

# Greg Smith, Greg M. Smith: Moving Explosions

Moving Explosions: Metaphors of Emotion in Sergei Eisenstein's Writings

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In one of his most famous categorizations, Sergei Eisenstein creates a hierarchy of cinematic means from the simplest physiological stimuli (in "metric montage") to a primitive emotional appeal ("rhythmic montage") to the pinnacle of cinematic achievement: intellectual montage. (W 186-194) In this arrangement, one type of montage forms the basis for the next higher form. One can only rise to the heights of intellectual montage by standing on the shoulders of emotion, rhythm, and meter. Thus emotion is a helpful tool fully congruent with a cinematic appeal to humanity's highest faculties (the cognitive).

In later writings, however, Eisenstein seems to reverse himself and argue that the highest goal the cinema can achieve is ecstasy and pathos, emotional goals not intellectual ones. In fact, he states that ecstasy is ultimately valuable primarily because it is not intellectual. Instead it is "a transport out of understanding -- a transport out of conceptualization -- a transport out of imagery -- a transport out of the sphere of any rudiments of consciousness whatever in the sphere of 'pure' effect, feeling, sensation, 'state.'" (NN 178-179)

Yet at other times Eisenstein speaks of cognition and the emotions as being at cross purposes. When discussing expressive movement and the actor's work, he argues that conscious thought usually conflicts with more immediate emotional desires.<sup>(1)</sup> Here cognition's role is to retard the more instinctive forces of the emotions.

What is the relationship between cognition and emotion in Eisenstein's writings? Are emotions and thoughts fundamentally in conflict? Can they form an alliance in the hands of a gifted filmmaker? If so, how? Can conflicts between emotion and emotion be explained (as much else can for Eisenstein) through a dialectic tension? Are primitive emotions the gateway to higher cognition, or is emotion the ultimate goal of the cinema for Eisenstein? This article articulates Eisenstein's conceptions of the emotions: how they work (particularly in art), how filmmakers should use them, and how they relate to cognition. I cast Eisenstein in a new light: as a theorist/practitioner who is as consistently concerned with emotion as he is with montage. As Eisenstein changes his metaphorically rooted understanding of emotion, his aesthetic system changes. This article provides a new explanation for the evolution of Eisenstein's formalism, an explanation rooted in his changing notions about the emotions.

## The Process of Emotions

Sergei Eisenstein has had a seminal influence on both film theory and film production. He combined the roles of filmmaker, theoretician, and teacher to a degree matched by few others, and he saw these multiple activities as being deeply intertwined and complementary. Films provided a laboratory for him to experiment with his ideas, and he used the results of these experiments to alter his theoretical conceptions. Although his theories incorporate a remarkably eclectic blend of materials, they are rarely too far removed from practical application. Eisenstein balanced aesthetic theory and filmmaking practice in his teaching at Soviet film academies, and by combining aesthetic prescriptions in his writings with internationally acclaimed films (such as the landmark Battleship Potemkin), he modeled a complex understanding of the cinema that has been of seminal importance to many international film movements, including Italian neorealism, the French New Wave, and the modernist avant-garde.

Eisenstein's joint emphasis on theory and practice is characteristic of the Constructivist movement in 1920's Russia, though he called upon a wider range of materials than any of his peers. He situated the cinema in relation to art history and literature from both the West and the East and attempted to reclaim the radical potential of aesthetic techniques, freeing them from their bourgeois heritage. Along with fellow filmmakers and film writers Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, and V.I. Pudovkin, Eisenstein is best known for his emphasis on montage, on using the editing techniques pioneered by D. W. Griffith and others to create a disjunctive cinema. Throughout his life Eisenstein explored an alternative to the classical cinema, creating a model of cinema based on a variety of conflicts, tensions, and oppositions, not continuity. He sought to engage an active spectator by coordinating all the elements of filmmaking into a highly effective and aggressive whole.

Eisenstein is well known for advocating montage as a central component of cinema, but throughout his career he also championed emotion as the primary filmic concern. In his earliest writings he says that he regards "cinema as a factor for exercising emotional influence over the masses." (W 39, emphasis added) In his later work he says, "mainly, it is necessary that everything, beginning from the actor's performance and ending with the play of the folds of his clothes, be equally immersed in the sound of that single, increasingly defined emotion that lies at the basis of the polyphony of the whole multifaceted composition." (NN 305, emphasis added) If montage is the central formal principle for Eisenstein's work, emotion is the primary goal served by film style and is the beginning of all art. "Without the preconditions of love and hatred," he says, "no work of art can come into being." (TTM 294)

So what are the characteristics of emotion for Eisenstein? He conceived of emotion as a process, not just a gestalt of feeling tone that cannot be broken down. Emotions have a progression that can be consistently initiated if an actor or filmmaker or viewer can be led through a series of steps. (W 136, 141) Since emotions are processes, they can be broken down into component steps just as Taylorism breaks down industrial processes. Such processes are analyzable so that film practitioners can find more effective ways to evoke emotion, discovering new ways to access the emotional system. More efficiently

engineering the emotions is the task of the filmmaker.

