

The Crystal Palace as the Parliament of Objects: On Alexander Kluge's Collage Film *The Power of Emotion*

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Abstract

In a sequence dedicated to the London World's Fair in his collage film *The Power of Emotion* (1983), Alexander Kluge talks about how the suppression of prudent proletarian emotion by the aesthetic staging and emotionalisation of exchange value corrupted the departure of industrial modernity into happiness and affluence. Correspondent to the mode of the opera, which originated concurrently with the "parliament of objects" as the "power plant of emotions", the fairytale-like beginning of the collage with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 is followed by the Crystal Palace fire in 1937, with which the

Reichstag fire of 1935 is associated. What is crucial is the portrayal of the workers Kluge's montages feature as the 'real' builders of the Crystal Palace and of societal prosperity. The artisanal sensitivity with which bolt and nut are connected in such a way that the construction is stable represents a social utopia, which in view of its loss requires a response at the artistic level that is appropriate to the wartime destruction. The technological construction of aesthetic semblance has to be laid bare, the artistic form has to become iconoclastic.

Pilgrimage to the commodity fetish

[1.] Joseph Paxton's gigantic glass-and-iron building for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London was the first highly prestigious piece of architectural engineering. The name it was given, the Crystal Palace, obscures this technological quality, suggests a mystical totality. As is generally known, this building and the commentaries devoted to it served as the historical starting point for the glass utopias designed by Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut, on their part leading to the ideal of transparency in modern architecture.¹ The crystal metaphor evokes the openness of the constructed space and the self-acting growth of the form, hence an art and nature identity. Despite the monarchial framing, the first of the "places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish"² created important scope for those bourgeois ideologies that Karl Marx, at the time working in exile in London, and Friedrich Engels had begun to examine. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie justifies its claim to power by professing to act in the name of an absolute beyond religious legitimation, namely as the advocate of the unity and greatness of nature.³ Marx describes a kind of naturalization of what is produced socially as the fetish character of the world of commodities: "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form."⁴ Wealth appears in the form of a commodity; in other words, it is not recognised where it is produced, in labor, but "reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things."⁵ Alexander Kluge translated these "religious reflections of the real world"⁶ into his own poetic language. "All things are bewitched people" it says in the monumental montage film *News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx – Eisenstein – Capital*, with express reference to the central category of the commodity fetish.⁷ Yet it is not only this late work, which is devoted to and falls in

¹ See Regine Prange, *Das Kristalline als Kunstsymbol – Bruno Taut und Paul Klee. Zur Reflexion des Abstrakten in Kunst und Kunsttheorie der Moderne*, Hildesheim 1991. A new, expanded edition is currently in preparation.

² Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, transl. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA/London 1990, 7.

³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, transl. Ben Fowkes, London 1990.

⁴ Marx (1990), 125.

⁵ Marx (1990), 164-165.

⁶ Marx (1990), 173.

⁷ Alexander Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike. Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, 34. See Regine Prange, "'Kapitalismus in uns'. Eine Analyse der ersten Sequenz von Alexander Kluges 'Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike. Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital'", in: *Augenblick. Konstanzer Hefte zur Medienwissenschaft*, ed. Ursula von Keitz, Beate Ochsner, Isabell Otto, Bernd Stiegler and Alexander Zons, no. 74: *Mediale Subjektivitäten. Fotografie, Film und Videokunst*, ed. Samantha Schramm and Magdalena Nieslony, Marburg 2019, 37-51; Regine Prange, "Das Kapital – digital. Materialistische Theorie als Kunst in Alexander Kluges Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike", in: Maria Effinger et al., eds., *Von analogen und digitalen Zugängen zur Kunst. Festschrift für Hubertus Kohle zum 60. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 2019, <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.493> (accessed March 3, 2020).

line with Sergei Eisenstein's plan to make a film of Marx's *Kapital*, that pursues the intention of an artistic critique of ideology. And it is not only here that Kluge is concerned with understanding the effect of the political economy on the subject. He inquires into how social life processes are formed or deformed by capitalist relations and their history, most of all a history of wars and a history of institutions such as that of civil law. Only against the background of this more comprehensive project of removing the 'veil' in the sense of Marx's "utopia"⁸ can it become understandable why Kluge makes reference to the international exposition in London in his film *The Power of Emotion* (Figs. 1–18), thus to the historical beacon of the said bewitching of people into things, which, according to Kluge's commentary at the beginning of the sixth film sequence, are "the opposite of emotions."⁹ Before taking a closer look at the Crystal Palace sequence, a concluding part of this sixth film sequence, more light shall first of all be shone on Kluge's approach and the content of the film.

[2.] Kluge's cinematic oeuvre was recently referred to as a continuation of Critical Theory with narrative means.¹⁰ Indeed, in films by Kluge we move from one narrative into the other. While his first feature film, *Yesterday Girl*, is still borne by a plot, albeit broken up by episodes – the protagonist, played by Alexandra Kluge, experiences the social coldness of the reality of the Federal Republic of Germany –, in later works Kluge increasingly breaks up the strands in order to string together a plethora of individual sequences – sketches and interviews as well as collages consisting of images and texts. However, the individual episodes are not isolated but are elements of a historiography interconnected through the repetition and variation of forms and motifs that, inspired by the classic Frankfurt School, pertain to the German path into industrial modernity and National Socialism as well as its aftermath. The point of departure are Kluge's literary texts, which he mostly speaks as a voice-over, supposedly in the style of a classic documentary. However, based on his literary methods one can more likely speak of a montage aesthetic bound to realism.¹¹ It has a laconic, casual formal language of its own that denies any composedness and comes across as a protocoling, improvised, or even punning non-form. In contrast to Theodor W. Adorno, whose friendship and respect he enjoyed, neither does Kluge shy away from Brechtian

⁸ Marx (1990), 173.

⁹ Alexander Kluge, "Textliste des Films 'Die Macht der Gefühle'", in: Alexander Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, 72-161: 103. In the footnotes to follow, the "Textliste" (text list) will be cited as TL. Unless indicated otherwise, all of the quotes from the German TL that appear in English were taken from the English subtitles of the film *Die Macht der Gefühle / The Power of Emotion*, West Germany 1983, directed and written by Alexander Kluge, edition filmmuseum 26, Filmmuseum München, Goethe-Institut München.

¹⁰ Christoph Streckhardt, *Kaleidoskop Kluge. Alexander Kluges Fortsetzung der Kritischen Theorie mit narrativen Mitteln*, Tübingen 2016.

