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VIOLENCE IN SOVIET REVOLUTIONARY CINEMA

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To my grandmother G.
who always supported me

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"Violence is so good. It has a significant impact on audiences. You know you're watching a film."
– Quentin Tarantino, director of Reservoir Dogs (Tarantino, 2010)[1]

The main focus of this dissertation is the theme of violence, analysed through nine Soviet films of the 1920s: *Battleship Potëmkin, Mother, October, The End of St. Petersburg, Earth, Old and New, Zvenigora, Arsenal,* and *Storm over Asia.* The main aim of my work is to draw a comparison between these works, to delineate their similarities and, most of all, their differences. The dissertation is divided into four main chapters, which reflect the themes of the 1905 Revolution, the October Revolution, Collectivisation, and the Civil War. With this structure, I aim to highlight the progressive evolution of film directors, such as Eisenstein's *October, which* can be seen, in some aspects, as a more advanced version of *Battleship Potemkin.*
As Bourgois wrote in his book, Violence is a complex notion — it is nonlinear, both productive and destructive, as well as reproductive. It exhibits mimetic qualities, akin to imitative magic or homoeopathy. It generates its existence.[2] It is not possible to distinguish between "good" and "bad" violence[3] since it is the means through which one can attain their goal, e.g., in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potëmkin,* both the sailors on the Battleship and the tsarist army on the Odessa Steps engage in a fight, but the effect is completely divergent (the formers seek for freedom, whereas the latter want to suppress it and maintain control over the population). In Dovzhenko's *Arsenal*, one of Stalin's favourite films, both the communists and the counterrevolutionaries kill people to prove their aim to be true. In Pudovkin's *Mother*, Pavel's father is accidentally killed by the communist Misha, who was trying to defend himself, while the prisoners are brutally shot down by the jail guards, whose aim is to stop their jailbreak.

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[1] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp. 119
[2] N. Shepher-Hughes and P. Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology,* Hoboken, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 1
[3] S. Žižek, *Violence,* London, Profile Books Ltd, 2008, p. 64

Every film mentioned in this dissertation displays violence, but it is only the spectator, under the influence of the film director, who can make assumptions about the roles played by the different forces on the screen.

One of the dominant elements causing contrasts and leading to the fight is the desire for power and ambition: The aspiration for property and power is valid to the extent that it allows a person to attain autonomy from others. However, opponents in a dispute inherently possess a continuous inclination to seek more. For them, nothing suffices, and they remain perpetually discontented. They cannot restrain themselves; they recognise no boundaries. Desire requires significantly more than mere necessity.[4] In *October,* Kerensky's craving for power is interspersed with the reconstruction of the destroyed statue of Alexander 3rd and some Napoleon figures, thus alluding to his tyrannical role in the plot. In *The End of St. Petersburg*, the increment of Lebedev's income is intercut with dead soldiers at the front, and the sequence is then concluded with the intertitle "*The transaction is completed*", hence establishing a direct correlation between these two events: in this sense, the form of violence is One (Kerensky or Lebedev) against All (the Bolsheviks and the workers).[5] As Hannah Arendt wrote, power relates to the human capacity not only to take action but also to act collectively. It is never an attribute of a single individual; it is a collective asset and persists only as long as the group remains united (the Provisional Government in *October* loses power as soon as they are divided and defeated). On the contrary, violence differs from power as it is inherently instrumental; similar to all means, it invariably requires direction and justification based on the objective it aims to achieve.[6]

In this scheme, death plays an important role as it can convey multiple messages, which can often be linked to the concept of equalisation. In *Earth (*Vasyl's funeral) and *Old and New* (Fomka's murder) death stands for a symbol of reborn, in *Arsenal* (the german soldier laughing after having inhaled some toxic gases) for the last nichilist act, in *Battleship Potëmkin* (the mourn over Vakulinchuk) it signals the bond between the dead and the crowd, who is bound to be massacred on the Odessa Steps, in *Storm over Asia,* the communist brutally shot down by the soldiers awakens Bair's communist consciousness.

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[4] Ibid. pp. 64
[5] H. Arendt*, On Violence,* Orlando*,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970, pp. 42
[6] Ibid. pp. 44

Conversely, racism and racial struggles contribute to the creation of two opposite forces, e.g. in *Storm over Asia* the merchant's minion shouts, "a*venge the white man's blood!"* after he has been hurt by Bair during the skirmish, in *Battleship Potëmkin*, a bourgeois man yells "*Smash the Jews!*" and, due to this, is engulfed by the masses (according to the communist ideals, there should have been no distinctions between the different social classes).
To emphasise a massacre or an unequal fight, Eisenstein makes use of blood, for instance, in the sequence where the schoolmistress is shot down by the tsarist army on the Odessa Steps. With regard to this, Žižek stated:

"In The End of Faith, Sam Harris defends the use of torture in exceptional cases. [...] His defence is based on the distinction between our instinctive abhorrence of witnessing the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes, and our abstract knowledge of mass suffering: it is much more difficult for us to torture an individual than to sanction from afar the dropping of a bomb which would cause the more painful deaths of thousands. We are thus all caught in a kind of ethical illusion, parallel to perceptual illusions."

By taking into account all these variables, it is not possible to speak about aimless violence.[7] Every character who has been mentioned acts accordingly to the space and the rules that govern each film. Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko have managed to represent these tense periods.
Even though the rules imposed by the communist party about the depiction of the communists and the enemies were strict, there were no limits in the representation of violence and nudity: in addition to the submentioned schoolmistress' death, it is to highlight the bloody hand of the merchant's minion in *Storm over Asia*, the depiction of Vasyl's naked wife shouting and crying out during the funeral of his husband in *Earth* and the manifold group of dead civilians in *Arsenal*. Unlike in the Soviet Union, such explicit violence was not tolerated in the American cinema (especially in gangster movies). In the 1930s, the USA introduced the *Motion Picture Production Code,* which included guidelines for self-censorship in the film industry.[8]

[7] N. Shepher-Hughes and P. Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology,* Hoboken, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 1
[8] S. Prince, *Classical film violence, Designing and regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968, New Jersey, Rutgers University, 2003* pp. 33

EISENSTEIN, PUDOVKIN AND DOVZHENKO: THEIR LIFE

Before approaching the theme of violence in the selected films, it is necessary to trace the most important events that had a considerable impact on the life and, most of all, on the film production of each director and how such biographical traits helped them in the representation of violence in each film.

