you loved, somewhere, long ago . . . back in Südwest, eh?' To allow the tribal past to disperse, all memories ought to be public record, there's no point in preserving history with that Final Zero to look forward to . . ." (*author's elisions*)

And two pages later (p. 322) comes the following:

But we, Zone-Hereros, under the earth, how long will we wait in this north, this locus of death? Is it to be reborn? or have we really been buried for the last time, buried facing north like all the rest of our dead,

and like all the holy cattle ever sacrificed to the ancestors. North is death's region. There may be no gods, but there is a pattern: names by themselves may have no magic, but the *act* of naming, the physical utterance, obeys the pattern. Nordhausen means dwellings in the north. The Rocket had to be produced out of a place called Nordhausen. The town adjoining was named Bleicheröde as a validation, a bit of redundancy so that the message would not be lost. The history of the old Hereros is one of lost messages. It began in mythical times, when the sly hare who nests in the Moon brought death among men, instead of the Moon's true message. The true message has never come. Perhaps the Rocket is meant to take us there someday, and then Moon will tell us its truth at last. There are those down in the Erdschweinhöhle, younger ones who've only known white autumn-prone Europe, who believe that Moon is their destiny. But older ones can remember that Moon, like Ndjambi Karanga, is both the bringer of evil and its avenger . . .

And Enzian's found the name Bleicheröde close enough to "Blicker," the nickname the early Germans gave to Death. They saw him white: bleaching and blankness. The name was later latinized to "Dominus Blicero." Weissman, enchanted, took it as his SS code name.

On page 420, during an episode dealing with the rocket technician Pökler and his daughter (who is kept away from him by his superiors so that during his periodic visits with her he doesn't know if this year's 'daughter' is in fact the one he saw last), one is reintroduced to the question of the hopelessness of recall, of surveillance like that cast upon Slothrop on page 120, and of personal—in this case actually incestuous—sublimation which is manipulated from outside:

A number of uncertainties shifted then for Pökler and locked into sense. To his shame, his first feeling was pride. He hadn't known he was so vital to the program. Even in this initial moment, he was seeing it from Their side—every quirk goes in the dossier, gambler, foot-fetishist or soccer fan, it's all important, it can all be used. Right now we have to keep them happy, or at least neutralize the foci of their unhappiness. You may not understand what their work really is, not at the level of the data, but you're an administrator after all, a leader, your job is to get results . . . Pökler, now, has mentioned a "daughter." Yes, yes we know it's disgusting, one never can tell what they have locked up in there with those equations, but we must all put off our judgments for now, there'll be time after the war to get back to the Pöklers and their dirty little secrets.

On page 520 one comes to the quote on the Real Text which has already appeared in this essay, it occurs during an episode that again deals with Enzian,

and together with the paragraphs that surround it rephrases the main assumptions of the novel as a whole. The third paragraph on page 521 resurrects the idea of a planetary ambition invoked by Katje Borgesius on p. 223:

We have to look for power sources here, and distribution networks we were never taught, routes of power our teachers never imagined, or were encouraged to avoid . . . we have to find meters whose scales are unknown in the world, draw our own schematics, getting feedback, making connections, reducing the error, trying to learn the real function . . . zeroing in on what incalculable plot? Up here, on the surface, coal-tars, hydrogenation, synthesis were always phony, dummy functions to hide the real, *the planetary mission* yes perhaps centuries in the unrolling . . . this ruinous plant, waiting for its Kabbalists and new alchemists to discover the Key, teach the mysteries to others . . .

Katje Borgesius appears also on page 620, but it may be more appropriate to insert page 624 into the succession we're considering here. On p. 624 Slothrop comes across graffiti announcing his own presence in a place he's never visited before, and adds to it a sign which is a drawing of the mandala, of the layout of an Herero village, and, as he comes to realize, a view of the A4 rocket viewed from below . . . "By which time he had become tuned to other fourfold expressions—variations of Frans van der Groov's cosmic windmill—swastikas, gymnastic symbols FFFF in a circle symmetrically upside down and backward, Frisch Fromm Frölich Frei over neat doorways in quiet streets, and crossroads, where you can sit and listen in to traffic from the other Side, hearing about the future (no serial time over there: events are all there in the same eternal moment and so certain messages don't always 'make sense' back here: they lack historical structure, they sound fanciful, or insane)."

On page 720, man's commitment to destructiveness is explained:

. . . human consciousness, that poor cripple, that doomed and deformed thing, is about to be born. This is the world just before men. Too violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen by men directly. They are meant only to look at it dead, in still strata, transputrified to oil or coal. Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans, was an overpeaking of life so clangorous and mad, such a green corona about Earth's body that some spoiler *had* to be brought in before it blew the creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. *It is our mission to promote death.* The way we kill, the way we die, being unique among the Creatures. It was something we had to work on, historically and personally. To build from scratch up to its present status as reaction, nearly as strong as life, holding down the green

uprising. But only nearly as strong.

Two pages later Blicero, during a speech on death, describes it as Europe's gift to the world:

"America *was* the edge of the World. A message for Europe, continent-sized, inescapable. Europe had found the site for its Kingdom of Death, that special Death the West had invented. Savages had their waste regions, Kalaharis, lakes so misty they could not see the other side. But Europe had gone deeper—into obsession, addiction, away from all the savage innocences. America was a gift from the invisible powers, a way of returning. But Europe refused it. It wasn't Europe's Original Sin—the latest name for that is Modern Analysis—but it happens that Subsequent Sin is harder to atone for.

"In Africa, Asia, Amerindia, Oceania, Europe came and established its order of Analysis and Death. What it could not use, it killed or altered. In time the death-colonies grew strong enough to break away. But the impulse to empire, the mission to propagate death, the structure of it, kept on. Now we are in the last phase. American Death has come to occupy Europe. It has learned empire from its old metropolis. But now we have *only* the structure left us, none of the great rainbow plumes, no fittings of gold, no epic marches over alkali seas. The savages of other continents, corrupted but still resisting in the name of life, have gone on despite everything . . . while Death and Europe are separate as ever, their love still unconsummated. Death only rules here. It has never, in love, become *one with* . . ." (*author's elisions*)

Another episodic strand runs through pages numbered in the sixties which acts contrapuntally to the one running through those numbered in the low twenties. One might go so far as to analogize it to moving from the inside of a spiral outwards as opposed to moving in from without. Blicero's speech is the end of the progression numbered through the twenties—the book has 760 pages in all—while the first sentence on page 60 is: "Death has come in the pantry door: stands watching them, iron and patient, with a look that says *try to tickle me*." On page 166, death is identified with the basic ingredients of industrialism—coal and steel—and with the Protestant preterite, those who've been passed over: "Consider coal and steel. There is a place where they meet. The interface between coal and steel is coal-tar. Imagine coal, down in the earth, dead black, no light, the very substance of death. Death ancient, prehistoric, species *we will never see again*. Growing older, blacker, deeper, in layers of perpetual night. Above ground, the steel rolls out fiery, bright. But to make steel, the coal tars, darker and heavier, must be taken from the original coal. Earth's excrement, purged out for the ennoblement of shining steel. Passed over.'"

This analogizing of coal tars—the source of such staples of modern life as the aspirin—with preterition continues. On page 260 there is mention of synthetics and of one Max Schweiter, who is connected with Psychochemie AG, and whom Slothrop asks for information about Imoplex G, an “erectile plastic” developed at Blicero’s behest. It’s through the metaphorical identification of coal tar with preterition that technology’s tendency to “favor death” (p. 261) becomes, for the novel as a whole, a way of accounting for everybody’s involvement in that same technology.

