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THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN FILM
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THE FILM SENSE
Sergei Eisenstein

The Film Sense

by
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Although the author is himself of the profession and knows the things that long practice, aided by much special reflection, can teach him about it, he will not linger as much as might be thought over that part of the art which seems the whole of art to many mediocre artists, but without which art would not exist. He will thus seem to encroach on the domain of the critics of esthetic affairs, men who doubtless think that practice is not needed for them to rise to speculative consideration of the arts.

He will treat of philosophic more than of technical matters. That may seem singular in a painter who writes on the arts: many semi-erudite men have treated the philosophy of art. It would seem that their profound ignorance of technical matters was looked on by them as a title to respect, persuaded as they were that preoccupation with this matter, so vital to every art, debarred professional artists from esthetic speculation.

It would seem almost that they had imagined a profound ignorance of technical matters to be one reason more for rising to purely metaphysical considerations, in a word that preoccupation with a craft must render professional artists rather unfit to rise to the heights which are forbidden to the people outside esthetics and pure speculation.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX [1]

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J. L.

I

WORD AND IMAGE

Every word has been permeated, as every image has been transmuted, through the imaginative intensity of one compelling creative act. "Consider it well," says Abt Vogler of the musician's analogous miracle:

Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world–loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

Give Coleridge one vivid word from an old narrative; let him mix it with two in his thought; and then (translating terms of music into terms of words) "out of three sounds he [will] frame, not a fourth sound, but a star."

JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES [2]

THERE was a period in Soviet cinema when montage was proclaimed "everything." Now we are at the close of a period during which montage has been regarded as "nothing." Regarding montage neither as nothing nor everything, I consider it opportune at this juncture to recall that montage is just as indispensable a component feature of film production as any other element of film effectiveness. After the storm "for montage" and the battle "against montage," we must approach its problems simply and afresh. This is all the more necessary because in the period of "renunciation" of montage, its most incontrovertible aspect, the one really immune to challenge, was also repudiated. The point is that the creators of a number of films in recent years have so completely "discarded" montage that they have forgotten even its basic aim and function: that rôle set itself by every work of art, *the need for connected and sequential exposition of the theme, the material, the plot, the action,* the movement within the film sequence and within the film drama as a whole. Aside from the *excitement* of a story, or even its logic or continuity, the simple matter of telling *a connected story* has often been lost in the works of some outstanding film masters, working in various types of films. What we need, of course, is not so much an individual criticism of those masters, but

primarily an organized effort to recover the montage culture that so many have lost. This is all the more necessary since our films are faced with the task of presenting not only a narrative that is *logically connected*, but one that contains a *maximum of emotion and stimulating power*.

Montage is a mighty aid in the resolution of this task.

Why do we use montage at all? Even the most fanatical opponent of montage will agree that it is not merely because the film strip at our disposal is not of infinite length, and consequently, being condemned to working with pieces of restricted lengths, we have to stick one piece of it on to another occasionally.

The "leftists" of montage saw it from the opposite extreme. While playing with pieces of film, they discovered a certain property in the toy which kept them astonished for a number of years. This property consisted in the fact *that two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition.*

This is not in the least a circumstance peculiar to the cinema, but is a phenomenon invariably met with in all cases where we have to deal with juxtaposition of two facts, two phenomena, two objects. We are accustomed to make, almost automatically, a definite and obvious deductive generalization when any separate objects are placed before us side by side. For example, take a grave, juxtaposed with a woman in mourning weeping beside it, and scarcely anybody will fail to jump to the conclusion: *a widow*. It is precisely on this feature of our

perception that the following miniature story by Ambrose Bierce bases its effect. It is from his *Fantastic Fables* and is entitled "The Inconsolable Widow":

> A Woman in widow's weeds was weeping upon a grave.
> "Console yourself, madam," said a Sympathetic Stranger. "Heaven's mercies are infinite. There is another man somewhere, besides your husband, with whom you can still be happy."
> "There was," she sobbed—"there was, but this is his grave." [3]

The whole effect of this is built upon the circumstance that the grave and the woman in mourning beside it lead to the inference, from established convention, that she is a widow mourning her husband, whereas in fact the man for whom she is weeping is her lover.

The same circumstance is often found in riddles—for example, this one from international folk-lore: "The raven flew, while a dog sat on its tail. How can this be?" We automatically combine the juxtaposed elements and reduce them to a unity. As a result, we understand the query as though the dog were sitting on the tail of the raven, while actually, the riddle contains two unrelated actions: the raven flies, while the dog sits on its own tail.

This tendency to bring together into a unity two or more independent objects or qualities is very strong, even in the case of separate words, characterizing different aspects of some single phenomenon.

An extreme instance of this can be found in that inventor of the "portmanteau word," Lewis Carroll. His modest declaration of his invention, of "two meanings

packed into one word like a portmanteau," concludes his introduction to *The Hunting of the Snark:*

For instance, take the two words "fuming" and "furious." Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak. If your thoughts incline ever so little towards "fuming," you will say "fuming-furious"; if they turn, by even a hair's breadth, towards "furious," you will say "furious-fuming"; but if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumious." [4]

Of course, in this instance we do not gain a new concept, or a new quality. The charm of this "portmanteau" effect is built upon the sensation of duality residing in the arbitrarily formed single word. Every language has its "portmanteau" practitioner–the American language has its Walter Winchell. Obviously, the greatest manipulation of the portmanteau word is to be found in *Finnegans Wake.*

Essentially, therefore, Carroll's method is a *parody* of a natural phenomenon, a part of our common perception–the formation of qualitatively new unities; hence it is a basic method of building comic effects.