Sergei Michailowitsch Eisenstein (1898, Riga - 1948, Moscow) was attracted to violence since he was 12 years old. He recalled an episode at a dacha in Bullen where a book cover displaying various implements of torture, with the neck of a young man, who was stripped to the waist, gripped tightly by an iron collar (such images can hence be found in his films), immediately caught his attention[9].

When it comes to the events of 1905, Eisenstein, who was just 7 years old, recalled a detail from Bloody Sunday that a witness had shared with him: Young boys perched in the trees of Alexandrovsky Park, ‘just like sparrows’, and when the first shots rang out at the crowd, they leapt.[10] In February 1905, for the first time in modern Russian history, millions of people from both urban and rural areas participated in a massive movement. By late September and early October, this movement escalated towards a dramatic peak. Strikes erupted everywhere. The outcome of this struggle resulted in a complete paralysis of the economy and widespread panic among government leaders.

The tense relationship between Sergei and his father, Mikhail Osipovich, is also a precious element, which in the end will bring the future film director to become a fervent supporter of the October Revolution. Eisenstein, captivated by tales of the 1905 revolt—of which he retained only hazy yet intriguing recollections of the upheaval in daily life—alongside his childhood readings of the French Revolution and his disdain for the bourgeois, fueled by his father's oppressive rule, embraced the Bolsheviks with great enthusiasm. The Revolution of 1917 provided him with the invaluable 'freedom to determine' his future. Eisenstein enlisted in the Red Army as an engineer alongside his fellow students. When the civil war erupted in 1918, fifty-one-year-old Mikhail Osipovich Eisenstein aligned himself with the opposing

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[9] R. Bergan, Sergei Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict, New York, Arcade, 2016, pp. 44
[10] Ibid. pp. 47

White Army in the capacity of an engineer. During the Revolution, the son created a caricature depicting his father, who was appalled by the raising of the red flag.[11]
At the onset of the Civil War, Eisenstein, serving as a member of the College of Ensigns within the Engineering Corps, was tasked with constructing bridges over the Neva River and establishing fortifications around Petrograd. In a section of his memoirs titled 'Why I Became A Director', he recounts a specific scene that highlights one aspect of what shaped him into the director he ultimately became:

"*An ant hill of raw, fresh-faced recruits moved along measured out paths with precision and discipline and worked in harmony to build a steadily growing bridge which reached hungrily across the river. Somewhere in this ant hill,I I moved as well. Square pads of leather on my shoulders supporting a plank, resting edgeways. Like the parts of a clockwork contraption, the figures moved quickly, driving up to the pontoons and throwing girders and handrails festooned with cabling to one another – it was an easy and harmonious model of perpetuum mobile, reaching out from the bank in an ever-lengthening road to the constantly receding edge of the bridge … all this fused into a marvellous, orchestral, polyphonic experience of something being done, in all the variations of its harmony … Hell, it was good!*"[12]

This image emerged as a pivotal representation of Eisenstein's aesthetic. A distinct creation arose from the intricate interactions between man and material. Numerous events transpired concurrently, resulting in a singular effect; it was the polyphonic structure that captivated him. Such an aesthetic can be found in *Battleship Potëmkin* (An Appeal from the Dead) and at the beginning of *October.*
Towards the conclusion of 1919, as the Red Army approached victory in the Civil War, the platoon to which Eisenstein was assigned was deployed to a city under Communist control. With more free time, he and several young soldiers at his location thought it would be entertaining to establish an amateur theatrical group. To pursue this idea, Eisenstein reached out to the local House of Culture, which boasted a vibrant theatre company managed by the painter Konstantin Yeliseyev. Eisenstein inquired whether he and his fellow soldiers could observe rehearsals to acquire some insights into theatre. In the weeks that followed, Eisenstein, dressed in

[11] Ibid. pp. 79
[12] Ibid. pp. 80

his worn uniform, frequently lingered around the theatre whenever possible. He became a somewhat elusive figure during discussions between the actors and Yeliseyev.[13]

This was the origin of Eisenstein, the film director who would have revolutionised cinema all over the world with masterpieces such as *Battleship Potëmkin* (1925)*, October* (1927)*, Old and New (*1928)*, Aleksandr Nevskij (1938), Ivan the Terrible (1944)*

Born in Penza in 1893, Vsevolod Pudovkin dedicated his early adult years to studying physics and chemistry. With the onset of World War I, he enlisted in the Russian artillery. He sustained injuries in 1915 and subsequently spent three years in a German POW camp before managing to escape. It was in this place that he faced violence and death, which subsequently made their appearance in his films (*Mother, The End of St. Petersburg* and *Storm over Asia)*. Following a brief stint as a writer and chemist, Pudovkin ventured into the Russian film industry. Influenced by D.W. Griffith's Intolerance (1916), he enrolled in the State Cinema school, where he worked as an assistant on various propaganda films.

In 1922, Pudovkin became a student at the experimental film lab founded by Lev Kuleshov. Under Kuleshov's guidance, he began to formulate his theories of montage, which would not only shape his work but also impact the filmmaking of numerous other Soviet directors. In contrast to Eisenstein, another advocate of montage who emphasised the clash of images, Pudovkin's editing style is more lyrical, utilising cross-cuts to enhance the narrative without disrupting it. He had a particular affinity for intercutting "passive" close-ups of subjects with poignant images of dogs and babies, illustrating that the essence of drama lies not in the actor's performance but in the interplay of two contrasting images.[14] This is well represented in the sequence in *The End of St. Petersburg,* where Lebedev and his minions are intercut with soldiers (common people) dying on the front.