A hundred pages later than that (p. 361) geology’s anticipation of a social reality (and one notes that that reality is concretized not in the fact of sedimentation but in the process which uncovers and transforms it), is developed into an *historical* preceding of signified by signifier. We learn that the Schwartzkommando’s badge is like that worn by von Trotha’s troops in the brutal suppression of the Herero uprising of 1904. Again it is a circle, with one letter at the center and four above, below, and at either side of it, representing the five positions of the A4 rocket’s launching switch. The German-Herero relationship has become what one might call a literary tautology. Entirely conversant with German science, the Hereros see in it their own mythic iconography; which in *its* turn might suggest an even earlier case of anticipatory signification. Because it is a product—or at least a direct consequence—of German industry—in both senses of the word—the Hereros’ determination to commit tribal suicide brings us back to the question of considering “the behavior of the whole injury.” A tribal project is formulated by way of and because of science, but it’s conceived as a project entirely justified by local mythopoiesis, and the compatability of the two is a consequence of their sharing a vocabulary at what’s been called the Planetary level. The reference at a parallel point in the series of pages in the twenties to the Moon as both the bringer of evil and its avenger (p. 322, see above) is mythopoieically succinct not only for the Hereros but, through recurrent references to European female deities such as in the passage which follows, for everyone else in the novel too.¹⁴ In *Gravity’s Rainbow* planetary ambition is founded at the convergence of pre-Christian myth—the Hereros before colonization are described on page 321 as “one of the last pockets of Pre-Christian Oneness left on the planet”—and scientific, *i.e.*, universal, law.

The Hereros’ pursuit of suicide represents a reading of a text of which they are a part. It is written in scientific language and, because of that, understood

14. In regard to which it is pleasant to note that the Adorno essay cited above ends with the following: “Paul Klee too belongs to any debate about committed and autonomous art: for his work, *écriture par excellence*, had roots in literature and would not have been what it was without them—or if it had not consumed them. During the first world war or shortly after, Klee drew cartoons of Kaiser Wilhelm as an inhuman iron-eater. Later, in 1920, these became—the development can be shown quite clearly—the *Angelus Novus*, the machine angel, who, though he no longer bears any emblem of caricature or commitment, flies far beyond both. The machine angel’s enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it. But, as Walter Benjamin, who owned the drawing, said, he is the angel who does not give but takes.”

through groping back to terms which precede but anticipate its own. In an adjacent passage (p. 364) the idea of sin, and of the sense in which the novel is an inversion of Christian literary models such as the *Mort d'Arthur*, is most clearly enunciated. The world is seen to proceed not through values but through things, not talismen but instruments. Yet, as we've said, this isn't an attribution of any kind of neutrality:

Slothrop's dumb idling heart sez: The Schwarzgerät is no Grail, Ace, that's not what the G in Imoplox G stands for. And you are no knightly hero. The best you can compare with is Tannhäuser, the Singing Nincompoop—you've been under one mountain at Nordhausen, been known to sing a song or two with uke accompaniment, and don'tcha feel you're in a sucking marshland of sin out here, Slothrop? maybe not the same thing William Slothrop, vomiting a good part of 1630 away over the side of that *Arbella*, meant when he said "sin" . . . But what you've done is put yourself on somebody else's voyage—some Frau Holda, some Venus in some mountain—playing her, its, game . . . you know that in some irreducible way it's an evil game. You play because you have nothing better to do, but that doesn't make it right. And where is the Pope whose staff's gonna bloom for you?

Another hundred pages and a lack of choice or enthusiasm similar to Slothrop's is said to have surrounded the birth of the rocket. On page 464 Thanatz, one of the maddest characters in the book (whose name surely has its origins in the word Thanatos and who, elsewhere recommending that if Sado-Masochism could be instituted at the family level the state would wither away, thus collapsing into his own persona precisely the confusion between erotic and non-erotic destructiveness, and the inevitability of that confusion, which Freud invoked), describes the rocket's development as follows:

There is no problem steering him onto the subject of the rocket—"I think of the A4," sez he, "as a baby Jesus, with endless committees of Herods out to destroy it in infancy—Prussians, some of whom in their innermost hearts still felt artillery to be a dangerous innovation. If you'd been out there . . . inside the first minute, you saw, you grew docile under its . . . it really did possess a Max Weber charisma . . . some joyful—and *deeply* irrational—force the state bureaucracy could never routinize, against which it could not prevail . . . they did resist it, but they also allowed it to happen. We can't imagine anyone *choosing* a role like that. But every year, somehow, their numbers grow."

On page 563 the anticipation of signified by signifier announced on p. 361 is conclusively elaborated:

[Slothrop] brings out the mandala he found. "What's it mean?"

Andreas sets it on the ground, turns it till the K points northwest. "Klar," touching each letter, "Entlüftung, these are the female letters. North letters. In our villages the women lived in huts on the northern half of the circle, the men on the south. The village itself was a mandala. Klar is fertilization and birth, Entlüftung is the breath, the soul. Zündung and Vorstufe are the male signs, the activities, fire and preparation or building. And in the center, here, Hauptstufe. It is the pen where we kept the sacred cattle. The souls of the ancestors. All the same here. Birth, soul, fire, building. Male and female, together.

The four fins of the Rocket made a cross, another mandala. Number one pointed the way it would fly. Two for pitch, three for yaw and roll, four for pitch. Each opposite pair of vanes worked together, and moved in opposite senses. Opposites together. You can see how we might feel it speak to us, even if we don't set one up on its fins and worship it. But it was waiting for us when we came north to Germany so long ago . . . even confused and uprooted as we were then, we *knew* that our destiny was tied up with its own. That we had been passed over by von Trotha's army so that we could find the *Aggregat*."

Slothrop gives him the mandala. He hopes it will work like the mantra that Enzian told him once, *mba-kayere* (I am passed over), *mba-kayere* . . . (*author's elisions*)

And on pages 660-1 the themes developed at the beginning of this series of episodes surface in an image of the conversion of nature into death which explicitly links the psychology of an individual—Katje Borgesius, who is speaking to Enzian—with a transformation which goes beyond Eros:

"How can my story be sadder than that?" Shameless girl, she isn't humoring him, she's actually flirting with him now, any technique her crepe-paper and spider-italics young ladyhood ever taught her, to keep from having to move into his blackness. Understand it isn't *his* blackness, but her own—an inadmissible darkness she is making believe for the moment is Enzian's, something beyond even the center of Pan's grove, something not pastoral at all, but of the city, a set of ways in which the natural forces are turned aside, stepped down, rectified or bled to ground and come out very like the malignant dead: the Qliphoth that Weissman has "transcended," souls whose journey across was so bad they lost all their kindness back in the blue lightning (the long sea-furrows of it rippling), and turned to imbecile killers and jokers, making unintelligible honks in the emptiness, sinewed and stripped thin as rats—a city-darkness that is her own, a textured darkness in which flows go in all directions, and nothing begins, and nothing ends. But as time passes things get louder there. It is shaking

itself into her consciousness.

Finally, on page 760, the last words of the book are:

. . . or, if song must find you, here's one They never taught anyone to sing, a hymn by William Slothrop, centuries forgotten and out of print, sung to a simple and pleasant air of the period. Follow the bouncing ball:

There is a Hand to turn the time,
 Though thy Glass today be run,
 Till the Light that hath brought the Towers low
 Find the last poor Pret'rite one . . .
 Till the Riders sleep by ev'ry road,
 All through our crippl'd Zone,
 With a face on ev'ry mountainside,
 And a soul in ev'ry stone . . .

Now everybody—

It is, then, possible to think of *Gravity's Rainbow* as a series of recurrences ordered quite straightforwardly into a physical mass. It is the banality of this ordering which is under consideration here because, as Adorno says, it is that which defines the socio-political nature of the work's autonomy.

The book is mapped on to the landscape of Europe in order that it may propose an identification of the U.S. with that same area. One may think of this as a series of juxtapositions onto Eurasia of the map of America, so that, for example, if one draws a rectangle which contains the U.S. and places this onto a map of Europe so that Berlin is in the top left, the easternmost extent of Tchitcherine's sojourn on the Kirghiz steppes would be at the bottom right. Within this restriction of the action of the novel to a surface equal to that of America's, images are in case after case intensified by their convergence with historical or linguistic fact. One notes that Germany is almost exactly above South West Africa, and that both Trotha and Herero may be words which have behind them early German words for the God of the Christians.¹⁵ That the Frau Holde referred to on page 364 is a Germanic goddess identified specifically with north Germany.¹⁶ That 'Enzian'

15. See, Philippe Wolff, *Western Languages A.D. 100-1500*, trans. Frances Partridge, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1971, p. 94ff. The early German words in question are "truht (a troop of free fighting men, and tending to represent God as a war leader, freely followed by the faithful)" and "hêro (the most recent, since there is no corresponding English word) based on hêr, venerably old . . ."