¹¹ See Alexander Kluge, "Die realistische Methode und das sog. 'Filmische'", in: *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin. Zur realistischen Methode*, Frankfurt am Main 1975, 201-210. Kluge also regularly places printed text-image montages alongside independent image sequence or gives theoretical works a "cinematographic" character by means of independent image sequences. In terms of content, *The Power of Emotion* refers to Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, Frankfurt am Main 1981, reprinted in: *Der unterschätzte Mensch. Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden*, vol. 2, Frankfurt am Main 2001.

didactics. Nonetheless, his films meet Adorno's demand on a work of art to be enigmatic. They are consistent with his point of view that the political content and a utopian dimension of an artwork may not be simply stated and communicated, since only the autonomous art entity can be wrenched from service to reality.¹² The drastic, the grotesque, and poetic combinatorics create an audiovisual work out of images, sounds, and words whose complex content first has to be opened up through decelerated vision.

The negative and positive power of emotion

[1] With high-rise office buildings and the opera house, Frankfurt's urban architecture provides the petrified pole of that alienation with which Marx's analysis of commodities deals. The film *The Power of Emotion* begins with the "daybreak over the Main with a view of the high-rise buildings," a "temporal close-up [Zeittotale] from 5:00 to 8:15 a.m."¹³ Accompanied by dramatic sounds from Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, we see how the rising sun illuminates a glass high-rise – a light symbolism that not only runs through this film. It is the light of enlightenment that has become ensnared in the objects and the structures of capital and already point to the archetype of the Crystal Palace, whose history will be gone into later. Kluge uses the time lapse to render visible the ephemeral fugitiveness of the performance of human activity compared to the majestically resting, immovable buildings that announce the allegedly eternal order of the capitalist economy, indeed, even seem to possess their own pneuma. This nature-mythical aura of Frankfurt's skyline heightens Wagner's musical *Gesamtkunstwerk* to become the Holy Grail achieved through sacrifice.

[2] Light is also a spark of the soul; it testifies to the presence of the people bewitched into the object. Delimited from that enlightened rationality of the economic world, modernity has created a special technical vessel – the opera house as the "power plant of emotions."¹⁴ The film addresses a number of opera performances and uses them to demonstrate the objectifying canalization of emotions. The Klugian *Zeittotale* dominates here as well. The spectacle is often presented among the scenes or in a view from above as apparatus-determined action.¹⁵ On his

¹² Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. C. Lenhardt, London and New York 1986, 31: "Baudelaire's poetry was the first to express the fact that art in a fully developed commodity society can do nothing except look on powerlessly as that society drifts along. The only way in which art can henceforth transcend the heteronomy of capitalist society is by suffusing its own autonomy with the imagery of that society. The modernity of art lies in its mimetic relation to a petrified and alienated reality. This, and not the denial of that mute reality, is what makes art speak." See Alexander Kluge, "Glatte und rauhe Filme", in: Kluge (1984), 48-49.

¹³ Translated from Kluge, TL, 74. See Lutz Nitsche, *Erzählverfahren im Montage-Film von Alexander Kluge. Am Beispiel von 'Die Macht der Gefühle'*, Hamburg 1997, 46-51.

¹⁴ Translated from Kluge, TL, 110.

¹⁵ The construction of theatrical illusion is also laid bare in the conversation between the reporter Mrs. Pichota (Alexandra Kluge) and the singer B., and in the interview with Gilda's wardrobe lady from *Rigoletto*. Kluge, TL, 77-79 and 113-114.

own admission, Kluge shot this film in order to throw light on the background for the "obstinacy of war" in an improperly organised emotional household.¹⁶

[3] Hence the "power of emotion" is another formulation of the "dialectic of enlightenment."¹⁷ Its negative power manifests in the numerous destructive and inexplicable outbursts of which Kluge tells; he demonstrates its positive power, the view into a non-alienated relationship between the subjects, in the final sequence by means of the comedic, fairy-tale-like narrative of Betty Fahle, called "Knautsch-Betty", a prostitute whom "Schleich, a specialist in burglaries" buys "for her own sake".¹⁸ With a great deal of patience and shared effort, the two revive an allegedly murdered man and "they are closer now", as the end of the film announces.¹⁹ Here, the opposite of that clichéd operatic rhetoric that places happiness at the beginning and has the catastrophe follow is recommended as the "design of paradises".²⁰ Kluge's narrative proposes placing the difficulty, out of whose mutual processing and mastering will ensue happiness, at the beginning. It becomes clear that the utopian quality of emotion does not happen to be the one that is staged in the romance as fateful coincidence. It has to do with emotion as an everyday power of distinction, as sensitivity for the situation and for what it calls for. In the final analysis, Kluge's concept of emotion alludes to what in a socialist context has been called solidarity and class consciousness: It is first the awareness of one's own social situation that dashes the natural magic of emotion in bourgeois culture. The bourgeois ideology of emotion is out to propagate the entirely different spontaneous experience not achievable through reason – as an alleged reservoir of a human essence separate from economic logic, which is meant to be experienced quintessentially in art. Kluge promotes the development of emotion in the sense of a continuation of that mandate of enlightenment that political theater and cinema gave itself in the interwar period. Slatan Dudow's film *Kuhle Wampe (To Whom Does the World Belong, 1932)*, made in collaboration with Bertolt Brecht and which Kluge directly quotes elsewhere,²¹ continued to attach this principle of education to the reality of the Communist Party. This could no longer be an option in the period following the disappearance of the worker's movement and the lack of a broad-based opposition, which could not be reestablished in the wake of social democracy and student protest. Kluge's grotesque case examples of outrageous and misguided emotion gone wild play out, like his

¹⁶ Translated from Alexander Kluge, "Die Hartnäckigkeit des Krieges," in: Kluge (1984), 457.

¹⁷ Max Horkheimer's and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectics of enlightenment* (1944) plays an important role in Kluge's art and theory. See Streckhardt (2016), i.a. ch. 2.4.2.

¹⁸ Translated from Kluge, TL, XI sequence: "Bought for Her Own Sake", 141-153, esp. 141 and 144. The actors are Suzanne von Borsody and Paulus Manker.

¹⁹ Translated from Kluge, TL, XII sequence: "Undoing of a Crime by Means of Cooperation", 154-161, esp. 161.

²⁰ Translated from the interview by Florian Hopf with Alexander Kluge, "Gefühle können Berge versetzen ...", in: Kluge (1984), 180-186, esp. 183.