This comic effect is achieved through the perception of both the new result and its two independent parts–all at the same time. Instances of this kind of wit are innumerable. I shall cite here only three such examples that one can find – in Freud:

During the war between Turkey and the Balkan States, in 1912, *Punch* depicted the part played by Roumania by representing the latter as a highwayman holding up the

members of the Balkan alliance. The picture was entitled: *Kleptoroumania.* . . .

A naughty jest of Europe has rebaptized a former potentate, Leopold, into *Cleopold* because of his relation to a lady surnamed Cleo. . . .

In a short story . . . one of the characters, a "sport," speaks of the Christmas season as the *alcoholidays.* By reduction it can be easily seen that we have here a compound word, a combination of *alcohol* and *holidays.* . . .[5]

I think it is apparent that the phenomenon we are discussing is more than widespread–it is literally universal.

Hence there is nothing surprising in the circumstance that a film audience also draws a definite inference from the juxtaposition of two strips of film cemented together.

We are certainly not criticizing all these facts, nor their noteworthiness, nor universality, but simply the false deductions and conclusions that have been drawn from them. On this basis it will be possible to make the necessary corrections.

Of what omission were we guilty when we first remarked the undoubted importance of the above phenomenon to an understanding and mastery of montage? What was true, and what false, in our enthusiastic declarations at that time?

The basic fact was true, and remains true to this day, that the juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot–as it does a *creation.* It re-

sembles a creation—rather than a sum of its parts—from the circumstance that in every such juxtaposition *the result is qualitatively* distinguishable from each component element viewed separately. At this late date no one need really be reminded that quantity and quality are not two different properties of a phenomenon but only different aspects of the same phenomenon. This law of physics is just as true in other spheres of science and in art. Of the many fields to which it can be applied, Professor Koffka's application of it to the field of behavior is apropos to our discussion:

> It has been said: The whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is more correct to say that the whole is something else than the sum of its parts, because summing is a meaningless procedure, whereas the whole-part relationship is meaningful.[6]

The woman, to return to our first example, is a representation, the mourning robe she is wearing is a representation—that is, both are *objectively representable.* But "*a widow,*" arising from a juxtaposition of the two representations, is objectively unrepresentable—a new idea, a new conception, a new image.

What was the "distortion" in our attitude at that time to this indisputable phenomenon?

The error lay in placing the main emphasis on the possibilities of juxtaposition, while less attention seemed to be paid to the problem of *analyzing* the *material* that was juxtaposed.

My critics did not fail to represent this as a lack of interest in the *content* of the film shot-pieces, confusing

research in one aspect of a problem with the attitude of the researcher to the representation of reality.

I leave them to their consciences.

The trouble arose from my having been charmed primarily with that newly revealed feature of the film strips—that, no matter how unrelated they might be, and frequently despite themselves, they engendered a "third something" and became correlated when juxtaposed according to the will of an editor.

Hence I was preoccupied by a potentiality untypical in normal film construction and film composition.

Operating at the outset with such material and such occurrences, it was natural to speculate principally upon the potentialities of juxtaposition. Less attention was given to an *analysis* of the actual nature of the pieces juxtaposed. Such attention would not have been sufficient in itself. History has proven that such attention, directed solely to the content of single shots, led in practice to a decline of montage to a level of "special effects," "montage sequences," etc., with all the consequences this involved.

What should have been the proper emphasis, what should have received the principal attention, in order that neither element would be unduly exaggerated?

It was necessary to turn to that fundamental basis which equally determines both the content enclosed by single frames and the compositional juxtaposition of these separate contents with each other, i.e., to the content of the *whole,* of the general and *unifying* needs.

One extreme consisted in distraction with problems of

the technique of unification (the methods of montage), the other—with the unified elements (the content of the shot).

We should have occupied ourselves more with an examination of the nature of the *unifying principle* itself. This is precisely that principle which should determine both the content of the shot and that content which is revealed through a given *juxtaposition of these shots.*

But with this in mind it was necessary for the researcher's interest to be turned primarily not in the direction of paradoxical cases, where this whole, general, final result is not *foreseen* but emerges unexpectedly. We should have turned to those cases where the shot-pieces are not only not unrelated to each other, but where this *final*, this *general*, this *whole* result is not merely foreseen, but itself predetermines both the individual elements and the circumstances of their juxtaposition. Such cases are normal, generally accepted and frequent in occurrence. In such cases the whole emerges perfectly as "a third something." The full picture of the whole, as determined both by the shot and by montage, also emerges, vivifying and distinguishing both the content of the shot and the content of the montage. It is cases of this kind that are typical for cinematography.

With montage considered in this light, both single shots and their juxtaposition fall into a correct mutual relationship. In addition to this, the very nature of montage not only ceases to be divorced from the principles of realistic film delineation, but serves as one of the most

coherent and practical resources for realistic narration of film content.

