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Painterly Image and Film Image

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Abstract

The author's point of departure is a self-reflection on the status of film studies, hitherto focused on exploring problems related to the screenplay and the relationship between film and literature. One of his aims is therefore to redirect these research interests to the relationship between film and traditional visual arts. Much of the text is devoted to theoretically defining the painterly image and the film image, and, subsequently, their common features and differences. The author then analyses the processes involved in translating, so to speak, a painterly image into a film image. 'Painterly quality' emerges as the central concept of his considerations; it is understood in two ways: as film's ability to "imitate" actual paintings and as the ability to create film images that are considered "painterly" (due to their composition, colour choice, static nature). **(Non-reviewed material; originally published in *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 1953, no. 10, pp. 66-87).**

Current research in film studies places the main emphasis on screenwriting matters. This direction is by all means right and justified. When fighting for the film of human truth, of historical truth, for the film of profound knowledge of man observed in the revolutionary process of his growth, change, maturation, it is difficult not to turn attention to the source of the most profound knowledge about man: to literature. Socialist realist film, if it is to fulfil its momentous mission of shaping the new man and the new society, must needs make use of everything that the masters of classic world literature had discovered in the field of the 'study of man' (this is what Maxim Gorky called literature) even before the creation of the art of film. Nor is it possible to ignore what contemporary socialist realist writers have been discovering and formulating in their novels. This is why we say that film as an art was not born with the invention of the cinematograph at the end of the 19th century but draws on the rich inexhaustible arsenal of tradition.

Not just the literary tradition, though. Since its inception, even as it relied on the achievements of literature (as evidenced by the numerous adaptations of works by Emile Zola, Victor Hugo, Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, and others in the early years of film history), film has always been a visual art. Today, film art has acquired new means of expression, sound in particular; nevertheless, the primary means of cinematic expression is still image, increasingly turning from exclusively black-and-white to multicoloured, and maybe soon to become stereoscopic. This whole sequence of technical progress in no way alters the fact that film art is a visual art.

And just as screenplay authors cannot do without all of the world's realist literature, when creating a film image, when working in the principal and fundamental domain of film art, one cannot do without the tradition of realist painting. This idea was most aptly expressed by Sergei Eisenstein in his essay "Film radziecki i tradycje kultury rosyjskiej" ["Soviet Film and the Traditions of Russian Culture"][1]:

Being the heir to all values created by humanity in times gone by, our age, called upon to develop the cultural foundations of filmmaking, does not renounce the real achievements of old culture. Whether it be the great tragedies of Shakespeare or the sarcasm of Swift, Balzac's masterful recreation of the character of his age, Eastern art's captivating colours, Cervantes and Homer, Rembrandt and Michelangelo – all this stands at the right moment at the disposal of those who have been granted the honour of fighting for the glory and fame of Soviet film. These masters each aid us at the right moment with their experience as we strive to grasp or critically dissect some detail in the great problems that we face when elaborating issues of dramatic tension, depicting characters, and composing the musical aspect of a film.

Further on, we read[2]:

Pushkin's means of visual expression, the significance of this most laconic master of words for film culture – could be the subject of whole dissertations.

The expressiveness of Gogol's visuality and originality of his descriptive "frames" could be discussed at such great length as his almost cinematic use of colour.

Tolstoy's method of unveiling the feelings and thoughts of his characters and revealing the mechanics of their actions shall forever remain an inexhaustible source of experience.

An author of a historical film will not be able to remain indifferent to Surikov.
An author of a psychological film – to Repin.
An author of a deep, characteristic film portraiture – to Serov.

Today, Eisenstein's words sound to us like a given, for no one presently objects to the assertion that drawing on the traditions of national as well as foreign culture is one of the driving forces behind the development of socialist realist film art. That said, we face the question of how these traditions should be used, how the great masters of cinema had used them.

I would go as far as to declare that in the literary field, the matter is much simpler than in the field of visual arts. Latest research on the screenplay has demonstrated irrefutably that it is not only a literary genre similar to the novel, but it also possesses the features (e.g., author's remarks, descriptions of the characters' mental states, etc.) that until recently were considered alien to the screenplay. Identifying similar relations between film and traditional visual arts is much more complicated, though, as they only seemingly use the same means of expression; in fact, there are major differences between them, posing certain difficulties for a theoretical treatment of the issue. Cinematic practice is well ahead of theory in this regard. After all, it is no secret to anyone, for example, that in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* Carl Dreyer used French medieval miniature as a model, that the mass scenes of his film were suggested by Bruegel; in Murnau's *Faust* we can sense the atmosphere of Albrecht Dürer, in Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* we see a clear influence of medieval guild painting,[3] and the film form of Aleksander Ford's *Young Chopin* (*Młodość Chopina*) is rooted the tradition of our 19th-century painting.

And yet, in spite of these examples, of which many more could be evoked here, film criticism has not developed a suitable scientific framework to analyse and record these practical experiences, so that they become not only the accomplishments of one master of cinema or another but a lasting achievement of film studies.

The present article sets itself the rather modest task of formulating, in a general way, certain basic similarities and differences between the painterly and film images, suggesting certain methodological foundations for research in this field. Many of the propositions presented here are generally known and obvious; still, it seems useful to attempt to systematise them, thus making the necessary first step towards theoretical research on film visuality. It also goes without saying that many assertions made in this article ought to be considered open to debate.

