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The Shifting Protocols of the Visible: The Becoming of Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*

ABSTRACT: This article aims to trace and articulate the extremely rich production and postproduction history of the early Soviet classic, Sergei Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin* (The Battleship Potemkin, 1925). By engaging Paolo Cherchi Usai's idea that early films exist as multiple objects, the paper explicates how Eisenstein's film was re-edited in three of its most important versions: the original 1925 cut; the first international cut, produced in 1926; and the 1950 cut. By elucidating the distinctive sociopolitical conditions that crucially informed all three cuts of the film, the article interprets and compares the visual transformation of *Potemkin* in accordance with editorial and re-editorial alterations, identifying a nexus of contributing factors that regulate the economy of the visible in Eisenstein's film. I argue that the junction at which authoritative social impulses are negotiated with Eisenstein's individual vision takes us to what might be one of the critical moments in Eisenstein's early career in which his early, avant-garde–informed approach to filmmaking is recalibrated with the rules of dramaturgy of film form.

KEYWORDS: montage, censorship, re-editing, multiple object, visualization of affects, protocols of seeing, narratocracy, Soviet cinema

"[T]he most vital aspect of our work: the problem of representation and the relationship to what is being represented."

SERGEI EISENSTEIN, "ON THE STRUCTURE OF THINGS"

The dynamic of early cinema is highly resonant with some of the guiding principles of modernist aesthetics, according to which a work of art exists as a modal, processual entity.[1] Indeed, if historians and archivists of early cinema are to be trusted, the way in which silent films materially exist should compel us to rethink the way we understand cinema as an art form: not only are early films unstable because they are physically vulnerable (due to the decomposition

of nitrate print), but they are also ephemeral in a more profound sense, due to the principal incompleteness and openness of film as an artistic medium. It is with this idea in mind that one of the foremost historians of early cinema, Paolo Cherchi Usai, has alerted us that the earliest films cannot be perceived as unitary, concluded wholes, but as *multiple objects*, which are "fragmented into a number of different entities equal to the number of surviving copies."[2] This proposition, in which the reference is primarily made to the material limitations of the medium, is relevant to the study of early cinema more generally. The idea that any film principally exists as a multiple object, an open structure that can be subject to repetitive structural alterations not only by its assumed authors, its *auteur* (director), and/or its legal proprietor (producer), but also by the potentially endless collective of solicited and unsolicited coauthors, its editors, political censors, projectionists, critics, or even ordinary viewers, challenges our understanding of what defines the art of the moving image. The potential open-endedness of the moving image, the notion that cinema emerges as a fundamentally protean, open work of art,[3] blurs the boundaries between the acts of production, postproduction, and, ultimately, reception. In light of this postulation, the following questions arise: what are the exact ramifications of the idea that cinema is a processual, ever-emerging art form and how does that idea affect the ways in which onscreen visual realities are constructed and perceived?

The production and postproduction histories of Sergei Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin* (The Battleship Potemkin, 1925) and the vicissitudes surrounding the construction of the visible in this early Soviet film offer a compelling set of answers to these questions. Eisenstein's film is customarily thought of as a superior result of much premeditation and meticulous planning, made tangible in its unique authorial aesthetics and leading ultimately to its canonical status in the histories of Soviet and global cinema. However, the five officially recognized versions of the film and the innumerable unofficial ones hide from our view an unappropriated, yet extremely valuable part of the history of *Battleship Potemkin*, the one that indicates the processual, emerging nature of this film. Following its theatrical release in 1925, this editio princeps of Eisenstein's film was amended in April 1926 in Berlin by Eisenstein himself, after which the film was released in its second original version. After Eisenstein's death in February 1948, *Potemkin* was institutionally re-edited at least three more times, which allows us to speak of another three internationally recognized cuts of the film: the first one was supervised by Grigorii Aleksandrov with Esfir' Tobak at the editing desk in 1949–50; the second one was supervised in Moscow in 1975–76 by Sergei Yutkevich with the assistance of Naum Kleiman; the third and most recent rendition of the film was supervised by the German film historian and

archivist Enno Patalas and executed under the auspices of Bundesfilm Archive Berlin and the Munich Film Museum in 2005. My ambition in this article is to revisit and somewhat unsettle the easy assertion of premeditation and finalizability of Eisenstein's film through a focused discussion of the first three cuts of the film and their inter- and extratextual interactions: the original December 1925 version, the 1926 Berlin cut, and the 1950 release of the film.

The suggestion that *Battleship Potemkin*, like many other films in early cinema, may be conceived of as a synchronically and diachronically conditioned, open-ended process also interacts controversially with Eisenstein's core artistic and political creeds; these hold that only the most careful arrangement of moving images may exert a powerful impact upon the viewer, incite psychoemotional pathos, and make a previously indifferent viewer susceptible to ideological content. From his earliest theoretical texts like "Montazh attraktsionov" (The montage of attractions, 1923) to his more mature writings such as those published under the title *Neravnodushnaia priroda* (Nonindifferent nature, 1940), Eisenstein emphatically argued for the mathematical calculability of this aesthetic impact. It is worth noting, however, that Eisenstein's discursive strategies, of course, served not only as evaluation, but also as social legitimation of his cinematic practice, assuring the longevity of its legacy in the ideologically volatile context of the Soviet cinema. Notably, in the 1920s, the self-built aura of the scientific rigor of Eisenstein's artistic practice helped the young director distance his art from the aesthetic ineffectiveness (and social precariousness) of the radical avant-garde circles in which he participated, from the Proletarian Culture Movement (Proletkul't) and Left Front in Art (Lef),[4] to the Association of Revolutionary Cinema (ARK/ARRK).[5] On the other hand, Eisenstein's description of his own cinematic practice in terms of the Pythagorean idea of the golden section (as the organically united whole) in the 1930s also fell on a fertile soil:[6] it corresponded very well with the newly inaugurated Empire style and legitimized Eisenstein as an unlikely champion of Stalinist cinema. These paradoxes, which reveal that many of Eisenstein's core proclamations and purported aesthetic imperatives are unattainable in practice, provide yet another incentive for the present article. The following pages refocus our vision of Eisenstein's *Potemkin* by paying critical attention to the sociopolitical mechanisms and artistic strategies that shaped the emergence and constant reconstruction of the Potemkin text.

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN*, TAKE ONE: EARLY FILM AS AN ITERABLE MEDIUM

The shooting of *Potemkin* as we know it started on September 28, 1925, on locations in the Black Sea port of Odessa, six months after the production was approved by authorities and assigned to Eisenstein.[7] Originally titled *1905*, the scenario for the film included ten loosely related episodes set in the year of the failed Russian revolution. Only forty-three shots of episode two were initially allocated for the coverage of the mutiny on the Imperial Navy armored cruiser *Prince Potemkin of Tauris* on June 14/27, 1905.[8] Dissatisfied with the footage he and cinematographer Aleksandr Levitskii had made in July and August 1925 on location in Moscow, Leningrad, and Odessa,[9] Eisenstein halted the production and embarked on a thorough revision of the screenplay, which, as of then, concentrated on the mutiny alone.[10] With the exception of the final sequence of the film, "Meeting the Squadron," which remained to be completed by Eisenstein's assistant Grigorii Aleksandrov in the director's absence, the filming of *Potemkin* was finished in less than two months. Eisenstein returned from Odessa to Moscow on November 23, and the editing of 4,500 meters of footage began in a rapid manner, as the film was scheduled to pre-premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre on December 21. As Grigorii Aleksandrov later recalled, the final seaming of cuts was completed by Eisenstein on the very day of the premiere, which turned out to be three days after the initially scheduled date, on December 24.[11]

The audiences at the gala event at Bolshoi were ecstatic, and this enthusiastic reception might have caused the Soviet cultural authorities to promptly approve the film for theatrical distribution. Ironically (in hindsight), the intentions of the Commission of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, the producer of Eisenstein's film, were modest and above all ceremonial:[12] to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the 1905 popular uprising, a failed prequel to the October Revolution.[13] When the official theatrical life of *Potemkin* started on January 18, 1926, the film proved to be an astounding success; according to the available data, in two theaters alone, the film was seen by nearly seventy thousand people in the first twelve days of screening.[14] If we take into account that the distribution of Eisenstein's film was rife with difficulties due to monopolized distribution rights and a limited number of copies, this reception of *Potemkin* is even more impressive.