What is essentially involved in such an understanding of montage? In such a case, each montage piece exists no longer as something unrelated, but as a given *particular representation* of the general theme that in equal measure penetrates *all* the shot-pieces. The juxtaposition of these partial details in a given montage construction calls to life and forces into the light that *general* quality in which each detail has participated and which binds together all the details into a *whole*, namely, into that generalized *image*, wherein the creator, followed by the spectator, experiences the theme.

If *now* we consider two pieces of film placed together, we appreciate their juxtaposition in a rather different light. Namely:

Piece *A* (derived from the elements of the theme being developed) and piece *B* (derived from the same source) in juxtaposition give birth to the image in which the thematic matter is most clearly embodied.

Expressed in the imperative, for the sake of stating a more exact working formula, this proposition would read:

Representation A and *representation* B must be so selected from all the possible features within the theme that is being developed, must be so sought for, that their *juxtaposition*—that is, the juxtaposition of *those very elements* and not of alternative ones—shall evoke in the perception and feelings of the spectator the most complete *image of the theme itself.*

Into our discussion of montage two new terms have entered: "representation" and "image." I want to define the demarcation between these terms before we proceed further.

We turn to an example for demonstration. Take a white circular disc of average size and smooth surface, its circumference divided into sixty equal parts. At every fifth division is set a figure in the order of succession of 1 to 12. At the center of the disc are fixed two metal rods, moving freely on their fixed ends, pointed at their free ends, one being equal to the radius of the disc, the other rather shorter. Let the longer pointed rod have its free end resting at the figure 12, and the shorter, in succession, have its free end pointing toward the figures 1, 2, 3, and so on up to 12. This will comprise, a series of *geometrical* representations of successive relations of the two metal rods to one another expressed in the dimensions 30, 60, 90 degrees, and so on up to 360 degrees.

If, however, this disc be provided with a mechanism that imparts steady movement to the metal rods, the geometrical figure formed on its surface acquires a special meaning: it is now not simply a *representation*, it is an *image* of time.

In this instance, the representation and the image it evokes in our perception are so completely fused that only under special conditions do we distinguish the geometrical figure formed by the hands on the dial of the clock from the concept of time. Yet this can happen

to any one of us, given, admittedly, the unusual circumstances.

It happened to Vronsky after Anna Karenina tells him that she is pregnant:

> When Vronsky looked at his watch on the Karenins' verandah he was so agitated and so preoccupied that he saw the hands and the face of the watch without realizing the time.[7]

In his case, the *image* of time created by the watch did not arise. He saw only the geometrical representation formed by the watch dial and the hands.

As we can see in even so simple an instance, where the question touches only astronomical time, the hour, the representation formed by the clock dial is insufficient in itself. It is not enough merely to see—something has to happen to the representation, something more has to be done with it, before it can cease to be perceived as no more than a simple geometrical figure and can become perceptible as the image of some particular "time" at which the event is occurring. Tolstoy points out to us what happens when this process does not take place.

What exactly is this process? A given order of hands on the dial of a clock invokes a host of representations associated with the time that corresponds to the given order. Suppose, for example, the given figure be five. Our imagination is trained to respond to this figure by calling to mind pictures of all sorts of events that occur at that hour. Perhaps tea, the end of the day's work, the

beginning of rush hour on the subway, perhaps shops closing, or the peculiar late afternoon light . . . In any case we will automatically recall a series of pictures (representations) of what happens at five o'clock.

The image of five o'clock is compounded of all these individual pictures.

This is the full sequence of the process, and it is such at the point of assimilating the representations formed by the figures which evoke the images of the times of day and night.

Thereafter the laws of economy of psychic energy come into force. There occurs "condensation" within the process above described: the chain of intervening links falls away, and there is produced instantaneous connection between the figure and our perception of the time to which it corresponds. The example of Vronsky shows us that a sharp mental disturbance can cause this connection to be destroyed, and the representation and the image become severed from each other.

We are considering here the *full* presentation of the process which takes place when an image is formed from a representation, as described above.

These "mechanics" of the formation of an image interest us because the mechanics of its formation in *life* turn out to be the prototype of the method of creating images in art.

To recapitulate: between the representation of an hour on the dial of the clock and our perception of the image of that hour, there lies a long chain of linked representations of separate characteristic aspects of that

hour. And we repeat: that psychological habit tends to reduce this intervening chain to a minimum, so that only the beginning and the end of the process are perceived.

But as soon as we need, for any reason, to establish a connection between a representation and the image to be evoked by it in the consciousness and feelings, we are inevitably compelled to resort again to a chain of intervening representations, which, in aggregate, form the image.

Consider first an example approximating closely the other example from everyday life.

In New York City most of the streets have no names. Instead, they are distinguished by numbers—Fifth Avenue, Forty-second Street, and so on. Strangers find this method of designating streets extraordinarily difficult to remember at first. We are used to streets with names, which is much easier for us, because each name at once brings up an image of the given street, i.e., when you hear the street name, this evokes a particular complex of sensations and, together with them, the image.