I

To proceed with the task stipulated above, let us begin with a general characterisation of the painterly image. We will be interested primarily in the formal aspect in question.

The painterly image is a form of conveying knowledge about life and our surrounding world emotionally, using the visual mode, through ocular perceptions. The painterly image reflects spatial forms of reality by appropriately reproducing them on a plane.

To this end, it uses a) spatial and chromatic composition, b) colour, from paints, c) value, d) painting texture.

These f u n d a m e n t a l elements interrelate in multiple ways, different in each painting; they break down into various smaller groups (we speak, for example, of different types of colour: light, heavy, cold, warm, of various colour scales), but such specifics are outside the scope of our interest here. The above-mentioned elements of a painting sufficiently define its formal character.

The painterly image belongs to artistic genres with which we make contact optically, by viewing. All effects that make up the final artistic expression of a painterly image are constant; they do not change, so we can view them for any length of time. Nor are there any limitations as to the distance between the viewer and the viewed painting: we can move closer or further away and choose any angle from which to view it. The way in which a painting is viewed depends solely on the viewer; it is not determined by the nature of the painting itself.

Having sketched this general, brief characterisation of the painterly image, let us now try and compare with it the most general characterisation of film presentation (at this point, I am deliberately using the term 'film presentation' and not 'film image,' for reasons that will become clear in what follows).

Before we attempt to formulate the proper notion of the film image, let us look at how the above-mentioned formal categories of the painterly image manifest themselves in a static film presentation.[4]

A presentation of this kind will possess the following features:

As in painting, it will be a reflection of three-dimensional reality on the two-dimensional plane of the screen. Like a painting, this presentation will be distinguished by its own composition, colour (in the case of a colour film, these will be colours belonging to different colour scales, in the case of a black-and-white film, these will be neutral colours), value, and its own texture, which will be determined here by the texture of the screen onto which the image is projected.[5] Thus, we can see that in this situation, the film presentation only differs from the painterly image in one feature: while in painting both spatial and colour effects are achieved with the use of paints, applied on an appropriately prepared plane of the canvas, a film presentation is achieved with the use of light, projected onto the surface of the screen.

The film image is "drawn" by light, writes Anatoli Golovnya;[6] *it is with light that one delineates silhouettes, details of the set decoration, the surroundings and the background; by means of light the effects of lighting are achieved, and, finally, it is by means of light that colour is created. And even though the word 'light drawing' (Rus. 'svetopis') sounds rather archaic, it is this word that characterises the cinematographer's work on a film presentation.*

In this particular situation specified above, where we are viewing a static film presentation on the screen, the viewing process itself, too, can be assumed to be identical to the way in which a painterly image is viewed.

However, if we adopt this artificially simulated situation, the film presentation ceases to be a film presentation and becomes an epidiascopic presentation, in which we are dealing with a still image drawn by means of light.

Obviously, then, at this stage no interrelations between the painterly image and the film image can be examined, as their relationship would be reduced to a simple projection of a painterly image or its reproduction onto the screen. This demonstrates the futility of any considerations of the painterly qualities of this or that film shot based on a statically treated presentation.

The difference between the film presentation and the epidiascopic presentation is that the former relies on the decisive role of movement. Film as an art form begins with the beginning of movement recorded on film and reproduced by means of a projector on the two-dimensional plane of the screen. *Cinema has opened for us a Kingdom of Movement*, says Karol Irzykowski, adding: *The notion of movement that concerns us here is much broader and should not be equated with the notion of "moving."*[7] Movement in film can be considered in two ways:

a) as a succession of shots, as montage,

b) as in-frame movement.[8]

The moment movement steps in, as both a succession of presentations and in-frame movement, it is no longer possible to consider film presentation in the way we did above. And in order to continue an inquiry into film visuality, to arrive therein at concrete conclusions, one should not employ the simple film presentation, but the full form of the film image.

Golovnya writes: *The concept of visual composition* (of the image) *in film should be applied to the episode and the scene, where the visual form develops in parallel with the dramatic direction of the action. A separate frame only represents a fragment of the composition, just as it contains only a part of the content of the unfolding scene. But an individual frame can and should be expressive and have sufficient dramatic weight.*[9]

This statement encapsulates the most fundamental issue of film form: the issue of m o n t a g e .

In his unfinished work on film form, Eisenstein presents an example of how individual presentations, when combined, produce concepts; these concepts can be completely different from each other even when one of the presentations that make up the concept is the same in two cases. Thus, for example:

an eye + water = t o w e e p

a mouth + a dog = t o b a r k

a mouth + birds = t o s i n g

a child + a mouth = t o s c r e a m etc.[10]

The type of montage depicted in the above example is not the only one encountered in film visuality. Eisenstein discusses collision montage, in which a concept image is created as a result of a collision, a violent juxtaposition of two presentations that produces an image. Alongside this form, which was the dominant form in Eisenstein's own silent films, we have another type of montage, when the subsequent presentations are not opposite, different, but, being similar in content, they produce an image not by collision, but by complementation. Among the many examples of this type of montage, one can mention, for example, the opening image of Lacombe's silent film *La Zone*: we see on the screen a sequence of views of garbage heaps and waste, which add up to produce the concept of vast urban debris.

Modern sound film uses a slightly different montage construction of the image, enriched with new elements, but based on the same principle.

