artistic unity and audience response surrounding the metamorphosis of the Aristophanic hero from frustrated victim to triumphant, uninhibited fulfiller of fantasies, which are often surprisingly difficult to communicate in a discussion based on a printed translation of Aristophanes' plays. After viewing *9 to 5*, students—and others—better comprehend the nature of the appeal of the lovable scoundrel, not just to ancient peoples or simpler societies but even to space-age sophisticates.

IX

Ancient Poetics and Eisenstein's Films

J. K. Newman

The application of filmic principles to criticism of classical literature is now well established and includes interpretation drawn from the Soviet director Sergei M. Eisenstein.[1] My essay has a different purpose: to link certain procedures of ancient narrative and the critical maxims they generate, notably in Aristotle, with specific aspects of Eisenstein's writings. This approach is encouraged by Eisenstein's habit of quoting widely from the most disparate sources, although his incidental acknowledgments of classical predecessors are never supported by sustained examination of ancient texts. In that respect, an essay such as this fills a gap in the great filmmaker's own explication and defense of his artistic positions.

My methodology is simple. After first discussing certain classical narrative passages and critical points, I link the principles illustrated in them with precepts and examples set forth by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and by Eisenstein himself in what his Soviet editors call his "theoretical researches."

1. Greek Poetics from Homer to the Hellenistic Age

At the beginning of the *Iliad*, the priest Chryses asks for his daughter back from Agamemnon. The other Greeks agree enthusiastically. But Agamemnon refuses, "enjoining on him a violent word":

> "Let me not find you, old man, by the hollow ships, either lingering now or coming again later, lest the staff and garland of the god avail you nothing. Her I will not release: before that old age will come upon her in my

1. See in particular the pioneering article by Fred Mench, "Film Sense in the *Aeneid*," first published in 1969 and reprinted in slightly revised form in this volume.

palace at Argos, far from her native land, as she toils at the loom and tends my bed. Off with you, don't provoke me, so that your return may be safer."

At this, the old man felt a stab of fear, and heeded [the king's] word. And he went in silence along the shore of the gurgling sea.[2]

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the whole future of European narrative technique is contained in these lines. Several points may be noted:

1. The *Iliad* is an epic, but this is a *dramatic confrontation*. In a fashion typical of later Attic drama, two violently opposed characters face each other before what may be considered a chorus, in this case the Achaean soldiers.

2. The scene is filled with *irony*. As Homer's audience knew from the myth, Agamemnon was not in fact destined to enjoy Chryseis' sexual favors. Although he appeared fearful and powerless in the presence of the mighty king, Chryses was going to win this conflict, and on terms so crushing that they form the whole tragedy of the *Iliad*. Agamemnon's bluster leads to Achilles' withdrawal from the fighting, to the deaths of Patroclus and Hector, and to the eventual confrontation between Priam and Achilles and the realization of the mortal condition affecting us all.

3. There is great use of *antithesis*. While the other Greeks, for example, had only one verb to indicate their approval at line 22, Agamemnon speaks his disapproval at length. Chryseis is young, but she will be old. She was free and a virgin here; she will be a slave and the king's mistress there. The old priest is silent, but nature, the "gurgling sea," takes up and magnifies his indignation for him.

4. The dramatic scene convinces by its use of *concrete, telling detail*. Agamemnon does not say: "your sacred rank" but "the staff and garland of the god." He does not say: "Your daughter will be my slave and mistress" but singles out tasks vividly denoting the role of such a slave and mistress. The silence of the priest, contrasting with the noisy sea, particularizes what "the old man felt a stab of fear" means.

5. *Characterization* is not spelled out in authorial generalizations but emerges from linguistic structure. Agamemnon is violent, crude, and egotistical. In a more literal translation than the one given above he says: "Off with you—don't go on provoking me—so that you may return safer." The word order shows his agitation. With the interjection he is projecting his own wrongdoing onto the priest. He is really the one provoking; if he is provoked, it is by his own lust. "Safer" (*saôteros*) is an

2. *Iliad* 1.26–34. Throughout, translations from Greek, Latin, and Russian are my own unless stated otherwise.

idiom of the type found, for instance, in the Homeric phrase "more feminine women" (*Iliad* 8.520), where women are not being contrasted with other women but with men. The suffix *-ter-* implies a contrast (more antithesis), here not between two types of safety but between safety and what could happen to Chryses—what the king desires to do to him.

6. *Pathos* is developed by a peculiar technique in which the listener is required to collaborate with the verbal construct. Homer is aware of what it means for the old man to lose his daughter in defiance of all morality, because afterward (36) he makes Apollo, "son of fair-tressed Leto" and therefore himself aware of family ties, quick to answer his priest's call. The priest will say in his later prayer: "May the Greeks pay for my tears with your arrows" (42). But what we are not told is that the priest weeps here and now, only that he is afraid and silent. We have to read his distress beyond this fear and silence retroactively into the scene, unless we learn how to get the most out of poetry on first reading.

7. The phrase "the gurgling sea" offers a hint of the priest's inner storms. But on the other side this *powerful image* symbolizes the world as it is given by the gods, greater than our concerns, not to be disturbed by human willfulness: "There is the sea, and who shall quench it?"[3]

8. *Repetition*. Homer says that Agamemnon "enjoined on him a violent word" at the start (25), and this is the "word" the old man obeys at the end (33). This is the ring composition which may have been essential in an oral technique, later developed to extraordinary lengths. It is a device prevalent in all Greek literature, including the prose of Herodotus and Thucydides. From the Greeks it passed to the Romans.

9. *Musicality*. This cannot be divorced from repetition, one of the most characteristic procedures in music. Implied here is more than euphony and assonance. If we examine the lengths of the individual segments making up the narrative in lines 17–52, we find the following:

I.	Chryses asks for his daughter back:	5 lines
II.	The other Greeks agree:	2 lines
III.	Agamemnon disagrees:	2 lines
IV.	He speaks threateningly:	3 + 4 = 7 lines
V.	Chryses goes off in fear:	4 lines
VI.	He prays:	6 lines
VII.	Apollo responds by assailing the Greeks:	10 lines

3. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 958. To anticipate my argument, we may compare Eisenstein's remarks about the function of the vast, cathedral spaces in his film *Ivan the Terrible* (two parts, 1943 and 1946). See Eisenstein, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Isskustvo, 1964), vol. 3, 353. (Later references to Eisenstein's writings in these volumes will be abbreviated as *I.P.*)—Eisenstein's theories as they are rele-

Chryses' departure and prayer (V, VI) and the response (VII) are in perfect balance: ten and ten lines; compare his first prayer (I) of five lines. Agamemnon's jarring isolation from the other Greeks during his speech (IV) is suggested by his anomalous seven lines. But even they echo, antithetically or antiphonally, I and II. We may be skeptical about this kind of analysis because we divorce music from poetry and both from mathematics; the ancients did not. "I remember the numbers; if only I could think of the words!" exclaims Lycidas in Virgil's *Ninth Eclogue* (9.45).