In the 1920s, Pudovkin shot three remarkable films: *Mother* (1926), *End of St. Petersburg* (1927), and *Storm Over Asia* (1928). These films are widely regarded as some of the best examples of Soviet silent cinema. Unlike Eisenstein, Pudovkin

[13] Ibid. pp. 85

[14] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting,* Scotts Valley, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015 (edition used), pp. 55, 56

chose to develop narratives that emphasised the bravery and perseverance of individuals. A clear illustration of this thematic focus can be observed in Mother.

As the Soviet film industry transitioned into the sound era, Pudovkin remained committed to his theories and methods of montage. While other filmmakers were extending shot lengths to incorporate dialogue, Pudovkin's sound films included a greater number of individual shots per reel than almost all of his peers.
Pudovkin continued his filmmaking career into the 1950s, receiving the Order of Lenin and two Stalin Prizes during this time. He passed away in 1953 at the age of 60.

Aleksandr Petrovich Dovženko was born on September 10, 1894, in Vinušce, a small rural village located in northern Ukraine. He was the son of Petr Semënovic Dovženko and Odarka Ermolajvna Dovženko, an illiterate peasant couple. As the seventh of fourteen children, he faced significant challenges, and due to malnutrition and famine, he was one of only three siblings, alongside his sister Polina and brother Trifon, to survive into adulthood. Given the hardships his family faced, it was his grandfather who motivated him to pursue education, leading Dovženko to become an elementary school teacher at the young age of 19.
During his formative years, Dovženko became involved in the Ukrainian National Liberation Movement. The revolution marked his first phase as a supporter of Ukrainian nationalism, but he changed his mind as a soviet supporter only when he started shooting *Zvenigora.* In 1917, he relocated to Kyiv to attend courses at the Faculty of Economics, although he did not complete his studies. Instead, he was excused from military service during World War I due to heart failure.
The year 1917 also marked the October Revolution. The Bolshevik Party, which advocated for the rights of the most disadvantaged populations, appeared to him as a vehicle to transform a backwards nation like Tsarist Russia into a promising future.
In the early 1920s, Aleksandr Petrovich Dovženko became a member of the Communist Party of Ukraine and made a name for himself by serving as a volunteer during the civil war that ensued after the October Revolution.
Dovženko was also deeply involved in social initiatives, and due to his contributions, he was appointed as the head of the administrative service at the Soviet Embassy in

Warsaw, a position he held until 1922. The following year, he moved to Berlin, where he assumed the role of Secretary at the USSR Consulate.

While in Berlin, Dovženko pursued studies in painting and, upon returning home, he worked as an illustrator and caricaturist for various newspapers and magazines under the alias “Bellamy.” In 1926, Dovženko settled in Odessa, housing the studios of Vse-Ukrains'ke Foto Kino Upravlinnia (VU.FK.U). After having worked as an elementary school teacher and a diplomat, he transitioned into the film industry.

Dovženko subsequently wrote and directed a new comedy titled *The Fruit of Love* (1926). The next year, he directed The Diplomatic Courier's Bag, an adventurous police drama. Thanks to these initial three films, the director attained significant public acclaim.

In his later works, Dovženko engaged more directly with the central themes of the Revolution and the emergence of socialism. His first feature film was *Zvenigora*.

A cinematic poem dedicated to the Ukrainian countryside, narrated in the refined, romantic style that Dovženko expertly mastered; sequences alternate between images of rural life and still shots of nature.

In 1928, he produced, wrote, and directed *Arsenal*. Dovženko, in his most overtly militant film, depicted the class struggle of the Ukrainian proletariat, illustrating the

The uprising of the workers from the Kiev arsenal, who had to support the Bolshevik army against the nationalist government in January 1918.

With *Arsenal*, the director conveyed a straightforward narrative infused with remarkable insights and experimentation. He captured the sometimes grotesque faces of the peasants in close-up, with fixed images, almost as if he aimed to etch the significance of those living conditions into memory.

1928 marked a significant year for Dovženko, who directed *The Storm*.

Dovženko resumed his work in the summer of 1929, once again in a Ukrainian village, to depict in his unique style the collectivisation of the land. The local peasants and residents engaged enthusiastically in the project, influencing and at times altering it. This collaboration led to the creation of *Zemlja* (1930), which many consider to be the director's crowning achievement.

The meeting that represents the importance of these three directors, who determined the path of soviet cinema and influenced global cinematography, took place after the

premiere of *Arsenal,* and it was as if Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo met each other.[15]

THE 1905 REVOLUTION: *BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN* AND *MOTHER*

"I like the way you die, boy"
Django in *Django Unchained (2012)*

The 1905 Revolution in the Russian Empire was the first step towards the awakening of a new consciousness, the communist one. The main cause of such upheaval is to be found in the harsh living conditions of the population during that period. Moreover, the defeat of the tsarist Army in the war against Japan can be considered the pivotal moment, after which the revolution started. The strike movement persisted, culminating in the significant general strike of October 1905. On October 17, 1905, Nicholas II released the October Manifesto, drafted under the supervision of Sergei Witte, which promised the creation of a State Duma elected by all societal classes, without whose consent no law could be enacted. The manifesto also conferred fundamental civil liberties, personal inviolability, and freedoms of religion, speech, assembly, and association. On that same day, Nicholas appointed a cabinet led by Witte, who became Russia's first Prime Minister and would be answerable to the tsar. The manifesto elicited widespread celebration as society perceived it to signify the conclusion of absolute monarchy.[16] Meanwhile, Nicholas ensured that the ministers implemented severe and effective retribution measures. Under his vigilant oversight, the Minister of Interior, Petr Durnovo, restructured the local administration and dispatched governors-general to address the insurrections. The tsar rejoiced at the eradication of insurgent factions and the execution of insurrectionary labourers. In a correspondence to his mother regarding the violent suppression of the Bolshevik armed uprising in December 1905, Nicholas conveyed his relief and anticipated that this approach would be applied in other situations. "Terror must be met with terror.