²¹ Kluge takes up the subject of a young woman's development of political awareness in *Gelegenheitsarbeiten einer Sklavin (Part-Time Work of a Domestic Slave)* in 1975. He inserts a scene from *Kuhle Wampe* into the crucial park scene, which relates Roswitha's decision to no longer devote herself to only the family but also to social involvement. Here, too, it is already about the formation of emotion. An extensive analysis of that sequence will be presented elsewhere.

counter-narrative, in the Western capitalist world of the postwar period. The energies of resistance are attached to fictional characters like Mrs. Pichota, Knautsch-Betty, and Schleich, who visualise the encounter with the real economic and political relations, institutions, and ideologies and subject them to reflection.

The worker, the bolt, and the soul of commodities

[4] Kluge demonstrates the specific way in which he takes up the legacy of revolutionary cinema in the image of the worker, who appears as an expert on productive emotion. According to Kluge, the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat sustains the exploitation and oppression of emotions, which are the "proletarian in us, powerful proletarians".²² Two short sequences that lead over to the history of the Crystal Palace explain this equivalence with typical Klugian humor. The socialist utopia is namely in the sensitive handling of bolt and nut, a metaphor with an explicitly sexual connotation: "Erwin screwed bolts with more care than he treated her. Still, she often wished, that he would handle her as carefully as some valuable object."²³ The machinist Willi Münch now explains in detail how important it is to twist bolt and nut into one another with "a lot of feeling" – one of the film's key lessons, which unites work and love as collective activities.

[5] Divorced from this reality of solidary emotion, Kluge presents the occurrence of the World's Fair in London, since objects themselves become the actors here. "Once in the middle of the 19th century, all the valuable objects of the world assembled in London. All commodities worldwide sent their representatives."²⁴ Hardly noticeable right away, on the other hand, is Kluge's poetic principle, with which he artistically develops the Marxist critique of political economy. More precisely, in the quoted phrase Kluge develops the literary fiction of the *Warensseele* (soul of commodities) used by Marx himself²⁵ by paraphrasing a sentence from the chapter on fetishism in *Capital*: "If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values."²⁶

[6] Firstly, Kluge's artistic appropriation of the sentence consists in stylizing the supposed subjectification of commodities as carriers of exchange value into the reality of a fairy-tale world, just as, in 2008, he would speak of people "bewitched" into things.²⁷ The fairy-tale-like tenor of Kluge's voice, coupled with unpretentious sobriety, reflects the productivity of the capitalist economy, virtually experienced as a miracle and also appreciated by Marx. It is about the happy beginning of a grand opera! The relationship between the commodities result in progress, as the value form made a maximum unfolding of knowledge necessary and therefore possible. Kluge had

²² Translated from Hopf/Kluge, „Gefühle können Berge versetzen“, in: Kluge (1984), 186.

²³ Kluge, TL, 108.

²⁴ Kluge, TL, 109.

²⁵ Marx (1990), 177: "Now listen how those commodities speak through the mouth of the economist."

²⁶ Marx (1990), 176-177.

²⁷ See footnote 7.

announced the fact that a disaster is simultaneously impending in the objectification of social relationships, that the opera of industrial modernity would meet a fatal end, in the woman's wish to be handled like a valuable object.²⁸ The commodity fetish absorbs emotion.

[7] Kluge marks the "happy beginning" primarily by combining the Marxist metaphor of the commodity fetish with what is evaluated as the apparently positive democratic institution of parliament. "All commodities worldwide sent their representatives."²⁹ Not least, there are German industrial products (actually produced later) among the representatives of "commodities worldwide": "the Siemens telegraph, steel goods from Solingen [...]. A Krupp cannon [...]." Hence the "ancestors of all modern consumer goods" that met in London comprise communication media, luxury cutlery, and weapons – essential areas of bourgeois order. After the description of the building of Paxton's "greenhouse" in Hyde Park, the sequence concludes with the burning of the community building reconstructed in Sydenham, which is again associated with German history. It occurred "four years after the Reichstag fire." The chapter ends with: "Since then, objects have no parliament." Thus the history of the World's Fair in London is not only interpreted as the history of capitalism, but as the history leading up to fascism and its ineluctable consequences. Kluge's own specific diagnosis of a modern loss of the public sphere can be heard in the cited brief announcement that "objects have no parliament."³⁰ According to the original draft of the film, the focus was to be placed on the dissolution of the public sphere and the criticism thereof. Besides the state and the opera, in this concept the World's Fair of industry is an image of public orientation still applicable to a reality that was replaced by the "modern project (based on the grand opera of the Third Reich) of pluralistically filtered emotions, divided into information and entertainment."³¹ This epoch of "moderate public-sector media" in turn threatens to be suspended by the project of "privately financed, new media" initiated in the 1980s in favor of even further fragmentation, against which Kluge calls for the "democracy of

²⁸ However, this objectification is also viewed as her only chance. See the episode concerning the thrown-away lover in Kluge, TL, 100-102. Her killing herself for love is prevented by rape. Treated like an object, the woman in the expensive fur is saved from her self-destructive feeling, a connection that the judge cannot understand with her concept of the legal person. Knautsch-Betty is also a precious object that can be bought. Her self-confidence and cooperative spirit are based on this, which annuls the violence against the diamond salesman. Kluge, TL, XII sequence "Undoing of a Crime by Means of Cooperation", 154-161.

²⁹ Kluge, TL, 109. All of the following quotes also stem from this paragraph.

³⁰ Kluge's 'parliament of objects' does not yet mean the post human and post marxist idea of objects and men having equal right as recommended by Bruno Latour's *Politique de la nature* (Paris 1999, dt. *Das Parlament der Dinge*, Frankfurt am Main 2001). Rather, Kluge ironically points out that modern democracy is not, as her defenders claim, achieved by the individuals, but 'realised' in fetishised commodity relations. To name the Crystal Palace a parliament of things means, that after all it still evokes the chance to be changed into a parliament of human beings. Hence Kluge's marxist anthropology does not primarily intend to reconcile non human nature with society. The aim is rather to free human nature from its fatal objectification in abstract labour and value form.

³¹ Translated from Alexander Kluge, "Drehbuch. Szenenfolge. Die Macht der Gefühle. Tunnelkampf im Medienschwungel", in: Kluge (1984), 234-257, esp. 235.

human senses."³² He even regards the achievements of the public sphere as the "most valuable treasures of the free West."³³ From here, however, it is not quite understandable why the production of the public sphere by corporations that stem from the free West requires resistance.³⁴ Does Kluge acknowledge the Great Exhibition in London as the medium of a classic public sphere, which since the perversion of the public sphere by the National Socialist media apparatus has been irretrievably lost?