In *Young Chopin*, Aleksander Ford constructs the image of a group of villagers going to a wedding. Using sharp montage cuts, he shows a sequence of the heads of the speeding horses, the cantering hooves seen from different vantage points. Taken together, all this produces an image of racing horse carriages. Horse heads alone on the screen would tell us nothing. The same heads juxtaposed with hooves treading slowly on the grass would give us the impression that the horses are grazing. Yet with the combination in which the director showed them to us on the screen, in effect we get the image of speed. But is the whole scene already sufficiently defined, unambiguous? Of course not. These steeds could be harnessed to ancient chariots as well as to the vehicles of a wedding party. So the director shows us the vehicle. The accompanying music makes the depicted image even more concrete, disambiguates it.

Thus, we can see from these examples that the film image is not reduced to a single static presentation, but consists of a sequence of edited presentations, and not only visual ones, but also non-visual, e.g., sound presentations. (In these considerations, however, we are only interested in matters relating to film visuality.) And now we are facing the following question: If an individual film presentation, a frame, is not a film image but only an element of it, if a film image consists of a sequence of presentations, what criterion to adopt that will allow us to recognise a given set of presentations as an image? This criterion is the c o n c e p t that the set of presentations creates, it is the content.

From a painterly image we require that it should convey to us the full content related to the subject chosen by the author, specify the place and time of the action, show it in its true historical and psychological dimensions. In short – by using the means of visual expression characteristic of the art of painting, it should fulfil its cognitive and, at the same time, emotional function in relation to the subject it presents. Discussing the tasks fulfilled by visual thinking (and thus also painting, which is a materialisation of visual thinking), Mieczysław Porębski says: *The visual image, too, can constitute a means of communication between people... Each of the different varieties of visualisation reflects certain objective content proper to itself, each elucidates and communicates something. One of the ways in which they differ from language is that language is primarily a means of conceptual thinking... Thinking through images – visual thinking – has different aims and tasks. It captures objective content not in generalisations and abstractions, but concretely, in its rich qualitative substance. Thanks to this, visual forms, appealing with their content to man's cognitive powers, at the same time move his imagination and feelings, mobilise him emotionally, organise his will and activity. Conceptual thinking is an instrument of rational analysis and rational planning; visual thinking expands the range of man's affective experience, familiarising him with and presenting to him socially meaningful content in all its concreteness, in all its emotional richness.*[11]

When properly arranged, concretely shown visual presentations create impressions in the viewer that generalise into a conceptual form. This concept can be broader or narrower; it can be reduced to the words: 'to sing' or 'to cry,' as in the above example, or it can have a broader scope, as does the concept of a peasant wedding. This type of emotional impact, when a concept emerges out

of concrete visual presentations organised into an image, is common to film and painting as forms of visual thinking (with painting being fully located in the domain of visual thinking, while film adopts visual thinking as the primary but not the only means of artistic expression).

While pointing out this common feature of the film image and the painterly image, one must also recognise the fundamental difference between the two phenomena.

1) By introducing the notion of m o n t a g e as the fundamental factor in the creation of the film image, we have pointed to the fact that a film image conveys its full ideological and artistic content by means of a sequence of presentations that are in a relation of succession, one presentation replaced by the next. The content of an individual film presentation (visual or audial) is incomplete, but montage combines them into a conceptually complete film image. While in a painterly image all individual elements appear together and can be viewed simultaneously, in a film image we view them sequentially. From this it follows that the film image, unlike the painterly image, is governed by the time factor.

2) In the painterly image, the painterly space is defined once and for all. It is constituted by that part of the visible world which the painter has chosen to frame within his painting. This space varies in character, ranging from a small detail, through a portrait or a still life, to a vast landscape. But at the same time, once established, the spatial relationships within the painting do not change. They are bound together by a logical composition, resulting from spatial relationships that exist in reality. The painterly image by principle shows a specific fragment of the visual world from only one vantage point. In this way, we usually get a reflection of the imagined objects from one side only, the painter trying to create the impression that they are solid shapes by using colour and value, and thus implying their solidity, and with it their other depictions, observed from other points in space.

Film does not know this limitation. Showing an object from only one side in each individual presentation, it can show it to us from many sides, too, using several succeeding visual presentations, making all its depictions accessible. As we know, also in the history of painting there have been attempts to show an object from many sides in order to emphasise its solid shape. Such attempts include Egyptian reliefs and some works of modern painting, e.g. Picasso's; these works, however, using in such cases a method similar to technical drawing, create an impression of artificiality, a convention, and deviate from normal human vision.

The possibility of showing objects from multiple sides is decisive for the factor of the new f i l m s p a t i a l i t y proper to the film image, although it is not the only expression of this spatiality. The film image, containing some unambiguous content, a concept, is in principle not constrained by a spatial frame. Early montage films in particular, aiming to construct an image, to create expression, gathered presentations that were very distant from each other spatially, while the painter is constrained by the real spatial relationships existing in the observed section of life. Of course, this, too, is not a rule confirmed in all painterly images. Modern surrealist and fantastic painting often combines within a single image

multiple elements from completely different spatial systems, but in so doing it rips them out of their proper spatial systems, it alienates them, thus losing the realistic vision of the world, whereas film, when editing together various spatial presentations, maintains their real connection with their surroundings.

Thus, we can see that in addition to the previously discussed features of the film image, also inherent to it is a specific kind of spatiality, different from that found in painting.

