

Books by Sergei Eisenstein

Film Form
The Film Sense
Notes of a Film Director
Film Essays, with a Lecture
Non-Indifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things

Sergei Eisenstein

Film Form

Essays in Film Theory

edited and translated by Jay Leyda

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essence, not a "concert" of co-existent, contiguous, "linked," but actually independent arts.

At last we have had placed in our hands a means of learning the fundamental laws of art—laws which hitherto we could snatch at only piecemeal, here a bit from the experience of painting, there a bit from theater practice, somewhere else from musical theory. So, the *method of cinema, when fully comprehended, will enable us to reveal an understanding of the method of art in general.*

We indeed have something to be proud of on this twentieth anniversary of our cinema. Within our country. And beyond its borders. Within the art of cinema itself—and far beyond its borders, throughout the whole system of art.

Yes, we have something to be proud of—and to work towards.

[1939]

DICKENS, GRIFFITH, AND THE FILM TODAY

People talked as if there had been no dramatic or descriptive music before Wagner; no impressionist painting before Whistler; whilst as to myself, I was finding that the surest way to produce an effect of daring innovation and originality was to revive the ancient attraction of long rhetorical speeches; to stick closely to the methods of Molière; and to lift characters bodily out of the pages of Charles Dickens.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW¹

"THE KETTLE began it. . . ."

Thus Dickens opens his *Cricket on the Hearth*.

"The kettle began it. . . ."

What could be further from films! Trains, cowboys, chases . . . And *The Cricket on the Hearth*? "The kettle began it!" But, strange as it may seem, movies also were boiling in that kettle. From here, from Dickens, from the Victorian novel, stem the first shoots of American film esthetic, forever linked with the name of David Wark Griffith.

Although at first glance this may not seem surprising, it does appear incompatible with our traditional concepts of cinematography, in particular with those associated in our minds with the American cinema. Factually, however, this relationship is organic, and the "genetic" line of descent is quite consistent.

Let us first look at that land where, although not perhaps its birthplace, the cinema certainly found the soil in which to grow to unprecedented and unimagined dimensions.

We know from whence the cinema appeared first as a world-

wide phenomenon. We know the inseparable link between the cinema and the industrial development of America. We know how production, art and literature reflect the capitalist breadth and construction of the United States of America. And we also know that American capitalism finds its sharpest and most expressive reflection in the American cinema.

But what possible identity is there between this Moloch of modern industry, with its dizzy tempo of cities and subways, its roar of competition, its hurricane of stock market transactions on the one hand, and . . . the peaceful, patriarchal Victorian London of Dickens's novels on the other?

Let's begin with this "dizzy tempo," this "hurricane," and this "roar." These are terms used to describe the United States by persons who know that country solely through books—books limited in quantity, and not too carefully selected.

Visitors to New York City soon recover from their astonishment at this sea of lights (which is actually immense), this maelstrom of the stock market (actually its like is not to be found anywhere), and all this roar (almost enough to deafen one).

As far as the speed of the traffic is concerned, one can't be overwhelmed by this in the streets of the metropolis for the simple reason that speed can't exist there. This puzzling contradiction lies in the fact that the high-powered automobiles are so jammed together that they can't move much faster than snails creeping from block to block, halting at every crossing not only for pedestrian crowds but for the counter-creeping of the cross-traffic.

As you make your merely minute progress amidst a tightly packed glacier of other humans, sitting in similarly high-powered and imperceptibly moving machines, you have plenty of time to ponder the duality behind the dynamic face of America, and the profound interdependence of this duality in everybody and everything American. As your 90-horsepower motor pulls you jerkily from block to block along the steep-cliffed streets, your eyes wander over the smooth surfaces of the skyscrapers. Notions lazily crawl through your brain: "Why don't they

seem high?" "Why should they, with all that height, still seem cozy, domestic, small-town?"

You suddenly realize what "trick" the skyscrapers play on you: although they have many floors, each floor is quite low. Immediately the soaring skyscraper appears to be built of a number of small-town buildings, piled on top of each other. One merely needs to go beyond the city-limits or, in a few cities, merely beyond the center of the city, in order to see the same buildings, piled, not by the dozens, and fifties, and hundreds, on top of each other, but laid out in endless rows of one- and two-storied stores and cottages along Main Streets, or along half-rural side-streets.

Here (between the "speed traps") you can fly along as fast as you wish; here the streets are almost empty, traffic is light—the exact opposite of the metropolitan congestion that you just left—no trace of that frantic activity choked in the stone vises of the city.

You often come across regiments of skyscrapers that have moved deep into the countryside, twisting their dense nets of railroads around them; but at the same rate small-town agrarian America appears to have overflowed into all but the very centers of the cities; now and then one turns a skyscraper corner, only to run head on into some home of colonial architecture, apparently whisked from some distant savannah of Louisiana or Alabama to this very heart of the business city.

But there where this provincial wave has swept in more than a cottage here or a church there (gnawing off a corner of that monumental modern Babylon, "Radio City"), or a cemetery, unexpectedly left behind in the very center of the financial district, or the hanging wash of the Italian district, flapping just around the corner, off Wall Street—this good old provincialism has turned inward to apartments, nestling in clusters around fireplaces, furnished with soft grandfather-chairs and the lace doilies that shroud the wonders of modern technique: refrigerators, washing-machines, radios.

And in the editorial columns of popular newspapers, in the aphorisms of broadcast sermon and transcribed advertisement,

there is a firmly entrenched attitude that is usually defined as "way down East"—an attitude that may be found beneath many a waistcoat or bowler where one would ordinarily expect to find a heart or a brain. Mostly one is amazed by the abundance of small-town and patriarchal elements in American life and manners, morals and philosophy, the ideological horizon and rules of behavior in the middle strata of American culture.

In order to understand Griffith, one must visualize an America made up of more than visions of speeding automobiles, streamlined trains, racing ticker tape, inexorable conveyor-belts. One is obliged to comprehend this second side of America as well—America, the traditional, the patriarchal, the provincial. And then you will be considerably less astonished by this link between Griffith and Dickens.

The threads of both these Americas are interwoven in the style and personality of Griffith—as in the most fantastic of his own parallel montage sequences.

What is most curious is that Dickens appears to have guided *both* lines of Griffith's style, reflecting both faces of America: Small-Town America, and Super-Dynamic America.

This can be detected at once in the "intimate" Griffith of contemporary or past American life, where Griffith is profound, in those films about which Griffith told me, that "they were made for myself and were invariably rejected by the exhibitors."

But we are a little astonished when we see that the construction of the "official," sumptuous Griffith, the Griffith of tempestuous tempi, of dizzying action, of breathtaking chases—has also been guided by the same Dickens! But we shall see how true this is.

First the "intimate" Griffith, and the "intimate" Dickens. *The kettle began it. . . .*

As soon as we recognize this kettle as a typical close-up, we exclaim: "Why didn't we notice it before! Of course this is the purest Griffith. How often we've seen such a close-up at the beginning of an episode, a sequence, or a whole film by

him!" (By the way, we shouldn't overlook the fact that one of Griffith's earliest films was based on *The Cricket on the Hearth!* *)

Certainly, this kettle is a typical Griffith-esque close-up. A close-up saturated, we now become aware, with typically Dickens-esque "atmosphere," with which Griffith, with equal mastery, can envelop the severe face of life in *Way Down East*, and the icy cold moral face of his characters, who push the guilty Anna (Lillian Gish) onto the shifting surface of a swirling ice-break.

Isn't this the same implacable atmosphere of cold that is given by Dickens, for example, in *Dombey and Son*? The image of Mr. Dombey is revealed through cold and prudery. And the print of cold lies on everyone and everything—everywhere. And "atmosphere"—always and everywhere—is one of the most expressive means of revealing the inner world and ethical countenance of the characters themselves.

We can recognize this particular method of Dickens in Griffith's inimitable bit-characters who seem to have run straight from life onto the screen. I can't recall who speaks with whom in one of the street scenes of the modern story of *Intolerance*. But I shall never forget the mask of the passer-by with nose pointed forward between spectacles and straggly beard, walking with hands behind his back as if he were manacled. As he passes he interrupts the most pathetic moment in the conversation of the suffering boy and girl. I can remember next to nothing of the couple, but this passer-by, who is visible in the shot only for a flashing glimpse, stands alive before me now—and I haven't seen the film for twenty years!

Occasionally these unforgettable figures actually walked into Griffith's films almost directly from the street: a bit-player, developed in Griffith's hands to stardom; the passer-by who may never again have been filmed; and that mathematics

* Released on May 27, 1909, with Herbert Pryor, Linda Arvidson Griffith, Violet Mersereau, Owen Moore, this film followed the dramatic adaptation of the *Cricket* made by Albert Smith with Dickens's approval.

teacher who was invited to play a terrifying butcher in *America*—the late Louis Wolheim—who ended the film career thus begun with his incomparable performance as "Kat" in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

These striking figures of sympathetic old men are also quite in the Dickens tradition; and these noble and slightly one-dimensional figures of sorrow and fragile maidens; and these rural gossips and sundry odd characters. They are especially convincing in Dickens when he uses them briefly, in episodes.

The only other thing to be noticed about [Pecksniff] is that here, as almost everywhere else in the novels, the best figures are at their best when they have least to do. Dickens's characters are perfect as long as he can keep them out of his stories. Bumble is divine until a dark and practical secret is entrusted to him. . . . Micawber is noble when he is doing nothing; but he is quite unconvincing when he is spying on Uriah Heep. . . . Similarly, while Pecksniff is the best thing in the story, the story is the worst thing in Pecksniff. . . .²

Free of this limitation, and with the same believability, Griffith's characters grow from episodic figures into those fascinating and finished images of living people, in which his screen is so rich.

Instead of going into detail about this, let us rather return to that more obvious fact—the growth of that second side of Griffith's creative craftsmanship—as a magician of tempo and montage; a side for which it is rather surprising to find the same Victorian source.

When Griffith proposed to his employers the novelty of a parallel "cut-back" for his first version of *Enoch Arden* (*After Many Years*, 1908), this is the discussion that took place, as recorded by Linda Arvidson Griffith in her reminiscences of Biograph days:

When Mr. Griffith suggested a scene showing Annie Lee waiting for her husband's return to be followed by a scene of Enoch cast away on a desert island, it was altogether too distracting. "How can you tell a story jumping about like that? The people won't know what it's about."

"Well," said Mr. Griffith, "doesn't Dickens write that way?"

"Yes, but that's Dickens; that's novel writing; that's different."

"Oh, not so much, these are picture stories; not so different."³

But, to speak quite frankly, all astonishment on this subject and the apparent unexpectedness of such statements can be ascribed only to our—ignorance of Dickens.

All of us read him in childhood, gulped him down greedily, without realizing that much of his irresistibility lay not only in his capture of detail in the childhoods of his heroes, but also in that spontaneous, childlike skill for story-telling, equally typical for Dickens and for the American cinema, which so surely and delicately plays upon the infantile traits in its audience. We were even less concerned with the technique of Dickens's composition: for us this was non-existent—but captivated by the effects of this technique, we feverishly followed his characters from page to page, watching his characters now being rubbed from view at the most critical moment, then seeing them return afresh between the separate links of the parallel secondary plot.

As children, we paid no attention to the mechanics of this. As adults, we rarely re-read his novels. And becoming filmmakers, we never found time to glance beneath the covers of these novels in order to figure out what exactly had captivated us in these novels and with what means these incredibly many-paged volumes had chained our attention so irresistibly.

Apparently Griffith was more perceptive . . .

But before disclosing what the steady gaze of the American film-maker may have caught sight of on Dickens's pages, I wish to recall what David Wark Griffith himself represented to us, the young Soviet film-makers of the 'twenties.

To say it simply and without equivocation: a revelation.

Try to remember our early days, in those first years of the October socialist revolution. The fires *At the Hearthsides* of our native film-producers had burnt out, the *Nava's Charms**

* *Nava's Charms* (by Sologub) and *At the Hearthsides*, two pre-Revolutionary Russian films, as is also *Forget the Hearth*. The names that follow are of the male and female film stars of this period.—EDITOR.

of their productions had lost their power over us and, whispering through pale lips, "Forget the hearth," Khudoleyev and Runich, Polonsky and Maximov had departed to oblivion; Vera Kholodnaya to the grave; Mozhukhin and Lisenko to expatriation.

