Justifiably, Petric regards Vertov as a major contributor to the Soviet avant-garde, and a primary exponent of the Constructivist conviction that "function determines form." As Petric makes clear, Vertov was one of the first movie-makers, in Russia or abroad, to use the art of cinema precisely as a new art without the weight of historical experience or preconceived visual formulae. Before Vertov's activities, most Russian movies continued to apply methods and attitudes borrowed from painting, sculpture, and architecture, especially the element of narration and narrativity, e.g., the idea that the work of art should be reportorial and didactic. As Petric demonstrates in his careful analysis of *Man with the Movie Camera*, Vertov declined to pay homage to these oppressive traditions, and made bold advances into the field of naked formal structure in which the exposition of device (montage, collage, zoom, close-up, displacement) is the real impetus behind the sequence of frames.

Few of the Constructivists, whichever discipline they favored (spatial constructions, architecture, design, dance) managed to reduce their art to such bare and startling elements as Vertov did. Petric discusses this in his sections on the "negation of narrative" and "shot composition and visual design," although perhaps he could have been more liberal with references to the Key Constructivist theorists of the time such as Boris Arvatov, Osip Brik, Aleksei Gan, and Nikolai Tarabukin. They were the authors whom the movie-makers read, and even though it is tempting to link Vertov with the literary Formalists, especially Boris Eikhenbaum and Viktor Shklovskii, the visual critics, above all, Gan, deserve a more visible place in the mosaic of critical and aesthetic influences.

The *Man with the Movie Camera* is unique in the boldness of its dislocations—and its inner fragmentations and rupture with the cinematic story. Petric argues, of course, that it is the very "disorder" of *Man with the Movie Camera* that makes it a truly revolutionary and avant-garde movie. It is also extraordinary in its flagrant rejection of the occult and the spiritual, thanks to its emphasis on the material culture of furniture, buildings, metal and glass. Vertov is also innovative in his brilliant application of what Petric calls "subliminal propulsion" and "onieric impact" and the intense game of image repetition and processing the predetermines the viewer's emotional and psychological perceptions. Petric's discussion of ideology and graphic patterns help us to understand the still unfamiliar talent of Vertov.

It is books such as *Constructivism in Film* that help us to recognize the artistic supremacy of the Russian avant-garde, and to realize, perhaps paradoxically, that this aesthetic condition transcended the political dictates of the October Revolution.

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Judith Mayne, *Kino and the Woman Question: Feminism and Soviet Silent Film*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. ix, 211 pp., illus. $25.00.

If readers turn to Judith Mayne's *Kino and the Woman Question* expecting new insights into the vexing issue of Bolshevism's complex and uneasy relationship with feminism (as well they might, given the title), they will be disappointed. If they turn to this book for fresh and provocative readings of the classic films of Soviet cinema's fabled "Golden Age," they will be richly rewarded.

Mayne, who is well-known in film studies circles, is a professor of French and Women's Studies at Ohio State University. It would appear from her source notes
that she does not read Russian, and it is apparent from her first chapter, in which she attempts to set the historical stage, that her understanding of Soviet politics, culture, and society in the 1920s is rudimentary at best. Mayne seems not to realize, for example, that the films she has chosen to analyze are exceptional works which form a very small and very discrete canon; they are not films which typify Soviet productions of the 1920s, as she implies in several places (see, e.g., pp. 12, 130).

Mayne's grasp of the "woman question" in its Soviet variant is also quite tenuous. She has pieced together her discussion of Russian feminism from the works of Linda Edmondson, Beatrice Farnsworth, Cathy Porter, and Richard Stites (Louise Bryant serves as a "first-hand" account) and focuses almost exclusively on Aleksandra Kollontai (acting on the assumption that a woman who was in fact extraordinary is somehow typical). It is an unfortunate and puzzling chapter—unfortunate because it is a weak beginning to an otherwise fine book, puzzling because in my opinion Mayne's cinematic analyses in no way depend on historical context for validity.

The heart of Kino and the Woman Question lies in the textual analyses which, fortunately, can stand alone. Mayne's conscious choice to ignore the movies of two famous women directors of the period, Olga Preobrazhenskaiia and Esfir Shub, in order to concentrate on those of even more famous male directors will doubtless provoke some controversy. Yet these men's films do serve as fascinating subjects for feminist analysis—not because they are "typical," however, but rather because they are not. Most of them have been so mythologized and over-analyzed that I would have claimed prior to reading this book that new insights were highly unlikely, if not impossible.

Mayne makes the impossible possible—in clear, cogent prose free of the professional jargon which characterizes some feminist criticism and much theoretical writing on film. Mayne discusses Potemkin, By the Law, October, and Earth briefly in the first chapter and then accords a chapter each to five films. Some of them are obvious choices for feminist analysis (Mother, Bed and Sofa, Fragment of the Empire), while others are not (especially Strike, but also The Man with the Movie Camera). All of her analyses focus on the depiction of public and private space in these films (which becomes an even more critical issue in the films of the 1930s), and on the function of women as signifiers of "discord" or as agents who "complicate" the narrative action.

The value of this book is best demonstrated by examining Mayne's discussions of Strike (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) and The Man with the Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929) in more detail. As she notes, women are marginal to both the plot and theme of Strike, but this fact does not prevent the film from raising some interesting gender issues, particularly about the tensions between class (power) relations and gender relations. Women do not appear in Strike until about mid-way through, and it is no coincidence that this is precisely the point at which the strike is imperiled. This first scene is idyllic—a striking worker at home with wife and baby—and sharply contrasts to shots of the factory owner, eating alone in a public space.

But as the strike continues, living conditions begin to deteriorate, and home is no longer a refuge. The wife begins to complain and blame her husband (thereby implicitly undermining the strike), and he is "forced" to dominate her by taking her possessions to sell. From this moment on, class differences between women matter little, and we see bourgeois women acting like the beleaguered proletarian wife—as sowers of discord. The most vivid example of this occurs in the scene where the boss's well-dressed lady companion screams at him to kill the worker whose arrest