3) This is related to another essential feature of the film image, its depth. In traditional visual arts, depth is a form of spatiality, treated not as the arrangement of objects on a two-dimensional plane (the outline), but as their arrangement in different spatial planes. Painting was always striving to master perspective depth. Studies by early Renaissance masters – Giotto, Uccello, and others, theorists such as Alberti – crowned by the works of Leonardo da Vinci, allowed Early Modern painting to fully master the illusion of perspective depth using the principles of mathematical (linear), colour, and aerial perspective. Thanks to these means, the painterly image offers an almost perfect illusion of perspective depth. This illusion is created to the same extent in film, but in both the painterly image and the film image, it is only an illusion, as both arts project their presentations onto a plane. That said, film has developed its own means of expression also in this domain.

While making use of all the principles of painterly perspective, film depth adds two new important elements to it: sound and camera movement as well as in-frame movement.

It is characteristic of sound that it always entails a sense of spatiality. On hearing a sound, we assess the distance from which it is coming. To assess the distance is our reflex action in response to sound phenomena.

Distance has a special capability to modulate sound. We perceive sounds from a greater distance differently than in the case of a close distance; in this way, the type of sound serves to determine distance, depth. Excellent examples of the modulation of sound depending on the distance and the type of indoor space in which the sound travels can be found in Orson Welles's film *Citizen Kane*.

Thus, in the film image, sound is a complement that can add to the film vision further qualities of depth spatiality.

The second element that makes it possible to create a special illusion of depth in film – in addition to the above-discussed film spatiality, achieved through the montage of static presentations seen from different vantage points and different distances (spatial planes: from wide shot to close-up) – is in-frame and camera movement.

Movement within the frame, the recording of moving objects on film, is an inherent, fundamental domain of cinema, the domain from which the very art of filmmaking originated

Here, we will be considering in-frame movement from two angles: looking at its contribution to the illusion of depth in film presentation and looking at its influence on the painterly composition of individual film shots.

Let us first consider the essence of in-frame movement. In terms of physics, the simplest form of motion occurs when a point or a set of points marking a plane or a solid changes its position in relation to other points or sets of points

The Earth Trembles, dir. Luchino Visconti (1948)

The Earth Trembles, dir. Luchino Visconti (1948)

which externally remain at rest. In practice, of course, we observe much more complex movements, as not just one object is in motion but a number of them; however, all these forms of mechanical motion can be reduced to the simplest formula specified above.

Within the film frame, the phenomenon of movement is observed when the camera moves forward or back and sideways (panning) without changing the shot or when the object in front of the camera is moving. In the first case, our distance in relation to the objects on the screen changes, their size on the screen changes, or, with panoramic movement, some objects drop out of our field of vision while others take their place. The camera replaces our eye looking at a particular section of reality. If the camera is in motion, we get the impression that we ourselves, as observers, are changing our position, that we are moving. This involves the obvious sensation of space related to motion.

The movement of the object on the screen and the movement of the object in front of the camera create the same impression, because when we get the illusion of a moving object, we cannot help but associate it with the illusion of space and depth.

The additional sense of spatiality achieved by means of the movement of the camera or the object in front of the camera is related in a rather obvious way to our forms of associative perception of phenomena, developed in the course of life experience.

Far more important for the characterisation of in-frame movement, however, is its influence on film composition. In our discussion of simple montage movement, it was obvious that each of the presentations joined together using montage has its own different composition and, consequently, that a film image composed of a series of such presentations is a function of a series of different compositional arrangements.

Let us consider the influence of in-frame movement on the composition of the film image – whether its effect is different from montage or ultimately amounts to the same thing. With this aim in mind, let us use the simplest example from film practice. In Abram Room's film *The Ghost That Never Returns* (*Prividenye, katorye ne vozvrashchaetsya*), we see a shot of a long street flanked by tall walls. Between the walls, in the elongated passage enclosed by them, a man is running. He is moving, further and further away from the camera's point of view. With his every step, the proportions within the frame change: the figure diminishes in relation to the part of the walls seen in the foreground. Even though the camera stands still, even though there is no montage cut, as the human figure moves, we keep getting new compositional arrangements manifested through changing proportions. Hence, we get a sequence of different, ever so slightly differing compositional arrangements. If the running man in the frame were to cover the whole lengh of the street enclosed by the walls, we could distinguish three main groups of compositional arrangements:

a) when the figure is close to the camera, being disproportionately large in relation to the objects deeper towards the back,

b) when the figure is at such a distance that its relation to the walls rising on either side appears to us as harmonious, consistent with the proportions observed in nature, and

c) when the figure is deeper towards the back, being disproportionately small in relation to the part of the walls in the foreground.

These three points demarcate the main compositional groups, each of which can be subdivided into countless smaller fragments, just as the stretch covered by the running man can be subdivided into countless sections. This leads to the conclusion that the movement we have just discussed, perceived on the screen as continuous, in fact consists of an infinite number of snapshots edited together. Thus, in-frame movement is a disguised form of montage; hence the sometimes-used name 'in-frame montage'.

This form of montage owes its development and dominant role in contemporary film primarily to the revolution caused in film visuality by the introduction of sound. In his work "O budowie ruchu scenicznego" ["On the Construction of Stage Movement"],[12] the film director Mikhail Room says:

As is well known, the entry of sound into film rapidly changed the understanding of montage and stage movement. First came the long American shot of actors talking, then the understanding of the montage shot as such was violated. The more important functions of montage, especially in acting scenes, turned out to be impossible with sound. Speech brought with it the element of real time, thus completely undercutting the most emotional montage in conventional time (stretched, or, conversely, shortened). The necessity to maintain a sense of completeness of the spoken material sharply narrowed the possibilities of breaking down the acting scenes into montage segments.