Normative as it was for later Greek poets, the Homeric technique could still admit refinement. Homer's epics had presumed the existence of other types of poetry, for example the wedding song on the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.493–495). In particular, the choral lyric as developed by Stesichorus seems to have had an epic dimension and to have acted as a bridge between the two styles. The fragmentary state of much choral poetry prevents us from tracing post-Homeric development in any detail, but Simonides, Pindar's older contemporary, is credited with the saying that painting is silent poetry and poetry painting that speaks.[4] He is also cited in a passage of the anonymous treatise *On the Sublime*, whose author, discussing special effects of imagination (*phantasiai*), declares:

> In general, imagination may be defined as any thought which in its occurrence produces speech. In this context the term is most common nowadays when, under the influence of enthusiasm and emotion [*pathos*], you seem to see what you are saying, and then communicate that vision to your hearers. (15.1)

vant to this essay are available to the English-speaking reader in Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, tr. Herbert Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; rpt. 1994). They are summarized here, however, directly from the Russian of Eisenstein, *I.P.*, vol. 2, 329–483, and vol. 3, 33–432. See also Eisenstein, *Izbrannye Stat'i* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, 1956). The best-known selections of Eisenstein's writings in English translation are in *The Film Sense*, ed. and tr. Jay Leyda (1942; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), and *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and tr. Leyda (1949; rpt. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977). *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works*, vol. 1: *Writings 1922–1934*, ed. and tr. Richard Taylor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988; rpt. 1996), contains a useful introduction; Taylor calls Eisenstein "by general consent the single most important figure in the history of cinema" (ix). Recent interpretive works in English include David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); James Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema, and History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Håkan Lövgren, *Eisenstein's Labyrinth: Aspects of a Cinematic Synthesis of the Arts* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell International, 1996). For descriptions and illustrations of Eisenstein's working methods see Leyda and Zina Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work* (New York: Pantheon/Museum of Modern Art, 1982).

4. Plutarch, *On the Glory of the Athenians* 3 (*Moralia* 346f–347c).

Euripides, we go on to learn, is a good example of this. But there are also cases in Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles—and Simonides. In the two authors mentioned last, the shade of Achilles appeared above his tomb to the army leaving Troy for the last time, "a scene which nobody perhaps has depicted as vividly as Simonides" (15.7).[5]

In Pindar we find both a polemic against Homer and a modification—in essence a concentration and intensification—of his narrative techniques. Scholars single out, for example, the myth of the *First Nemean Ode*.[6] The miraculous deed by which the infant Heracles signaled his more-than-human birth is related in a series of dramatic, painterly scenes. In the following translation I have attempted to preserve some of the affective word order of the original. In normal English, Heracles, for instance, would be "seizing the twin serpents by their necks with his two ineluctable hands," but the poet presents his picture in the abnormal order given here, telling

> how, when from his mother's womb immediately into the marvelous light
> the son of Zeus fleeing the birth pang with his twin brother came—how
> not escaping golden-throned Hera the saffron swaddling clothes he entered. But the queen of the gods, angry at heart, sent serpents forthwith.
> They, as the doors flew open, into the broad recess of the chamber entered, around the children their swift jaws to wrap eager. But he raised
> his head and made his first trial of combat with both his the-two-serpents-by-the-necks-seizing, ineluctable hands. And as they were strangled, time
> breathed out the lives from their unspeakable limbs. Unbearable fear
> struck the women who were in attendance at Alcmena's bed. She herself
> got to her feet unrobed as she was and rushed from the couch in spite of
> all, and tried to ward off the insolence of those monsters. And swiftly
> the Theban chiefs with bronze weapons ran up all together, and in his
> hand Amphitryon brandishing a sword naked from its scabbard arrived,
> by sharp distresses stricken.

At this point, the poet breaks off to remark: "For what is close to home oppresses every man alike, but straightway the heart feels no pain for another's care." The story now resumes:

> There he stood, by astonishment, both unbearable and yet happy, confused. For he witnessed the unwonted spirit and power of a son. Backward-tongued the immortals made for him the news of the messengers, and he summoned his neighbor, the eminent spokesman of most high Zeus, right-prophesying Tiresias.

5. Cf. Apollonius, *Argonautica* 2.911–929 (Sthenelus' tomb).

6. Cf. Leonhard Illig, *Zur Form der pindarischen Erzählung: Interpretationen und Untersuchungen* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1932), 20–25. The lines translated hereafter are *Nemean* 1.35–61.

Tiresias then delivers a prophecy, muffled in the circumlocutions of reported speech, about the victorious career of Heracles, culminating in his fight on the side of the gods against the snake-limbed Giants. Heracles' own life comes full circle in an existential ring composition. Following Athenian tradition, Pindar passes straight from Heracles' battle against the Giants to his apotheosis. He ignores within the economy of his poem the details we find, for example, in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*.

This story proceeds in a series of pictures: the birth, the sending of the serpents, the mysteriously opening doors, and the response of the baby son of Zeus. The interlocking word order in the strangulation of the two serpents cuts from the baby's grasp to what he is grasping, until we finally realize with relief that around their necks he has his hands. But this high point is anticipation. The story cuts back to the serving women, and then particularizes the reaction of the mother, struggling in her weakened state to get out of bed and not even bothering to seize a robe. Negative adjectives ("ineluctable," "unspeakable," "unbearable," "unrobed") force us to supply their positive counterparts since negatives in themselves make no appeal to the imagination. Now the Theban chiefs arrive, armed in bronze, and again someone is singled out among them: father Amphitryon, his bare sword flashing.

Verbs of movement have so far predominated: "fleeing," "came," "entered," "sent," "entered," "eager," "rushing," "ran, " "arrived," but here the narrative halts (cf. 55: *esta*) as the poet reflects on his version of the old adage that blood is thicker than water. This has been thought of as merely a holding remark, unimportant in itself, and intended to allow the listener to savor the vivid picture so far presented. But it is more, as the sequel shows.

Amphitryon reacts ambiguously. Wonderment is the appropriate reaction to a divine epiphany, and the unity of opposites illustrated by pain and pleasure together (55–56) is also part of this extraordinary mystical etiquette. His intervention, as it turns out, is not needed. The boy is quite able to look after himself, and the alarming news brought by the messengers is reversed. What did these messengers say? Perhaps: "Your sons are in mortal danger." The situation now proclaims: "Not only are your sons not in mortal danger, but this miracle also shows that the bolder of them is not your son." No wonder Amphitryon's feelings were mixed as he struggled to assimilate this conclusion, simultaneously flattering and devastating. Perhaps some inkling of it caused him to send for the spokesman of Zeus, because, as we were told at the beginning of the myth (35), the father of the child is none other than Zeus most high.

This sheds another light on the poet's reflections on the miracle. In cold logic, Amphitryon has been bothered about "another's care," since Heracles is now shown to be no child of his. Amphitryon's trouble was wasted, his assumption of responsibility premature, his weapons were unneeded, and, like all cuckolds, he is left looking rather a fool. Like Homer's Agamemnon in his middle-aged lusts, the hero is caught in a less than heroic moment. All he can really do is stand there.

Pindar's *Fourth Pythian Ode*, his most elaborate, contains a long narrative of the seizure of the Golden Fleece.[7] It strikingly illustrates a technique by which Pindar, following Homer, seeks his listener's cooperation in the fashioning of the work of art. Jason has just completed his plowing with the brazen bulls commanded by Aeëtes:

> And at once the wondrous child of the Sun [Aeëtes] told of the shining fleece and where the sword blows of Phrixus had stretched it out. He was hoping that this toil at least Jason would not fulfill. For it lay in a thicket and clung to the savage jaws of a serpent that in bulk and length outdid a fifty-oared ship finished by the blows of the iron. It is long for me to travel the cart road. Time presses, and I know a certain shortcut. To many others I am a leader in the poet's craft. He slew the fierce-eyed, spangle-backed serpent with arts, Arcesilaus, and stole Medea with herself, the murderess of Pelias. And they plunged into the expanses of Ocean and the Red Sea, into the tribe of Lemnian women who slew their husbands.

At the height of the action the poet simply abandons his story. He breaks off to congratulate himself on his poetic prowess. But this desertion of the story is part of his very prowess, for in our impatience, and drawing on our familiarity with longer narrative poetry, we reconstruct the combat in our imagination. Presumably we are perfectly satisfied with our own creative work. The poet's thesis and claim of mastery have been triumphantly vindicated.

