

EISENSTEIN

SERGEI

ESSAYS IN FILM THEORY

FILM FORM

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY JAY LEYDA

Form together with **The Film Sense**, by the internationally renowned Soviet actor, are regarded as classic statements on the aesthetics of filmmaking. **Form** draws together twelve essays written between 1928 and 1945 that nonstrategically key points in the development of Eisenstein's film theory and in particular his analysis of the sound-film medium. Among the essays are several discussions of the Kabuki theatre, "Methods of Montage," "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," "The Filmic Fourth Dimension," "Film Language," and Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today." Also included is a statement on the mid-film by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov; "Notes from a Director's Laboratory," written during work on **Ivan the Terrible**; and all the diagrams and photographs of the original edition.

turns savagely polemical and whimsically humorous. . . Eisenstein's last work, like all his writings, is on fire with imagination. . . Jay Leyda, well-known authority on Eisenstein's work, has done an excellently thorough job of editing and translating."

—Saturday Review

gei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, who was born in Riga in 1898, first achieved world fame with his silent film **Potemkin** in 1925. Although he completed only two films before his death in 1948, he is considered one of the most influential filmmakers and film theoreticians of our time.

Design by Richard Mantel
Photo of Sergei Eisenstein: Culver Pictures, Inc.

\$17.95 / Higher in Canada

ISBN 978-0-15-630920-2

51795



9 780156 309202
9780156309202 02/14/14
FILM FORM ESSAYS EISENSTEIN
22 Book Culture
Our Price: \$17.95

Harvest Book
Harcourt, Inc.
www.HarcourtBooks.com

EISENSTEIN

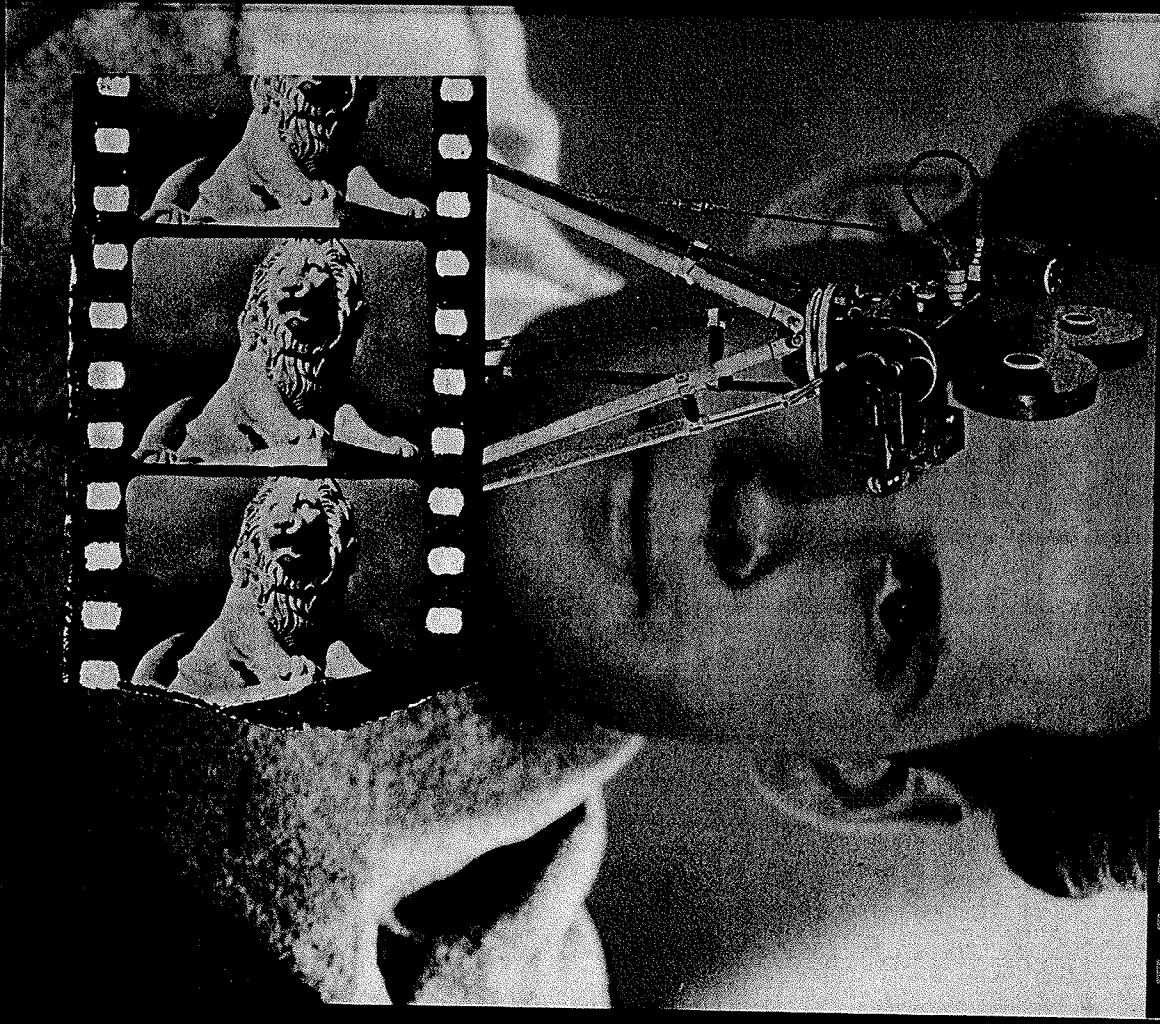
EISENSTEIN

SERGEI

ESSAYS IN FILM THEORY

FILM FORM

FILM FORM



Harcourt

Sergei Eisenstein

Books by Sergei Eisenstein

Film Form

The Film Sense

Notes of a Film Director

Film Essays, with a Lecture

Non-Indifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things

Film Form

Essays in Film Theory

edited and translated by Jay Leyda

A Harvest Book • Harcourt, Inc.

A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book

San Diego New York London

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
THROUGH THEATER TO CINEMA	3
THE UNEXPECTED	18
THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLE AND THE IDEOGRAM	28
A DIALECTIC APPROACH TO FILM FORM	45
THE FILMIC FOURTH DIMENSION	64
METHODS OF MONTAGE	72
A COURSE IN TREATMENT	84
FILM LANGUAGE	108
FILM FORM: NEW PROBLEMS	122
THE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM	150
ACHIEVEMENT	179
DICKENS, GRIFFITH, AND THE FILM TODAY	195
<i>Appendix A. A Statement on the Sound-Film by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov</i>	257
<i>Appendix B. Notes from a Director's Laboratory</i>	261
<i>Notes on Texts and Translations</i>	266
<i>Sources</i>	268
<i>Index</i>	273

Copyright 1949 by Harcourt, Inc.
Copyright renewed 1977 by Jay Leyda

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to the following address: Permissions Department, Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, Florida 32887-6777.

