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On the Mechanics of Power

Repetition in Pudovkin and Eisenstein

Henry Keazor

> "L'inépuisable dans l'atlas Mnémosyne, ne désigne rien d'autre que la capacité à monter constamment, à démonter et à remonter, des corpus d'images hétérogènes afin de créer des configurations inédites et d'y saisir certaines affinités inaperçues ou certains conflits à l'œuvre. Cela signifie qu'on appauvrit la notion même de montage à ne la considérer que sous l'angle d'un procédé 'artistique'. Bien au-delà de tout procédé, le montage est une procédure capable de mettre en mouvement de nouveaux 'espaces de pensée'."
>
> Georges Didi-Huberman,
> *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet*, Paris, 2011, p. 281

"Expressive" versus "Didactic"?

Repetition appears to be a phenomenon that triggers ambiguous reactions: In his book *Telling It Again and Again. Repetition in Literature and Film,* the author Bruce F. Kawin refers on the one hand to positions which conceive repetition as something positive and even pleasant. Thus, his book opens with an epigraph taken from Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "Repetition, the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure."[1] Although Freud here speaks of "something identical", he obviously does not mean something entirely identical since he, like Kawin, is thinking of repetition, but not of identically repeated processes ("Every day the sun comes up, stays up, goes down [...]: we do not find this cycle boring. It has rhythmic sympathy with the way we function")[2] or actions of which, by repeating them at our desire, we exert and demonstrate our control and mastery, thus gaining pleasure from their reiteration.[3] Another effect of repetition can be exemplified with reference to Agnès Varda's film *Le Bonheur* (France, 1965) where, towards the end, the scene showing a husband embracing his drowned wife is repeated numerous times, seen from different perspectives and in different variations: "the event is coming under scrutiny and is showing itself so large as to find one portrayal insufficient. The husband can't realize what has happened and goes into a kind of temporal shock; repeating the scene signifies the intensity of the observation and emotion."[4] Repetition can thus have "constructive powers".[5]

But as Søren Kierkegaard has shown with his literary experiment of 1843, *The Repetition. An Essay in Experimental Psychology* (*Gjentagelsen*),[6] even if we can repeat certain actions, we can do so only in a very approximate way since we can only act in and according to time, and to repeat precisely one and the same action we would have to travel back in time. Telling the story of Constantine Constantius, of a man who wants to repeat a trip to Berlin in order to have the same pleasurable experiences as the first time, Kierkegaard shows that this type of repetition is impossible: "Had Constantine Constantius' trip to Berlin succeeded, it would have been a near-repetition, because it would have occurred in time. Even if he had experienced the same trip, he would have been a different person during the repetition."[7]

Together with authors such as Kawin and Karl-Heinz Hartmann we therefore have to distinguish between "nonverbal" or "near-repetitions",[8] i. e. "consecutive repetitions" ("anschließende Wiederholungen"),[9] on the one hand and "verbal repetitions", i. e. "reduplications of events" ("Reduplikationen von Ereignissen"),[10] on the other.

But these very notions also bring into view the "destructive" nature of the repetition since "verbal repetitions", as will be shown below, perhaps exactly because they are so unnatural, have something uncanny. But even the "near-repetitions" of events, such as the repetition of the scene with the drowned wife in *Le Bonheur*, can at the same time have an effect that counterbalances the above described intensification of emotion: "the repeated shot both communicates the husband's pain and calls the audience's attention to the ambiguity and importance of the embrace."[11] "Repetition in this case is operating to remove the emotional content from a mental experience".[12] Thus, repetition can work towards an intensification and emphasis of the emotional weight of images and at the same time towards their emotional devaluation, which then makes room for a rather pedagogical value of the repeated image: repetition can be used in an "expressive" as well as a "didactic" way – a difference that is also important with respect to how directors such as Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein made use of repetition.

The Paradoxes of Authenticity and Repetition

Although dealing with repetition in a broader sense when taking into account phenomena such as the re-enactment of an event or of a work of art, or when dealing with reference to an earlier artistic or architectural style (such as in the case of postmodernism), the volume edited in 2013 by Uta Daur even in its title quite precisely captures the ambiguity of the phenomenon of repetition: Daur's volume is called *Authentizität und Wiederholung. Künstlerische und kulturelle Manifestationen eines Paradoxes* (Authenticity and repetition: the artistic and cultural manifestations of a paradox).[13] It not only uses antagonistic notions such as "authenticity" and "repetition", but via its subtitle already hints at the fact that – despite these opposing

notions – we are not always merely dealing with a simple dichotomy between the authentic original (here) and the derivative, parasitizing repetition (there). Rather, we are simultaneously confronted with a series of paradoxes. So, although it originates in and refers to a previously existing object, a copy is materially also an authentic original in its own right. Then again, an authentic work can sometimes draw its very power from the fact that it is based on the practise of repetition, as for example the work of Elaine Sturtevant shows. Sturtevant, throughout her career, ostentatiously repeated the work of other artists, such as Andy Warhol for example, in order to raise questions about artistic creativity.[14] And sometimes an original can even get its value and rank just from the fact that there are copies of it, copies seeming to document, confirm and even emphasize its quality, importance and value, as is demonstrated in Abbas Kiarostami's film *Certified Copy* (*Copie conforme)* (France/Italy/Belgium/Iran, 2010) where the author James Miller (played by William Shimell) exemplifies this theory with reference to Michelangelo's *David*. The statue is publicly displayed only via a copy on the Piazza della Signoria where it is, however, seen and appreciated by more people than is the original in the Accademia, which is only visited and admired by a small crowd. The copy, so Miller's idea, inevitably always refers to the original, which in this case, however, is not a sign of the deficiency of the copy. On the contrary – it signifies its merit since the copy vouches for and perhaps even enhances or, even more, outright creates the value of the original: original and copy, the "authentic" event and its repetition thus would not necessarily have to be seen in the usual hierarchical or competing relationship, but instead as two poles which mutually complement each other.[15]

"Each Image is the Mortal Enemy of the Other"