The interrelation and interdependence of image and sound length was vividly demonstrated in practice by De Sica in his *Miracle in Milan* (*Miracolo a Milano*). In the scene where two capitalists are haggling over a square where paupers live, the increasing pace of the montage enforces the contraction of the words spoken, eventually reducing them, with a very fast montage, to inarticulate sounds.

II

In the preceding pages, the point was to characterise the fundamental features of the film image. Only now, having as complete a notion of this image as possible, can we juxtapose and compare the painterly image and the film image or, to be more precise, trace how fundamental categories of the painterly image manifest themselves in the new quality that the film image constitutes.

We shall proceed with this in the same order in which we compared the painterly image and the static (epidiascopic) film presentation.

Thus:

1) The scope of the film image is determined, as in the painterly image, by the fullness of realistic content, here expressed through cinematic ways, i.e., such a number of composed presentations that makes it possible to construct a c o n c e p t about the phenomena being demonstrated. Anatoli Golovnya rightly points out that a film image usually overlaps with the film's dramatic categories such as an episode or a scene (just as a painterly image represents a scene or an episode).

2) The painterly image is a form of reflection of three-dimensional reality in two dimensions. Although the film image also consists of a series of appro-

priately arranged two-dimensional presentations, as a whole, it can produce the illusion of three-dimensionality by showing different depictions of objects; in practice, this means that it is not limited to a single point from which the reproduced reality is observed.

The three-dimensionality of the film image is enhanced by illusions created by the sound and by the movement of objects in front of the camera as well as the movement of the camera itself.

3) The painterly composition is a static one, determined once and for all for every finished painting. The composition of the film image is kinetic, changing, influenced by the factor of movement. Film composition is determined by two main factors: montage movement and in-frame movement.

Montage influences composition by giving the film image an appropriate rhythm. Rhythm, the length of the individual presentations and the way they relate to one another, is of fundamental significance for film composition. By keeping one presentation longer on the screen, we give it the dominant compositional role in the image; an increasing *crescendo* rhythm of the image gives the role of the compositional apex to the final presentation, which actually tends to disrupt the rising rhythm of the image for emphasised expression. Indeed, every image in a film has its own compositional principle and this matter should be considered individually in each case.

Constructed from a series of presentations, the film image is the resultant of these presentations. Similarly, its composition is the resultant of the compositions of these presentations. If Georges Sadoul says that in Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* (*Ivan Grozny*), *many sequences have been constructed based on visual leitmotifs corresponding to the musical themes in Prokofiev's musical illustration – the Queen's death, for example, is dominated by overwhelming diagonal compositions; the feast is delineated by different kinds of 'S'; the finale is torn by semi-expressionistic zigzags,*[13] this means that the individual presentations are composed by the director on this particular principle, so that these compositional patterns impose themselves as the compositional dominant of the whole image.

Within individual shots, in-frame movement occurs, which, as we have mentioned, determines, on a montage basis, the internal composition of the shot, indirectly influencing the compositional arrangement of the image.

In the practice of sound film, it is common for images to consist of only one shot (e.g., the conversation scenes in Fridrikh Ermler's classic "talking" film *The Great Citizen / Velikiy grazhdanin/*). Establishing the compositional principle of such images is relatively simpler, as certain visual elements, such as the set decoration, remain unchanged. The fragmentation of the image into presentations is only determined by the movement within the frame, the movement of figures or objects, the mise-en-scène. The compositional dominant is determined by the relation of moving elements to fixed elements (set decoration) and the relation of moving elements to each other and to the angle and point of view of the camera (e.g., in Raymond Bernard's *Les Misérables*, the cinematographer J. Drucer[14] uses a skewed camera, which results in a skewed image on the screen).

The internal composition of the image is also determined by the kind of movement involved. If, for example, we imagine a shot in which an object moves,

then stops for a certain period of time, and then resumes movement, the moment with the greatest temporal emphasis will dominate in terms of composition.

In static presentations, composition manifests itself identically as in the painterly image; for example, the beautiful shot from Visconti's *The Earth Trembles* (*La Terra Trema*), with black-clad women standing on rocks and looking out to sea, strikes us as a "painterly image," because it is subject to painterly compositional principles. However, this type of shot never appears on its own; it has a specific dramatic function within the whole image.

We have said of in-frame movement that it causes compositional variability in a film shot. We must make a reservation here, though: not every kind of movement leads to a change in the shot composition. Let us take, for example, the movement of prisoners on a prison walk in Pudovkin's film *Mother* (*Mat'*). They are walking around a single point. Looking at this shot as presented by Pudovkin, that is, from above, we find that this movement does not alter the basic spatial composition: we are invariably dealing with the plane of the cobbled yard and the circle outlined on it. Similar in character is the shot of soldiers crossing a bridge in the Chinese film *Red Flag on the Green Hill* (*Cui gang hong qi*), directed by Zhang Junxiang. As it was photographed from the side, this shot gives us a regular line of figures on the bridge; the line creates a distinct cut across the screen, and the shot receives a fixed compositional pattern. One may add here as an aside that it is precisely such shots with a fixed compositional pattern that we recognise, along with static shots, as the most p a i n t e r l y .