[15] R. Bergan, Sergei Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict, New York, Arcade, 2016, pp. 198
[16] R. Wortman, *Nicholas II and the Revolution of 1905,* Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2006, pp. 206

Now, Witte himself has come to this realisation." He directed commanders to refrain from negotiations or concessions, instead opting to retaliate and punish, that is, to eliminate immediately.[17]

In 1906, the “Stolypin court-martials” law entered into force an investigation was deemed unnecessary when guilt was considered "so obvious." The decree transformed the countryside into a battleground. Between 1906 and 1909, the field court-martials condemned nearly 2,700 individuals to death. During those three years, the number of lives lost due to political offences exceeded that of the entire nineteenth century. Furthermore, more than 22,000 individuals were subjected to administrative exile. [18] The Bolsheviks consistently faced challenges regarding the legitimacy of their regime, which ascended to power via a military coup. Consequently, they sought to construct a historical narrative for their regime, aiming to create a heroic legacy. This necessity led them to commission propaganda films from Eisenstein and Pudovkin.

In the 1920s, two major films about the 1905 revolution were produced and would have had an immense impact on the society of the time: Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and Pudovkin’s *Mother* (1926). However, they developed two distinct yet complementary approaches to storytelling and staging the narrative. In Eisenstein’s film, the director leans more towards the spectacularization of the masses through violence, adopting the so-called typage. In contrast, Pudovkin concentrates more on the psychological evolution of his characters as a reflection of the masses[19]. The party's goal at the time was reflected in this, as films had to be made for the general public while adhering to rigid narrative and stylistic standards.[20]

In Eisenstein's specific case, he fulfilled this social mandate. His social command stemmed from the proletarian revolution, during which he emerged as an artist. This command developed organically within him as a natural part of the revolution's progression. Pudovkin employs literary techniques, utilises professional figures, follows a conventional plot, and bases actions around characters.

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[17] Ibid. pp. 211
[18] Ibid. pp. 212
[19] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 82
[20] J. Neuberger, R. Salys, D. Bordwell, *The Russian Cinema Reader: 1908 to the Stalin Era: Volume I, 1908 to the Stalin Era*, Boston, Academic Studies Pr, 2013, pp. 109

When it comes to this difference between the two, Eisenstein writes:" *Pudovkin works with actors: that is one point on which our views differ. He is doing something very interesting: He is looking for something between a professional actor and the people I use in my films.*"[21]

On the other hand, Pudovkin points out that every sentence the scenario writer writes must have a plastic appearance on the screen in some discernible form. As a result, the externally expressed plastic images he describes in his writing are more significant than the words themselves.*"*[22]

Eisenstein, on the contrary, deliberately chooses ordinary people to play every role (see Lenin in *October,* played by a worker) and focuses more on the role of the masses, for example, as seen in the Odessa Steps in *Battleship Potëmkin*. He prefers to use a non-conventional plot, characterised by the constant presence of multiple lines of action culminating in one peak moment (see the sailor rebellion on the *Battleship Potëmkin*). Other than this, while in Pudovkin's films the use of close-ups is primarily driven by the need for dramatic continuity, Eisenstein utilises close-ups to provide significant flexibility for metaphorical and metonymic substitutions.[23] Finally, the main goal of Eisenstein was to provoke the spectator, mainly by using montage and editing techniques.[24]

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[21] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 11
[22] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique And Film Acting,* Scotts Valley, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015, pp. 26-27 (edition used)
[23] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 76
[24] J. Neuberger, R. Salys, D. Bordwell, *The Russian Cinema Reader: 1908 to the Stalin Era: Volume I, 1908 to the Stalin Era*, Boston, Academic Studies Pr, 2013, pp. 110

THE BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

The Battleship Potëmkin was first demonstrated in January 1926; from a victorious and heroic point of view, it restages the bloody events which took place in 1905. Goodwin highlights that, unlike *Strike*, the tragedy illustrated in the *Battleship Potëmkin* contains its revolutionary development.[25]

The film is divided into 5 parts ("Men and Worms", "Drama in Tendre Harbour", "An Appeal from the Dead", "The Odessa Steps" and "Meeting the Squadron") that escalate in power and dramatism. These sections are inextricably linked with each other: Part 2 contains the rebellion outbursts, which seem to be suppressed in Part 4. Part 5 answers the question posed in Part 1, where "*The revolution has its peak in the unity of all sailors and citizens*".[26]

In addition to this, every chapter concludes dramatically and symbolically: First, the sailor smashing the plate with the inscription "*Give us the daily bread*" (see Picture 1), Vakulinchuk's death after the rebellion outbreak, the red communist flag on top of the ship, the Potëmkin's destroying the tsarist's HeadQuarters in Odessa, and the Black Sea Fleet calling the sailors in the Potëmkin "*Brothers*" (See Picture 2).

The action in the *Battleship Potëmkin* occurs mainly in two locations, on the Battleship and in Odessa. The represented forces are mainly two: the officers of the tsarist army and the sailors, along with the civilians of Odessa. The limited space in which the action takes place is one of the four factors enhancing the pathos in the film; The other three are the concentration of events in a 3-day narration, the circumscription of the camera movement, i.e. the camera is often "*stoically fixed*", and the stylistic development of tension leading to the conflict.[27]

Eisenstein is also known for using the typage technique; according to Goodwin, " *Eisenstein's concept of typage is dialectical in its combination of the actuality in type-casting with the conventionality in stereotyping. An example on the practical level is the selection of a nonactor for the character Dr. Smirnov and then the use of artificial whiskers on him."*[28] This technique aims to offer an understanding of