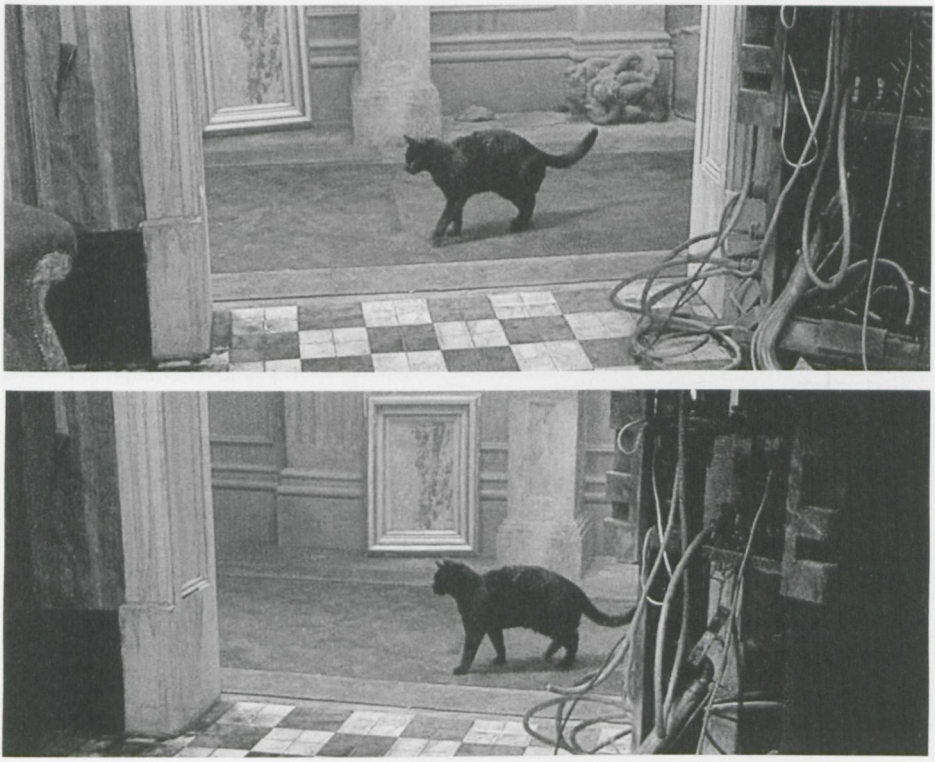
Nevertheless, despite this (so to say) soothing view on iterativeness, the fact has to be considered that – especially when it comes to images – there is apparently a deeply-rooted discomfort and unease when it comes to repetitions. This may already be due to the fundamental fact that, as the painter Gerhard Richter puts it with reference to Theodor W. Adorno, two or more images, when juxtaposed, do not tolerate each other. In the documentary *Gerhard Richter Painting* (Germany, 2012) by Corinna Belz, the painter, when speaking about the practise of painting, states at one point: "Das ist…'n aggressives Geschäft…oder 'ne Tätigkeit. Der Adorno hat es ja auch mal so schön gesagt: Eigentlich, Bilder zusammen – das geht gar nicht. Jedes Bild ist der Todfeind des anderen. Und 'Todfeind' ist das richtige Wort dafür. Das hat was mit Vernichtung zu tun. Das ist 'ne Behauptung und die will, die duldet nichts neben sich."[16] ("This is an aggressive business…or activity. Adorno has put it quite nicely: Fundamentally, images together – that is impossible. Each image is the mortal enemy of the other. And 'mortal enemy' is here the right word. This has some-

thing to do with annihilation. It (the image) is a statement which does not tolerate anything else next to itself.")

One can easily imagine how this is intensified if the two specimens even are identical at first sight, i. e. if one is an exact repetition of the other (such as for example in the classical case of the *Doppelgänger* which, in narratives, also often ends with a fight between the twins, frequently resulting in the death of one of them).[17] From such a point of view, it would also become understandable why, if images are combined and arranged together, a certain hierarchy and order seems to be necessary, for example in the sense that images are considered as pendants of one another or as a cycle, put into a particular order by either confronting each other or by making them interlock in the sense of a sequence.

This might also be due to the fact that the duplication and doubling of images simultaneously seems to be associated with a loss of control, since replicas and copies are often considered to be puzzling, to cause confusion. They undermine and subvert the reigning order, which is why it is felt to be imperative to re-establish this order as quickly as possible by constituting a clear and orienting hierarchy, establishing what is authentic and what is derivative. At the same time painters often have felt that the production and the existence of repetitions, for example as painted or as engraved copies, also would lead to a loss of control: not only was it then impossible for them to know where their works would circulate, but even the quality of the painted or engraved copies was out of their control. They were concerned that their reputation could be undermined by bad prints and sloppy copies of their original works, leading the unaware and undiscerning viewer to the conclusion that possible flaws in the repetitions would be not due to the engraver's or the copyist's incompetence, but rather the making of the original producer. The French Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin for example even imagined the danger of a systematic design, fabricated by envious minor artists to hurt the reputation of their more eminent and famous colleagues. He was so troubled both by the idea of having his series *Seven Sacraments*, begun in the mid-1630s for Cassiano dal Pozzo, copied by bad painters, but also by the thought of producing by his own hands a set of replicas for his client Paul Fréart de Chantelou, that he decided he would rather paint an entirely new and slightly different (and in his view, better) series around 10 years later.[18]

But the unease with the repetition of images is not only encountered in the context of inert pictures: in film, too, such repetitions – in this case not of one single image, but rather a sequence of images – are used in order to articulate a certain discomfort, in order to show that there is something uncanny going on. It may suffice to refer here to a blatant example such as a scene from Andy (now Lilly) and Larry (now Lana) Wachowski's *The Matrix* (USA 1999) where the double appearance of a black cat (fig. 1a–b), resulting in the almost identical repetition of a scene, is not only conceived as a classical effect of déjà-vu, but also interpreted as a flaw in the weaving of the virtual and simulated reality of the "Matrix", an uncanny and threaten-



1a–b Film stills from *The Matrix*, USA 1999, direction: Andy (now Lilly) and Larry (now Lana) Wachowski, TC: a) 1:15:28, b) 1:15:34

ing sign that the controllers of this artificial and externally controlled world have begun to intervene in the running program of the "Matrix", which hence suddenly becomes unpredictable.[19]

Repetition as Deconstruction

Seen in this light, it is therefore not surprising that especially the directors of avant-garde film of the early 20th century were interested in using repetition as a technical as well as stylistic device. This was because such a repetition of an already seen moment could serve their purposes, exactly since it was perceived by the viewer as something that interrupted the "natural" flow of depicted events, as a therefore irritating and perhaps even discomforting element that alerted the viewer and heightened his attention. Since the repetition thus helped to deconstruct the accustomed way of perceiving, the directors here saw their chance to dismantle relationships and connections that usually are perceived as seemingly obvious, "natural",

"normal", in order to reassemble their elements into a new, "enlightening" order and according to the lesson they wanted the viewer to understand and learn. Repetition achieved via montage was and is, therefore, also conceived as a means of control for the director over the events he or she is narrating in his/her film as well as the key to the desired pedagogical effect. And since such a "learning success" was one important element at the heart of the films of Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, the notion "repetition" can be found especially in the writings of these directors.[20]

In his 1928 text "On Film Technique" Pudovkin states "that in order to shoot and filmically represent any given action [sic!] [meaning as opposed to just mimicking and copying reality, or the naturalistic way theatre represents things – H. K.] we must subject it to our control – that is, it must be possible for us to bring it to a standstill, to repeat it several times [...]."[21] "[...] we must, in order to obtain the filmic representation desired, interrupt the natural course of the action, either by stopping or by repetition."[22] Pudovkin also underlines the fact that he is not alone with this view and therefore himself recalls that his colleague "Eisenstein [...] has always emphasised his moments by repetitive cutting".[23] Pudovkin herewith at the same time introduces another way repetition can be used: as a means of highlighting certain moments in a narration which gain more weight due to the repetition of shots, making an action go on for a longer time, stretching its duration and thus giving it not only a temporal, but also a semantic extension – a lesson Varda with her above mentioned *Le Bonheur* seems to have absorbed.

