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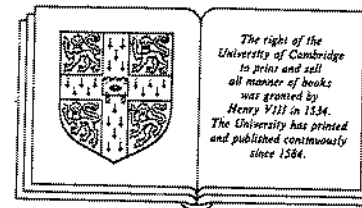
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# NONINDIFFERENT NATURE

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

*Translated by*

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From an area where subjective experience has already been completely devoured by objective concreteness, through whose exterior depiction the artist's temperament and fantasy are quite unexpectedly and no less intensely aroused.

#### Architecture.

Having verified the norms of ecstatic construction discovered by us in examples from the first two areas, let us try to show how persuasive they are also in the area of architectural conception, fantasy, and imagery.

We could make this excursion on the principles of the Gothic that seem to explode the balance of the Romanesque style. And, within the Gothic itself, we could trace the stirring picture of movement of its lancet\* world from the first almost indistinct steps toward the ardent models of the mature and postmature, "flamboyant" late Gothic.

We could, like Wölfflin, contrast the Renaissance and Baroque<sup>94</sup> and interpret the excited spirit of the second, winding like a spiral, as an ecstatically bursting temperament of a new epoch, exploding preceding forms of art in the enthusiasms for a new quality, responding to a new social phase of a single historical process.

We could show this clearly in a very concrete example of what was done with the "cosmically balanced" project of the plan of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome [created by a man of the Renaissance, Bramante<sup>95</sup> (1506)], by Michelangelo, in whom the temperament of a man of the Baroque is exploding when this initial project finally falls to him forty years later for its final completion.†

But for clarity I would still prefer to trace this case as well – again within the limits of one biography – by juxtaposing two works of two different stages of the creativity of the same artist – the builder completing his path by a leap from the architect and archeologist into the image of the artist – and the visionary.

Such is the case of Giovanni Battista Piranesi.<sup>96</sup>

If El Greco is known by every youngster in his aspect of an ecstatic mystic, then perhaps it would do no harm for Piranesi if we introduced several "corroborations" of this from "authoritative sources" before rushing into a direct observation of his etchings, although they cry out most eloquently of this themselves!

A. Benois's *History of Painting* has discussed this exhaustively:†<sup>97</sup>

... History knows few artists in whom the excitement of creativity would appear with such strength, in whom there would be such *ardor*...

... A remarkable ability to be at the same time both a *scholar* and a *poet* (no

\* [Lancet arch: sharply pointed arch associated with the Gothic style – HM.]

† After Bramante, the project passes to Raphael. Raphael dies in 1521. The project is continued by Peruzzi and Antonio da Sangallo the younger. Sangallo dies in 1546 and the next year the work passes to Buonarroti.

‡ Issue 16, p. 486. In the quote I allowed myself to categorically choose those passages that have particularly direct relation to what is relevant to us.

one will say where Piranesi the *archaeologist* ends and where the *artist* begins, where the *poet* passes over into the *scholar* and the *visionary* – into the strict *investigator*).

... Myopic minds reproached Piranesi for the fact that in proceeding from his archaeological studies, he was not able to restrain his fantasies. However, one may ask what is essentially more valuable: those grains of so-called knowledge, which a true archaeologist may discover in his investigations, or that new fairy-tale world which arose in Piranesi's imagination as the result of his *ecstasy* before the power and beauty of Roman architecture?...

Even in this short, descriptive discussion, even in these traditional turns of speech, which are always at the service of art critics and historians of art ("... where the archaeologist ends and where the artist begins, where the *poet* passes over into the *scholar* and the *visionary* -- into... the *investigator*"), even in them we can perceive what we already know as the basis of the characteristic quality of *ecstasy*, of the ecstatic personality!

Here what is taken, not as a series of rhetorical phrases but as a biographical fact, gives us another broad example of a leap within the biography itself.

We already saw Zola passing from a "novelist" into a "teacher of life"; we know that same evolution from the satirist to the utopianist in the biography of Gogol; we know Leonardo da Vinci, transported from an artist to a scholar. We also know this latter from Goethe's biography, where the jump from poetry into the sphere of pure philosophy (even if it be the second part of *Faust*) is even more striking...

However, in his biography Piranesi gives us transitions of a reverse leap instead: from archeologist to artist, from scholar to poet, from investigator to visionary.

Thus at least inner discovery moves through the sequence of a series of etchings, through the etchings themselves, and, finally, through visibly changing editions of the same series in intervals through a period of fifteen to twenty years.

Let us recall something analogous in the regeneration of the pictorial treatment of one and the same theme in El Greco.

And let us turn to this area in discussing the problems of the work of Giovanni Battista Piranesi...

#### Piranesi or the flux of form<sup>98</sup>

I am sitting in a bright yellow room flooded by sunlight. It is the corner room of my apartment on Potylikha and through one of its windows it looks out at the village of Troitskoe-Golenishchevo. From here, beating the French "in the rear," partisans at one time drove out the army of Napoleon's invaders from Moscow.

(This gave the name to the whole region.)

The other window looks out at a bare field.

Once this field was an apple orchard.

The apple trees of the orchard – I dug up, in 1938.

I liberated this area of its orchard under a studio lot for "The Battle on the Ice."

Here in the summer, after transforming the lot into the ice-covered surface of Lake Chad, and after re-creating other hordes of invaders of the Russian land, I pursued for a month – the cur-knights of *Alexander Nevsky*.

Recently beyond my windows the limits of the city of Moscow terminated.

And the house where I lived was the last house within Moscow city limits.

Inadvertently dropping a cucumber out of the kitchen window, it would now drop into Moscow . . . Province.

But now the limits of the city have been extended, and the line of the watershed of both province and city go far out beyond my windows.

In 1941 the invader-Germans were not allowed up to this line and were held back somewhere, above the village of Troitskoe and the field of "The Battle of the Ice," not reaching my yellow room, which looked out through its windows in the direction of Mozhaïsk and Minsk.

Between the windows – in the corner – a windowsill.

On the windowsill – it.

It – the object of many years of longing and searching.

I first saw it as a reproduction in a small – but actually quite thick – little book on the history of theater decoration: *Guilio Ferrari, La Scenografia* (Milano, 1902), from the library of the former theater of S. I. Zimin.

It is a sheet of a Piranesi etching.

It belongs to the series *Operie varie di Architettura* [*Various Works of Architecture*].

And it is called *Carcere oscura* [*Dark Dungeon or Dark Prison*].

It is assumed to have been created under the influence of the work *Prison d'Amadis* of Daniel Marot.<sup>99</sup> It far surpasses the prototype. And it is dated 1743.

Quite recently – just now – I was finally able to get it.

As always – by means both strange and inscrutable.

In the form of an exchange.

An exchange with one of the peripheral museums.

The museum was based on an extravagant and unsystematized collection of rarities of a certain merchant, who often traveled abroad.

In his private residence a stuffed bear got along quite peacefully with a dish, a terrible carved "blackamoor" with candlesticks, and beautiful items truly upper class: for example, several sheets of Piranesi.



Figure 7. *Dark Dungeon* [or *Dark Prison*] by G.B. Piranesi, 1743. From *Prima Parte di Architetturae Prospettive inventate ed incise da Gio. Batta. Piranesi architetto veneziano . . .*, Plate 2, drawing 6. Photograph © Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

In exchange went – one Edelinck,<sup>100</sup> one Hogarth,<sup>101</sup> one Nanteuil,<sup>102</sup> and the charming Claude Mellan<sup>103</sup> . . .

Perhaps that was a lot.

But in return I finally got this one and one other sheet of Piranesi – my very own.

My very own, accurately framed, is distinguished from the canary-yellow walls by its expressive coffee-stained color of burnt sienna and white passe-partout.

I have been a long-time admirer of the architectural violence of Piranesi's *Dungeons*.

But more an enthusiast than a connoisseur.

Therefore I always related this sheet I liked so much to the series *Invenzioni capriccose di carceri*,\* well-known in two variants – 1745 and 1761–5 – not to the earlier *Opere varie*.†

I am looking at this sheet on the wall right now.

And at first I am struck by its complete perfection – the degree of its balanced . . . meekness.

Probably, because of the freshness of the first impression made by originals of the latest *Carceri*,‡ it seems unexpectedly harmless, without much pathos.

Not ecstatic . . .

And now, looking at the sheet and mentally examining the means used in the method of "ecstaticizing" the material, I involuntarily begin to apply them to the given etching.

I ponder over what would happen with this etching if it had been brought to a state of ecstasy, of being beside itself.

Both as a whole. And in all of its features . . .

I admit that this experiment on Piranesi preceded what has been described above and applied to El Greco.

And both experiments are put here not in the "historical" sequence of their origin but with the aim of maintaining a progressive sequence (actor – painter – architect) according to the motives discussed above.

For a clarifying exposition of what I worked out in my thoughts, here is a reproduction of the etching and a diagrammatic breakdown. Let us enumerate the basic elements in the diagram and its distinctive features.

Now – step by step, element by element – let's "blow them up" one by one.

We already did this once with El Greco's picture.

Therefore now it is already simpler, habitual, demanding less time and space.

\* *Fantasies on Dungeons*.

† Moreover this same mistake was made (with less justification than by a lonely dilettante) by the album published by the Academy of Architecture USSR *Piranesi* (1939), which, without any basis at all, also includes this sheet in the wrong series.

‡ *Dungeons*.

A dozen explosions will be sufficient to ecstatically "transform" the diagram that is drawn before us.

However, it would be wrong to deny completely any quality of *pathos* in this initial sheet.

Otherwise – what would be this print's attraction for me, the sheet I knew before my encounter with the raging [*Dungeon*] of the basic series?

But here, in this sheet, if there is a degree of "being beside itself," then it is realized, not as an explosion, but as . . . dissolution.

And – not as form, but only as a system of means of expression.

And, therefore, instead of violence and strongly impressive uproar – a flowing lyricism of "mood."

Giesecke, in his work on Piranesi,\* writes about this print in exactly this spirit:

The etching *Carcere oscura* is daring and yet still restrained (befangen im Vortrag [restrained in delivery]) in the presentation of the material . . . The bright and airy perspective here goes even further . . . (in comparison to other etchings of the series – SME) the soft silvery light, which the Venetians so love streams down from above into this airy chamber and loses itself in the gloomy distance; forms are softened, are quite indistinct, as if they were in the process of dissolution (Auflösung), and the drawing itself tenderly scatters like streams of separate lines . . .

To this I would add that the vaults rise and stretch upward so that the dark mass at the bottom, gradually growing light, overflows into the vaulted top flooded with light . . .

However, let us turn to the technique of the explosion.

In order to analyze this, let us enumerate the basic data of depiction in the etching.

A – the general arch confining the entire etching as a whole.

$a_1$  and  $a_2$  – its side walls.

B and C – the arches carrying the basic support of the architectural composition of the whole.

D – the system of passing far into the depths of the lower corner arches, and in its depths resting against the wall with the grated window.

E – the ascending staircase, carried off into the depths, behind the columns.

$F_1F_2$  – the ropes, outlining the center of the composition (F), and underlining its movement into the depths ( $F_1$ )

G – the little round window over the "zavalinka."†

H – the firm base of the stone slabs of the floor.

J – the heavy masonry of the stone blocks of the severe vertical columns.

$m_1m_2$  – the little balcony to the right and left near the columns of the foreground.

\* We will refer later to this work of Giesecke: *Meister der Grafik*, Band IV. *Giovanni Battista Piranesi von Albert Giesecke*, Klinghardt and Biermann, Leipzig, 1911.

† [A small mound of earth along the outer walls of a peasant's house – HM.]

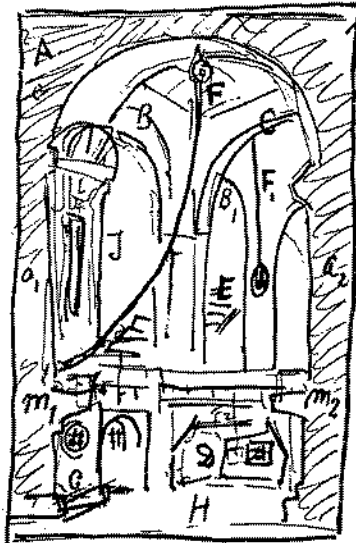


Figure 8. Eisenstein's schematic outline of Piranesi's *Dark Dungeon* [Dark Prison].

Now let us try to give freedom to the ecstatic fury of the whole and let us observe what must occur – and would occur – with all these concrete elements of composition to achieve this.

First of all, arch *A*, which confines the etching, would explode.

The upper stone semicircle flies out beyond the limits of the sheet.

If you like – from being semicircular it will become . . . angular.