[8] The basic order of the draft can definitely be read in the film that was ultimately produced. However, in no way can its arrangement be broken down into the quoted media-political statements and dissenting positions. While in Kluge's draft the historical necessity that leads from the classic to the fragmented public sphere remains unnamed, the cinematic form creates a playful, dialectic tension between the contrary "powers of emotion" that are repeatedly compared with the political economy.³⁵ Kluge produces a critical synchronization of the World's Fair as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* with that of the opera, and implicitly with that of Hitler's fascism. What drives history is the culmination of emotion in sacrifice and the catastrophic collapse, caused by the separation of reason and memory.

From the Great Exhibition to catastrophe: The Crystal Palace sequence

[9] The sixth sequence begins with a table lamp that "was turned on before a holiday and then forgotten"³⁶, and it ends with the memory of the Reichstag fire.³⁷ Just as the lamp was forgotten and continues to burn, a bomb from the Second World War "was hidden in the ground for 38 years" with a fully intact brass fuse.³⁸ Another episode tells of a front-line soldier who in 1918 finds his wife in bed with another man and shoots. The voice-over: "He sought clarity. He had his rifle."³⁹ Emotion is objectified and forgotten in both the lamp as well as the weapon. The object speaks instead of the person. This shift to the grotesque already featured in a court scene in the second film sequence: A defendant, played by Hannelore Hoger, had fired a shot at her husband, and when the judge asks her about her motive and intent, all she can cite is this: "I wanted to

³² Translated from Kluge, "Drehbuch", in: Kluge (1984), 257.

³³ Translated from Kluge, "Drehbuch", in: Kluge (1984), 234.

³⁴ Kluge, "Drehbuch", in: Kluge (1984), 243.

³⁵ This occurs most succinctly in the final episode about Knautsch-Betty, for instance by example of the diamond and its exchange value, revered by false emotion – portrayed in the fatal romance between Mäxchen and Manfred Schmidt.

³⁶ Kluge, TL, 103.

³⁷ Kluge, TL, 109: "It [the Crystal Palace] was destroyed by fire in 1937, four years after the Reichstag fire." Actually, the fire in Sydenham took place in 1936.

³⁸ Kluge, TL, 105.

³⁹ Kluge, TL, 104.

shoot."⁴⁰ Kluge concentrates delusion as well as utopian power in the phrase "All emotions believe in a happy ending."⁴¹

[10] Gentle, understanding emotion, which alludes to an active agency of consciousness and memory, is represented by the machinist Willi Münch as well as the reporter Mrs. Pichota, played by Alexandra Kluge. Sitting on a park bench before a blossoming cherry tree, she looks around briskly and secures her notes with stones – probably a rudiment of the early film script in which Alexandra Kluge plays the housewife Rosemarie Eilers – the "owner of her own broadcasting station, which competes with the new audiovisual media corporations."⁴² Mrs. Pichota's spright attentiveness and her deliberate holding-on to memory contrast with forgetting and the lack of emotion, which, as Willi Münch explains, leads to the bolt "loosen[ing]" or even falling out.⁴³ "Then the damage is already done."⁴⁴

[11] As already delineated, in Alexander Kluge's metaphorical language the loss of bolt and nut by neglecting their correct interaction means the collapse of social relationships. Because Münch's explanation of the damage cuts directly to the Crystal Palace sequence, this has to be read as a historical retrospection that more closely examines the "damage" that has occurred. After all, against the background of the episodes cited, which tell of the dangerous independent existence of objects as fetishes of emotion, as fairy-tale-like as it begins, the talk of the parliament of commodities experiences a break. From the very start, the weakness and power of those "factions" of reason seem to be inscribed into the modern production of goods that "have permanently married the world of facts" and cannot "pursue enlightenment" with "power that is that emotionless and lacking a will of its own."⁴⁵ As a result, emotions that do not come into their own become "contact mines."⁴⁶ Not least, the various militaristic motifs articulate the consequence: "Everybody is a bomb."⁴⁷

[12] In the following analysis of the Crystal Palace sequence, it will be shown how Kluge responds to the World's Fair as *Gesamtkunstwerk* with his own intermedia-based creative means, and how he makes the suppressed social conflict visible in the documentary photographs he uses. Particular attention will be paid to the colorization of these photographs, which separates the

⁴⁰ Kluge, TL, 83.

⁴¹ Kluge, TL, 103 and 106-107 as a caption in the doubled, blurred vacation snapshot of Kluge's mother, Alice, to whom he dedicates the film. See Kluge 1984, 179. Her photographic portrait in a fur coat above the dedication is the icon of the woman as a "valuable object". See note 26.

⁴² Translated from Kluge, "Drehbuch", in: Kluge (1984), 241.

⁴³ Kluge, TL, 108.

⁴⁴ Kluge, TL, 108.

⁴⁵ Translated from Alexander Kluge, "Über Gefühl. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag", in: Kluge (1984), 210-215, 213.

⁴⁶ Translated from Kluge, "Über Gefühl", in: Kluge (1984), 212.

⁴⁷ Translated from Alexander Kluge, "Archäologie des Gefühls", in: Kluge (1984), 200-201, esp. 201.

visual worlds into contrasting spheres, confronting the exposition's programmatical reconciliation of technological rationality and nature, of capital and labour.⁴⁸

[13] The first photomontage shows two structures on a balustrade, behind which towers the Crystal Palace, which can scarcely be situated in terms of space (Fig. 1), and is sharply separated into a bluish part belonging to the building and a yellowish outdoor area.



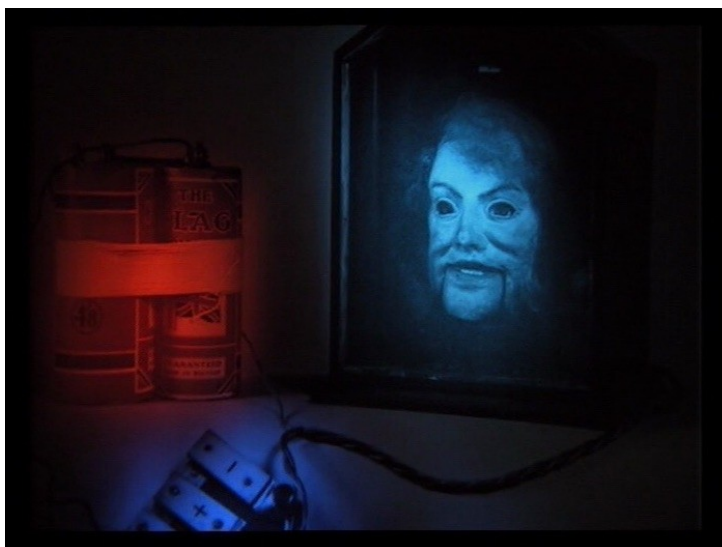
1 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:42:56): "Once, in the middle of the 19th century, all the valuable objects of the world assembled in London"⁴⁹

The posing men wearing top hats and occupying the space between the engineering construct and nature neither develop a lively relationship to one another, nor are their gazes directed towards anything. This dissociation of alienated consciousness once again becomes the subject of the coloration in each of the ensuing shots.