Because of their use of repetition, two silent films by Pudovkin and by Eisenstein will be analysed here in order to see where they use repetition similarly, but also to see where they seem to diverge in their handling of the montage and repetition techniques.

Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* and Eisenstein's *October*

The films which are compared here – Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* (*Konec Sankta-Peterburga*, Soviet Union 1927) and Eisenstein's *October* (*Oktyabr*, Soviet Union 1928) – in a certain way invite such a comparison, since they were not only produced almost simultaneously, but also for the same occasion: the 10-year jubilee of the October Revolution in 1927. Pudovkin already began with his work a year before, in 1926,[24] while Eisenstein did not begin with the production of his movie until April 1927.[25] At that time it seemed as though he would overtake Pudovkin's rivalling project since the premiere of *October* was scheduled for November 1927, while Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* was not to be shown until December 1927.[26] However, Stalin, after seeing parts of Eisenstein's film, demanded – among other things – that scenes with his rival Leon Trotsky be removed, which is why the

scheduled premiere of Eisenstein's film was cancelled upon short notice and *October* did not premiere until March 1928.[27]

Both films have to do with repetition in various ways: first of all, they are in a certain way both a re-enactment, a repetition of the events that led to and were an integral part of the October Revolution in 1917. Moreover, they can be seen as mutual repetitions as they were not only commissioned for the same occasion, but they also deal with the same events. In addition, they were even shot simultaneously and at the same original locations such as the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. In an interview with Ivor Montague, Pudovkin for example stated that he bombed the Winter Palace from the harbour while Eisenstein attacked the building from the Peter and Paul Fortress, and that one night during the shooting he blasted away a part of the roof balustrade and was afraid of getting into trouble for this, but was relieved when he learnt that in the same night Eisenstein had smashed 200 bedroom windows during the shooting of his film.[28] This is also why, if one briefly views short extracts from both films, one can hardly tell from which film they are. Finally, both directors use the technique of repetition in their work and they even do so with the same intention. However, the precise use of repetition differs each time, which also has to do with the different way each author typically develops and tells the story of the Revolution and its background.

Pudovkin, in a characteristic approach, covers a longer period with his film – three years, from 1914 to 1917 –, whereas Eisenstein focuses solely on the events of 1917.

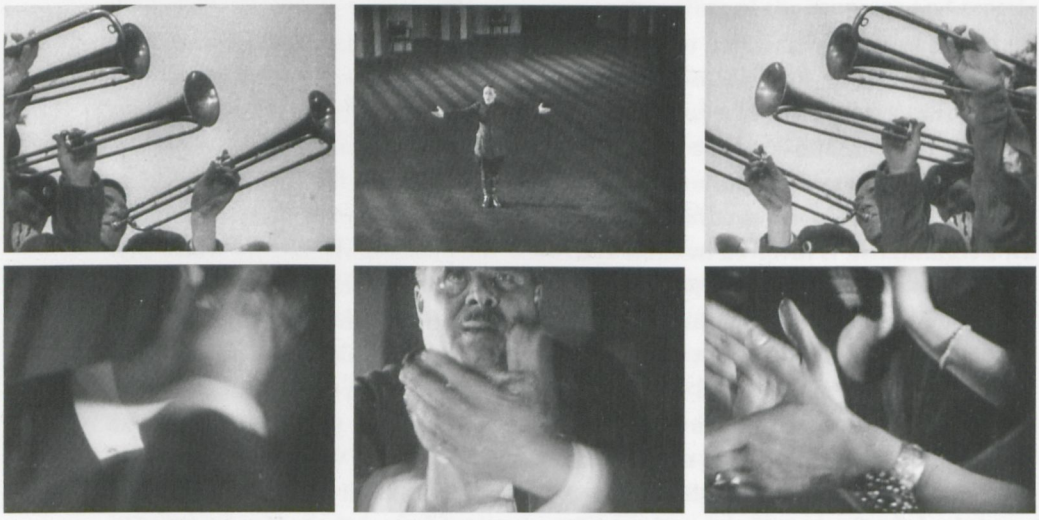
Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*

Pudovkin originally intended to portray a history of St. Petersburg covering up to 200 years,[29] but he then narrowed this very broad perspective to three years, following the development of a farm boy who comes to St. Petersburg. Forced by the shortage of work and food, he has left the rural area where he previously worked and lived, and has come into town to earn his living. But the family he was told to report to there is also short of food and in difficult straits, since the head of the family, a communist, is involved in strike activities. The owner of the factory where this man works has just increased the workload, having invested in expensive share certificates, despite the fact that his workers are already at the limit of their capacities. The naïve country boy, without grasping the consequences of his actions, betrays the communist and, happy to find work and recognition, acts as a strikebreaker, but he quickly realizes his mistake. In trying to amend his deeds, he gets into trouble and is first sent to prison and then to the front in the First World War. He there begins to understand that his comrades and he are sacrificing their lives only for the economic benefit of war profiteers at the stock exchange. Meanwhile, in Russia, also due to poverty and famine among the population, the tsarist autocracy is overthrown in

the February Revolution of 1917 and Alexander Kerensky is made Chief of the Russian Provisional Government. However, since he is portrayed by Pudovkin as a marionette of the Russian bourgeoisie, it does not come as a surprise that things do not improve under his government and thus the communist movement gains momentum. In order to prevent this, a part of the regiment, including the country boy, is called back to St. Petersburg to defend the city against the communist revolutionaries. The country boy rebels when he sees that the communist he once betrayed is being threatened by the army officer. This officer is then shot by his own soldiers, who have taken the side of the communist revolution. The film ends with a brief depiction of the storming of the Winter Palace where, the next morning, the wife of the communist finds the country boy among the survivors, whom, together with his comrades, she feeds. She also finds her husband, who, leading his communist comrades, occupies the Winter Palace.