Eisenstein believes that conscious awareness of emotional cueing is not necessary for emotional response. He believes that "there is an immense collection of so-called subsensory phenomena, i.e., those that act on us not only without being noticed in the field of consciousness but without being registered in our sensations." (NN 178) Low level sensory phenomena can have aesthetic and emotional ramifications even if they do not reach consciousness.

This is partly due to his construing of emotions as relatively instantaneous states, as opposed to the more deliberate calculations of the mind. He distinguishes between "immediate" reactions (comparable to reflexes) and "mediated" reactions ("on the basis of wisdom acquired through experience, i.e., of certain generalised data gained from the practice of immediate reaction"). (TTM 35) Conscious thought can weigh alternatives before deciding on a course of action, but emotion's reactions are closer to instincts in their speed and urgency. Since emotions are immediate, they necessarily cannot require the more time-consuming processes of cognition.

Eisenstein conceptualized emotions, therefore, as processes with all the immediacy and lack of consciousness of physical reflexes. They are not quite physical reflexes, however; they differ in that they can be altered and trained. Eisenstein believed that emotions are closer to Pavlovian conditioned reflexes, which exhibit "direct passion. . . grown wise with experience." (W 158) Although cognition is not required for evoking emotion, the emotions can be trained through conditioning to respond immediately in a manner shaped by conscious experience. Through social training our emotions can be consciously taught to react appropriately without the time-consuming deliberations of reasoning. For Eisenstein the mind-body dualism of passion and intellectualism can be resolved into a dialectic synthesis that he calls a "social reflex." (W 158)

These conditioned reflexes are based on associations, and creating, linking, and evoking associations in the audience's mind are the keys to emotional appeal for Eisenstein. The concept of associations is crucial for Eisenstein, because it allows him to talk about connections that may be either conscious/intellectual or below conscious level. The associations required for a Pavlovian conditioned reflex do not have to be conscious to be effective, although they may be. Whether forged in consciousness or in the unconscious, Eisensteinian associations are the basic mechanisms that enable emotions to be retrained into progressive new "social reflexes."

To train the spectator is to create new chains of associations based on existing associations. (TTM 260) Emotion can be transferred<sup>(2)</sup> from one object to another, associating an unconditioned (or already conditioned) response with a new object. Thus a primary characteristic of emotional associations is their flexibility, their ability to combine with other associations to create new configurations. This flexibility is what makes it possible to train a spectator, to get them to break the emotional habits they have developed. Because emotions are transferrable through creating new associative links, this opens up powerful potential for the practice of cinema.

How does Eisenstein recommend that the filmmaker create these new associations? The filmmaker selects "montage pieces, each of which provokes a certain association, the sum of which amounts to a composite complex of emotional feeling." (W 178) Each shot, even a simple image of a clock face, elicits a swarm of associations. A mental mechanism of psychic economy compresses these varied associations into a gestalt, and this end result is what we perceive as the image's unified association (ITM 300-301).

For instance, Eisenstein suggests that a montage of actions such as this one:

1. A hand raises a knife.
2. The eyes of the victim open wide.
3. His hands clutch the table.
4. The knife jerks.
5. The eyes close.
6. Blood spurts out.
7. A mouth shrieks.
8. Drops fall onto a shoe. . .

not only depicts the action of murder but also conveys the terror of a murder taking place. (W 178-179) What we are aware of is a unified feeling tone (terror); that tone is the product of combinations of associations from montage elements.

For Eisenstein the job of the filmmaker involves narrowing down these associations so that an image will efficiently evoke the appropriate response in the audience: "In the selection and presentation of this material the decisive factor should be the immediacy and economy of the resources expended in the cause of associative effect." (W 46) These carefully chosen filmic elements can combine to create a new compound, which itself can recombine to make a new associative complex, and so forth. The resulting chain of associations creates not a simple stream of information but a feeling. (W 178)

In his earlier writing, Eisenstein argues that this process works most forcefully when the montage combines "attractions," elements that clearly and aggressively influence the audience's emotions (such as a particular shot of a bull being butchered). Attractions are usually linked into simple contrasting comparisons: a crowd being massacred is linked to a cattle slaughter. Carefully combining such evocative comparisons concentrates the audience's emotions in a particular direction (toward the filmmaker's ends). (W 40-43) For early Eisenstein the primary mechanism for creating new associative links for the emotions is a simple comparison between images that themselves have clear and forceful emotional associations.

The centrality of the concept of associations allows Eisenstein to expand this process to include much less aggressive and more subtle cinematic material. The smallest details of film style also evoke associations, and Eisenstein in his later writing explores with increasing specificity how to combine

particular stylistic elements to provoke audience emotional responses.