The young Soviet cinema was gathering the experience of revolutionary reality, of first experiments (Vertov), of first systematic ventures (Kuleshov), in preparation for that unprecedented explosion in the second half of the 'twenties, when it was to become an independent, mature, original art, immediately gaining world recognition.

In those early days a tangle of the widest variety of films was projected on our screens. From out of this weird hash of old Russian films and new ones that attempted to maintain "traditions," and new films that could not yet be called Soviet, and foreign films that had been imported promiscuously, or brought down off dusty shelves—two main streams began to emerge.

On the one side there was the cinema of our neighbor, post-war Germany. Mysticism, decadence, dismal fantasy followed in the wake of the unsuccessful revolution of 1923, and the screen was quick to reflect this mood. *Nosferatu the Vampire*, *The Street*, the mysterious *Warning Shadows*, the mystic criminal *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*,* reaching out towards us from our screens, achieved the limits of horror, showing us a future as an unrelieved night crowded with sinister shadows and crimes. . . .

The chaos of multiple exposures, of over-fluid dissolves, of split screens, was more characteristic of the later 'twenties (as in *Looping the Loop* or *Secrets of a Soul*†), but earlier German films contained more than a hint of this tendency. In the

* *Nosferatu* (1922), directed by F. W. Murnau; *Die Strasse* (1923), directed by Karl Grune; *Schatten* (1923), directed by Arthur Robison; *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1922), directed by Fritz Lang.

† *Looping the Loop* (1928), directed by Arthur Robison; *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (1926), directed by G. W. Pabst.

over-use of these devices was also reflected the confusion and chaos of post-war Germany.

All these tendencies of mood and method had been foreshadowed in one of the earliest and most famous of these films, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), this barbaric carnival of the destruction of the healthy human infancy of our art, this common grave for normal cinema origins, this combination of silent hysteria, particolored canvases, daubed flats, painted faces, and the unnatural broken gestures and actions of monstrous chimaeras.

Expressionism left barely a trace on our cinema. This painted, hypnotic "St. Sebastian of Cinema" was too alien to the young, robust spirit and body of the rising class.

It is interesting that during those years inadequacies in the field of film technique played a positive rôle. They helped to restrain from a false step those whose enthusiasm might have pulled them in this dubious direction. Neither the dimensions of our studios, nor our lighting equipment, nor the materials available to us for make-up, costumes, or setting, gave us the possibility to heap onto the screen similar phantasmagoria. But it was chiefly another thing that held us back: our spirit urged us towards life—amidst the people, into the surging actuality of a regenerating country. Expressionism passed into the formative history of our cinema as a powerful factor—of repulsion.

There was the rôle of another film-factor that appeared, dashing along in such films as *The Gray Shadow*, *The House of Hate*, *The Mark of Zorro*.* There was in these films a world, stirring and incomprehensible, but neither repulsive nor alien. On the contrary—it was captivating and attractive, in its own way engaging the attention of young and future film-makers, exactly as the young and future engineers of the time were attracted by the specimens of engineering techniques unknown

* *The House of Hate* (1918), a serial directed by George Seitz, with Pearl White; *The Mark of Zorro* (1921), directed by Fred Niblo, with Douglas Fairbanks. The American film released in Russia as *The Gray Shadow* has not been identified.—EDITOR.

to us, sent from that same unknown, distant land across the ocean.

What enthralled us was not only these films, it was also their possibilities. Just as it was the possibilities in a tractor to make collective cultivation of the fields a reality, it was the boundless temperament and tempo of these amazing (and amazingly useless!) works from an unknown country that led us to muse on the possibilities of a profound, intelligent, class-directed use of this wonderful tool.

The most thrilling figure against this background was Griffith, for it was in his works that the cinema made itself felt as more than an entertainment or pastime. The brilliant new methods of the American cinema were united in him with a profound emotion of story, with human acting, with laughter and tears, and all this was done with an astonishing ability to preserve all that gleam of a filmically dynamic holiday, which had been captured in *The Gray Shadow* and *The Mark of Zorro* and *The House of Hate*. That the cinema could be incomparably greater, and that this was to be the basic task of the budding Soviet cinema—these were sketched for us in Griffith's creative work, and found ever new confirmation in his films.

Our heightened curiosity of those years in *construction and method* swiftly discerned wherein lay the most powerful affective factors in this great American's films. This was in a hitherto unfamiliar province, bearing a name that was familiar to us, not in the field of art, but in that of engineering and electrical apparatus, first touching art in its most advanced section—in cinematography. This province, this method, this principle of building and construction was *montage*.

This was the montage whose foundations had been laid by American film-culture, but whose full, completed, conscious use and world recognition was established by our films. Montage, the rise of which will be forever linked with the name of Griffith. Montage, which played a most vital rôle in the creative work of Griffith and brought him his most glorious successes.

Griffith arrived at it through the method of parallel action. And, essentially, it was on this that he came to a standstill. But we mustn't run ahead. Let us examine the question of how montage came to Griffith or—how Griffith came to montage.

Griffith arrived at montage through the method of parallel action, and he was led to the idea of parallel action by—Dickens!

To this fact Griffith himself has testified, according to A. B. Walkley, in *The Times* of London, for April 26, 1922, on the occasion of a visit by the director to London. Writes Mr. Walkley:

He [Griffith] is a pioneer, by his own admission, rather than an inventor. That is to say, he has opened up new paths in Film Land, under the guidance of ideas supplied to him from outside. His best ideas, it appears, have come to him from Dickens, who has always been his favorite author. . . . Dickens inspired Mr. Griffith with an idea, and his employers (mere "business" men) were horrified at it; but, says Mr. Griffith, "I went home, re-read one of Dickens's novels, and came back next day to tell them they could either make use of my idea or dismiss me."

Mr. Griffith found the idea to which he clung thus heroically in Dickens. That was as luck would have it, for he might have found the same idea almost anywhere. Newton deduced the law of gravitation from the fall of an apple; but a pear or a plum would have done just as well. The idea is merely that of a "break" in the narrative, a shifting of the story from one group of characters to another group. People who write the long and crowded novels that Dickens did, especially when they are published in parts, find this practice a convenience. You will meet with it in Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope, Meredith, Hardy, and, I suppose, every other Victorian novelist. . . . Mr. Griffith might have found the same practice not only in Dumas *père*, who cared precious little about form, but also in great artists like Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Balzac. But, as a matter of fact, it was not in any of these others, but in Dickens that he found it; and it is significant of the predominant influence of Dickens that he should be quoted as an authority for a device which is really common to fiction at large.

Even a superficial acquaintance with the work of the great English novelist is enough to persuade one that Dickens may have given and did give to cinematography far more guidance than that which led to the montage of parallel action alone.

Dickens's nearness to the characteristics of cinema in method, style, and especially in viewpoint and exposition, is indeed amazing. And it may be that in the nature of exactly these characteristics, in their community both for Dickens and for cinema, there lies a portion of the secret of that mass success which they both, apart from themes and plots, brought and still bring to the particular quality of such exposition and such writing.

What were the novels of Dickens for his contemporaries, for his readers? There is one answer: they bore the same relation to them that the film bears to the same strata in our time. They compelled the reader to live with the same passions. They appealed to the same good and sentimental elements as does the film (at least on the surface); they alike shudder before vice,* they alike mill the extraordinary, the unusual, the fantastic, from boring, prosaic and everyday existence. And they clothe this common and prosaic existence in their special vision.

Illumined by this light, refracted from the land of fiction back to life, this commonness took on a romantic air, and bored people were grateful to the author for giving them the countenances of potentially romantic figures.

This partially accounts for the close attachment to the novels of Dickens and, similarly, to films. It was from this that the universal success of his novels derived. In an essay on Dickens, Stefan Zweig opens with this description of his popularity:

* As late as April 17, 1944, Griffith still considered this the chief social function of film-making. An interviewer from the *Los Angeles Times* asked him, "What is a good picture?" Griffith replied, "One that makes the public forget its troubles. Also, a good picture tends to make folks think a little, without letting them suspect that they are being inspired to think. In one respect, nearly all pictures are good in that they show the triumph of good over evil." This is what Osbert Sitwell, in reference to Dickens, called the "Virtue v. Vice Cup-Tie Final."

The love Dickens's contemporaries lavished upon the creator of *Pickwick* is not to be assessed by accounts given in books and biographies. Love lives and breathes only in the spoken word. To get an adequate idea of the intensity of this love, one must catch (as I once caught) an Englishman old enough to have youthful memories of the days when Dickens was still alive. Preferably it should be someone who finds it hard even now to speak of him as Charles Dickens, choosing, rather, to use the affectionate nickname of "Boz." The emotion, tinged with melancholy, which these old reminiscences call up, gives us of a younger generation some inkling of the enthusiasm that inspired the hearts of thousands when the monthly instalments in their blue covers (great rarities, now) arrived at English homes. At such times, my old Dickensian told me, people would walk a long way to meet the postman when a fresh number was due, so impatient were they to read what Boz had to tell. . . . How could they be expected to wait patiently until the letter-carrier, lumbering along on an old nag, would arrive with the solution of these burning problems? When the appointed hour came round, old and young would sally forth, walking two miles and more to the post office merely to have the issue sooner. On the way home they would start reading, those who had not the luck of holding the book looking over the shoulder of the more fortunate mortal; others would set about reading aloud as they walked; only persons with a genius for self-sacrifice would defer a purely personal gratification, and would scurry back to share the treasure with wife and child.

In every village, in every town, in the whole of the British Isles, and far beyond, away in the remotest parts of the earth where the English-speaking nations had gone to settle and colonize, Charles Dickens was loved. People loved him from the first moment when (through the medium of print) they made his acquaintance until his dying day. . . .⁴

Dickens's tours as a reader gave final proof of public affection for him, both at home and abroad. By nine o'clock on the morning that tickets for his lecture course were placed on sale in New York, there were two lines of buyers, each more than three-quarters of a mile in length:

The tickets for the course were all sold before noon. Members of families relieved each other in the queues; waiters flew across

the streets and squares from the neighboring restaurant, to serve parties who were taking their breakfast in the open December air; while excited men offered five and ten dollars for the mere permission to exchange places with other persons standing nearer the head of the line! * *

Isn't this atmosphere similar to that of Chaplin's tour through Europe, or the triumphant visit to Moscow of "Doug" and "Mary," or the excited anticipation around the première of *Grand Hotel* in New York, when an airplane service assisted ticket buyers on the West Coast? The immense popular success of Dickens's novels in his own time can be equaled in extent only by that whirlwind success which is now enjoyed by this or that sensational film success.

Perhaps the secret lies in Dickens's (as well as cinema's) creation of an extraordinary plasticity. The observation in the novels is extraordinary—as is their optical quality. The characters of Dickens are rounded with means as plastic and slightly exaggerated as are the screen heroes of today. The screen's heroes are engraved on the senses of the spectator with clearly visible traits, its villains are remembered by certain facial expressions, and all are saturated in the peculiar, slightly unnatural radiant gleam thrown over them by the screen.

It is absolutely thus that Dickens draws his characters—this is the faultlessly plastically grasped and pitilessly sharply

* Dickens himself witnessed a modern by-product of popular success—speculators: "At Brooklyn I am going to read in Mr. Ward Beecher's chapel: the only building there available for the purpose. You must understand that Brooklyn is a kind of sleeping-place for New York, and is supposed to be a great place in the money way. We let the seats pew by pew! the pulpit is taken down for my screen and gas! and I appear out of the vestry in canonical form! . . . The sale of tickets there was an amazing scene. The noble army of speculators have now furnished (this is literally true, and I am quite serious) each man with a straw mattress, a little bag of bread and meat, two blankets, and a bottle of whisky. . . . It being severely cold at Brooklyn, they made an immense bonfire in the street—a narrow street of wooden houses—which the police turned out to extinguish. A general fight then took place; from which the people furthest off in the line rushed bleeding when they saw any chance of ousting others nearer the door, put their mattresses in the spots so gained, and held on by the iron rails. . . ."

sketched gallery of immortal Pickwicks, Dombey's, Fagins, Tackletons, and others.

Just because it never occurred to his biographers to connect Dickens with the cinema, they provide us with unusually objective evidence, directly linking the importance of Dickens's observation with our medium.

[John] Forster speaks of Dickens's recollections of his childhood sufferings, and notes, as he could hardly fail to note, Dickens's amazingly detailed memory. He does not note, as he should, how this super-acuteness of physical vision contributed a basic element to Dickens's artistic method. For with that acuteness of physical vision, and that unerring recollection of every detail in the thing seen, went an abnormally complete grasp of the thing in the totality of its natural connections. . . .