The "Kerensky Sequence" I

During the ca. 87 minutes of the film,[30] Pudovkin variously uses the verbal repetition technique both on a macro- and a micro-level: "micro" means that sequences such as the one with the "enthronement" of Kerensky work with the repetition of certain shots, "macro" means that the entire film makes frequent use of the repetition of selected shots.



2a–f Film stills from *The End of St. Petersburg*, Soviet Union 1927, direction: Vsevolod Pudovkin,
TC: a) = 1:03:38, b) = 1:02:47, c) = 1:02:55, 1:03:05, 1:03:35, d) = 1:02:25, 1:03:12, e) = 1:02:32, f) = 1:03:00

3a–d Film stills from *The End of St. Petersburg*, Soviet Union 1927, direction: Vsevolod Pudovkin, TC: a) = 0:59:39, 1:02:56, 1:03:53, b) = 1:03:26, 1:03:35, c) = 0:59:36, 1:02:45, d) = 0:59:20, 1:03:25

This analysis will focus on the sequence where Kerensky is "enthroned",[31] first, since it has a clear parallel in Eisenstein's *October* and second, since it uses both techniques: certain shots are only repeated in the Kerensky-sequence itself while the sequence at the same time also contains shots from earlier parts of the film.

The sequence has a kind of a prelude that connects it with the previous sequence in which the dramatic effects of famine and poverty among the population are shown. The resulting pressure is symbolized by steam, swelling up from factory chimneys and ultimately also from a steam locomotive that is just starting up and that seems to stand for the beginning of freedom and peace, apparently gained when the tsar is overthrown. The following text-insert "Long live the Coalition Government!"[32] and the accompanying applause seem to celebrate this achievement, but the ensuing images quickly reveal this wording as pure sarcasm: the applause comes from the prospering and decadent bourgeoisie, not from the communists, and Kerensky appears like an actor on a stage, only playing a part and eventually moving the audience to tears with his melodramatic gestures. The low position of Kerensky, a powerless instrument of the representatives of the bourgeoisie, acting only according to their will, is also stressed by the fact that the viewer, seemingly together with the

audience, sees the chief of the Russian Provisional Government from above, like from the box seat of a theatre or opera house. His speech and the applause it garners are then interspersed with images from the battlefield of the First Word War, depicting dead soldiers, shots of a military band playing fanfares, and applauding bourgeoisie.

The sequence is structured by a dense web of repetitions, each varying in extent: thus, on a micro-level there is a series of repeated shots which work as establishing elements for the scene. Kerensky appears like an actor on a stage who is (this is suggested by the shots of the applauding audience, shot from different angles) surrounded on all sides, cornered by the public as well as by the military band with its fanfares, leaving him few possibilities to move (fig. 2a–f), and hence the whole sequence, despite the manifold movement depicted in it, appears static and inert.

The same thing is then shown in an even more precise way via the recurrent images from the battlefields (fig. 3a–d): with their repeated appearance, they also add to the static impression of the sequence while they, at the same time, also deliver a very precise picture of the inertia in Kerensky's behaviour since, despite his promises to bring the war to a victorious conclusion and to achieve peace, obviously nothing changes.

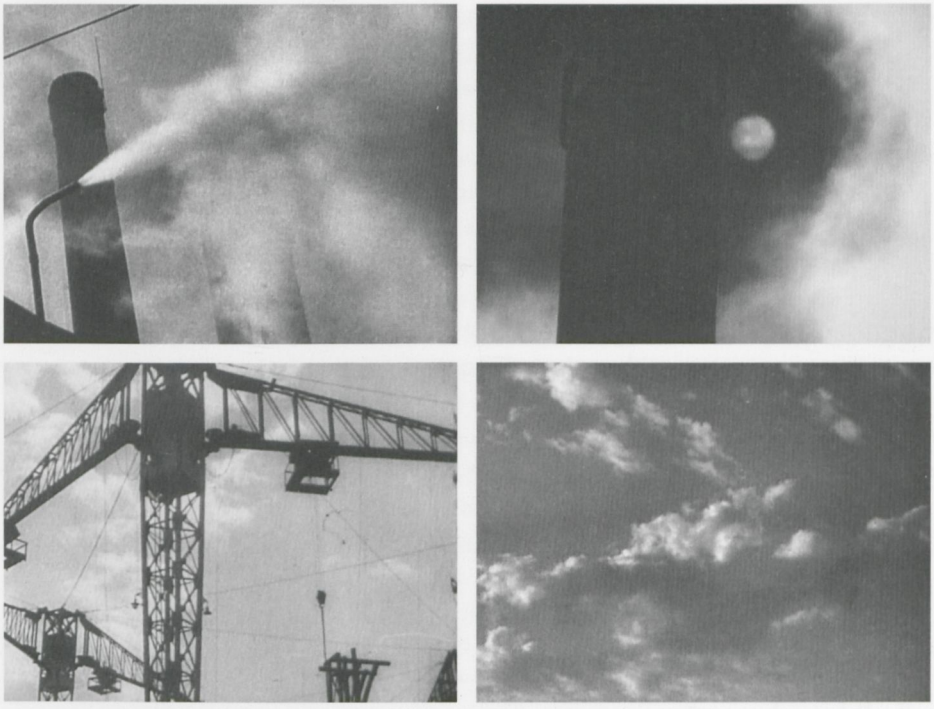
Moreover, the images from the battle fields transgress the boundaries of this Kerensky sequence since they tie in with an earlier segment of the film[33] where not only these same shots (fig. 3a–d), but also the previous battle actions, leading to the results shown here, are presented. The images appear as a visualized accusation against how the soldiers are sacrificed on the altar of the economy and greed.[34]

The "Kerensky Sequence" II

Sensitized for this kind of back-reference via repetition, the viewer of the film then encounters even more shots in the Kerensky sequence which point to earlier moments of the film: the flower-throwing woman as well as the crying men (fig. 4a–b) were introduced earlier in the film as motives (fig. 4c–d), tellingly when Russia's entry into the World War was declared.[35] Already then, Pudovkin revealed this move as only a manoeuvre for the purpose of distracting the populace from the threat of civil war and as a means for war-profiteers to make money. The fact that images of weeping men and flower-throwing women are repeated when Kerensky makes his speech (now even in a certain way spelling out one possible symbolic meaning of the flowers as a sign for the "flower of the Russian Nation" that he and the bourgeoisie think themselves to be),[36] shows that Pudovkin wants to demonstrate the shallowness of Kerensky's words and that actually nothing – despite the dismissal of the tsar – has changed. On the contrary: earlier in the film Pudovkin showed the capitalist owner of the factory Lebedev (fig. 5a) as well as a statue of Tsar Alexander the Great (fig. 5b) in a low angle shot that made Lebedev resemble the monarch[37] (a visual parallel Pudovkin was obviously very proud of, since he describes it in his text