In later work he rejects the notion that the conditioned reflex's one-to-one correspondence between stimulus and response applies to art. For example, color cannot be reduced to an absolute corresponding quality (red = anger). The audience response involves individual and cultural associations and depends largely on the context provided by the artwork. (TTM 357-370) However, he still uses "conditioned reflex" to describe the way that "objectless, formless" ecstasy can be linked to concrete imagery (e.g., religious iconography). (NN 179) Eisenstein uses the concept of associations to broaden his aesthetics from the one-to-one linkages (implied by the idea of a conditioned reflex) to a subtler notion that can deal with the most nuanced aspects of cinematic style.

The process of creating film emotion, however, remains basically the same as it did in the early writings: hone the cinematic elements until their associations are clear, and combine those elements to create new associative complexes, thus evoking emotion. Throughout his career Eisenstein emphasizes different types of cinematic elements (overtones, themes, etc.), situates his thinking in different intellectual contexts (Joycean/Vygotskian inner speech, Romantic visions of a Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, etc.), and reconceptualizes the ultimate goals of cinema (ecstasy instead of ideological persuasion), but his primary conception of how to evoke emotions remains remarkably constant. Though he later rejects a strict allegiance to conditioned reflexes, the central idea underlying the concept (immediate responses that do not necessarily require conscious awareness but are based on associations and conscious experience) remains a touchstone for Eisenstein's aesthetics, regardless of whether he refers explicitly to "reflexes" or to "syntheses" of mind and body (in the later work). Though Eisenstein's vision of the cinema changes greatly, his understanding of the basics of the emotions stays fairly consistent.

### The Basis of Aesthetic Emotions: Imitative Movement

Why should artworks be able to condition and activate such emotional responses? Eisenstein's early explanation of aesthetic emotions depends on what he believes is an innate human tendency to imitate (physically) a depicted object. He says, "emotional perception is achieved through the motor reproduction of the movements of the actor by the perceiver. . . . the whole process of the actor's movement is organised with the aim of facilitating the imitative capacities of the audience." (W 48, 50) In fact, he considers "expressive movement" to be at the core of his aesthetic.

Eisenstein does not, of course, believe that his audiences actually mimic each of the various actions of film characters, except in rare circumstances (such as an audience he observed swaying back and forth during the hay-making sequence in Old and New). (W 192) By the same token, emotions do not always provoke action; fear does not necessarily lead to flight. But both states (emotion and audience imitation) create muscular tension that is an approximation of action. The link between emotion and this low-level

physical imitation is that both are muscular tendencies toward action. Emotions and physical imitation can be restrained by conscious will, but both provide a perceptible kinesthetic realignment of the spectator.

This motor similarity between emotion and imitation explains why this imitative tendency is considered to produce emotion. If the imitation of a fearful character can trigger a motor reaction that resembles one's own kinesthetic experience of fear, this simultaneously can trigger an association linking this bodily state with an emotion. Such an association between fear and certain muscular tensions creates a kind of conditioned reflex that can elicit emotion through the body without requiring psychologizing empathy with characters. It is not necessary for an audience to empathize with the masses of workers in Strike who leave the factory, angrily protesting as they run. Innate imitation encourages us a muscular tension that resembles the actions of the angry workers, which simultaneously encourages the audience toward the associated angry response.

As the breadth of Eisenstein's aesthetic philosophy increases to include an enormous array of artworks, he finds a broader phenomenon that he asserts is "the basic element of art -- movement." (NN 247) Of course motion pictures rely on movement, and Eisenstein asserts that movement is the common denominator that makes it possible to unify cinematic elements such as images and sound: "[M]usic and pictures really are not congruent. If it is at all possible to speak of any genuine, profound correspondence and congruence between them, it can only be a correspondence between fundamental elements of the movement of music and pictures. . . ." (TTM 373, emphasis in original) Similarities in the movement of pictures and music provide the foundation to create correspondences between the two elements. Because movement is at the basis of film images and sound, this makes unity possible in the cinema.

Not only is the cinema dependent on the apparent movement of projected photographs, but emotion itself is also a kind of movement. Emotion is a phenomenon that, according to Eisenstein, "is completely identical with the primary phenomenon of cinema. [In cinema] movement is created out of two motionless cells. Here, a movement of the soul, i.e. emotion (from the Latin root motio = movement), is created out of the performance of a series of incidents." (TTM 145, emphasis in original) Properly structured as a series of uncompleted incidents, montage calls on us to finish the actions mentally, and for Eisenstein this internal movement of filling in the gaps is emotion, a movement of the soul.

Eisenstein believes that audience emotion is heightened when the film presents an event in incomplete fragments which the audience must assemble for themselves, rather than simply showing them the whole event. The part stimulates the spectator to assemble the whole (pars pro toto (TTM 128-9) in an active, emotional fashion:

A fight filmed from a single viewpoint in long shot will always remain the depiction of a fight and will never be the perception of a fight, i.e. something with which we feel immediately involved in the same

way that we feel involved in a fight between two live people. . . . The convention of [the images'] partialness. . . forces our imagination to add to them and thereby activates to an unusual degree the spectator's emotions and intellect. . . . You are not seeing the depiction of an argument: the image of an argument is evoked within you; you participate in the process of the image of an argument coming into being. . . ." (TTM 134-5, emphasis in original)

Good filmmaking requires that the audience participate in the process of putting together both the cognitive content and the emotional appeal of the film. By using images which are incomplete by themselves, this requires the audience to assemble the parts into a coherent whole, actively creating both meaning and emotion. Thus the most basic concepts of good filmmaking are founded on inducing the audience to fill in the blanks left by partial imagery.