And if ever a man had the gift of the eye—and not merely of the eye but of the ear, and of the nose—and the faculty of remembering with microscopic accuracy of detail everything ever seen, or heard, or tasted, smelled, or felt, that man was Charles Dickens. . . . The whole picture arises before us in sight, sound, touch, taste, and pervading odour, just exactly as in real life, and with a vividness that becomes positively uncanny.

To readers less sensitive than Dickens, this very vividness with which he visualizes plain things in plain everyday life appears to be "exaggeration." It is no such thing. The truth is that Dickens always sees instantly, and in every last, least, tiny detail, *all* that there is to be seen; while lesser mortals see only a part, and sometimes a trifling part at that.⁷

Zweig continues the case:

He cuts through the fog surrounding the years of childhood like a clipper driving through the waves. In *David Copperfield*, that masked autobiography, we are given reminiscences of a two-year-old child concerning his mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape, and Peggotty with no shape at all; memories which are like silhouettes standing out from the blank of his infancy. There are never any blurred contours where Dickens is concerned; he does not give us hazy visions, but portraits whose every detail is sharply defined. . . . As he himself once said, it is the little things that give meaning to life. He is, therefore, perpetually

on the watch for tokens, be they never so slight; a spot of grease on a dress, an awkward gesture caused by shyness, a strand of reddish hair peeping from beneath a wig if its wearer happens to lose his temper. He captures all the nuances of a handshake, knows what the pressure of each finger signifies; detects the shades of meaning in a smile.

Before he took the career of a writer, he was parliamentary reporter for a newspaper. In this capacity he became proficient in the art of summary, in compressing long-winded discussions; as shorthand writer he conveyed a word by a stroke, a whole sentence by a few curves and dashes. So in later days as an author he invented a kind of shorthand to reality, consisting of little signs instead of lengthy descriptions, an essence of observation distilled from the innumerable happenings of life. He has an uncannily sharp eye for the detection of these insignificant externals; he never overlooks anything; his memory and his keenness of perception are like a good camera lens which, in the hundredth part of a second, fixes the least expression, the slightest gesture, and yields a perfectly precise negative. Nothing escapes his notice. In addition, this perspicacious observation is enhanced by a marvelous power of refraction which, instead of presenting an object as merely reflected in its ordinary proportions from the surface of a mirror, gives us an image clothed in an excess of characteristics. For he invariably underlines the personal attributes of his characters. . . .

This extraordinary optical faculty amounted to genius in Dickens. . . . His psychology began with the visible; he gained his insight into character by observation of the exterior—the most delicate and fine minutiae of the outward semblance, it is true, those utmost tenuosities which only the eyes that are rendered acute by a superlative imagination can perceive. Like the English philosophers, he does not begin with assumptions and suppositions, but with characteristics. . . . Through traits, he discloses types: Creakle had no voice, but spoke in a whisper; the exertion cost him, or the consciousness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face much more angry, and his thick veins much thicker. Even as we read the description, the sense of terror the boys felt at the approach of this fiery blusterer becomes manifest in us as well. Uriah Heep's hands are damp and cold; we experience a loathing for the creature at the very outset, as though we were

faced by a snake. Small things? Externals? Yes, but they invariably are such as to recoil upon the soul.⁸

The visual images of Dickens are inseparable from aural images. The English philosopher and critic, George Henry Lewes,⁹ though puzzled as to its significance, recorded that "Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly *heard* by him. . . ."

We can see for ourselves that his descriptions offer not only absolute *accuracy of detail*, but also an absolutely *accurate drawing of the behavior* and actions of his characters. And this is just as true for the most trifling details of behavior—even gesture, as it is for the basic generalized characteristics of the image. Isn't this piece of description of Mr. Dombey's behavior actually an exhaustive regisseur-actor directive?

He had already laid his hand upon the bell-rope to convey his usual summons to Richards, when his eye fell upon a writing-desk, belonging to his deceased wife, which had been taken, among other things, from a cabinet in her chamber. It was not the first time that his eye had lighted on it. He carried the key in his pocket; and he brought it to his table and opened it now—having previously locked the room door—with a well-accustomed hand.¹⁰

Here the last phrase arrests one's attention: there is a certain awkwardness in its description. However, this "inserted" phrase: *having previously locked the room door*, "fitted in" as if recollected by the author in the middle of a later phrase, instead of being placed where it apparently should have been, in the consecutive order of the description, that is, before the words, *and he brought it to his table*, is found exactly at this spot for quite *unfortuitous* reasons.

In this deliberate "montage" displacement of the time-continuity of the description there is a brilliantly caught rendering of the *transient thievery* of the action, slipped between the preliminary action and the act of reading another's letter, carried out with that absolute "correctness" of gentlemanly dignity which Mr. Dombey knows how to give to any behavior or action of his.

This very (montage) arrangement of the phrasing gives an exact direction to the "performer," so that in defining this decorous and confident opening of the writing-desk, he must "play" the closing and locking of the door with a hint of an entirely different shade of conduct. And it would be this "shading" in which would also be played the unfolding of the letter; but in this part of the "performance" Dickens makes this shading more precise, not only with a significant arrangement of the words, but also with an exact description of characteristics.

From beneath a heap of torn and cancelled scraps of paper, he took one letter that remained entire. Involuntarily holding his breath as he opened this document, and bating in the stealthy action something of his arrogant demeanour, he sat down, resting his head upon one hand, and read it through.

The reading itself is done with a shading of absolutely gentlemanly cold decorum:

He read it slowly and attentively, and with a nice particularity to every syllable. Otherwise than as his great deliberation seemed unnatural, and perhaps the result of an effort equally great, he allowed no sign of emotion to escape him. When he had read it through, he folded and refolded it slowly several times, and tore it carefully into fragments. Checking his hand in the act of throwing these away, he put them in his pocket, as if unwilling to trust them even to the chances of being reunited and deciphered; and instead of ringing, as usual, for little Paul, he sat solitary all the evening in his cheerless room.

This scene does not appear in the final version of the novel, for with the aim of increasing the tension of the action, Dickens cut out this passage on Forster's advice; in his biography of Dickens Forster preserved this passage to show with what mercilessness Dickens sometimes "cut" writing that had cost him great labor. This mercilessness once more emphasizes that sharp clarity of representation towards which Dickens strove by all means, endeavoring with purely cinematic laconism to say what he considered necessary. (This, by the way,

did not in the least prevent his novels from achieving enormous breadth.)

I don't believe I am wrong in lingering on this example, for one need only alter two or three of the character names and change Dickens's name to the name of the hero of my essay, in order to impute literally almost everything told here to the account of Griffith.

From that steely, observing glance, which I remember from my meeting with him, to the capture *en passant* of key details or tokens—indications of character, Griffith has all this in as much a Dickens-esque sharpness and clarity as Dickens, on his part, had cinematic "optical quality," "frame composition," "close-up," and the alteration of emphasis by special lenses.

Analogies and resemblances cannot be pursued too far—they lose conviction and charm. They begin to take on the air of machination or card-tricks. I should be very sorry to lose the conviction of the affinity between Dickens and Griffith, allowing this abundance of common traits to slide into a game of anecdotal semblance of tokens.

All the more that such a gleaning from Dickens goes beyond the limits of interest in Griffith's individual cinematic craftsmanship and widens into a concern with film-craftsmanship in general. This is why I dig more and more deeply into the film-indications of Dickens, revealing them through Griffith—for the use of future film-exponents. So I must be excused, in leafing through Dickens, for having found in him even—a "dis-solve." How else could this passage be defined—the opening of the last chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine. . . .

Six tumbrils roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilettes of flaring Jezebels, the churches that are not my Father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants!

How many such "cinematic" surprises must be hiding in Dickens's pages!

However, let us turn to the basic montage structure, whose rudiment in Dickens's work was developed into the elements of film composition in Griffith's work. Lifting a corner of the veil over these riches, these hitherto unused experiences, let us look into *Oliver Twist*. Open it at the twenty-first chapter. Let's read its beginning:

*Chapter XXI **

1. It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street; blowing and raining hard; and the clouds looking dull and stormy.

The night had been very wet: for large pools of water had collected in the road: and the kennels were overflowing.

There was a faint glimmering of the coming day in the sky; but it rather aggravated than relieved the gloom of the scene: the sombre light only serving to pale that which the street lamps afforded, without shedding any warmer or brighter tints upon the wet housetops, and dreary streets.

There appeared to be nobody stirring in that quarter of the town; for the windows of the houses were all closely shut; and the streets through which they passed, were noiseless and empty.

2. By the time they had turned into the Bethnal Green Road, the day had fairly begun to break. Many of the lamps were already extinguished;

a few country waggons were slowly toiling on, towards London; and now and then, a stage-coach, covered with mud, rattled briskly by:

the driver bestowing, as he passed, an admonitory lash upon the heavy waggoner who, by keeping on the wrong side of the road, had endangered his arriving at the office, a quarter of a minute after his time.

The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open.

By degrees, other shops began to be unclosed; and a few scattered people were met with.

* For demonstration purposes I have broken this beginning of the chapter into smaller pieces than did its author; the numbering is, of course, also mine.

Then, came straggling groups of labourers going to their work; then, men and women with fish-baskets on their heads: donkey-carts laden with vegetables; chaise-carts filled with live-stock or whole carcasses of meat; milk-women with pails; and an unbroken concourse of people, trudging out with various supplies to the eastern suburbs of the town.

3. As they approached the City, the noise and traffic gradually increased;

and when they threaded the streets between Shoreditch and Smithfield, it had swelled into a roar of sound and bustle.

It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again; and the busy morning of half the London population had begun. . . .

4. It was market-morning.

The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; and a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle,

and mingling with the fog,

which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above. . . .

Countrymen,

butchers,

drovers,

hawkers,

boys,

thieves,

idlers,

and vagabonds of every low grade,

were mingled together in a dense mass;

5. the whistling of drovers,

the barking of dogs,

the bellowing and plunging of oxen,

the bleating of sheep,

the grunting and squeaking of pigs;

the cries of hawkers,

the shouts, oaths and quarrelling on all sides;

the ringing of bells

and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house;

the crowding, pushing, driving, beating,
whooping and yelling;
the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market;

and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.

How often have we encountered just such a structure in the work of Griffith? This austere accumulation and quickening tempo, this gradual play of light: from burning street-lamps, to their being extinguished; from night, to dawn; from dawn, to the full radiance of day (*It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again*); this calculated transition from purely visual elements to an interweaving of them with aural elements: at first as an indefinite rumble, coming from afar at the second stage of increasing light, so that the rumble may grow into a roar, transferring us to a purely aural structure, now concrete and objective (section 5 of our break-down); with such scenes, picked up *en passant*, and intercut into the whole—like the driver, hastening towards his office; and, finally, these magnificently typical details, the reeking bodies of the cattle, from which the steam rises and mingles with the over-all cloud of morning fog, or the close-up of the legs in the almost ankle-deep filth and mire, all this gives the fullest cinematic sensation of the panorama of a market.

Surprised by these examples from Dickens, we must not forget one more circumstance, related to the creative work of Dickens in general.

Thinking of this as taking place in "cozy" old England, we are liable to forget that the works of Dickens, considered not only against a background of English literature, but against a background of world literature of that epoch, as well, were produced as the works of a city artist. He was the first to bring factories, machines, and railways into literature.

But indication of this "urbanism" in Dickens may be found not only in his thematic material, but also in that head-spinning

tempo of changing impressions with which Dickens sketches the city in the form of a dynamic (montage) picture; and this montage of its rhythms conveys the sensation of the limits of speed at that time (1838), the sensation of a rushing—stage-coach!

As they dashed by the quickly-changing and ever-varying objects, it was curious to observe in what a strange procession they passed before the eye. Emporiums of splendid dresses, the materials brought from every quarter of the world; tempting stores of everything to stimulate and pamper the sated appetite and give new relish to the oft-repeated feast; vessels of burnished gold and silver, wrought into every exquisite form of vase, and dish, and goblet; guns, swords, pistols, and patent engines of destruction; screws and irons for the crooked, clothes for the newly-born, drugs for the sick, coffins for the dead, church-yards for the buried—all these jumbled each with the other and flocking side by side, seemed to flit by in motley dance. . . .¹¹

Isn't this an anticipation of a "symphony of a big city"? *

But here is another, directly opposite aspect of a city, out-distancing Hollywood's picture of the City by eighty years.