16. Cf.: "Holde, Holle, Hulda, Hulle, or Holl A Germanic goddess, especially of the Suevi,

was the name given by the Germans to the anti-aircraft rocket they were trying to develop at the end of the war. And that Nordhausen and Bleicherode are indeed the names of the two places where the rocket was designed and tested.¹⁷

Signification proliferates, then, through constantly reminding the reader of the facts as they are and were, of oppositions which mutually illuminate, including geographical identification which unearths curious coincidences. When Tchitcherine is engaged in teaching the Kirghiz the New Turkic Alphabet—part of Stalin's solution to the nationalities 'problem'—the locale is described as being like the wild west, and it so happens that the Kirghiz were suppressed—and at the same time nicknamed the "black Kirghiz"—at the same time that the plains Indians were being wiped out here; in latitude the area is dead level with the Dakotas. In *Gravity's Rainbow* literariness renews one's acquaintance with facts, to which the fiction has a relationship which can hardly be called arbitrary, and from which it ultimately seems to want to claim no genuine independence. The text is instead an encounter with the possibility that the work of the artist is of clarification rather than invention, in the sense that invention is no more, or less, than the manipulation of literary devices in order that proclivities inherent in the language with which the book is written may be more fully felt, or felt anew. For both Pynchon and Smithson, artistic production is concerned to displace and reorder material. Never, as Smithson said, is it undertaken to manipulate ideas in a way that is independent of things. The *Spiral Jetty* marks, and in that marking reconstitutes, content already identified with its location. Smithson knew that for the South-West Indians the spiral (the conch shell) represents the whirlwind and the word. And also that although science has found no evidence to support the legend of a whirlpool at the bottom of the lake, the last person who claimed to have seen it died within living memory. Bearing in mind Pynchon's "Soul in ev'ry stone," it's worth considering Smithson on Poe:

Poe's narrative of A. Gordon Pym seems to me excellent art criticism as a prototype for rigorous "non-site" investigations. "Nothing worth mentioning occurred for the next twenty-four hours except that, in examining the ground to the eastward of the fluid chasm, we found two triangular holes of great depth, and also with black granite sides." His descriptions of chasms and holes seem to verge on proposals for "earth words." The shapes of the chasms themselves become "verbal roots" that spell out the difference between darkness and light. Poe ends his mental image with the sentence—"I have graven it within the hills

Hessians, and Thuringians, appearing in many manifestations. Early she was a sky goddess, often to be seen riding on the wind. Snow was said to be feathers from her bed, detached as she was making it up. Often in her wild rides through the sky she is accompanied by a procession of witchlike creatures. Women suspected of witchcraft were said to 'ride with Holde'. . . ." *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1972, p. 500.

17. Brian Ford, *German Secret Weapons*, New York, Ballantine Books, 1969, p. 148.

and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock."¹⁸

Smithson is responding to the fact that in an editorial "Note" appended to the *Narrative* Poe 'reads' the shapes of the landscape as hieroglyphs of which the etymologies are Ethiopian, Arabian, and Egyptian, root words.¹⁹

Pynchon's and Smithson's use of the spiral and the mandala might be described as the adoption and development of a peripheral form which defamiliarizes a language conditioned by Christianity. Both are devices that, to adopt a phrase of Braudel's, set the short view against the long. In Pynchon's case, the scientific against the mythical, which are thereby made to converge. On page 100 of *Gravity's Rainbow* the mandala is described as "the ancient sun wheel from which tradition says the swastika was broken by the early Christians, to disguise their outlaw symbol." On pages 412-3, where Kekulé's dream of the serpent with its tail in its mouth is invoked—"Kekulé went looking among the molecules of the time for the hidden shapes he knew were there"—the mandala is identified with the tetravalency of carbons. As for the spiral, Pierre Gaudibert has this to say:

Finally the spiral remains the model and the symbol of every vital force, of every deployment of generative energy, of every primordial vibration, of every fecundity, in short, of the fundamental structure of every becoming (energy, life, consciousness, spirit). As the spiral motif allows us to visualize in a simplified manner the order of change, symmetry within asymmetry, the dynamic equilibrium at the center of perpetual disequilibrium, it is applied to multiple forms of becoming, birth as decline, life as death, progress as decadence, evolution as involution. Even more strange—and which makes it especially deserving of deeper investigation—the spiral is also found in a number of traditional teachings as well as in the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic, which utilizes the notion of "development in a spiral," although it

18. Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum*, VII (September, 1968), 49.

19. In another Poe piece, "The Journal of Julius Rodman," the writer pauses in awe before certain stratifications of rock along the embankment of the Missouri River, and wonders whether they were produced by geological upheaval or architectural design; to him they seem more like works of art than of nature. It is passages such as these, as well as his more overt interest in social situations and particularities of the landscape (such as the whirlpool) that signify through semantic, etymological, or iconographical association, which make of Poe more than a source of passing relevance here. His *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* also contains several striking figural anticipations of *Gravity's Rainbow*. In an introductory essay to the paperback edition (New York, Hill and Wang, p. XIV), Sidney Kaplan cites such elements as "the black rock that marked the North Pole (*Rupes nigra et altissima* Mercator labels it on his map of 1569); the hollow earth of Captain Symmes; the Antarctic Utopia of the Perfect Whites" as basic to Poe's construction of the *Narrative*. Not only is the novel generated out of Black/White, North/South oppositional pairs, but in its final pages the narrator disappears into a blinding white veil of light reminiscent of the screen at the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Not a face, but a figure looming from behind the veil, brings Poe's *Narrative* to its conclusion: "But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow."

assumes a relatively marginal importance in orthodox Christian symbolism.²⁰

Smithson and Pynchon both refer, the sculptor in the film of the *Spiral Jetty* and the novelist on page 321 of *Gravity's Rainbow*, to the world before the continents drifted apart. Their works are no less, and no more, than affective speculations on material sedimented into signs. There is little in either work which doesn't lead one into, below the surface of, physical reality. This is the sense in which our perception of them is of autonomous works prepared to depict things-as-they-are, the state of the language and its landscape. One last example will serve to illustrate this aspect of their autonomy. Smithson's reference to Indian iconography has a parallel in the word Pynchon invented for the pig hero, a folk-ritual figure whose mantle Slothrop wears for a while. Pynchon gives this character the name Plechazunga, an unusual word for modern German in that there are few words in that language which begin with the sound 'Ple'. There is, however, a root for it in one of the languages German replaced. 'Plechazunga' is a combination of an old Balto-Slavic word for tearing or peeling—plèk—and the modern German word for tongue (*die zunge*), so the name means 'torn tongue', and in it suppressed and suppressor stand side by side and also inverted, in that the verb is provided by the language that is now extinct.²¹

One recalls Karl Kraus: "The closer you look at a word, the greater the distance from which it stares back at you." And this is the sense in which the attitude towards artistic conventionality taken by these works must be said to be the opposite of idealist hermeticism. Their autonomy has little to do with psychologizing appropriations of the sublime which would have it that the art work provides a model for a sense of self that 'transcends' history, a closed environment in which an idea of 'purity' may continue to fester in self-congratulatory splendor. In that they stand opposed to that thinking which would separate thinking from things, the individual from history, science from ideology, *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* confirm, superficially curious though the comparison may seem, Lenin's earlier assault on that version of science which would take thought out of the world; "Yesterday's limit to our knowledge of the infinitesimal particles of matter has disappeared, hence—concludes the idealist philosopher—matter has disappeared (but thought remains). Every physicist and every engineer knows that electricity is (material) motion, but nobody knows clearly *what* is moving, hence—concludes the idealist philosopher—we can dupe the philosophically uneducated with the seductively 'economical' proposition; let us *conceive* motion *without matter*."²²

The motion inextricably part of the material world in *Gravity's Rainbow*

20. Pierre Gaudibert, "Spirale et Temps," in *Spiralen & Progressionen*, ed. Jean-Christophe and Max Wechsler, Lucerne, Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1975, n.p.