ISBN 978-0-15-630920-2
ISBN 0-15-630920-3 (Harvest: pb)

Printed in the United States of America

DOC 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28

barely to see it on the table, and the apple as it appears to the master of the house who picks it up and lordly hands it to his guest.²

At once the question arises: with what methods and means must the filmically portrayed fact be handled so that it simultaneously shows not only *what* the fact is, and the character's attitude towards it, but also *how* the author relates to it, and how the author wishes the spectator to receive, sense, and react to the portrayed fact.

Let us look at this from the viewpoint of composition alone, and there examine an instance where this task, of embodying the author's relation to a thing, is served primarily by composition, here understood as a law for the construction of a portrayal. This is extremely important for us, for though little enough has been written on the rôle of composition in cinema, the features of composition that we speak of here have been left unmentioned in film literature.

The object of imagery and the law of structure, by which it is represented, can coincide. This would be the simplest of cases, and the compositional problem in such an aspect more or less takes care of itself. This is the simplest type of structure: "sorrowful sorrow," "joyful joy," "a marching march," etc. In other words: the hero sorrows, and in unison with him sorrows nature, and lighting, sometimes the composition of the shot, and (more rarely) the rhythm of the montage—but most often of all, we just add sad music to it. The same thing happens when we handle "joyful joy," and other similar simplicities.

Even in these simplest cases it is perfectly evident what nourishes composition and from where it derives its experience and material: *composition takes the structural elements of the portrayed phenomena* and from these composes its *canon for building the containing work*.

In doing this composition actually takes such elements, first of all, from the structure of the *emotional behavior of man*, joined with the *experienced content* of this or that portrayed phenomenon.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

This is an Art
Which does mend Nature: change it rather, but
The Art itself, is Nature.

SHAKESPEARE, *The Winter's Tale*

All is in man—all is for man.

GOETTY 1

LET US say that grief is to be represented on the screen. There is no such thing as grief "in general." Grief is concrete; it is always attached to something; it has conveyors, when your film's characters grieve; it has consumers, when your portrayal of grief makes the spectators sorrow, too.

This latter result is not always obligatory for your portrayal of grief: the grief of an enemy, after his defeat, arouses joy in the spectator, who identifies his feelings with those of the conqueror on the screen.

Such considerations are obvious enough, yet beneath them lies one of the most difficult problems in constructing works of art, touching the most exciting part of our work: *the problem of portraying an attitude toward the thing portrayed*.

One of the most active means of portraying this attitude is in composition. Though this attitude can never be shown by composition alone. Nor is it the sole task of composition.

I wish to take up in this essay this particular question: how far the embodiment of this attitude can be achieved within narrowly compositional means. We have long since realized that an attitude to a portrayed fact can be embodied in the *way* the fact is presented. Even such a master of "attitude" as Franz Kafka recognized physical viewpoint as critical:

The diversity of ideas which one can have, say, of an apple: the apple as it appears to the child who must stretch his neck so as

It is for this reason that real composition is invariably *profoundly human*—be it the “leaping” rhythmic structure of gay episodes, the “drawn-out monotonal” montage of a sad scene, or the “joyful sparkling” tone of a shot.

Diderot deduced the theory that compositional *principles* in vocal, and later in instrumental, music derived from the basic intonations of living emotional speech (as well as from sound phenomena perceived by our ancestors in surrounding nature).

And Bach—master of the most intricate compositional forms—maintained a similarly *human approach* to the fundamentals of composition as a direct pedagogical premise. In describing Bach's teaching methods, Forkel writes:

He considered his voices as if they were persons who conversed together like a select company. If there were three, each could sometimes be silent and listen to the others till it again had something to the purpose to say.⁸

It is exactly thus, on a base of interplaying human emotions, on a base of human experience, that the cinema must also build its structural approaches and its most difficult compositional constructions.

Take, for example, one of the most successful scenes in *Alexander Nevsky*—the attack by the German wedge on the Russian army at the beginning of the Battle on the Ice.

This episode passes through all the shades of an experience of increasing terror, where approaching danger makes the heart contract and the breathing irregular. The structure of this “leaping wedge” in *Alexander Nevsky* is, with variations, exactly modeled on the inner process of such an experience. This dictated all the rhythms of the sequence—cumulative, disjunctive, the speeding up and slowing down of the movement. The boiling pulsing of an excited heart dictated the rhythm of the leaping hoofs: pictorially—the *leap* of the galloping knights; compositionally—the *beat* to the bursting point of an excited heart.

To produce the success of this sequence, both the pictorial

and compositional structures are fused in the welded unity of a terrifying image—the beginning of a battle that is to be a fight to the finish.

And the event, as it is unfolded on the screen according to a timetable of the running of this or that passion, thrown back from the screen, involves the emotions of the spectator according to the same timetable, arousing in him the same tangle of passions which originally designed the compositional scheme of the work.

This is the secret of the genuinely emotional affect of real composition. Employing for source *the structure of human emotion, it unmistakably appeals to emotion*, unmistakably arouses the complex of those feelings that gave birth to the composition.

In all the media of art—and in film art most of all, no matter how neglected by this medium—it is by such means, primarily, that is achieved what Lev Tolstoy said of music:

Music carries me immediately and directly into that mental corner in which the man was who composed it.⁴

That—from the simplest to the most complicated cases—is *one* of the possible *types* of construction to be considered.

But there is also another case, when, instead of a resolution of the “joyful joy” type, the author is forced to find the compositional vessel for, say, the theme of “life-affirming death.” What would happen here?

Apparently, the law of constructing works of art in such a case cannot be nourished *exclusively* by elements issuing directly from the natural and habitual emotions, conditions, and sensations of man, attendant on such a phenomenon.

Yet the law of composition remains unchanged in such a case.

Such schemes of composition will have to be sought not so much among the emotions attached to the portrayed thing, but primarily among the emotions attached to the author's *relationship to the thing portrayed*.

Strictly speaking, this also is a factor in the above example

of the "wedge" in *Alexander Nevsky*, only with this peculiarity, that there the emotion of the portrayed thing coincides with the emotion of the author's relationship to the portrayed thing.