It contained several large streets all very like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.¹²

Is this Dickens's Coketown of 1853, or King Vidor's *The Crowd* of 1928?

If in the above-cited examples we have encountered prototypes of characteristics for Griffith's *montage exposition*, then it would pay us to read further in *Oliver Twist*, where we can find another montage method typical for Griffith—the method of a *montage progression of parallel scenes, intercut into each other*.

* A reference to the Ruttmann-Freund film, *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt* (1927).

For this let us turn to that group of scenes in which is set forth the familiar episode of how Mr. Brownlow, to show faith in Oliver in spite of his pick-pocket reputation, sends him to return books to the book-seller, and of how Oliver again falls into the clutches of the thief Sikes, his sweetheart Nancy, and old Fagin.

These scenes are unrolled absolutely à la Griffith: both in their inner emotional line, as well as in the unusual sculptural relief and delineation of the characters; in the uncommon full-bloodedness of the dramatic as well as the humorous traits in them; finally, also in the typical Griffith-esque montage of parallel interlocking of all the links of the separate episodes. Let us give particular attention to this last peculiarity, just as unexpected, one would think, in Dickens, as it is characteristic for Griffith!

Chapter XIV

COMPRISING FURTHER PARTICULARS OF OLIVER'S STAY AT MR. BROWNLOW'S, WITH THE REMARKABLE PREDICTION WHICH ONE MR. GRIMWIG UTTERED CONCERNING HIM, WHEN HE WENT OUT ON AN ERRAND.

... "Dear me, I am very sorry for that," exclaimed Mr. Brownlow; "I particularly wished those books to be returned tonight."

"Send Oliver with them," said Mr. Grimwig, with an ironical smile; "he will be sure to deliver them safely, you know."

"Yes; do let me take them, if you please, Sir," said Oliver. "I'll run all the way, Sir."

The old gentleman was just going to say that Oliver should not go out on any account; when a most malicious cough from Mr. Grimwig determined him that he should; and that, by his prompt discharge of the commission, he should prove to him the injustice of his suspicions: on this head at least: at once.

[Oliver is prepared for the errand to the bookstall-keeper.]

"I won't be ten minutes, Sir," replied Oliver, eagerly.

[Mrs. Bedwin, Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper, gives Oliver the directions, and sends him off.]

"Bless his sweet face!" said the old lady, looking after him. "I can't bear, somehow, to let him go out of my sight."

At this moment, Oliver looked gaily round, and nodded before

he turned the corner. The old lady smilingly returned his salutation, and, closing the door, went back to her own room.

"Let me see; he'll be back in twenty minutes, at the longest," said Mr. Brownlow, pulling out his watch, and placing it on the table. "It will be dark by that time."

"Oh! you really expect him to come back, do you?" inquired Mr. Grimwig.

"Don't you?" asked Mr. Brownlow, smiling.

The spirit of contradiction was strong in Mr. Grimwig's breast, at the moment; and it was rendered stronger by his friend's confident smile.

"No," he said, smiting the table with his fist, "I do not. The boy has a new suit of clothes on his back; a set of valuable books under his arm; and a five-pound note in his pocket. He'll join his old friends the thieves, and laugh at you. If ever that boy returns to this house, Sir, I'll eat my head."

With these words he drew his chair closer to the table; and there the two friends sat, in silent expectation, with the watch between them.

This is followed by a short "interruption" in the form of a digression:

It is worthy of remark, as illustrating the importance we attach to our own judgments, and the pride with which we put forth our most rash and hasty conclusions, that, although Mr. Grimwig was not by any means a bad-hearted man, and though he would have been unfeignedly sorry to see his respected friend duped and deceived, he really did most earnestly and strongly hope, at that moment, that Oliver Twist might not come back.

And again a return to the two old gentlemen:

It grew so dark, that the figures on the dial-plate were scarcely discernible; but there the two old gentlemen continued to sit, in silence: with the watch between them.

Twilight shows that only a little time has passed, but the *close-up* of the watch, *already twice* shown lying between the old gentlemen, says that a great deal of time has passed already. But just then, as in the game of "will he come? won't he come?", involving not only the two old men, but also the

kind-hearted reader, the worst fears and vague forebodings of the old housekeeper are justified by the cut to the new scene—Chapter XV. This begins with a short scene in the public-house, with the bandit Sikes and his dog, old Fagin and Miss Nancy, who has been obliged to discover the whereabouts of Oliver.

"You are on the scent, are you, Nancy?" inquired Sikes, proffering the glass.

"Yes, I am, Bill," replied the young lady, disposing of its contents; "and tired enough of it I am, too. . . ."

Then, one of the best scenes in the whole novel—at least one that since childhood has been perfectly preserved, along with the evil figure of Fagin—the scene in which Oliver, marching along with the books, is suddenly

startled by a young woman screaming out very loud, "Oh, my dear brother!" And he had hardly looked up, to see what the matter was, when he was stopped by having a pair of arms thrown tight round his neck.

With this cunning maneuver Nancy, with the sympathies of the whole street, takes the desperately pulling Oliver, as her "prodigal brother," back into the bosom of Fagin's gang of thieves. This fifteenth chapter closes on the now familiar montage phrase:

The gas-lamps were lighted; Mrs. Bedwin was waiting anxiously at the open door; the servant had run up the street twenty times to see if there were any traces of Oliver; and still the two old gentlemen sat, perseveringly, in the dark parlour: with the watch between them.

In Chapter XVI Oliver, once again in the clutches of the gang, is subjected to mockery. Nancy rescues him from a beating:

"I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin," cried the girl. "You've got the boy, and what more would you have? Let him be—let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time."

By the way, it is characteristic for both Dickens and Griffith to have these sudden flashes of goodness in "morally degraded" characters and, though these sentimental images verge on hokum, they are so faultlessly done that they work on the most skeptical readers and spectators!

At the end of this chapter, Oliver, sick and weary, falls "sound asleep." Here the physical time unity is interrupted—an evening and night, crowded with events; but the montage unity of the episode is not interrupted, tying Oliver to Mr. Brownlow on one side, and to Fagin's gang on the other.

Following, in Chapter XVIII, is the arrival of the parish beadle, Mr. Bumble, in response to an inquiry about the lost boy, and the appearance of Bumble at Mr. Brownlow's, again in Grimwig's company. The content and reason for their conversation is revealed by the very title of the chapter: OLIVER'S DESTINY CONTINUING UNPROFITOUS, BRINGS A GREAT MAN TO LONDON TO INJURE HIS REPUTATION . . .

"I fear it is all too true," said the old gentleman sorrowfully, after looking over the papers. "This is not much for your intelligence; but I would gladly have given you treble the money, if it had been favourable to the boy."

It is not at all improbable that if Mr. Bumble had been possessed of this information at an earlier period of the interview, he might have imparted a very different coloring to his little history. It was too late to do it now, however; so he shook his head gravely; and, pocketing the five guineas, withdrew. . . .

"Mrs. Bedwin," said Mr. Brownlow, when the housekeeper appeared; "that boy, Oliver, is an impostor."

"It can't be, Sir. It cannot be," said the old lady energetically. . . . "I never will believe it, Sir. . . . Never!"

"You old women never believe anything but quack-doctors, and lying story-books," growled Mr. Grimwig. "I knew it all along. . . ."

"He was a dear, grateful, gentle child, Sir," retorted Mrs. Bedwin, indignantly. "I know what children are, Sir; and have done these forty years; and people who can't say the same, shouldn't say anything about them. That's my opinion!"

This was a hard hit at Mr. Grimwig, who was a bachelor. As

it extorted nothing from that gentleman but a smile, the old lady tossed her head, and smoothed down her apron preparatory to another speech, when she was stopped by Mr. Brownlow.

"Silence!" said the old gentleman, feigning an anger he was far from feeling. "Never let me hear the boy's name again. I rang to tell you that. Never. Never, on any pretence, mind! You may leave the room, Mrs. Bedwin. Remember! I am in earnest."

And the entire intricate montage complex of this episode is concluded with the sentence:

There were sad hearts in Mr. Brownlow's that night.

It was not by accident that I have allowed myself such full extracts, in regard not only to the composition of the scenes, but also to the delineation of the characters, for in their very modeling, in their characteristics, in their behavior, there is much typical of Griffith's manner. This equally concerns also his "Dickens-esque" distressed, defenseless creatures (recalling Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess in *Broken Blossoms* or the Gish sisters in *Orphans of the Storm*), and is no less typical for his characters like the two old gentlemen and Mrs. Bedwin; and finally, it is entirely characteristic of him to have such figures as are in the gang of "the merry old Jew" Fagin.

In regard to the immediate task of our example of Dickens's montage progression of the story composition, we can present the results of it in the following table:

1. *The old gentlemen.*
2. Departure of Oliver.
3. *The old gentlemen and the watch. It is still light.*
4. Digression on the character of Mr. Grimwig.
5. *The old gentlemen and the watch. Gathering twilight.*
6. Fagin, Sikes and Nancy in the public-house.
7. Scene on the street.
8. *The old gentlemen and the watch. The gas-lamps have been lit.*
9. Oliver is dragged back to Fagin.
10. Digression at the beginning of Chapter XVII.

11. The journey of Mr. Bumble.
12. *The old gentlemen* and Mr. Brownlow's command to forget Oliver forever.

As we can see, we have before us a typical and, for Griffith, a model of parallel montage of two story lines, where one (the waiting gentlemen) emotionally heightens the tension and drama of the other (the capture of Oliver). It is in "rescuers" rushing along to save the "suffering heroine" that Griffith has, with the aid of parallel montage, earned his most glorious laurels!

Most curious of all is that in the *very center* of our breakdown of the episode, is wedged another "interruption"—a whole digression at the beginning of Chapter XVII, on which we have been purposely silent. What is remarkable about this digression? It is Dickens's own "treatise" on the principles of this montage construction of the story which he carries out so fascinatingly, and which passed into the style of Griffith. Here it is:

It is the custom on the stage, in all good murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky well-cured bacon. The hero sinks upon his straw bed, weighed down by fetters and misfortunes; and, in the next scene, his faithful but unconscious squire regales the audience with a comic song. We behold, with throbbing bosoms, the heroine in the grasp of a proud and ruthless baron: her virtue and her life alike in danger; drawing forth her dagger to preserve the one at the cost of the other; and just as our expectations are wrought up to the highest pitch, a whistle is heard: and we are straightway transported to the great hall of the castle: where a grey-headed seneschal sings a funny chorus with a funnier body of vassals, who are free of all sorts of places from church vaults to palaces, and roam about in company, carolling perpetually.

Such changes appear absurd; but they are not so unnatural as they would seem at first sight. The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death-beds, and from mourning-weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling; only, there, we are

busy actors, instead of passive lookers-on; which makes a vast difference. The actors in the mimic life of the theatre, are blind to violent transitions and abrupt impulses of passion of feeling, which, presented before the eyes of mere spectators, are at once condemned as outrageous and preposterous.

As sudden shiftings of the scene, and rapid changes of time and place, are not only sanctioned in books by long usage, but are by many considered as the great art of authorship: an author's skill in his craft being, by such critics, chiefly estimated with relation to the dilemmas in which he leaves his characters at the end of every chapter: this brief introduction to the present one may perhaps be deemed unnecessary. . . .

There is another interesting thing in this treatise: in his own words, Dickens (a life-long amateur actor) defines his direct relation to the theater melodrama. This is as if Dickens had placed himself in the position of a connecting link between the future, unforeseen art of the cinema, and the not so distant (for Dickens) past—the traditions of "good murderous melodramas."

This "treatise," of course, could not have escaped the eye of the patriarch of the American film, and very often his structure seems to follow the wise advice, handed down to the great film-maker of the twentieth century by the great novelist of the nineteenth. And Griffith, hiding nothing, has more than once acknowledged his debt to Dickens's memory.

We have already seen that the first screen exploitation of such a structure was by Griffith in *After Many Years*, an exploitation for which he held Dickens responsible. This film is further memorable for being the first in which the close-up was *intelligently* used and, chiefly, *utilized*.*

Lewis Jacobs has described Griffith's approach to the close-up, three months earlier, in *For Love of Gold*, an adaptation of Jack London's *Just Meat*:

* Close shots of heads and objects were not so rare in the pre-Griffith film as is generally assumed; close shots can be found used solely for novelty or trick purposes by such inventive pioneers as Méliès and the English "Brighton School" (as pointed out by Georges Sadoul).

