

struction of Literary-Artistic Organisations' of April 1932). Each chapter is given a title that characterises the period under discussion. Most of these titles are self-explanatory, although some are abstract. It is difficult to ascertain what is being consolidated in the chapter entitled 'Consolidation', for example, especially since the Eighth Quartet and Twelfth Symphony were composed during the period under discussion (1958-1961). Problems also invariably arise at times when Shostakovich's creative juices were not flowing, such as the late 1930s. It is at this point that we learn about the composer's love of various sports, chess and poker. This is all interesting information, but not specific to period, and there is a sense that it merely fills the void while we wait for the creative muse to return to Shostakovich and the circumstances surrounding his next composition could be discussed.

However, these are minor quibbles, and should not detract from what is an outstanding book. On the evidence of her analysis of the circumstances surrounding the composition of the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* in 1996, Ian MacDonald claimed it 'comic were there not so many dead bodies involved' that Laurel Fay was 'presently engaged in producing what her publisher, Oxford University Press, trusts will be a definitive biography of Shostakovich'. Laurel Fay in my opinion more than answers her critics, and the intemperance of Ian MacDonald's remark alone illustrates why the calm and collected *Shostakovich: A Life* is a necessary and valuable contribution to the field of Shostakovich studies.

Lars Kristensen

Critical Studies Vol. 21: The Montage Principle, Eisenstein in New Cultural and Critical Context, Jean Antoine-Dunne and Paula Quigley (eds.), Rodopi: Amsterdam & New York 2004, XVIII + 220 pp.

The aim of this study is to celebrate the diversity of Eisenstein's legacy, and as such is not about the montage principle in itself, but about how montage has given rise to working practices in different artistic fields. These fields are as diverse as they can be, incorporating animation, literature, drama, film theory, feminism, Caribbean aesthetics and the digital image.

In the reprinted essay, *A Boy from Riga*, Richard Taylor charts Eisenstein's life from early childhood to the troublesome time under Stalin and finds evidence of a traumatic relationship with an oppressive father figure, which leads Eisenstein to seek refuge in books and in his imagination. Eisenstein was 'an outsider in an outpost of German culture in a Russian state', and remained an outsider throughout his life – living his life in the imagination of his art, 'which provided a refuge from his sense of isolation, of difference' (p. 27-8). This, says Taylor, informed both his films and his writing.

For Arthur McCullough the context of the montage principle was late modernism around the time of the two World Wars, where the aesthetic 'is set against a backdrop of the increasingly disruptive stimuli of a runaway modernity' (p. 46). Especially in film, and even more in montage, shock was part of the aesthetic, where the filmmakers could strike a blow at the spectator's psyche and thereby develop a direct link between the artist and the spectator's perception of reality. In this way montage is linked to Dadaism and Futurism, and, McCullough asserts (p. 53), is closer to the former, thus rejecting the idea that montage was part of a dictatorial futurism.

From here onwards the study takes a leap (no irony intended) from the socio-historical context to dealing in contemporary themes and issues. This leap can only be done because of the previous contextualisation by McCullough and Taylor's understanding of Eisenstein as isolated and different, as a foreigner within his own country, which connect Eisenstein's aesthetics to a larger world-view – outside a narrow early Soviet aesthetics. Hence it can be argued, as this collection does, that the montage principle managed to have an influence worldwide, for example on feminism and postcolonialism. Nevertheless, because of this leap, the collection runs the risk of stretching Eisenstein's thinking so far that his ideas lose their originality and origin. In this connection, we may recall how Bakhtin's notion of 'carnavalesque' was seen everywhere, and thereby lost its meaning for the context in which Bakhtin was writing and in which 'carnavalesque' is to be understood.

In this sense, I find, in particular, Debbie Ging's essay on feminist filmmaking and montage problematic. In her overall argument that feminist filmmakers are seeking through the use of sound a middle-ground of non-alienating counter-cinema, a cinema both emotionally engaging and politically agitational, Eisenstein's ideas of montage are reduced to 'jarringly formal devices' (p. 92). 'Jarring' is not what montage is about. Furthermore, the analysis encompasses a great number of films in which Ging finds montage 'everywhere'. In one instance, she detects a 'kind of macro-montage [...] by intercutting narrative and documentary formats' (p. 76) (which is, in fact, a device also used in mainstream cinema!), and in another film 'a powerful piece of what could be called micro-montage' (p. 87). Although the two mentioned parts could arguably be described as montage, what I miss here is the macro and the micro within the same film and a leap into a new pathos, i.e. Eisenstein's organic whole.

The organic whole is at the centre of Anne Sheridan's analysis of Ritwik Ghatak's *The Cloud Capped Star* (1960), and it therefore works better. Although 'Ghatak could be accused of conventional melodramatic cathartic resolution', it is Sheridan's argument that 'the focus [of the filmmaker] throughout is on the nature of unity – on how elements make up the organic whole' (p. 123). This is informative about a director who professes an affinity with Eisenstein and whose work is marked by the desire to heal the 1947 Partition of Bengal.

Informative is a term that could also be applied to Jean Antoine-Dunne's two essays: the first on the Caribbean writers Derek Walcott and Kamau Brathwaite, where Eisenstein's theories of audio-visual contrapuntal montage are used to assess the formation of a postcolo-

nial Caribbean aesthetic; the second is a compelling analysis of Samuel Beckett's indebtedness to Eisenstein's theory. For both artists it is 'between the cracks of time and space [that] a new image of inner and outward reality emerges' (p. 197). It is, in my view, in these two artists that the affinity in thinking is clearest.

Paula Quigley assesses the potential of Eisenstein's interest in ideogram as a model for film language as an alternative to the 'powerful, not to mention paradoxical, anti-ocular inflection of film theory' (p. 154). Contrary to post World War II film theorists, in particular French film theorists, who were concerned with the dangers of suture and the illusion of the image, Eisenstein's 'cinematographic writing cannot be accounted for by the signifier/signified model', but instead formed an ideogram writing where 'meaning is produced in the structural relations of the filmic system, rather than in the relation of the image to reality' (p. 161). It is Quigley's assertion that the understanding of the Eisensteinian emphasis on the indexical image offers contemporary film theory a possible rejection of the favoured anti-specular stance.

The indexical of the image is also the concern of Paul Willemen. In a staunch rebuff of the stance that sees Eisenstein's celebration of the iconic image in the 'new media,' it is Willemen's argument that through a pre-programmed computerisation the image loses its indexicality – its 'body' of the artist, and hence is reduced to assemblage and mechanical organism. The difference between a computer drawn mouse and Mickey Mouse is 'the transmutation of aspects of Disney's body into the drawing of a mouse, and the images created by mice' (p. 185). The loss of the indexical of the image makes the digital image anti-democratic, 'because it makes the administrative control of 'meaning' easier' (p. 180) – as it were, taking the Dadaism out of the montage and infusing it with dictatorial futurism.

Although there are discrepancies, as I have pointed out, this study manages to stay faithful to Eisenstein's theory. This stems from the fact that, by and large, all the essays can coherently be located within the perimeters of the Eisenstein context, and as such this collection is useful to both student and scholars of the montage principle.

John M. Bates

Carl Tighe, *The Politics of Literature. Poland 1945-1989*, University of Wales Press: Cardiff 1999, IX + 412 pp.

Carl Tighe is the author of several works on Polish themes, including a monograph on German-Polish relations, *Gdańsk: National Identity in the German-Polish Borderlands* (1990) and a novel *Burning Worm* (2001), which despite its modernist pretensions, is an evocative account of life in Poland during the early nineteen-eighties. The present