⁴⁸ See my introduction concerning the metaphorical 'naturalization' of economic power and relationships. Global harmony beyond social conflicts was addressed by religious ideas and the cult of universal mankind. Besides the crystalline 'New Jerusalem', The Great Exhibition's iconography for example employs the idea of 'Universal Brotherhood'. See Utz Haltern, *Die Londoner Weltausstellung von 1851. Ein Beitrag zur bürgerlich-industriellen Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, Münster 1971, 356.

⁴⁹ All screenshots are taken from: Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983.

[14] The "Siemens telegraph" now clearly breaks with documentary authenticity (Fig. 2). Whereas in 1846 Werner von Siemens invented the so-called Siemens pointer telegraph, with which one could easily transmit news letter-by-letter without having to use a code (the device depicted here is not comparable with the one by Siemens).



2 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:05): "All commodities worldwide sent their representatives: the Siemens telegraph"

[15] Kluge employs a fictional pictorial document, analogous to the pseudo-documentary use of fictional characters such as Mrs. Pichota. The device, according to Kluge's text list out of which the signals "resonate", consists primarily of a bluish monitor on which a mask-like face appears.⁵⁰ The shot evidently recalls the historical beginning of mass technological communication, including that of film. Is Kluge providing us with a self-portrait of the intellectual and artist in the age of technological media, a Socratic mask that transforms into the clownesque instead of into the silenusque? Although his speech movement seems to be part of a mechanism and the glowing red light does not belong to it but to the technical energy source, this mask-like face possesses a baffling vitality. Like Jean-Luc Godard in *Caméra-œil* (1967),⁵¹ Kluge poses the question of the truth potential of art that is an adjunct to big industry, the parliament of objects.

⁵⁰ Translated from Kluge, TL 108.

⁵¹ See Regine Prange, "Der Mann mit der Kamera. Zur Kritik am dokumentarischen Realismus in Godards Kurzfilm *Caméra-œil*", in: Georg Peter and Reuß-Markus Krauß, eds., *Selbstbeobachtung der modernen Gesellschaft und die neuen Grenzen des Sozialen*, Wiesbaden 2012, 301-313.

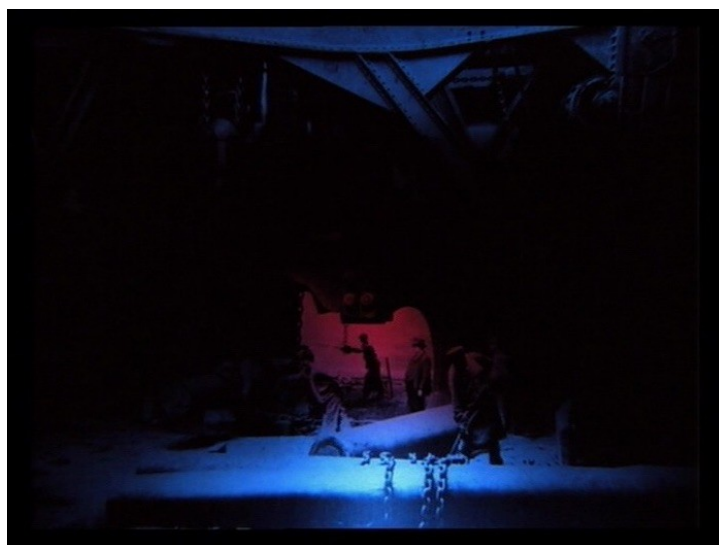
[16] The "steel goods from Solingen" are also combined with the human face, now in the plural (Fig. 3).



3 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:14): "Steel goods from Solingen"

[17] However, what seems to be a martial montage remains alien and inaccessible to any media-technological transceiver circuit in the manner it was previously arranged with utopian features. And yet a real relationship is being depicted here, that of the producers to their product. The group portrait of workers in the greenish light-and-dark of faded photo albums is crowded together on a narrow strip, which nonetheless conveys the individuality of each one of the men. The three workers in the middle seem to be being attacked by the pointed tines and blades of the polished cutlery, which is presented in the aesthetic of a promotional photograph. How could the said perversion be more clearly expressed that makes the producer the victim of the production he is so substantially responsible for, to say nothing of the fact that the luxurious character of the cutlery is obviously intended for another, sophisticated population stratum. Hence, the montage provides a precise image of the aggressiveness of the expropriation of the worker in the production process analyzed by Marx. The inversion of the two outer knives signals the objectives of the workers' movement, the re-appropriation of the product. It does not have to be added that this photomontage does not aim at a restricted documentary truth. Neither can the origin of the cutlery in Solingen and the depicted workers be verified nor proof be furnished for a corresponding exhibit at the Great Exhibition in London.

[18] This applies even less to the following photograph, "British iron stove" (Fig. 4), even though it possesses theatrical qualities that correspond with the format of the exposition.⁵²



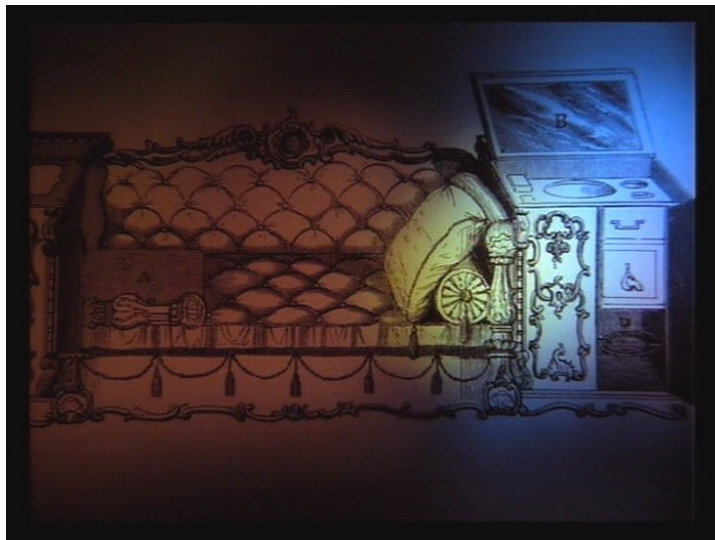
4 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:19): "A British iron stove"