I found it very difficult to remember the *images* of New York's streets and, consequently, to recognize the streets themselves. Their designations, neutral numbers like "Forty-second" or "Forty-fifth," failed to produce images in my mind that would concentrate my perception on the general features of one or the other street. To produce these images, I had to fix in my memory a set of objects characteristic of one or another street, a set of objects aroused in my consciousness in answer to the signal "Forty-second," and quite distinct from

those aroused by the signal "Forty-fifth." My memory assembled the theaters, stores and buildings, characteristic of each of the streets I had to remember. This process went through definite stages. Two of these stages should be noted: in the first, at the verbal designation: "Forty-second Street," my memory with great difficulty responded by enumerating the whole chain of characteristic elements, but I still obtained no true perception of the street because the various elements had not yet been consolidated into a single image. Only in the second stage did all the elements begin to fuse into a single, emerging image: at the mention of the street's "number," *there still arose this whole host of its separate elements, but now not as a chain, but as something single* —as a whole characterization of the street, *as its whole image.*

Only after this stage could one say that one had really *memorized* the street. The image of the given street began to emerge and live in the consciousness and perception exactly as, in the course of creating a work of art, its single, recognizable whole image is gradually composed out of its elements.

In both cases—whether it be a question of memorizing or the process of perceiving a work of art—the procedure of entering the consciousness and feelings through the whole, the whole *through the image,* remains obedient to this law.

Further, though the image enters the consciousness and perception *through aggregation,* every detail is preserved in the sensations and memory *as part of the whole.* This obtains whether it be a sound image—some rhythmic or melodic sequence of sounds, or whether it be a plastic, a visual image, embracing in pictorial form a remembered series of separate elements.

In one way or another, the series of ideas is built up in the perception and consciousness into a whole image, storing up the separate elements.

We have seen that in the process of remembering there are two very essential stages: the first is the *assembling* of the image, while the second consists in the *result* of this assembly and its significance for the memory. In this latter stage it is important that the memory should pay as little attention as possible to the first stage, and reach the result after passing through the stage of assembling as swiftly as possible. Such is practice in life in contrast to practice in art. For when we proceed into the sphere of art, we discover a marked displacement of emphasis. Actually, to achieve its result, a work of art directs all the refinement of its methods to the *process.*

A work of art, understood dynamically, is just this process of arranging images in the feelings and mind of the spectator.* It is this that constitutes the peculiarity of a truly vital work of art and distinguishes it from a lifeless one, in which the spectator receives the represented result of a given consummated process of creation, instead of being drawn into the process as it occurs.

* Later we shall see that this same dynamic principle lies at the base of all truly vital images, even in such an apparently immobile and static medium as, for example, painting.

This condition obtains everywhere and always, no matter what the art form under discussion. For example, the lifelike acting of an actor is built, not on his representing the copied results of feelings, but on his causing the feelings to *arise, develop, grow into other feelings—to live before the spectator.*

Hence the image of a scene, a sequence, of a whole creation, exists not as something fixed and ready-made. It has to arise, to unfold before the senses of the spectator.

In the same way a character (both in the writing and in the performing of a rôle), if it is to produce a genuinely living impression, must be built up for the spectator in the course of the action, and not be presented as a clockwork figure with set *a priori* characteristics.

In drama it is particularly important that the course of the action should not only build up an *idea* of the character, but also should build up, should "image," *the character itself.*

Consequently, in the actual method of creating images, a work of art must reproduce that process whereby, *in life itself,* new images are built up in the human consciousness and feelings.

We have just shown the nature of this in our example of the numbered streets. And we should be correct in expecting an artist, faced with the task of expressing a given image by factual representation, to resort to a method precisely like this "assimilation" of the streets of New York.

We also used the example of the representation

formed by the dial of a clock, and revealed the process whereby the image of time arises in consequence of this representation. To create an image, a work of art must rely upon a precisely analogous method, the construction of a chain of representations.

Let us examine more broadly this example of time.

With Vronsky, above, the geometrical figure failed to come to life as an image of time. But there are cases when what is important is not to perceive the hour of twelve midnight chronometrically, but to experience midnight in all the associations and sensations the author chooses to evoke in pursuance of his plot. It may be an hour of the anxious awaiting of a midnight assignation, an hour of death at midnight, the hour of a fateful midnight elopement, in other words it may well be far from a simple representation of the chronometrical hour of twelve midnight.

In such a case, *from a representation of the twelve strokes* must emerge the image of midnight as a kind of "hour of fate," charged with significance.

This can also be illustrated by an example—this time from Maupassant's *Bel Ami.* The example has an additional interest in that it is auditory. And yet another because, in its nature pure montage, by the correctly chosen method of its resolution it is presented in the story as a narration of actual events.

The scene is the one where Georges Duroy (who now writes his name Du Roy) is waiting in the cab for Suzanne, who has agreed to flee with him at midnight.