The climax of the story was the scene in which the two thieves begin to distrust each other. Its effectiveness depended upon the audience's awareness of what was going on in the minds of both thieves. The only known way to indicate a player's thoughts was by double-exposure "dream balloons." This convention had grown out of two misconceptions: first, that the camera must always be fixed at a viewpoint corresponding to that of a spectator in a theatre (the position now known as the long shot); the other, that a scene had to be played in its entirety before another was begun. . . .

Griffith decided now upon a revolutionary step. He moved the camera closer to the actor, in what is now known as the full shot (a larger view of the actor), so that the audience could observe the actor's pantomime more closely. No one before had thought of changing the position of the camera in the middle of a scene. . . .

The next logical step was to bring the camera still closer to the actor in what is now called the close-up. . . .

Not since Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, some five years before, had a close-up been seen in American films. Used then only as a stunt (the outlaw was shown firing at the audience), the close-up became in *Enoch Arden* [*After Many Years*] the natural dramatic complement of the long shot and full shot. Going further than he had ventured before, in a scene showing Annie Lee brooding and waiting for her husband's return Griffith daringly used a large close-up of her face.

Everyone in the Biograph studio was shocked. "Show only the head of a person? What will people say? It's against all rules of movie making!" . . .

But Griffith had no time for argument. He had another surprise, even more radical, to offer. Immediately following the close-up of Annie, he inserted a picture of the object of her thoughts—her husband, cast away on a desert isle. This cutting from one scene to another, without finishing either, brought a torrent of criticism down upon the experimenter.¹⁸

And we have read how Griffith defended his experiment by calling on Dickens as a witness.

If these were only the first intimations of that which was to bring glory to Griffith, we can find a full fruition of his

new method in a film made only a year after he began to direct films—*The Lonely Villa*. This is told in Iris Barry's monograph on Griffith:

By June, 1909, Griffith was already gaining control of his material and moved to further creative activity: he carried Porter's initial method* to a new stage of development in *The Lonely Villa*, in which he employed cross-cutting to heighten suspense throughout the parallel scenes where the burglars are breaking in upon the mother and children while the father is rushing home to the rescue. Here he had hit upon a new way of handling a tried device—the last-minute rescue—which was to serve him well for the rest of his career. By March, 1911, Griffith further developed this disjunctive method of narration in *The Lonedale Operator*, which achieves a much greater degree of breathless excitement and suspense in the scenes where the railwayman-hero is racing his train back to the rescue of the heroine attacked by hold-up men in the depot.¹⁵

Melodrama, having attained on American soil by the end of the nineteenth century its most complete and exuberant ripeness, at this peak must certainly have had a great influence on Griffith, whose first art was the theater, and its methods must have been stored away in Griffith's reserve fund with no little quantity of wonderful and characteristic features.

What was this period of American melodrama, immediately preceding the appearance of Griffith? Its most interesting aspect is the close scenic entwining of *both* sides that are characteristic for the future creation of Griffith; of those *two sides*, typical for Dickens's writing and style, about which we spoke at the beginning of this essay.

This may be illustrated by the theatrical history of the original *Way Down East*. Some of this history has been preserved for us in the reminiscences of William A. Brady. These

*Miss Barry had previously pointed out that "Edwin S. Porter in *The Great Train Robbery* had taken a vital step by introducing parallel action through a rough form of cross-cutting. . . ." ¹⁴

are particularly interesting as records of the emergence and popularizing of that theatrical genre known as the "homespun" melodrama of locale. Certain features of this tradition have been preserved to our own day. The successes of such keenly modern works as Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (in their original and film versions) contain ingredients common to this popular genre. These two works complete a circle of rural poesy, dedicated to the American countryside.

Brady's reminiscences are an interesting record of the scenic embodiment of these melodramas on the stages of that era. For purely as staging, this scenic embodiment in many cases literally anticipates not only the themes, subjects and their interpretations, but even those staging methods and effects, which always seem to us so "purely cinematic," without precedent and . . . begotten by the screen! *

A variety actor named Denman Thompson in the late 'seventies was performing a sketch on the variety circuits called *Joshua Whitcomb*. . . . It happened that James M. Hill, a retail clothier from Chicago, saw *Joshua Whitcomb*, met Thompson, and persuaded him to write a four-act drama around Old Josh.¹⁶

Out of this idea came the melodrama, *The Old Homestead*, financed by Hill. The new genre caught on slowly, but skillful advertising did its work—recalling sentimental dreams and memories of the good old, and alas! deserted hearth-side; of life in good old rural America, and the piece played for twenty-five years, making a fortune for Mr. Hill.

Another success from the same formula was *The County Fair* by Neil Burgess:

*For this reason immediately after the facts on the circumstances and arrangement that brought success to the play of *Way Down East* in the 'nineties, I shall offer a description, in no less bold relief, of the scenic effects in the melodrama *The Ninety and Nine*, a success in the New York theater of 1902.

He introduced in the play, for the first time on any stage, a horse race on tread-mills. He patented the device and collected royalties the world over when it was used in other productions. *Ben Hur* used it for twenty years. . . .

The novelty and attraction of this thematic material cast in scenic devices of this sort quickly made it popular everywhere and "homespun dramas sprung up on every side. . . ."

Another long-lived earthy melodrama was *In Old Kentucky*, which with its Pickaninny Band made a couple of millions in ten years for its owner, Jacob Litt. . . . Augustus Thomas tried his hand writing a trio of rurals—*Alabama*, *Arizona*, and *In Missouri*.

An energetic all-round entrepreneur like Brady was sure to be drawn towards this new money-making dramatic form:

All through the 'nineties, I was a very busy person in and around Broadway. I tackled anything in the entertainment line—melodramas on Broadway or the Bowery, prize fights, bicycle races—long or short, six days, twenty-four hours, or sprints—league baseball. . . . Broadsword fights, cake-walks, tugs of war, wrestling matches—on the level and made to order. Masquerade balls for all nations at Madison Square Garden. Matching James J. Corbett against John L. Sullivan and winning the world's heavyweight championship. This put me on the top of the world, and so I had to have a Broadway theatre.

Brady leased the Manhattan Theatre with "a young fellow named Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr." and went looking for something to put into it.

A booking agent of mine named Harry Doel Parker brought me a script called *Annie Laurie* [by his wife, Lottie Blair Parker]. I read it, and saw a chance to build it up into one of those rural things that were cleaning up everywhere. . . . I told him that the play had the makings, and we finally agreed on an outright purchase price of ten thousand dollars, he giving me the right to call in a play doctor. I gave the job to Joseph R. Grismer, who rechristened the play *Way Down East*. . . .*

* Elsewhere, William A. Brady has given more detail on Grismer's contribution: "During the trial-and-error period at one time or another we had used every small town in the United States as dog for *Way*

. . . We booked it at our Broadway theater, where it ran seven months, never knowing a profitable week. The critics tore it to pieces. . . . During its Broadway run we used every trick known to the barnstormer to pull them in, but to no avail. . . . We depended on "snow"—sloughing New York and its suburbs with "Pass 2's."

One night a well-known minister dropped in and he wrote us a nice letter of appreciation. That gave us a cue. We sent out ten thousand "minister tickets" and asked them all for tributes and got them. They all said it was a masterpiece—made long speeches from the stage to that effect—and followed it up with sermons from their pulpits. I hired the big electric sign on the triangle building at Broadway and Twenty-third Street (the first big one in New York). It cost us a thousand dollars a month. How it did make the Rialto talk! In one of our weekly press notices, which *The Sun* printed, it stated that *Way Down East* was better than *The Old Homestead*. That gave us a slogan which lasted twenty years. . . .

The manager of the Academy of Music, the home of *The Old Homestead*, was asked to put *Way Down East* into his theater.

He was willing, but insisted that the show and its production was too small for his huge stage. Grismer and I put our heads together and decided on a huge production, introducing horses, cattle, sheep, all varieties of farm conveyances, a monster sleigh drawn by four horses for a sleigh-ride, an electric snowstorm, a double quartette singing at every opportunity the songs that mother loved—forming, all in all, a veritable farm circus. It went over with a bang, and stayed in New York a full season, showing profits exceeding one hundred thousand dollars. After that, it was easy

Down East, and no two of them ever saw the same version. . . . Grismer lived, slept and ate it. He certainly earned that credit-line which always ran in the program: 'Elaborated by Joseph R. Grismer.' Why, the mechanical snowstorm used in the third act, which had no small part in making the play a memorable success, was specially invented by him for the production and then patented. One of his inspirations was laying hands on a vaudeville actor named Harry Seamon, who had a small-time hick act, breaking his routine into three parts and running him into *Way Down East*.¹⁷

going. I launched a half-dozen touring companies. They all cleaned up.

The show was a repeater and it took twenty-one years to wear it out. The big cities never seemed to grow tired of it. . . .

The silent movie rights of *Way Down East* were purchased by D. W. Griffith for one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, twenty-five years after its first stage production.

In the fall of 1902, exactly a year before the production of *The Great Train Robbery*, a moralistic melodrama entitled *The Ninety and Nine* (the title derives from a familiar hymn by Sankey) opened at the same Academy of Music. Under a striking photo of the climactic scene in the production, *The Theatre Magazine* printed this explanatory caption:

A hamlet is encircled by a raging prairie fire and three thousand people are threatened. At the station, thirty miles away, scores of excited people wait as the telegraph ticks the story of peril. A special is ready to go to the rescue. The engineer is absent and the craven young millionaire refuses to take the risk to make the dash. The hero springs forward to take his place. Darkness, a moment of suspense, and then the curtain rises again upon an exciting scene. The big stage is literally covered with fire. Flames lick the trunks of the trees. Telegraph poles blaze and the wires snap in the fierce heat. Sharp tongues of fire creep through the grass and sweep on, blazing fiercely. In the midst of it all is the massive locomotive, full sized and such as draw the modern express trains, almost hidden from view in the steam or smoke. Its big drive wheels spin on the track, and it rocks and sways as if driven at topmost speed. In the cab is the engineer, smoke-grimed and scarred, while the fireman dashes pails of water on him to protect him from the flying embers.*

Further comment seems superfluous: here too is the tension of parallel action, of the race, the chase—the necessity to get

* In his accompanying review, Arthur Hornblow gives us some idea of how this effect was achieved: "This scene, which is the 'sensation' of the production, is one of the most realistic effects of machinery ever seen on any stage. . . . Tissue paper streamers, blown by concealed electric fans, on which brilliant red and yellow lights play, represent the flames, while the motion of the on-rushing locomotive is simulated by revolving the forest background in an inverse direction."

there in time, to break through the flaming barrier; here too is the moral preachment, capable of inflaming a thousand ministers; here too, answering the "modern" interests of the audience, is HOME in all its "exotic fullness"; here too are the irresistible tunes, connected with memories of childhood and "dear old mother." In short, here is laid out the whole arsenal with which Griffith later will conquer, just as irresistibly.

But if you should like to move the discussion from general attitudes of montage over to its more *narrowly specific* features, Griffith might have found still other "montage ancestors" for himself—and on his own grounds, too.

I must regretfully put aside Walt Whitman's huge montage conception. It must be stated that Griffith did not continue the Whitman *montage tradition* (in spite of the Whitman lines on "out of the cradle endlessly rocking," which served Griffith unsuccessfully as a refrain shot for his *Intolerance*; but of that later).

It is here that I wish, in connection with montage, to refer to one of the gayest and wittiest of Mark Twain's contemporaries—writing under the *nom de plume* of John Phoenix. This example of montage is dated October 1, 1853 (!), and is taken from his parody on a current novelty—illustrated newspapers.

The parody newspaper is entitled "Phoenix's Pictorial and Second Story Front Room Companion," and was first published in the San Diego *Herald*.¹⁸ Among its several items, ingeniously illustrated with the miscellaneous "boiler-plate" found in any small-town newspaper print-shop of the time, there is one item of particular interest for us:



**Fearful accident on the Princeton Rail Road!
Terrible loss of life!!**

"By all the rules of the art" of montage, John Phoenix "conjures up the image." The montage method is obvious: the play of *juxtaposed detail*-shots, which in themselves are immutable and even unrelated, but from which is created the desired *image of the whole*. And particularly fascinating here is the "close-up" of the false teeth, placed next to a "long-shot" of the overturned railway coach, but both given in *equal size*, that is, exactly as if they were being shown on "a full screen"!