This aesthetic precept of pars pro toto reaffirms Eisenstein's basic notion of emotion as process (as opposed to emotion simply being a pure gestalt of feeling tone). Simply presenting an audience with an emotional event does not necessarily activate their emotional processes. If an audience completes an emotional process that the film has already begun for them, their individual emotional systems are initiated, bringing about a stronger response.

Recall that Eisenstein thinks of emotion as a low level movement or tendency toward action that does not necessarily result in external motion. When he argues that the viewer should finish internally the incomplete movement begun onscreen, his aesthetics rely on his assumptions about the centrality of motion to emotion. Even though the motion may not be performed physically, it is completed at a lower level. The reason why emotion is the dominant consideration for filmmakers is that the cinema and emotion share the same foundation: a low-level processing of movement. Behind all Eisenstein's arguments for an artwork unified by emotion is an understanding that emotion is movement.<sup>(3)</sup>

For Eisenstein movement and its concomitant emotion is not exclusive to the skeletal muscles or to the "soul." It also applies to the senses. Movement is so crucial to emotion, according to Eisenstein, that we humans experience movement even in static images, movement provided by our senses. In observing an object, our eyes traverse around its outline, and the sensory movement around this figure gives an emotional quality to our perception. This imbues objects with emotion:

The movement of the outline is in essence a purely conventional concept: after all, the outline is static; it does not in fact move about. It is our eye that moves along the outline. . . . we transfer to the outline the movement which it has forced our eye to make, and we conventionally attribute that process of movement to the outline. The apparent movement of the outline is thus the consequence of a certain movement, but it is that apparent movement which has an expressive quality, not the act of movement itself. By creating the apparent movement, we also participate in it as if it had really taken place. (TTM 243-4)

Moving our eyes around an outline is a participatory process that evokes emotion, according to Eisenstein. The eye has a sort of sensory "inertia;" it tends to keep moving in the same direction unless that movement is somehow obstructed. Following an outline requires the eye to stop and start numerous times, breaking the inertia of the senses. For Eisenstein, "the way in which the inertia of perception is interrupted determines the sensation being perceived." (Composition 17) The quality of the emotional response is shaped by the shape of the object being perceived. Aesthetic feeling depends on a pattern of interruptions to our perceptual inertia, placing this sensory movement at the center of our aesthetic experience.

This assertion that we experience movement in the cinema even during static compositions gives Eisenstein a way to explain that emotion in the cinema is not limited to moments where onscreen images are moving. It also opens up possibilities for extending the concept of movement, the basic element of art, beyond mobile figures and still images. Eisenstein asserts that "pure linearity, i.e., a narrowly 'graphic' structuring of the composition, is only one of many ways of establishing the nature of movement." (TTM 377, emphasis in original) For example, he notes that "a tune is a movement of the voice deriving from the same kind of emotive movement that is a vital factor in delineating the image graphically." (TTM 376, emphasis in original) All of the senses may be involved in this aesthetic experience. In fact, he defines synesthesia as "the ability to gather into one all the variety of feeling brought from different areas by different organs of sensation." (NN 297, emphasis in original) Still graphic images, physical landscapes, melodies, montages, and poetry embody some of the many ways that movement can make aesthetic appeal to the senses.

This belief in the emotional quality of purely sensory motion helps Eisenstein incorporate these other artforms into his increasingly eclectic theory of aesthetic emotion. If we can experience emotion by simply allowing our eyes to traverse the outline of a painting or a landscape or our ears to resonate according to rhythms and melodies, then movement clearly underlies all aesthetic phenomena because all artworks involve the patterning of sensual stimuli. Aesthetic emotion is not limited to human figure movements in theater or opera but instead is bound up in the most basic levels of style and the sensory perception of artistic patterns. The reason Eisenstein believes cinematic style can evoke emotion without relying on identifications with psychological characters is because style involves motion of the senses. Style calls upon the senses to move, which means that even static art can "move" us emotionally.

But perception of movement, after all, is only movement at the most minute scale (the eye movements as one views a canvas, for instance). Why does Eisenstein believe that this perception of movement afford such emotional pleasure? Eisenstein argues that attention to the concrete nature of imagery is a characteristic of "primitive," "prelogical" thought and that such attention causes a sort of regression to this earlier form of thinking, making the distinction between motion and emotion less distinct and opening up progressive possibilities for the cinema.

"Sensuous thought"<sup>(4)</sup> (which Eisenstein also calls "prelogical" or "concrete" thought) is characteristic of



the early years of humanity, meaning that it is representative both of an individual's early childhood and of a society's primitive era. Sensuous thought dominated the society as a whole in tribal times, according to Eisenstein, and every modern person reenacts social evolution in individual terms by beginning with prelogical thought as a child and progressing to logical thinking as they grow older. Prelogical thought exists within both individual and social experience.