In fact, Pindar has offered hints at what he wants us to do: "blows of iron" in his narrative, although, at first sound, blows of shipwrights' hammer and mallet, could just as well in another application be sword blows (cf. line 242). As it were, the Argo has metamorphosed into, and itself subsumed, this final confrontation, just as the serpents almost blended into the Giants in the *First Nemean Ode*. This is why, in that ode, Time (the word is repeated a little later at line 69) "breathed out the life from their unspeakable limbs." So in this, although we do not hear a great deal about what will happen to Medea and Jason, we are told that she will be

7. On this see my *The Classical Epic Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 96–99. Individual studies of the ode are Charles Segal, *Pindar's Mythmaking: The Fourth Pythian Ode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Bruce K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988). The lines below are *Pythian* 4.241–252.

the death of Pelias and the first stop on the voyage home is to be the island of women who murdered their menfolk. The root *phon-* ("murder") is repeated twice in three lines.

Pindar, congratulating himself on his virtuosity as narrator, both implies and develops a whole narratology.[8] He opens the *Second Dithyramb*, for example, by remarking: "Earlier there crawled the *schoinos*-length song of the dithyrambs and the false *san* from men's lips." The schoinos is an ancient unit of measurement, and so this is an objection to irrelevant length in poetry. There may be an allusion in san, an old name for sigma, to some experiment perhaps by the poet's teacher Lasus of Hermione in avoiding the use of the consonant *s*.[9] The Alexandrian Callimachus picks up the language of the schoinos in the preface to his *Aitia* (18: *schoinoi*).

At *Paean* VII.B.11 Pindar refers to Homer's "cart track," a term already familiar from the *Fourth Pythian Ode* (line 247) and later to be adapted by Callimachus (preface to the *Aitia*, 25). In a now fragmentary passage, the chorus were perhaps advised not to travel along it and not to ride on other people's horses.

Pindar's polemic must not be exaggerated. Every poet stakes out his own terrain by distinguishing himself from his immediate predecessors. For the Greeks, long-dead Homer was an immediate predecessor, partly because of his lasting prestige, particularly in education, and partly because he was the nominal patron of a great mass of poetry loosely associated with his tradition. Pindar has reinforced certain Homeric features noted in our extract from the *Iliad*. He has carried selectivity and compression even further. In the *First Nemean Ode* he heightens the emotional element; the interplay between human and divine veers toward the tragicomic. There are careful lighting effects: "light," "golden-throned," "saffron," "bronze," "brandishing a naked sword." Everything moves from divine to human and back to a new apprehension of the divine, toward a stillness of the kind familiar from Japanese Kabuki theater. At the climactic moment the armed father, his chiefs behind him, stands in the doorway and, staring with a mixture of awe-struck emotions at his (or not his?) triumphant baby son, ponders what it all might mean.

8. This does not mean that Pindar was anti-Homeric any more than Callimachus, but he was far more reflective about his art than Homer. It is to Pindar, for example, that the controversial Callimachus looks back; see my *Augustus and the New Poetry* (Brussels: Collection Latomus, 1967), 45–48, and "Pindar and Callimachus," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 10 (1985), 169–189.

9. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On the Arrangement of Words* 14. Perhaps Pindar was objecting to sigmatism of the kind for which the comic playwright Plato later criticized Euripides (Fr. 30 Kock).

Simonides' famous saying about poetry and painting may perhaps be paraphrased that poetry is painting with a soundtrack. We do not know how soon Greek painting caught up with poetry or what poetry had previously borrowed from painting. But the sophisticated technique of narration by omission, already familiar in the poets, became famous in the visual arts of the classical period with the painter Timanthes of Sicyon. Cicero relates that Timanthes, in a painting of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, indicated varying degrees of sorrow among the spectators waiting at the altar. We may interpret Cicero's remarks. The priest Calchas stood there, sorry, of course, although for him this sacrifice may have been no more than the almost routine fulfillment of a religious duty. Next was Odysseus, hardened, shrewd, but perhaps less impervious to human feeling than his clerical colleague. Then Menelaus. With what eyes could he watch his virginal niece, in the flower of her youthful beauty, being cut down for the sake of his honor and desire to recover his adulterous wife? Finally the girl's father, Agamemnon. What were his feelings? His daughter was to die to preserve his position and prestige as commander-in-chief. Did he weep? Did he try to seem resolute? How would he look? The painter showed him turned away, his head muffled in his robe. It was for the spectator to supply the father's feelings from his own heart and to his own satisfaction.[10]

This leap into another dimension, from showing to not-showing, made Timanthes' picture famous throughout antiquity. This technique of antithesis was familiar to the Athenian playwrights. The ancient *hypothesis* (introductory summary) to Euripides' *Medea* notes that some critics had condemned him for inconsistencies in his heroine's character: "He is blamed for not sustaining Medea's role and for her resort to tears when plotting against Jason and his wife."[11] Horace later seems to echo this critical blame when he urges that characters should remain true to one

10. Cicero, *Orator* 22.74: "The painter saw, when at the sacrifice of Iphigenia Calchas was sad, Ulysses more sad, Menelaus in mourning, that Agamemnon's head had to be muffled, since he could not depict with the brush that supreme degree of grief." Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.73: "He veiled the face of her actual father, unable to depict it satisfactorily." A version of Timanthes' painting from the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii is preserved in the Museo Nazionale, Naples. See also the relief on the circular marble altar signed by Cleomenes (latter half of first century A.D.), now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

11. In a similar vein Eisenstein remarks: "In ancient tragedy one is frequently struck not so much by a double, divided nature but at times and above all by the unmotivated breakdown of a character into another extreme incommensurate and irreconcilable with the first, into another contradiction" (*I.P.*, vol. 3, 137). The difference is that he approves of this method of composition.

guiding emotion, "in agreement with themselves" (*Art of Poetry* 119). But the Greek writers knew differently. So did the painter Parrhasius when he depicted the Athenian people as a mass of contradictory emotions:

> His painting of the Athenian *dêmos* [people] also shows great talent. He portrayed it as fickle, passionate, unjust, changeable, yet flexible, compassionate and lenient, boastful, proud and humble, bold and cowardly, in a word, everything alike.[12]

The route by which this complex legacy was transmitted to the later world has not always been accurately traced. Greek civilization did not pass directly from Athens to Rome. The importance of Alexandria in Hellenistic Egypt for the mediation of Greek antiquity even to Byzantium, the New Rome, and from there to Russia, is too easily forgotten. The duty of the Alexandrian poets in the third century B.C., led by Callimachus, was to assess the legacy of the past at a time when they were beset on two fronts, by the achievements of fourth-century prose and by the monopolization of the epic manner on the part of writers like Choerilus of Iasos, who, following a pattern set by his earlier namesake Choerilus of Samos, supposed that unthinking imitation of Homer's mannerisms could serve the propaganda needs of modern conquerors. Alexander the Great had remarked that he would sooner be Homer's Thersites than Choerilus' Achilles.[13] But the bitter polemic that eventually developed between the Callimacheans and the anti-Callimacheans over the question of epic shows that not all Hellenistic grandees were as fastidious as Alexander.

Callimachus, in rethinking the task of narrative poetry, was much influenced by the example of Pindar. In particular, he takes over some of Pindar's terms. In one place, tellingly an imitation of Pindar, he appears from our perspective to think ahead to a filmmaker's verb: "Let [the reader] add his own thought and so cut length off the song."[14]

Although often considered a great innovator, Callimachus here simply repeats an idea already attributed to Pindar's contemporary Aeschylus, reputed to have said that his plays were "cuts," that is, slices, from Homer's banquets.[15] Closer inspection of Callimachus's implied poetic reveals a number of principles: analogy with music; selection of detail; vivid presentation that concentrates especially on emotion; balance and recurrence in language and overall setup; seriocomedy (irony) of tone. It is a measure of the importance of his poetic that it illumines not only him but also Virgil.