Here twelve o'clock at night is only in the slightest

degree the chronometrical hour and is in the greatest degree the hour at which all (or at any rate a very great deal) is at stake. (*"It is all over. It is a failure. She won't come."*)

This is how Maupassant drives into the reader's consciousness and feelings the image of this hour and its *significance*, in distinction from a mere description of the particular time of night:

> He went out towards eleven o'clock, wandered about some time, took a cab, and had it drawn up in the Place de la Concorde, by the Ministry of Marine. From time to time he struck a match to see the time by his watch. When he saw midnight approaching, his impatience became feverish. Every moment he thrust his head out of the window to look. A distant clock struck twelve, then another nearer, then two together, then a last one, very far away. When the latter had ceased to sound, he thought: "It is all over. It is a failure. She won't come." He had made up his mind, however, to wait till daylight. In these matters one must be patient.
>
> He heard the quarter strike, then the half-hour, then the quarter to, and all the clocks repeated "one," as they had announced midnight. . . .[8]

In this example, we see that when Maupassant wanted to chisel into the reader's consciousness and sensations the *emotional* quality of the midnight hour, he did not confine himself to saying merely that first midnight struck and then one. He forced us to experience the sensation of midnight by making twelve o'clock strike in various places on various clocks. Combining in our perception, these individual groups of twelve strokes

are built up into a general sensation of midnight. *The separate representations are built up into an image.* This was done entirely through montage.

The example from Maupassant can serve as a model for the most polished kind of montage scripting, where "12 o'clock" in sound is denoted by means of a whole series of shots "from different camera-angles": "distant," "nearer," "very far away." This striking of the clocks, recorded at various distances, is like the shooting of an object from various camera set-ups and repeated in a series of three different shot-pieces: "long shot," "medium shot," "distant shot." Moreover, the actual striking or, more correctly, the varied striking of the clocks is chosen not in the least for its virtue as a naturalistic detail of Paris at night. The primary effect of this conflicting striking of clocks in Maupassant is the insistent stressing of the emotional image of the "fateful midnight hour," not the mere information that it is "12:00 P.M."

If his object had been merely to convey the information that it was then twelve o'clock at night, Maupassant would scarcely have resorted to such a polished piece of writing. Just as, without a carefully chosen creative-montage solution of this kind, he would never have achieved, by such simple means, so palpable an emotional effect.

While we are on the subject of clocks and hours, I am reminded of an example from my own practice. During the filming of *October*, we came across, in the Winter Palace, a curious specimen of clock: in addition to the main clock dial, it possessed also a wreath of small dials

ranged around the rim of the large one. On each of the dials was the name of a city: Paris, London, New York, Shanghai, and so on. Each told the time as it happened to be in each city, in contrast with the time in Petrograd shown by the main face. The appearance of this clock stuck in our memory. And when in our film we needed to drive home especially forcefully the historic moment of victory and establishment of Soviet power, this clock suggested a specific montage solution: we repeated the hour of the fall of the Provisional Government, depicted on the main dial in Petrograd time, throughout the whole series of subsidiary dials recording the time in London, Paris, New York, Shanghai. Thus this hour, unique in history and in the destiny of peoples, emerged through all the multitudinous variety of local readings of time, as though uniting and fusing all peoples in the perception of the moment of victory. The same concept was also illuminated by a rotating movement of the wreath of dials itself, a movement which, as it grew and accelerated, also made a plastic fusion of all the different and separate indices of time in the sensation of one single historic hour. . . .

At this point I hear a question from my invisible opponents: "That's all very well for you to say, but what about a single unbroken, uncut strip of film containing the performance of an actor—what has this to do with montage? Doesn't his acting, of itself, make an impression? Doesn't the performance of a rôle by Cherkasov *

* Nikolai Cherkasov, as Prof. Polezhayev in *Baltic Deputy*, the Tzarevich Alexei in *Peter the First*, and as Alexander Nevsky.

or Okhlopkov,* Chirkov † or Sverdlin ‡ also make an impression?" It is futile to suppose that this question inflicts a mortal blow on the conception of montage. The principle of montage is far broader than such a question assumes. It is entirely incorrect to assume that if an actor acts in a single unbroken strip of film, uncut by the director and cameraman into different camera-angles, that such a construction is untouched by montage! By no means!

In such a case all we have to do is look for montage elsewhere, in fact, *in the performance of the actor*. And the question of the extent to which the principle of the "inner" technique of acting is related to montage we shall discuss later. At the moment it will be sufficient to let a leading artist of the stage and screen, George Arliss, contribute to this question:

> I had always believed that for the movies, acting must be exaggerated, but I saw in this one flash that *restraint* was the chief thing that the actor had to learn in transferring his art from the stage to the screen. . . . The art of restraint and suggestion on the screen may any time be studied by watching the acting of the inimitable Charlie Chaplin.*

To emphasized representation (exaggeration), Arliss counterposes restraint. He sees the degree of this re-

* Nikolai Okhlopkov, as Vasili in *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918*, and as Vasili Buslai in *Alexander Nevsky*.

† Boris Chirkov, as Maxim in the *Maxim* Trilogy, and as *The New Teacher*.

‡ Lev Sverdlin, as the spy Tzoi, in *In the Far East*, Colonel Usizhima in *The Defense of Volochayevsk*, and as Chubenko in *Guerrilla Brigade*.

straint in the reduction of actuality to suggestion. He rejects not merely the exaggerated representation of actuality, but even the representation of actuality in entirety! In its place he counsels suggestion. But what is "suggestion" if it not be an element, a detail of actuality, a "close-up" of actuality, which, in juxtaposition with other details, serves as a determination of the entire fragment of actuality? Thus, according to Arliss, the fused effective piece of acting is nothing but a juxtaposition of determining close-ups of this kind; combined, they create the image of the acting's content. And, to proceed further, the actor's acting may have the character of a flat representation or of a genuine image according to the method he uses to construct his performance. Even though his performance be shot entirely from a single set-up (or even from a single seat in a theater auditorium), none the less–in a felicitous case–the performance will itself be "montage" in character.