Hoping to build on the film's home success, the Soviet federal film board approved *Potemkin* for international distribution. On January 21, 1926, a private screening of *Potemkin* to a select audience was held in Berlin to mark the second anniversary of Lenin's death. Upon seeing the film, Willi Müntzenberg, the prominent German communist and Lenin's friend from the latter's

immigration years, decided to set up a film distribution company, Prometheus Film, which, on February 26, purchased distribution rights for *Potemkin*—as well as the only negative of the film.[15] In order to obtain a license for public distribution, Prometheus Film submitted a copy of the film to a censorship commission, which included mainly police and military personnel. Well aware that the political climate in Weimar Germany in the aftermath of the March 1920 workers' uprising was not favorable for the film's revolutionary agenda,[16] Müntzenberg set up a team led by the well-known director of the so-called proletariat films, Philipp (Piel) Jutzi, to act preemptively and re-edit the film to make it more suitable for the censors[17] By mid-March 1926, Jutzi's team introduced a number of ostensibly minor and technical interventions into the original December 1925 cut: it divided the film into six acts (instead of five), removed a certain number of shots depicting the state actors' brutality, and others.[18] It was this re-edited version of the film that was shown to the censorship commission on March 17, 1926, in Berlin. Although Jutzi's changes moderated the revolutionary pathos of the film, the verdict of the commission was negative; on March 24 the Department of Film Affairs (Second Chamber of Film Censorship) ruled that *Battleship Potemkin* was a threat to "public tranquillity and order" and voted to ban the film from public screening in Germany.[19] Prometheus Film appealed the decision, and another meeting of the commission was scheduled for April 10. Meanwhile, Jutzi's cut of the film was re-edited again, now in the presence of Eisenstein and Tisse, who arrived in Berlin on March 18. The official purpose of Eisenstein's and Tisse's trip to Berlin was to "study the organisation, working methods and technical equipment of German film studios," which precludes film historians from taking a firm stand on the question of Eisenstein's actual involvement in the Berlin cut of his film.[20] The question of Eisenstein's participation in the re-edit is important, however, given that the interventions carried out during the late March and early April re-editing were considerable. If we assume that Eisenstein had decisive input into the Berlin re-editing of the film (both the one carried out by Jutzi alone before March 17 and the second one, probably made in collaboration, in the period between March 18 and April 10), what remains confusing is that Jutzi was named as the author/editor of the version that was submitted for the April meeting of the censorship commission.[21] Likewise, if we agree with the suggestion that Jutzi made the changes regardless of, or contrary to, Eisenstein's opinion, the question that remains unanswered is to what extent Eisenstein would accept and keep the type of changes that were made.[22]

Despite the concerted efforts to reduce the scenes of revolutionary pathos in the original cut, the Censorship Committee, which met on April 10, came up with new demands: Prometheus Film was required to remove an additional

fourteen shots from acts 2 and 4 of the Jutzi-Eisenstein cut, totalling around thirty meters of filmed and edited material. All of the required changes were implemented, and the first international cut of *The Battleship Potemkin* premiered on April 29 at the Apollo Theatre in Berlin before an audience of three thousand. The final Berlin cut of the film differed from the December 1925 version in three respects: a series of shots containing a close depiction of brutality was excised, the order of episodes within sequences was altered, and the original musical score by Edmund Meisel was added. The 1926 Berlin cut of the film remained the basis for practically all subsequent versions of the film—and therefore informed all the lay, artistic, and scholarly audiences' responses to it—until the mid-1950s. The film's unusual editing trajectory occurred because, along with distribution rights, Prometheus Film, as previously noted, had also purchased the only negative of the film. The following pages will elucidate the sociopolitical and aesthetic mechanisms that gave rise to the first two types of interventions and then examine the ways in which these changes reorganized the visual and narrative aspects of Eisenstein's film and made our understanding of it a complex and potentially indeterminate affair.

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN*, TAKE TWO: "HOW ARE DIFFERENT PARTS PUT TOGETHER?"

In March-April 1922, Eisenstein visited his friend, the actor Leonid Obolenskii, and listened attentively as he described Lev Kuleshov's recent cinematic experiments. At the end of it, Eisenstein had only one urgent question for Obolenskii: "How are different parts put together?"[23] This first reaction to the idea of cinematic montage—later to eventuate in a number of Eisenstein's direct interactions with Kuleshov—would inform all of Eisenstein's future engagements with the subject and become central to his film philosophy. And the question of how to put different parts together would have been very much at the forefront of his mind when both constructing and reconstructing *Battleship Potemkin* for German audiences in the spring of 1926.

As suggested before, Jutzi and Eisenstein were governed by the pragmatic concerns of responding to an ideological dictate: they complied closely with the requests by the German Chamber of Film Censorship, as a result of which fourteen sections identified in the chamber's report as problematic (four from act 2, and ten from act 4) were dealt with without delay.[24] As a matter of principle, individual shots containing the most graphic depictions of violent acts were removed, but the episodes and larger sequences remained. The way in which the censorship-requested cuts were implemented can be demonstrated through examples from two episodes taken from the "Odessa Steps" scene in act 4. In the first of these, a series of close-ups from the "Mother and Son" episode depicting

Figs. 1 and 2: Two shots from the 1925 cut of *Battleship Potemkin*, excised in the 1926 Berlin cut of the film

the wounded child crying for help while being stomped over by the panicking crowd were removed (figs. 1 and 2).

The portrayal of extreme violence visually organized through the juxta-position of close-ups of the boy's anguish, close-ups of his mother's horror, and medium shots of the panicking crowd, was moderated in the April 1926 cut to a few medium shots of the boy's lifeless body, a close-up of his mother's anguish, and a medium shot of the crowd.

Figs. 3 and 4: The same sequence in the 1926 Berlin cut of the *Battleship Potemkin*

The framing of the boy's death, which in the previous version conveyed high pathos, was rearticulated through the more distanced and less engag-ing medium shots: first, of a woman stumbling upon the boy's body, and then of a man making efforts to avoid stepping on the boy's legs (figs. 3 and 4). In other words, the informational aspect of the message is communicated, but its affective capacity to incite pathos is toned down.

Later within the same episode, medium shots depicting the unit of Cossacks firing cold-bloodedly at the mother and her child and then executing them (figs. 5 and 6) were also cut.

Figs. 5 and 6: Two shots from the December 1925 cut of *Battleship Potemkin*, excised in the 1926 Berlin cut of the film

Having eliminated the shots that captured the moment at which the Cossack unit fires at the mother and child, the ending of the episode showing the troops as they march down the stairs over the bodies of the mother and her child is framed distantly in a medium shot (figs. 7 and 8).