Between Callimachus and Virgil came Apollonius of Rhodes.[16] The subtle unifying of his new epic, *The Argonautica*, by repetition of key images has only recently become clear. In particular, the red-gold of the Fleece recurs throughout the poem in many guises: in the blushing cheek of love, in the hero's red cloak assumed for his visit to Hypsipyle, and eventually in the red stain spreading over a sister's silvery dress while her unarmed and unsuspecting brother is foully done to death in the shrine of Artemis by Jason.[17]

Greek eulogists such as Choerilus of Iasos may have invented for their poems strict parallels between modern patrons and the great heroes of old. An important aspect of the Hellenistic theory of allusion, which is a prominent feature of Apollonius' epic and reveals the erudition these Greek poets and their Roman emulators prized highly, is the abandonment of any search for exact or logical correspondences between the characters in a scene evoked from an earlier original and the later poets' adaptations. It is enough that the motifs should be recalled, even if they are now found differently distributed. This again is something Apollonius was to hand down to Virgil. (In Eisenstein's epic *Ivan the Terrible*, a dense pattern of reminiscences from earlier Russian literature lends resonance to the filmic narrative without any insistence on precise linkage. This is the inevitable outcome of a preoccupation with musical technique in all these artists.) Form elevates sense into something manipulable, suggested, transrational. Even where a scene is recalled from within the same work, its elements may be rearranged.

2. Aristotle's Poetics and Eisenstein's Theories of Film

Behind all the surface differences of meaning or form in ancient and modern works there lies a common human nature—more significantly, a

12. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.69; quoted from Pliny, *Chapters on the History of Art*, tr. Katherine Jex-Blake (1896; rpt. Chicago: Ares, 1982), 112. See my later mention of Homer's Andromache "laughing through her tears"; see also Callimachus, Fr. 298 Pfeiffer; Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.1165–1167; Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Posthomerica* 7.635.

13. The ancient commentator Porphyrio (on Horace, *Art of Poetry* 357) has preserved Alexander's comment.

14. Callimachus, Fr. 57.1 Pfeiffer. See Peter J. Parsons, "Callimachus: *Victoria Berenices*," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 25 (1977), 1–50.

15. Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 347e.

16. Hermann Fränkel, *Noten zu den Argonautika des Apollonios* (Munich: Beck, 1968), 324–325, uses film as an analogy to the art of the *Argonautica*: "wie wenn in einem laufenden Film," etc.

17. Eisenstein is critical, however, of the use of a symbolic red cloak in Rouben Mamoulian's 1935 film *Becky Sharp*, based on William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (*I.P.*, vol. 2, 372). In general, this metamorphosing image is an example of the concept of the "basic thought" mentioned later. For more on the use of connected images in the *Argonautica* see my *Classical Epic Tradition*, 74–88.

common tradition, without understanding which we are bound to miss what individual works of art mean. Such a tradition is of vital importance for anyone dealing with antiquity and its continuing influence, and it is the supreme justification for the kind of investigation undertaken here.

Because of this shared tradition, I have already employed a terminology dependent on both Aristotelian and filmic principles to illuminate ancient poetic techniques. I spoke, for example, of drama, selectivity and characterization in Homer (all Aristotelian insights), and of the unity of opposites and a Kabuki-like quiet (both filmic principles) in Pindar's *First Nemean Ode*. Aristotle, the greatest of the ancient critics, was himself a creative artist, a poet. Let us compare his reflections with those of the greatest of the modern theoreticians of the film, Sergei Eisenstein, one of the cinema's foremost visual poets. If the theories of the two can be drawn together, my examination of them will be striking proof that a cinematic analysis of Greek poetry and its Roman heirs is neither intrusive nor anachronistic. Indeed, Eisenstein's thoughts correspond to the deepest insights of an ancient critic whose mind played over the whole range of classical Greek literature.

On the modern side, however, things begin ominously enough. Lenin had emphasized that in the class struggle the cinema was the most important of all arts. Eisenstein was a propagandist of revolution, his task to expose the corruption of the old system and the compelling common sense of the new order, one not in need of hypocritical pretenses or disguises. One might have thought at the time that it would have been enough for him merely to picture some sort of "scientific," objective truth. What is therefore extraordinary is his frank admission that the artist, even the Communist artist, is engaged in systematic distortion. Eisenstein points out, for example, how extensively in his agricultural film *The Old and the New* (1926–1929) he used "lens 28," rejected by other filmmakers because of its wide-angle distortion of the image. With this 28mm lens Eisenstein aimed at making objects go out of themselves, beyond the dimensions of the scope and forms nature prescribed for them. This deformation, as he goes on to explain, was also marked by irony or even satire. The hulk of the sleeping *kulak* (wealthy peasant), for example, from whom the activist member of the village cooperative, Martha Lapkina, hoped in vain to borrow horses for her plowing, was shot to look like the body of the dead Christ in a painting of Andrea Mantegna. The horses themselves were overlarge, and poor Martha ends up using her old cow. The kulak's bull became monumental until it looked like the mythical bull that had abducted Europa. During the shooting of *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Eisenstein's cameraman Eduard Tissé hung netting or tulle over the lens in order to muffle the contours of objects in some of his shots. But this distortion is not at the service of narrow personal feelings, although Eisenstein declares that an artist is needed who writes with the blood of his own heart. The artist is only interested in the personal as far as it can be universalized. El Greco, to use Eisenstein's examples, may (or may not) have subsumed personal feelings in his "Storm over Toledo" or Leonardo da Vinci in his drawings of machines. This recalls the Aristotelian interest in what is *katholou* ("universal"; *Poetics* 1449b8).

The artist, continues Eisenstein, may have a twofold relationship to his material. He may wish to reflect it simply: sadness, jollity, and so on. But he may also have a comment to make. At this point irony enters, the deliberate transgression of the bounds of normality and expectation. As this transgression becomes more marked, there may occur a unity of opposites to secure a single artistic effect. Here is where Pindar's description of Amphitryon as "unbearable and yet happy" (*Nemean* 1.55–56) and, before him, Homer's famous phrase about Andromache ("laughing through her tears"; *Iliad* 6.484) secure their rationale. With the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, Eisenstein believes in the essential flux of phenomena, not in order to argue with Plato that they are unknowable or contemptible but to urge that they are growing and that they are doing so according to mathematically determinable laws. This is why he so strongly defends, for example, the use of the Golden Section and is pleased to note its occurrence in his films.

Although the cinema was a new art in the 1920s, Eisenstein uses a great many terms of classical rhetoric to describe it. Amplification, for example, is one of his basic concepts. By this he means the reshaping of reality to larger-than-life dimensions in order to serve an artistic purpose. He analyzes the novels of Emile Zola to point out how that master of realism distorted reality. He notes that, in a letter of October 24, 1894, Zola compared his use of repetition, for example, with Richard Wagner's use of the leitmotif and argued that in this way he secured greater unity for his works. Similarly, adds Eisenstein, in his preface to *Pierre et Jean*, Guy de Maupassant claimed that critics usually fail to discover the most subtle threads, hidden and often invisible, that certain modern writers use in place of the previous single thread, the intrigue. Eisenstein claims that he is the heir of the past.[18]

Eisenstein advances criteria of appreciation for the classics which go well beyond mere commonplaces. The following principles of his poetic are the most important. Before I discuss them in greater detail, I list each point with a reference to a passage of Aristotle's *Poetics* that advances a similar argument.

18. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 238.

1. *The primacy of the theatrical among artistic genres.* The real heir to ancient epic is modern drama. Eisenstein thought that his acted art was the culmination and encapsulation of the art of the past. With some adjustments, this is the thesis of chapter 26 of the *Poetics*. In the same vein, Aristotle had characterized Homer's artistry as "dramatic" (*Poetics* 1448b35).

2. *The actor's art is paradigmatic for the creative artist,* but this does not mean that the actor matters more than the story. The Russian cinema rejected the Hollywood star system. To Aristotle, the plot (*mythos*) is the soul of tragedy, and the actor helps complete the script with his gestures as indicated or designed by the poet (*Poetics* 1450a38 and 1455a29).

3. *Metaphor is the chief and unteachable poetic gift.* To Aristotle, "much the most important thing is to be metaphorical" (*Poetics* 1459a6).

4. *Factual or historical truth is irrelevant to the artist's need for figurative truth.* According to Aristotle, "poetry is something more philosophical and serious than history" (*Poetics* 1451b5–6).

5. *Clarity in unwavering attention to artistic goals is essential, aided by careful selection of detail.* The film director's achievement lies chiefly in his ability to cut effectively, a point also crucial to Eisenstein's contemporary, director and film theorist Vsevolod Pudovkin. Aristotle's praise of Homer is especially relevant here (*Poetics* 1451a22).

6. *The work of art must have a controlling rhythm,* to be derived from the director's overall concept of what his work is meant to express. This parallels *Poetics* 1451a30–35.

7. *The artist must make use of pathetic structure.* In this way the recipient of his work is continually torn between opposite poles of emotion until this movement becomes so violent that there is a breakthrough or leap into another dimension. This may occur on a small or on a large scale; if the latter, then with climactic and shattering emotional effect. With this we may compare the Aristotelian concept of catharsis (*Poetics* 1449b28).

As the parallels in Aristotle show, Eisenstein's points apply to Greek poetry. My discussion now amplifies the observations with which this essay began.

1. The theatrical has priority because all great art tends toward drama. Plato had disparaged Homer as "the leader of the modern tragedians" (*Republic* 595b–c). Aristotle developed Plato's point for the Attic tragedians but reversed his judgment, especially at the end of the *Poetics*. Shakespeare would have been a supreme illustration of Aristotle's thesis, but because we take Shakespeare for granted we cannot see what an amazing argument in defense of "modern" poetry Aristotle, a conservative Greek, advanced. He dismissed all flaccid epic writing, which passed itself off as Homeric by aping the external mannerisms of the grand style, and seized upon the real merit of the *Iliad*, in particular that it was "dramatic" and "tragic." The dramatic scenes in the *Iliad* and their speeches prove the correctness of Aristotle's insight.

Stesichorus early turned the choral lyric toward dramatic themes, and the tenth-century Byzantine Suda lexicon attributes dramas even to Pindar. Whatever these may have been, the dramatic confrontations and character painting of, for example, the *Fourth Pythian Ode* are clear. Pelias is a crude, cunning and bombastic liar; Jason, the soul of honor. Euripides, who raised tragedy to new heights while—in Eisenstein's words—"visibly preserving the features of its line of inheritance from earlier (lower) stages of intensity," was to be acutely conscious of lyric drama. (I return to this quotation from Eisenstein at greater length later.) Such drama reached its climax on so traditional a theme as that of Euripides' *Bacchae*, whatever the novelty of certain details.

2. Eisenstein admired the Russian stage directors Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold and, although he does not mention him, was in his way also a disciple of Duns Scotus with his theory of *haecceitas* (literally, "thisness"). You cannot depict grief, Eisenstein says in a famous passage, you can only depict this grief in this person in this context, because only by visualizing and feeling your way into the specifics of the pathetic situation can you recreate them convincingly for the spectator.[19] Horace, depending on Aristotelian tradition, says exactly the same thing: "If you want me to weep, you have to weep yourself first of all. Then your misfortunes, Telephus or Peleus, will bruise me" (*Art of Poetry* 102–103). Aristotle had said something broader. The playwright, if he hopes to persuade, should act out each part to himself. Commentators have found this odd, although there are parallels with Charles Dickens or Henrik Ibsen. But if this is indeed odd, why does the comic poet Aristophanes depict the tragedians Euripides and Agathon as wearing their characters' clothes while writing their plays?[20] Agathon explains his behavior in quite intelligible terms. He says he changes his attitude according to what he has on:

> I wear clothing to suit my frame of mind. For a poet must suit his character to the plays he has to write. For example, when he writes about women, he must physically share in their character.[21]

19. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 37.

20. Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 412 and *Thesmophoriazusae* 148–152 (quoted later).

21. This is an insight effectively exploited by Bertolt Brecht in *Galileo*, when the liberal Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, dressing on stage in his papal robes after his election as Urban VIII, becomes more and more illiberal as he assumes the garb appropriate to his new office.

Writer and stage or film director must be imaginatively inside their characters' minds if they wish to present them persuasively. Only then will they be able to call forth the desired emotions in the spectator.

3. After noting certain individual features in *The Old and the New*, Eisenstein remarks that the film also needed an overall metaphor. In this piece of propaganda for the collective farm, the metaphor was that of a fountain of milk, recalling peasant proverbs about "rivers of milk." Eisenstein also argues for the importance of metaphor in general, of the feel by the author for an image that controls all individual representations of the action. The content of Homer's and Vladimir Mayakovsky's metaphors is different, he remarks, but the principle of metaphor is the same in both.[22] Just so, music may change, but rhythm is essential to all of it. Without such a metaphor, the details of a composition will tend to fall to pieces. This already implies the principle of selectivity, since what is irrelevant to the reinforcement of the metaphor must be cut out. If modern critics of classical literature had grasped this point, their appreciation of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and the significance in it of the Golden Fleece, would have been immeasurably deeper. In many odes of Pindar, a governing image is metamorphosed time and again to lend a musical unity to the whole. Eisenstein and Stanislavsky agree that without some overarching aim (*sverkhzadacha*, "basic thought") as organizational principle the artistic production simply disintegrates.

4. Eisenstein handled the events of the Potemkin mutiny with great freedom. In general he was opposed to the literalness that cripples poetic imagination. But the conflict between historical poetry and imaginative larger-scale writing is ancient. The preface to Callimachus' *Aitia*, for example, gives us some inkling of the bitter intensity with which this creative war was pursued in Alexandria. Why this clash of opinion matters so much beyond Hellenistic culture can only be fully understood outside the Greek world, since the principal protagonists when the battle continued were, at least probably, the Roman epic poets Ennius and Virgil. An inability to understand this irreconcilable division is the likely reason for the failure of Petrarch's epic *Africa*.[23] The imaginative writer is asking for freedom to develop a larger truth, and that truth may not always be flattering to heroes.