4a–d Film stills from *The End of St. Petersburg*, Soviet Union 1927, direction: Vsevolod Pudovkin, TC: a) = 1:03:09, b) = 1:03:50, c) = 0:52:03, d) = 0:51:45

5a–b Film stills from *The End of St. Petersburg*, Soviet Union 1927, direction: Vsevolod Pudovkin, TC: a) = 0:16:03, b) = 0:16:01



6a–d Film stills from *The End of St. Petersburg*, Soviet Union 1927, direction: Vsevolod Pudovkin, TC: a) = 1:01:46, b) = 1:04:28, c) = 1:05:07, 1:20:49, d) = 1:20:59

"On Film Technique"[38] – however, he later was violently criticised for it by the communists for having "monumentalized" the bourgeoisie). At the end of this Kerensky scene, Pudovkin makes the audience understand that now the capitalist Lebedev not only equals the ruler, but that he actually possesses and controls him: "We made the revolution and we can hold onto it", he says while putting his arm around Kerensky's shoulder in a possessive manner while raising his glass in a toast.[39] Given this, it is almost no wonder that the sequence ends (fig. 6b) with almost the same images with which it began (fig. 6a): images of steam as a symbol for pent up pressure and imminent upheaval which now comes from the chimney of the factory where the communist rebel reacts to what he has just seen: "Down with the capitalist ministers!"[40] The steam engine of freedom has not yet reached its goal. Only towards the end, after the storming of the Winter Palace, the sky will clear up and the stony, inert and opaque architecture of the palace will be countered by the intricate network of gently moving cranes and by the delicate weave of power cables (fig. 6c–d).

Eisenstein's *October*

It is now interesting to observe how Eisenstein uses repetition as a motivic as well as a structural tool in his film *October*.

As already noted, there is, despite the parallel theme of the October Revolution as the central topic and occasion for the commissioning of the film, a series of differences to Pudovkin's film: Whereas the latter followed an original script, Eisenstein and his co-author Grigori Aleksandrov based their film on John Reed's novel *Ten Days That Shook The World* of 1919.[41] Moreover, whereas Pudovkin spins a narration that begins in 1914 and ends with the revolution in October 1917, Eisenstein focuses on the events from July to October 1917. Differently than in Pudovkin's film, Eisenstein's interpretation of the events does not feature – typically for him – any heroes or even main protagonists. And while the storming of the Winter Palace is just a brief episode in Pudovkin's film, Eisenstein devotes almost 20 minutes of his 100-minutes-long film just to the fighting that goes on during the conquest of the building by the Bolshevik warriors.

Nevertheless, there are also parallels between the two films that go beyond their common theme: statues play a major symbolic role in both works,[42] and in both cases the inefficiency of the provisional government is exposed after it has been sarcastically hailed with the words "Long live the provisional government!" in one of the intertitles,[43] then being foiled by scenes of war and famine. Eisenstein's film even spells out the fact that everything – hunger and war – has remained unchanged under the government. The conclusion is the same as in Pudovkin's film: "Down with the capitalist ministers!", one intertitle exclaims.[44]

We even encounter the steam motive[45] which, however, in Eisenstein's case, does not stand for the merits of the revolution, but rather for the, in his view, counter-revolutionary General Kornilov, the commander-in-chief of the Russian Army who in August/September 1917 apparently launched a coup d'état against the Russian Provisional Government and was then arrested by Kerensky.

But what is particularly different is Eisenstein's use of repetition,[46] as can be observed especially in a scene in the Winter Palace (hence, the parallel setting in Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*). It has its counterpart in the sequence in Pudovkin's film where Kerensky appears as an actor on stage. In *October*, Kerensky is shown as he climbs the palace staircase to the tsar's apartments to first meet the lackeys of the deposed tsar before then entering and inheriting the tsar's rooms.[47]

Kerensky's (at Least) 'Four Bodies'

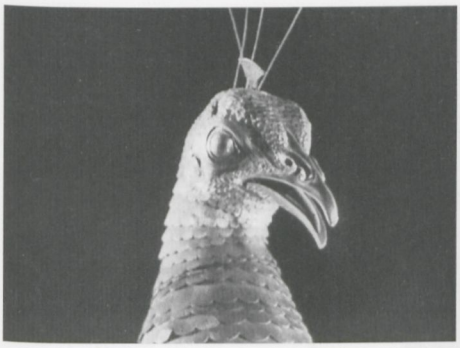
Kerensky is already mocked when he climbs the stairs together with his two assistants because Eisenstein in a certain way ironically 'dismantles' him by ridiculing Keren-

sky's amassment of power and posts: from Mai 1917 he was minister of war and the navy, before he then also became head of the government. Thus, Eisenstein displays his different duties and defines Kerensky not via his integral and consistent physical persona, but rather via his various posts. He therefore shows us four times – a sort of an anticipation of Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* of 1957[48] – how first the dictator Kerensky, then the minister of war Kerensky, then the minister of the navy and then the prime minister Kerensky climbs up the stairs, each time in almost literally the same shot, thus presenting us "Kerensky's four bodies". Eisenstein even seems to spare us more possible repetitions of the same staircase-sequence when he just hints at the many other posts Kerensky might have had by abridging the sequence with an impatient "and so on and so on..." in the intertitles.[49] The scene at the same time gives the impression that despite Kerensky's purposeful stride, it takes him a while to reach his destination, the top of the stairs.

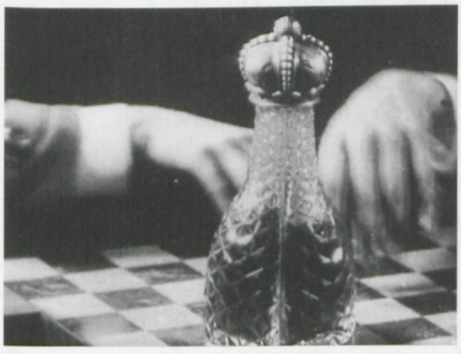
A man of such power, "the hope of the fatherland and of the revolution", as the next intertitle sarcastically states,[50] should be expected to be adequately resolute and active. But already when a complacent Kerensky ogles and smiles, apparently at the female statues holding floral wreaths, as a montage suggests, – in Kerensky's eyes ready to crown him – one begins to wonder how much of a revolutionary he might be if he is ready to succumb to the temptations of his monarchic predecessor. And indeed, when he has reached the top of the stairs, he is shown not as active, but to the contrary: after having dutifully fulfilled the protocol of greeting the various lackeys of the tsar, he himself seems to become such a lackey, remaining motionless in front of the closed doors, anxiously waiting for them to open for him. Eisenstein here now uses repetition on the one hand in order to, just like Pudovkin, give the impression that things stay the same. On the other hand, he thereby creates suspense: we see over and over again the faces of the sympathetic lackeys, and literally the same shots of particular views of Kerensky, such as his firmly fixed, boot-clad legs, his hand nervously kneading a glove, and time and again the closed doors.