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[25] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 59
[26] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 64
[27] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 63
[28] Ibid. pp. 71

character from a broader viewpoint, rather than focusing on the unique psychological aspects of a subject. Therefore, type represents the fundamental structure that supports the conceptual frameworks of creative thought in the realm of art: It "*shows not the man in the class, but the class in the man*". In other words, through this stylisation, the entirety of humanity and the crucial social determinants are manifested at their development peak, showcasing the fullest realisation of their inherent possibilities and the most intense expressions of individuals and their historical periods. The director employs a comparable approach in depicting profound social change, contrasting the idealised historical potential of the working class with the outdated stereotypes that portray the ruling class as out of touch with contemporary realities. Therefore, the spectator is made aware of the righteous legitimisation made by the sailor through the revolution, as Lenin's quotation at the beginning appears (this also happens in *October* and *Old and New)*:

"The spirit of revolution soared over the Russian land. [...] The individual personality, having hardly time to become conscious of itself… dissolved in the mass, and the mass itself became dissolved in the revolutionary elan" (See Picture 3)

This act of rebellion is also preannounced by the nature of the violent waves crashing against the shore, which are a prelude to what will happen on the battleship and the Odessa steps, the sailors accumulating forces just to unleash them against the symbols of the regime.[29] Such an introduction contrasts with the one in Dovzhenko's *Earth,* where man and nature are depicted in a state of peaceful accord. In *Battleship Potëmkin,* the main purpose is to represent the revolutionaries in all their strength and impact; hence, the sea must be rough. Eisenstein insists on a liquid element to symbolise the flow of events, its constant mutation, whereas Dovzhenko, in his film, focuses more on the fields and landscape in general to convey a message of peace and tranquillity between humans and nature.

The film covers the revolution in 1905 in Odessa, and Lenin acknowledges the importance of the event by saying that without the "*Dress rehearsal*" of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution would have been impossible.[30] Furthermore, he

[29] J. Neuberger R. Salys, D. Bordwell, *The Russian Cinema Reader: 1908 to the Stalin Era: Volume I, 1908 to the Stalin Era*, Boston, Academic Studies Pr, 2013. pp. 122

[30] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 57

foresaw the event's failure because people exhibited a deficiency in persistence, a vague sense of purpose, and an inadequate comprehension that only through relentless continuation of the armed struggle and a decisive triumph over all military and civil authorities could the revolution achieve success.[31] Eisenstein answered back at the critics of the time about "*Historical inaccuracy*" by stating that he wanted to represent the peak of what happened, the highest level of revolutionary awareness possible given the situation.[32]

Moreover, the director stated in one interview:" *It is not simply after but through the struggle of classes that the masses of men and women become authentically humanised*."[33] The class conflict here becomes the only way to reach what Marx once called the acquisition of "*real human life as man's possession*".

The film's emotional appeal (pathos) is focused on the theme of renewal within the context of class struggle. This pathos represents a proactive, class-driven acknowledgement rather than merely an emotional response[34]: The representation of violence in Eisenstein's film plays a deeper role than what is perceived at first sight; it pushes the spectator into thinking about historical events and feeling part of the revolutionary cause, which, in this case, is embodied by the sailors and citizens of Odessa. The emotional appeal is created through three effects that stem from passive art: uncertainty, sorrow, and sentimentality. These components are taken apart and then reconfigured.

The film then continues by displaying the sailors being oppressed by the navy's captains, in particular by Doctor Smirnov, who refuses to acknowledge the dire status of the meat, which is infested; he instead claims that they are just dead fly larvae (See Picture 4). In this sense, the Doctor is the tsarist tyrant who just wants to humiliate his subordinates. In order to underline this contrast, Eisenstein promptly zooms in and out of the meat with the worms on its surface, followed by the complaints of Vakulinchuk and the others. It is also not surprising that the mutiny in Chapter 2 ends only when Smirnov is thrown out of the ship with a last shot on his pince-nez and a brief one on the rotten meat: the old order is rotten[35]. Only in the

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[31] Ibid. pp. 58
[32] Ibid. pp. 58
[33] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 61
[34] Ibid. pp. 70
[35] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 71

confrontation between the sailors and Smirnov does the director decide to display the two subjects on the same level; however, since the Doctor is smaller than Vakulinchuk, the eventual victory of the revolutionaries is implied.

This part's final scene represents three sailors smashing the plate with the inscription "*Give us this day our daily bread*". The moment is sharply intensified: The camera firstly focuses on the sailor's eyes, full to the brim with anger, and then zooms the instant during which he destroys the plate through a distended rush.[36] Goodwin ascribes all of this to the so-called "*Shock effect".*[37] The shock effect can be acknowledged thanks to the typical large-scale shot in the film, for instance, in part four during the massacre on the Odessa steps. In the confrontation scene between the sailors and Dr. Smirnov, the meat is the main reason for the mutiny.

In Part 2, the cross is held by the priest and is shown in concurrence with the execution. This points out an alliance between religion and military oppression. Furthermore, Bordwell points out that, as the firing squad targets the tarpaulin, Eisenstein transforms the cross into a weapon by cutting to the priest, who slaps it into his hand, akin to a blackjack.[38]. Not only does the cross convey such a meaning, but it is also connected to an officer's hand stroking his dagger a couple of shots later. This metaphorical alliance is a constant theme in the director's films, for example, the painting depicting Nicholas 2nd and Jesus Christ during the storm at the Winter Palace in October. This leads to the conception that religion cannot exist in the new communist world, as it is a symbol primarily linked to the Old Regime.

The tarpaulin shows the commanders' spinelessness, showing their inability to shoot some people in the face. After covering the victims, some soldiers of the execution platoon start to laugh and smirk (See Picture 5). The intense dramatic tension present in the quarterdeck scenes can be attributed to a blend of various circumstances and intentional design choices.[39] This side of the counterrevolutionaries is also displayed in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal,* where a soldier of the White Army forces a Bolshevik to turn on the other side so that he could shoot him in the back. In both fights, the Bolsheviks win, but there is a difference: while in

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[36] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 66

[37] Ibid. pp. 74-75

[38]Ibid. pp. 66

[39] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 60

Battleship Potëmkin, victory is collective and everybody mourns over the martyrdom of Vakulinchuk, in *Arsenal* the communist shooting at his enemy is represented as cold-blooded; alone, his gaze is fixed, underlining a deeper, more obscure meaning about the revolutionaries' morality in Dovzhenko's work, i.e., they are not afraid of killing people to pursue their aim.