In prelogical consciousness the strong boundaries between self and other are not yet formed. Fluidity and interconnection are the primary modes, not the rigidity and division that mark logical categories. The distinction between moving around an object and one's eye moving around an object, which is so clear to logical adults, makes little difference at this stage: "The eye of the observer (the subject) `runs around' the observed (the `object'). . . . at this stage of development there is yet no differentiation between the subjective and the objective. And the movement of an eye, running along the line of a mountain's contour, is read just as easily as the running of the contour itself." (D 55) Eisenstein can assert that movement of the senses is as emotionally charged as bodily movement because artistic perception causes a return to concrete, prelogical thought, which cannot differentiate between the two.

Sensuous thought takes its pleasure in the concrete, not the abstract. It is concerned with the materials, textures, and shapes of things more than their meanings. Because we return to prelogical thinking when presented with an artwork, according to Eisenstein, our experience of that work is intensely caught up with sensory perception and the material of the artwork. The attention to concrete, emotionally-charged imagery that characterizes sensuous thought makes possible the modern aesthetic experience.

Regression to sensuous thought helps us respond to the style and the formal qualities of the artwork.

Eisenstein's belief in prelogical thought enables him to situate movement as the metaphor most central to his theories about cinema and the emotions. Perceived through the fluid prelogical consciousness, sensory movements in front of an artwork resemble the implied movement implicit in an emotion's action tendency. In prelogical consciousness, sensory movements, bodily movements, and emotional movements all share a basic similarity. This aesthetic movement is the key to the prelogical consciousness, a powerful preideological state of fluidity that makes breaks down the distinctions erected by thought. For Eisenstein the blend of sensory and bodily movement in art creates the motion tendency that is emotion.

### Hierarchies and Formlessness: Explosions, Fire, and Water

Eisenstein is fond of hierarchies and stages. He erects a hierarchy of montage forms (metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtonal, intellectual), and he structures consciousness into levels. He creates a stage model of the history of the cinema (single set-up, multiple set-up, vertical montage) and later constructs another

basis for explaining film history (based on the concepts of the "expressive man," the "artistic image," and the "art of cinema").<sup>(5)</sup> When confronted with a complex phenomenon, Eisenstein's response is usually to dissect it and rearrange it into hierarchies.

He not only categorizes his objects of study, but usually organizes these categories into a clear progression of advancement. The lower, earlier levels always constitute the basis on which higher, more advanced levels are constructed. Lower structures (e.g., metric montage) are the building blocks that make the higher forms (intellectual montage) possible. Therefore prelogical consciousness, a lower form of thought, serves as the common denominator upon which more advanced aesthetic appeals are made to higher forms of consciousness.

The processes on any given level tend to be driven by interactions of tension, opposition, collision, and conflict. Conflict is "the essential basic principle of the existence of every work of art," (W 161) he proclaims, and aesthetic tension is a source of audience pleasure. He quotes Stekel as saying that "any powerful nervous tension has a tonic effect, and the heightened tone provokes a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure." (W 186)

Eisenstein broadly applies this concept of conflict/tension to a wide variety of cinematic formal elements, attempting to determine a grammar of film based on the contrast of stylistic components (lines, planes, lighting, etc.). If viewers respond to form and style as well as characters, then conflict should take place between stylistic elements as much as it does between characters. Calling on a loose interpretation of Marxist dialectics,<sup>(6)</sup> Eisenstein sees conflict everywhere he looks, and he situates dialectic conflict as the basic process of art.

Recall that Eisenstein also said that movement (not conflict) is the basic element of art. These two positions are not necessarily incompatible because Eisenstein sees conflict/opposition as a process rooted in movement: "a picture, formally and mechanically in stasis, reproduc[es] the dialectical idea of the unity of oppositions, in which `each by itself' opposition at the same time coexists in unity, which is possible only in a process, in movement, in dynamics." (D 58, emphasis in original) Conflict necessarily involves movement.

The basic dynamic of art is not simply movement but is movement in opposing directions. For Eisenstein, "Cinema begins where the collision between different cinematic measures of movement and vibration begins." (W 192) If emotions are action tendencies in a particular direction, then the kind of emotions advocated by Eisenstein are full of conflict created by the tension between contrasting aesthetic elements. He believes that "emotional power is conveyed as the unity of opposites within the compositional principle." (TTM 90, emphasis in original) Not surprisingly, Eisenstein's preferred conception of emotion is not one based on continuity of cues pointing viewers toward a unitary feeling tone. We should not simply read an actor's intentions and complete the motion in an unconflicted manner. Filmmakers should provide us motions to complete that are at cross purposes, so that when we complete these actions internally we experience the pleasure provided by this aesthetic tension.