Curious also is the figure of the author himself, hiding beneath the pseudonym of Phoenix the honored name of Lieutenant George Horatio Derby, of the United States Army Engineers, wounded at Serro Gordo in 1846, a conscientious surveyor, reporter and engineer till his death in 1861. Such was one of the first American ancestors of the wonder-working method of montage! He was one of the first important American humorists of a new type, who belongs as well to the indubitable forerunners of that "violent" humor, which has achieved its wildest flourish in films, for example, in the work of the Marx Brothers.*

I don't know how my readers feel about this, but for me personally it is always pleasing to recognize again and again the fact that our cinema is not altogether without parents and without pedigree, without a past, without the traditions and rich cultural heritage of the past epochs. It is only very thoughtless and presumptuous people who can erect laws and an esthetic for cinema, proceeding from premises of some incredible virgin-birth of this art!

Let Dickens and the whole ancestral array, going back as far as the Greeks and Shakespeare, be superfluous reminders that both Griffith and our cinema prove our origins to be not

* Sufficient evidence of this lies in the anecdote by John Phoenix in which Tushmaker's new tooth-pulling machine "drew the old lady's skeleton completely and entirely from her body, leaving her a mass of quivering jelly in her chair! Tushmaker took her home in a pillow-case. She lived seven years after that, and they called her the 'India-Rubber Woman.' She had suffered terribly with the rheumatism, but after this occurrence, never had a pain in her bones. The dentist kept them in a glass case. . . ." 19

solely as of Edison and his fellow inventors, but as based on an enormous cultured past; each part of this past in its own moment of world history has moved forward the great art of cinematography. Let this past be a reproach to those thoughtless people who have displayed arrogance in reference to literature, which has contributed so much to this apparently unprecedented art and is, in the first and most important place: the art of viewing—not only the *eye*, but *viewing*—both meanings being embraced in this term.

This esthetic growth from the *cinematographic eye* to the *image of an embodied viewpoint on phenomena* was one of the most serious processes of development of our Soviet cinema in particular; our cinema also played a tremendous rôle in the history of the development of world cinema as a whole, and it was no small rôle that was played by a basic understanding of the principles of film-montage, which became so characteristic for the Soviet school of film-making.

None the less enormous was the rôle of Griffith also in the evolution of the system of Soviet montage: a rôle as enormous as the rôle of Dickens in forming the methods of Griffith. Dickens in this respect played an enormous rôle in heightening the tradition and cultural heritage of preceding epochs; just as on an even higher level we can see the enormous rôle of those social premises, which inevitably in those pivotal moments of history ever anew push elements of the montage method into the center of attention for creative work.

The rôle of Griffith is enormous, but our cinema is neither a poor relative nor an insolvent debtor of his. It was natural that the spirit and content of our country itself, in themes and subjects, would stride far ahead of Griffith's ideals as well as their reflection in artistic images.

In social attitudes Griffith was always a liberal, never departing far from the slightly sentimental humanism of the good old gentlemen and sweet old ladies of Victorian England, just as Dickens loved to picture them. His tender-hearted film morals go no higher than a level of Christian accusation of

human injustice and nowhere in his films is there sounded a protest against social injustice.

In his best films he is a preacher of pacifism and compromise with fate (*Isn't Life Wonderful?*) or of love of mankind "in general" (*Broken Blossoms*). Here in his reproaches and condemnations Griffith is sometimes able to ascend to magnificent pathos (in, for example, *Way Down East*).

In the more thematically dubious of his works—this takes the form of an apology for the Dry Law (in *The Struggle*) or for the metaphysical philosophy of the eternal origins of Good and Evil (in *Intolerance*). Metaphysics permeates the film which he based on Marie Corelli's *Sorrows of Satan*. Finally, among the most repellent elements in his films (and there are such) we see Griffith as an open apologist for racism, erecting a celluloid monument to the Ku Klux Klan, and joining their attack on Negroes in *The Birth of a Nation*.*

Nevertheless, nothing can take from Griffith the wreath of one of the genuine masters of the American cinema.

But montage thinking is inseparable from the general content of thinking as a whole. The structure that is reflected in the concept of Griffith montage is the structure of bourgeois society. And he actually resembles Dickens's "side of streaky, well-cured bacon"; in actuality (and this is no joke), he is woven of irreconcilably alternating layers of "white" and "red"—rich and poor. (This is the eternal theme of Dickens's novels, nor does he move beyond these divisions. His mature work, *Little Dorrit*, is so divided into two books: "Poverty" and "Riches.") And this society, perceived *only as a contrast between the haves and the have-nots*, is reflected in the consciousness of Griffith no deeper than the image of an intricate race between two parallel lines.

Griffith primarily is the greatest master of the most graphic form in this field—a master of *parallel montage*. Above all else,

* In all instances the craftsmanship of Griffith remains almost unaltered in these films, springing as it does from profound sincerity and a full conviction in the rightness of their themes, but before all else I am noting the themes themselves and their ideological aims.

Griffith is a great master of montage constructions that have been created in a direct-lined quickening and *increase of tempo* (chiefly in the direction of the higher forms of parallel montage).

The school of Griffith before all else is a school of *tempo*. However, he did not have the strength to compete with the young Soviet school of montage in the field of expression and of relentlessly affective *rhythm*, the task of which goes far beyond the narrow confines of tempo tasks.

It was exactly this feature of *devastating rhythm* as distinguished from effects of *tempo* that was noted at the appearance of our first Soviet films in America. After recognizing the themes and ideas of our works it was this feature of our cinema that the American press of 1926-27 remarked.

But true rhythm presupposes above all organic *unity*.

Neither a successive mechanical alternation of cross-cuts, nor an interweaving of antagonistic themes, but above all a unity, which in the play of inner contradictions, through a shift of the play in the direction of tracing its organic pulse—that is what lies at the base of rhythm. This is not an outer unity of story, bringing with it also the classical image of the chase-scene, but that inner unity, which can be realized in montage as an entirely different system of construction, in which so-called parallel montage can figure as one of the highest or particularly personal variants.

And, naturally, the montage concept of Griffith, as a primarily parallel montage, appears to be a copy of his dualistic picture of the world, running in two parallel lines of poor and rich towards some hypothetical "reconciliation" where . . . the parallel lines would cross, that is, in that infinity, just as inaccessible as that "reconciliation."

Thus it was to be expected that our concept of montage had to be born from an entirely different "image" of an understanding of phenomena, which was opened to us by a world-view both monistic and dialectic.

For us the microcosm of montage had to be understood as a unity, which in the inner stress of contradictions is halved,

in order to be re-assembled in a new unity on a new plane, qualitatively higher, its imagery newly perceived.

I attempted to give theoretical expression to this *general tendency* of our understanding of montage, and advanced this in 1929, thinking least of all at that time to what degree our method of montage both generically and in principle was in opposition to the montage of Griffith.

This was stated in the form of a definition of the *stages* of relationship between the shot and montage. Of the thematic unity of content in a film, of the "shot," of the "frame," I wrote:

The shot is by no means an *element* of montage.

The shot is a montage *cell*.

Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage.

Montage is the expansion of intra-shot conflict (or, contradiction) at first in the conflict of two shots standing side by side:

Conflict within the shot is potential montage, in the development of its intensity shattering the quadrilateral cage of the shot and exploding its conflict into montage impulses *between* the montage pieces.

Then—the threading of the conflict through a whole system of planes, by means of which "... we newly collect the dis-integrated event into one whole, but in *our* aspect. According to the treatment of our relation to the event."*

Thus is broken up a *montage unit*—the cage—into a multiple chain, which is *anew gathered into a new unity—in the montage phrase, embodying the concept of an image of the phenomenon*.

It is interesting to watch such a process moving also through the history of language in relation to the word (the "shot")

* See "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," pages 34-38.

and the sentence (the "montage phrase"), and to see just such a primitive stage of "word-sentences" later "foliating" into the sentence, made up of separately independent words.

V. A. Bogoroditzky writes that "... in the very beginning mankind expressed his ideas in single words, which were also primitive forms of the sentence."²⁰ The question is presented in more detail by Academician Ivan Meshchaninov:

Word and sentence appear as the product of history and are far from being identified with the whole lengthy epoch of gutturals. They are antedated by an unfoliated state, till this day undetected within the materials of incorporated languages.*

Broken up into their component parts, word-sentences show a unity between the original words and their combination into the syntactic complex of the sentence. This gains a diversity of possibilities in expressive word-combinations. . . .

The embryos of syntax, previously laid down, were in a latent form of incorporated word-sentences, then, later during its decomposition, projected outward. The sentence appeared to have been broken down to its chief elements, that is, the sentence is created as such with its laws of syntax. . . .²¹

We have previously stated the particularity of *our* attitude towards montage. However, the distinction between the American and our montage concepts gains maximum sharpness and clarity if we glance at such a difference in principle of the understanding of another innovation, introduced by Griffith into cinematography and, in the same way, receiving at our hands an entirely different understanding.

We refer to the *close-up*, or as we speak of it, the "large scale."

This distinction in principle begins with an essence that exists in the term itself.

We say: an object or face is photographed in "large scale," i.e., *large*.

* This is a term for those modern languages, preserving this character up to the present day, for example, the languages of the Chukchi, the Yukagirs and the Gilyaks. A full account for those of us especially interested in these languages may be found in Professor Meshchaninov's work.

The American says: *near*, or "close-up."*

We are speaking of the *qualitative* side of the phenomenon, linked with its meaning (just as we speak of a *large* talent, that is, of one which stands out, by its significance, from the general line, or of *large* print [bold-face] to emphasize that which is particularly essential or significant).

Among Americans the term is attached to *viewpoint*.

Among us—to the *value of what is seen*.

We shall see below what a profound distinction in principle is here, after we have understood the system which, both in method and in application, uses the "large scale" in our cinema in a way distinguished from the use of the "close-up" by the American cinema.

In this comparison immediately the first thing to appear clearly relating to the principal function of the close-up in our cinema is—not only and not so much to *show* or to *present*, as to *signify*, to *give meaning*, to *designate*.

In our own way we very quickly realized the very nature of the "close-up" after this had been hardly noticed in its sole capacity as a means of showing, in American cinema practice.

The first factor that attracted us in the method of the close-up was the discovery of its particularly astonishing feature: to create a *new quality of the whole from a juxtaposition of the separate parts*.

Where the isolated close-up in the tradition of the Dickens kettle was often a determining or "key" detail in the work of Griffith, where the alternation of close-ups of faces was an anticipation of the future synchronized dialogue (it may be apropos here to mention that Griffith, in his sound film, did not freshen a single method then in use)—there we advanced the idea of a *principally new qualitative fusion*, flowing out of the process of *juxtaposition*.

* Griffith himself, in his famous announcement in *The New York Dramatic Mirror* of December 3, 1913, employed both designations: "The large or close-up figures. . . ." But it is characteristic that in habitual American film usage it should be the latter term, "close-up," that has been retained.

For example, in almost my first spoken and written declarations of the 'twenties, I designated the cinema as above all else an "art of juxtaposition."

If Gilbert Seldes is to be believed, Griffith himself came to the point of seeing "that by dovetailing the ride of the rescuers and the terror of the besieged in a scene, he was multiplying the emotional effect enormously; the whole was infinitely greater than the sum of its parts,"²² but this was also insufficient for us.

For us this *quantitative accumulation* even in such "multiplying" situations was not enough: we sought for and found in juxtapositions more than that—a *qualitative leap*.

The leap proved beyond the *limits of the possibilities* of the stage—a leap beyond the *limits of situation*: a leap into the field of montage *image*, montage *understanding*, montage as a means before all else of revealing the *ideological conception*.

By the way, in another of Seldes's books there appears his lengthy condemnation of the American films of the 'twenties, losing their spontaneity in pretensions towards "artiness" and "theatricality."

It is written in the form of "An Open Letter to the Movie Magnates." It begins with the juicy salutation: "Ignorant and Unhappy People," and contains in its conclusion such remarkable lines as these:

. . . and then the new film will arrive without your assistance. For when you and your capitalizations and your publicity go down together, the field will be left free for others. . . . Presently it will be within the reach of artists. With players instead of actors and actresses, with fresh ideas (among which the idea of making a lot of money may be absent) these artists will give back to the screen the thing you have debauched—imagination. They will create with the camera, and not record . . . it is possible and desirable to create great epics of American industry and let the machine operate as a character in the play—just as the land of the West itself, as the corn must play its part. The grandiose conceptions of Frank Norris are not beyond the reach of the camera. There are painters willing to work in the medium of the camera

and architects and photographers. And novelists, too, I fancy, would find much of interest in the scenario as a new way of expression. There is no end to what we can accomplish.