21. Philip Scherer, "Germanic-Baltic-Slavic Etyma," *Supplement to Language*, XVII, (January-March, 1941), 28.

22. V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1972, p. 340.

and the *Spiral Jetty* is that process which governs coherence and identifies credibility for us. In the conclusion to this essay we shall attempt to pursue the putative comparability which has concerned us thus far to the end of establishing that what is experienced in *Gravity's Rainbow* and the *Spiral Jetty* is a contemporary view of the tension between language as product and producer of the world in which we live. In the course of doing that, we shall say that these works are ultimately comparable because they propose similar attitudes to the technical problem of transition, and that it is this which thereby becomes the basis for something like a world-view. That is the—only—sense in which these works ought to be described as representative of a generation's attitude towards the artistic conventionality it inherits. It is, again, the sense in which the successful work of art shows one where one stands by refraining from recommending an alternative position.

*

The operation which consists of reconciling the possible with the impossible accurately illustrates the word 'impossible' itself. And yet literature *exists*; that is its greatest paradox.²³

N.Y. 1975-6

Second of three parts

23. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard, Cleveland, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973, p. 175.

Jasper Johns:
The Functions
of Irony

ROSALIND KRAUSS

In all of this you must not think of coldness and lovelessness, contempt and scorn. Epic irony is rather an irony of the heart, a loving irony; it is greatness filled with tenderness for little things.

Thomas Mann, "Art of the Novel."

Taken simply, *The Critic Sees* is a cheap shot. It is an ironic performance of a rather standard kind, with the artist passing judgment on the critic. The work, by Jasper Johns, is a small relief in which a pair of spectacles mounted flush with a metal plaque display behind their transparent glass lenses, not the eyes we would expect, but two mouths engaged in the gestures of speech. "The critic sees with his mouth,"—and in seeing *that way*, "the critic is blind."

Well—you might ask—is there any other way to take it? And you might recall the story Johns gave out as the incident that prompted this work: about how he decided to make it after witnessing a critic spend under a minute 'looking' at



Jasper Johns. *The Critic Sees*. 1961. Sculptmetal on plaster with glass. $3\frac{1}{4}$ by $6\frac{1}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. (Coll: Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull.)

the paintings in one of his shows.

Yet, I do think there is another way of taking it. And while that way doesn't convert the irony, it does change the angle of incidence on the butt of this particular jest. In an interview made around the time of this work, Johns said that for an artist while working, "One goes about one's business and does what one has to do and one's energy runs out. And one isn't looking throughout, but then one looks at it [the painting] as an object. It's no longer part of one's life process. At that moment, none of us being purely anything, you become involved with looking, judging, etc."¹

With such a statement, Johns allows the epithet 'critic' to include himself. Or at least that part of himself no longer immersed in the process of working—that aspect of the artist who is left with the products of his labor, only. The very sign that a work is 'finished' is that it can be addressed, verbally: by the artist as well as by others. In quitting that realm of private engagement in which it was part of an unspoken colloquy, the work ends up as 'statement'. The permanence of the finished work is then a signal for the death of the creative act through which it was formed. And this sense that resolution, even if 'successful' inevitably brings failure, stems from a far more interesting level of irony than the one about the 'blindness' of the critic. It is a type of irony often called Romantic, in that it expressed the deep scepticism of 19th Century artists about the Classical canons of form, their sense that authenticity derived only from the speculative or imaginative act, and the inevitable fact that this was itself transitory.

There was in Johns's early work a blend of this Romantic poignancy with the more deeply negative and derisive ironies of a modernist kind. The surfaces of the first *Flags*, *Targets*, and blank, gray walls of works like *Drawer* and *Shade*, were like the evidence of love lavished on the creation of a tombstone. The modernist ironies were of course about the nature of the tomb. They were about the closing-off of the possibility of a believable space within painting, or behind the picture's surface. They were about a blind pulled down forever over the conventional window of the Western easel painting—as in *Shade* (1959); about those irretrievable contents locked behind a surface that would no longer open—as in the painting called *Drawer* (1957). The only way to speak of space, these works said over and over in different tropes, was negatively, sceptically. The pictures became questions about the nature of space, by which the very concept of pictorial space was annulled. "One may ask a question," Kierkegaard wrote, "for the purpose of obtaining an answer containing the desired content, so that the more one questions, the deeper and more meaningful becomes the answer; or one may ask a question, not in the interest of obtaining an answer, but to suck out the apparent content with a question and leave only an emptiness remaining. The first method naturally presupposes a content, the second an emptiness; the first is

1. In an interview by David Sylvester, broadcast by the BBC, October 10, 1965. Reprinted in *Jasper Johns Drawings*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974, p. 12.



Jasper Johns. The Drawer. 1957. Encaustic on canvas and wood. 30½ by 30½ inches.

the speculative, the second the ironic."²

With the emptiness of the notion of pictorial 'space' there comes as well a radical leveling of the concept of *genre*—the variousness of pictorial types through which to express or embody that space. Johns has turned his hand to still-life, to landscape, to portraiture: always with the same result. With the destruction of their natural space, each of these species loses its distinctiveness. All assume the same object-like opacity. The still-life is a real coat-hanger suspended from a gray surface; the landscape is an unmodified map of the U.S.; the portrait is a body-cast or else an anthology of objects that have been retrieved from earlier paintings. The possibility of subjects and the variety of their terms are, then, also submitted to ironic attack.

Contained in this attack on the *genres* or sub-sets of the convention of picture-making—each with its own history—is the ironist's basic attack on the significance of history itself. In describing the Socratic method as a constant recourse to irony, Kierkegaard speaks of Socrates' attitude to history. "It is obvious," he says, "that this Socratic conception is negative: it negates life, development, in short, history in its most universal and widest sense."³ The sorts of values that history itself might be felt to reveal, are greeted by the sceptic with a deep sense of disbelief, expressed as irony. For the sceptic cannot believe in an originating source of value outside of the negative voice with which he questions.

And that voice, resonating with the scepticism about received values which we recognize as modernist, establishes through its complex tone of doubt the single, positive note the ironist is capable of striking: the voice itself is a model of autonomy. Irony is not translatable. There is no other way to say what the ironist is saying, no way to reverse the double negative, to unscramble the contradictions into a statement that is 'straight'. "Christ is an abyss filled with light," writes Kafka. One simply cannot paraphrase that and still retain the tone. And the tone is everything. In it is contained the certainty—the *negative* certainty—and the despair, and the peculiar sense of release that those two, taken together, engender.

Johns's early paintings were superb performances of this voice. The mundane object was used as an attack on the conventions of picture-making, of what could be represented and how and where. Yet the object was always absorbed by that voice, buried under the repeated inflections of pigment suspended in wax with which Johns built the surface of his argument. Those works were no more 'about' presenting the object as a picture than they were 'about' the objective conditions of the surface. It is more accurate to say that they were utterly absorbed by the performance of irony.

Which is why, at first glance, his most recent pictures are so shocking. First of all, they seem devoid of irony. And second, they insist on a reading in which a crucial term is history.

2. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. Lee M. Capel, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1965, p. 73.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

The apparent withdrawal from the ironic mode is a consequence of the surface unity of these paintings. That doubleness from which the contradictions of the earlier works stemmed—an image that is manifestly flat (like a flag) rendered in the spatial pregnancy of expressionist brushwork; the conflicting play between words and objects as systems of representation⁴—has disappeared. In place of that polyvalence is a surface entirely constructed as a network of hatched lines, executed in strokes of color.