Figs. 7 and 8: The same sequence in the 1926 Berlin cut of the *Battleship Potemkin*

Likewise, in the so-called pram episode, the extreme close-up depicting the waist of a woman shot by the Cossacks, which showed the traces of blood (fig. 9), had to be cut; the extreme close-up without bloodstains remained (fig. 10).[25]

Figs. 9 and 10: Still from the original 1925 cut and the same still from the Berlin cut

In the censored cut, we see only one close-up of the woman's waist before she is hit by a bullet, and we realize that she is wounded only by her facial expression in the following close-up of her face, not by the extreme close-up showing blood on her belt.

The finale of the episode was also deemed too graphic: when the pram reaches the foot of the stairs, it tips over. In the original edit, this was followed in quick succession by four extreme close-ups of a Cossack officer drawing his *shashka* and slaying the lady with pince-nez (figs. 11 and 12).
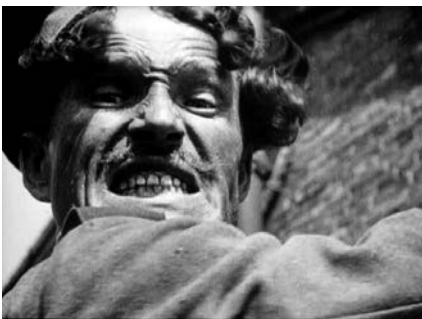
Figs. 11 and 12: Still from the original December 1925 cut of ending of the pram episode

The re-edited version leaves these shots out and quickly juxtaposes the medium shot of the pram (fig. 13) (instead of the massacred lady with pince-nez) with the medium shot of the turning tower of the battleship as it prepares for its retaliatory cannonade (fig. 14). This intervention uses an anticipated compensatory action to dilute the highly affective charge of the episode's original tragic pathos.
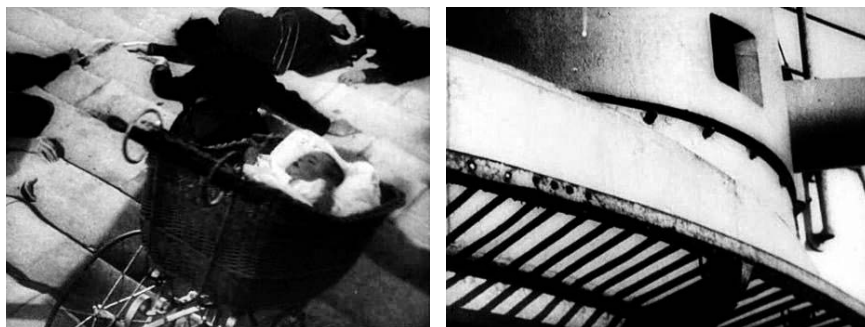
Figs. 13 and 14: A still from the Berlin cut: the new, April 1926 ending of the pram episode

So, cumulatively, what effect did this rearrangement of the visual order have on the structuring of the object of cinematic representation in *The Battleship Potemkin*? Or, taking into account Christian Metz's description of the specificity of the cinematic medium as the "absence of the object seen," the question could be reformulated as follows: what impact did the interventions in the changed economy of the visible in *Potemkin* have on the construction of the film's "imaginary object"?[26] First, the censorship commission's interventions lay bare both the operation of and the radical incommensurability between the two visual orders through which Eisenstein's film, as a cinematic art object, attempts to systematize the way in which we see and understand the world around us in two different cuts.[27] The first of the two visual regimes that structure Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* populates the field of the visible with images of anguish and suffering, while the second restricts the visualization of these affects. It could therefore be said that the two cuts of the film differ primarily in the protocols that set the rules of rendering human affects and suffering visible. Second, to draw attention to this difference also illuminates the mechanisms by which the moving image communicates the evasive object of its representation. For it was not the object, or the *signified* (violence, suffering, or political oppression), that was at stake, but the visual *signifier* itself. Rather remarkably, the censorship commission did not object to the reference to, or even the *factual* depiction of, the atrocious killing of a boy and his mother, but the way in which the killing was signified and rendered visible.

This attention to the structuring of the scopic regime of *Potemkin* infers an important theme: namely, the unique capacity of the visual signifier to communicate through excess what is absent and/or unnamable. For that reason, the censorship commission's intervention into the visual organization of affects must be seen as a preeminently political act; and, vice versa, Eisenstein's excessive figuration of affects must be seen as a political gesture par excellence. The

pivotal concept of Eisenstein's early aesthetics, the montage of attractions, is premised on the structuring and visual rendition of human affects for the purpose of political mobilization of the spectator; in order for that to happen, the spectator must be exposed to scenes of suffering and brought to a state of profound emotional shock. As Eisenstein puts it in his key early text "Montage of Attractions," this critical stratagem involves an "aggressive moment . . . that subjects the audience to an emotional or psychological influence . . . in order to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator."[28] These oft-quoted words are usually understood in the following way: to be transformed into a revolutionary subject, the spectator must first be exposed to a certain protocol of pathos and excess, or the tendentiously arranged (through editing) images of aggression and violence. However, one important aspect of this iron law of Eisenstein's aesthetics has often been neglected: the critical aspect of this structured exposure to the power of the visual lies in the capacity of the visual to convey and channel the *affective excess*. The absent and unnamable object of cinema cannot be communicated without excess: only the emphatic visualization (multiple close-ups) of affective content (the anguish and suffering of children) performs the naming of the unnamable. In Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, it was precisely the visual figuration of the political message through excess which enabled the communication of that message; moreover, and unsurprisingly, the censorship commission of the Weimar Republic identified this excess as a threat.

The history of repeated "getting different parts together" of Eisenstein's film is long and ongoing at various levels and through different instantiations; and the story of the consequences of such reconstructions for our engagement with the protocols of seeing in *Potemkin* is, likewise, rich. However, the present account of the signature cuts of Eisenstein's film and their ideological recutting would not be complete without one more stop: the 1950 Soviet release of the film. Produced two years after Eisenstein's death to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first theatrical release of the film, the first and only Stalin-era cut runs under sixty-three minutes and presents the shortest version of *Potemkin*. The 1950 edition, which was supervised by Aleksandrov and re-edited by Esfir' Tobak,[29] surprises the Eisenstein scholar by its complete reliance on the 1926 Berlin cut. Indeed, with the exception of Edmund Meisel's score, which was replaced by a new one written by the Soviet composer Nikolai Kriukov,[30] in most critical scenes of the film, the 1950 version matches the April 1926 Berlin cut. This also applies to the crucial scenes from act 4 of *Potemkin* where the 1950 version of the film copies verbatim the censored version of the scenes. This reliance on the censored cut comes as a surprise in light of the immediate historical context—of the strong anti-German sentiments in the USSR in the aftermath of World War II—and, perhaps more importantly, the availability of the negative

Figs. 15 and 16: An intertitle and a still from the original December 1925 cut

Figs. 17 and 18: Two stills from the 1950 cut: "Bundistka" and "The Lynch"

of the original cut of *Potemkin*. The latter appeared in Moscow possibly in the 1930s as a result of the bankruptcy of the Prometheus in 1933, or as a corollary to the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, or in the 1940s, as a spoil of victory after the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.[31]