But such a case is rather rare and is by no means obligatory for all cases. In such cases there commonly arises a quite curious and often unexpected picture of a transferred phenomenon, constructed in a way unusual in "normal" circumstances. Literature abounds in such examples of all degrees, often touching the primary elements of compositional development, such as an imagist structure, resolved possibly through a system of similes.

The pages of literature offer us models of completely unexpected compositional structures, in which are presented phenomena that "in themselves" are quite ordinary. These structures are not in the least determined, nourished, or brought into being by formalist excesses or extravagant researches.*

The examples I have in mind come from realistic classics—and they are classical because with these means the examples embody with maximum clarity a maximum clear judgment of a phenomenon, a maximum clear relation to the phenomenon. How often in literature do we encounter descriptions of "adultery"! No matter how varied the situations, circumstances, and imagist comparisons in which this has been portrayed—there is hardly a more impressive picture than the one where "the sinful embrace of the lovers" is imagistically compared with—murder.

She felt so guilty, so much to blame, that it only remained for her to humble herself and ask to be forgiven; but she had no one in the world now except him, so that even her prayer for forgiveness was addressed to him. Looking at him, she felt her humiliation physically, and could say nothing more. He felt what a murderer must feel when looking at the body he has deprived of life. The body he had deprived of life was their love, the first period of their love. There was something frightful and revolting in the recollection of what had been paid for with this terrible

* Two phrases commonly employed by Eisenstein's critics—EDITOR.

price of shame. The shame she felt at her spiritual nakedness communicated itself to him. But in spite of the murderer's horror of the body of his victim, that body must be cut in pieces and hidden away, and he must make use of what he has obtained by the murder.

Then, as the murderer desperately throws himself on the body, as though with passion, and drags it and hacks it, so Vronsky covered her face and shoulders with kisses.

She held his hand and did not move. Yes! These kisses were what had been bought by that shame! "Yes, and this hand, which will always be mine, is the hand of my accomplice."⁵

In this passage from *Anna Karenina* the imagist structure of its simile throughout the whole magnificently ferocious scene is resolved from the most profound relation of its author to the phenomenon, rather than from the feelings and emotions of its participants (as is this same theme, for example, in infinite variations, solved by Zola throughout the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle).

On *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy placed an epigraph from the Epistle to the Romans: "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*" In a letter to Veresayev (23 May 1907) Mikhail Sukhotin quoted what Tolstoy meant by this epigraph, which had moved Veresayev:

... I must repeat, that I chose this epigraph to express the idea that whatever is evil, whatever man does, brings bitter consequences, not from people, but from God and from what Anna Karenina experiences herself.⁶

It is in the second part of the novel, from which our passage is taken, that Tolstoy assumes the particular task of demonstrating "whatever is evil, whatever man does."

The temperament of the writer forces him to feel in the forms of the highest level of evil—in crime. The temperament of the moralist forces him to appraise this evil on the highest level of crime against a person—murder. And finally, the temperament of the artist forces this estimate of the behavior of his character to be presented with the help of all expressive means available to him.

Crime—murder—is established as the *basic expressive relation of the author* to the phenomenon, and is simultaneously established as the *determinant of all basic elements for the compositional treatment of the scene*.

It dictates the images and the smiles:

He felt what a murderer must feel when looking at the body he has deprived of life. The body he had deprived of life was their love. . . .

as well as the images of the characters' behavior, prescribing the fulfillment of actions, peculiar to love, in forms peculiar to murder:

. . . as the murderer desperately throws himself on the body, as though with passion, and drags it and hacks it, so Vronsky covered her face and shoulders with kisses.

These absolutely exact "directives," defining the shading of behavior, were chosen from thousands of possibilities for the reason that they correspond identically with the relation of the author himself to the phenomenon.

The idea of evil, compositionally expressed through the image of crime—murder—as resolved in the cited scene, can be encountered elsewhere in Tolstoy's art. For him, this is a beloved image.

This is his compositional-imagist structure, not only for "adultery," but also for the "swinish connexion" within the bonds of marriage.

We again find this theme in *The Kreuzer Sonata*. Two fragments from Pozdnyshyev's narrative show it clearly. The second of these (regarding the children) expands the frame of reference, providing a renewed unexpectedness of outer compositional construction, issuing as a whole, however, from Tolstoy's inner relation to the theme:

"I wondered what embittered us against one another, yet it was perfectly simple: that animosity was nothing but the protest of our human nature against the animal nature that overpowered it. "I was surprised at our enmity to one another, yet it could not

have been otherwise. That hatred was nothing but the mutual hatred of accomplices in a crime—both for the increment to the crime and for the part taken in it. What was it but a crime, when she, poor thing, became pregnant in the first month, and our *swinish* connexion continued? You think I am straying from my subject? Not at all! I am telling you *how* I killed my wife. They asked me at the trial with what, and how, I killed her. Fools! They thought I killed her with a knife, on the 5th of October. It was not then I killed her, but much earlier. Just as they are all now killing, all, all. . . ."⁷

"So the presence of children not only failed to improve our life, but poisoned it. Besides, the children were a new cause of disension. As soon as we had children they became the means and the object of our discord, and more often the older they grew. They were not only the object of discord, but the weapons of our strife. We used our children, as it were, to fight one another with. Each of us had a favorite weapon among them for our strife. I used to fight her chiefly through Vasya, the eldest boy, and she me through Lisa. . . . They, poor things, suffered terribly from this, but we, with our incessant warfare, had no time to think of that. . . ."⁸

As we can see, no matter what example we take, the method of composition remains the same. In all cases, its basic determinant remains primarily *the relation of the author*. In all cases, it is the *deed* of man and the *structure* of human deeds that prefigures the composition.

The decisive factors of the compositional structure are taken by the author from the basis of his relation to phenomena. This dictates structure and characteristics, through which the portrayal itself is unfolded. Losing none of its reality, the portrayal emerges from this, immeasurably enriched in both intellectual and emotional qualities.

Another example may be offered here. Its interest lies in the delineation of two characters by an imagery that is customary and even routine, perfectly natural in both structure and characteristics, but the structural means is consciously produced by . . . *an exchange of structures!*

These personages are a German officer and a French prostitute.

The imagist structure of a "noble officer" is employed for the prostitute. In the same way the most repellent elements in the imagist structure of a prostitute serve as skeletal outline for the German officer.

This ingenious "contra-dance" idea was Maupassant's—used in "Mademoiselle Fifi."

The image of the Frenchwoman is woven from all the traits of nobility, linked with a middle-class attitude towards army officers. Consistent with this method, the *substance* of the German officer is revealed in its prostitute nature. From this "nature" Maupassant seized only one trait—its destructiveness of the "moral principles" of bourgeois society. Further interest for us is lent to this aspect in that Maupassant took this over from a similar scheme that in a finished form was well-known and fresh in the public's memory—perhaps so that his readers could not possibly miss his point! The portrait structure of his German officer is cut from a pattern designed by Zola.