From stone – wooden.

The intersection of wooden rafters – instead of a stone arch – would allow it to “jump out” simultaneously from both the material and the form.

The columns *a*<sub>1</sub> and *a*<sub>2</sub> would appear to “burst” inside the sheet out of its borders, and the sheet, broadening out beyond their limits, “leaps over” from a vertical format – to a horizontal one (we may recall such a leap of the format into its opposite – but from horizontal to vertical – in the example of El Greco!).



But the arches *B* and *B*<sub>1</sub> would not submit to this tendency to explode.

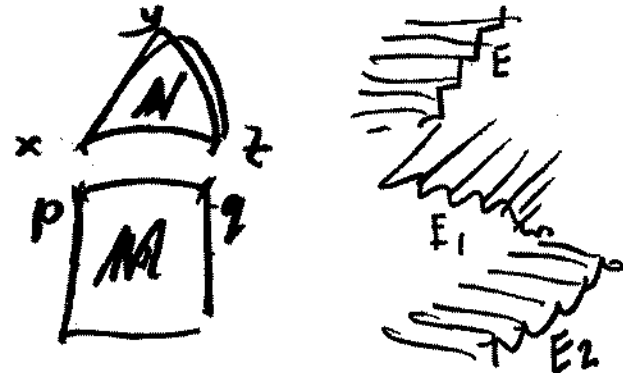
As distinct from arches *A* and *C*, which flew apart completely, these arches may undergo an “explosion” *within their form*; that is, preserving the “idea” of the arch, they could change into something of an opposite character.

What would the qualitative jump inside the form of the arch in the given circumstances be like?

The jump from the semicircular arch – into a lancet arch:



Moreover – this can be another leap from a single-flying arch into an arch of the double-flying vertical type.



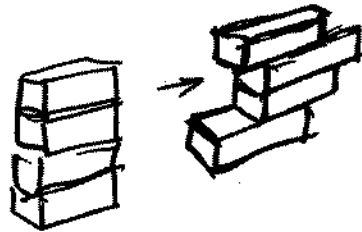
Such a form would be particularly appropriate, since its very outline bears the image of an upper lancet arch *N* exploding as if it were in flight out of the flat overhang *M* and with the two-cornered outline *p*–*q* transported into the triangle *x*–*y*–*z*, thus keeping in this drawing a trace of that process that occurred with the whole arch *A*.

Rushing ahead and moving into the depths by column *a*<sub>1</sub> downward, the staircase in its growing explosion pushes down column *a*<sub>1</sub> standing in its path, dashes ahead, and not only by one flight of stairs *E*, but like a triple break in a flash of lightning – *E*, *E*<sub>1</sub>, *E*<sub>2</sub> – it dashes in zigzag fashion ultimately forward. And this ultimate movement seems like a dash beyond the limits of the contours of the sheet. In exactly the same way the system of arches *D*, increasing their tendency into the depths, during which they change the angularity of the contour into a semicircle – knocks out by its pressure this confining wall with the grated window and dashes off somewhere in the direction of the general point of descent that, in turn, in contrast to the initial form, seems to already exist not between the upper and lower edge of the sheet, but somewhere beyond its limit; not only to the right, but also *below*, and with a rumble, repeating it, the firm base of the floor disappears, which is so distinctly visible in the first sheet and which in the second disappears somewhere in the framed depths of its new ecstatic appearance.

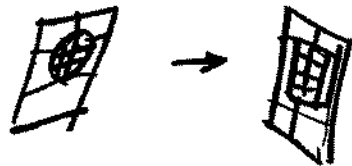
The little broken balconies *m*<sub>1</sub> and *m*<sub>2</sub> on the columns of the

foreground  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  dash toward each other, become a single bridge, and this bridge remains not as balconies in front of the arch outlining  $D$ , but undoubtedly dashes beyond it – into the depths and, perhaps, upward.

The strict proportion of the stone breaks apart in the masonry.



The little round window  $c$  turns into a square and escapes into the plane perpendicular to it.



And finally, having broken away from the centerline (which is outlined so distinctly), the ropes and blocks explode into those parts of the etching that, in its vertical stage, were not even in the initial variant of the sheet!

And, as if catching their signal, all the other details seem to be caught up by a whirlwind;

and "everything is swept by a powerful tornado" – as if they would roar out from the sheet, which has lost its initial reticence and "cosiness" in the name of raging violence...

And here in the thoughts before us, in place of the modest, lyrically meek sheet of *Carcere oscura* – a whirlwind, aiming like a tornado at all sides: Ropes, scattering staircases, exploding arches, stone blocks torn apart from each other...

The scheme of this new ecstatic form of the etching emerges in our imagination before our very eyes.

The eyes themselves – glide along the yellow wall.

Here they slipped out beyond the limits of the edges of the first sheet.

Now they slipped by another model of violence hanging between the window and the door – *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Callot.<sup>104</sup>



Figure 9. *Dungeon* by G.B. Piranesi, c. 1743. From *Carceri*, Plate XIV, 2nd state. Photograph © Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

And here they stopped unexpectedly on the second sheet of Piranesi, which came to me from that same peripheral source, from under the canopies of those same carved figures of blackamoors with candlesticks, of a bear with a tray, and a second-rate Japanese bric-à-brac of bronze.

To where did the scheme that was just standing before our eyes suddenly disappear?

I cannot catch it.

I think it – plunged into that second sheet of the incomparable Giovanni Battista.

And so it is!

The "miracle" of El Greco – has been repeated.

The farfetched scheme – turns out to really exist.

Namely, it lies at the basis of Piranesi's second etching.

Indeed, it was necessary that in a bundle of all the other possible Piranesi etchings besides the *Carcere oscura*, the late merchant Maecenas should bring this very one from Italy.

That as an exchange for the second etching it was this very one that fell into my hands.

That both of them, mounted, should hang on the yellow wall of that same room of mine.

And that, having taken my eyes off one, they should stop with the imagined scheme before us; namely, on that sheet that cast, like invisible nets, this invisible scheme of transforming the first etching into the second!

Nevertheless, the second etching of Piranesi – is the first exploding in ecstatic flight.

Here it is.

Try to argue!

Let us quickly peruse its main features.

Down to the pettiest detail they are identical to what we approximately outlined above.

After this we have little need of general phrases of Benois on the ecstasy of Piranesi.

(By the way, we found these words many years after the direct "illumination" coming from the fusion of both etchings).

We are interested in the dates of the sheets.

The way they are linked in biographical succession.

The place of *Dungeons* in the general biography of Piranesi's work.

The stages of their creation.

The chorus of enthusiasm accompanying them.

The personalities of the enthusiasts.

The nature of the actual architectural fantasies, in which one system of visions grows into others; where certain planes, endlessly opening up behind others, push the eyes into unknown depths; and the staircases, ledge by ledge, grow into the heavens or, like a reverse cascade of these ledges, precipitate downward.

Indeed, the ecstatic image of the staircase, hurled from one world to another, from sky to earth, we already know from the biblical legend of Joseph's dream,<sup>105</sup> but the *pathos* image of the elemental down surge of human masses on the Odessa steps, reaching up to the heavens, we know from our own *opus* [*Potemkin*].

*Carcere oscura* as a restrained precursor of the most notorious *Carceri* just as famous [...]

*Carcere oscura* – still a distant peal of thunder from the depths of the series of 1743 is of quite a different ring.

Within two years this distant peal bursts out like a real blow. During these years in Piranesi's consciousness and feelings there occurred one of those explosions, one of those inner "cataclysms" shaking his spiritual constitution, worldview, and relation to reality that transform a man. One of those psychic leaps that "suddenly," "abruptly," unexpectedly, and unforeseen raise man from the class of those just like himself to the height of a true creator, capable of wresting from his soul images of unprecedented might, with unabated strength burning the hearts of men.

Some interpret the *Carceri* as the visions of an archeologist's delirium, who absorbed too deeply the terrible romanticism of the gigantic ruins of Rome's former greatness.

Others try to see in them the embodiment of the image of persecution mania from which at this moment the artist is beginning to suffer.

They also enumerate real causes for it, but give preference to imagined ones.

But I think that in the interval of these several years there occurs in Piranesi that same moment of illumination "of genius" that we noted above in Balzac, and that P. I. Tchaikovsky wrote so clearly about in discussing another musician of genius – Glinka.

June 27, 1888, Tchaikovsky notes down in his diary:

... An unprecedented amazing phenomenon in the sphere of art. A dilettante who played now the violin, now the piano; who composed rather colorless quadrilles, fantasies on fashionable Italian themes, who tried out serious forms as well (the quartet, sextet) and romances, but, except for banality reflecting the taste of the '30's, he had not written anything, when suddenly in his thirty-fourth year he composes an opera, which in genius, scale, novelty, and unapproachable technique stands on a level with the greatest and most profound works that exist in art? ... At times I am alarmed to the point of madness by the question of how such a colossal artistic strength could be combined with such insignificance, and how, after having been a colorless dilettante for so long, Glinka in one step suddenly rose to the level (yes! to the level!) of Mozart, Beethoven, and whomever you please...

And actually there were no models at all; there were no antecedents\* for Mozart, for Glinka, or for any of the masters. It is striking, amazing!...

Yes! *Glinka* is a real creative genius...<sup>†</sup>

It is necessary to assume that in this, "suddenly," abruptly, and instantaneously "there burst" everything that, as grainlike bits and pieces, accumulated and added up through the "banal," the insignificant and the "dilettantish," so that it could explode in *Ruslan* as a whole, organic unity of individual genius.

But what is particularly striking here is the complete "correspondence" to what happens to Piranesi between the series *Vedute varie*<sup>‡</sup> and *Carceri*.

Actually, *Carceri* stands almost at the beginning of the creative path of Piranesi.

Everything done before has almost no real, independent value (if you don't take into account two or three *Capricci*.<sup>§</sup>)

\* That is, precedent – a case occurring earlier and serving as justification for subsequent cases of a similar type.

‡ *The Diary of P. I. Tchaikovsky*, GIZ, Moscow – Petrograd, Musical Sector, 1923, pp. 214–15.

§ *Various Views*.

¶ *Fantasies*.



And even those different groups of etchings that Piranesi created before *Dungeons* do not constitute independent series, but later the majority of them became part of a suite of architectural views of 1750.

As we can see, "the divine word" of ecstasy concerns Piranesi at a rather early stage of his work.

And the blinding flash of *Dungeons* seems to retain its bright reflections and keep its sparkle, filling with its inspired poeticization not only the picturesqueness of the ruins of former Rome, which appear in such inspired profusion from under his burin, but also the more prosaic "vedutas" of the official buildings of the city contemporary to him.

This imperishable fervor through all his creativity is also apparent from the fact that, in fifteen to twenty years, from his hand there appears a new, more profound, even more perfect variant of these etchings, made stronger by the redrawing of the plates in their unrestrained elemental grandeur. (Let us recall how many times, continually perfecting its inner spirituality, El Greco repaints one and the same theme in several variants!)

Even here there is an echo in El Greco!

But there is even more in common with El Greco.

After the first hint of 1743, 1745 brings the series *Carceri* in its initial variant.

Giesecke names them – successfully, and in the tone of Goethe's "Ur-Faust" – "Ur-Carceri." (The first, original *Faust* is the first variant of *Faust*; the "original" first *Dungeons* – the first variant of the series *Dungeons*.)

Successfully and appropriately because, along with Goethe's *Faust*, replacing the first *Ur-Faust* (1770–75), comes *Faust* proper (1770–1806)

And in place of it, the second part of *Faust* (1773–1832).

Thus, in place of the first variant of *Dungeons*, in fifteen to twenty years the second variant appears – and, if it seems supplementary, retouched, and redrawn in terms of the etchings, then in terms of depictive, ecstatic "revelation" it is more profound and vivid. After this follows the third stage of the inner self-explosion of the *Dungeons*.

It is true – no longer within the work of Piranesi himself.

Beyond the limits of his biography.

Even beyond the limits of his country and epoch.

But a hundred-odd years ahead.

And not on the soil of Italy, but Spain.

But on one and the same line with it.

And with a step, beginning from there, to where the volume and space of his conceptions were quickly reached by the furious spirit of Piranesi.

Continuing to rise in the intensity of his plastic conceptions, these three phases seem to repeat the stimulating growth of the conception of Goethe's *Faust*, from a sketchy beginning to its apocalyptic concluding episode.

*Carcere oscura* plays a role here, similar to that which the *Faust* of the Middle Ages plays (which also served Christopher Marlowe in 1588), as a purely thematic herald of the future philosophical conceptions of Goethe.