It should be remarked that the second example of montage cited above (from *October*) is not an example of everyday montage, and that the first example (from Maupassant) illustrates only a case where an object is shot from various set-ups with various camera-angles.

Another example that I will cite is quite typical for cinematography, no longer concerned with an individual object, but instead, with an image of a whole phenomenon–composed, however, in exactly the same way.

This example is a certain remarkable "shooting-script." In it, from a cumulative massing of contributory details and pictures, an image palpably arises before us.

It was not written as a finished work of literature, but simply as a note of a great master in which he attempted to put down on paper for his own benefit his visualization of The Deluge.

The "shooting-script" to which I refer is Leonardo da Vinci's notes on a representation of The Deluge in painting. I choose this particular example because in it the *audio-visual* picture of The Deluge is presented with an unusual clarity. Such an accomplishment of sound and picture co-ordination is remarkable coming from any painter, even Leonardo:

Let the dark, gloomy air be seen beaten by the rush of opposing winds wreathed in perpetual rain mingled with hail, and bearing hither and thither a vast network of the torn branches of trees mixed together with an infinite number of leaves.

All around let there be seen ancient trees uprooted and torn in pieces by the fury of the winds.

You should show how fragments of mountains, which have been already stripped bare by the rushing torrents, fall headlong into these very torrents and choke up the valleys,

until the pent-up rivers rise in flood and cover the wide plains and their inhabitants.

Again there might be seen huddled together on the tops of many of the mountains many different sorts of animals, terrified and subdued at last to a state of tameness, in company with men and women who had fled there with their children.

And the fields which were covered with water had their waves covered over in great part with tables, bedsteads,

boats and various other kinds of rafts, improvised through necessity and fear of death,

upon which were men and women with their children, massed together and uttering various cries and lamentations, dismayed by the fury of the winds which were causing the waters to roll over and over in mighty hurricane, bearing with them the bodies of the drowned;

and there was no object that floated on the water but was covered with various different animals who had made truce and stood huddled together in terror, among them wolves, foxes, snakes and creatures of every kind, fugitives from death.

And all the waves that beat against their sides were striking them with repeated blows from the various bodies of the drowned, and the blows were killing those in whom life remained.

Some groups of men you might have seen with weapons in their hands defending the tiny footholds that remained to them from the lions and wolves and beasts of prey which sought safety there.

Ah, what dreadful tumults one heard resounding through the gloomy air, smitten by the fury of the thunder and the lightning it flashed forth, which sped through it, bearing ruin, striking down whatever withstood its course!

Ah, how many might you have seen stopping their ears with their hands in order to shut out the loud uproar caused through the darkened air by the fury of the winds mingled together with the rain, the thunder of the heavens and the raging of the thunderbolts!

Others were not content to shut their eyes but placing their hands over them, one above the other, would cover

them more tightly in order not to see the pitiless slaughter made of the human race by the wrath of God.

Ah me, how many lamentations!

How many in their terror flung themselves down from the rocks! You might have seen huge branches of the giant oaks laden with men borne along through the air by the fury of the impetuous winds.

How many boats were capsized and lying, some whole, others broken in pieces, on the top of men struggling to escape with acts and gestures of despair which foretold an awful death.

Others with frenzied acts were taking their own lives, in despair of ever being able to endure such anguish;

some of these were flinging themselves down from the lofty rocks,

others strangled themselves with their own hands;

some seized hold of their own children,

and with mighty violence slew them at one blow;

some turned their arms against themselves to wound and slay; others falling upon their knees were commending themselves to God.

Alas! how many mothers were bewailing their drowned sons, holding them upon their knees, lifting up open arms to heaven, and with divers cries and shrieks declaiming against the anger of the gods!

Others with hands clenched and fingers locked together gnawed and devoured them with bites that ran blood, crouching down so that their breasts touched their knees in their intense and intolerable agony.

Herds of animals, such as horses, oxen, goats, sheep, were to be seen already hemmed in by the waters and left isolated upon the high peaks of the mountains, all huddling together,

and those in the middle climbing to the top and treading on the others, and waging fierce battles with each other, and many of them dying from want of food.

And the birds had already begun to settle upon men and other animals, no longer finding any land left unsubmerged which was not covered with living creatures.

Already had hunger, the minister of death, taken away their life from the greater number of animals, when the dead bodies already becoming lighter began to rise from out the bottom of the deep waters, and emerged to the surface among the contending waves; and there lay beating one against another, and as balls puffed up with wind rebound back from the spot where they strike, these fell back and lay upon the other dead bodies.

And above these horrors the atmosphere was seen covered with murky clouds that were rent by the jagged course of the raging thunderbolts of heaven, which flashed light hither and thither amid the obscurity of the darkness. . . .[10]

The foregoing was not intended by its author as a poem or literary sketch. Péladan, the editor of the French edition of Leonardo's *Trattata della Pittura*, regards this description as an unrealized plan for a picture, which would have been an unsurpassed "chef d'œuvre of landscape and the representation of elemental struggles." [11] None the less the description is not a chaos but is executed in accordance with features that are characteristic rather of the "temporal" than of the "spatial" arts.