The classic example of such actions at cross purposes is the Odessa Steps sequence, in which soldiers descending down the steps confront besieged proles ascending the stairs begging for mercy. Montage breaks these actions down into incomplete fragments, encouraging the audience to complete these clashing motions internally. The conflict is conveyed through graphic elements and through the juxtaposition of the fearful crowd with the fearsome soldiers. The opposing vectors of force create a conflict of movement, which is the fundamental dynamic energizing each of Eisenstein's various stages.

Eisenstein's writings not only articulate stage/step models but they also discuss the means of transitioning from one stage to a higher one. The energy associated with a particular level of development comes from the conflicting movement between opposing elements. When this dialectic tension intensifies, however, it becomes difficult to resolve this conflict within that level.

This moment of peak tension defines the transition from one level of hierarchy to another. When the conflict on a particular level intensifies greatly, it seeks resolution, and Eisenstein believes that the tension resolves on the next level. Thesis and antithesis are resolved into synthesis, which is necessarily of another order of complexity. Thus the transition from metric to rhythmic montage or from tonal to overtone montage requires that the conflict become so intensified that the tension cannot be resolved without ascending to a new level. (V 190-1)

The energy from the conflict fuels the transformation to a higher level of complexity. No longer a conflict of degree, these conflicts result in a resolution of another order altogether, as Eisenstein notes in this passage: "The actual movement has been transferred to a higher phase, into the realm of vibration. Later we shall see that this is true not only for sound and music, where it is inherently obvious due to the laws of physics; we shall see that the visual component of a film, as the new contribution to this phase, is joined to the first two forms of movement. . . ." (TTM 244) Both visual and auditory stylistic elements can stir an audience, and the energy created by their conflicting movements triggers a dialectic transformation.<sup>(7)</sup>

It is important to note that the Eisensteinian conception of emotional processes that I have summarized thus far has explanatory power (according to Eisenstein) as long as we are dealing with a single level of artistic complexity. Whether audience members are experiencing relatively simple metric montage or more complex intellectual montage, they respond emotionally based on associations and rhythms evoked by the senses moving across the stylistic contours of the artwork. As long as these conflicting movements do not intensify to an irreconcilable degree, our aesthetic perception produces emotion along the lines described above.

When enough energy is placed into this process, however, the process ceases to work in its normal fashion. Instead the process transmutes the materials into a new level of complexity. Once the transition has been made (from metric to rhythmic, for instance), then the associative/moving process of aesthetic emotions resumes as usual, at least until enough tension is built up at this new higher level to cause yet another transformation.<sup>(8)</sup>

As Eisenstein grows more interested in this fluid energy that characterizes moments of dialectic transition, this emphasis reshapes his hierarchies. Early Eisenstein sees emotion as a crucial but lower form of processing that should be harnessed by filmmakers to achieve higher ends. The transitions from metric to rhythmic to tonal to overtone montages rely on intensifications of emotional forces generated by stylistic components. Emotion provides a "universally human" (W 193) principle for filmmakers to exploit, but Eisenstein primarily promotes the development of intellectual montage, a higher category that relies on the lesser, emotionally driven forms. Emotion is necessary because of the nature of the spectator, but emotion becomes a tool toward reaching the true goal, helping film develop from its roots in purely emotional appeals to the pinnacle of cinematic evolution: intellectual montage. During this period of his thinking, Eisenstein's categorizations are straightforwardly hierarchical with the lower stages forming the basis for higher development.

Later Eisenstein becomes enamored with the concept of "ecstasy," literally meaning "being beside oneself" or "going out of a normal state:" "To be beside oneself is unavoidably also a transition to something else, to something different in quality. . . . to be out of the usual balance and state, to move to a new state. . . ." (NN 27) Ecstasy describes the feeling tone of the moment of transition to a new level in an aesthetic hierarchy, and increasingly this becomes the focus instead of the hierarchy itself. Experiencing ecstasy by transcending the hierarchy becomes the reason for the hierarchy's existence.

Eisenstein calls the means of bringing the spectator to ecstasy "pathos construction." The principles of pathos construction rely on familiar Eisensteinian concepts: individual elements chosen based on emotionally felt central concepts and placed in opposition to each other; this creates a conflict that may be resolved by organically unifying the opposing elements at a higher level of complexity. (NN 162; 169-70) Pathos is inextricably linked with experiencing the dialectic: "a structure of pathos is that which compels us, in repeating its course, to experience the moments of culmination and becoming of the norms of dialectic processes." (NN 35, emphasis in original)

If dialectics is rooted in movement, then pathos must necessarily be described in terms of movement: "pathos is what forces the viewer to jump out of his seat. It is what forces him to flee from his place. It is what forces him to clap, to cry out." (NN 27, emphasis in original) Pathos, like all Eisensteinian concepts of emotional appeal, is a tendency toward movement.