The Baron Wilhelm von Eyrick, nicknamed "Mademoiselle Fifi," is, of course, "Nana."

Not the whole figure of Nana, but Nana in that part of the novel where Zola raises this image to immense destructive powers that are directed against well-ordered families, symbolically climaxed by Nana's destructive caprice in smashing the family heirlooms brought to her by her admirers. The generalized presentation of the courtesan's destructive powers for family and society is further "materialized" by the particular breaking of the bonbonnière of Dresden china and her "general massacre" of the heap of other valuable gifts that serve as a symbol of the "high society" which is mockingly broken by Nana's caprices.

The structure of the officer's behavior is absolutely identical with the structure of Nana's behavior in this scene. Even within the surface similarity of the names of "Nana" and "Fifi" there is a further clue to this identity: the Baron's nickname

was given him for his habit of expressing his contempt for everyone and everything around him—"fi, fi, donc!"

And in the story as a whole we have a fine model of the compositional re-channeling of a customary naturalistic imagery into a structural framework suitable to the author's requirements.

We have examined cases that are quite descriptive, palpable, and easily apparent. The very same principles, however, lie in the deepest elements of compositional structure, in those strata that can be uncovered only by the scalpel of the most pedantic and probing analysis.

And everywhere we see as basic the same *humanity* and *human psychology, nourishing and shaping the most intricate compositional elements of form exactly as it feeds and defines the content of the work.*

I wish to illustrate this with two complex and seemingly abstract examples, in regard to the composition of *Potemkin*. These will serve as examples of structure and composition in the broadest sense of the terms, corroborating what has been said above.

When *Potemkin* is discussed two of its features are commonly remarked: The organic construction of its composition as a whole. And the pathos* of the film. Sacrificing grace to precision, we can refer to these two qualities as:

ORGANIC-NESS and PATHOS

Taking these two most noticed features of *Potemkin*, let us attempt to uncover the means by which they were achieved, primarily in the field of composition. We shall observe the first feature in the composition as a whole. For the second, we shall take the episode of the Odessa steps, where the pathos of the film achieves its greatest dramatic tension.

We are here concerned with how the organic-ness and pathos of the theme are resolved by specifically compositional

* This is a much abused term, used here in its original sense.

means. In the same way we could take apart these qualities to see how they are resolved by other factors; we could examine the contribution to organic-ness and pathos made by the actors' performances, by the treatment of the story, by the light and color scale of the photography, by the mass-scenes, by the natural backgrounds, etc.

That is, we take up this matter from one narrow, particular question of structure, and by no means pretend to a thorough analysis of all the film's aspects.

However, in an organic work of art, elements that nourish the work as a whole pervade all the features composing this work. A unified canon pierces not only the whole and each of its parts, but also each area that is called to participate in the work of composition. One and the same principle will feed any area, advancing in each its own qualitative signs of distinction. And only in such a case may one speak of the organic-ness of a work, for an organism is here understood as defined by Engels in *Dialectics of Nature*: "... the organism is certainly a higher unity . . ."

These considerations bring us at once to our first matter—to the question of the "organic" structure of *Potemkin*.

We shall attempt to approach this question, proceeding from the premise established at the opening of this essay. The organic-ness of a work, as well as the sensation of organic-ness that is received from the work, must rise in that case where the law of building the work answers *the law of structure in natural organic phenomena*.

It must be quite evident that we are speaking here of the sensation of compositional organic-ness in the whole. This can break down the resistance even of that spectator whose class allegiance is in sharp opposition to the direction taken by the subject and the theme of the work, i.e., those spectators for whom neither theme nor subject is "organic." This partially explains the reception given *Potemkin* outside the Soviet Union.

Let us be more precise: What do we mean by the organic-ness of building the work? I should say that we have two kinds of organic-ness.

The first is characteristic of any work that possesses wholeness and inner laws. In this case organic-ness can be defined by the fact that the work as a whole is governed by a certain law of structure and that all its parts are subordinated to this canon. The German estheticians would label this: organic-ness of a general order. It is apparent that in our instance of this principle we have a pattern of the principle on which natural phenomena are built and about which Lenin said:

The particular does not exist outside that relationship which leads to the general. The general exists only in the particular, through the particular. . . .⁹

But the *law* itself by which these natural phenomena are constructed, as yet in this first case by no means certainly coincides with that canon on which one or another work of art is constructed.

The second kind of organic-ness of a work is present together with not only the very *principle of organic-ness*, but also the *canon itself*, according to which natural phenomena are built. This may be termed organic-ness of a *particular or exceptional kind*. And it is this that is of especial interest for us.

We have before us a case where a work of art—*an art-ificial work*—is built on those same laws by which *non-artistic phenomena*—the "organic" phenomena of nature—are constructed.

There is in this case, not only a truthful realistic subject, but also, in its forms of compositional embodiment, a truthful and full reflection of a canon peculiar to actuality.

Evidently, whatever may be the kind of organic-ness in it, the work has a completely individual affect on its perceivers, not only because it is raised to the level of natural phenomena, but also because the laws of its construction are simultaneously the laws governing those who perceive the work, inasmuch as this audience is also part of organic nature. Each spectator feels himself organically related, fused, united with a work of such a type, just as he senses himself united and fused with organic nature around him.

To a greater or lesser degree each of us inevitably experiences this sensation, and the secret lies in the fact that in this case *we and the work* are governed by *one and the same canon*. We can observe nature operating within this canon in both the examples chosen, though they would appear to touch two different and independent questions. These do, however, meet each other finally.

The first example is devoted to an analysis of this canon in static conditions; the second analyzes the dynamic operation of this canon.

Our first example will raise questions of parts and proportions in the structure of the work. Our second—the *movements* of the structure of the work.

This means that the solution of the first question of the organic structure of *Potemkin* must begin with the deciphering of that which is subordinate to the first structural condition—*organic-ness of a general kind*.

Potemkin looks like a chronicle (or newsreel) of an event, but it functions as a drama.

The secret of this lies in the fact that the chronicle pace of the event is fitted to a severely tragic composition. And furthermore, to tragic composition in its most canonic form—the five-act tragedy. Events, regarded almost as naked facts, are broken into five tragic acts, the facts being selected and arranged in sequence so that they answer the demands set by classical tragedy: a third act quite distinct from the second, a fifth distinct from the first, and so on.