Without appraising in detail the structure of this extraordinary "shooting-script," we must point, however, to the fact that the description follows a quite definite *movement.* Moreover, *the course of this movement* is not in the least fortuitous. The movement follows a definite order, and then, in corresponding *reverse order,* returns to phenomena matching those of the opening. Beginning with a description of the heavens, the picture ends with a similar description, but considerably increased in intensity. Occupying the center is the group of humans and their experiences; the scene develops from the heavens to the humans, and from the humans to the heavens, passing groups of animals. The details of largest scale (the close-ups) are found in the center, at the climax of the description (". . . *hands clenched and fingers locked together . . . bites that ran blood . . .*"). In perfect clarity emerge the typical elements of a montage composition.

The content within each frame of the separate scenes is enforced by the increasing intensity in the action.

Let us consider what we may call the "animal theme": animals trying to escape; animals borne by the flood; animals drowning; animals struggling with human beings; animals fighting one another; the carcasses of drowned animals floating to the surface. Or the progressive disappearance of terra firma from under the feet of the people, animals, birds, reaching its culmination at the point where the birds are forced to settle on the humans

and animals, not finding any unsubmerged and unoccupied land. This passage forcibly recalls to us that the distribution of details in a picture on a single plane also presumes movement—a compositionally directed movement of the eyes from one phenomenon to another. Here, of course, movement is expressed less directly than in the film, where the eye *cannot* discern the succession of the sequence of details in any other order than that established by him who determines the order of the montage.

Unquestionably though, Leonardo's exceedingly sequential description fulfills the task not of merely listing the details, but of outlining the trajectory of the future movement of the attention over the surface of the canvas. Here we see a brilliant example of how, in the apparently static simultaneous "co-existence" of details in an immobile picture, there has yet been applied exactly the same montage selection, there is exactly the same ordered succession in the juxtaposition of details, as in those arts that include the time factor.

Montage has a realistic significance when the separate pieces produce, in juxtaposition, the generality, the synthesis of one's theme. This is the image, incorporating the theme.

Turning from this definition to the creative process, we shall see that it proceeds in the following manner. Before the inner vision, before the perception of the creator, hovers a given image, emotionally embodying his theme. The task that confronts him is to transform this image into a few basic *partial representations* which,

in their combination and juxtaposition, shall evoke in the consciousness and feelings of the spectator, reader, or auditor, that same initial general image which originally hovered before the creative artist.

This applies both to the image of the work of art as a whole and the image of each separate scene or part. This holds true in precisely the same sense for the actor's creation of an image.

The actor is confronted with exactly the same task: to express, in two, three, or four features of a character or of a mode of behavior, those basic elements which in juxtaposition create the integral image that was worked out by the author, director and the actor himself.

What is most noteworthy in such a method? First and foremost, its dynamism. This rests primarily in the fact that the desired image is *not fixed or ready-made, but arises—is born.* The image planned by author, director and actor is concretized by them in separate representational elements, and is assembled—again and finally—in the spectator's perception. This is actually the final aim of every artist's creative endeavor.

Gorky put this eloquently in a letter to Konstantin Fedin:

> You say: You are worried by the question, "how to write?" I have been watching for 25 years how that question worries people . . . Yes, it is a serious question; I have worried about it myself, I do worry about it, and I shall go on worrying about it to the end of my days. But for me the question is formulated: How must I write so that the man, no matter who he may be, shall emerge from

the pages of the story about him with that strength of physical palpability of his existence, with that cogency of his *half-imaginary* reality, with which I see and feel him? That is the point as I understand it, that is the secret of the matter. . . .[12]

Montage helps in the resolution of this task. The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame creative road that the author traveled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author. And this is, obviously, the highest possible degree of approximation to transmitting visually the author's perceptions and intention in all their fullness, to transmitting them with "that strength of physical palpability" with which they arose before the author in his creative work and his creative vision.

Relevant to this part of the discussion is Marx's definition of the course of genuine investigation:

> Not only the result, but the road to it also, is a part of truth. The investigation of truth must itself be true, true investigation is unfolded truth, the disjuncted members of which unite in the result.[13] *

* Zur Wahrheit gehört nicht nur das Resultat, sondern auch der Weg. Die Untersuchung der Wahrheit muss selbst wahr sein, die wahre Untersuchung ist die entfaltete Wahrheit, deren auseinander gestreute Glieder sich im Resultat zusammenfassen.

The strength of the method resides also in the circumstance that the spectator is drawn into a creative act in which his individuality is not subordinated to the author's individuality, but is opened up throughout the process of fusion with the author's intention, just as the individuality of a great actor is fused with the individuality of a great playwright in the creation of a classic scenic image. In fact, every spectator, in correspondence with his individuality, and in his own way and out of his own experience—out of the womb of his fantasy, out of the warp and weft of his associations, all conditioned by the premises of his character, habits and social appurtenances, creates an image in accordance with the representational guidance suggested by the author, leading him to understanding and experience of the author's theme. This is the same image that was planned and created by the author, but this image is at the same time created also by the spectator himself.