... For the movie is the imagination of mankind in action. . . .²³

Seldes expected this bright film future to be brought by some unknown persons who were to reduce the cost of films, by some unknown "artists," and by epics, dedicated to American industry or American corn. But his prophetic words justified themselves in an entirely different direction: they proved to be a prediction that in these very years (the book appeared in 1924) on the other side of the globe were being prepared the first Soviet films, which were destined to fulfill all his prophecies.

For only a new social structure, which has forever freed art from narrowly commercial tasks, can give full realization to the dreams of advanced and penetrating Americans!

In technique also, montage took on a completely new meaning at this time.

To the parallelism and alternating close-ups of America we offer the contrast of uniting these in fusion; the MONTAGE TROPE.

In the theory of literature a *trope* is defined thus: "a figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it,"²⁴ for example, a *sharp* wit (normally, a *sharp* sword).

Griffith's cinema does not know this type of montage construction. His close-ups create atmosphere, outline traits of the characters, alternate in dialogues of the leading characters, and close-ups of the chaser and the chased speed up the tempo of the chase. But Griffith at all times remains on a level of *representation and objectivity* and nowhere does he try through the *juxtaposition* of shots to shape *import and image*.

However, within the practice of Griffith there was such an attempt, an attempt of huge dimensions—*Intolerance*.

Terry Ramsaye, a historian of the American film, has definitively called it "a giant metaphor." No less definitively has

he called it also "a magnificent failure." For if *Intolerance*—in its modern story—stands unsurpassed by Griffith himself, a brilliant model of his method of montage, then at the same time, along the line of a desire to get away from the *limits of story* towards the *region of generalization* and metaphorical allegory, the picture is overcome completely by failure. In explaining the failure of *Intolerance* Ramsaye claims:

Allusion, simile and metaphor can succeed in the printed and spoken word as an aid to the dim pictorial quality of the word expression. The motion picture has no use for them because it itself is the event. It is too specific and final to accept such aids. The only place that these verbal devices have on the screen is in support of the sub-title or legends. . . .²⁵

But Terry Ramsaye is not correct in denying to cinematography *all possibility in general of imagistic story-telling*, in not permitting the assimilation of simile and metaphor to move, in its best instances, beyond the text of the sub-titles!

The reason for this failure was of quite another nature; particularly, in Griffith's misunderstanding, that the region of metaphorical and imagist writing appears in the sphere of *montage juxtaposition*, not of *representational montage pieces*.

Out of this came his unsuccessful use of the repeated refrain shot: Lillian Gish rocking a cradle. Griffith had been inspired to translate these lines of Walt Whitman,

... endlessly rocks the cradle, Uniter of Here and Hereafter.*

not in the structure, nor in the *harmonic recurrence of montage expressiveness*, but in an *isolated picture*, with the result that the cradle could not possibly be *abstracted into an image of eternally reborn epochs* and remained inevitably simply a *life-like cradle*, calling forth derision, surprise or vexation in the spectator.

We know of a nearly analogous blunder in our films, as well: the "naked woman" in Dovzhenko's *Earth*. Here is another

* This is Griffith's editing of two Whitman phrases, actually twenty lines apart: "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking . . ." "... uniter of here and hereafter."

example of a lack of awareness that for *imagist* and *extra-life-like* (or *surrealist*) "manipulation" of film-shots there must be an *abstraction of the lifelike representation*.

Such an abstraction of the lifelike may in certain instances be given by the *close-up*.

A healthy, handsome woman's body may, actually, be heightened to an *image of a life-affirming beginning*, which is what Dovzhenko had to have, to clash with his montage of the funeral in *Earth*.

A skillfully leading montage creation with *close-ups*, taken in the "Rubens manner," isolated from naturalism and abstracted in the necessary direction, could well have been lifted to such a "sensually palpable" image.

But the whole structure of *Earth* was doomed to failure, because in place of such montage material the director cut into the funeral *long shots* of the interior of the peasant hut, and the naked woman flinging herself about there. And the spectator could not possibly separate out of this concrete, lifelike woman that generalized sensation of blazing fertility, of sensual life-affirmation, which the director wished to convey of all nature, as a pantheistic contrast to the theme of death and the funeral!

This was prevented by the ovens, pots, towels, benches, tablecloths—all those details of everyday life, from which the woman's body could easily have been freed by the *framing of the shot*,—so that *representational* naturalism would not interfere with the embodiment of the *conveyed metaphorical* task.

But to return to Griffith—

If he made a blunder because of non-montage thinking in the treatment of a recurring "wave of time" through an unconvincing plastic idea of a rocking cradle, then at the opposite pole—in the gathering together of all four motifs of the film along the same principle of his montage, he made another blunder.

This weaving of four epochs was magnificently conceived.*

* It was Porter (again) who earlier explored, in film, this parallel thematic linking of unconnected stories. In *The Kleptomaniac* (1905), "The story told of two women, one poor and the other rich, who are

Griffith stated:

... the stories will begin like four currents looked at from a hilltop. At first the four currents will flow apart, slowly and quietly. But as they flow, they grow nearer and nearer together, and faster and faster, until in the end, in the last act, they mingle in one mighty river of expressed emotion.²⁶

But the effect didn't come off. For again it turned out to be a combination of *four different stories*, rather than a *fusion of four phenomena* in a *single imagist generalization*.

Griffith announced his film as "a drama of comparisons." And that is what *Intolerance* remains—a drama of comparisons, rather than a *unified, powerful, generalized image*.

Here is the same defect again: an inability to abstract a phenomenon, without which it cannot expand beyond the *narrowly representational*. For this reason we could not resolve any "*supra-representational*," "conveying" (metaphorical) tasks.

Only by dividing "hot" from a *thermometer reading* may one speak of "a sense of heat."

Only by abstracting "deep" from *meters and fathoms* may one speak of "a sense of depth."

Only by disengaging "falling" from *the formula of the accelerated speed of a falling body* ($mv^2/2$) may one speak of "a sensation of falling!"

However, the failure of *Intolerance* to achieve a true "mingling" lies also in another circumstance: the four episodes chosen by Griffith are actually un-collatable. The *formal failure* of their mingling in a *single image* of *Intolerance* is only a *reflection of a thematic and ideological error*.

Is it possible that a tiny general feature—a general and superficially metaphysical and vague viewpoint towards *Intolerance*

caught shoplifting and are arrested. The rich one is freed; the poor one is jailed. The story's effectiveness depended on the paralleling of the causes of the actions and fates of the two women." (Jacobs) Griffith's most ambitious pre-*Intolerance* trial of this multiple story form seems to have been made in *Home, Sweet Home* (1914).

(with a capital I!)-can really unite in the spectator's consciousness such obvious historically uncollated phenomena as the religious fanaticism of St. Bartholomew's Eve with labor's struggle in a highly developed capitalist state! And the bloody pages of the struggle for hegemony over Asia with the complicated process of conflict between the colonial Hebrew people and enslaving Mother Rome?

Here we find a key to the reason why the problem of abstraction is not once stumbled upon by Griffith's montage method. The secret of this is not professional-technical, but ideological-intellectual.

It is not that representation cannot be raised with correct presentation and treatment to the structure of metaphor, simile, image. Nor is it that Griffith here altered his method, or his professional craftsmanship. But that he made no attempt at a genuinely thoughtful abstraction of phenomena—at an *extraction of generalized conclusions* on historical phenomena from a wide variety of historical data; that is the core of the fault.

In history and economics it was necessary for the gigantic work of Marx and the continuers of his teaching to aid us in understanding *the laws of the process* that stand behind miscellaneous *separate data*. Then science could succeed in abstracting *a generalization from the chaos of separate traits* characteristic for the phenomena.

In the practice of American film studios there is a splendid professional term—"limitations." Such a director is "limited" to musical comedies. The "limits" of a certain actress are within fashionable rôles. Beyond these "limitations" (quite sensible in most cases) this or that talent cannot be thrust. Risking departure from these "limitations" sometimes results in unexpected brilliance, but ordinarily, as in commonplace phenomena, this leads to failure.

Using this term, I would say that in the realm of *montage imagery* the American cinema wins no laurels for itself; and it is ideological "limitations" that are responsible for this.

This is not affected by technique, nor by scope, nor by dimensions.

The question of montage imagery is based on a definite structure and system of thinking; it derives and has been derived only through collective consciousness, appearing as a reflection of a new (socialist) stage of human society and as a thinking result of ideal and philosophic education, inseparably connected with the social structure of that society.

We, our epoch—*sharply ideal and intellectual*—could not read the content of a shot without, before all else, having read its ideological nature, and therefore find in the *juxtaposition of shots an arrangement of a new qualitative element, a new image, a new understanding*.

Considering this, we could not help rushing into sharp excesses in this direction.

In *October* we cut shots of harps and balalaikas into a scene of Mensheviks addressing the Second Congress of Soviets. And these harps were shown not as harps, but as an imagist symbol of the mellifluous speech of Menshevik opportunism at the Congress. The balalaikas were not shown as balalaikas, but as an image of the tiresome strumming of these empty speeches in the face of the gathering storm of historical events. And placing side by side the Menshevik and the harp, the Menshevik and the balalaika, we were *extending the frame of parallel montage into a new quality, into a new realm: from the sphere of action into the sphere of significance*.*

The period of such rather naive juxtapositions passed swiftly enough. Similar solutions, slightly "baroque" in form, in many ways attempted (and not always successfully!) with the available palliative means of the silent film to anticipate that which is now done with such ease by the music track in the sound-film! They quickly departed from the screen.

However, the chief thing remained—an understanding of montage as not merely a means of producing effects, but above all as a means of *speaking*, a means of *communicating* ideas, of communicating them by way of a special film language, by way of a special form of film *speech*.

* Further analysis of this error can be found on page 58.—EDITOR.

The arrival at an understanding of normal film-speech quite naturally went through this stage of excess in the realm of the trope and primitive metaphor. It is interesting that in this direction we were covering methodological ground of great antiquity. Why, for example, the "poetic" image of the centaur is nothing more than a combination of man and horse with the aim of expressing *the image of an idea, directly un-representable by a picture* (but its exact meaning was that people of a certain place were "high speed"—swift in the race).

Thus the very production of simple meanings rises as a process of juxtaposition.

Therefore *the play of juxtaposition* in montage also has such a deep background of influence. On the other hand, it is exactly through elementary *naked juxtaposition* that must be worked out a system of the complicated inner (the outer no longer counts) juxtaposition that exists in each phrase of ordinary normal literate montage speech.

However, this same process is also correct for the production of *any kind of speech* in general, and above all for *that literary speech*, of which we are speaking. It is well known that the metaphor is an abridged simile.

And in connection with this Mauthner has very acutely written about our language:

Every metaphor is witty. A people's language, as it is spoken today, is the sum total of a million witticisms, is a collection of the points of a million anecdotes whose stories have been lost. In this connection one must visualize the people of the language-creating period as being even wittier than those present-day wags who live by their wits. . . . Wit makes use of distant similes. Close similes were captured immediately into concepts or words. A change in meaning consists in the conquest of these words, in the metaphorical or witty extension of the concept to distant similes. . . .²⁷

And Emerson says of this:

As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes,

which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin.²⁸

At the threshold of the creation of language stands the simile, the trope and the image.

All meanings in language are imagist in origin, and each of these may, in due time, lose its original imagist source. Both these states of words—imagery and non-imagery—are equally natural. If the non-imagery of a word was considered derivative as something elementary (which it is always), that derives from the fact that it is a temporary latency of thought (which imagery is its new step), but movement attracts more attention and is more provocative of analysis than is latency.