Another theme that is noticeable in the mutiny outbreak is the stateliness provided by the captains. The expansion of the dramatic field and the scene itself is static, allowing the confrontation between officers and sailors to be better highlighted. On the other hand, Vakulinchuk and his crew serve as a counterbalance; they give the shots a dynamic aura, especially when the mutiny starts as soon as Vakulinchuk calls himself "*above*".[40]

The interval between the orders given to the firing squad and Vakulinchuk's intervention is extended through interspersed shots of a life preserver, an imperial emblem, and the ship's bugle. Eisenstein openly acknowledges that this sequence is characterised by a melodramatic tempo: "*The action is decelerated, and the tension is heightened*."[41]

Besides, the squad's refusal to shoot the sailors demonstrates their new awareness of the situation. A similar scene will be reiterated in chapter 5 when, after some hesitation, the Black Sea Fleet decides not to open fire against the Potëmkin.

From now on, the action is split into different happenings: the sailors gathering the weapons, Vakulinchuk against Captain Gilyarovskij, the skirmish around the piano, and the officers being thrown away by the sailors. Everything peaks with Doctor Smirnov being thrown overboard from the ship and Vakulinchuk, who proudly dangles from the ropes after Captain Gilyarovskij has shot him; these moments encapsulate at their best the rebellion that has just occurred. In this system, the moment of violence is characterised as a hypermoment, a moment that has been hypostatized. In this context, violence transforms into a means of experiencing presence; or, to be more precise, it serves to imitate presence, creating a fabricated sensation of being present despite the inherent impossibility of true presence.[42]

On the one hand, the demise of the simple sailor, who fought for the principles in which he believed, is represented in all of his heroism. On the other hand, Smirnov

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[40] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 66

[41] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 63

[42] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 48-49

cowardly tries to shirk his responsibilities through his selfish and stubborn behaviour. Vakulinchuk's death agony is depicted through a series of baroque perspectives that highlight his suspended posture. This elaborate and stylised representation of the event stands in stark contrast to the summary of Smirnov's death that occurs moments earlier, emphasised by the juxtaposition of his pince-nez.[43] Death is a recurrent theme in the soviet cinema of the 1920s and conveys different messages: Vasyl's brutal murder in *Earth* symbolises the abrupt interruption of the life-cycle, the communist shot down in front of Bair's eyes in *Storm over Asia* serves to awaken the communist consciousness in the protagonist finally, the communist beaten up to death in *October* shows the true face of the Bourgeoisie, who takes pleasure in clobbering innocent people.

The very next chapter plays a key role in the story: Vakulinchuk's body is brought to Odessa, and a multitude of people mourn over him. The man is not a mere sailor anymore; he has ascended to being called a hero, the hero of the revolution. For the first time, Eisenstein delineates the psychological aspect of the civilians after witnessing such consequences of a brutal act as Vakulinchuk's murder. The crowd pays respect to the hero of the Potëmkin; they twist their caps while listening to the student agitator, who also shakes his hat. In *Earth,* there is also an agitator during Vasyl's funeral; however, his function is not only to convert people to his cause, but also to negate Khoma's confession about the murder of the main character.

Suddenly, people's pain transforms into rage; the crowd knots their hands into fists in the air, and a woman even rips her shawl, followed by a young man who does the same with his shirt. As the film director wrote, in these shots, "*The theme of mourning leaps into the theme of fury".*[44]

This scene is magisterially cut by the intertitles "All for one" and "One for all", which delineate the connection between Vakulinchuk and the crowd (especially with what will happen on the Odessa Steps): Eisenstein frequently aligns intertitles with visuals to establish metaphorical themes.[45] Moreover, the people who stand in the crowd do not belong to a particular social group; instead, they are vividly represented in manifold ways, for instance, there are well-dressed women, pensioners, students and many others. In doing so, the aim is to depict Russian citizens as united against

[43]Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 67

[44] Ibid. pp. 75

[45] Ibid. pp. 69

the tsarist regime[46]. This is a unique scene, which stands out also in comparison to the other films, as the Bourgeoisie and workers are not represented on the same level. During the parade in *The End of St. Petersburg,* the wealthy class is on the balcony, observing and cheering the soldiers going to war, who are, for the most part, common people. Pudovkin signals, therefore, a separation in the two forces (the Bourgeoisie and workers).

In *Battleship Potëmkin,* the civilians move as if they were part of something bigger; they belong to the mass. The only exception in this scene is provided by the man who shouts "*Smash the Jews*!" (see picture 6) and is subsequently swallowed by the crowd. In Odessa, during significant labour protests or strikes, organisers frequently felt the need to urge workers not to channel their frustration towards the Jewish community, but rather to unite as one with both Jews and Russians against the employer. More critically, organisers needed to alleviate concerns among the general populace that these demonstrations and strikes could escalate into pogroms. The apprehension that strikes and protests might descend into anti-Semitic violence acted as a restraint on labour militancy.[47]

This electrifying atmosphere reigns throughout the third chapter, but in the following sequences, the situation is about to change when the famous intertitle "*and suddenly*" kicks in. The tragedy on the Odessa Steps is generally attributed to Eisenstein's mind; however, the director has modified the event: it occurs during the day (and not at night), and, secondly, the streets are full of civilians. This allows Eisenstein to convert the fact into how we know it today, dissociating it from civil disorder.[48]

On the Odessa steps, the tsarist army starts to shoot; people break into panic. The soldiers are soulless, as a non-recognisable mass of people, who not only move, but also think as one body; they are trained to kill everybody who dares to stand in their way. They are framed while pushing down and oppressing the crowd by exerting their incommensurable power. About the representation of the enemy as faceless, Sam Keen writes, "*Our reluctance to think clearly about the enemy appears to be an unconscious conspiracy. We systematically blur distinctions and insist that the*