The use of detached brushstrokes to give material presence to the surface is not new in Johns, of course. The early works (1955–60) had proceeded in this way, with monochrome hues (most often gray) suspended in encaustic, so that each waxen touch of color made itself felt as an isolated deposit on the surface of the image. But the more mechanical or organized procedures of hatching had not appeared until 1972 in paintings made up of several panels. In those, each panel contained a different type of image: in some the leaden surface of a kind of flag-stone flooring; in others the spread of bas-relief composed of casts of parts of the body. Against these, the panels containing the network of parallel lines, systematically changing direction over the surface, appeared as another kind of image. Specifically, it was an image of pictorial technique—for hatching is one way for a graphic artist to depict the change of plane as a form turns into depth, and, simultaneously to record the way the light fades on the receding surface. Johns's hatching, reduced from the task of representing the three-dimensional world, and relegated to the 'mere' ornamentation of a painted panel, did institute itself as ironic in the 1972 pictures. But in the new works, without the contrast and comparison of the other images—with their superior capacities to 'picture' reality—the use of hatching does not strike one as particularly ironic. No more than the use of modeling (value-gradations) in the recent work of the color-field painters could be thought to be so.

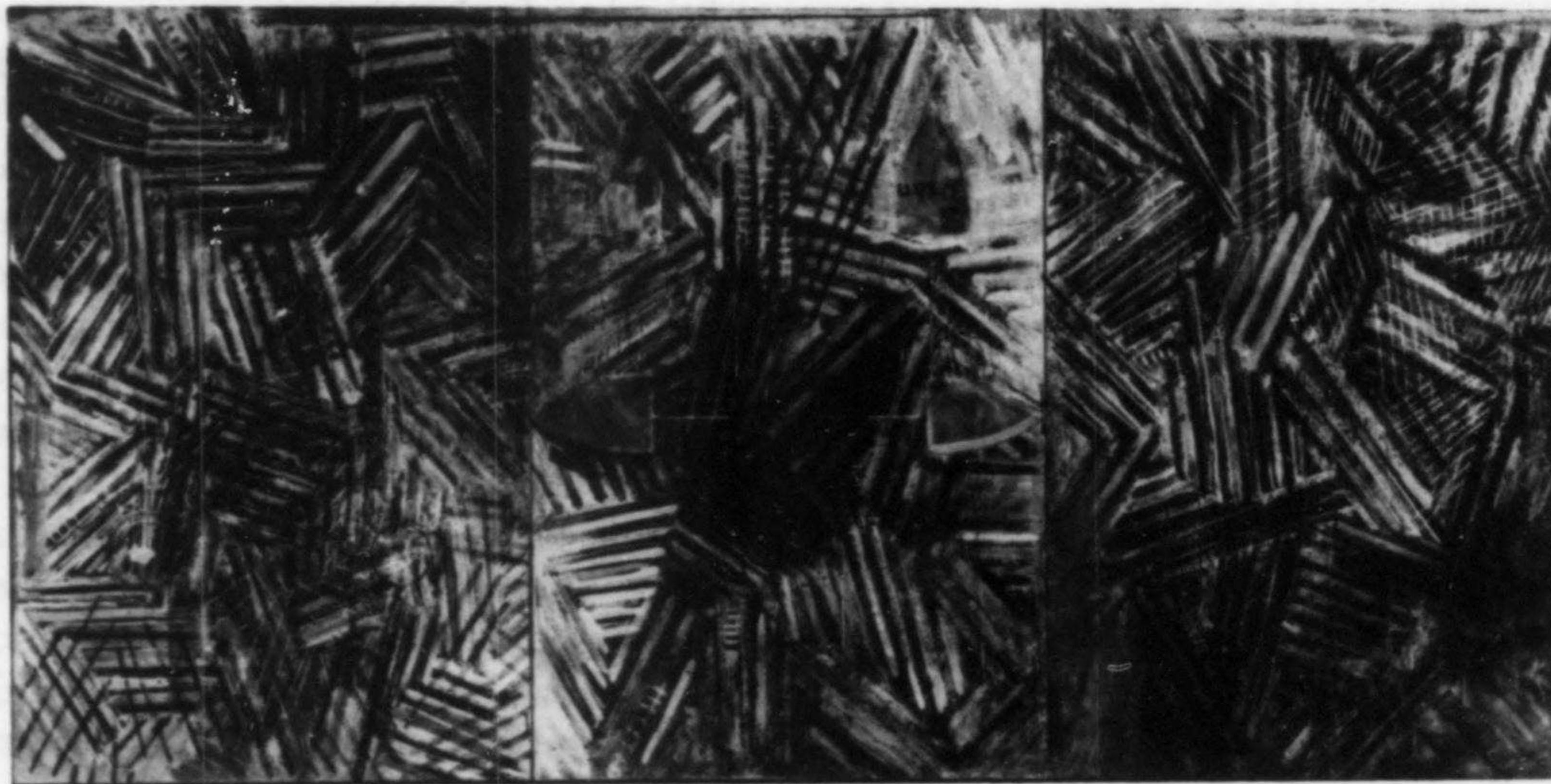
The one point at which irony might enter the surface handling of these works is through the use of mirroring and symmetry in the disposition of the segments of hatching. Many of the new works are built out of several panels and the hatching pattern is worked from panel to panel in terms of a symmetrical repeat. There is something almost ludicrously mechanical in the studied precision of these repeats. But this mirroring simply reinforces the fact that the hatching functions abstractly within these works—that it is shorn of the traditional duty to record the disposition of objects in three-dimensional space. The occurrence of the hatching therefore no longer attests to the unique placement of objects in reality. It signals instead the very different attributes of a plane surface—its rules of recurrence, its continuity, the mirroring of its boundaries from edge to edge. In seeming to bow to the analytic procedures through which recent abstract painting has elaborated the rules and values of the picture surface, these works by Johns

4. For a discussion of Johns's involvement with the theory of representation, see the two-part essay by Barbara Rose, "Decoys and Doubles, Part One," in *Arts, L* (May 1976).

seem softened and chastened, their derision silenced, their questions over.

But if I have been using words like 'seeming' and 'apparent' to indicate the initial experience of Johns's recent work as non-ironic, that is because the ground of Johns's irony has shifted in them, become less apparent, less a matter of surface contradictions and paradoxes. Looking at these paintings, one finds oneself engaged by an overt relation to history—to the specific history of art, and particularly modernist art. In that sense they represent yet another of the traditional *genres* to which Johns addresses himself: the by-now lapsed and almost impossible mode of History Painting.

The most obvious example is the triptych called *Weeping Women*, the dense cross-hatching of each panel executed in near monochrome, one of red, one of yellow, the third of blue. The visual references made by this work are inescapable. They are, most immediately, to that series of paintings Picasso made in the fall of 1907 and the winter/spring of 1908, in which a preoccupation with the standing nude figure brought him from the first display of his mature ambition—the *Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (1906-7)—to the developing phase of Cubism in 1909.