The utility in the choice of a five-act structure in particular for this tragedy was, of course, by no means accidental, but was the result of prolonged natural selection—but we need not go into this history here. Enough that for the basis of our drama we took a structure that had been particularly tested by the centuries. This was further emphasized by the indi-

vidual titling of each "act." * Here, in condensation, are the contents of the five acts:

Part I—"Men and Maggots." Exposition of the action. Milieu of the battleship. Maggory meat. Discontent ferments among the sailors.

Part II—"Drama on the Quarterdeck." "All hands on deck!" Refusal of the wormy soup. Scene with the tarpaulin. "Brothers!" Refusal to fire. Mutiny. Revenge on the officers.

Part III—"Appeal from the Dead." Mist. The body of Vakulinchuk is brought into Odessa port. Mourning over the body. Indignation. Demonstration. Raising the red flag.

Part IV—"The Odessa Steps." Fraternalization of shore and battleship. Yawls with provisions. Shooting on the Odessa steps. The battleship fires on the "generals' staff."

Part V—"Meeting the Squadron." Night of expectation. Meeting the squadron. Engines. "Brothers!" The squadron refuses to fire. The battleship passes victoriously through the squadron.

In the action of its episodes each part of the drama is totally unlike the others, but piercing and, as it were, cementing them, there is a repeat.

In "Drama on the Quarterdeck," a tiny group of rebelling sailors (a small particle of the battleship) cries "Brothers!" as they face the guns of the firing squad. And the guns are lowered. The whole organism of the battleship joins them.

In "Meeting the Squadron," the whole rebellious battleship (a small particle of the fleet) throws the same cry of "Brothers!" towards the guns of the flagship, pointed towards the *Potemkin*. And the guns are lowered: the whole organism of the fleet has joined them.

From a tiny cellular organism of the battleship to the organism of the entire battleship; from a tiny cellular organism

* When *Potemkin* was exhibited outside the Soviet Union, these titles were invariably removed by the various adaptors; the only foreign prints of *Potemkin* restored to its original form are those circulated by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library.—EDITOR.

of the fleet to the organism of the whole fleet—thus flies through the theme the revolutionary feeling of brotherhood. And this is repeated in the structure of the work containing this theme—brotherhood and revolution.

Over the heads of the battleship's commanders, over the heads of the admirals of the czar's fleet, and finally over the heads of the foreign censors, rushes the whole film with its fraternal "Hurrah!" just as within the film the feeling of brotherhood flies from the rebellious battleship over the sea to the shore. The organic-ness of the film, born in the cell within the film, not only moves and expands throughout the film as a whole, but appears far beyond its physical limits—in the public and historical fate of the same film.

Thematically and emotionally this would, perhaps, be sufficient in speaking of organic-ness, but let us be formally more severe.

Look intently into the structure of the work.

In its five acts, tied with the general thematic line of revolutionary brotherhood, there is otherwise little that is similar externally. But in one respect they are absolutely alike: each part is distinctly broken into two almost equal halves. This can be seen with particular clarity from the second act on:

- II. Scene with the tarpaulin → mutiny
- III. Mourning for Vakulinchuk → angry demonstration
- IV. Lyrical fraternization → shooting
- V. Anxiously awaiting the fleet → triumph

Moreover, at the "transition" point of each part, the halt has its own peculiar kind of *caesura*.

In one part (III), this is a few shots of clenched fists, through which the theme of mourning the dead leaps into the theme of fury.

In another part (IV), this is a sub-title—"SUDDENLY"—cutting off the scene of fraternization, and projecting it into the scene of the shooting.

The motionless muzzles of the rifles (in Part II). The gaping mouths of the guns (in Part V). And the cry of "Brothers,"

upsetting the awful pause of waiting, in an explosion of brotherly feeling—in both moments.

And it should be further noted that the transition within each part is not merely a transition to a merely *different* mood, to a merely *different* rhythm, to a merely *different* event, but each time the transition is to a sharply opposite quality. Not merely contrasting, but *opposite*, for each time it *images exactly that theme from the opposite point of view*, along with the theme that *inevitably grows from it*.

The explosion of mutiny after the breaking point of oppression has been reached, under the pointed rifles (Part II).

Or the explosion of wrath, organically breaking from the theme of mass mourning for the murdered (Part III).

The shooting on the steps as an organic "deduction" of the reaction to the fraternal embrace between the *Potemkin's* rebels and the people of Odessa (Part IV), and so on.

The unity of such a canon, recurring in *each act* of the drama, is already self-evident.

But when we look at the work as a whole, we shall see that such is the whole structure of *Potemkin*.

Actually, near the middle, the film as a whole is cut by the dead halt of a *caesura*; the stormy action of the beginning is completely halted in order to take a fresh start for the second half of the film. This similar *caesura*, within the film as a whole, is made by the episode of the dead Vakulinchuk and the harbor mists.

For the entire film this episode is a halt before the same sort of transfer that occurs in those moments cited above within the separate parts. And with this moment the theme, breaking the ring forged by the sides of one rebellious battleship, bursts into the embrace of a whole city which is topographically *opposed to the ship*, but is in feeling fused into a unity with it; a unity that is, however, broken away from it by the soldiers' boots descending the steps at that moment when the theme once more returns to the drama at sea.

We see how organic is the progressive development of the theme, and at the same time we also see how the structure of

Potemkin, as a whole, flows from this movement of the theme, which operates for the whole exactly as it does for its fractional members.

We need not seek in nature for what appears to be pathos *per se*. We shall confine ourselves to an analysis in a work of pathos from the viewpoint of its receiver or, more exactly, in regard to the theatrical media, from the viewpoint of its affect on the spectator. Moving from these basic features of affect we shall attempt to define those basic features of construction which a composition of pathos must possess. And then we can verify these features with the particular example that concerns us. Nor will I deny myself the satisfaction of concluding with a few general considerations.

For our purpose let us first sketch in a few words the affect of pathos. We'll deliberately do this with the most trivial and banal symptoms possible. Out of this the most prominent and characteristic features will bring themselves to our attention.

For the most primitive illustration let us take a simple description of the superficial signs of external behavior in a spectator gripped by pathos.

But these signs are so symptomatic that they at once bring us to the core of the question. Pathos shows its affect—when the spectator is compelled to jump from his seat. When he is compelled to collapse where he stands. When he is compelled to applaud, to cry out. When his eyes are compelled to shine with delight, before gushing tears of delight. . . . In brief—when the spectator is forced "to go out of himself."