  The editors of the 1950 version of *Potemkin* retained the censorship of the Berlin cut, but, in addition, they idiosyncratically restored the original intertitles to the film, which were authored by the poet Nikolai Aseev and the multitalented avant-garde figure Sergei Tret'iakov. For example, in act 3 (intertitled "A Dead Man Calls for Justice"), during a public rally which spontaneously developed from a vigil at the body of Grigorii Vakulenchuk, the murdered leader of the mutiny, a middle-aged man from the crowd ("chernosotenets," or "member of the black hundreds," according to Eisenstein's typecasting),[32] shouts an anti-Semitic insult at an agitated speaker, a young woman with noticeably Jewish features (in Eisenstein's casting notes—"bundistka," or "member of the Bund Party").[33] As a result, an angry mob lynches the man. In the December 1925 cut, the lynching scene is immediately preceded by the intertitles "Kill the Jew!" (*bei*
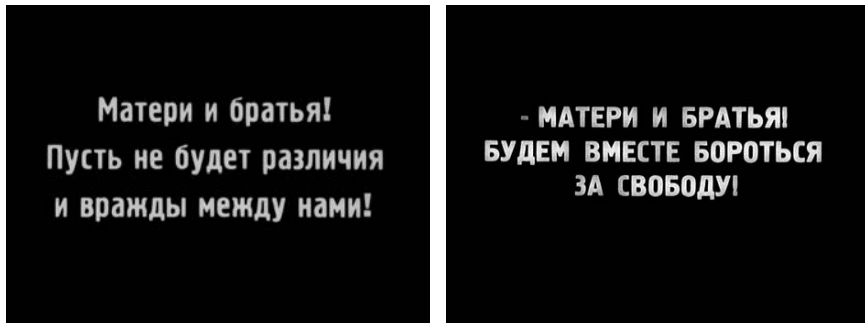
Figs. 19 and 20: Two intertitles, one from the original cut and one from the 1950 cut

zhidov!), so that the irritated looks of the crowd and subsequent lynching are not perceived as a random act of violence, but, rather, as an act of solidarity with the agitators and the moment of realization (presumably, on the part of the reticent majority) that everyone, Jews and Russians alike, has a common enemy, namely, the Tsarist oppression (figs. 15 and 16). In the 1950 cut, however, the intertitles with the anti-Semitic rant are removed. From a narrative point of view, the motive for popular reaction is now removed and the symbolic register of the entire scene shifts: from serving as a symbol of the popular unity of diverse ethnicities against oppression, the scene now turns into incomprehensible mob violence (figs. 17 and 18).

In conjunction with this despecification of perpetrators and victims and overall semantic generalization, the original intertitles that feature in the 1950 cut underwent a slight but ideologically telling alteration. From emphasis on the equality and amity of the people ("Let there not be any difference and enmity amongst us"), the message shifts to one of more neutral "togetherness" ("We shall fight for freedom together") (figs. 19 and 20).

This new figuration of the visible in *Potemkin* reveals the emergence of the visual regime of high Stalinism, which evocatively reflects the societal values and ideologems of a particularly complex moment in Soviet history. Exhausted and traumatized by the war, the Soviet state struggled to adjust to its new global position. In the early days of the Cold War, the sense of increasing global insecurity triggered a number of protective mechanisms at the level of domestic policy. The most alarming one has now become known as the anticosmopolitan campaign, that is, a state-sponsored identification and targeting of internationalism in practically every sphere of social life. For a variety of reasons, none of which can be discussed in this paper at any length, the anticosmopolitan campaign had markedly anti-Semitic overtones.[34] Hence, the contrastive juxtaposition of the revolutionary Jews and the retrograde, or reticent, Russians, so clearly

gestured to in the 1925 cut, became implausible, even precarious, in the tide of xenophobic national unity that characterizes late Stalin years.

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN*, TAKE THREE: TELLING THE TALE OF DEATH

Here I would like to return to the 1926 Berlin cut of *Potemkin* once again, to draw attention to another type of change this cut of the film introduced that altered the film's scopic regime in ideologically telling ways. This type of change involves a number of modifications in the order of episodes within certain important sequences in the film. Although less obvious to the average observer than the changes that deleted actual film material, these alterations are controversial enough to merit discussion.

The visual rearrangement of the narrative in act 2, known as "Drama on the Quarter-Deck" (Drama na Tendre[35]) is particularly illuminating in this context. Act 2 of the film, seventeen minutes, twenty seconds long, was, like other acts in the film, carefully structured in two parts:[36] while the first part (approximately eight minutes, fifty seconds long) shows the gradual development of the mutiny and culminates with its outbreak, the second, only slightly shorter part, stages a battle between the seamen and their officers, which ends with the sailors' exultant celebration of their triumph. The treatment of one highly resonant episode from the second part of act 2—the killing of the seamen's leader Vakulenchuk—differs considerably in the 1925 and the Berlin cut. In the original cut, Vakulenchuk is shot by the loyalist officer Ippolit Giliarovskii (impersonated in the film by Grigorii Aleksandrov himself) *after* the victorious resolution of the mutiny, whereas in the Berlin 1926 cut, the killing takes place at the beginning of the mutiny and is positioned halfway into act 2.[37] The second of these (the Berlin version), while not being an alteration requested by the censors, appears more in line with the principle of causality and the narrative arc of Aristotelian dramaturgy. With this insight in mind, we may first pose the question of why Eisenstein deviated from the expected, narratively effective organization of the episode in the 1925 cut in the first place. Arguably, it was not for lack of skill that Eisenstein opted for this idiosyncratic narrative line. Rather, I would argue, this dramaturgical coil bears import for our understanding of some premises of Eisenstein's early aesthetics. The positioning of Vakulenchuk's death after the end of the mutiny has specific effects for the narrative and ideological economy of act 2 and the film as a whole. It could be said that, from a purely dramaturgical point of view, the posterior staging of Vakulenchuk's death exerted an anticlimactic impact on the episode and was meant to be understood as a sobering coda to the overall jubilant atmosphere of the denouement in act 2. By situating Vakulenchuk's murder after the triumph, Eisenstein stages the act of rebellion

beyond the narrative motivational cycle based on the principles of cause and effect; thereby, he presents the rebellion as an act of political, ethical, and even universal justice, not necessarily bound by individual or site-specific causes. At the same time, this ordering of episodes institutes the 1905 murder of Vakulenchuk as an anticipatory gesture, one that requires and precipitates a response, the one that happened in 1917. The final semantic horizon is completely in line with the deeper symbolic logic of *Battleship Potemkin*, as throughout the film the rebellion is presented as a synecdoche, or a symbolic anticipation of the revolution. What appeared to some as an aberration from dramaturgical conventions, or simply a mistake in directorial organization of act 2, was in fact an extraordinary aesthetic-cum-ideological maneuver: by circumventing the principles of cause and effect and subverting the dramaturgical order, Eisenstein makes a powerful statement on the preeminence of the political over the narrative. As suggested earlier in the text, Eisenstein's purposeful disregard for dramatic principles may seem baffling from the perspective of Eisenstein's later reflections on *Potemkin*, where he imputed that each episode of the film was structured meticulously to meet the Pythagorean golden section and maximize its impact upon the viewer.[38] But if one puts Eisenstein's dramaturgical practice in *Potemkin* in the context of his attempts to theorize his approach to filmmaking in the 1920s, one can see that, in these writings as well as in Eisenstein's practice of that period, the issue of narrative economy, understood in the formalist sense of the word, was secondary to the question of juxtapositional editing of dynamic/ex-centric shots, capable of releasing affective potential and ultimately exerting ideological impact upon the viewer.[39]