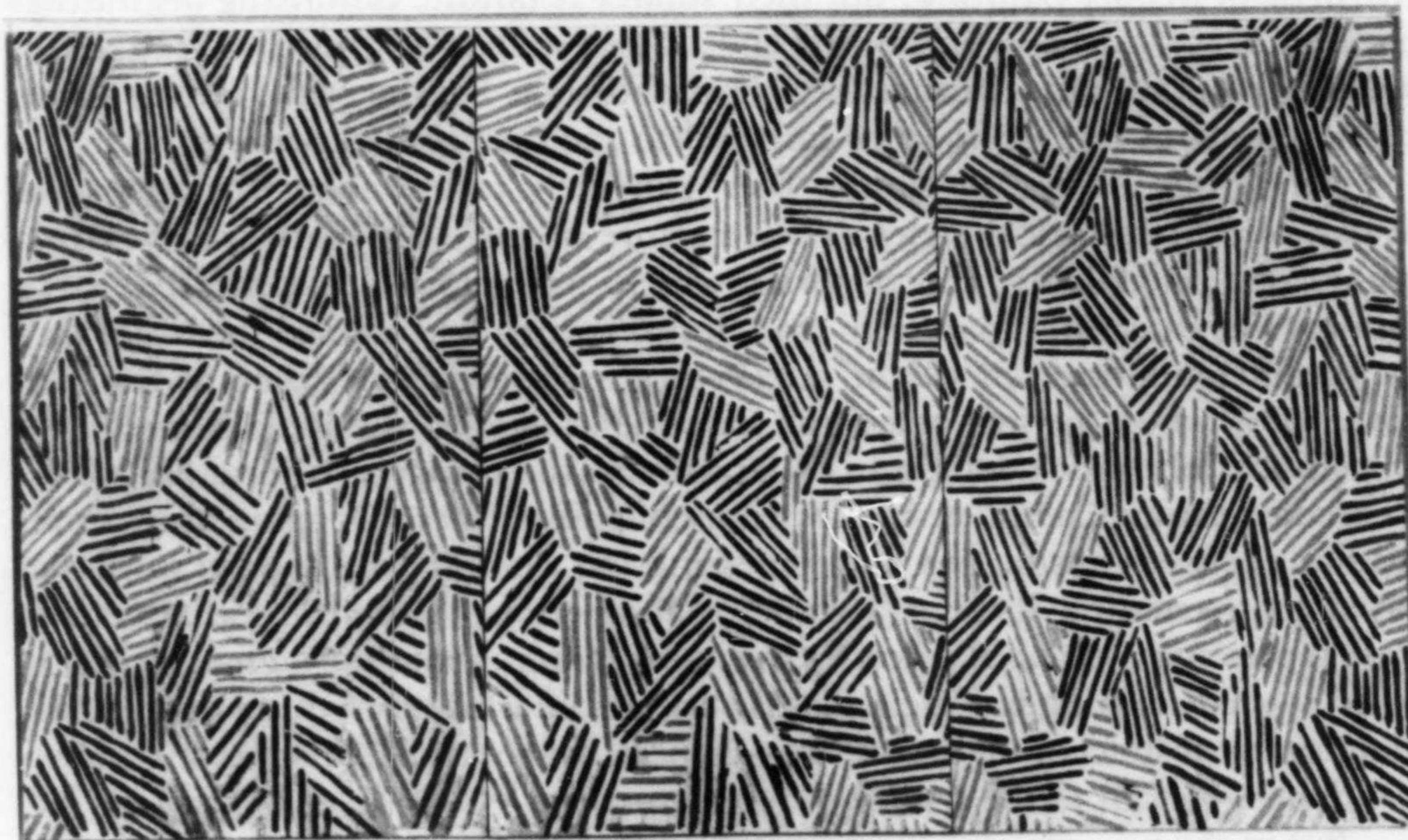
Jasper Johns. *Weeping Women*. 1975. Encaustic on canvas. 50 by 102 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (Coll: Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Lee.)

These figures were explored by means of a crude and insistent hatching by which Picasso declared that the language for depicting depth was to be the major problematic of a modern style. Using strokes of black and white to exaggerate the violence of the hatching, the 1907-08 pictures witness the first major attack on the possibility of color to enact the kinds of dislocations that were to become central to Cubism. And Johns's painting evokes those Picassos down to the laceration of color and the internal scale of the areas of hatching.

But the picture evokes other Picassos as well. Just as the 1907-08 nudes were

studies struck from the earlier *Desmoiselles*, a different series of studies was generated by another major work in Picasso's later career. After his several months' engagement with the subject of *Guernica* (1939), Picasso went on to elaborate certain sections of that work in a series called "Weeping Woman." In this later series, too, Picasso resorted to a broad and violent use of hatching, although to far more psychologically expressive ends than in the early standing nudes. By naming his painting after those studies, by using an expanded mural format to evoke *Guernica* itself, and by exploiting internal repetition to suggest a single image repeated through successive studies, Johns conflates the naissance of Cubism with its maturity—some would say, its old age.

The sense of history—or rather *a* history—compacted on the surface of *Weeping Women*, is also to be felt in another of these works of Johns: the one called *Scent*. There, in what is superficially the least 'attractive' of these paintings, Johns conjures a history very different from that of Cubism: one that begins with Impressionism and ends with Pollock.



Jasper Johns. *Scent*. 1974. Encaustic and collage on canvas 72 by 126 inches. (Coll: Dr. Peter Ludwig.)

Scent is also a three-panel work, although no distinction is made from panel to panel in terms of hue. The largest of these pictures (it is over ten feet wide), *Scent* is entirely composed of hatching in the secondary triad: green, purple, orange; which overlays the phantom presence of underpainting in the primaries: red, yellow, blue. In the 'all-over' composition of this wall of atomized color, in its concern for a quasi-divisionist relationship to hue, *Scent* inescapably recalls the last great phase of Impressionism. It conjures up Monet's waterlily cycles—the point at which naturalism began to transmute itself through Symbolism into

Abstraction. And with *Scnt*, as with *Weeping Women*, the title works as a reference to the culmination of a particular historical development. For *Scnt* is the name of one of the last (or perhaps *the* last) pictures by Jackson Pollock. It is a work in which Pollock tried to resurrect the shimmering, compressed space of the earlier drip paintings, using however strokes rather than spills and drips of color. The drag of these strokes, hue against hue, the sense of flickering, shallow space perceived between their interstices, recapitulates the late Monet. But in *Scnt* the result is turgid, labored, overpainted. It is a picture through which one feels the closing-off of possibility.

History painting is tied to the condition of narrative. No matter how compressed the moment rendered, the historical narrative surrounds the image, creating for it a temporal milieu. The actuality of depicted gesture swells with the knowledge of the gestures that preceded this one, leading up to it, and the ones that will lead away. The works by Johns, in their evocation of several moments—and monuments—central to the development of modern art, are engaged with the enterprise of history painting. But their subject is failure, promising beginnings that lead to convulsive or ineffectual ends. Their subject is 'growth' as stasis. It is in this sense that Johns maintains the ironic attitude. For the works convey a deep scepticism about the *significance* imputed to the historical process.

Johns has always, of course, been extremely canny about the subject of history, and of historical styles. The structure of his early work was based on synthesizing modalities or categories which had proved, historically, to be distinct. The categories 'painterly' and 'linear' which had formed the historian's key to differentiating schools of art (Venice as opposed to Rome in the 16th Century) or whole period styles (the Baroque as against the Renaissance) were oppositions Johns took delight in collapsing. So the stringently linear flag would be executed through a bravura performance of painterliness. Or again, the natural antithesis between abstraction and representation would be nullified in work that played representation itself as a game of abstraction. "Everything that usually serves representation and illusion," Greenberg wrote about the *Flags* and *Targets*, "is left to serve nothing but itself, that is abstraction; while everything that usually connotes the abstract or the decorative—flatness, bare outlines, all-over or symmetrical design—is put to the service of representation."⁵

But in the new pictures there is a different attitude to history. Before, though the historical categories were toyed with and reversed, they were nonetheless a source of energy. In the new works they are simply leveled out, negated. In being so treated they are much more deeply challenged as a source of value.

What is left as always is the performative voice: Johns creating, patiently, this scenario of negation. For the pictures are extremely beautiful; and they convey an extraordinary sense of the autonomy of the visual. The autonomy of the voice is

5. Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International* (1963), reprinted in Henry Geldzahler, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1969, p. 365.

the ironist's last source of value. There is a section of a dialogue between Beckett and Georges Duthuit that bears repeating:

B. The only thing disturbed by the revolutionaries Matisse and Tal Coat is a certain order on the plane of the feasible.

D. What other plane can there be for the maker?

B. Logically none. Yet I speak of an art turning from it in disgust, weary of its puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road.

D. And preferring what?

B. The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.⁶

6. Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett, a Critical Study*, London, 1962, p. 30.

Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity

CARL ANDRE AND JEREMY GILBERT-ROLFE

[*Editors' Note: The following is an exchange between Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, in the form of responses to previously agreed-upon questions. Instead of answering the questions, one-by-one, Andre wrote a short text, which we have printed as the second part of this document. The first part contains the original questions and Gilbert-Rolfe's responses, which Andre then annotated with his own reactions to Gilbert-Rolfe's statements.*]

What are the relations between art object and marketplace?