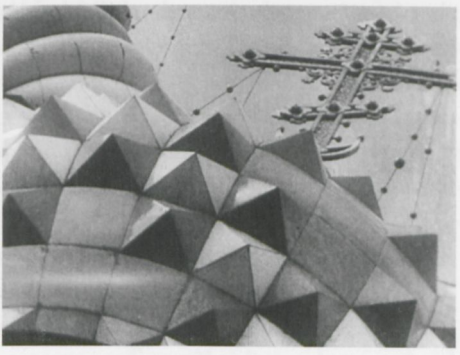
The Mechanics of Power

Nothing less than a mechanical metal peacock (a gift the tsar had in his collection: fig. 7a) functions, most tellingly, as a "deus ex machina" (in the true sense of the word), ultimately bringing decisive movement into the process.[51] After it has sprung to life, it first seems to muster Kerensky before then unfolding its plumage while turning its back on him – a process Eisenstein emphasizes by showing it repeatedly in five, densely joint shots, presenting the moment in varying close-ups. Given the film montage which then also repeats the moment of the opening doors by showing it three times in increasing close-ups, it not only seems as if the machine of the peacock will make the doors open (fig. 7b), but also as if Kerensky will almost walk

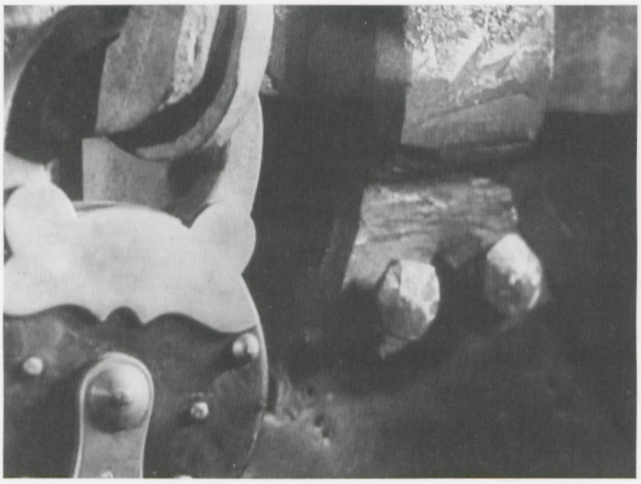


7a–b Film stills from *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, Soviet Union 1928, direction: Sergej Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, TC: a) = 0:23:38, 0:23:44 b) = 0:23:03





8a–d Film stills from *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, Soviet Union 1928, direction: Sergej Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, TC: a) 0:26:32, b) = 0:26:34, c) = 0:27:24, d) 0:28:45



9 Film still from *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, Soviet Union 1928, direction: Sergej Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, TC: 0:24:16

into the posterior of the mechanical bird[52] – a hint at Kerensky's imminent toadyism, since he then quickly assimilates the monarchic surroundings. A few scenes later we see him posing as Napoleon (fig. 8a), with whom Eisenstein directly associates him visually (fig. 8b) in a way comparable to the imagery used by Pudovkin[53] (fig. 5a–b), and then even symbolically restoring the insignia of the tsar and the church when he reassembles a display of small bottles which he tops with a crown (fig. 8c).[54] The rustication-like, knurled bottles not only resemble an onion-domed tower in their shapes and surfaces, but also mimic the domes' surface-structure, as clearly seen a few moments later when Eisenstein, almost in comparison, shows the towers of a Russian Orthodox church (fig. 8d).[55] Given the crown Kerensky puts on the reassembled bottles, it seems as if, here, Eisenstein also wants to refer to the union of monarchy and church.

With all this, the director apparently aims at emphasizing the fact that Kerensky succumbs to the "mechanics of power"[56] – differently than in Pudovkin's film, where the power is clearly associated with the bourgeoisie and money, Eisenstein gives the objects formerly possessed by the tsar an almost magical spell. Even a revolutionary sailor at the end of the film seems to be under their control for a few seconds before he then frees himself, scornful spits on the precious objects and then destroys them.[57] Kerensky and his staff seem, however, to be caught inside the peacock, which, after they have entered, closes the doors behind them, turns around and – apparently (an impression achieved via a clever montage) – secures the closed doors with a strong lock (fig. 9).[58]

Summary. The Ambiguity of the Machine

As we have seen, both directors make use of the technique of (often, verbal) repetition in order to artificially shape a scene whose importance they also stress by this time-stretching treatment. Pudovkin uses repetition on a macro- as well as on a micro-level, repeating in his Kerensky sequence shots that are intrinsic to this scene as well as shots stemming from earlier parts of the film. This opens the Kerensky-sequence

up to the rest of the film and, with semantic motives, persuades the viewer towards an argumentation that shows how the provisional government is just one stone in the mosaic of bourgeois power and capitalist control, all of which has to be overcome by the Bolshevik revolution.

Eisenstein's Kerensky-sequence also works occasionally with shots that might be considered as referring both backwards and forward: the shots of the parts of the peacock clock, for example, anticipate a later scene where other parts of the clock are shown. However, in the earlier Kerensky-sequence, the mechanical peacock as well as its details are not shown as part of a clock and are hence interpreted by the viewer differently, as elements of an unknown mechanical device that seems to guard and control the doors to the tsar's apartments. Therefore, the whole sequence is kept very much closed upon itself since the sequence only works with precise repetitions of shots from within this sequence. Apart from ridiculing Kerensky and his accumulation of power and posts, the technique works to make the scene and the situation it shows both appear as closed and entrapping: the architecture, the setting and the collection of the Winter Palace not only represent the system of power, but they actually exert and perform this power onto people such as Kerensky, who becomes caught by the mechanics of this power, symbolized in the peacock-automaton that seemingly controls the doors and represents the sway of the old political order.

Whereas machines are a symbol of resistance in Pudovkin's film,[59] Eisenstein uses them as a symbol of the old political forces and deduces from the fact of their mechanization also the necessity to fight them with all possible means since they otherwise capture and seduce people who were originally part of the revolution. This explains also why Eisenstein shows this fight for freedom on a much larger scale than Pudovkin, who only briefly shows scenes from the storming of the Winter Palace, where these devices are stored, together with other alluring art works.