We are looking at a stage-like scene in a steel factory where men are working under the supervision of a corpulent man wearing a bowler hat. In contrast to the framing, blue iron constructions, the opening of the furnace in the background of the image, which is colored red and blazes like a hell mouth, announces great promise and horror alike. At the same time, one might discern a reply to Adolph von Menzel's *Eisenwalzwerk* (Iron Rolling Mill, 1872–1875), which transferred the Christian light iconography of the "Holy Night" to the miracle of the Industrial Revolution. The fervent red harbors the utter ambivalence of industrial productivity.⁵³

⁵² Kluge and Oskar Negt reproduced a similarly arranged photograph entitled "Stahl" (steel), which evidently stemmed from the same series, in *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (see Negt/Kluge [1981], 194-195) for the purpose of illustrating technical industrial labor, not least the specific form of cooperation highlighted by Marx. On the aesthetic dimension, see also the diagram of a "Hochofenbühne" (blast furnace platform).

⁵³ See the extreme "red light milieu" of Betty and Schleich's apartment, the site of the murder and the starting point for the "Undoing of a Crime by Means of Cooperation."

[19] In "Chaiselongue with a cardboard wash unit" (Fig. 5), we now suddenly enter the exposition, as this is the first time Kluge illustrates a verifiable exhibit. We come across a precise description in Nikolaus Pevsner's catalogue on the exhibition of Victorian design.



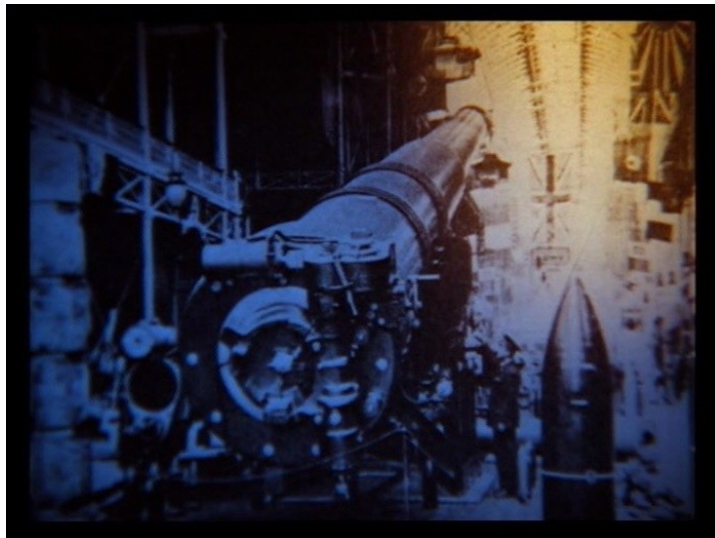
5 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:25): "A cardboard chaiselongue and wash basin"

It concerns furniture for a ship: "Steamship Furniture convertible into a raft. By Taylor & Sons of Southwark."⁵⁴ In an emergency, the sofa stuffed with cork fiber is floatable – a curious combination of luxury and a fearful consciousness of danger, anticipating the Titanic disaster. Thus, the threatening overtones continue in the context of the cinematic collages. In Kluge and Oskar Negt's sociological theory, the piece of furniture out of papier-mâché also stands for the imaginary of a dream reality, which the authors understand as a potential domain of protest.⁵⁵ This is conveyed by the warm, energetic colors of red and yellow that characterise the piece of upholstered furniture.

⁵⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner, *High Victorian Design: A study of the exhibits of 1851*, London 1951, 43.

⁵⁵ Negt/Kluge (1981), 513-14, 662-664, 669, esp. "Abb. Neuheit auf der Weltausstellung: Möbel aus farbig gemustertem Pappmaché" (Fig. Innovation at the world exposition: furniture made of colorfully patterned papier-mâché).

[20] However, the picture of the "Krupp cannon" (Fig. 6), which is montaged into the main aisle of the Crystal Palace alongside an upright projectile, now unmistakably alludes to impending catastrophes.⁵⁶



6 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:32): "A Krupp cannon, not for sale at that time. These are the ancestors of all modern consumer goods"

The motif of the weapon, touched on multiple times,⁵⁷ is linked not only with the presentation of products. The voice-over makes the cannon appear to be the most important ancestor of modern goods. Thus, what Kluge presents in his montage is the military apparatus in its actual historical completeness with the departure into industrial modernity. The delicate yellow of the Crystal Palace's vault lends it a cheerful impression, which is threatened, so to speak, by the cold-blue, monstrous cannon exhibit. A self-destructive power dwells within the Industrial Revolution.

⁵⁶ A 6-pound cast-steel cannon and a 4,500-pound block of steel were actually exhibited in London. See also Benjamin (1990), 183.

⁵⁷ After the prologue, the film begins with a montage of documentary war scenes followed by excerpts from Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (1924). Soldiers seek protection behind a British Mother armored vehicle from the First World War; a child dies. The clash between the subject and the wartime reality of history is Kluge's theme per se. As a 13-year-old, in 1945 he experienced the destruction of his parental home in Halberstadt during an aerial assault by the US Army. This is treated in a fictional interview by the reporter Mrs. Pichota with Brigadier General Anderson. See Kluge, TL, 94-95.

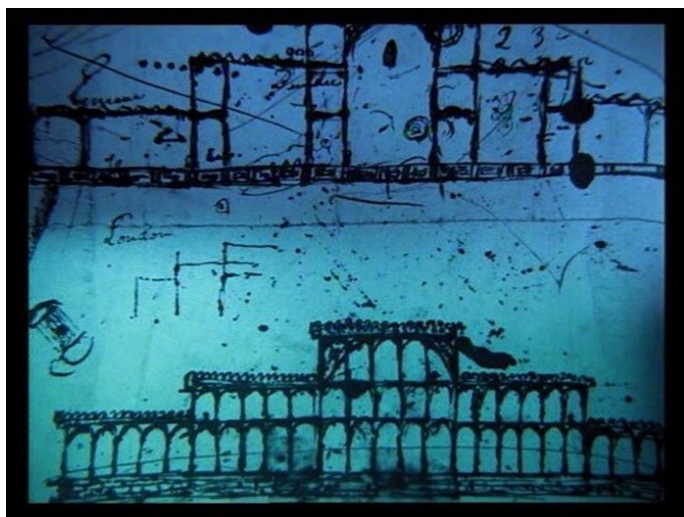
[21] An aerial photograph from 1936 that shows the Crystal Palace that was rebuilt in Sydenham causes this attack to become reality in a surreal way (Fig. 7).