As a fetish,¹ the art object obviates the question of labor-value to the extent that there is an almost immediate recognition of its value in terms of exchange. No one buys an artist's labor, they buy instead an object which provides provocation or satisfaction of a kind they choose to subsidize and encourage.² (There is a difference between buying labor and subsidizing it, in that subsidies permit labor-value to remain unstated and variable.) The relationship between the art object and the marketplace seems to have undergone less fluctuation or transformation than that between other commodities and their place of exchange, possibly because of the fact that nowadays labor-value in the world at large is subsidized rather than priced. The price of an art object tends to be no more or less than what the market will bear, which is not the case with, for example, Boeing Aircraft, or the productivity of someone who works for the Post Office.³ The art marketplace is, then, an anomaly of a certain sort: a social institution which is able to remain

1. Andre: Are not all art objects in all cultures fetishes? Instead of attempting to prove that women have penises as in sexual fetishisms, does not the art object attempt to prove that we do not die, not of course through any pretension to 'immortality' but through a denial of mortality? The fetishism of commodities lies not in their physical aspect but in their ready convertibility into unwithering (immortal) finance capital.

2. Andre: Robert Barry—"The collector buys this object, but he pays for the next one."

3. Andre: The exchange value of an art object is largely created through publicity-by-reproduction, while the production value of an art object is degraded exactly by frequency of reproduction. This does not apply to those arts unique to our time whose original and authentic production is reproduction. Film is the artform born fully proletarianized out of the factory system of the 19th Century.

crudely capitalist because it is underwritten by those feudal notions of patronage—subsidies—which capitalism was supposed to have replaced.⁴ In this, as the comparison with Boeing indicates, the artmarket is a paradoxical microcosm of the situation at large, in that Capitalism, as we know, survives by persistently and surreptitiously belying its own commitment to free competition through having to have recourse to that government patronage which maintains its shambling edifice.

Is it possible for artists and their art to exist in a capitalist society outside of capitalism?

One would suppose not. If you live in a forest and spend all your time chopping down trees you're still a woodsman. If you live there and pretend you're living on a plain you're a solipsist. Even a hermit has to eat, and therefore to live in a world that is physical to that degree.

Why would people desire that it should?

Because, apart from the understandable human desire to take no responsibility for certain of one's actions, in living amongst the contradictions of capitalism we still tend to cleave for security to the idealism which that economic system perpetuates. The notion that in order to see something one must isolate it from the world persists, and that isolation becomes a token which absolves the artist and the art from self-identification with that system with which they are in every observable sense involved. A commitment to the idea of eternal or universal values becomes in this regard an excuse for a guilty and coy indifference to the historical transformation of those values—of that system of signification—in a particular place or time, namely America at the moment when it's losing its grip on international politics and finance. It's slightly comic that artists, of all people, should want to be saints when it seems that saints have rarely been involved in the production of anything—notable exceptions like the poetry of John of the Cross aside—except their own martyrdom.⁵

Is it possible for artists to be responsible for the social, political, and economic destiny of their work?

The artist may be able to a limited extent to be responsible for the social destiny of the work he or she produces insofar as there may be the possibility of controlling where it's put. Its political destiny is an affair of interpretation and the artist can no more assume final responsibility for that than for any other aspect of

4. Andre: Since art in any purely material sense is nonproductive all art-making activities in all cultures *must* be subsidized. Of course the exact same thing is true of war-making which is the homosexually Utopian activity of men subsidized by the exaction of tribute from women kept in the bonds of sexism. (J.G-R.)

5. Andre: And transfiguration.

its 'meaning'. To try is to lapse into intentionalism. As for its economic destiny, that is a matter of speculation which the artist can only control negatively and only when the object's desirability has been firmly established in the public's mind.

If possible, is it desirable?

It seems desirable in that it seems to be a direct extension of professional responsibility. How possible it is is another matter. For one thing the artist can only take responsibility as long as he or she is alive. After that, things show an inclination to go awry, as the posthumous careers of David Smith and Mark Rothko suggest. So one can see why some artists might choose to give up the ghost, as it were, in their own lifetime.

If responsible, to whom is the artist responsible?

I should prefer to say, to the values of a craft—a process of making and selecting—and to the task of making that craft intersect with contemporary life as it is felt and seen. This includes the responsibility of considering that the craft may have become atrophied or redundant. Certainly I can't think of any social group towards whom the artist can be said to be responsible in the sense of answerable. He or she might *feel* responsible to any given group, but it's hard to describe a situation in which the artist could be said to *be* responsible in the sense of fulfilling an obligation which either side of the exchange could define with a view to accounting for the product in terms of measurable gratification or self-recognition. Art is a response to an *unspoken* desire which it anticipates and fulfills *without warning*. Responsibility is, then, for me more a question of to what than to whom.

By whom do artists wish to be judged?

By other artists and by posterity, the existence of which all art assumes.

And by whom are they judged and what is the form of that judgment?

In practise they are seldom judged by other artists, who tend to be too busy encouraging their peers⁶ to deliver much solid criticism. Art in this society is mostly judged by critics too timid to draw conclusions, too idle to develop a methodology which can question itself, and overwhelmingly committed to the view that the function of art is to gratify rather than to reveal; art in America is by and large judged by people neurotically determined to suspend judgement.

—Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe

6. Andre: I wish this were so. The besetting vice of the proletariat under capitalism is envy and all the artists I know, especially myself, must constantly overcome the surge of displeasure which accompanies the realization that another artist may have added a truly authentic and autonomous utterance to the stock of the imagined world.

J.G-R.: In this regard, Alan Tate once described the army as the organized adolescents of all ages. It occurs to me that the art world might be described as the unorganized adolescents of all ages.

Answers in My Disorder

"Those to whom the consciousness of history is denied are, like the innocent beasts of the field, condemned to the ceaseless reproduction of their present."

I. It is the genius of the bourgeoisie to be able to buy anything. That is, by offering money the capitalist ruling class creates exchange value where none existed before. There is the wonderfully true story of the advanced collector who bought the goldfish out of the artist's studio and then insisted on leaving the goldfish behind and obliging the artist to care for them as the collector's property. The most farcical claim of the conceptualizing inkpissers is that their works are somehow antibourgeois because they do away with objects. In fact, doing away with objects and replacing them with such reifications of abstract relations to production as stockshares, contracts, liens, options, and paper money itself (which is nothing but the fetishization of the idea of exchange value severed from even the dream of production) is exactly the final triumphant form of the bourgeois revolution.

II. In the comedy of the denial of history, the failed American artist sitting alone in her studio surrounded by the unsold, unbought weapons of her vision is subjectively and objectively the inheritor of Utopian capitalism. Where exchange value has not yet invaded, equity remains undivided. When the factory worker leaves the assembly line at the end of her workday, she takes nothing with her but an empty lunchpail and a packet of paper the value of which is determined by the private lucubrations of the autocephalic Federal Reserve Board. The living fire of the worker's labor has been stolen by Promethean capital.

When the capitalist leaves his office at the end of a hard day (and do not be fooled into believing that ruling successfully is anything but tedious, arduous, and almost totally consuming), he has the satisfaction of knowing he has met his payroll and thus severed the worker from any claim to the vision and destiny of her labor. What is more, at the end of the day the capitalist leaves nothing of his own behind him. He takes in his person his ownership of the worker's labor, his ownership of the tools of production (to which he has only the most tenuous dematerialized and conceptual relation), and he takes with him full ownership of all that has been produced materially and accumulated as capital and all that has been produced and distributed as exchange-value. The last delicious irony savored by the capitalist is his ownership through the Federal Reserve System of the paper money in the worker's wagepacket for which the workers must pay rent in the form of interest on the National Debt. The National Debt is owed to the capitalist by the worker who services it by paying taxes on her wages while the capitalist uses the collateral of the debt owed to him to create new finance capital in an endlessly self-replicating chain of paper wealth. The capitalist pays the worker her wages in units of debt which, like the beer she drinks in her saloons, she can never own but only rent.

III. It is the sorrow and pity of America that historical consciousness either died here or was left off the cargo manifests of the bottoms that breasted this New Found Land. Perhaps that is why Liberty stands with her back to us holding up her futile light against the oilspilled seas of oblivion. Without a sense of history we cannot begin to imagine who we are. Instead of revolution emerging in the culture of history we have spectacle mired in the narcotizing ooze of publicity with no place to hide ourselves should we by chance come to some knowledge of our shame. As artists we have sold off inspiration to buy influence. As audience, to pay the fines for being entertained, we have traded in our capacity to be moved to anything other than applause for jokes that in another time were intended not to win our witless assent but to free our willing laughter. Because there is no historical consciousness in America except among the ruling class, there is no class consciousness in America except among the ruling class. Without class consciousness, there can be no socialism in America. Brave, reckless, beautiful souls live in the weather of a terrorist underground trying to swim like fish among the grains of the sands of a desert. In history there is nurture, in spectacle there is not even shelter. In publicity is perfect forgetfulness where decadism drives out even decadence and the Nineties are gay and the Twenties are roaring and the Sixties are swinging and the Seventies lie under the crossroads like a vampire waiting for us in our innocence to pluck the stake from out of its heart and return the silver bullet to the masked man.