Before I further assess the import of dramaturgical rearrangement for Eisenstein at the time of his work on *Potemkin*, I will examine the subsequent treatment of the episode of Vakulenchuk's killing in the Berlin cut. Most likely with Eisenstein's consent, the April 1926 cut alters the place of the episode by moving it to the beginning of the second part of act 2 to *precede* the outbreak of the mutiny, thereby turning it into the immediate cause of the uprising. In light of what I have argued above, one has to pose the question: what could have motivated an author as uncompromising as Eisenstein to make a potentially far-reaching, yet unrequested change? The incentive for the change may have come from the Russian formalist critic and Eisenstein's acquaintance Viktor Shklovsky, who objected as early as January 1926 that the killing of Vakulenchuk should have happened earlier in act 2.[40] The semantic and affective consequences of the reordering of episodes in act 2 are interesting. From a dramaturgical point of view, the narrative ties between the first and second parts of act 2 are undoubtedly tighter in this version, insofar as the mutiny now emerges as the immediate upshot of Vakulenchuk's death. The murder itself develops as

somewhat less motivated, but remains probable enough in the new cut, as it is still perceived as a violent and oppressive act whose perpetrators are known and given their due. But this is not the whole story. In order to elucidate further Eisenstein's concession to narrative economy in the April 1926 cut as well as his unorthodox earlier treatment of the narrative in the original 1925 cut, let me expand this investigation by specifying how exactly the dramaturgy of *Potemkin* in two cuts relates to the aesthetic iconoclasm of the early Soviet avant-garde, the cultural milieu that exerted a formative impact on Eisenstein's early art.

It is hardly a secret that Eisenstein's ideas on dramaturgy and his understanding of performing arts in general were profoundly informed by his apprenticeship in the theatrical workshop of Vsevolod Meyerhold and in the orbit of the Proletkul't movement.[41] Concepts such as attractions, biomechanics, eccentric acting, or pathos that Eisenstein repeatedly uses in the early 1920s as well as later in life all originate in the aforementioned sources. Eisenstein's own idea of a new theatrical language that would be suitable for the revolutionary theater that transforms the lives of its viewers was based on the rejection of the expressive repertoire of the nineteenth-century theater and on the commitment to harnessing the expressive potential of the hitherto unrecognized paratheatrical forms and genres that include circus, variety theater, and, certainly, the moving image.[42] This pursuit of a new form of expression led the young Eisenstein to embark on his first theatrical production, the adaptation of nineteenth-century Russian playwright Aleksandr Ostrovskii's play *Na vsiakogo mudretsa dovol'no prostoty* (Enough stupidity in every wise man).[43] Produced in 1923 under the auspices of the Proletkul't theater, Eisenstein's adaptation of this work subjugates the narrative aspects of the play to its nonrepresentational means—attractions. In his/her review of the performance, entitled "Opyt teatral'noi raboty" (The theatrical experience/The experience of working in theater), the author Raketa (the Rocket, a pseudonym that was for a long time mistakenly believed to mask Eisenstein himself) explains this staging on the grounds of a radically new theatrical vision:[44] in contrast to the old bourgeois theater of illusions (illiuzornyi teatr), the active theater (deistvennyi teatr), the reader is instructed, does not try to conceal its "assault on the spectator's psyche by [using] mimetic representation and [by] pretending" (ne podrazhaiushchii, ne 'delaiushchii vid'); instead, the actor of the new style is a skillful performer who is "working for real [vzapravdu] with his own muscles."[45] In other words, instead of the empathetic principles of traditional drama, the new theater deploys an array of bodily and visceral expressive means, which are termed attractions. The dramaturgical significance of attractions, the author suggests, lies in their relative independence from the traditionally understood plot structure. As a Soviet film historian has observed, the author Raketa appears to even propose

that the less integrated into the dramaturgical fabric, the more unexpected and more effective the attraction is.[46] A similar premise runs through Eisenstein's collaboration with another avant-garde powerhouse of the Soviet 1920s, the artistic collective Lef and its governing idea, most eloquently articulated by Nikolai Chuzhak, that the task of the Soviet artist is *not to grasp, explain, or mimetically represent the world*, but to master the science of reflexes.[47]

The belief that mimetic representation and causal organization of the narrative alone are insufficient to transmit revolutionary ideas in art figured importantly in the performance section of the Proletkul't movement, Lef, and in Eisenstein's own theater practice. The same conviction continues to inform Eisenstein's work in the 1920s, I argue, and most directly contributes to the figuration of the order of the "Drama on the Quarter-Deck" sequence in the original cut of *Battleship Potemkin*.[48] Here, as in his theater work, Eisenstein seems to be primarily interested in the effects that the performative regime, or the particular staging of the episode, has on the way we see the world. If, as was the case in the original cut of *Potemkin*, the death of Vakulenchuk in the hands of oppressors is freed from the narrative principles of causality, this would be an act of monumentalizing the class struggle of the Russian proletariat as a whole. Conversely, by interweaving the death into the principles of causality, the Berlin cut of the film sacrifices the ethos of rebellion for the rules of dramaturgical conventions. The anteriorization of Vakulenchuk's killing relegates the meaning of the seamen's rebellion from an anticipation of revolutionary change to a functional part in a causally segmented narrative. En route, the alteration in the visual protocol of the mutiny impacts the viewer's affective and semantic appropriation of this event, from a symbolically charged, leap-like interaction with the subsequent history (the Soviet viewer's present) to an orderly, causality-based immersion into the diegetic world of the film. The seemingly minute reordering of the sequence in act 2 of *Potemkin* in the Berlin cut thus performs a narrativization of sociohistorical laws, a retranscription of a belief in the inevitability of revolutionary change from a teleological postulate to a circumstantial occurrence.

If these are the outcomes of the Berlin re-editing of *The Battleship Potemkin*, then we might be on the path of articulating one of the key moments in Eisenstein's early creative trajectory, a conceptual junction at which the anti-narrative impulse of his early avant-garde years encounters and negotiates what the political theorist Davide Panagia has identified as the rule of narrative, or the narratocracy of representative regimes. Panagia uses the latter concept to indicate the necessity of all human practices, ideas, art works, or real-life events to be transcribed through certain "perceptual fields," that is, "genres" or "discourses," in order to be "rendered visible." Rendering our experience visible

emerges as an imperative inasmuch as any human practice, in order to be communicated and understood, must first be made intelligible, that is, adapted to the conditions of readability, which are, by necessity, external to that practice. There is nothing wrong in this need for human practices to adjust to an external societal environment, Panagia suggests, and it is with this lens that we should cast our view on Eisenstein's "submission to narratocracy."[49] But, before I bring this part of the discussion to a conclusion, let me reiterate the real stakes here. The treatment of the episode of Vakulenchuk's murder in two versions of *Potemkin* is indicative of the ways in which the transcription of the political into an aesthetically normative regime reduces the political potential of the episode**.** In the original cut, the ringleader of the mutiny, Vakulenchuk, dies regardless of the position of that event in the overall narrative economy of the episode, act 2, or film as a whole. In what we might term the universally political regime of art, cardinal events need no translation/transition in order to become visible: Vakulenchuk's appearance, his actions, and ultimately his death signify in their own right, by virtue of partaking in an inevitable, teleological historical process. Or, in terms of classical poetics, Vakulenchuk dies not to cathartically purify the viewer from the "emotions of pity and fear,"[50] but quite the opposite: to retain these powerful emotional states in order to harness them, exert impact upon the viewer, and incite action.