They repeat "literally" that path made by El Greco's *Expulsion from the Temple*, from the stage of a depiction of an "everyday biblical scene" on a level that is still maintained by *Carcere oscura* – to the pathos dramatization of the middle variants of the composition – *Ur-Carceri* (1745) – to the ecstatic last variant *Carceri* (1760–66).

... Is it possible to go even further?

And is it possible – after the comparatively short first stage with its dissolution of forms, through the second – already exploding the objects being depicted – and this in two jolts, strengthening the breaking up of forms and the pushing of the elements both into the depths as well as forward (by means of extensions of the foreground) – to foresee and find one more "jump," one more "explosion," one more "thrust" beyond the limits and dimensions and thus, it seemed, totally and completely to the limit of the exploded "norms" in the last variant of *Dungeons*?

Is such a subsequent jump possible?

And where, in what area of depiction should it be sought?

In *Carcere oscura* the concreteness was retained and the means of depiction "flew apart": Lines disintegrate into cascades of tiny strokes\*; the density of form, softened by light, spreads into space, the clarity of edges plunges into the overflowing contours of form.

In *invenzioni capricciosi*, using those same means of expression (true, in somewhat heightened intensity), the concreteness has also "flown apart."

More precisely – objects as physical elements of the depiction itself flew apart.

But the representational concreteness of the elements in this case was not altered.

Stone "moved away" from stone, but kept its representational "stone" concreteness.

The stone vault was hurled into the angular wooden rafters, but the representational "concreteness" of both was kept untouched.

These were "in themselves" real stone arches, "in themselves" realistic wooden beams.

The piling up of perspective recessions coincides with the madness of narcotic visions (see below), but each link of these generally dizzy perspectives "in itself" is even naturalistic.

The concrete reality of perspective, the real depictive quality of the objects themselves, are not destroyed anywhere.

\* Although they do not undergo that furious turbulence that governs the disintegrating (exploding) strokes, for example, in drawings by the pen of van Gogh.

Madness – is only in the piling up, in the juxtapositions, exploding the very basis of their everyday "possibility," the grouping of them into a system of arches consecutively being "beside themselves," erupting from the bowels of their new arches; staircases exploding into flights of new stair passages; vaults continuing the leaps out of each other into infinity.

Now it is already clear what will be (or should be) the next step.

What is left to explode – is the concreteness.

Stone no longer stone, but a system of intercrossing angles and planes, in whose play the geometrical basis of its forms explode.

Semicircles of their structural contour burst out of the semicircular outlines of vaults and arches.

Complex columns disintegrate into primary cubes and cylinders, from whose interdependence the concrete appearance of the elements of architecture and nature is constructed.

The play of chiaroscuro – the conflict of illuminated projections with areas of gaping darkness among them – becomes independent spots, no longer of light and dark, but concretely drawn dark and light colors (namely, colors, and not a range of "tones").

Can it be that this is everything that occurs in Piranesi's etchings?

No, not within the limits of the etchings.

But beyond them.

Not in the work of Piranesi.

But beyond their limits.

A leap beyond the limits of this opus.

And as a cannonade of directions and schools exploding out of each other.

And in the first place, beyond the limits of the canon of realism in the sense it is interpreted by popular understanding.

The first leap is beyond the limits of a precise outline of objects in the play of geometrical forms composing them – and we have before us Cézanne.

The connection with the object is still imperceptible.

Next – the young Picasso, Gleizes, Metzinger.<sup>106</sup>

A step further – and the blossoming of Picasso.

The object – the "cause" – is already disappearing.

It has already dissolved and disappeared.

It has exploded in general outlines and elements, as fragments and "stage wings" (the continuity of Piranesi), which build a world of new spaces, volumes, and their interrelationships.

Leftists of the arts and . . . ecstasy?

Picasso and ecstasy?

Picasso and . . . *pathos*?

Whoever has seen *Guernica* will be even less surprised by the possibility of such an assertion.

The Germans, looking at *Guernica*, asked the author:

"Did you do this?"

And proudly the painter answered:

"No – you!"<sup>107</sup>

And probably it is difficult to find – although one should include the *Destios* of Goya (*The Disasters of War*) – a fuller and more agonizing expression of the inner tragic dynamics of human annihilation.

But it is interesting that even on the paths leading here to the militant Spaniard's explosion of the *pathos* of social indignation could be seen the tie of Picasso with ecstasy, in relation to his actual method in earlier stages of his work.

There the ecstatic explosion did not coincide with the revolutionary essence of the theme.

And the explosion was not born from the theme.

There – like a unique elephant in a china shop – Picasso trampled and smashed any kind of merely "cosmically established order hateful to him" as such.

Not knowing where to lash out at those who were guilty in the social disorder of this "order of things," he lashed out at "things" and "order," before he suddenly "began to see clearly" in *Guernica* – where and in what lay discord and "initial causes."

Thus, curiously enough, Burger (*Cézanne and Hodler*), for example, includes Picasso before *Guernica* into the category of mystics.

And this is because of signs of – ecstasy.\*

But in *Guernica* Picasso experiences a leap from an abstract ecstatic "protest" into the *pathos* of a revolutionary challenge to fascism trampling Spain.

And Picasso himself – into the ranks of the Communist Party.<sup>†</sup>

The fate of the majority of others – is different.

Internally they are not aware of ecstatic explosions.

For internally they do not burn with *pathos*.

They are not scorched by the flame of an enduring idea.

And with the most lofty of all possible ones – the idea of social protest.

With the fire of battle.

With the flame of the re-creation of the world.

They are not shaken by an inner peal of indignation.

In their souls the coiling lightning of wrath does not flash.

They do not blaze with white fire, in which service to an idea flares up with action.

And few are those who know ecstasy within their works.

The ideological impulse is lacking.

\* This quote was cited by me on another occasion in the chapter *Nonindifferent Nature*.  
<sup>†</sup> We will return to the problem of ecstasy in Picasso again in the chapter *Nonindifferent Nature*.

And there is no *pathos* of creation.

And they lie in the scheme of ecstasy like separate links of a single historical chain of the leaping movement of art as a whole, and in their personal biographies there are not those huge leaps and jumps, beyond the frame, of newer and newer limits, with which the life paths of El Greco and Piranesi overflow as well as Zola or Whitman, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy.

Even if they do not burn with that hint of flame.

Even if the fires of their burning did not achieve the degree of the flame of social protest.

Nevertheless, they still are all devoured by ideas that are more valuable to them than life itself.

And only with such ideas.

Only with the obsession of such ideas.

Only with the self-dissolution and self-kindling of self in the service of those capable of giving birth to *pathos*.

Only with such a degree of incandescence of obsession is the ecstasy possible, shifting by continuous leaps through the expressive means of the artist enveloped by an idea, as by a flame; by images erupting like lava; by his heart nourishing his works with blood.

However, after this flight of personal *pathos*, which is somewhat unexpected on the pages of a research essay, let us turn back and look again at a series of features of the phenomenon that interests us – the work of that same Piranesi.

Perhaps here it would be most appropriate to linger slightly on the strange appearance of ecstasy, which for some reason is very often connected with visions of architectural images.

One of the greatest merits of architectural structures and ensembles is considered to be the harmonic transition of certain of their forms into others – like an “overflow” of some into others.

In completed examples of architecture this is discerned directly.

And the dynamics of these construction elements overflowing into each other promote that feeling of emotional seizure, that “abstract,” “nonrepresentational” whole that the harmonic building truly represents for us.

The “abstract” and “nonrepresentational” quality in the given case in no way removes a very definitely expressed “imagistic” quality from such an ensemble.

And in this sense the architecture in different epochs is expressed in different ways, and, besides, it expresses a definite thought or idea in the most concrete sense of the word.

And this is why the “image” is always socially and historically conditioned and expresses a definite ideological content of a certain epoch.

The very rhythm (and melody) of forms harmoniously flowing over into each other is the reflection, through the interrelationship of volumes and space and the structure of materials, of a certain leading image of social concepts; and the completed building thus expresses and embodies the spiritual content of the nation-builder at a certain stage of its social and historical development.

[The mistake of the so-called leftist architecture – especially the constructivist – is in the rejection of the imagistic content of a building, which is totally reduced to utilitarian aims and the properties of building materials.

No less abominable in its architectural ideology is the substitution (in the imagistic content of the building) by an eclectic reconstruction “in parts” of elements of obsolete architectural epochs, reflecting in their forms ideologies of other nations and social and political conditions alien to us.]\*

If one compares the perfect transitions of architectural forms into each other in such different examples as, let us say, the Hagia Sophia or Chartres Cathedral with a government building of the Nicholas epoch or a facade of the Pitti Palace, then one is clearly struck by the fundamental difference of the rhythmic characteristics both of the forms themselves and of the rhythmic course of their transition into each other, in the process of the composition of the organic architectural whole.

And each of these examples begins to speak with the strongest figurative rhetoric of its epoch: of its system or of its inner aspirations.

Typical is the expressive form of the palaces of sovereign feudal dukes, who built a fortress in the center of the city – a bulwark against the two independent communes of the townspeople.

The image of absolutism frozen in the invincibility of its principles – is the structure of buildings of the Nicholas epoch. The terrestrial emperor – the concrete “Tsar and God,” leaning on the bureaucrat and policeman.

And on the other hand, the exalted “upward” flight of the Middle Ages in Gothic churches, directed toward the abstract, idealistic god of the mystics, whom the Roman high priest – the pope – had not yet succeeded in replacing.

However, in all the historical differentiation of architectural images in the composition of ensembles of different epochs, there lies the same basic principle – the principle of the transition of separate parts from one to the other, a principle of harmony resounding in different ways in different ages.

And it is on this second feature will will now focus our attention.

\* [Here Eisenstein is clearly criticizing the so-called Stalinist style of eclectic architecture – HM.]

On the roads and crossroads of my path to cinematography I once had to study architecture as well (in the Institute of Civil Engineering).

I had just begun to work on a project when the whirlwind of the Civil War snatched me away and returned me not to the drawing boards of architectural projects, but transferred me to the stage of the theater, first as a set designer, then as a theater director, and then – as a film director.

The experience of an architect-designer and set designer for the theater did not last long.

But long enough to capture one – most fundamental – feature of the actual process of the “creation” of volume – space constructions.

Architecture is not called “frozen music” in vain (“Gefrorene Musik” – Goethe).

At the basis of the composition of its ensemble, at the basis of the harmony of its conglomerating masses, in the establishment of the melody of the future overflow of its forms, and in the execution of its rhythmic parts, giving harmony to the relief of its ensemble, lies that same “dance” that is also at the basis of the creation of music, painting, and cinematic montage.<sup>108</sup>

The massive and spatial caesuras between them, the spots of light and pits of darkness shading them, the conglomeration of details growing out of each other and then in scattering trills the outlines of the general contours – all this preceded by spots, lines, intersections, in the form of a rough draft, striving on paper to consolidate that flight of spatial visions, which is condemned to settle as stones or bricks, iron and concrete, glass and the prefabricated walls of a prepared structure.

At the basis of the architectural design is that same emotion that, from the level of inspired obsession, now overflows in a flame of ecstasy – and the dithyrambs of its visions consolidate the cathedral chorale frozen in stone, now by a magnificent marching step, whose image has been kept for centuries by the court and park structures of Versailles, now finally able to scatter through the artificial play of the pipes of porcelain shepherds and shepherdesses, which came to life through the coquettish play of the Trianonites...<sup>109</sup>

We are interested in the first case.

The case of maximum restraint.

A case when architecture is no longer an analogue to salon conversation by the fireplace but a unique stone “symbol of faith” – a passionate expression in stone of its ideological *credo*, whose ardor forces the stones to pile upon stone, and in their straining toward heaven, to forget their own gravity, to soar up in the lancet form of arches, hanging in the air and, piers unfolding between them, to return in them on the surfaces of stained-glass windows, burning like multicolored flames.

It is difficult to find structures more clearly representing the embodiment of ecstasy frozen in stone than Gothic churches.

It is difficult to find buildings capable by their structure alone to sequentially “turn on” to ecstatic harmony those entering beneath their vaults.

And to the degree that the structure and image of such a cathedral in all its features repeats that system of sequences of intensity bursting out of each other, those principles of being beside oneself and of passing into each other, and the final fusion together of all elements composing it, when the vaults tremble like an organ, and the sun streams through the stained-glass windows, etc., etc. – could serve as a separate chapter.

However, besides the social-historical validity of the image of the Gothic cathedral, of which much has been written, we are also interested in its inner prototype as an ecstatic vision.

And we have every right to suspect such a psychic basis for it.