This movement, characterizing the energy filled transition from one level to another, is necessarily a violent one, and Eisenstein turns to the metaphors of "explosion" to describe these transitions. Pathos involves a kind of detonation of stylistic materials, destroying the old order in order to rise to the new order. Eisenstein describes the wake sequence in Potemkin as being structured

according to the same formula of explosion, following an uncurbed buildup of intensity, bursts into a system of successive explosions, emerging one from the other, just as in a rocket missile or in the uranium chain reaction of an atom bomb. . . . the scheme "of a chain reaction" -- buildup of intensity -

- explosion -- leaps from explosion to explosion -- gives a clearer structural picture of the leaps from one state to another, characteristic for the ecstasy of particulars accumulating into the pathos of the whole. (NN 46, emphasis in original)

Eisenstein returns to comparisons with rockets (NN 155-9) and atom bombs (NN 168) to emphasize not only that ecstasy is a process that unfolds in stages (a "chain reaction") but that ecstasy is based on powerful opposing forces.

The explosion metaphor performs much the same function as the metaphor of "shock" used in the early definition of attractions. (W 34) Shock/explosion emphasizes the violence of the conflict between opposing elements in ecstatic constructions, a violence that is felt by the spectator. When filmmakers ask an audience to unify the associations prompted by two disparate images, the audience must do violence to the social categories that keep the images apart: "[t]he shock itself -- is the same crooked mirror of qualitative jump which, at some instant 'becomes unhinged' and overturns a certain established 'order of things' and circumstances, previously appearing stable and indestructible." (NN 56) Thus for Eisenstein the return to prelogical thinking feels like a shock or explosion because stable social divisions are destroyed.

Trying to convey another sense of the concept of ecstasy, Eisenstein turns to other metaphors besides movement and shock/explosion. He uses two primary metaphors for describing the formless, energized flux of these moments of ecstatic coming into being: fire and water. (D 45)

According to Eisenstein, "Fire is an image of coming into being, revealed in a process." (D 46, emphasis in original) Fire embodies the energy and formlessness of ecstasy; it is "eternally changeable, like the play of tongues, mobile and endlessly diverse," (D 27) exhibiting "omnipotence in the realm of the creation of plastic shapes and forms," (D 25) Fire can suggest many different forms, but yet it never embodies any of these. It is pure transformation, full of the potential of forms without fully manifesting any of them. The fire metaphor emphasizes the constant, restless change and the power of the ecstatic state of coming into being.

The water/fluid metaphor captures a sense of the lack of boundaries and structure in the concept of ecstasy. In the moment of coming into being, all categories break down. Distinctions dissolve, and dialectically opposed factors interpenetrate and mingle with each other. Aesthetic material "flows" (NN 72) from one state into another with a mobility resembling water's.

The liquid metaphor also allows Eisenstein to discuss these moments of ecstatic transformation as being like the changes of physical state in water:

The moment of culmination is understood here in the sense of those points through which water passes at the moment of becoming steam, ice -- water, castiron -- steel. This is that same being

beside oneself, going out of a state, a move from quality to quality, ecstasy. And if water, steam, ice, and steel could psychologically register their own feelings at these critical moments -- moments of achieving the leap, they would say they are speaking with pathos, that they are in ecstasy. (NN 35-6, emphasis in original)

Just as a person wishing to change liquid to gas must create the necessary conditions (temperature, pressure) for that transformation to occur, an artist must recreate certain conditions (the construction of pathos) in order to transform the spectator into an ecstatic state.

The fluid metaphor underlies one of the earliest conceptions of emotions: the notion of the body being full of "humors." Although Eisenstein makes little more than passing reference to humors, (NN 105-6) his use of the fluid metaphor bears some similarity to this age-old conception. The liquid metaphor emphasizes that emotions are amorphous rather than stable, reshaping themselves to fit the container in which they are placed. The metaphor allows a certain commonsensical physics to be applied to the emotions. For instance, the law of conservation of matter applied to emotion suggests that emotions cannot disappear, that they must move from one place to another (and thus the necessity for an angry person to "let off steam"). The liquid metaphor undergirds our understanding of emotional "pressures" and shapes our sense of how emotions transform from one state to another, as in Eisenstein's writing. Eisenstein's liquid metaphor for the emotions is informed by centuries of common usage, and so his theory bears some of the imprint of this folk psychology/physics.

Eisenstein sees his stylistic conflicts as producing new substances from constituent elements: steam from water, heat and ashes from fire. The fire metaphor highlights that art transforms its materials into an entirely new compound that radically differs from its components, just as a chemical reaction does. The water metaphor emphasizes that although a qualitatively different substance results from a transformation (steam vs. water), there still remains a basic similarity between the elements and the end product. Both metaphors stress transmutability, and it is this emphasis on transformation within the hierarchy and not the hierarchy itself that increasingly characterizes Eisenstein's later thought.

Eisenstein's commonsensical understanding of the emotions as more chaotic and formless than thought undergirds the entire body of his work. Early in his career he accepts that these chaotic states are universal and powerful, but he considers them to be tools that filmmakers can use to lead the audience to higher states, toward intellectual analysis of the conditions of their being. Emotions may be formless like fire or water, but they are containable within the lower levels of the hierarchy Eisenstein constructs.