4) So far, we have not addressed the colour composition of the film image. In this summary, however, we ought to devote a few words to it.

Painting uses two basic types of colour composition: local colour, connected with an object, and colour not connected with any specific shape, permeating the whole image, merging into a separate colour composition, independent, as it were, of the shapes of the depicted objects.

Local colour was the exclusive element in the colour composition of medieval European and Byzantine painting. Alongside local colour, there later appeared a separate colour, detached from any specific shape: colour and light reflections, colour-marked "airiness," and other types of colour not strictly connected with an object. In the history of art, this type of colour composition begins to flourish in the 15th-century with the Renaissance Venetian school, to take the primacy of composition in the painting of the French Impressionists of the 19th century and their epigones.

In his essay "Ob izobrazitelnoy forme kinofilma" ["On the Visual Form of Film"],[15] Mikheil Chiaureli posits that composition that does not involve local colour is the more cinematic type of colour composition. In his view, it is only in certain cases, artistically justified, that a filmmaker should rely on local colour, nevertheless placing the main emphasis on saturating the entire image with a common colour tonality that determines its character.

This proposition does not seem to resolve the issue. Overuse of colour reflection often results in the so-called colour "sauce" and the blurring of proper colour relationships. At the same time, it precludes colour composition in film from following the interesting path of achieving artistic effects by juxtaposing local colours, by coupling colour patches with montage. Excellent examples of this

method are provided in Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*, where colour patches are often used to create contrast.

If the element of non-local colour is assumed as the proper means of film expression, we must note that film movement does not play such a decisive role here as in the case of spatial composition. Images with a rich movement structure can at the same time have a uniform or near-uniform colour composition. With the opposite approach, with colour montage, the movement factor plays a decisive role, which does not mean, however, that this method is incapable of providing the image with some general dominant colour tonality.

5) We have already discussed colour value as a factor of painterly composition in the construction of the film image when analysing the kind of presentation that we described as epidiascopic. The introduction of the film image in the full understanding of the term does not cause valour relationships to change in any fundamental, independent way; their variability is inseparably linked with the variability of the compositional arrangement of the film image.

6) The texture of the film image may also be omitted here, as there are no changes in this regard in relation to our earlier comparison of the painterly image with the static film presentation.

7) The final point concerns the reception of the film image. We have previously said that the painterly image and the epidiascopic image are subject to the same laws of free reception. We understand this freedom here as a free unrestricted choice of the point and angle of viewing an image. In the case of the film image, this freedom is subject to fundamental limitations. The viewer is of course free to choose his seat, but his freedom ends here. Neither the viewing angle nor the distance from the image can be changed. This is done not by the viewer but by the film itself. By using various field sizes and angles when shooting, the film imposes its own way of looking at the image on the viewer. To use a comparison from visual arts, the film here plays the role of an illustrated album presenting an individual work of art: it selects, according to preference, details that it considers particularly important; it shows wide shots to orient the viewer in the whole composition; it shows some fragments more precisely and others less so.

III

Let us now try to answer the question posed in the introduction: How does the film image make use of the painterly image; how does a painterly image turn into a film image?

There is a caveat right at the outset. This matter is largely an individual one, and in two ways at that: in terms of both the nature of the painterly model used and the method applied by the filmmaker and cinematographer. Therefore, the matter must be analysed individually.

Here, we can only limit ourselves to some general observations. With this aim in mind, it is worth recalling Eisenstein's enormously valuable remark on the nature of the creative process, contained in his now classic work on montage.[16]

According to Eisenstein, *the process occurs in the following manner: a certain image hovers in front of the author's inward eye, an image which for him is an emotional*

embodiment of the theme of this work. He is then faced with the task of turning that image into two or three p a r t i a l   d e p i c t i o n s , which in combination and juxtaposition will evoke in the mind and emotions of their perceiver precisely that initial generalised image which the author saw with his mind's eye.

I am talking of both the image of the work as a whole and the image of a separate scene.

It is striking how this remark on the creative process converges with the crux of Lenin's well-known definition of the cognitive process:

From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice, – such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality, Lenin says.[17]

By highlighting this convergence, we want to emphasise the fact that the creative process is a cognitive one. If the creative process in film is inspired by a painterly image, if this is what constitutes the 'truth' and 'objective reality' of which Lenin speaks, the transposition must have its beginning in the cognitive relation to this image.

A filmmaker who wishes to draw creatively, and not slavishly, on a particular painterly tradition – whether a single painting or a number of paintings related in substance and style – must first recognise their content, their principal ideological and artistic sense. This is a crucial moment, for an incorrect interpretation of the content of the painting on which we rely may lead to misunderstandings, namely the use of an alien form, an alien model to express particular content. For example, a filmmaker using the models of Gierymski or Szermentowski to express the contemporary content of life in the Polish countryside, only prompted by the similarity of the subject matter, would be faced with the problem of divergence between content and form in the film image. Deciphering the content, the inner intention that is served by the set of artistic means used by a particular artist, is far more important than the subject matter, although the latter imposes itself much more strongly.

The next step is to analyse the artistic means used in a given painterly image, to analyse its main, distinctive compositional and colour features, its internal dynamics, and so forth. This analysis will aid the construction of individual presentations, since, following Eisenstein's observation, the general image should be broken down into a series of 'partial depictions'.