If an ecstatic state had not been at the original source of this image, then the image, not having been born of such a state, would not have been in a position to be that “copybook sample,” by which the experiencing viewer would have fallen into a state of ecstasy.

Thus Tolstoy wrote about music.

(The shortest path of direct transmission of the original state of the author – to the listener.)

Thus, the waltz tempo is a copy of that state in which Johann Strauss’s “soul danced,” repeating by its movements the structure of this tempo in the completed waltz. Those dancing join that same state in which its author was at the moment of the creation of the dance.

A rudimentary example of that phenomenon we know in the culture of ancient Mexico.

Here the examples are not as grandiose and systematically elaborated by a system of canons as in the culture of the Gothic cathedral. But just because of this, probably, they are clearer and more perceptible. The chimeras sit solemnly on these cathedrals like frightening visions of delirium.

Thousands of frightening figures, like a forest, covering the structures of their coeval Asiatic contemporaries – the Hindu “gopurams.”<sup>110</sup>

But they (basically component images of separate natural phenomena: the head of an eagle above a woman’s breast, a human body crowned by an elephant’s head) in no way reach the level of horror of the ornamental monsters of ancient Mexico.

And here – the monstrosity and frightening unexpectedness derive not so much from the combination of various frightening details, actually belonging to various animals (the way in which Leonardo da Vinci created realistic models of unreal beings, and Barnum<sup>111</sup> demonstrated in the puppets at the beginning of his career), as much as in... the ornamental decomposition of visible objects of nature.

Your head literally whirls when you see the treatment of the corner of



Figure 10. (a, b) Sculptural decorations on the Mayan Pyramid, Yucatan. From Eisenstein's 1931 film *Que Viva Mexico!* (c) Detail from the frieze of the façade of the Governor's Palace, Uxmal, showing some of the two thousand sculptured stone elements comprising its decoration.

"Las Monjas Palace" in Uxmal<sup>112</sup> in the form of a decomposed human profile or in the serpent heads disintegrating into incredible disjointedness in the galleries behind the Teotihuacan pyramid.

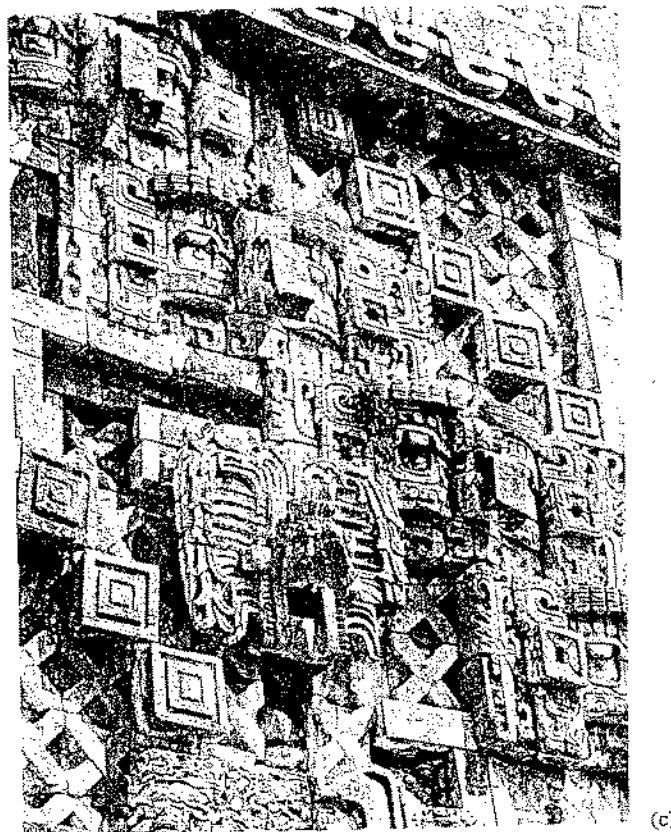
How simply and clearly the stretched-out details compose "backwards" into "a bear": its face, eyes, claws, back on the light blue carpets of the tribes of the North American Indians.

How easily the whole is gathered together again "montagelike" from this ornamental distribution. And what real dizziness seizes you when the stone hook, protruding along a diagonal from the corner of the building, begins to be interpreted as a nose; you must look for deformed stone eyes through the system of carved stones going around both sides of the corner; and the teeth of the lower part of the treatment of the building suddenly appear as a system of monstrously transformed jaws.

Dizziness is the result of a constant slipping from the prototype face into this system of stretched-out details losing their human features, and again back to the face in a tormenting attempt to create the process through which one becomes the other, the original — a monstrous result — again — "backward" — to the original (without which it would be impossible "to interpret," to organize, to perceive, to include it into a system of representations comprehensible to us).

And...dizziness — is not simply a rhetorical phrase — it is what actually occurs.

For in the attempt to "enter" into the process of birth of these ecstatic —



Caption to Figure 10 (cont.)

actually "having become ecstatic" from the appearance given to them — images of the ornamental decomposing of faces and heads, you enter a system of the norms of that process, which gave birth to these images of decomposed forms inaccessible to the normal state of consciousness [...]

...The visions of similar architectural images in states of exaltation and ecstasy connected...with opium are described by De Quincy.<sup>113</sup>  
(He calls his own devotion to opium a disease.)

...In the early stages of the malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural; and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as never yet was beheld by waking eye, unless in the clouds...

Later he quotes from Wordsworth<sup>114</sup> "...a passage which describes,

as an appearance actually beheld in the clouds, what in many of its circumstances I saw frequently in sleep."\*

In the same passage of poetry he clearly stops at the moment of the continuous fluctuation of architectural ensembles that piled up with threatening clouds:

"The sublime circumstances – 'that on their restless fronts bore stars,' – might have been copied from my own architectural dreams, so often did it occur..."

These quotations would be enough to compare Piranesi's amazing architectural visions flowing into each other, not only in the uniqueness of their system, but also in their figurative system, with the reflection in concrete forms of the fantastic architecture of these authors' ecstatic states.

However, this is also confirmed by the fact that De Quincy uses, namely, Piranesi's *Dungeons* as the most precise correspondence to those architectural visions that seize him in states of exaltation under the influence of opium:

Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Coleridge,<sup>115</sup> then standing by, described to me a set of plates from that artist, called his *Fantasies*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of these (I describe only from memory of Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls, on the floor of which stood mighty engines and machinery, wheels, cables, catapults, etc., expressive of enormous power put forth, or resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon this, groping his way upward, was Piranesi himself. Follow the stairs a little farther, and you perceive them reaching an abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who should reach the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, at least you suppose that his labors must now in some way terminate. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Once again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is described; and there, again, is the delirious Piranesi, busy on his aspiring labors: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and the hopeless Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. With the same power of the endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. (pp. 249–50.)

We must not be disturbed by the factual imprecision of his details. This *Dungeons* is called *Fantasies*.

The movement of Piranesi down the stairs of his own fantasies is – inventions.

There is no sheet in the series *Dungeons* like the one described.

\* [Thomas De Quincy, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Routledge, London, 1905, p. 250 – HM.]

But the fact that the flights of stairs reflected the inner flight of the author himself – is obvious.

And it is not accidental that the combined memories of two poets – one about the etchings and the other of a story about them – embodied this thought into a real image of the author of the etchings running along the staircase passages.

There is also no evidence of visions of allegedly feverish delirium engraved on these sheets. And the reflection in them of states of real exaltation – is nothing more than a conjecture without any real basis. But an even more basic mistake is the designation of the hall as – Gothic.

This is not so much a mistake as the ecstasy of Piranesi caught quite precisely, an ecstasy expressed through an architectural image, particularly fully expressed in Gothic halls and cathedrals.

The scheme, device, formula, or method is particularly apparent when you see them applied not only in pure form, but also in parody.

Parody can be of two types.

Either both the theme and manner of its application are parodied – "made fun of" – and then parody is something attacking from the side.

Or a parody of the method (device, formula, scheme) arises when it is not the "manner" but the "theme" that is subjected to mockery. Then these means are in the hands of the author, and he uses them when, for example, to achieve persiflage [banter], "the insignificant" is raised to the height of *pathos*.

The application to the "insignificant" of the means of treating what is "valuable and significant" – in the incongruity of the story's content and form – by itself produces a mocking, comic result.

(Thus, for example, the comic "catalog" of Rabelais sounds as if it were a parody of Whitman, in its "patheticizing" the trifles of everyday life from the details of the childhood of the giant Gargannia.)

A similar case has arisen in my own experience.

It is interesting to note that it wedged itself into the middle of the shooting of *The Old and the New* (during suspended production) – that is, in the middle of shooting that very film in which the problems of *pathos* were refined.

This "case" is one of the scenes of the film *October* (produced in 1927).

This scene is the ascent of the head of the pre-October Provisional Government, Kerensky, up the Jordan Staircase of the Winter Palace, treated as an ironic symbol of his ascent to the peak of high power.

The "trick" of this scene (and its ironic effect) consisted in the fact that the same piece of the ascent of the chief up the marble staircase of the Winter Palace was joined together one after the other "without end." Of course, not really without end, but in the length of four or five retakes in which this scene was shot. During the shooting of what was a simple everyday "domestic" episode, it was conceived as being extremely...

II. *Pathos*

ironic in behavior – after his ascent up the staircase, Kerensky “democratically” shakes hands with the former tsar’s janitor, standing on the top landing of the staircase.

Already in the course of editing emerged the concept of a *pathos*-parody solution with the repeated shot of ascending the stairs.

Thus the exact same ascent piece is repeated four or five times.

Besides the “insignificance” of the object, an ironic effect is achieved by the fact that in the scheme of *pathos* construction – where a move (jump) from dimension to dimension, from piece to piece, is obligatory in the design of ecstasy – here not only were there no “jumps” of quality, but even no change in the piece itself.

From below Kerensky went up in one shot.

From below – up that same staircase – in the second.

From below up – in the third.

In the fourth.

In the fifth.

This absence of qualitative crescendo from piece to piece is emphasized by the fact that a crescendo of captions went into the cuts between these pieces and carried ranks of increasing importance, with which this pre-October toady of the bourgeoisie obligingly decorated himself.

“The minister of this,” “the minister of that,” “the president of the council of ministers,” “the commander-in-chief.”

And the repetition of the same method of depiction, in its turn, “invalidated” the crescendo of callings and ranks – reducing them to the level of that absurd ascent “to nowhere,” which the feet of the commander-in-chief, fettered by English-type leggings, tramped out on the marble stairs.

As we can see, by an essentially insignificant system of displacement, the *pathos*-filled ascent of Piranesi merges from the visions of De Quincey and Coleridge into the ironic marking time of Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky.

“From the sublime to the ridiculous – is one step.”

In the essence of the phenomenon as well as in the principles of its compositional embodiment!

Thus, this example throws light on our basic principle from yet one more angle of scrutiny.

From the position of ironic parody construction.

The “significance” and meaning of those very forms flowing into each other – architectural forms that belong to a system of more stable objects of nature organized by man, has already been discussed by us above.

[ . . . ] However, let us go back even further, back for just a moment, and again compare what Piranesi does in his classical *Carceri* with what Giesecke calls the *Ur-Carceri*.

The merging of these two variants is extremely remarkable. One

and the same technical compositional device is in them absolutely everywhere.

For the already existing variant (see, for example, in Giesecke the reproductions of both variants of the title page or the page with the powerful monumental staircase with armor, helmets, and flags at its foot), Piranesi definitely draws new foregrounds.

These new foregrounds are hurled one more step into the depths by planes of the deepening conglomeration of forms.

Even without this, the very composition of the architectural ensembles is built on the continuously diminishing and contracting repetitions of one and the same architectural motif, which (in terms of perspective) appear to thrust themselves out of each other.

Literally stretching lengthwise, reduced to the diameter of a single telescope tube, these diminishing arches, engendered by the arches of a plane brought closer, these flights of stairs, these progressively diminishing new stair landings bursting upward, plunge into the depths. Bridges engender new bridges. Columns – new columns. Vaults – vaults. And so on – ad infinitum. As far as the eye will allow you to follow.

Raising the intensity of the engravings from variant to variant, Piranesi, while adding new foregrounds, seems to push even more into the depths, yet one more stage deeper, the whole fugue created by him of volumes and spaces consecutively plunging deeper, joined and intersected by the stairs.

Plane bursts out of plane and like a system of explosions, plunges into the depths.

Or, through a system of continuously arising new foregrounds replacing them, it thrusts forward from the sheet of the etching advancing on to the viewer.

Forward or into the depths? – Isn’t it all the same here? And in this simultaneity of opposing thrusts – forward or into the depths – one more pair – a pair of opposites – is again triumphantly shot in ecstasy!