7 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:42); sequence without text

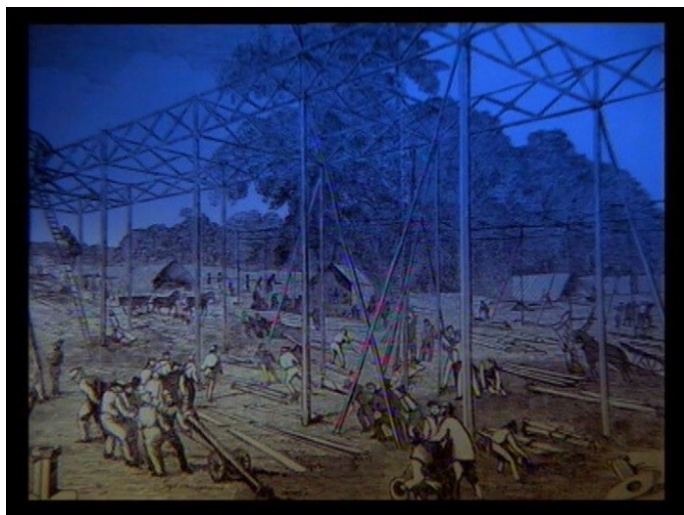
Here, the curved vault of the side aisle resembles the barrel of a cannon that has bored itself into the main aisle. The yellow celestial dazzle seems about to eclipse, as if the destruction that really occurred in 1937 had already begun. Yet this is where the actual narrative begins. Soft romantic piano music commences, a lyrical variation of the prologue, where Wagner accompanies Frankfurt's skyline. The contrast between the lyrical music and the technoid construct could not be more salient. The image-sound montage communicates the rupture between technological objectivity and the artistic creation of emotion.

[22] The photograph of a sketch (Fig. 8) with autographic architectural drawings and covered with spots, scribbles, and the word "London" then retranslates the engineering construct into the autographic, individual artistic design, with the result that the lyricism of the piano music in turn finds its equivalent but is counteracted by the cold blue colorization of the image.



8 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:43:54); sequence without text

[23] In the following, a drawn view of the construction site shows the erecting of the building's first pillars and the enormous difference in its dimensions in comparison with the workers' living huts (Fig. 9).



9 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:00); sequence without text

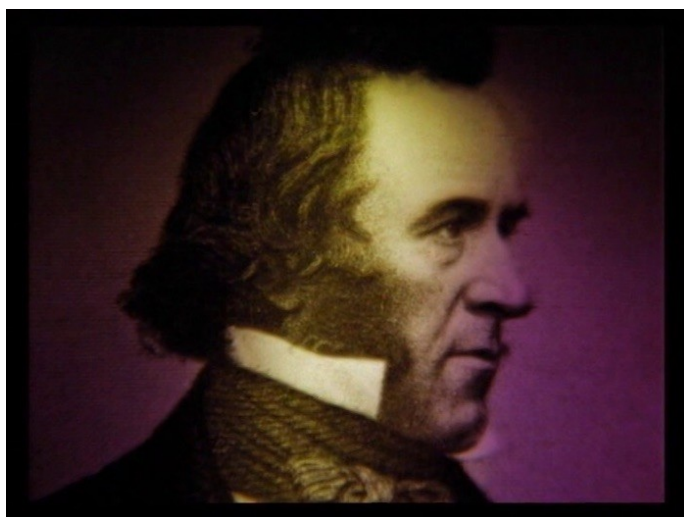
The area of the sky colored blue and with the geometrical grid construct belongs to a different world than the brownish earth area, which is completely dominated by the multifarious cooperative building activities of the workers. But neither does the Royal Family (Fig. 10) participate in the blue of the age of technology.



10 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:06); sequence without text

[24] Kluge selects a detail from the painting by Franz Xaver Winterhalter that features Queen Victoria with the Prince Consort Albert, the Duke of Wellington and Prince Arthur at a great distance from the Crystal Palace. He concentrates the image, bathed in a golden Rembrandtian *chiaroscuro*, on the homage to the child, to whom the godfather as if he was one of the three Magi, presents a precious vessel in exchange for a bouquet of lilies of the valley.⁵⁸ Kluge's lighting places emphasis on the ornamentation and the elegiac, pensive expression of the figures, who complement one another with both intimacy and pathos.

[25] For the "Gardener of the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Paxton" (Fig. 11), Kluge chooses the detail of the head of elegantly clothed, ennobled engineer from a very well-known portrait photograph, which he markedly alienates.



11 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:10): "The building was designed by the gardener of the Duke of Devonshire, Mr Paxton"

⁵⁸ Prince Arthur was born on 1st May 1850. The painting was commissioned to celebrate his first birthday.

A violet background, energetic red cooled with blue, encroaches on the sense organs of the nose and the mouth like an infectious process.⁵⁹ Only the eyes, forehead, hair, and collar bind are still filled by a luminous yellow ocher. Compared with the nearly full-figure portrait photograph of Mr. Paxton wallowing in props, by cropping the image Kluge directs one's gaze to the constriction of the throat by the stiff white collar and the bowknot, which likewise takes his breath away.

[26] Kluge highlights Paxton's profession as a gardener and claims that he "gave his design the form of a greenhouse."⁶⁰ In the illumination of a contemporary print (Fig. 12), the vital yellow characterises the world exposition in a greenhouse – the site of the creation of a second nature built over the first, threatened by a violet sky.

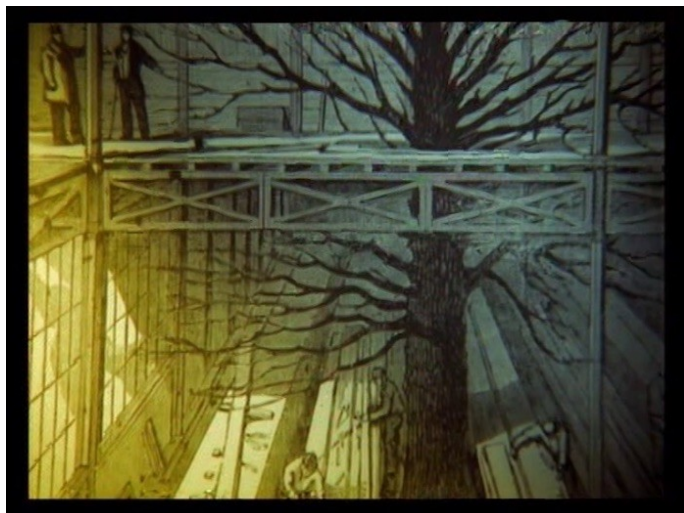


12 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:16): "He gave his design the form of a greenhouse"

[27] When Kluge now states that "the trees in the park did not have to be felled," because they "fit inside the house," he says and demonstrates that every living thing that has space in this building is not destroyed but transformed. The vertical tracking shot, the only camera movement in the entire sequence, illustrates the level that runs around the tree (Fig. 13) and the isolating view of it that it creates, which is foreign to the tree itself.