Both directors – each one in their own way – is hereby following an approach that appears as "expressive" in its means as it is "didactic" in its desired effect.[60] However, one might contend that Pudovkin's Kerensky-sequence with its (often: verbal) repetition of images depicting dead or dying soldiers, ecstatic women and crying men is more "expressive" than Eisenstein's Kerensky-sequence. In the latter the various verbal repetitions of the staircase-scene tend to work in a way that "the event is coming under scrutiny"[61] and that "the repeated shot [...] calls the audience's attention to the ambiguity" of the process shown:[62] "Repetition in this case is operating to remove the emotional content from a mental experience"[63] – in this respect Eisenstein's use of repetition appears in comparison as less "expressive" and more "didactic" than that of Pudovkin.

1 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Original: "Jenseits des Lustprinzips" [1920]), here quoted from Bruce F. Kawin, *Telling It Again and Again. Repetition in Literature and Film*, Ithaca/London, 1972, p. 1. For filmic interpretations for this experience see Julia Gerdes, "Nur einmal noch! Augenblick und Wiederholung in der Liebesszene", in Jürgen Felix et al. (eds.), *Die Wiederholung. Thomas Koebner zum 60.*, Marburg, 2001, pp. 357–380.

2 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), pp. 2–3.

3 See also Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 16.

4 Ibid., p. 42.

5 Ibid., p. 6.

6 Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Wiederholung. Ein Versuch in der experimentellen Psychologie*, Copenhagen, 1843.

7 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 183. For an application of this thought on media and cinematic experiences see Knut Hickethier, "The Same Procedure. Die Wiederholung als Medienprinzip der Moderne", in Felix, 2001 (note 1), pp. 41–62.

8 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 7 where he speaks of "near-repetition" and specifies: "Repetition is a nonverbal state; it cannot be committed to any art that occurs in time." This is a generalization that asks for a discussion since in the art of film actually repetition can be achieved verbally. Of course, one could argue here that even then the viewer who perceives a verbally repeated section from a film is not the same viewer who saw this section before. However, this would mean that one has to clearly state according to which perspective the labels "verbal" and "nonverbal" are used: seen from the phenomenological- or viewer-side, there might be indeed no "verbal" repetition for the above-mentioned reason. Seen instead from the purely empirical and material side, one can clearly state that there are actually repetitions in a film when the very same section is used more than once in that film.

9 Karl-Heinz Hartmann, *Wiederholungen im Erzählen. Zur Literarität narrativer Texte*, Stuttgart, 1979, p. 7.

10 Hartmann, 1979 (note 9), p. 6.

11 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 42.

12 Ibid., pp. 26–27.

13 Uta Daur (ed.), *Authentizität und Wiederholung. Künstlerische und kulturelle Manifestationen eines Paradoxes*, Bielefeld, 2013.

14 On this, see for example Viola Vahrsen, *Die Radikalität der Wiederholung im Werk Sturtevants*, Paderborn, 2006.

15 Henry Keazor, "Die Kopie als Risiko und Chance: Nicolas Poussin – Re-produktive versus dokumentarische Kopie", in Ariane Mensger (ed.), *Déjà-vu? Die Kunst der Wiederholung von Dürer bis YouTube*, exh. cat., Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle, Bielefeld/Berlin, 2012, pp. 54–63, here especially p. 54.

16 Corinna Belz, *Gerhard Richter Painting*, Pfiffl Medien Gmbh, 2012, 0:50:21–0:50:51. The original quote by Adorno reads: "Jedes Kunstwerk ist der Todfeind des anderen" ("Each work of art is the mortal enemy of the other") – see: Theodor W. Adorno, "Die zehn größten Romane der deutschen Literatur?", in Rolf Tiedemann et al. (eds.), Theodor W. Adorno: *Gesammelte Schriften in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 20.2: Vermischte Schriften II, Frankfurt/Main, 1997, pp. 735–736, here p. 735.

17 See for example the novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* by E. T. A. Hoffmann from 1815/16 or Edgar Allan Poe's story *William Wilson* from 1839.

18 Keazor (note 15), 2012.

19 Andy (Lilly) and Larry (Lana) Wachowski, *The Matrix*, Warner Home Video, 2007, 1:15:28–1:15:34. For the use of this scene as a metaphor for "repeating" films in the context of cinematic remakes, see Daniel Vardell, *Hollywood Remakes, Deleuze and the Grandfather Paradox*, New York, 2014, p. 14. For an artistic interpretation of these filmic remakes see the exhibition *Cinema Remake – art & film* that was held between 23 March and 1 June 2014 in the Amsterdam "Eye" museum, the national museum for film, where film makers and artists, a bit like Elaine Sturtevant (see above), seized upon existing films in order to create new films, sometimes repeating the previous works.

20 For the historical background, see also David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction* [1979], 9th edition, New York, 2010, pp. 467–469.

21 Vsevolod Pudovkin, "Film Technique", in Lewis Jacobs (ed.), *The Cinema Writings of V. I. Pudovkin*, London, 1954, pp. 1–204, here p. 74.

22 Ibid., p. 75.

23 Ibid., p. 192.

24 Jay Leyda, *Kino. A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, London, 1960, pp. 222 and 235.

25 Richard Taylor, *October, BFI Film Classics*, London, 2002, p. 12.

26 Ibid., p. 15. Peter Rollberg, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 2nd edition, Lanham/Plymouth, 2016, p. 224 writes "Premiere: 13 December 1927" concerning Pudovkin's film, whereas Leyda, 1960 (note 24), p. 235 gives 7 November 1927 as the start date of the film, hereby focusing on its premiere in the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

27 Taylor, 2002 (note 25), pp. 16–17.

28 Leyda, 1960 (note 24), p. 235 and Lance Kepley, *The End of St. Petersburg*, London, 2003, p. 37.

29 Liz-Anne Bawden (ed.), *Buchers Enzyklopädie des Films*, Luzern/Frankfurt am Main, 1977, p. 422.

30 There are different versions: the Soviet-Russian versions run between 80 to 89 minutes, one French version runs 91, an English one 80 minutes – I am referring here to the Italian version, published on DVD in 2010 under the title *La Fine di San Pietroburgo* by DCult which runs 87 minutes.

31 Vsevolod Pudovkin, *La Fine di San Pietroburgo* ("Konec Sankta-Peterburga"), DCult 2010, 1:02:15 – 1:04:29.

32 Ibid., 1:02:15.

33 Ibid., 0:59:03–0:59:43.

34 This is also emphasized by a parallel montage of battle scenes and scenes at a busy stock market exchange (the latter themselves being partially a repetition from respectively an echo of an earlier segment of the film: ibid., 0:14:34–0:15:02) as well as by the fact that the combat operations are labelled in the intertitles with the term "transaction" (0:56:02: "The transaction begins" and 0:59:24: "The transaction is completed"), as if the war images would show a business deal or a money transfer.