Eisenstein's understanding of the emotions is distinctive in its refusal to keep cognition and emotion absolutely separate. Instead he blends them in concepts such as the conditioned reflex, which mixes forceful, instantaneous emotions with the mediated deliberations of thought. This blend allows him to conceptualize emotions as driven by associations. The blend of cognition and emotion fuels the spectator as he/she moves toward Eisenstein's first conception of the pinnacle of cinematic experience:

rational analysis of the conditions of economic and social production.

Guided by a metaphor comparing emotions to movement, Eisenstein constructs a model of the emotions as responses to the material nature of the artwork. Sensory perception of the style triggers a lower form of conscious processing (prelogical thought). This mode of sensuous thought predates ideology, class, and distinctions and therefore provides the political power of the cinema. For later Eisenstein, this experience of formlessness has political effectivity because it provides the possibility for the viewer to transcend the restrictive categorizations that bind them in society. A style that emphasizes fluidity and transition necessarily criticizes a society's limitations and constraints: "Metamorphosis is a direct protest against the standardly immutable." (D 43, emphasis in original) Filmmakers such as Walt Disney gain emotional power by playing with the plasticity of forms, but a more ideologically aware filmmaker can use a fluid style to criticize the restrictive structures of capitalism. It is this experience of fluidity that gives the cinema its radical potential, both politically and emotionally. Even when the restrictive categories of class are not yet abolished in a society, audiences can gain a brief taste of this freedom from boundaries when they experience ecstasy prompted by art. (NN 363)

The more heavily Eisenstein emphasizes this regression to fluid prelogical thought as central to art, the harder it becomes to advocate intellectual analysis as the goal of art. Eisenstein the formalist eventually comes to emphasize the experience of formlessness as the primary goal of the cinema, though he continues to stress a highly structured arrangement of stylistic elements as the means to arrive at this goal. Paradoxically the road to supreme artistic experience is through the lower forms of emotional thinking, through regression to sensuous, concrete thought. Transcending the aesthetic hierarchy becomes the aim of the filmmaker who uses the hierarchy.

The understanding of the emotions as a powerful but less clearly formed portion of consciousness eventually re-forms Eisenstein's conception of the cinema's appeal as a whole. Emotions not only operate at all levels of the cinema but they also crucially govern the transitions between levels. Eisenstein's reorientation makes him see the emotions as not merely the engine upon which the cinematic mechanism depends. Emotion becomes both the guiding principle upon which filmmakers make every artistic decision and the ultimate aspiration for spectators.

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## Endnotes

1. He writes, "only the affect can serve as the cause of organic motor manifestation and not the volitional impulse whose fate it is to act merely as a brake on and a betrayer of intention." (W 52)
2. The epitome of art's ability transfer emotion from one expressive channel to another and to fuse together an emotional ensemble is Japanese Kabuki theater. (W 117-118)
3. Eisenstein's justification of the centrality of movement in large part rests on his belief that movement figures importantly at the origins of human expression. Eisenstein situates movement as underlying the nature of metaphor. He notes that "metaphorical connotations figured at an earlier stage as simple, straightforward physical actions ('I am drawn to you,' 'I grovel before you,' etc., etc.)." (TTM 20) He makes a similar argument concerning music: "[r]hythm in music derives from those basic physical movements of work and dance which were the forerunners of what later became music proper." (TTM



238) Movement for Eisenstein is the source of much artistic expression. It is central to the origins of metaphor, music, and dance, and it remains powerfully linked to aesthetics.

4. Bordwell discusses the intellectual history of sensuous thought and related terms. (169-174)

5. The first system is the organizing structure of Towards a Theory of Montage. The second system is discussed in the "Conspectus of Lectures on the Psychology of Art." (Psychology 16-25)

6. Bordwell discusses the intellectual currents that provided Eisenstein with this loose formulation of dialectics. (127-130)

7. Eisenstein uses Hegel's phrase "coming into being" (D 45-7) to characterize the fluidity of the transition into a dialectic unity, and Hegel's influence can be seen throughout Eisenstein's hierarchical conceptions. "Coming into being" denotes energized instability and change; it is a state of formlessness and possibility that exists before imagery has congealed into a particular form. Eisenstein's aesthetic prescriptions support this concept of "coming into being." By advocating the use of imagery that is partial and therefore that must be completed by the spectator in order for them to have meaning, he necessarily promotes a cinema that is constantly on the verge of "coming into being" at the emotional and conceptual levels. To involve the spectator in the process of making a concept come into being is to make them participate in the artistic process.

8. This process may be loosely compared to Thomas Kuhn's understanding of ordinary science and science that results in a new paradigm. Most of what scientists do is methodical ordinary science, working within a given paradigm to produce experimental results. However, this process of ordinary science over time begins to accumulate seemingly anomalous results that cannot be explained by the paradigm. The resulting tension causes certain scientists to engage in a qualitatively different kind of science, a less regimented, more inductive process of exploration. This process can result in a new paradigm that resolves the unexplained phenomena. This paradigm then becomes the basis for the practice of more ordinary science.