To use a prettier term, we might say that the affect of a work of pathos consists in whatever "sends" the spectator into ecstasy. Actually there is nothing to be added to such a formulation, for the symptoms above say exactly this: *ex-stasis*—literally, "standing out of oneself," which is to say, "going out of himself," or "departing from his ordinary condition." All our symptoms follow this formula to the letter. Seated—

he stands. Standing—he collapses. Motionless—he moves. Silent—he cries out. Dull—he shines. Dry—he is moistened by tears. In each instance occurs a "departure from a condition," a "going out of himself."

But this is not all: "to go out of oneself" is not to go into *nothing*. To go out of oneself inevitably implies a transition to something else, to something different in quality, to something opposite to what was (immobility—into movement; silence—into noise; etc.).

Even in such a superficial description of ecstatic affect, produced by a structure of pathos, it is self-evident what basic indications structure must possess in a composition of pathos. By all its indications such a structure must maintain the condition of "going out of oneself" and incessant transition to differing qualities.

To leave oneself, to remove oneself from one's customary equilibrium and condition, and to pass over into a new condition—all this of course penetrates the affective conditions of every art that is capable of gripping a perceiver. And the media of art tend to group themselves according to their capability in achieving this affect. Ranged in this way, the possession of this general quality shows its fundamental vitality to the highest degree. Apparently, structures of pathos are the culminating points along this single road.

And, apparently, all other varieties of composition in artistic works may be examined, and they will be found to be *diminished* derivatives of *maximum instances* (producing "departures from oneself" to a maximum degree), employing a *pathetic type of structure*.

No one should be alarmed by the fact that in speaking of pathos, I have not yet once touched the question of theme and content. We are not discussing here pathetic content in general, but rather of the meaning of pathos as realized in composition. The same fact may enter a work of art in any aspect of treatment: from the cold protocol form of a précis to a hymn of genuine pathos. And it is these particular artistic

means, lifting the "recording" of an event to the heights of pathos, that interest us here.

Unquestionably this primarily depends on the author's relation to the content. But composition in this meaning, as we comprehend it here, is also a construction which, in the first place, serves to embody the author's relation to the content, at the same time compelling the spectator to relate himself to the content in the same way.

In this essay we are therefore less interested in the question of the "nature" of pathos in one or another phenomenon; this is always socially relative. We shall also not pause on the character of the author's pathetic relation to this or to that phenomenon, just as obviously socially relative. We are interested (by the *a priori* presence of both) in the narrowly posed problem of how this "relation" to "natural phenomena" is realized by composition within the conditions of a pathetic structure.

And so, in following that thesis, already once justified in the question of organic-ness, we can affirm that, in wishing to gain a maximum "departure from oneself" in the spectator, we are obliged in the work to suggest to him a corresponding "guide." Following this guide he will enter into the desired condition.

The simplest "prototype" of such imitative behavior will be, of course, that of a person ecstatically following, on the screen, a personage gripped by pathos, a personage who in one way or another, "goes out of himself."

Here structure will coincide with imagery. And the object of the imagery—the *behavior* of such a man—will itself flow according to the conditions of "ecstatic" structure. This may even be shown in speech indications. The *unorganized* customary flow of speech, made pathetic, immediately invents the pattern of clearly behavioristic *rhythm*; prose that is also *prosaic* in its forms, begins to scintillate at once with forms and turns of speech that are *poetic* in nature (unexpected metaphors, the appearance of expressive images, etc.). There is no indication of speech or other human manifestation that would

not show, at such a moment, this transfer from one quality into a new quality.

On this ladder the first rung is a line of compositional possibilities. A case will become more complicated and more affective when this basic condition does not stop with man, but goes itself "beyond the limits" of man, radiating out into the surroundings and environment of a personage, that is, when his very surroundings also are presented in, say, his condition of "frenzy." Shakespeare has given us a classical example of this in the "frenzy" of Lear, a frenzy that goes beyond the boundaries of the personage, into the "frenzy" of nature itself—into a tempest.

For the same resolutions of material in any customary means, examples may be found in the richest abundance among the naturalists of the Zola school and, in the first place, in Zola himself. In Zola the very description of the surroundings, fusing its details with the separate phases of an event in each scene, is always selected and presented in a *realistic* and *physiocal* way, but always as required by the structure of the condition.* This holds true for any of his compositional structures, but is particularly graphic in those cases where Zola raises to pathos an event that is by no means obliged to be pathetic.

Not in the rhythm of prose, nor in a system of images and similes, nor in the scenic structure—nor in any purely compositional elements of episodes does a structural canon seem absolutely necessary to Zola for his scenes; he is almost solely guided by his formula in portraying phenomena and the portrayed people act according to the author's laws.

This is so typical for Zola's manner that it would be possible to take this as a specific process characteristic of the methods

* Though Zola prided himself on his "scientific documentation," he was a master in selecting and arranging raw material for his own undeniably artistic purposes. Even in his "documentary" notes for *L'Assommoir* one sees the compositional imagination at work in the naked "lists" describing, for example, his central tenement, or the opening violence in the washing-house, or the bitterly fantastic details of Coupeau's alcoholic death.¹⁰ The works of Frank Norris reveal similar environmental compositions.

used by the naturalists of this school. In this way primary value is given to *an arrangement of phenomena, which themselves flow ecstatically*, in themselves "going out of themselves," for it is at exactly such moments of their existence that they are seized for description.

And this method is also accompanied by a second, already rudimentary compositional method: the representation of phenomena as distributed in such a way *among themselves, that each of them in relation to each other seems a transition from one intensity to another, from one "dimension" to another*.

And it is only in the third and last place that this school rarely employs conditions pointing towards such purely compositional elements as movements within the changing rhythms of prose, within the nature of the language, or general structure in the movement of episodes and links between episodes. This part of work falls historically to the share of the school that replaced that of "naturalism," the school which in its enthusiasm for this side of the matter often achieves this to the detriment of a good "Rubens-esque" materiality of imagery, so characteristic for Zola.

With this in mind let us return to the principal object of our inspection—to the "Odessa steps." Look how this event there is presented and arranged.

In the first place, noticing the *frenzied condition of the people and masses that are portrayed*, let us go on to find what we are looking for in structural and compositional indications.

Let us concentrate on the line of *movement*.

There is, before all else, a chaotic *close-up* rush of figures.

And then, as chaotic a rush of figures in *long-shot*.

Then the *chaos* of movement changes to a design: the *rhythmic* descending feet of the soldiers.

Tempo increases. Rhythm accelerates.