Epilogue

We have always had the historical choice of either lying through or living through our contradictions. Now through the genius of the bourgeoisie we have the chance to market them.

Carl Andre
N.Y., May, 1976.

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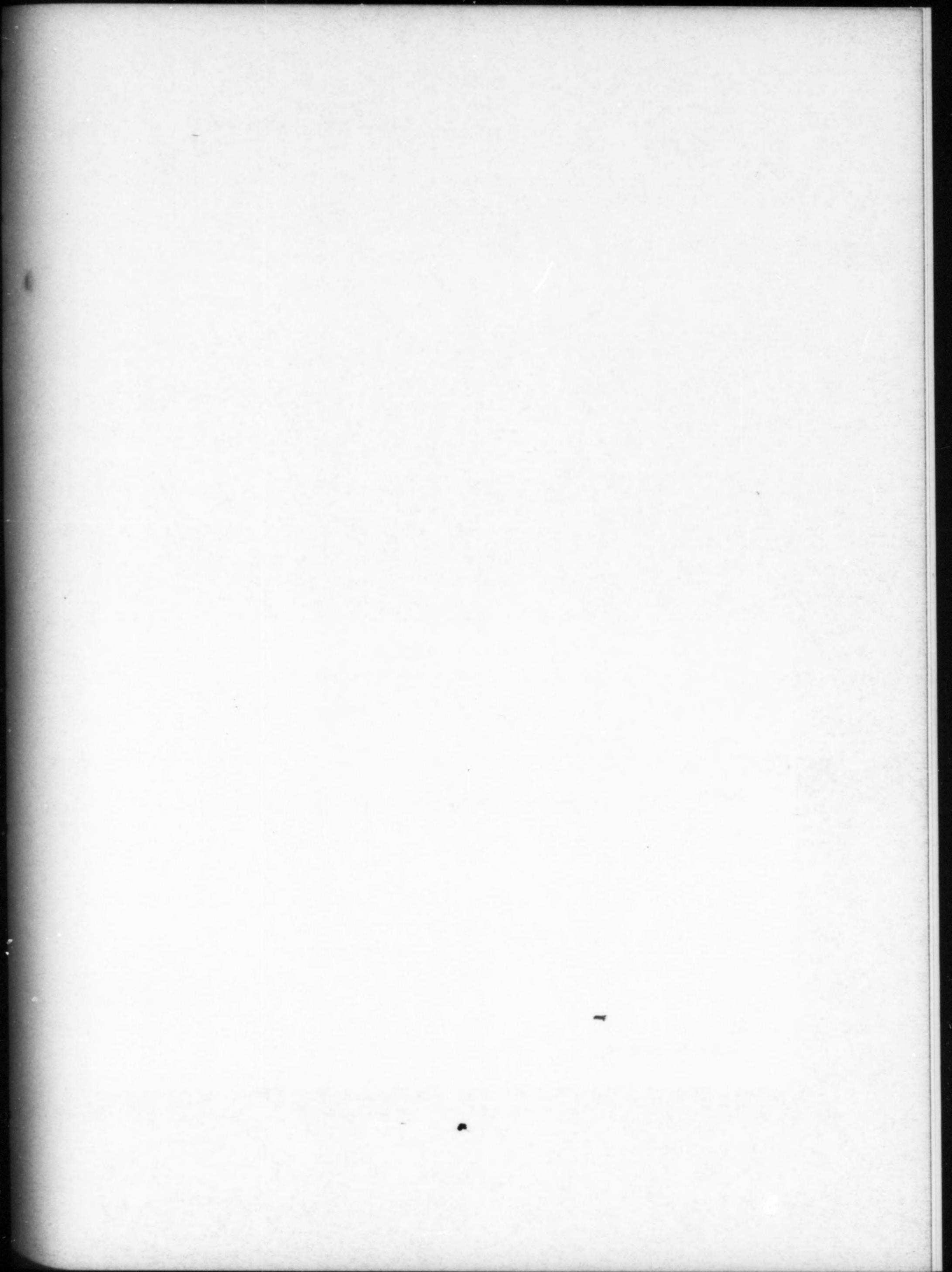
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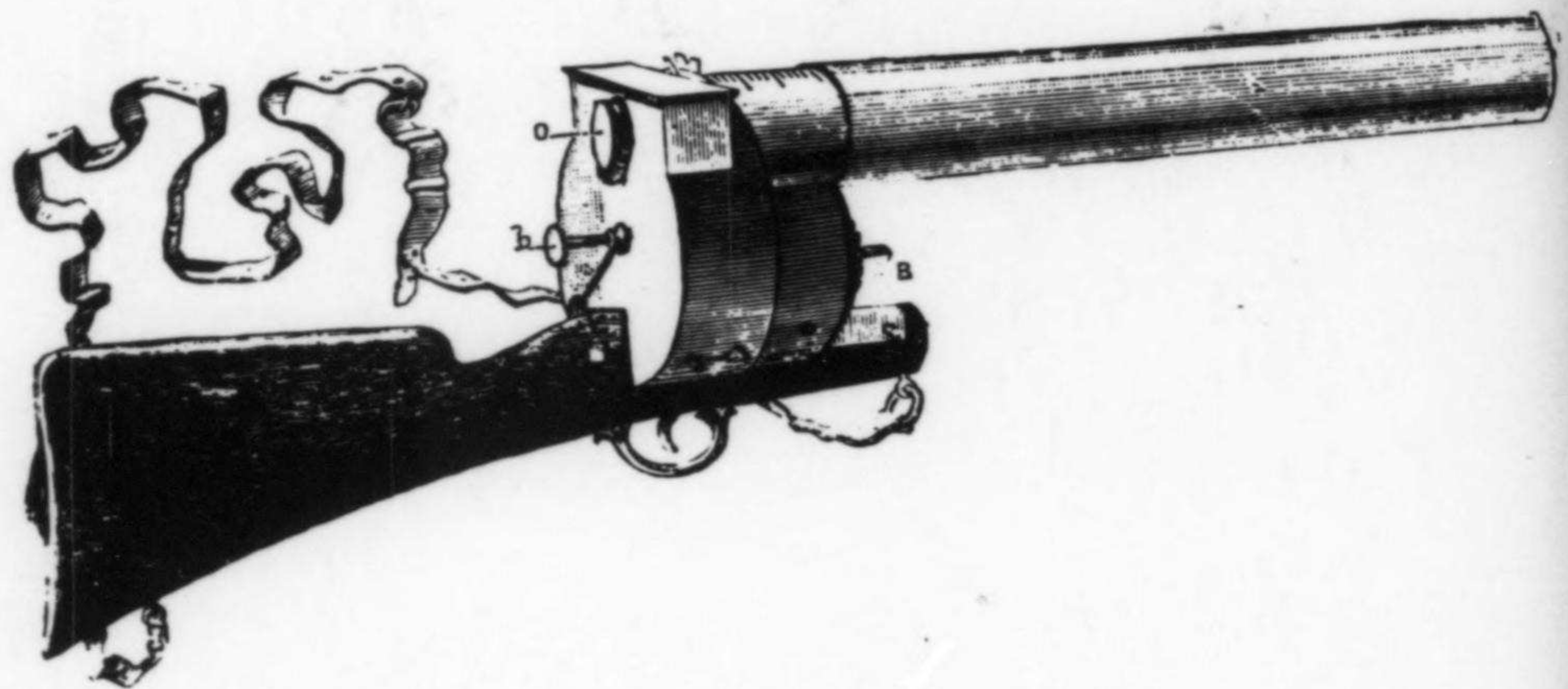
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