As we can see, not only in a scheme of finished construction, but even in the method of the process of construction itself, “pushing out” from plane to plane.

It is necessary to stop here for a moment and say a few words about the significance of perspective reduction.

Its role in Piranesi is twofold.

First of all, the common one – illusion-spatial perspective, that is – “drawing” the eye into the imagined depth of space, which is represented according to the rules of how it was used to seeing receding distances in actual reality.

But there is something else – “second.”

In Piranesi perspectives are constructed in a very unique way.

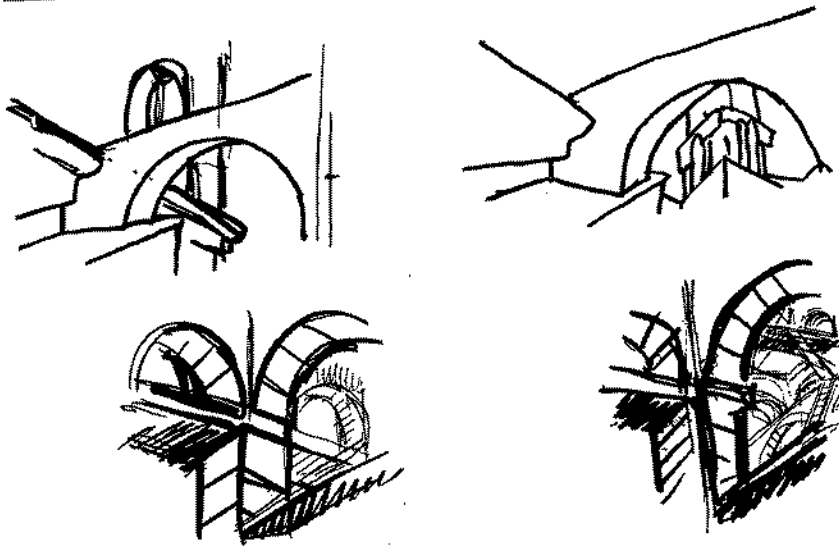


Figure 11. Four sketches by Eisenstein analyzing Piranesi's *Dungeon*.

And their basic uniqueness lies in their inherent interruptions and leaps.

Nowhere in *Dungeons* do we find an uninterrupted perspective view into the depths.

But everywhere an initial movement of plunging into the depths through perspective is interrupted by a bridge, column, arch, or passage.

Each time the perspective movement is caught up again behind a similar column or semicircular arch.

But it is not in this perspective key, but in a new one – usually in a considerably reduced scale of representation than you would expect or wish to suggest.

This gives a double effect.

A direct one, which is manifested in the fact that such a reduced representation through a break in an arch, or from under a bridge, or between two columns, gives the illusion of the extremely great remoteness of what is represented in the distance.

But even stronger is the second effect.

We have already said that the scale of these new pieces of architectural space seem to be different from what the eye "would expect" to see.

In other words: The size and movement of the architectural elements striving, let us say, to meet an arch, finish by drawing their scale behind the arch in a natural way, that is, the eye expects to see behind the arch a

continuation of the architectural theme in front of the arch, reduced in a normal way through perspective.

Instead of this, another architectural motif looks through the arch at it, but moreover – this motif, in terms of perspective reduction, is approximately twice as large as the eye would suppose.

And as a result there is the feeling that the suggested arched structure seems to "explode" out of the naturally suggested scale into a qualitatively different scale – into a scale of heightened intensity (in the given case – exploding "out of itself" from the normally presumed spatial recession).

From this arises the unexpected qualitative leap in scale and space.

And the series of spatial depths, cut off from each other by columns and arches, are constructed as disconnected links of independent spaces, strung together not according to the quality of uninterrupted perspective, but as a sequential collision of spaces with different qualitative intensities of depths.

(This effect is built on the ability of our eye to continue by inertia a motion that has once been set up. The collision of this "presumed" path of motion with the other path substituted for it gives the effect of a jolt. The phenomenon of cinematographic movement is also constructed on an analogous ability to retain the imprint of the viewer's impression.)

It is very curious that in certain features of this method, Piranesi corresponds to the "vertical" landscapes... of Chinese and Japanese painting (*kakemono*).

This is its scheme [see Figure 12].

Here also an amazing feeling of ascension is achieved.

But the nature of this "ascension" is very different from the examples of Piranesi.

If in Piranesi everything is – dynamics, whirlwind, the furious tempo of drawing one into the depths and into the interior, then here everything – is a calm and solemn ascent to the illuminated heights.

Both this and the other model in their emotional effect go beyond the limits of the usual realistic effect.

The first – by passionate intensity.

The second – by lucidity.

In them it seems the active aggressiveness of Western ecstasy was imprinted (Spanish, Italian) in contrast to the ecstatic quietism<sup>116</sup> of the East (India, China).

It is interesting to compare the different means by which these effects were achieved, different in nature but similarly ecstatic in relation to the "normal" course of effect on things.

The attempts of the Italian are directed with full force to making out of the flat surface of the engraving a truly captivating three-dimensional body.





Figure 12. Eisenstein's schematic analysis of "vertical" landscape in Chinese art.

The attempt of the Chinese – to make out of three-dimensional reality – a two-dimensional image of contemplation.

This is the source of the representational canons – the extreme perspective of one and – the reverse perspective in the other.

Common to both – is the interruption of the continuity of representation done in an identical sequential manner.

In Piranesi the continuity of perspective is broken by columns, arches, and bridges.

In Choko and Yosa Buson<sup>117</sup> the fusion of representation is simply interrupted or "motivated" by streaks of clouds.

After each such interruption or layer of clouds that slipped through, the next representational element of landscape (a mountain mass) is again not given in the scale dictated by an effect of real recession.

But, in contrast to Piranesi, here the new element turns out to have been unexpectedly decreased, but also unexpectedly increased (also exactly twice as much!):

not:



but:



The volume of the object (the mountain ridge) also is "beside itself" in relation to the presumed scale.

But this is a leap not in an increase of the range between the normal size of details in perspective, but on the contrary – in a decrease of this range.

In the diagram below it is apparent what is happening in both cases.

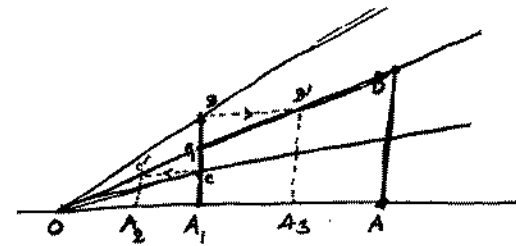
Let the real perspective reduction of the object  $AB$  at the point  $A_1$  be expressed through  $A_1B_1$ .

Piranesi at this point depicts it in measure  $A_1C$  (i.e.,  $A_1C < A_1B_1$ .)

Consequently the "jump is more powerful, and the illusory sense of depth is greater, and the eye, carrying point  $A_1$  to  $A_2$ , plunges into the depths.

The Chinese at the same point  $A_1$  represent the object in the dimension of  $A_1D$  (where  $A_1D > A_1B_1$ ).

The jump between  $AB$  and  $A_1D$  is less than the normal perspective interval  $AB - A_1B_1$ , and the eye, bringing point  $A_1$  to  $A_3$ , stretches it forward into the plane.



As a result both cases have an ecstatic effect, going beyond the limits of a simple true reflection of the appearance of phenomena.

But they are characterized in a different (opposite) way: One serves as the expression of the pantheistic quietism, characteristic of the ecstatic contemplation of the East; the other expresses the "explosiveness" typical of "active" ecstasy – one of the proclivities of "Western" ecstasy. (This certainly does not mean that the East is unaware of the fanatic ecstasy of the dervishes or of Shakhshy-Bakhshy, and Spain – of the mystical ecstasies of St. John of the Cross<sup>118</sup>; or that the works of Fra Beato Angelico<sup>119</sup> do not correspond to the Bodhisattva<sup>120</sup> of India or the Mongol demons with the works of El Greco. This division, of course, is quite "conventional.")

Quietism tries to bring opposites together by *dissolving them into each other*. Hence the reduced scope of the difference in size repeats this, returning and bringing the explosive jumps to a single smooth flow.

The other type of ecstasy acts in a different way: Maximally intensifying each of the opposites, it tries at the highest point of this

intensification to force them to *penetrate each other*, thereby raising their shattering dynamism to the highest pitch.

The present section of this work is basically devoted to this type. Attention is given to quietism in another chapter in this collection – in *Nonindifferent Nature*.

This method of capturing the depths of space is close to me because of my own work on the shot.

It is interesting that this method has been most distinctly formulated in *The Old and the New*, and its most extensive application occurs in the set designs for *Ivan the Terrible*, promoting the effect of the "gigantness" of the interiors. I wrote about the significance of the different scales in relation to the theme of Ivan in *Izvestiya* (Feb. 14, 1945) in connection with the premiere of the first series of the film. And it was probably not accidental that I referred to their size not by a static term, but by a term reflecting the dynamic conception of "growing size," "rising" vaults, etc. The feeling put into them of the obsession and exaltation of the theme achieved by the author appears through the terminology.

This method consists of the fact that the "set design proper" for my shots never in itself exhausts the real "place of action."

Most often this set design proper seems to be a "spot in the background," which appears through a system of foregrounds placed like "wings" attached endlessly in front of it, driving this set design proper further and further into the distance.

In my work set designs are inevitably accompanied by the unlimited surface of the floor in front of it, allowing the bringing forward of unlimited separate foreground details; and a collection of just such details: portable columns, parts of vaults, stoves, piers, or objects of everyday use.

The last point in this method is the close-up of the actor carried beyond all thinkable limits. Over the actor's shoulder is put the whole space in which can be outlined the set design with all its substructures, and the back of whose neck covers that part of the studio that can no longer be fettered by the insufferable details of the "place of action."

This "ecstatic" method of construction of set designs according to a scheme... based on the telescope, is not limited in my work to the area of the visual and plastic.

As in all other "schemes" of ecstatic construction, this also occurs in my work in the dramatization.

If in respect to *Potemkin* and *The General Line*<sup>121</sup> we touched on a "transference into the opposite" within the course of the drama itself, and in *The Old and the New* the very pivot of the action consisted in such a transference from the "old" to the "new," then in another epic-drama case we are dealing with a pure scheme of phases of a developing historical

subject that consecutively – "like a crossbow" – eject each other.

It is in just this way that the scheme of the film about the Fergansky Canal was constructed, which we planned with P. A. Pavlenko<sup>122</sup> right after *Alexander Nevsky*, but, unfortunately, it was not realized.

I conceived it as a triptych of the struggle of man for water.

Three phases:

Tamerlane,\*

Tsarism,

The kolkhoz [collective farm] system.

How should one connect in a dynamic unity three similar epochs standing apart from each other by centuries and decades?

Here the device turns out to be the "triple crossbow" separated in the tempo of narration – the double transference beyond oneself arranged in retrospective sequence.

The first link.

The epic-lay deployment of Tamerlane's campaigns and Urcheng's sieges passed by.

And its tragic finale flowed together into an image of an old man, the narrator Tokhtasyn, singing about these times of yore.

The figure of the old man closed the first link.

And the singing old man opened

the second link.

It narrated – no longer in primordial forms but in common, everyday forms – the tone of battle for a centimeter of an irrigation ditch of Central Asia impoverished under the tsars, a battle, replacing the scope of the campaigns of medieval titans, that drove hundreds of thousands of soldiers against each other, draining rivers from besieged cities, fighting each other by depletions and by the influx of water that drowned the besieging armies.

In the unequal battle with the bey [Turkish governor] and the tsarist official, the old singer abandoned his native Central Asia after having begun the mournful page of this story with his song.

The daughter was taken away by a merchant and bey "for a debt."

Along with the father, the meditator and nonresistor to evil, the young son broke away, leaving for the liberation movement.

And the old man dragged himself into the Iranian foothills, far away from the people.

But even this episode turned out to be a narrative: not a song of the past, but a tale around a campfire.

\* ["In 1395 Moscow barely escaped invasion by the army of one of the greatest conquerors of history, Tamerlane, who had spread his rule through the Middle East and the Caucasus... Tamerlane's forces actually devastated Riazan and advanced upon Moscow, only to turn back to the steppe before reaching the Oka River" (N. Riazanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1970, p. 11) – HM.]

The tale of an engineer-builder, one of the participants of the unprecedented construction of the Fergansky Canal.

The engineer was that same young man – the son of Tokhtasyn, who had left his father – but the "second link" of the film was the story of how, passing through the revolution, he came to the Fergansky construction.

And his story opened the third link of the epic narration.