And thus – a filmmaker using the models of, say, Bruegel must notice the principal features of his composition, consisting in its effusion, the fragmentation of the image into a series of meticulously treated episodes and elements, its rich airiness; this principle governs the composition of individual presentations and the general montage composition of the whole image.

A filmmaker drawing on Rembrandt's famous *Night Watch*, is confronted above all with the problem of dynamics, of movement. The richness of this movement stems from the fact that what is shown here is a very specific moment, namely the momentary stillness preceded by and preceding movement (a situation akin to that in Myron's *Discobolus*). This movement is, however, bound by the static nature of a painting. In film, it can have an actual kinetic realisation by means of both in-frame movement and appropriate montage. Film offers the possibility of spelling it out in time and space. We encounter a similar problem when looking at Chełmoński's paintings which allowed

Aleksander Ford to create an original and very cinematic composition in the already discussed scene of speeding horses in *Young Chopin*. In the same film, Ford used the models of Polish genre painting of rural life to create a scene in a peasant hut. In keeping with the intrinsic content of these works, the movement in this scene is gentle, calm, and sparse.

Every painting involves a different approach to colour, which must find its expression in the colour composition of the film. Not every painterly model is suitable for the conditions of a black-and-white film. While Rembrandt's visual features can be fully brought out in a black-and-white film using valour, it is unthinkable to model a black-and-white film on the colour concept of Impressionist paintings.

Painting is helpless in the face of the real existence of the solid shape, sometimes accentuating it excessively on the two-dimensional plane (cubism) to the point of deformation. Film, on the other hand, in certain specific cases, when this is duly justified, can well attempt a full expression of these longings of painting for the third dimension. Only film can fully convey the artistic qualities of relief and full round sculpture. All painterly values can be reflected in film, not through simple photography, but when their essential visual qualities are woven into a new constructional framework of the film image.

At this point it is worth returning with a little more detail to what I signalled earlier as the problem of the "painterly quality" of individual film presentations. This "painterly quality," entailed in the static character of the presentation or a fixed composition, is justified only in certain, indeed rather sporadic cases. As I have tried to demonstrate, the transposition of a painterly image into film does not consist in the construction of a living picture, but in transferring its emotional content and compositional values into new means of expression specific to film art. "Painterly" compositions sometimes have a disorganising effect in film. Thus, for example, Paul Rotha[18] rightly points out that Dreyer's otherwise excellent *Passion of Joan of Arc* resembles a collection of splendid painterly images rather than an organised film image. Similarly, Ford's battle scene in *Young Chopin*, clearly inspired by Polish battle painting, makes an unfavourable impression due to its slowed-down pace, far removed from the internal dynamism of his models. The fact that this image appears as a hallucination is irrelevant here. The well-known dispute over the film's Paris scenes is also rooted, in my opinion, in the fact that Ford, using Delacroix as a model, treated his painting as a static composition, without attempting to transpose its dynamics into the dynamics of the film image.

And here the basic conclusion is due: A film image that is a transposition of a painterly image (or a stylistically related group of painterly images) does not have to, in any of its presentations, resemble the model in the form of a finalised, complete, merely photographed painting. It is possible to be faithful in transposing a painterly image into a film image without staging this image in the film frame at all. Instead, the task consists in conveying essential features of the painterly work using entirely new, different in terms of genre, means of filmic expression. The composition of a painting cannot be conveyed in film, because it is bound by static presentation – but film does have the means that can fully

convey the essential features of this composition, enriching it with two new dimensions: space and time. The dynamics of a painterly image or a painterly work only suggests movement; film can liberate this movement, really present it on the screen. In short, any artistic feature of a painting can be translated onto the screen; copying it on the screen is a mistake, it means breaking the formal canons of a new art – the art of film.

Finally – one more issue related to the "painterly quality" of the film presentation. Someone will say – and rightly so – that there is hardly a film that would not feature a painterly presentation, that would not contain at least one image whose artistic shape resembles a painter's canvas. Many examples could be evoked here – from the dawn of film art to the superb visual from of Raizman's *Dream of a Cossack* (lit. *The Knight of the Golden Star* / *Kavalyer zalatoy zvezdy* /).

The answer is simple. Film itself, the construction of the film image, sometimes gives rise to a "painterly" presentation, which is one of the components of the cinematic vision. The appearance of such a presentation does not constitute a mistake on the part of the filmmakers; in many cases, it counts as their undeniable accomplishment.

However, the appearance of a "painterly" presentation in a film must be motivated by its dramatic and compositional role; it must ensue from the dramatic development of the film and the composition of the image. Then it plays a creative role, enriches the visual form of the film, contributing new elements of beauty. We value Italian cinema for its "painterly" presentations, we value *Alexander Nevsky*, *Dream of a Cossack*, *Young Chopin*, films shot by cinematographers such as Figueroa, Tisse, Golovnya, Tuzar, and many others. But the purpose of this "painterly quality" is not to copy painting, but to fulfil a specific dramatic function: to accentuate the point, to familiarise the viewer with the territory of the action, to introduce a mood, to provide psychological characterisation, and so on.

It sometimes happens that the "painterly" frame emerging as part of the dramatic development of the image coincides with a particular model. More often, however, it is a self-existent composition, created specifically for the film. In both cases, however, it needs to be contextualised, purposeful, and artistically justified.