35 For the flower throwing see ibid., 0:51:40–0:51:58. Crying men appear variously in the sequence that ties in with the flower throwing – see ibid., 0:52:02–0:52:39 – and which ends and culminates in the surreal image of the weeping statue of Tsar Alexander III (0:52:32–0:52:38).

36 Ibid., 1:03:14: "We are the flower of the Russian Nation."

37 Ibid., 0:15:56–0:16:03.

38 Pudovkin 1954 (note 21), pp. 16–17 where he adds: "I claim that the resultant composition is effective with a reality quite other than that produced by the posing of an actor, which nearly always smacks of Theatre."

39 Pudovkin, 2010 (note 31), 1:04:19.

40 Ibid., 1:04:48.

41 This is also signaled by the film's often omitted subtitle "Desyat' dney kotorye potryasli mir" (Ten Days that Shook The World). See for this also Taylor, 2002 (note 25), p. 8.

42 In both films, the monuments for the monarchs, art works as well as the statues of the allegories on the architecture of the Winter Palace are frequently put into a visual interaction with the human beings. They often stand for counter-revolutionary tendencies – see for this Amy Sargeant, *Vsevolod Pudovkin. Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-Garde*, New York, 2000, p. 89 and Yuri Tsivian, "Eisenstein and Russian Symbolist Culture. An Unknown Script for 'October'", in Ian Christie and Richard Taylor (eds.), *Eisenstein Rediscovered*, London/New York, 1993, pp. 79–109, here p. 81.

43 See above, note 32 and Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Oktober* ("Oktyabr"), DEFA-Stiftung/Icestorm 1999, 0:04:31: "Lang lebe die provisorische Regierung!" Although it is not specifically clear who is exclaiming these words in Eisenstein's film, it seems obvious that they are part of the propaganda of the government.

44 See Pudovkin, 2010 (note 40), and Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 0:10:51: "Nieder die kapitalistischen Minister." In this case, it seems clear that it is the rebelling crowds who are uttering this sentence out of their misery.

45 See Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 0:27:17–0:27:35 and 0:30:23.

46 Most analyses of the film are instead focusing a bit one-sidedly on Eisenstein's use of discontinuity and are rather understating his use of repetition – see for example the chapter on "Functions of Discontinuity Editing: October" in Bordwell/Thompson, 2010 (note 20), pp. 262–265 where it is said on p. 263: "Graphically, there are some continuities. When the soldiers fraternize, many shots closely resemble one another graphically [...]. But the *discontinuities* are more noteworthy." Such a focus is, of course, indebted to Eisenstein's own theoretical writings, such as especially his essay "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" (aka "The Dialectical Approach to Film Form") of 1929 where the concept of the "conflict" in its various forms is emphasized – Eisenstein writes: "[...] the dynamic conception of objects [...] is equally of basic importance for the correct conception of art and all art forms. In the realm of art this dialectical principle of the dynamic is embodied in CONFLICT as the essential basic principle of the existence of every work of art and every form" and, concerning the sequence of non-matching images: "The incongruity in contour between the first picture that has been imprinted on the mind and the subsequently perceived second picture – the conflict between the two – gives birth to the sensation of movement, the idea that movement has taken place. The degree of incongruity determines the intensity of impression, determines the tension that, in combination with what follows, will become the real element of authentic rhythm." See Richard Taylor (ed.), *The Eisenstein Reader*, London, 1998, pp. 93–110, here p. 93 and 96. However, as the notion "conflict" shows, one should also keep a focus on the oppositional phenomenon of discontinuity, that is, in this case: repetition, especially since such a repetition can be also seen as being in conflict with the accustomed way of experiencing as well as presenting events where verbal and detailed repetitions are rather unusual and

mostly (see the "Matrix"-example given in this article) a sign of unnatural and troubling processes. See therefore also positions such as those of Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 46: "Eisenstein not only builds his montage out of the dialectical juxtaposition of conflicting shots, but also repeats parts of scenes, starting over and stretching time for emphasis."

47 See Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 0:20:39–0:24:19.

48 Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, 1957. In his book Kantorowicz reconstructs the development of the modern state with its distinction between an official public function and the person who holds this position from the mediaeval conception of the natural and mortal body of the king on the one hand and his supernatural and immortal body on the other.

49 See Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 0:21:38: "und so weiter, und so weiter…"

50 Ibid., 0:21:46: "Die Hoffnung des Vaterlandes und der Revolution."

51 The golden Peacock Clock, made in 1779/81 by the British watchmaker, jeweler and goldsmith James Cox, was originally in the possession of Grigory Potemkin who had acquired it in 1780 from the English Duchess of Kingston. It entered the Hermitage in 1797. The dial-plate is on a mushroom on the trunk of a tree on which the peacock sits. The bird is accompanied by a cock and an owl in a cage – when the clock chimes, the peacock displays its covert feathers, the cock crows and the owl turns its head. See for this Roger Smith, "James Cox (c. 1723–1800): A Revised Biography" in *The Burlington Magazine* 142/1167, 2000, pp. 353–361.

52 See for this also Tsivian, 1993 (note 42), p. 99: "Eisenstein was hoping to achieve the effect of Kerensky entering the peacock's asshole."

53 See note 37 above.

54 Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 0:26:53–0:27:26.

55 Ibid., 0:28:09–0:28:15.

56 David Bordwell, "Monumental Heroics. Form and style in Eisenstein's silent films", in Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (eds.), *The Silent Cinema Reader*, London/New York, 2004, pp. 369–388, here p. 372 and 373 instead rather reads the peacock as a metaphor for Kerensky's vanity, emptiness and artificiality as well as his failure ("the mechanical toy works better than the government").

57 Eisenstein, 1999 (note 43), 1:31:13–1:31:50. See for this also Taylor, 2002, p. 71.

58 In reality, this lock has nothing to do either with the peacock or with the doors but is taken from a different context, similar to the iron gate shown at 1:19:53. A telling example for such a deconstructive approach to visual motives can be also seen when Eisenstein later (1:11:19) shows another element of the Peacock Clock, without, however, making the viewer understand that it belongs to this same device: under the heading "Die Zeit läuft ab" (Time runs out), he depicts the isolated mechanical owl.

59 See on this also Sargeant, 2000 (note 42), chapter 4, devoted to "The End of St. Petersburg", pp. 81–110, and opening with the header "Mechanism, Vitalism and physiological psychology".

60 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 42, despite his comments on Eisenstein's use of reiteration and not just "conflict", follows the established, but perhaps too one-sided view that Eisenstein, with his "use of repetition in conflict-montage may be called *expressive*" whereas "Pudovkin […] may be called *didactic*."

61 Kawin, 1972 (note 1), p. 42.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., pp. 26–27.