Eisenstein's vacillating position on the question of narrative probability, which has not remained unnoticed by Eisenstein scholars,[51] should be likewise viewed in the context of the author's adjustment to external normative procedures. The question then is no longer that of whether or not the historical mutiny on the imperial battleship *Prince Potemkin of Tauris* happened precisely in the way it was depicted by Eisenstein, an objection voiced in some of the earliest assessments of Eisenstein's cinematic treatment,[52] nor is it indeed one of Eisenstein's compliance with what probability in the traditional sense of the word might be. The issue that should preoccupy our attention, this article has argued, is that of the interaction between *Potemkin* as a cinematic text and the principles that govern its emergence and transmission in various contexts of its appropriation. When, precisely in 1926, Eisenstein exclaimed, "*Strike* is a treatise; *Potemkin* is a hymn,"[53] he also drew our attention to the critical juncture of his early career in which his self-legitimated, experimental aesthetics is negotiated through its encounter with the aesthetics of narrative cinema.[54]

CONCLUSION

This article has identified and articulated a series of specific transitions that Sergei Eisenstein's film *The Battleship Potemkin* underwent in the period after its release in December 1925. These transitions took place in Eisenstein's

encounter with, and adjustment to, the constantly changing sociopolitical contexts and ensuing aesthetic regimes. Each of these transitional moves, those that were mandated by various censorial bodies as well as those orchestrated by Eisenstein himself, involved important interventions into the visual economy or the regime of the original version of *Potemkin*. In these multiple transitions, the world of Eisenstein's film was made to conform to a variety of external, ethical, ideological, and aesthetic protocols, or organized belief systems. In these encounters with external protocols of the visible, the semiotic repository of values in *Potemkin* delicately but importantly morphed from the excessive pathos that dominates the visual discourse of *Potemkin* in its early Soviet revolutionary articulation, to the more contained visuality of the Weimar Republic and the equally neutral visual economy of the Stalin-era cut; from self-conscious resistance to narrative conventions, to conforming to the principles of Western dramaturgy. Paolo Cherchi Usai's suggestion about the principal openness of early films, the idea that, due to a number of factors that affect their materiality as well as their long-disputed status as an art form, early films exist as *multiple objects*, provided an initial impulse for the re-examination of these transitions and transformations of *The Battleship Potemkin*. The interaction of Eisenstein's film with various social stimuli not only confirmed, but also productively developed Cherchi Usai's conceptualization to accommodate a new hypothesis about the adaptability of the moving image to external stimuli and consequently the arbitrariness of any strong assumptions we might have about it. The analytical framework I have chosen for this investigation supplied my project with its most valuable critical tools, but it also set limits to it. On the one hand, the idea of the iterability of the cinematic medium provided the epistemological framework for the only possible understanding of the multiple emergences of *The Battleship Potemkin* and socioaesthetic vicissitudes that have accompanied this process. On the other hand, the idea that early cinema operates as an unstable medium gave rise to a certain inconclusiveness of this discussion. The final outcome of this article is thus the revelation of the spectrum of mechanisms that initiate the continuous and potentially inconclusive historical re-emergence of *The Battleship Potemkin* rather than a provision of a conclusive answer about the "meaning" of Eisenstein's film. Within this remit, the article has charted some new territories for Eisenstein studies: it has identified a specific historical, sociopolitical, and aesthetic transition that Eisenstein's key early film has traversed in its varied cuts, but it also illuminates the affective spaces that emerge in these transitional moments as the sites of extremely dense encounters of seismic historical processes, individual creative aspirations, and circumstantial occurrences. Out of this inquiry, Eisenstein's film, through all of its historical incarnations, appears

as a *multiple object*, a result of complex factors that govern the structuring of the film as such and set the rules for our engagement with it.

Notes

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. and ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Athlone Press, 1997), 167.

2. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema*, trans. Emma Sansone Rittle (London: BFI Publishing, 1994), 84.

3. For Italian semiotician Umberto Eco, openness is the fundamental quality of modernist art in general. See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), esp. 1–24 and 44–83. On the now widespread concept of unfinalizability (nezavershennost', nezavershimost'), which was put forward by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin to suggest that artistic production in the form of novelistic discourse, just like human existence, is an ongoing and inconclusive process, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 117.

4. An acronym for proletarian cultural-educational organizations (proletarskie kul'turno-prosveti-tel'nye organizatsii), proletkult (proletkul't) was a semiofficial umbrella organization active in the period from 1917 to 1932 that aimed to promote a new, revolutionary mode of cultural expression. The Left Front of Art (Levyi front iskusstv) was an association of the futurist wing of Russian avant-garde writers, critics, and visual artists. Founded and presided over by the revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, the association was active in Moscow in the period from 1922 to 1928.

5. The Association of Revolutionary Cinema (Assotsiatsiia revoliutsionnoi kinematografii), or later, the Association of Revolutionary Workers in Cinema (Assotsiatsiia rabotnikov revoliutsionnoi kinematografii), was founded in 1924 in Moscow in reaction to/resemblance with the literary movement RAPP (Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Writers). See Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 105–6; and Natalie Ryabchikova, "ARRK and the Soviet Transition to Sound," in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed. Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 84–86. Although one of its founding members, Eisenstein kept a distance from the association, which, strictly speaking, had no program or agenda.

6. Sergei Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, trans. Herbert Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17–18.

7. The decision to fund a film production in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution of 1905 was made in March 1925. In May 1925, Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko and V. Nevskii were both commissioned to produce scenarios dedicated to the events of 1905. In June, Agadzhanova-Shutko's screenplay was still in progress, but another one by Shchegolev was also produced. In early July 1925, Agadzhanova-Shutko's screenplay *1905*, which comprised ten parts, was accepted, and initial shooting started almost immediately. See Naum Kleiman and K. Levina, eds., *Bronenosets Potemkin* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1969), 24.

8. "Postanovochnyi stsenarii. '1905 god,'" in Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 27–49, esp. 30–31. Note that the double dating (June 14/27, 1905) has to do with the thirteen day difference between the Julian calendar (in use in Russia until 1918) and the Gregorian calendar used in the West. As a result of that difference, the event in question, which happened on 14 June 1905 in Russia (Julian style), was recorded in the West as happening on 27 June 1905.

9. Eisenstein's first choice of cinematographer was Eduard Tisse, with whom he had collaborated on his debut film *Strike*. However, Tisse was at the same time working on Aleksei Granovskii's *Evreiskoe shchast'e* (Jewish Luck), so Eisenstein agreed to take Aleksandr Levitskii instead. After two months, Levitskii left the production and suggested that Eisenstein employ Aleksandr Stanke, who happened to be in Odessa at the time working on Vladimir Gardin's *Krest i Mauzer* (Cross and Mauser). Eisenstein seems to have been apprehensive about Stanke's style, which was influenced by German expressionism, and replaced him first with the veteran cinematographer Evgenii Slavinskii, who also happened to be in Odessa working on Abram Room's *Bukhta smerti* (The Bay of Death) and then finally by Tisse in late September 1925. See Oksana Bulgakova, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography* (Berlin: Potemkin Press, 2002), 58; Ignatii Rostovtsev, *Bronenosets Potemkin* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, 1962), 73; and Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 63.