5. Selectivity is obvious in Pindar and the Alexandrian poets. But long before them, Homer chose one particular episode from the ten-year siege of Troy to encapsulate the entire experience of men at war.[24] The scene is set in the passage from the *Iliad* I cited at the beginning. Brutal, irreligious self-gratification has taken over in Agamemnon's mind from any larger purpose. As he defends his action in his dramatic confrontation with Achilles later in Book 1, it becomes evident that no sacrifice of his will end the war, since he has no imagination, no new method, but only the persistence with the old and failed. Achilles will break out of the stereotype and in so doing become the first tragic hero of European literature. In Books 20–22 we will not hear the name of Agamemnon at all. The commander-in-chief becomes irrelevant. This is also why Homer, who knew about the Trojan Horse (*Odyssey* 4.272), says nothing about it in the *Iliad*, where it might have made a difference. Not clever tactics but the sacrifice of flesh and blood in mortal combat changes history; the profound meditation on what that means changes poetry. Homer closely illustrates the following remarks by Eisenstein:

> Composition takes the structural elements of the phenomenon represented and from them creates the law of the thing's structure. Moreover, in the first instance, it takes these elements from the structure of the emotional behavior of the human being connected with the experience of the content of this or another represented phenomenon. . . . Precisely for this reason genuine composition is necessarily deeply human.[25]

6. Eisenstein, like the Roman elegist Gallus, was also an engineer, and so he was not afraid of the slide rule. He believed that pathos can only be present when there is an almost biological relation between the work of art and the laws of life and growth. Eisenstein sees this relation in the spiral graph of the Golden Section. He considered *Battleship Potemkin* a five-act tragedy. Tragedy, he says, has five acts because of the Golden Section. This allows for a transition into a sharp opposition, in which the organic growth of the work of art breaks through into new levels of development without losing its coherence and structure.

To suggest that ancient epics or dramas must have a controlling rhythm opens the door to speculations about numerical composition, in whose labyrinthine complexities the too-often innumerate critic can become quickly lost. But Aristotle claims that there must be some degree of measure when he argues that a work of art must be "easily viewable as one" (*eusunopton*) and when he rejects the notion of a hypothetical creature

22. *I.P.* vol. 3, 200.

23. Petrarch wanted to be a second Ennius, that is, a writer of historical epic, but his genius was too Ovidian, and the poem died in the fight between ambition and inclination. I develop this thesis in more detail in *The Classical Epic Tradition*, 282–292.

24. On the timelessness of this see in particular Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1993; rpt. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

25. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 38.

of ten thousand stades. Not to measure is to lose control. This is the point of the later polemic against the turgid Antimachus, whom Plato had admired. "The *Lyde* [of Antimachus] is a crass piece of writing and not clear," was Callimachus' judgment (Fr. 398 Pfeiffer). "But let the common herd take pleasure in swollen Antimachus," said Catullus (95.10). As Attic tragedy recapitulates its development in Euripides, we see symmetry reclaiming its prominence in, for example, *The Trojan Women*.[26]

7. Like Aristotelian catharsis, "pathetic structure" is a difficult concept. It is best to let Eisenstein speak for himself:

> Pathetic composition in essence is a measure of the formation of expressive methods, matching the measure of the pathetic apprehension by the author of his theme. At that point, the composition acquires the tokens of a new quality but at the same time visibly preserves the features of its line of inheritance from earlier (lower) stages of intensity, which it is possible to feel and detect through the lines of this new quality. . . . Pathos is what causes someone to go out of himself. It is the same as ecstasy. And ecstasy is the transition into another quality. . . . Pathos is the unity of opposites within the actual principle of composition. The unity of the later and the simultaneous.[27]

Part of this restates, although in somewhat different terms, the argument of the treatise *On the Sublime*, which praised phantasia as the power of imagination so vivid that it communicated the artist's emotion (pathos) to his audience. The vision of dead Achilles recreated for the departing Greeks and their Trojan captives all the tragic memories of what ten years of war had cost them. In this passage, the ancient author is moving in traditional areas, as his kinship with Greek Stoic thinkers and, on the Latin side, with Horace and Quintilian shows. The technique was familiar to the Renaissance. Erasmus remarks:

> We use this [*evidentia*] whenever, for the sake of *amplifying*, adorning or pleasing, we do not state a thing simply, but set it forth to be viewed as if portrayed in color on a panel, so that it may seem that we have painted, not narrated, and that the reader has seen, not read. We will be able to do this well if we first conceive a mental picture of the subject with all its attendant circumstances. Then we should so portray it in words and fitting figures that it is as clear and graphic as possible to the reader.[28]

26. On this see Werner Biehl, "Quantitative Formgestaltung bei Euripides: Die Trimeterszenen der *Troades*," *Philologus*, 126 (1982), 19–43. See also his *Textkritik und Formanalyse zur euripideischen Hekabe: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Komposition* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997).

27. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 39, 60–61, and 381.

28. Modified from Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, tr. Donald B. King and Herbert David Rix (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963; rpt. 1999), 47. Horace's famous phrase *ut pictura poesis* ("poetry like painting"; *Art of Poetry* 361) is already an Aristotelian insight; see *Aristotle: The Poetics*, ed. D. W. Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; rpt. 1990), 56, on *Poetics* 1447a18.

We already saw that "amplification" was one of Eisenstein's favorite terms. To him, the artist in essence recreates the original process in himself, and the spectators recreate it again under his artistic guidance. Imaginative feeling, in which the artist and his actors project themselves into the characters they are portraying, determines the visualization of the work. This leads the artist to select those details for portrayal that will most effectively convey a character's feelings. But these details will also be juxtaposed in such a way as to throw the observer off balance. When this happens often enough, a breakthrough occurs to a new dimension of feeling, what the author of *On the Sublime* called *ekplêxis*, knockout astonishment. This term is Aristotelian (*Poetics* 1455a17), although Aristotle does not use it with quite as narrow or drastic a scope as it was to acquire later.

Greek poet and Russian filmmaker alike select the telling detail for more than its vividness. The artist who narrates everything not only will bore his audience to death, as Antimachus seems to have done with his *Thebaid*, but he will leave nothing for it to do. If, on the other hand, he offers a few significant details after the principle that a part may stand for the whole, viewers or listeners will be drawn into working these details into a total picture. Engaged in the artistic process, they will be the more susceptible to its effect. This is why the old priest's tears in Homer were not mentioned at the time of the original insult. We deduced his grief by the contrast between his silence and the noise of the surging ocean. We must think into the text. This became so marked a feature of the Greco-Roman theater in its later pantomimic period that "eloquent silence" was then, as now, a cliché.[29]

Even the ancient Greek commentators understood the power of a repeated image.[30] Great artists possess a plasticity of imagination by which they see the similarity in difference. This is why Aristotle thought that metaphor was the chief and unteachable poetic gift. Eisenstein transforms his images again and again.[31] In *Battleship Potemkin* mutinous sailors are

29. Cf. Otto Weinreich, *Epigrammstudien*, vol. 1: *Epigramm und Pantomimus* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1948), 144–145.

30. Cf. Robin R. Schlunk, *The Homeric Scholia and the* Aeneid: *A Study of the Influence of Ancient Homeric Literary Criticism on Vergil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), 41.