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[46] Ibid. pp. 70

[47] R. Weinberg, *Workers, Pogroms, and the 1905 Revolution in Odessa,* Kansas, The Russian review, 1987, pp. 57

[48] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 58

enemy remain faceless; we are able to perpetuate the horror of the war [...] Homo hostilis cripples imagination by forcing it to serve the limited purposes of hatred and propaganda.[...] The purpose of propaganda is to paralyse thought, to prevent discrimination, and to condition individuals to act as a mass."[49]

The action and violence are developed in manifold lines of dialogue: A woman jerking spasmodically, people crying out, a mother losing his son in the terrorised crowd, a pram displayed as it slowly goes down the steps, a small group of women walking towards the soldiers, to stop them with pleas. Concerning the woman represented on the ground while jerking, Bordwell states:

Where is the woman located? What exactly has happened to her? Are we seeing her staggered again and again by a fusillade, or is this a single convulsion presented repeatedly? [...] never completely outside the story world, yet not firmly located in it"[50].

This shows how the director manages to illustrate the space in such scenes full of pathos. In his book, Prince wrote that the more graphic a violent act is, the more detailed its representation becomes, resulting in a greater stylistic amplitude. The level of graphicness is directly connected to the techniques used in film.[51]

The main lines of action consist of the schoolmistress with the pince-nez and the mother with the stumbling son. Both of them are due to be shot down in the same way, especially the mother, who sees his son accidentally stumble and be murdered by the crowd trying to escape. The pure depiction of violence is accomplished when the hopeless mother, who is depicted from her shoulder, begs the soldiers:" *Listen, do not shoot, my boy is badly hurt*" (See picture 7). In her path with the son in her hand, the mother traces her way through the corpses of murdered people and, in doing so, her shadow contrasts with those of the soldiers, who are cast downwards. The woman is represented in five different shots, distributed evenly in sequence, whose role is to extend her agony and agonising experience well beyond the canonical time.

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[49] S. Keen, *Faces of the enemy: Reflection of the hostile Imagination: The Psychology of Enmity,* New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1986, pp. 24-25

[50] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 74

[51] S. Prince, *Classical film violence, Designing and regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968, New Jersey, Rutgers university, 2003, pp. 35*

Besides, the fact that these characters are distinguished from the masses intensifies the brutality of the tragedy; mother and son are not part of the "flock"; they are unique in their way and recognisable from the others. This makes *Battleship Potëmkin's* brutality " *far more effective".*[52]

In this catastrophe, a third line of action is displayed: another mother, who is brutally murdered and, while swinging to death, accidentally pushes her pram. This character's shadow on the stairs is portrayed in contrast with the soldier's. As the Cossacks blocked the crowd at the base of the stairs, the carriage amplified the downward motion of the crowd.[53]

Meanwhile, the scene is mutually intercut by the schoolmistress crying out. The spectator, however, is not sure whether the woman is looking at the pram slowly and ineluctably going down. Everything is interrupted as soon as a cossack slashes four times with his sword, and a cut shows the woman with the pince-nez, which is now broken and full of blood: thanks to this montage illusion, the victim and her killer are never shown in the camera together.

Even though in this sequence is not made clear whether the schoolmistress has been hurt by the sword or has been shot, to encapsulate the tragedy of the happening is encapsulated the focus here is on both the firm representation of the violence and the lack of information the scenes deliver to the spectator. The violence inflicted upon the women in pince-nez symbolises an attack on perception. The camera's movement and its intermediate distance when she guides others in a plea reflect her optimistic rationality. In contrast, the fixed, close-up shots of the assailant portray the woman as a victim of an unyielding, soulless force.[54]

As in part 2, the representation of the oppressors and the victims is achieved. In this sense, the "*violation of axial space and its spectatorial motifs"*[55] plays a central role in the depiction of such a tragedy, or, in other words, the film director felt the urge to create and give life to a new global vision according to the birth of a new global order. The sequence in the Odessa Steps is successful because it revolves around the shock of violence.

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[52] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 69

[53]D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 76

[54] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 69

[55]Ibid. pp. 67

With Appelbaum's words the shock of violence is closely related to "*Intolerable violence, represented at a level which is intolerable for the viewers as well as the victim, catastrophic violence, violence that turns things around, reversing fortune, but also violence which at once signifies and shocks, violence that is part of a game, but also violence that seems to operate against the game, that breaks it up, shatters what psychologists like to call flow*"[56]

Other than this, there are still two motifs to factor in: the eye and the eyeglasses. Starting from the single eye leitmotif, it is to highlight that Dr. Smirnov is the first character, of whom the spectator can see this zoom in: in this case, the single eye stands for the absolute denial of the truth. Later, when the priest fakes his death, the eye becomes a symbol of duplicity, a sort of grey area. Finally, its power is transferred to the townspeople in Odessa and the schoolmistress, who becomes blind before being killed:" *The single-eye motif now evokes [...] the suffering of their victims*".[57] Hence, in the sailor rebellion and on the Odessa Steps two different messages are conveyed by using the same techniques: on the Battleship, violence represents the beginning of the sailors redemption arc and their awareness about the revolution, they are the heroes, who will build a new state. On the other hand, the massacre on the Odessa Steps has a tragic effect because the director makes us sympathise with the victims, who also include babies and mothers.

It is also possible to track down the meaning of the eyeglasses: Dr. Smirnov is the bespectacled character; he wears his pince-nez while analysing the meat, then this trait is expanded to the civilians in Odessa[58]. In both cases, we observe the transfer of tropes, beginning with the tsarist people and extending to the common ones.