10. This sudden shift in direction and thorough reworking of the initial scenario led many to believe that Eisenstein was filming *Potemkin* without a screenplay in the classical sense of the word. See Rostislav Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein: Zamysly, Fil'my, Metod, Chast' pervaia, 1898–1929* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1988), 115–16.

11. *Potemkin* pre-premiered on December 24 at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow three days after the originally scheduled time. But see Richard Taylor, *The Batteship Potemkin*, 11; and Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 60. According to Aleksandrov, by the time he dispatched the last reel to the Bolshoi on his motorcycle, the screening of the film had already begun. When the news of the postponement of the premiere for three days reached Eisenstein and his team, it came as a "lifesaver," as the editing of the film was far from completed. See Grigorii Aleksandrov, *Epokha i kino* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1974), 84–85.

12. The production cost of *Potemkin* suggests that Eisenstein's film was indeed envisaged as a historical monument rather than as a commercial commodity. The overall cost of *Potemkin* was 100,000 roubles, which was average by the standard of the day. For example, Aleksadr Ivanovskii's *Dekabristy* (The Decembrists), which entered production in 1926, cost exactly four times the amount. See Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 62.

13. For a succinct but competent discussion of the major events related to the popular revolution in Russia in 1905, see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: A Short History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

14. By comparison, the United Artists production of *Robin Hood*, featuring the undisputed king of Soviet movie theaters Douglas Fairbanks, was seen by 55,000. See Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 215.

15. In 1921 Müntzenberg founded the Workers International Relief (Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe, IAH), an organization that initially aimed to provide help to the drought- and famine-stricken Volga region. Workers International Relief, or Mezhrabpom, as its Soviet branch was known, went on to become one of the most important channels of cultural communication between the Soviet Union and the West. A subsidiary of Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe, Prometheus became the germ of what would become IAH's most successful Soviet cultural venture, the production company Mezhrabpom Rus'.

16. In response to the attempted right-wing coup on March 13, 1920 (the so-called Kapp Putsch), a large-scale armed rebellion erupted in the industrial region of Ruhr in late March. The insurgence, now known as the Ruhr Uprising involved around 50,000 workers and supporters of the German social democratic party and it spread around the Ruhr area with the aim of taking political power. The rebellion was brutally suppressed by the German army and right-wing volunteer units within two weeks and it led to over a thousand casualties.

17. Jutzi would go on to direct the first cinematic adaptation of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in 1931; in 1933, he would join the Nazi Party.

18. Enno Patalas, "'Khozhdeniia po mukam' *Bronenostsa Potemkin*: O novoi 'berlinskoi redaktsii' kartiny Eizenshteina," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 72 (2005): 277–84.

19. For more details on the censorship report, see Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 223–27; and Taylor, *The Batteship Potemkin*, 99.

20. Taylor, *The Batteship Potemkin*, 100.

21. Naum Kleiman bases his arguments in favor of Eisenstein's crucial input in the April 1926 re-editing on the assumption that Eisenstein and Tisse would not have been given permission to travel to Germany so promptly unless it was for such an important task. See Naum Kleiman's commentary no. 5 to Enno Patalas, "'Khozhdeniia po mukam' *Bronenostsa Potemkin*," 282. See also Patalas, "The Odyssey of the Battleship: On the Reconstruction of Potemkin at the Filmmuseum Berlin," *Journal of Film Preservation*, no. 70 (November 2005): 40; and Kleiman's and Patalas's oral testimonies in Artem Demenok's documentary film *Dem Panzerkreuzer Potemkin auf der Spur* (Tracing the Battleship Potemkin, 2007).

22. Patalas, who supervised the most recent and most successful restoration of *Potemkin*, believes that Eisenstein was profoundly unhappy with the extent of interventions made on the original version of *Potemkin* in April 1926. However, Patalas's claims that Eisenstein voiced his dissatisfaction with the April 1926 changes remain undocumented. See Demenok, *Tracing Battleship Potemkin*.

23. The conversation between Eisenstein and Obolenskii, dating to March-April 1922, is said to have presented Eisenstein's first encounter with the idea of cinematic montage. See Leonid Obolenskii, "Ot chechetki k psikhologii dvizheniia," in *Eizenshtein v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, ed. R. Iurenev (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), 152. By the end of 1922, Eisenstein and Kuleshov met and established a short-term but productive exchange, which would transform the history of cinematic art unlike anything before or after. As Kuleshov later recalled, Eisenstein would come for months to Kuleshov's workshop, which was located at Zon's Operetta Theatre, sitting, taking notes, and making drawings on editing practice. At one point, Eisenstein gave a talk on "physical culture," that is, biomechanics, to Kuleshov's amateur actors (*naturshchiki*). In return, Kuleshov lectured on cinema in the Proletkul't theater. See Lev Kuleshov, "Velikii i dobryi chelovek," in Iurenev, *Eizenshtein v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 160–67, esp. 161. On Kuleshov's landmark experiments, see, for example, Yuri Tsivian, Ekaterina Khokhlova, Kristin Thompson, Lev Kuleshov, and Aleksandra Khokhlova, "The Rediscovery of a Kuleshov Experiment: A Dossier," *Film History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 357–67; and Stephen Prince and Wayne E. Hensley, "The Kuleshov Effect: Recreating the Classic Experiment," *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 59–75.

24. The censorship board requested the removal of the following material from act 4 (the "Odessa Steps" sequence): close-up of the man who beats another man with a rifle; close-up of a shot man falling on the steps; close-up of a man whose body is stomped over by the penal detachment of Cossacks; shot of a boy who is shot along with his mother; close-up of the bleeding boy; close-up of his legs, on which the running crowd has tripped; his body being stomped by a woman. See Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 223–27.

25. Beatrice Vitoldi, who impersonated the mother in the pram episode, was to become the first permanent Soviet ambassador to Italy in 1931. In 1937, she was summoned to Moscow where she was convicted in a show trial and shot.

26. According to Metz, cinematic signification is the "construction of an imaginary object." See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzeti (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 61.

27. In the preface to his influential collection *Vision and Visuality*, Hal Foster draws attention to the ways of articulating the visual. The questions we need to ask are those of "how we see, how we are

able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein." Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), ix.

28. See Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, *Writings, 1922–1934*, trans. and ed. Richard Taylor (1988; repr., London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 34.

29. An experienced editor, Tobak worked with Eisenstein on *Oktiabr'* (October, 1928), *Aleksandr Nevskii* (Alexander Nevsky, 1938), and *Ivan Groznyi, skaz vtoroi: Boiarskii zagovor* (Ivan the Terrible, part 2: The Boiar's plot, 1946/1958).

30. Due to their abundant use of folk motifs, Kriukov's scores were highly regarded during the Stalin era and were considered a proper embodiment of socialist realist tendencies in music.

31. The exact history of the retrieval of the negative, which was sold to Prometheus in 1926, is unclear. For details concerning the negative of the film, see Patalas, "'Khozhdeniia po mukam' *Bronenostsa Potemkin*," and Naum Kleiman's commentary no. 14 to the same article.

32. "Black hundreds" were paramilitary units of extreme right inclination, established in late Imperial Russia. In *Potemkin* Eisenstein adhered closely to the concept of *tipazh*, or typecasting. The idea behind typecasting was that the new, revolutionary approach to acting should be based on the representation of typical sociocultural features rather than on the individuality of actors (as in bourgeois acting).