The third link, beginning with his tale, unfolded a new monumental fresco of new campaigns by masses in the thousands, but no longer in the form of a battle against each other, but in that unique battle that remains the lot of a man freed from exploitation, freed from the chains of slavery, a man creating Communist society\* – a battle with the elements, a victory over nature, a subjection of the natural forces to the creative genius of free man.

In the fury of this construction, the lively Tokhtasyn returned from the Iranian foothills and met his son in the joyful moment when the water begins to flow . . .

In the epic structure of this film, as if in slow motion, that same telescopic structure slowly unfolds that, in its springlike, instantaneous leap from phase to phase, we saw in the action of the ecstatic effect in preceding examples.

#### [Examples of ecstasy]

At this point I remember an amusing incident that may serve as a transition to the next section of examples of ecstasy.

My general conception of the *pathos* composition, as it has been discussed here, had been developed long before.

And even if it had not been worked out at once in all its aspects, still its basic elements had been studied in such detail that even thirty years later I included it in a course of lectures on how a director composes a film of *pathos*.

I remember how, after one of those lectures – I think it was in 1933 – concerning the ecstatic leap within a composition of *pathos*, one of my audience came up to me, Comrade D., and with a sly grin mysteriously communicated to me: "Sergei Mikhailovich, I bet you couldn't guess what inventions your lecture made me think of?"

He shook his head even more mysteriously at a question about the details of this improbable invention (as to the shape of his head, it was

\* [I read these words now with tragic irony, for the Fergansky Canal, along with the White Sea Canal and other "socialist" constructions of the Five Year Plans, were in the main built with slave labor from Gulag, as documented by A. Solzhenitsyn. Perhaps that was the real reason Stalin forbade the making of yet another Eisenstein film – HM.]

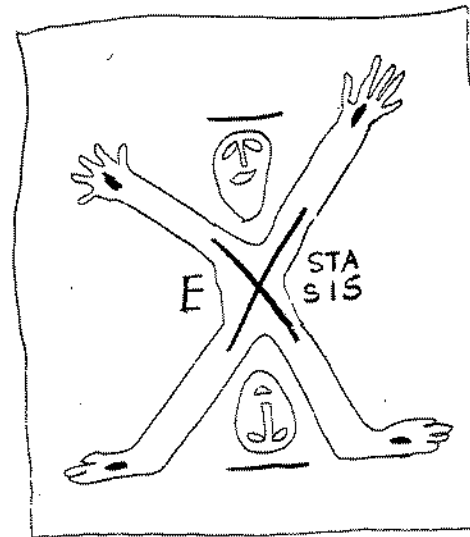


Figure 13. Eisenstein's drawing (Mexico, c. 1930) showing *ex stasis* (=pathos).

somewhere in between the head of a tapir and a dolphin, and the profile seemed to resemble the beak of a parrot, if such a beak could impetuously puff up from a terrible attack of a cold; add a small, extremely lively black eye to this . . . though what does his appearance matter to you?!)

Comrade D. refused to divulge his secret to me, but promised to confess his ideas in a few days.

In several days he really did come up to me again, but with an embarrassed look rather than a mysterious one.

The invention turned out to be a fiasco.

It turns out that the contents of my lecture on ecstasy made him think of . . . a rocket missile system of consecutive ejections of one rocket out of another.

He rushed over with this idea to someone in the military department.

However, there they calmed him down, saying that something of the sort had already been investigated there and was well known.

What it was exactly and to what degree – is unknown.

Later something of the sort really seemed to have been adopted in the Finnish campaign, judging by a chance tale, somewhat confused, of one of the participants of the battles in Finland.

In general, rocket missiles of the "chain" type seemed to have been adopted for practice even in World War II.

It is quite probable that the principle of the rocket missile is actually quite ancient, and there is an opinion that even in 1232 the Chinese used

such missiles against the attacking Mongols. Since the fourteenth century this missile was widespread in Europe. But definitely since 1850 – when the perfection of precise aim increases – the missiles of the rocket type being imprecise in this regard, disappear from practice and from the area of any theoretical interest.

The honor of a new revival and wide application of this principle in World War II belongs to the Soviet Union, which, since 1941, brought down on the German invaders a massive series of rockets from our multirocket projector (nicknamed *Katusha*).

The Germans are building their "V-2" according to this principle. England and later the United States have been diligently studying the discoveries made in this area during the war. The new intensification of interest in the idea of a rocket missile now depends on what this missile would be like if freed from the action of the so-called recoil – the reverse push that unavoidably is produced by each common artillery missile on the weapon ejecting it. This lack of recoil makes the rocket principle particularly valuable under conditions of firing missiles of great destructive power from relatively light and unsteady structures (light airplanes or small sea units).

But I have no particular interest in the "simple" rocket missile – or if I have, it is only because the "beautiful" here is in the initial active principle being taken in reverse or the "impeding" principle of the "normal" type of artillery. The principle of recoil is what should be taken as the active basis, transported from the area of counteraction into the principle of action itself; the power impetus is directed totally to the side, and, figuratively speaking, "the cannon" is reversed with its back to the opponent and strikes at him by means of the infinitely increased power of recoil aimed in his direction.

Thus the significance of the common expression, "cannon go to battle backwards,"\* is reversed from the image of where to strike the enemy, into a new phase more shattering in its blow! This almost recalls a similar paradox in the area of agricultural industry.

It is well known what a scourge the locust is.

But it is also well known what a great bearer of fatty tissue is this pest, which utterly devours the crops, grain, and earthly vegetation.

This fat forces steam engines to skid helplessly on the rails covered with the squashed little bodies of locusts.

And during my stay in Mexico they told me about an incident that took place in South America, where it turns out in certain districts it was more profitable to process the fatty substance of the locust (which was not allowed to develop to the stage of being able to fly) than to try to save the carelessly sown and unsown fields.

\* ["*Pushki k boyu stali zadom*," a Russian idiomatic expression – HM.]

A comparison of a military-technical incident with an incident from the biological-zoological field (where else could you find a similar use of locusts?!) is quite normal at this point, when spheres of principles previously rigidly opposing each other are closely connected, spheres that lie at the basis of physics and biology, the treatment of inorganic phenomena of nature, which merge with the norms of the organic kingdom of nature, etc.

This will be discussed below.

But even now it is curious to note that the rocket movement of missiles whose application clearly has a broad future has as its most profound "prototype" a phenomenon that is purely biological and, one might add, in its earliest stages of development.

Doesn't it seem that this principle is completely "copied" from the characteristics of the first steps on the path of independently moving *shifts* of the so-called Brownian movement in colloids?

This is how John Yerbury Dent describes the scheme of how molecules of living protoplasm shift:

Now let us imagine this catalyst as a compound with a big molecule: It has the attributes and behaviour of a colloid – that is, it is big enough to be comparatively stable in an environment of vibrating smaller molecules, yet small enough to be jostled by them. It exhibits what is called Brownian movement. We also must picture this molecule as being able to absorb and combine with certain molecules which we may consider its food, and able to break down at the other end of its molecular chain, giving out molecules as its waste products. This large molecule is impinged upon on all sides by other molecules but, it is able to absorb some of them. It is not displaced by the molecules it absorbs, and it suffers some recoil from the molecules it discharges; in other words, it moves towards its food and away from its waste products. It has developed another of the attributes of life. It is quite possible to picture all movement of protoplasmic molecules in this way. The direction is governed by the absorption of some molecules and the discharge of others.\*

However, let us return to the type of rocket missile my lecture on "the formula of ecstasy" inspired Comrade D.

It is quite apparent that such a "formula" applied to the treatment of increasing speed of the missiles (or flying machines) must definitely take into account the normal limits of speed, just as the flight of ecstasy must regard the conditions of normal emotion, and as *pathos* must regard – simple uplift.

And it cannot be that technical thought – so skillfully using the "ecstasy" of transferring certain forms of energy into others, provoking "explosions" by a definite form of composed mixtures, which are

\* John Yerbury Dent, *The Human Machine*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1937, p. 7.

transferred into the gaseous state, etc. – would not use such a construction so distinctly ecstatic, increasing the speed of flight.

It is curious that this idea was not applied in the prewar period, that it also was not used during the war; the first (in any case, published) data on a serious introduction of a similar idea into new technology appears only at the height of the period of postwar existence, when the world, hardly yet reestablished, already has begun what devilishly looks like preparations for a new war.

Thus, only by June 1948, – judging by the information from the mid-year congress of members of the American Society of Engineers and Mechanics in Chicago – similar experiments and a practical treatment of the application of this principle became a reality.<sup>123</sup>

It is interesting that the data in this direction go from the more crude and superficial applications of the ecstatic formula to the most refined areas, connected not only with constructions of new flying devices, but with a revision of the conception of the actual physical structure of matter, giving practical results that force you to observe "in a new aspect" a whole series of positions of theoretical physics that had appeared to be stable and indestructible.

Thus, Colonel Philip B. Klein, a staff member of Major Air Command of American aviation (the Air Material Command), describes the simplest possible of these aspects – the rocket plane, which is ejected from a "flying" airwomb rushing at full speed. According to his statements, such an experimental rocket plane (XS-1), ejected from the "womb" of a B-29, as shown in the test in California, is close to achieving the speed of sound.

Up until now, still not having tested to the full capacity of the power available to it, this rocket plane XS-1 and the model following it apparently confront one major difficulty – the inability of the pilot's reflexes to function in similar circumstances. This forces Colonel Klein to direct the attention of engineers and designers to the fact that in the future they must invent "something of a type" that would completely free the work of controlling similar apparatus, by means going far beyond the limits of functions conceivable for man.

More interesting and precise in construction – and, I might add, solved inwardly completely according to the "ecstatic prescription" – are the so-called space rockets on which M. J. Zucrow, professor at Purdue University, reported.

Part of the problem concerns the realization of flights, totally beyond the limits of the atmosphere, encircling the earth, and into regions free from the earth's gravity. In order to launch similar rockets, it turns out that it is not necessary to wait ages for man to master the control of atomic energy. It is possible to solve this problem by means of that same fuel (liquid oxygen is a component) on which the rocket planes

XS-1 work, if at the basis of the construction principle one puts the "multistep" principle, according to which a system of tandem rocket motors acts like a consecutive "chain," ejecting the "head one" forward – into space. The difficulty in its practical realization is still the high temperature (5,000 or more degrees Fahrenheit) to which the chamber of the inner structure is subjected. If this difficulty is finally overcome, then the given construction completely ensures the possibility of passengers flying beyond the limits of the space directly surrounding our planet. . . \*

The third "deepening" of the principle – from an airplane ejected from an airplane, through a rocket ejected by a rocket, ejected by a rocket, ejected by a rocket, etc.<sup>1</sup> – to a fraction of the material ejected in an endless series of chain reactions of new particles flying out – carries us beyond the limits of the Chicago conference of the practitioners of rocket construction – into areas of the practical application of the atom, which is now so much obsessing the imagination of nations after the destructive action of the atom bombs dropped on Japan.

### The Gothic

Already several times in the course of this work the sharp profile of Gogol protruded through its colorful variety, as a shadow slipping through its separate sections. [ . . . ]<sup>125</sup>

It would be too simple and too easy to flood these pages with another sea of quotes, taken from well-known pages of *pathos* in his works, in which digressions "rear up" once in awhile in his poems, stories, or tales.

The "ecstatic" structure of them is distinct and clear everywhere.

And we will relate Gogol to our theme in more detail at this point.

In an area with which he wouldn't usually be associated.

Let us consider Gogol alongside of Piranesi. . .

In regards to . . . architecture.

This would appear to be strange and unexpected only if one forgets how many months Gogol spent in that same Rome that put Giovanni Battista's imagination in a fever.

Forgetting about those spiritual "prisons" through which Gogol drove his reader in "The Inferno" and "Purgatory" of the final parts of *Dead Souls*,<sup>126</sup> out of which he himself so desperately sought an escape into the light, like the figure of Piranesi conceived by Coleridge, rushing along the precipices of the passages and staircases of his own etchings.

\* I am describing these data according to a report on a conference in *Newsweek* of June 30, 1947.

<sup>1</sup> I treat this formula here in the manner of the "translanguage" of Gertrude Stein<sup>124</sup> because in the next section this will help us establish the "correspondence" between the material of this chapter and the next.

And having quite forgotten Gogol's wonderfully passionate enthusiasm for architecture.

And how Gogol perceives architecture and how he writes about it – probably the closest approximation of how Piranesi forces it to live and tremble in his etchings.

Namely, the way Gogol writes about architecture as a form of being beside oneself and as a form of transition of one form into another; in the *pathos* of his descriptions he reveals the ecstatic character of his nature, as well as a reflection in the very principles of architecture of those basic necessary strivings of our nature, which find their expression in architecture.