31. The following remarks on *Battleship Potemkin* are paraphrased from *I.P.*, vol. 3, 264, and show what Eisenstein wished to emphasize rather than what may be valid in a total description of his film. See also his essay on organization and pathos in the composition of the film in *Izbrannye Stat'i*, 243–251.

to be executed on the quarter-deck by a firing squad drawn from their own comrades. A rolled-up canvas is brought in, carried so that it already looks like a shrouded corpse. In real life, this canvas would have been spread on the deck to catch the blood of the victims. Eisenstein had the idea of draping it instead over their heads, so that they are both dehumanized and buried while still alive. Later, Eisenstein wryly reports, the survivors of the mutiny recast their memories of the event in accordance with his artistic reconstruction.[32] A command is barked out, and the firing squad raises its rifles. There is an agonizing wait, ended by the muffled cry of "Brothers!" The entire crew heeds the cry and joins the mutiny, but one sailor, Vakulinchuk, is killed. The ship now sails for the harbor of Odessa, which is wrapped in a gray mist symbolic of mourning. Slowly the gray polarizes into black and white, culminating in the laying of the white-shrouded body on the black stones of the quay. A tiny candle is placed between the corpse's fingers. The element of fire grows into the townspeople's fiery anger and on into the raising over the ship of the fiery red flag of socialist revolution. It reverses into the fire of the black-and-white uniformed militia of the czar, who ruthlessly charge and massacre the unarmed protesting civilians on the steps leading down to the harbor. The battleship fires back its defiance, shaking the theater building in which the czar's generals are discussing their plans. (This detail is meant symbolically, because they are only irrelevant extras on the stage of events.) The linkage of all these scenes by recurring images is the rediscovery of an ancient technique. Eisenstein himself remarked: "Let us begin, as always, from our ancestors." These ancestors for him included the Greeks.[33]

If the principle of pathetic style should appear to explain too much—Greek, Russian, whatever—the explanation lies in the shared humanity of the artist's psychology, which may be engaged "either consciously or in some inspirational way." This is Eisenstein's phrase, and again there is agreement with Aristotle.[34] Eisenstein closely shares with Aristotle the belief that the actor's art is that of the author, that the true test of poetic genius is the use of metaphor, that music is the "sweetest" of the embellishments on which tragedy can call, that epic finds its natural culmination in drama, and that in drama not the hero but the action is of primary importance.[35] He also shares with him something else, the belief that the ultimate aim of pathetic structure is the leap into another dimension of consciousness that raises the spectator beyond himself, projects him perhaps into that *katharsis tôn pathêmatôn*, that "purging of the passions," that for centuries has been found puzzling and fascinating in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Eisenstein does not think that this leap into another dimension occurs once or that it is the mechanical discharge of ugly and unwanted humors. The multiplying of pathetic details leads to a sharp transition into another level of apprehension. Pathetic structure, moving between antithetical polarities all the time, eventually pushes its patient into an ecstasy of pathos.

So it was that in *Battleship Potemkin* a revolutionary flag filmed in black and white suddenly looked red under pressure of the fire imagery that pervades the entire film. So in Homer the cheers of the applauding Greeks who were quite willing for Chryses to get his daughter back passed into Agamemnon's angry words, into silence, into the noise of the elemental sea, and into prayer and the supernatural sound of Apollo's bow: "And terrible was the clang of his silver bow" (*Iliad* 1.49). Apollo would later guide the arrow that kills Achilles (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.56–58).

3. Performance: Roman Literature and Film

In their recent appreciations of classical literature, scholars have increasingly come to understand the central importance of performance. For this there are clues in the ancient sources, not only Plato's description, in the *Ion*, of Ion's presentations from Homer but also stories of Herodotus or Apollonius reading from their works. Virgil is said to have displayed "voice and utterance and acting skill," while Horace and Ovid note the public recitals of their Augustan contemporaries.[36]

As the impulse of Greek drama became assimilated in Rome, the Roman theater moved back from tragedy and comedy toward mime and pantomime. (We may think of pantomime as the ancient precursor of silent cinema.) The pantomime was known in classical Athens, but Roman poets pressed the ideal of performance even further.[37] By Virgil's day, there were amazing performers. Bathyllus, the comic actor from Alexandria, was a particular favorite of Maecenas. The tragedian Pylades of Cilicia lectured the emperor on the value of the theater to despots and composed a book on his art. He introduced some reforms, including the enlargement of the

32. *I.P.*, vol. 2, 370.

33. *I.P.*, vol. 2, 393. On the Greeks see, for example, *I.P.*, vol. 3, 136.

34. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 200; cf. *Poetics* 1451a24: "either through art or natural gift."

35. The traditional translation "sweetest" (*Poetics* 1450b16) is, however, too mawkish. The connection of the adjective *hedys* ("sweet") with *hêdonê* ("pleasure") must not be forgotten.

36. Donatus, *Life of Virgil* 28; Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.90–105; Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.43–50 and *Ex Ponto* 4.2.33–34.

37. On the Greek pantomime see Weinreich, *Epigramm und Pantomimus*, 125 and plate 1 (facing page 176).

orchestra that accompanied his performances. When asked to define his innovations, he replied with a Homeric line: "The call of flutes and pipes and the hubbub of humankind" (*Iliad* 10.13). Pylades felt the excitement of Homer's martial and heroic verses. His choice of "Pylades" for a stage name—Pylades was the companion of mad Orestes, "harried over the stage," in the words of Virgil (*Aeneid* 4.471)—hints that he claimed a place, however subordinate, in the heroic world.

This tragic pantomime, which at Rome came to prevail over its comic counterpart, singled out particular highly charged episodes instead of telling a connected story. A sung narrative accompanied the actor's studied dance. From these episodes the performer extracted the greatest possible pathos. To judge from surviving titles, there was a preference for characters caught at moments of crisis and collapse or fluttering on the borderlines of sanity and madness, of one world and another.[38] Such art, biased toward the unnatural, violent and frenzied, inevitably influenced more formal literature. The *Aeneid*, for instance, is the product of an age that both relished such tastes and asserted that they had borrowed something from Homer. Nero himself wanted to dance the role of Virgil's Turnus; later, Dido became a special favorite of pantomimes.[39] The Roman aesthetic in general is essentially carnivalesque, theatrical, pantomimic, musical, lyrical. Eisenstein believed that all performance art, including cinema, grew out of vaudeville and the circus.[40] Mikhail Bakhtin speaks of the carnival as theater without footlights, a description applicable to Roman life.[41] The following are some basic interrelated principles of the Roman "cinematic" aesthetic, which was indebted to the Greeks and transmitted by Byzantium to Russia:

1. The *appetite for outdoing all that went before*. This means borrowing from the past as a way of making it contribute to a new and more complex present.

2. *Nonlinear (vertical) time*. Everything is here now; yet what is present has value only as a symbol, one half of a whole to which the audience must fit a second half from their own experience, memory, and understanding—for example in the *Aeneid* the prophetic anticipations of Augustus' Rome and of limitless empire in Books 1 and 6 and Latinus' quite unrealistic palace in Book 7 (7.170–191). The tarpaulin scene in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* is a related example, as we saw. Nothing directly presented is exclusively concrete or specific.

3. *Mixing or dissolving* serial sequence by the combination of different stages and models of the past. This is particularly clear in Virgil's reverse-sequence imitation of Homer's two epics in both halves of his *Aeneid*, but it also occurs in his treatment of character.

4. *The use of form to transcend form* (in Eisenstein's phrase, the "leap into another dimension"). Since the Roman imagination was profoundly theatrical—to us, cinematic—what looks like, but rarely is, plain narrative in Roman poetry tends to dissolve into the scenic, involving both sight and sound. The phrase "a scene [*scaena*, i.e., theatrical backdrop] among shimmering woods" (*Aeneid* 1.164) occurs as the fugitive Trojans land in Africa, where they will find Dido building a theater at Carthage (1.427–429; cf. 4.471, mentioned earlier). The funeral games for Anchises take place in a *theatrum* ("theater"; 5.664), even a round stage evocative of classical Greek drama (*theatri circus*; 5.288–289). Hence also the prominence of rhetorically presented speeches and the entrusting of what actors call "business," that is, the added details intended to flesh out a performance, to the professional interpreter ("hypocrite") and to readers trained like him.[42] Here key words of Virgil's aesthetic such as "shadow" (*umbra*) and "reflection" (*imago*) find their proper context. Virgil's fascination with fires in the night, supremely illustrated in Book 2, is a particularly telling example. "Shadow-painting"—*skiagraphia* is Plato's term (*Critias* 107d)—is allied to the use of chiaroscuro ("darkness visible"), which is part of the control of interior space or emotionalism. Dido and Turnus, both deranged, haunted, became favorite pantomime parts.