In this acceleration of *downward* rushing movement there is a suddenly upsetting opposite movement—*upward*: the *break-neck* movement of the *mass* downward leaps over into a

slowly solemn movement upward of the mother's lone figure, carrying her dead son.

Mass. Break-neck speed. Downward.

And then suddenly: A lone figure. Slow solemnity. Upward. But—this is only for an instant. Once more we experience a returning leap to the downward movement.

Rhythm accelerates. Tempo increases.

Suddenly the tempo of the *running crowd* leaps over into the next category of speed—into a *rolling baby-carriage*. It propels the idea of rushing downward into the next dimension—*from rolling, as understood "figuratively," into the physical fact of rolling*. This is not merely a change in levels of tempo. This is furthermore as well a *leap in display method* from the figurative to the physical, taking place within the representation of rolling.

Close-ups leap over into long-shots.

Chaotic movement (of a mass)—into *rhythmic* movement (of the soldiers).

One aspect of moving speed (rushing people)—into the next stage of the same theme of moving speed (rolling baby-carriage).

Movement *downward*—into movement *upward*.

Many volleys of *many* rifles—into *one* shot from *one* of the *battle*ship's guns.

Stride by stride—a leap from dimension to dimension. A leap from quality to quality. So that in the final accounting, rather than in a separate episode (the baby-carriage), *the whole method of exposing* the entire event likewise accomplishes its leap: a *narrative* type of exposition is replaced (in the montage rousing of the stone lion) and transferred to the concentrated structure of *imagery*. Visually rhythmic prose leaps over into visually poetic speech.

In a compositional structure identical with human behavior in the grip of pathos, as remarked above, the sequence of the Odessa steps is carried along with such transfers to opposites: chaos is replaced by rhythm, prose—by poetic treatment, etc. Down each step gallops the action, propelled downward by an

ascending leap from quality to quality, to deeper intensity, to broader dimension.

And we see the theme of pathos, rushed down the steps by the pathos of the shooting, piercing as well to the depths of the basic structure, which gives a plastic and rhythmic accompaniment to the event.*

Is this episode on the steps unique? Does it fall away from, in this feature, from the general type of construction? Not in the least. In it these features, characteristic for the method, are only a pointed culmination, as pointed as the episode itself, which is a culmination in the tragic quality of the film as a whole.

I have mentioned the *caesurae* in the action, "leaping over" or "transferring" to a new quality that was, in each case, the *maximum of all availables*, and was, each time, a leap into *opposition*. All determining compositional elements encountered anywhere appear in such a way, showing us a fundamental ecstatic formula: the leap "out of oneself" invariably becomes a leap to a new quality, and most often of all achieves the diapason of a leap into opposition.

Here is another organic secret: a leaping imagist movement from quality to quality is *not a mere formula of growth*, but is more, a *formula of development*—a development that involves us in its canon, not only as a single "vegetative" unit, *subordinate to the evolutionary laws of nature*, but makes us, instead, a *collective and social unit, consciously participating in its development*. For we know that this very leap, in the interpretation of social phenomena, is present in those revolutions to which social development and the movement of society are directed.

For the third time the organic-ness of *Potemkin* appears before us, *for that leap which characterizes the structure of each compositional link and the composition of the film as a whole, is an infusion into the compositional structure of the most de-*

* I have pointed out previously that this analysis is of solely compositional "main-lines." The fabric of *Potemkin* holds up, however, just as well under more microscopic examination, as in the analysis of fourteen shots, on pages 115-120.

termining element of the content's very theme—the revolutionary explosion, as one of the leaps which function as inseparable bonds of the conducting consciousness of social development.

But:

A leap. A transition from quantity to quality. A transition to opposition.

All these are elements of a dialectical movement of development, elements which enter into the comprehension of materialist dialectics. And from this—for the structure of the work we are analyzing as well as for the structure of any construction of pathos—we can say that a pathetic structure is one that compels us, echoing its movement, *to re-live the moments of culmination and substitution* that are in the canon of all dialectical processes.

We understand a *moment* of culmination to mean those points in a process, those *instants* in which water becomes a new substance—steam, or ice—water, or pig-iron—steel. Here we see the same going out of oneself, moving from one condition, and passing from quality to quality, *ecstasis*. And if we could register psychologically the perceptions of water, steam, ice, and steel at these critical *moments*—moments of *culmination* in the leap, this would tell us something of pathos, of ecstasy!

Born from the pathos of the theme, the compositional structure echoes that basic and unique canon, by which is achieved the organic, social, or any other process given substance by the universe and through participation in this canon (the reflection of which is our consciousness, and its area of application—all our existence) cannot but fill us to the highest point with emotional sensation—pathos.

A question remains—How is the artist to achieve practically these formulae of composition? By a druggist's prescription? By some slide-rule? By specimens of penmanship? With a skeleton key?

These compositional formulae are to be found in any fully pathetic work. But they are not to be achieved by any single *a priori* compositional computation. Skill alone, craftsmanship alone, mastery alone, is not enough.

To achieve the heights of genuine organic-ness, of genuine pathos, in its highest form, all this is absolutely necessary, but this alone is too little.

Only when the work becomes organic, only when it can enter the conditions of a higher organic-ness—into the field of pathos as we understand it, when the theme and content and idea of the work become an organically continuous unity with the ideas, the feelings, with the very breath of the author.

Only when organic-ness itself takes on the strictest forms of constructing a work, only when the artistry of a master's perceptions reach the last gleam of formal perfection.

Then and then only will occur a genuine organic-ness of a work, which enters the circle of natural and social phenomena as a fellow member with equal rights, as an independent phenomenon.

1 January 1939

Post Scriptum:

This may be the most appropriate place for an answer to a question in regard to the connection between the eccentricism that was characteristic of my theater work, and the pathos that distinguishes my film work. This is an apparent paradox that was pointed out, many years ago, by Victor Shklovsky:

For the creation of his heroic style Eisenstein had to come to it through the montage of eccentric attractions.¹¹

Let us go back to those tendencies in the field of expressiveness that led to eccentricism in my theater work of 1920-23.

I dreamed then of a theater "of such emotional saturation that the wrath of a man would be expressed in a backward somersault from a trapeze."

And this dream was connected with the dramatic or, more exactly, the melodramatic—the *serious*—theater!

Of course, this was not without the intertwinning of the most varied influences, but in this initial formula there was already the inference of two basic theses, altogether individual and characteristic for my future program of activity as well as for the methods of its execution.

The first was a *maximum degree of passion as a point of departure*. And, second—a *breaking of the customary dimension as a method of its embodiment*.

From this point of view, our program doesn't sound so "crazy."