There are probably few who now reread the *Arabesques*. Even fewer readers linger over the article "On the Architecture of Our Time." Yes, and even I would have hardly glanced at it if it had not been put next to the article "A Few Words on Pushkin," which I needed for another, quite special occasion.

Therefore, this article should be discussed in detailed excerpts.

It is particularly characteristic that, of all the various types of architecture, the kind that is most attractive to Gogol is the architecture that is the most ecstatic – the Gothic.

Not in vain, Coleridge (and after him De Quincy), in defining the actual style of Piranesi's visions, turned to the term "Gothic hall." Incorrect in defining the true style of these halls, but quite correct in defining what Piranesi (ecstatically) does with these halls!

... No matter which kind of architecture it be – the smooth, monumental Egyptian, the huge and colorful architecture of the Hindus, the luxurious architecture of the Moors, the inspired and gloomy Gothic, the graceful Greek – all are good if they are suited to the specified construction; they will all be magnificent only when they are truly comprehended.

... If, however, one must give a definite preference to one of these architectural styles, then I would always give it to the Gothic. ...

... But it disappeared, this beautiful architecture! As soon as the enthusiasm of the Middle Ages was extinguished, the thought of man was dismembered and strove for a multiplicity of different aims; as soon as the unity and wholeness of the one disappeared, so did the grandeur as well. Its forces, once having been dismembered, became small: it suddenly produced a multiplicity of wonderful things in all shades and varieties, but no longer something grand, something gigantic. ...

... They passed – those centuries when faith, strong, ardent faith, directed all thoughts, all minds, all actions to one end; when the artist strove to raise his consciousness higher and higher toward heaven, to it alone he strained, and before it, almost in sight of it, he reverentially raised his praying hands. His building flew toward heaven; narrow windows, columns, vaults stretched infinitely toward the heights; transparent, almost lace-like spires like smoke appeared over them, and the magnificent temple was as great before the

common dwellings of the people as the demands of the soul were great before the demands of the body. ...

... Gothic architecture, that Gothic architecture which was formed before the end of the Middle Ages, is a phenomenon which the taste and imagination of man has never again produced. ... In it everything is unified together: this forest of vaults rising harmoniously high over your head, windows, huge and narrow, with numberless variations and intertwining, joined to this terrifying, colossal mass of the tiniest, most colorful decorations, this light web of carving, entangling it with its net, winding around it from the foot to the top of the spire and flying with it to the heavens; grandeur as well as beauty, luxury and simplicity, heaviness and lightness – these are the virtues which never, except for this period, were contained in architecture. Entering into the sacred darkness of this temple, through which the windows multicolored light peers fantastically, and raising your eyes upward, where lancet vaults lose themselves and intersect one over another, one over another, endlessly – it is quite natural to feel an involuntary terror in your soul at the presence of a female saint, whom the insolent mind of man dare not touch. ...

... Look more often at the famous Cologne Cathedral – there is all of its [Gothic – SME] perfection and grandeur. A finer monument was never produced by ancient or modern epochs. I prefer Gothic architecture because it allows the artist to engage in more revelry. The imagination strives more vividly and more ardently to height rather than breadth. And therefore one must use Gothic architecture only in churches and in high rising buildings. Lines and Gothic pilasters without cornices, close to each other, must fly through the whole structure. It is sad if they stand far apart from each other, if the building does not rise up to at least twice its height, if not triple! It then destroys itself. Raise it as it should be: so that its walls rise higher, higher, as high as possible,\* so that their numerous corner columns surround them more densely like arrows, like poplars, like pines! Let there be no cut, no break or cornice that would give another direction or would diminish the size of the building! So that they be equal from the foundations to the very summit! Huge windows, varied in form, more colossal than their height! More ethereal, lighter spires! So that the more everything rises upward the more it flies and penetrates. And remember the most important thing: there is no comparison of height and breadth. The word breath must disappear. Here there is one principle idea – height. †

Magnificent pages!

Magnificent in the feeling of the *pathos* of Gothic architecture.

\* Wasn't the cry of Plevako, so famous for its – pathetic quality, taken from here, which had resounded in the trial of the Mother Superior Mitrofanaya,<sup>127</sup> which, as is well-known, lay at the basis of the subject of A. N. Ostrovsky's *Wolves and Sheep*?

† N. V. Gogol, *On the Architecture of Our Time*, collected works in 6 volumes, vol. 6, Goslitizdat, Moscow, 1959, pp. 40–61. This article is cited later. [Victor Hugo, "Preface to *Cromwell*," also sees contrast as a mark of modern genius: "... it is of the fruitful union of the grotesque and the sublime types that modern genius is born – so complex, so diverse in its forms, so inexhaustible in its creations; and therein directly opposed to the uniform simplicity of the genius of the ancients." In G. Anderson and Robert Warnock, eds., Scott Foresman, *Tradition and Revolt*, Chicago, 1951, p. 356 – HM.]

And wonderful examples of the feeling for the characteristic features of *pathos* construction.

A basic significance that, in the given case, has the ardor of an idea. The flowing of all variety into the problem of expressing the unity of this idea.

The unity of opposites as a factor of its expression ("grandeur as well as beauty," "luxury and simplicity," "heaviness and lightness." At another place in his article Gogol writes: "The true effect is contained in sharp antitheses").

Repetition leading to infinity ("lancet vaults one over another... without end").

The leap from dimension to dimension ("so that their numerous corner columns surround them densely like arrows, like poplars, like pines"; "lace-like spires," coming out of the stone substance and, "like some," appeared over the building).

And in the statement itself about the features of the Gothic – there is a jump from description to direct authorial address to the reader: "Raise it... higher, as high as possible..." From an address to the reader – to direct command to the phenomena: "Let there be no break... So that they be equal... Huge windows... A more ethereal, lighter spire! So that everything would... fly and penetrate!"

And now, as if in ecstasy, we scan that same scale of gradations ejecting each other by which Gogol many years later achieved the description of the *pathos* flight of the "bird-troika" in *Dead Souls*.

But other pages of the article are variegated with that same type of dynamic exposition of the vivid movement of architectural forms.

Sometimes the exposition is ecstatically explosive, and the image of it resounds like a well-known figure (I will emphasize it in the text):

... A portico with columns... we also have lost: it did not occur to him to give it a colossal size, to push apart the whole width of the building, to raise it to its full height... Is it surprising that buildings, which they demanded be huge, seemed empty, because the pediments with columns were sculpted only over their porches...

... New cities have no form at all: they are so correct, so smooth, so monotonous that, after crossing one street and feeling bored, you reject any desire to look at another. These are a series of walls, and nothing more. Useless to try to find a viewpoint from which one of these continuous walls would at some point suddenly grow and explode into the air like a bold broken vault or would be ejected like some kind of tower-giant.

Sometimes the very form of the description slips into another system – a metaphoric system.

And then these descriptions take on a particular sensual charm, for the comparisons themselves are chosen by the marks of those external

prototypes of imitation or inner dynamic stimulants (the dance) that to a great extent determine the forms and rhythms, harmony and nature of architecture constructions:

In Gothic architecture what is most notable is the imprint, although somewhat unclear, of a tightly woven forest, gloomy, grand, where an axe has not rung out for centuries. These decorations, surging in interminable lines, and the nets of filigree carving, are nothing but a dark recollection of the trunk, branches and leaves of a tree...

And the building went beyond its stone limits, and the temple turned into a forest. But there is more – this is how the image of "the kingdom of Asiatic luxury" is drawn:

A huge Eastern dome – either totally round or curving like a delightful vase turned upside down, or in the shape of a sphere, or loaded, sculpted with carving and ornaments, like a rich mitre – reigns patriarchally over the entire building; below, at the very foot of the building, small domes go around its vast walls like a whole fence, and resemble obedient slaves. Slender minarets fly out on all sides, presenting the most charming contrast between its light, cheerful towers and the solemn, majestic appearance of the whole building. Thus a grand Mohammedan, in a wide robe decorated with gold and precious stones, reclines among the hours, slender, nude, and blinding in their whiteness...

The forms of the building come to life when combined with people.

Below it obedient slaves walk around it, its light minarets cluster around it like houris, and reposing in the center, its dome turned like the grand Mohammedan in a gold robe...

But even these transformations are not enough for the author.

By his will the architecture is forced to fuse into all possible variety of forms pouring into each other (he is discussing architectural cities):

Here the architecture must be as capricious as possible: it must take on a stern appearance, show a cheerful expression, breathe with antiquity, shine with novelty, spill over with fear, sparkle with beauty, be at one moment gloomy as a day seized by a storm full of thunderclouds, at the next as clear as a morning full of sunshine...

... Architecture is also the chronicle of the world, writes Gogol later, "it speaks when songs and legends have already become silent and when nothing speaks any longer of the nation which perished..."

And probably the most dynamic picture of the constant transition of architectural forms into each other, which his imagination draws for him, can be found in... a footnote to the same article:

... A very strange thought occurred to me earlier: I thought it would not be a bad idea to have one street in a city which would contain an architectural chronicle, so that it would begin with heavy, gloomy gates, and on passing through them the viewer would see on both sides grand buildings rising high of a wild, primeval

taste common to pre-historic peoples, and then a gradual shift of it into different forms: a great metamorphosis into the colossal, full of simplicity, the Egyptian, then into great beauty – the Greek, then into the sensual Alexandrian and Byzantine with low domes, then into the Roman, with several rows of arches; later descending again to wild periods and then suddenly rising to unusual luxury – in the Arabic; then to wild Gothic, then Gothic-Arabic, then pure Gothic, the crown of art breathing in Cologne Cathedral, then a terrible confusion of architecture, proceeding from a return to the Byzantine, then the ancient Greek in new costume, and, finally, the whole street would terminate in gates which would contain elements of a new style...

The perception of this formation of new types of architecture as a single stream of different varieties flowing into each other is manifested the whole time in the words in which this strange vision is described ("a gradual shift... into different forms," "a metamorphosis... into the Egyptian," "then into great beauty – the Greek," "then into the sensual Alexandrian," "descending again to wild periods," "then suddenly rising," etc. – all this characterizes these changes as a single stream, as single forms "metamorphosizing" into others, "descending" from some to others and "rising" from some to others.\*

However, what is probably most striking in this whole article is how Gogol, with the true insight of a seer, "distills" from a conglomeration of models of past architecture and contemporary architecture – a rough sketch of models of future architecture.

Meanwhile, he seems to have "guessed" ... the skyscraper (although of medium height) when he drops remarks about houses placed on city hills ("One should observe that houses show their height one behind the other, so that it would seem to one standing at the foot that a twenty-story mass was looking at him.").

Sighing very reasonably:

"Surely it isn't impossible to create (even for the sake of originality) completely original and new architecture, by-passing former conventions?..."

No less justly – even for our day! – he grieved:

"...Isn't it possible for us... to turn shattered bits of art into something grand? Must everything we meet in nature necessarily be only a column, a dome or an arch? How many other forms have still not been touched by us at all!... How many of these which not a single architect has yet entered into his codex!..."

In anticipation, Gogol mischievously throws in a concrete example at the end of the article:

\* At another point in the book I will bring in (for another reason) a description of a similar type of picture composed of the movement of changes in the appearance of women's fashion. It was written (in an ironic manner) by Jean Cocteau.<sup>128</sup> As we have seen, our Gogol, a good hundred years earlier, "outgalloped" the French wit of our time.

Let us take, for example, those hanging decorations which have recently begun to appear. So far, the hanging architecture only appears in theater boxes, balconies, and in small bridges.

But if whole storeys hang out,  
if daring arches are hurled one after another,  
if whole masses instead of heavy columns find themselves on castiron supports,

if a house is hung over from top to bottom with balconies decorated with castiron rinceau banisters,  
and in thousands of different forms, castiron decorations hanging from them envelop it with their light net,  
and it will look through them, as through a transparent veil,  
when these castiron rinceau decorations, twined around a pretty, circular tower, fly with it to the sky,  
what lightness, what aesthetic etherealness would our homes acquire then!

Once Andrey Bely struck his readers by a quote from *Nevsky Prospect* that anticipates Picasso.<sup>129</sup>

But somehow even Bely saw that Gogol had anticipated Le Corbusier's ideas about a house on tree trunks;<sup>130</sup> and if his idea of "the transparency" of architecture was solved, not by his castiron "transparent veils," but by... glass, then – it was the glass of the American (Frank Lloyd Wright), "father of transparent houses,"<sup>131</sup> and the conception of his "beautiful tower" – is Tatlin's tower.<sup>132</sup>

It is also interesting how, here in Gogol, a separate tiny detail (hanging theater boxes, balconies, small bridges) develops into a new form of an unprecedented whole.