The calm observer, reviewing a prepared transferred expression of a more complicated poetic creation, may find in his memory a corresponding non-imagist expression, more imagistically corresponding to his (the observer's) mood of thought. If he says that this non-imagery is *communis et primum se offerens ratio* then he attributes his own condition to the creator of imagist expression. This is as if one were to expect that in the midst of a heated battle it is possible thus calmly to deliberate, as at a chess-board, with an absent partner. If one should transfer into the condition of the speaker himself, that would easily reverse the assertion of the cold observer and he would decide that *primum se offerens*, even if not *communis*, is exactly imagist. . . .²⁹

In Werner's work on the metaphor he thus places it in the very cradle of language, although for other motives—he links it not with the tendency to *perceive* new regions, familiarizing the unknown through the known, but, on the contrary, with the tendency to *hide*, to substitute, to replace in customary usage that which lies under some oral ban—and is "tabu."³⁰

It is interesting that the "fact word" itself is *naturally* a rudiment of the poetic trope:

Independently from the connection between the primary and derivative words, any word, as an aural indication of meaning, based on the combination of sound and meaning in simultaneity or succession, consequently, is metonymy.³¹

And he who would take it into his head to be indignant and rebel against this would inevitably fall into the position of the pedant in one of Tieck's stories, who cried out:

"... When a man begins to compare one object with another, he lies directly. 'The dawn strews roses.' Can there be any thing more silly? 'The sun sinks into the sea.' Stuff! ... 'The morning wakes.' There is no morning, how can it sleep? It is nothing but the hour when the sun rises. Plague! The sun does not rise, that too is nonsense and poetry. Oh! If I had my will with language, and might properly scour and sweep it! O damnation! Sweep! In this lying world, one cannot help talking nonsense!"²²

The *imagist* transference of thought to simple *representation* is also echoed here. There is in Potebnya a good comment on this:

The image is more important than the representation. There is a tale of a monk who, in order to prevent himself from eating roast suckling during Lent, carried on himself this invocation: "Suckling, transform thyself into a carp!" This tale, stripped of its satirical character, presents us with a universal historical phenomenon of human thought: word and image are the spiritual half of the matter, its essence.²³

Thus or otherwise the primitive metaphor necessarily stands at the very dawn of language, closely linked with the period of the production of the first transfers, that is, the first words to convey meanings, and not merely *motor* and *objective* understanding, that is, with the period of the birth of the first tools, as the first means of "transferring" the functions of the body and its actions from man himself to the tool in his hands. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the period of the birth of articulate montage speech of the future had also to pass through a sharply metaphorical stage, characterized by an abundance, if not a proper estimation, of "plastic sharpness"!

However, these "sharpnesses" very soon became sensed as excesses and twistings of some sort of a "language." And attention was gradually shifted from curiosity *concerning excesses* towards an interest in *the nature of this language itself*.

Thus the secret of the structure of montage was gradually revealed as a secret of *the structure of emotional speech*. For the very principle of montage, as is the entire individuality of its formation, is the substance of *an exact copy of the language of excited emotional speech*.

It is enough to examine the characteristics of similar speech, in order to be convinced, with no further commentary, that this is so.

Let us open to the appropriate chapter in Vendryes' excellent book, *Language*:

The main difference between affective and logical language lies in the construction of the sentence. This difference stands out clearly when we compare the written with the spoken tongue. In French the two are so far removed from each other that a Frenchman never speaks as he writes and rarely writes as he speaks. . . .

. . . The elements that the written tongue endeavours to combine into a coherent whole seem to be divided up and disjointed in the spoken tongue: even the order is entirely different. It is no longer the logical order of present-day grammar. It has its logic, but this logic is primarily affective, and the ideas are arranged in accordance with the subjective importance the speaker gives to them or wishes to suggest to his listener, rather than with the objective rules of an orthodox process of reasoning.

In the spoken tongue, all idea of meaning in the purely grammatical sense, disappears. If I say, *L'homme que vous voyez la-bas assis sur la greve est celui que j'ai rencontre hier à la gare* (The man that you see sitting down there on the beach is he whom I met yesterday at the station), I am making use of the processes of the written tongue and form but one sentence. But in speaking, I should have said: *Vous voyez bien cet homme-la-bas-il est assis sur la greve-eh bien! je l'ai rencontre hier, il etait à la gare.* (You see that man, down there—he is sitting on the beach—well! I met him yesterday, he was at the station.) How many sentences have we here? It is very difficult to say. Imagine that I pause where the dashes are printed: the words *la-bas* in themselves would form one sentence, exactly as if in answer to a question—"Where is this man?—Down there." And even the sentence *il est assis sur la greve*

easily becomes two if I pause between the two component parts: "il est assis," [il est] "sur la greve" (or "[c'est] sur la greve [qu'] il est assis"). The boundaries of the grammatical sentence are here so elusive that we had better give up all attempts to determine them. In a certain sense, there is but one sentence. The verbal image is one though it follows a kind of kinematical development. But whereas in the written tongue it is presented as a whole, when spoken it is cut up into short sections whose number and intensity correspond to the speaker's impressions, or to the necessity he feels for vividly communicating them to others.⁸⁴

Isn't this an exact copy of what takes place in montage? And doesn't what is said here about "written" language seem a duplication of the clumsy "long shot," which, when it attempts to present something *dramatically*, always hopelessly looks like a florid, awkward phrase, full of the subordinate clauses, participles and adverbs of a "theatrical" *mise-en-scène*, with which it dooms itself?!

However, this by no means implies that it is necessary to chase at any cost after "montage hash." In connection with this one may speak of the *phrase* as the author of "A Discussion of Old and New Style in the Russian Language," the Slavophile Alexander Shishkov wrote of *words*:

In language both long and short words are necessary; for without short ones language would sound like the long-drawn-out moo of the cow, and without long ones—like the short monotonous chirp of a magpie.⁸⁵

Concerning "affective logic," about which Vendryes writes and which lies at the base of spoken speech, montage very quickly realized that "affective logic" is the chief thing, but for finding all the fullness of its system and laws, montage had to make further serious creative "cruises" through the "inner monologue" of Joyce, through the "inner monologue" as understood in film, and through the so-called "intellectual cinema," before discovering that a fund of these laws can be found in a third variety of speech—not in *written*, nor in *spoken* speech, but in *inner speech*, where the affective structure func-

tions in an even more full and pure form. But the formation of this *inner speech* is already inalienable from that which is enriched by *sensual thinking*.

Thus we arrived at the primary source of those interior principles, which already govern not only the formation of montage, but the inner formation of all works of art—of those basic *laws of the speech of art in general*—of those general *laws of form*, which lie at the base not only of works of film art, but of all and all kinds of arts in general. But of that—at another time.

Let us return now to that historical stage when montage in our field realized itself as a *montage trope*, and let us follow that path of development which it performed in the field of creating a unity of work, inseparable from that process, in which it became conscious of itself as an independent language.

Thus, in its way, montage became conscious of itself among us with the very first, not imitative, but independent steps of our cinema.

It is interesting that even in the interval between the old cinema and our Soviet cinema, researches were conducted exactly along the line of *juxtaposition*. And it is even more interesting that at this stage they naturally are known as . . . *contrasts*. Therefore on them above all else lies the imprint of "*contemplative dissection*" instead of an *emotional fusion* in some "new quality," as were already characterizing the first researches in the field of the Soviet cinema's own language. Such a speculative play of contrasts fills, for example, the film *Palace and Fortress* as if to carry the principle of contrast from its title into the very style of the work. Here are still constructions of a type of *un-crossed parallelism*: "here and there," "before and now." It is completely in the spirit of the posters of the time, split into two halves, showing on the left, a landlord's house *before* (the master, serfdom, flogging) and on the right—*now* (a school in the same building, a nursery). It is completely such a type of colliding shots that we find in the film: the "points" of a ballerina (the *Palace*) and the shackled legs of Beidemann (the *Fortress*). Similarly speculative in the

order of parallelism is given also in the combination of shots—Beidemann behind bars and . . . a caged canary in the jailer's room.*

In these and other examples there is nowhere any further tendency towards a union of representations in a generalized image: they are united neither by a unity of composition nor by the chief element, emotion: they are presented in an even narrative, and not in that degree of emotional excitement when it is only natural for an imagist turn of speech to arise.

But pronounced without a corresponding emotional degree, without corresponding emotional preparation, the "image" inevitably sounds absurd. When Hamlet tells Laertes:

I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. . . .

this is very pathetic and arresting; but try taking from this the expression of heightened emotion, transfer it to a setting of ordinary lifelike conversation, that is, consider the immediate objective content of this image, and it will evoke nothing but laughter!

Strike (1924) abounded in "trials" of this new and independent direction. The mass shooting of the demonstrators in the finale, interwoven with bloody scenes at the municipal slaughter-house, merged (for that "childhood" of our cinema this sounded fully convincing and produced a great impression!) in a film-metaphor of "a human slaughter-house," absorbing into itself the memory of bloody repressions on the part of the autocracy. Here already were not the simple "contemplative" contrasts of *Palace and Fortress*, but already—though still crude and still "hand-made"—a consistent and conscious attempt at *juxtaposition*.

Juxtaposition, striving to tell about an execution of workers

* This motif was placed on a considerably higher stage of meaning—in an image of Hopelessness—as it was later used by Pudovkin in *Mother* in the scene of the conversation between the mother and son in the prison, interrupted by shots of a cockroach pushed back into the sticky mass by the sentry's finger.

not only in representations, but further also through a generalized "plastic turn of speech," approaching a verbal image of "a bloody slaughter-house."

In *Potemkin* three separate close-ups of three different marble lions in different attitudes were merged into one roaring lion and, moreover, in another film-dimension—an embodiment of a metaphor: "The very stones roar!"

Griffith shows us an ice-break rushing along. Somewhere in the center of the splintering ice lies, unconscious, Anna (Lillian Gish). Leaping from ice-cake to ice-cake comes David (Richard Barthelmess) to save her.

But the parallel race of the ice-break and of the human actions are nowhere brought together by him in a unified image of "a human flood," a mass of people bursting their fetters, a mass of people rushing onward in an all-shattering inundation, as there is, for example, in the finale of *Mother*, by Gorky-Zarkhi-Pudovkin.

Of course, on this path excesses also occur, and also bald failures; of course, in more than a few examples these were good intentions defeated by shortcomings in compositional principles and by insufficient reasons for them in the context: then, in place of a flashing unity of image, a miserable trope is left on the level of an unrealized fusion, on the level of a mechanical pasting together of the type of "Came the rain and two students."

But thus or otherwise the dual parallel rows characteristic of Griffith ran in our cinema on the way to realizing themselves in the future unity of the montage image at first as a whole series of plays of montage comparisons, montage metaphors, montage puns.

These were more or less stormy floods, all serving to make clearer and clearer the final main task in the montage side of creative work—the creation in it of an inseparable domination of the image, of the unified montage image, of the montage-built image, embodying the theme, as this was achieved in the "Odessa steps" of *Potemkin*, in the "attack of the Kappel Division" of *Chapayev*, in the hurricane of *Storm Over Asia*, in the

Dnieper prologue of *Ivan*, more weakly—the landing of *We Are from Kronstadt*, with new strength in “Bozhenko’s funeral” in *Shchors*, in Vertov’s *Three Songs About Lenin*, in the “attack of the knights” in *Alexander Nevsky*. . . . This is the glorious *independent* path of the Soviet cinema—the path of the creation of the *montage image-episode*, the *montage image-event*, the *montage image-film in its entirety*—of equal rights, of equal influence and equal responsibility in the perfect film—on an equal footing with the *image of the hero*, with the *image of man*, and of the *people*.

Our conception of montage has far outgrown the classic dualistic montage esthetic of Griffith, symbolized by the two never-convergent parallel racers, interweaving the thematically variegated strips with a view towards the mutual intensification of entertainment, tension and tempi.

For us montage became a means of achieving a *unity of a higher order*—a means *through the montage image of achieving an organic embodiment of a single idea conception, embracing all elements, parts, details of the film-work*.

And thus understood, it seems considerably broader than an understanding of narrowly cinematographic montage; thus understood, it carries much to fertilize and enrich our understanding of art methods in general.

And in conformity with this principle of our montage, *unity and diversity* are both sounded as principles.

Montage removes its last contradictions by abolishing dualist contradictions and mechanical parallelism between the realms of sound and sight in what we understand as audio-visual (“vertical”) montage.*

It finds its final artistic unity in the resolution of the problems of the unity of audio-visual synthesis—problems that are now being decided by us, problems that are not even on the agenda of American researches.

Stereoscopic and color film are being realized before our eyes.

* See *The Film Sense*, particularly Chapters II-IV.

And the moment is drawing near when, not only through the method of montage, but also through the synthesis of *idea, the drama of acting man, the screen picture, sound, three-dimension and color*, that same great law of *unity and diversity*—lying at the base of our thinking, at the base of our philosophy, and to an equal degree penetrating the montage method from its tiniest link to the fullness of montage imagery in the film as a whole—passes into a *unity of the whole screen image*.

[1944]