While a libretto, sometimes composed by poets as gifted as Lucan or Statius, was sung, a virtuoso dancer interpreted the words by his gestures and movements in a process Eisenstein would have instantly recognized as an example of his "leap into another dimension." Tacitus tells us that some authors of his day were delighted to find their compositions sung and danced and that orators and actors received and enjoyed interchangeable compliments (*Dialogue on Orators* 26.3). It is hard to believe that

38. Ludwig Friedlaender, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*, vol. 2 (10th ed.; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1922), 127, lists, among others, *Atreus and Thyestes, Ajax Mad, Hercules Mad, Niobe, Hector, Aphrodite and Adonis, Aphrodite and Ares, Apollo and Daphne, Phaedra and Hippolytus, Meleager and Atalante, Jason and Medea*.

39. Suetonius, *Nero* 54; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.17.5.

40. He speaks fondly of his early stage production in 1922–1923 of an experimental farce with the proverbial title *Every Wise Man Is a Bit of a Fool*, after Alexander Ostrovsky's nineteenth-century comedy (*I.P.*, vol. 2, 453). Miming occurs in the first part of *Ivan the Terrible*.

41. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 6–7.

42. Cf. again Callimachus' statement quoted earlier: "Let [the reader] add his own thought, and so cut length off the song." Silent reading was not the rule in antiquity.

such skillful performances did not influence some of the surviving literary masterpieces.[43]

Eisenstein speaks of drunkenness and dreams as the closest approximation by normal consciousness to primitive emotion and thought.[44] Apollonius makes effective use of dreams, a token of the restless atmosphere of the Hellenistic world. They illustrate the thematic harmony in the structure of his epic.[45] Dreams play a notable part in Book 3 of the *Argonautica*, when the poet portrays lovelorn Medea's tormented mind. Yet psychological and even fantastic dreams were old. In the *Odyssey*, Homer had given a waking vision like a nightmarish trance, in which the seer Theoclymenus, one of Penelope's suitors, sees the palace walls running with blood.[46] The suitors' heads are wrapped in darkness, and this is in effect their "death-dream."[47] After Homer and before Apollonius, the Greek tragedians incorporated such psychological dreams into their plays, with a marked interest in women as dreamers. Atossa in Aeschylus' *Persians* and Euripides' Iphigenia are well-known instances.

These explorations of the dissolving bounds of perception are a further anticipation of film technique. Early Russian cinema knew the "Kuleshov effect," the ability of the cinema to juxtapose dimensions of perception in order to generate new apprehensions of time and space. This might be at the level of simple social criticism, as when a shot of soldiers dying in war was immediately followed by a scene of feverish activity on the St. Petersburg Stock Exchange in Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927). It might be the method of entering a mind teetering on the brink of madness, as in the first part of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*. Such extremes had always attracted tragedy. Euripides' *Orestes* and *Bacchae* presented examinations of a crumbling mind, and in the latter play Pentheus' double vision was the "cinematic" symptom of his altered state. Hellenistic theater, known to us only in fragments, inherited and further developed these techniques. Roman adaptations give us some inkling of

43. I have argued this case for Catullus and Propertius in *Roman Catullus and the Modification of the Alexandrian Sensibility* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1990), 343–366, and *Augustan Propertius: The Recapitulation of a Genre* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), 176–177.

44. *I.P.*, vol. 3, 424.

45. See my *Classical Epic Tradition*, 86.

46. *Odyssey* 20.345–358. Cf. Circe's dream in Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.664. In general see A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956; rpt. 1974), 179–374.

47. The term is from Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 213.

the powerful effects of its aesthetic, aided by the swiftly changing rhythms of voice and flute.

In Ennius' *Alexander*, for example, adapted from a play of Euripides, mad Cassandra indulges in extraordinary outbursts. Paris unexpectedly returns to the royal court, and his sister foresees that he will prove the ruin of Troy. Her song switches rapidly between rhythms—different meters—and visions:

> Here, here is the torch, wrapped in blood and fire, hidden for many years. Citizens, help, quench it! . . . And now on the mighty sea a swift fleet is being built, speeding a cargo of dooms. A savage band will come and fill our shores with its ships. . . .
>
> O light of Troy, my own brother Hector, why is your body so torn, and you so pitiful? What dragging is this before our very eyes?
>
> With a great leap a horse pregnant with men-at-arms has jumped over [our walls], and when it gives birth it is to bring low lofty Pergamum.[48]

The audience knew well the story of Troy's downfall. Yet to Cassandra's hearers on stage, these were events still to come. For the moment, they could dismiss her as mad. The tension generated by conflicting times and truths produces a kind of theater that foreshadows the cinema. For a full realization of its visual qualities and its quick movements from mental image to mental image, this theater needs the resources of the cinema, especially camera and editing.

In Ennius' *Alcmaeon*, probably taken from another Euripidean model, the hero, slayer of his own mother, has a vision of divine punishment. The Furies, aided by the gods, are assailing him:

> Bring me help, drive from me this plague, the fiery force which tortures me! Here they come, girt with black snakes, surrounding me with their blazing torches. Long-haired Apollo bends his golden bow, leaning on the moon. On the left, Diana hurls a brand.[49]

An Apollo leaning on the moon is virtually a Symbolist image, passed quite beyond the scope of any sort of realism. Again, only the cinema, or a stage borrowing from the cinema, could do full justice to such effects.[50]

48. The text is most easily accessible in *Remains of Old Latin*, ed. E. H. Warmington, vol. 1: *Ennius and Caecilius*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1967), 234–245; the passages translated (*Alexander* 67–72 and 76–81) are at 242 and 244.

49. Ennius, *Alcmaeon* 32–36; text at Warmington, *Ennius and Caecilius*, 232. Warmington's text and translation accept a modern emendation, which I do not adopt.

50. Mench, "Film Sense in the *Aeneid*," is especially good on this aspect of the filmmaker's art.

Much work still remains to be done before we can appreciate the full impact of the vivid, dramatic, painterly, musical, metamorphosing art of ancient narrative on its audiences. For scholars, it will not be enough to develop parallels between the ancient and the modern by random discovery. But when they look to filmmakers for a systematic theory, elaborated into what the Greeks would have called a poetic, to provide them with guidance, they would do well first to consult the pages of Sergei Eisenstein.

X

Film Sense in the *Aeneid*

Fred Mench

EDITOR'S NOTE: This essay originally appeared in *Arion*, 8 (1969), 380–397. An earlier detailed study of Book 1 of the *Aeneid* as filmic text is Paul Leglise, *Une oeuvre de pré-cinéma: L'Enéide: Essai d'analyse filmique du premier chant* (Paris: Debresse, 1958). See also A. Malissard, "Homère, Virgile et le langue cinématographique," *Caesarodunum*, 5 (1970), 155–169.

. . . workers in the art of film should not only study playwriting and the actor's craft, but must give equal attention to mastering all the subtleties of montage creation in all cultures.

—Sergei M. Eisenstein

The literary critic should study not only philology or comparative literature but also the techniques employed by the filmmaker if he wishes to appreciate those literary works that utilize a kinetic visual approach: montage, variation of viewing angle, alternation of close-up and distance shot, and the like.

In "Word and Image," the chief essay in *The Film Sense*, Eisenstein analyzes a number of authors, especially Alexander Pushkin and John Milton, to show that they used essentially cinematic techniques to give dynamic emphasis to scenes.[1] One short quotation will illustrate the nature of his analysis:

1. Sergei M. Eisenstein, "Word and Image," in *The Film Sense*, ed. and tr. Jay Leyda (1942; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 1–65. The epigraph appears at 65, the following two quotations at 58–60.

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