All attempts to copy painting, in turn, to create a "living picture" merely for the sake of effect in film practice, as well as their appreciation in theory and criticism, are misguided attempts; they do not develop the visual potential of film, but rather lead it astray; they do not advance the art of filmmaking, but lead it astray, depriving it of its own, cinematic values and replacing them with alien, borrowed ones.

Transl. Zofia Ziemann

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[1] S. Eisenstein, "Film radziecki i tradycje kultury rosyjskiej", in: idem, *Film w ZSRR*, Wyd. FAW 1951, p. 34.

[2] Ibidem, p. 37.

[3] Which was very convincingly discussed by K. Nałęcki and A. Wajda in "Kompozycja obrazu w filmach dźwiękowych Eisensteina", *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 1952, vol. II, no. 8, pp. 16-29.

[4] I am deliberately considering this situation here, rather than comparing a film still with a painting, for a film still is not a film presentation; the former relates to the latter in the same way that a reproduction of a painting relates to the original.

[5] We should note for the sake of accuracy that in A. Golovnya's work on cinematography in colour film, film texture [Russian *faktura* – translator's note] designates the illusion of airiness created by a film. This discrepancy, however, only concerns terminological issues. In the present article, I am using the term 'texture' [Polish *faktura* – translator's note] in the way it is conventionally used in painting terminology – to mean the treatment of the surface of the image, its type being most conveniently ascertained through tactile examination. This is how M. Porębski formulates the term 'texture' [faktura] in his study "Sens artystyczny obrazu", *Twórczość* 1946, vol. II, no. 9, pp. 89-109.

[6] A. Golovnya, *Cyomka tsvetnogo kinofilma*, Goskinoizdat, Moskva 1952, p. 10.

[7] K. Irzykowski, *Dziesiąta Muza*, Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, Kraków 1924, pp. 12-13.

[8] This distinction is artificial anyway. As we know, in-frame movement is also a form of film montage, as will be discussed later.

[9] A. Golovnya, op. cit., p. 8.

[10] S. Eisenstein, "O formie filmowej", *Przegląd Filmowy* 1951, vol. III, no. 1-2. [Cf. S. Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram", in: idem, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. J. Leyda, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York – London 1977, p. 30 – editors' note].

[11] M. Porębski, "Treść i forma w sztukach plastycznych", *Materiały do Studiów i Dyskusji* 1950, no. 3-4, pp. 59-60.

[12] M. Room, "O budowie ruchu scenicznego", *Przegląd Filmowy* 1950, vol. II, no. 11-12. [It is likely that the surname has been misspelled here and the reference is to Mikhail Romm – editors' note.]

[13] G. Sadoul, *Histoire de l'art du Cinema des origines à nos jours*, Flammarion, Paris 1952.

[14] Author's erroneous attribution; the film was photographed by Jules Kruger. [Editors' note]

[15] M. Chiaureli, "Ob izobrazitelnoy forme kinofilma", in: idem, *Voprosy masterstva v sovetskom kinoiskusstve*, Goskinoizdat, Moskva 1952, pp. 43-79.

[16] S. Eisenstein, "Montage 1938", in: idem, *Selected Works* vol. II: *Towards a Theory of Montage*, ed. M. Glenny, R. Taylor, trans. M. Glenny, BFI Publishing, London 1991, pp. 308-309.

[17] V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*", in: idem, *Collected Works* vol. 38: *Philosophical Notebooks*, trans. C. Dutt, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1976, p. 171.

[18] P. Rotha, *The Film till Now*, Vision Press Ltd, London 1949, s. 377.

Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz

Born 1933, died 2010; journalist, film critic and screenwriter, novelist, party activist. He graduated in art history from the University of Warsaw. Editor of several socio-cultural periodicals; in 1969-1975 editor-in-chief of the weekly *Szpilki*. His intellectual and journalistic activity focused on mass culture, TV, and comics. Apart from contributions published on an ongoing basis, he brought out several collected volumes of various texts. In 2004, he published the family and autobiographical portrait *Rodzina Toeplitzów. Książka mojego ojca* [*The Toeplitz Family: My Father's Book*] (Iskry press). An analysis of his output and activity, com-

plete with a meticulous bibliography of his published texts, is contained in the volume *Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz* (2024), edited by Barbara Giza and Piotr Zwierzchowski.

Słowa kluczowe:
teoria filmu;
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obraz filmowy;
malarskość

Abstrakt

Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz

Obraz malarski a obraz filmowy

Punktem wyjścia autora artykułu jest autorefleksja na temat statusu filmoznawstwa, dotąd skupionego na badaniu kwestii związanych ze scenariuszem oraz zależności pomiędzy filmem a literaturą. Jednym z celów jest zatem przekierowanie zainteresowań na związki między filmem a sztukami plastycznymi. Znaczną część tekstu zajmuje próba teoretycznego zdefiniowania obrazu malarskiego i filmowego, a następnie – ich cech wspólnych i różnic. Dalej autor analizuje procesy związane ze swoistym przekładem obrazu malarskiego na filmowy. Kluczowym pojęciem rozważań okazuje się „malarskość", rozumiana na dwa sposoby: jako zdolność filmu do „naśladowania" konkretnych obrazów malarskich oraz jako zdolność do tworzenia obrazów uważanych za „malarskie" (ze względu na kompozycję, dobór barw, statyczność). **(Materiał nierecenzowany; pierwodruk: „Kwartalnik Filmowy" 1953, nr 10, s. 66-87).**