In those first days, however, these theses were used not as *principles*, but were carried out *directly and literally*. And therefore they found their way, not into drama, but were made familiar through the buffonade, eccentricism, and the montage of attractions.

This dream was realized in its purest form in the circus treatment given Ostrovsky's *Enough Simplicity in Every Sage*. In one scene Maxim Shtraukh, playing Mamayev, and growing angry with his nephew for a caricature he had made of him, threw himself at him head first, breaking through the paper of the portrait in a flying somersault beyond the frame.

This moment can be thought of as symbolic of the whole production both in form and in execution: intensity of action everywhere "flew" beyond the limits of the accepted norm of representation, forcing the action with an unusual degree of tension to jump beyond the limits of the accepted measure and the accepted dimension.

In another part of the play we needed a "tense" scene. Glumov's diary is stolen by Goluvvin and handed over to Mamayeva.

"Tension" was taken beyond the frame of a tense performance of the dialogue: we introduced a *new measure* of tension into the scene—a tight-rope. Goluvvin, balancing and running along it, spoke his lines. The tension of such an "act on wire" extends the *conventional* tension of acting and transfers it into a new level of *real* physical tension.

Throughout the production there was a continuity of the-

atrical playing, but at the slightest "rise in temperature," this theatrical "play" leaped over into circus "work": a running jump from quality to quality.

A gesture turns into gymnastics, rage is expressed through a somersault, exaltation through a salto-mortale, lyricism on "the mast of death." The grotesque of this style permitted leaps from one type of expression to another. . . .*

The method worked in comedy, for the leap—a *dynamic* characteristic in a successive process—always proceeds from inside a *static* condition—of a forced external observance of *simultaneity* (ie., of the same dimension).

The "new quality" was treated as if it were the old—the "preceding" quality. This is in itself one of the means of achieving comic effects. How amusing it is, for example, when the latest stage of conveyance is forced to be dependent on the conveyance of an earlier epoch—when an automobile is harnessed to . . . oxen (as in *Little Red Devils*) or to mules (as in *Le dernier milliardaire*).

It is important that the author himself, in this case, while accomplishing the leap from theater to cinema, also accomplished an inner leap in understanding the method: in practice he understood that the method of the leap, comical under conditions of static appearance, works pathetically under conditions of a dynamic process. But this is something to be discussed in more detail on another occasion.

It is sufficient in the present essay to say that the connection between my eccentric theater work and my pathetic cinema work is more sequential and organic than one might have supposed at first glance!

A NOTE:

Sometimes it seems strange that in matters of practice in the sound-film, that I should resemble the last to arrive at the wedding! Youngest of our directors at the time of its inaugura-

* See "Through Theater to Cinema," above, page 7.

tion, and last to take part in its work. But on closer examination this is not quite so.

My first work in the sound-film was . . . in 1926. And in connection with (again!) *Potemkin*.

Potemkin—at least in its foreign circulation—had a special score written for it. The composer was Edmund Meisel, who wrote music for other silent films, both before and after his work on *Potemkin*. But there was nothing particularly extraordinary in this fact—for the history of silent films is sprinkled with such special scores. Music had even been used within the *filming* of certain films—for example, Ludwig Berger had filmed *Ein Walzertraum* to the music of Strauss.

Less usual, perhaps, was the way the *Potemkin* score was composed. It was written very much as we work today on a sound-track. Or rather, as we *should always work*, with creative friendship and friendly creative collaboration between composer and director.

With Meisel this took place in spite of the short time for composition that he was given, and the brevity of my visit to Berlin in 1926 for this purpose. He agreed at once to forego the purely illustrative function common to musical accompaniments at that time (and not only at that time!) and stress certain "effects," particularly in the "music of machines" in the last reel.

This was my only categorical demand: not only to reject customary melodiousness for this sequence of "Meeting the Squadron," relying entirely on a rhythmic beating of percussion, but also to give substance to this demand by establishing in the music as well as in the film at the decisive place a "throwing over" into a "new quality" in the *sound structure*.

So it was *Potemkin* at this point that stylistically broke away from the limits of the "silent film with musical illustrations" into a new sphere—into *sound-film*, where true models of this art-form live in a unity of fused musical and visual images,*

* As we see, our "Statement," appearing two years later [see page 257], posing in this way the question of the audio-visual image, was based on a few proved experiments.

composing the work with a united audio-visual image. It is exactly owing to these elements, anticipating the potentialities of an inner substance for composition in the sound-film, that the sequence of "Meeting the Squadron" (which along with the "Odessa steps" had such "crushing" effect abroad) deserves a leading place in the anthology of cinema.

It is especially interesting for me that the general construction of *Potemkin* (a leap into a new quality) maintained in the music everything that pierced the pathetic construction—the condition of a qualitative leap which we have seen in *Potemkin* was inseparable from the organism of the theme.

Here the "silent" *Potemkin* teaches the sound-film a lesson, emphasizing again and again the position that for an organic work a single law of construction must penetrate it decisively in all its "significances," and in order to be not "off-stage," but stand as an organic part of the film, the music must also be governed, not only by the same images and themes, but as well by the same basic laws and principles of construction that govern the work as a whole.

To a considerable degree I was able to accomplish this in the sound-film proper—in my first sound-film, *Alexander Nevsky*. It was possible to accomplish this, thanks to the collaboration with such a wonderful and brilliant artist as Sergei Prokofiev.¹²

ACHIEVEMENT

NEW INTELLECTUAL content, new forms for the embodiment of this content, new methods of theoretical comprehension—these are what startled foreign audiences of the Soviet cinema.

Though not always complete in their thematic solutions, nor perfected in their formal embodiment, and far from conclusive in theoretical knowledge and comprehension (all of which was critically perceived by ourselves), our films came as a revelation in the capitalist countries.

What an unexpected intellectual shock came to America and Europe with the appearance of films in which social problems were suddenly presented with all the dots on all the "i's"—to audiences that had heretofore seen only the rarest and vaguest hints of even an undotted "i" on their screens.

But that in itself was not enough. In this first formally imperfect period, our films, though novel in theme, aroused little more than curiosity.

I recall a half-ironical, half-fastidious appraisal (in, I believe, *Filmkurier*) at the time *Palace and Fortress*, one of our first exported films, was shown in Berlin:

This eye-scratching imperfection of harsh lighting, plus the crudeness of the whole treatment, does have a certain appeal and even piquancy for our jaded vision. . . .

And how deeply the emotions of the foreign spectator were scratched when, after *Potemkin*, our films charged down on him!

Born of new intellectual demands, and of the desire to live up to these demands and to be adequate to them, the formal