One might think that nothing could be more definite and clear than the almost scientific listing of the details of The Deluge as they pass before us in Leonardo's "shooting-script." Yet how personal and individual are the resulting images that arise in the mind of each reader, deriving from a specification and juxtaposition of details which are shared by all readers of such a document. Each is just as similar and as dissimilar as would be the rôle of Hamlet or Lear played by different actors of different countries, periods, or theaters.

Maupassant offers every reader the same montage con-

struction for the striking of the clocks. He knows that this particular construction will evoke in the perception more than mere information of the hour of night. An experience of the significance of the hour of midnight will be evoked. Each reader hears the striking of the hour identically. But in each reader is born an image of his own, his own representation of midnight and its significance. Each such representation is, in the image sense, individual, dissimilar, and yet identical thematically. And each such image of midnight, while being for every reader at the same time also that of the author, is also equally his own—living, close, intimate.

The image planned by the author has become flesh of the flesh of the spectator's risen image. . . . Within me, as a spectator, this image is born and grown. Not only the author has created, but I also—the creating spectator—have participated.

At the beginning of this chapter I spoke of an emotionally exciting and moving story as distinguished from a logical exposition of facts—as much difference as there is between an experience and an affidavit.

An *affidavit-exposition* would be the corresponding *non-montage* construction in each of the examples that have been cited. In the case of Leonardo da Vinci's notes for The Deluge, an affidavit-exposition would not have taken into consideration as he did the various scales and perspectives to be distributed over the surface of the finished picture, according to his calculations of the trajectory of the spectator's eyes. It would have been

satisfied by a mere display of the dial of a clock telling the exact time of the overthrow of the Provisional Government. If Maupassant had used such a method in the passage of Duroy's appointment, it would have been a curt item of information that the hour of twelve struck. In other words such an approach conveys bare documentary information, not raised by means of art to a created exciting force and emotional affect. As affidavit-expositions, these examples would all be, in film terms, *representations shot from a single set-up*. But, as fashioned by artists, they constitute *images*, brought to life by means of *montage construction*.

And now we can say that it is precisely the *montage* principle, as distinguished from that of *representation*, which obliges spectators themselves to *create* and the montage principle, by this means, achieves that great power of inner creative excitement * in the *spectator* which distinguishes an emotionally exciting work from one that stops without going further than giving information or recording events.

Examining this distinction we discover that the montage principle in films is only a sectional application of

* It is quite obvious that the *theme as such* is capable of exciting emotionally, independently of the form in which it is presented. A brief newspaper report of the victory of the Spanish Republicans at Guadalajara is more moving than a work by Beethoven. But we are discussing here how, by means of art, to raise a given theme or subject, that may already be exciting "in itself," to a maximum degree of affectiveness. It is further quite obvious that montage, as such, is in no way an exhaustive means in this field, though a tremendously powerful one.

the *montage principle in general*, a principle which, if fully understood, passes far beyond the limits of splicing bits of film together.

As stated above, the compared montage methods of *creation by the spectator* and *creation by the actor* can lead to absorbing conclusions. In this comparison a meeting occurs between the montage method and the sphere of the *inner* technique of the actor; that is, the form of that *inner process* through which the actor creates a living feeling, to be displayed subsequently in the truthfulness of his activity on the stage or on the screen.

A number of systems and doctrines have been erected upon the problems of the actor's performance. More accurately, there are really two or three systems with various offshoots. These offshoot schools are distinguished one from the other not merely by differences in terminology, but chiefly by their varying conceptions of the principal rôle played by *different* basic points of acting technique. Sometimes a school almost completely forgets an entire link in the psychological process of image-creation. Sometimes a link that is *not basic* is raised to the foremost place. Within even such a monolith as the method of the Moscow Art Theatre, with all its body of basic postulates, there are independent offshoots in the interpretation of these postulates.

I have no intention of delving into the nuances of either essential or terminological differences in methods of training or creation with the actor. Our purpose here is to consider those features of inner technique which

enter necessarily and directly into the technique of the actor's work and enable it to achieve results—seizing the imagination of the spectator. Any actor or director is, as a matter of fact, in a position to deduce these features from his own "inner" practice, if he would but manage to halt that process in order to examine it. The techniques of the *actor* and the *director* are, in regard to this section of the problem, indistinguishable, since the director in this process is also, to some extent, an actor. From observations of this "actor's share" in my own directorial experience, I shall try to outline this inner technique we are considering through a concrete example. In so doing there is no intention of saying anything *new* on *this* particular question.

Let us suppose that I am faced with the problem of playing the "morning after" of a man who, the night before, has lost government money at cards. Suppose the action to be full of all kinds of matters, including, let us say, a conversation with a completely unsuspecting wife, a scene with a daughter gazing intently at her father whose behavior seems strange, a scene of the embezzler nervously awaiting the telephone call that is to call him to account, and so on.

Suppose that a series of such scenes leads the embezzler into an attempt to shoot himself. The task before the actor is to act the final fragment of the climax, where he arrives at this realization that there is only one solution —suicide—and his hand begins to fumble in the drawer of his writing-table, searching for the revolver. . . .

I believe that it would be almost impossible to find