And how he has become aware by himself of this feature and potential. And now he considers this feature and potential to be inherent in the creator and poet:

"But what a multitude of hints about everything exist, capable of engendering an extremely unusual and vivid idea in the head of an architect, if only this architect be a creator and poet."

And this was all written in – 1831!

### Superconcreteness

[...] We discovered a certain "formula" according to which works of *pathos* are constructed.

We found an extremely clearcut condition for that state, in which all elements and features of a given work must be or appear, in order that the *pathos* effect of the whole be achieved (this condition was the ecstatic state of all its elements – a state that presumes the continuous spasmodic transition from quantity to quality as well as a series of other features).



89 Maurice Barres (1862–1923), French writer, author of the book *El Greco ou le Secret de Tolèdes*, (1912).

90 *This picture exists in four variants*. Actually there are seven canvases of *The Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple* attributed to El Greco and several copies from his studio. It may be that he had in mind the four with the greatest variations from each other.

91 *Laocoon*, the painting by El Greco, created in 1606–10 (preserved in the National Gallery, Washington); *The Lifting of the Fifth Seal*, see note 88; *The Concert of Angels in the Clouds*, detail (upper part) of the El Greco painting *The Annunciation* (1593, Bilbao Museum, Spain).

92 ... makes such an astonishing and exciting *Storm over Toledo*. In a section of *Nonindifferent Nature* Eisenstein analyzes in detail the principle of the "pathetication" of landscape in the painting *Storm over Toledo*.

93 Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531), Italian painter of the Renaissance, representative of the Florentine school.

94 ... contrast the Renaissance and Baroque. Eisenstein has in mind the book by the German art critic Henrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) *The Renaissance and the Baroque*.

95 Donato Bramante (1444–1514), Italian architect of the Renaissance, designer of the Milan cathedral and others. In 1504 began to work on a project for St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome.

96 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), Italian engraver and architect. Author of an enormous quantity of engravings, the themes of which are ancient and modern (for Piranesi) Rome and grandiose architectural fantasies. See G. B. Piranesi *Carceri*, Origo Verlag, Zurich, Switzerland, 1958. In the next chapter Eisenstein analyzes two engravings of Piranesi from his cycle *Fantasy on the Theme of Dungeons* (1745–50 and 1761.)

97 Alexandre Nikolayevich Benois (1870–1960), Russian artist, theater designer, art historian, head of the World of Art Group (Mir Iskusstvo), Petersburg. Eisenstein quotes from his *History of Painting of all Times and Peoples*.

98 This chapter does not have a title. Here is a note about it dated July 4, 1947, in which Eisenstein writes: "Strictly speaking the second theme in every chapter is or should be stamped out. Along the lines of "Helen or the Rescue of the Virtuous": "Piranesi or the Flux of Form."

99 Daniel Marot (1663–1752), French engraver and theater artist.

100 Gérard Edelinck (1640–1707), French engraver, master of metal engraving.

101 William Hogarth (1697–1764), English painter, engraver, and art theoretician, author of the well-known treatise *The Analysis of Beauty*.

102 Robert Nanteuil (1623–78), French engraver and draughtsman.

103 Claude Mellan (1598–1678), French engraver and draughtsman.

104 Jacques Callot (1592–1635), French engraver and draughtsman, whose basic works are considered his *Balli* (1629), *Capriccio* (1617–23) *The Disasters of War* (1623–33). Callot's two engravings "The Temptation of St Anthony" relate to 1615 and 1635.

105 ... the stair case, hurled from one world to another... *the Biblical legend of Jacob's dream*, see *Genesis*.

106 Next – the young Picasso, Gleizes, Metzinger. The French artist Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) declared: "Everything in nature is designed in the form of a

sphere, cone, cylinder; one must learn to draw these simple figures, and if you are able to master these forms, you can do anything, you want." (*Masters of Art on Art*, Vol. III, Iskusstvo, Moscow–Leningrad, 1939, p. 219). With this formula Cézanne expressed the task of one school of twentieth-century painting – cubism, the program of which was laid down by the French artists Albert Gleizes (1881–1953) and Jean Metzinger (1883–1956) in Gleizes and Metzinger, *On Cubism*, Unwin, London, 1913.

107 "No – you!" In his monumental painting *Guernica* Picasso reflected the barbarous destruction of the city of Guernica by the German and Italian fascists during the Spanish civil war (1936–9).

108 *At the basis of the composition of its ensemble... lies that same 'dance' that is also at the basis of the creation of music, painting, and cinematic montage*. (This statement refutes the accusations of certain critics that Eisenstein transfers mechanically the laws of one art into another. In fact... Eisenstein seeks for the general aesthetic laws governing each form of art's specific shaping of expression, but in principle universal for all systems of art. [Russian ed. note])

109 *Trianon*, a palace in Versailles decorated with frescoes and sculptures in the Rococo style.

110 *Gopurams*, the great gateways of Indian temples, richly ornamented with sculptures. Alongside of realistic representations of animals are also figures of fantastic monsters, several of which Eisenstein describes.

111 Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810–91), famous American circus entrepreneur, whose touring circus covered America and Europe.

112 *Uxmal*, one of the ancient cities of Yucatan, founded in 897–1007.

113 Thomas De Quincy (1785–1859), English writer, author of essays on Shakespeare, Milton, etc., and author of the famous *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821).

114 William Wordsworth (1770–1850), English poet.

115 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1824), English poet. Like De Quincy, Coleridge was a dope addict and his famous poem *Kubla Khan* was written under the influence of opium.

116 *Quietism*, a complicated religious movement that swept through France, Italy, and Spain during the seventeenth century. Quietism was essentially a reaction against the bureaucratic ecclesiasticism of the Roman Catholic Church. Its chief apostle was Miguel de Molinos who was eventually condemned as a heretic by the Inquisition and imprisoned for life. Eisenstein deals with the aesthetic expression of Eastern "quietism" – the contemplative philosophy of ancient India and China – in *Nonindifferent Nature* (see present volume, p. 216)

117 *Yosa Buson* (1716–83), Japanese artist and poet.

118 *St. John of the Holy Cross*, Eisenstein means Juan de la Cruse (1542–91), a Spanish poet-mystic, known as the Doctor Ecstatic and posthumously relegated to sainthood.

119 *Fra Beato Angelico* (Guido di Pietro) (1387–1455), Italian artist of the Florentine epoch of the Renaissance.

120 *Bodhisattva*, one of the incarnations of Buddha.

121 *The General Line*, the title of the first version of Eisenstein's film *The Old and the New* that was intended to show the general line of the Communist Party in agriculture. [See my other two books *Masters of Soviet Cinema*, Routledge

Kegan Paul, Boston, 1983; and *Immoral Memories*, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1983.

122 Peter Andreyevich Pavlenko (1899-1951), Russian Soviet writer and script-writer. Together with Eisenstein wrote the script of *Alexander Nevsky* (1938). [See *Masters of Soviet Cinema*, op. cit. p. 40, 216-17 - HM.]

123 Eisenstein is working here with data from the American press that he had at hand. The principle of the multistage rocket predicted by K. E. Tsiolkovsky was realized in practice in the following years of Soviet and Western astronautics.

124 Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), American author, representative of modernism, author of the books *Three Lives*, *The Autobiography of Alice Toklas*, and others. She had a significant influence on the formation of the style of the young Hemingway.

125 Later in the manuscript, Eisenstein says: "At another point we will briefly touch on the technique of *pathos* in which the famous passage of the 'bird-troika' of *Dead Souls* was constructed in terms of composition. In a third passage the governor thumbs his nose at himself in *Dead Souls*." However, in the manuscript *pathos* does not turn out to be among the examples enumerated here. In Tsgali (The Central State Archives of Literature and Art of the USSR), the sketched plan has been preserved, precisely pointing out the content and passage, in the research on *pathos*, of two unfinished fragments on *Dead Souls* by Gogol:

10 June, 1947. "Gogol and Pathos." "Bird-Troika."

A Gogol "Bird-troika."

- i Chichikov in the troika.
- ii The troika in general.
- iii Only a smart people could invent it.
- iv "Aren't you, too, Rus, a smart unsurpassable troika..." (formula of the atomic bomb)

10 June, 1947. Kislovodsk.

B Gogol. The formula of Whitman-Chichikov and the register of dead peasants (Vol. I, chap. VII). Right after and as a consequence of *The Covetous Knight* (Tsgali, f. 1923, op. 1, #1044).

126 *Inferno and Purgatorio*, the names, respectively, of the first and second parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Eisenstein hints here at Gogol's conception of *Dead Souls*. The Russian literary scholar D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, in characterizing this conception, wrote that the great poem of Gogol "had to first portray everything that was bad and dark" in the nature of Russian man, and then reveal the good inclinations hidden in it, and finally, to show Rus the way to rebirth, to a better future... The story about the adventures of Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov turned into a poetic contemplation of Rus "from a nice distance" into a mournful narration about northern Russian "darkness and the frightening lack of light," finally, into a moral-religious poem - about Russian "hell" (Part 1), "purgatory" (Part 2), and "heaven" (Part 3). Such was the conception inspiring *The Divine Comedy* of Dante, which Gogol never stopped rereading in Italy, where he also worked on *Dead Souls* (D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1. *Gogol*, GIZ, Moscow-Petrograd, 1923, pp. 32-3).

127 Fedor Nikiforovich Plevako (1843-1908), Russian lawyer and judicial orator. At the scandalous trial of the Mother Superior Mitrofanya, formerly the Baroness Rozen, who was connected by dark machinations to great speculators

and con men, Plevako shouted: "Higher, build higher the walls of the society that believes in you, so that the world won't see the deeds created by you under the cover of a cassock and cloister!"

128 Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), French writer, artist, theater director and film director, member of the French Academy. Cocteau's ironic passage on fashion is cited by Eisenstein in his study *Montage* (see Vol. II. *Selected Works*, pp. 398-9).

129 At this point in the manuscript Eisenstein made the mark of a footnote; however, he did not bring in the quote. At Tsgali the following excerpt from A. Bely's book *The Mastery of Gogol* has been preserved, marked "On... 'Gogol-Piranesi'."

"his (Gogol's S. E.) description of the city is the most urban of the urban: Paris: struck... by the gleam of streets, by the disarray of roofs, thick chimneys, unarchitectural, solid masses of houses, plastered with the dense raggedness of stores, the ugliness of bare... side walls, on the roofs... on chimneys, by the light transparency of the lower stories... from mirrors... Paris... craters, fountains, flashing sparks of news... under the fashion of petty... laws... A magic heap blazed... houses became transparent, etc. Rome." [It is interesting to note that S. M. Eisenstein worked in Hollywood on a filmscript called *The Transparent House*; see *Iskusstvo Kino (The Art of the Cinema)* - HM.]

"Gogol in a unique way sees the playing crowd of walls, as we see it from a streetcar: with a jump in the houses that open and close the perspective: 'Sidewalks bearing... carriages with galloping horses that seemed not to move, a bridge stretched out and broke... into an arch, a house stood with its roof below; a sentry-box came reeling towards him'" (*Nevsky Prospect*), A. Bely, *Mastery of Gogol*, Gos Izdkhudlit. Moscow-Leningrad, 1934. p. 309 (Tsgali, f. 1923, op. 130). In his well-known "Five Theses" the French architect Le Corbusier wrote: "In a structure one can separate the unessential from the essential. Instead of the former foundations on which a structure rested without a controlled calculation there appear calculated foundations, in the place of former walls - separate columns... They rise directly out of the earth to 3, 4, 6, etc. meters and bear the first story on this height. Thus, the building is saved from moisture, they have enough light and air, the building turns into a garden that passes under the house." (*Architecture of the Contemporary West*, M. Izogiz, ed., State Publishing House of Fine Arts, 1932, p. 40).

131 Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1961), American architect who had a great influence on the architecture of the twentieth century. The basic principles of Wright's work are a rejection of decorative stylization, the substitution of a flat facade for "three-dimensional" architecture, the attempt to connect the house with the surrounding landscape. Proceeding from these principles, Wright applies glass extensively, alternates closed spaces with open terraces and squares, achieving the "transparency" of a building and its "synthesis" with nature.

132 Valdimir Evgrafovich Tatlin (1885-1952), Russian artist. In 1922 he created the project of the monument to the Third International in the form of a colossal tower created in the spirit of constructivism.

133 Galley, an ancient ship propelled by both oars and sails.

134 Helicopter, a plane that can fly vertically.

135 Gregorian chants sung in unison, the performance by a male choir singing