⁵⁹ See Benjamin (1990), 201: "The world exhibitions were training schools in which the masses, barred from consuming, learned empathy with exchange value. 'Look at everything; touch nothing.'"

⁶⁰ Here, Kluge condenses the source reprinted in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1990, 177) that reports on Paxton's greenhouse for the Duke of Devonshire.



13 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:22): "The trees in the park did not have to be felled, they fit inside the house"

At the top, citizens are afoot with walking sticks, down below the workers, who during the tracking shot disappear from sight, like in reality. Here, the tree, in Kluge's films frequently used as a metaphor for resistive existence, appears without leaves and bathed in a bluish light that is not seized by the radiant yellow.

[28] In the next silent shot, for which Kluge uses a contemporary depiction of the construction work on the central aisle being looked at by curious crowd (Fig. 14), the reverse is the case.



14 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:33); sequence without text

The green foliage, framed by the roof segment that is under construction, constitutes a vital, if only weak, contrast to the architecture and the group of bystanders bathed in nocturnal blue. Kluge deliberately selects this image,⁶¹ since it exposes the separation between material

⁶¹ It deals with the depiction of the raising of the ribs of the transept roof.

production and aesthetic vision. In the conductor-like construction managers, who gesticulate as they monitor the maneuver, he reveals the fundamentally theatrical element of the spectacular staging of nature and commodities as Gesamtkunstwerk.

[29] The "men who built the glass palace" (Fig. 15) fall out of this staged photograph, as they do not, as in the previous shot, serve as attractive accessories.



15 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:40): "The men who built the Crystal Palace"

The workers that Kluge features in this photomontage will hardly, as the voice-over postulates, be identifiable as the builders of the Crystal Palace, which towers behind them. Their clothing is more indicative of them being craftsmen, whose existence is threatened and destroyed by industrialization. The extreme contrast between the serial wall structure and the impoverished everyday life of these craftsmen – incorporated into overgrown, fallow nature – documents, placing particular emphasis on their powerful but idle hands, the special sensitivity demonstrated by the machinist Willi Münch and its historical marginalization. In the following silent long shot (Fig. 16), the contrasting relationship, again with the help of colorization, is exaggerated to become the diametrical contradiction between social hardship and technological perfection. The story of the Crystal Palace ends with the workers gazing wearily and sullenly into the camera.



16 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:46); sequence without text

[30] The next shots (Figs. 17–19) refer to the Crystal Palace fire and that of the German Reichstag nearly four years prior to that.⁶²



17 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:50): "It was destroyed by fire in 1937"

⁶² See footnote 37.



18 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:44:54): "Four years after the Reichstag fire. Since then, objects have no parliament"



19 Alexander Kluge, *The Power of Emotion*, 1983, screenshot (00:45:00); sequence without text

What one sees is again ambiguous. In particular, the second shot in the epilogue (Fig. 18) is mysterious and could also make reference to the major zeppelin disaster, as it is more likely that the man wearing a hat is looking up at a hovering construction than at the remains of a building. On 6 May 1937, the Hindenburg, the largest airship of all time, went up in flames while landing in Lakehurst, New Jersey. Kluge links the catastrophe caused by modern technology with the political catastrophe of the Reichstag fire and invokes them both in the image of the fire in Sydenham. In doing this, he adheres to the montage logic already observed at length, which shatters the positivistic idea of history. Kluge's cinematic montage develops the inner meaning of the stories related by means of the similarization of the allegedly far-apart and the dissociation of the allegedly unified.

Epilogue: the opera house fire

[31] The Crystal Palace fire, in which all of the colors blend – hence in which the false segmentation of emotion and reason catastrophically collapse – not only corresponds with the Reichstag fire and the end of democracy even in its incomplete state of a parliament of objects. It obviously also corresponds in the overall film with the opera house fire in the eighth sequence, which previously, in the chapter on the "Power Plant of Emotions," can be traced back to rotted power cables and is therefore also bound to a technological logic. As a result, this implicitly motivates the historical opera house fire in Frankfurt during the hail of bombs in 1944 as well, which Kluge turns into the driving force of an enlightening story: "Fire Chief Schönecke had plenty of time" before the firestorm would reach the building. He "takes the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity" and to fathom what "was hidden inside the Grail in the opera 'Parsifal'",⁶³ and unveils the chalice. It is empty, and a close-up of the nut with which the bowl was screwed to the base can be discerned on the floor. The magic of art is exposed as a construct, whereby the legitimacy of the bourgeois order embedded in that magic seems to have gone out. "The fireman knows," says the paradoxical commentary, "that there is no way of stopping the fire." In the image of the bolt, the parliament of objects and the power plant of emotions prove to be made out of the same material. The artistic iconoclasm of the opera house fire is the only way to say the truth in art, to extinguish the fire. In this sense, in his text list Kluge permits himself to contradict his own film. Here, the chalice unveiled during the hail of bombs on Frankfurt, art, is a "kind of cup made of cardboard."⁶⁴

⁶³ Translated from Kluge, TL, 137.

⁶⁴ Translated from Kluge, TL, 137. Kluge again evokes the imaginary quality of the industrially produced objects on exhibit in London in 1851.

Acknowledgements

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Regine Prange is a professor at the Institute of Art History at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. Her research interests include utopias and theories of modern art, the history of art studies, and aesthetics and criticism of spatial construction in painting and film. Selection of book publications: *Piet Mondrian und die Selbstkritik der Malerei*, Munich 2006; *Film als Raumkunst. Historische Perspektiven und aktuelle Methoden*, Marburg 2012 (co-edited with Henning Engelke and Ralf Michael Fischer); *Das Problem der Form. Interferenzen zwischen moderner Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin 2016 (co-edited with Hans Aurenhammer). She is currently working on a book on "Realism as a Problem of Form", analyzing both painting (Courbet, Manet, Richter, Warhol) and film (Eisenstein, Pasolini, Godard, Kluge). In addition, a revised and enlarged edition of her dissertation from 1991, *Das Kristalline als Kunstsymbol*, is in preparation.

Translation

Translated from the German by Rebecca van Dyck

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