33. Bund was a Russian Jewish political organization of socialist provenance, which was founded in Russia in 1897.

34. For the political context that precipitated the so-called anticosmopolitan campaign, see, for example, Gennadii Kostyrchenko, "The Genesis of Establishment Anti-Semitism in the USSR: The Black Years, 1948–1953," in Zvi Gitelman and Yaacov Ro'i, eds., *Revolution, Repression and Revival: The Soviet Jewish Experience* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 179–92.

35. Tendra (also, Tendrovskaia kosa, or the Tendra Spit), which used to be a small island, is now a sand bar in the Black Sea located some forty nautical miles east of Odessa.

36. Much later, in 1939, when reflecting back on the structure of *Potemkin*, Eisenstein writes that each of the five acts of *Potemkin* was intentionally divided into two equal parts. See *Nonindifferent Nature*, 17.

37. The maritime historian Richard Hough claimed that the historical killing of Vakulenchuk occurred well into the mutiny and was immediately preceded by the exchange of fire between the seamen. See Richard Hough, *The Potemkin Mutiny* (1960; repr., Sutton: Severn House Publishers, 1975). For a more recent and more comprehensive account of the events on June 14/27, 1905, see Iurii Kardashev, *Vosstanie: Bronenosets "Potemkin" i ego komanda* (Kirov: Dom pechaty 'Viatka,' 2008), esp. 25, 26–28.

38. See Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, 17–18. The Soviet film historian Rostislav Iurenev critically assessed the way in which Eisenstein organized the episode of mutiny as substandard. According to Iurenev, Eisenstein regretted not being able to shoot this particular scene again. See Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, 130.

39. In two of his key early articles that preceded *Potemkin*, "The Montage of Film Attractions" and "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form," Eisenstein conspicuously avoided relating his filmmaking to dramaturgical principles. While in the former article he insisted that the "attractional" aspect of cinema precedes its capacities of the narrative, the latter essay argues for a "selective treatment" of "real phenomena through montage." See Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, 39–58 and 59–64, respectively.

40. In Shklovsky's view, Vakulenchuk had to be killed before the victory because if his death was staged after the victory, it would not appear to be the work of the hangman. Viktor Shklovsky, "Piat' fel'etonov ob Eizenshteine," in Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 297. Shklovsky disapproved of Eisenstein's loose attitude toward plot structure (*siuzhet*) already in *Strike*, faulting Eisenstein's cinematic debut for not being "economical" and for showing a tendency toward "plotless cinema" (*bezsiuzhetnoe kino*). See Viktor Shklovsky, "Neobkhodimoe zlo," *Kino* 34 (November 10, 1925): 2. However, as Valerie Pozner has shown, Eisenstein's views of Shklovsky's understanding of the moving image, and of his formalist critical practice in general, was anything but enthusiastic. See Valeri Pozner, "Shklovsky/Eizenshtein-dvadtsatye gody," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 46 (2000): 179–88, esp.180–86.

41. On Eisenstein's relationship with Meyerhold, including the formative years, see Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996), esp. 74–92. Eisenstein's relationship with the Proletkul't movement was a complex affair during which the young artist's infatuation with new ideas was mixed with reservation and distance. For more on Eisenstein's Proletkul't years, see Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, 35–56; and also Karla Hielscher, "S. M. Eisensteins Theaterarbeit beim Moskauer Proletkult, 1921–1924," *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 13 (1973): 64–75. With regard to the origins of Eisenstein's master concepts, this article does not include genealogies of any of them. However, concepts such as the montage of attractions or the physical conception of acting came into being precisely during Eisenstein's active involvement with Proletkul't theater. Vsevolod Meyerhold's emphasis on the biomechanical expressivity of the human body as the major corrective to the traditional conception of theatrical language served as another crucial incentive for the young Eisenstein to conceptualize his ideas about narrative representation.

42. "The rules of Lessing and Boileau," wrote one of Eisenstein's close associates and contemporaries, the theater director Nikolai Foregger, "are annulled by the rules of American montage." See Anton V. Sergeev, *Tsirkizatsiia teatra: Ot traditsionalizma k futurizmu* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'sko-torgovyi dom Alekseeva, 2008), 71.

43. Ostrovskii's play was staged for the first time in 1868 at the Aleksandrinskii Theatre in Saint Petersburg.

44. The article, which appeared in August 1923 in volume 8 of the Proletkul't journal *Gorn*, was long thought to have been written by Eisenstein himself. This attribution, first suggested by Rostislav Iurenev, has recently been refuted by Vladimir Zabrodin, who demonstrated that the pseudonym Raketa was most likely an acronym comprising the names of Boris Arvatov and Sergei Tret'iakov, which reveals these two avant-garde thinkers as the authors of the review in which the term "montage of attractions" first appears in print. See Vladimir Zabrodin, *Eizenshtein, Popytka teatra: Stat'i, Publikatsii* (Moscow: Eisenstein-Tsentr, 2005), 178–82.

45. See Raketa, "Opyt teatral'noi raboty," *Gorn* 8 (1923): 57.

46. See Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, 61–62.

47. Reference to Chuzak's known argument is quoted from Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtei*, 57, emphasis added.

48. Space limitations here preclude a more thorough account of Eisenstein's extremely prolific early years, but with regard to his avant-garde outlook on theatrical dramaturgy, Eisenstein's collaboration with another Soviet avant-garde powerhouse, the artistic collective Lef, deserves to be mentioned. The ideas of Lef, in particular those of Nikolai Chuzhak, that the task of the Soviet artist is *not to grasp, explain, or mimetically represent the world*, but to master the science of reflexes (Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, 57, my emphasis), fell on a fertile soil. See, for example, Mayakovsky's words from the opening epigraph of the article, which conceive of the cinematic medium as antiaesthetic, and which originate from the same nexus.

49. Panagia's compelling delineations provide an exemplary case of a contemporary, revisionist approach to politics and history-as-narrative by "privileging of narrative . . . for the exposition of claims and political ideas." See Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 11–12.

50. Eisenstein's rejection of both the principle of catharsis and the submission of logos to mythos brings about a natural comparison with Bertolt Brecht's rejection of the tragic mode of expression. The political theater or art in general are supposed to (and Eisenstein's art was bona fide political) disrupt the beautiful but deceptive realm of the mythos and make us face the painful truth of the logos (political ideology). It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the fertile field of continuities and differences between Eisenstein and Brecht. For some representative discussions, see Roland Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," *Screen* 15, no. 2 (1974): 33–40; and Dietrich Scheunemann, "Montage in Theatre and Film: Observations on Eisenstein and Brecht," *Avant-garde* 5–6 USSR (1991): 109–35.

51. Dana Polan has spoken insightfully of Eisenstein's "departure from [narrative] *probability*" in the Aristotelian sense of the word. See Dana B. Polan, "Eisenstein as Theorist," *Cinema Journal* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 14–29.

52. During a discussion of *Potemkin* held at the Association of Revolutionary Filmmakers (ARK) on January 6, 1926, one of the issues raised was that of the historical veracity of the events depicted in the film. Eisenstein responded characteristically: "One personal observation regarding veracity: I know very well that the old lady with a goose was not present there in 1905[;] she is my own mother." See Kleiman and Levina, *Bronenosets Potemkin*, 205–6.

53. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, 69.

54. When David Bordwell reminds us that in *Potemkin* Eisenstein "seeks to arouse emotion and partisanship by more traditional cinematic means" than in *Strike*, he points out that *Potemkin* was structured by the social and historical mechanisms that organize the ways of seeing and being. See David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 61.

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