After the perpetrated massacre, the Battleship Potëmkin promptly fires back at the tsarist Headquarters in Odessa. To avoid feeling sorry for the enemy, in the whole film, Revolutionary counterviolence is addressed through various displacements (the destruction of property instead of life), generalised compositions (the crowd encircling the heckler), or euphemisms such as the close-up of Smirnov's pince-nez caught in a hawser.[59]

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[56] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp.124

[57] J. Neuberger, R. Salys, D. Bordwell, *The Russian Cinema Reader: 1908 to the Stalin Era: Volume I, 1908 to the Stalin Era*, Boston, Academic Studies Pr, 2013, pp. 130

[58] Ibid. pp. 130

[59] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, PP. 69

While destroying the palace, the scene is wisely intercut with shots of a lion statue, which progressively gains strength as it leaps to its feet. Bordwell makes different assumptions:

"*The shots imply an upheaval that shakes even statues to life. Like many of Eisenstein's cinematic tropes, however, the passage is polysemous. Perhaps the leaping lions represent the generals stirred to rage by the bombardment [...] The lions may also be taken to symbolise the Russian people, aroused by the massacre and reasserting themselves in the ship's counterattack*.[60] Pudovkin expresses his thoughts on the scene montage by praising it; he stated that the explosion on the screen was literally "*deafening*.[61] Statues are often used to convey different messages. In *October,* the statue of Alexander 3rd was demolished by civilians only after a collective effort, only to be rebuilt under Kerensky, establishing a continuity between the violence of the Old Regime and that of the provisional government. In *The End of St. Petersburg,* statues of Peter the Great are so big that they cannot be framed in one shot, subsequently delineating the oppressive role played by the tsar.
In part 5, when confronting the squadron, the intertitles ("All for one/ One for all) are a recall of the scene in part 3, where the mourners established the same connection with the dead Vakulinchuk. However, here the ships are bound to win together, so their bond is based on life and not on death, as happened in "An Appeal from the Dead".
The *Battleship Potëmkin* is such an explosive film, not only when it comes to its content, but also to its reception: Nikolai Volkov, a reviewer for the newspaper *Trud,* wrote that "*Eisenstein, with the collaboration of his cameraman Tisse, has managed to express the very spirit of the revolution, its profound dynamics, its gigantic rhythm*"[62]. Similar to him, other reviewers went to the point where they spoke about the introduction of a new consciousness and a hero, who captivates with its genuine nature, the strength of its revitalised expressions, and its compelling lifelike realism. Moreover, enthused about the film was also Nikolaj Aseyev, who asserted that " *On the whole, it consists of the details that are not immediately discernible to the spectator, the details that provoke a particular emotion, operating not only with the*

[60] Ibid. pp. 139
[61] Ibid. pp. 140
[62] R. Taylor, The *Battleship Potemkin: The Film Companion,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 70

eye, but also through it."[63] He then proceeded to list the most captivating and eye-catching scenes of the work, such as the mourning around Vakulinchuk's tent and the pram on the Odessa Steps.

Moving on, Piotrovsky labelled the scenes revolving around the massacre in chapter four as "*a genuine staircase into Hell, real steps of horror".* The scenes in this film are intricately arranged into sequences, or "parts," infused with a profound and genuine pathos. The emotions of outrage, rebellion, the noble sorrow for the fallen, the brutal retribution of the tsarist regime, the intense anticipation, and the limitless joy form six emotional pillars that constitute this cinematic poem. Each of these pillars is further subdivided into countless human expressions and mechanical components. Moreover, concerning the schoolmistress, the woman in a shawl and the schoolboy in chapter three, he adds that they "*move with a single emotion, a single indignation, anger, hope or pride".*[64] He also pointed out that in *The Battleship Potëmkin* and *Mother,* there is something similar,i.e., thanks to them, a new film genre was born, the Soviet film style.

Pudovkin stated that even though the montage compellingly guides the viewer's experience and Eisenstein skillfully executes this technique, evoking a strong emotional response from the audience, the performances of the actors in their respective roles are largely subpar, with the exception of the nearly motionless scenes featuring non-professional actors and that this issue can be attributed in part to the director's inability to effectively manage his cast.[65]

Finally, the difference in viewpoints about cinema between the two directors about cinema derives from the fact that Pudovkin focuses more on professional theatrical actors, such as Baranovkaya in the role of the mother, and individual emotions to represent the emotions of the masses. Eisenstein, on the other hand, uses his team, aiming at a depersonalisation of a single actor in favour of the representation of the masses through the method of typage.

[63] Ibid. pp. 73
[64] Ibid. pp. 75
[65] Ibid. pp. 82

MOTHER

The film is loosely based on the homonymous novel by Maksim Gor'kij, written in 1906, and serves, similar to *Battleship Potëmkin,* to spread the party's goals in society. Concerning his work and his idea of cinema, Pudovkin said:

> *"Mother was my first independent work. [...] First and foremost, in this picture, I stubbornly fought with all my strength against Eisenstein and much of what Kuleshov had given me. I could see no chance of finding a place for myself with my organic need for excitement in that dry and peculiarly contemporary form that Kuleshov was then teaching. My attitude towards Eisenstein was roughly the same.*[66]

As soon as it begins, the roles of the main characters, their social status, and, most of all, the triangular family relationship emerge: Pavel Vlasov, a fervent supporter of the revolution, represents a new world in which freedom, peace, and justice prevail. The father, Michail Vlasov, is always drunk.[67] He is the tyrant of the family, imposing his rules with brutality and autocracy, representing the old regime. He is at the same time the best locksmith in the factory and the strongest man in the village. Nonetheless, he is insolent and disrespectful towards the foreman and the superintendent, and, therefore, earned very little; every holiday, he beat somebody, and everyone disliked and feared him.

In the novel, portrayed as being unaware of his actions, the son exhibits poor behaviour towards his mother following the death of Vlasov senior. Conversely, the film depicts the older generation as consistently engaging in morally questionable behaviour or adhering to misguided beliefs, which are juxtaposed with the enlightened perspectives of the younger generation.[68] With regard to the mother herself, it is worth adding that Baranovskaia (the actress playing the mother) portrays her character with her lips tightly sealed, as if rendered numb by resignation. She is

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[66] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 82

[67] The character of Vlasov is used to endorse the official campaign against alcoholism (prominently voiced by Trotsky) and to promote the idea of a new Soviet citizenry who would reject alcoholic excess (A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde)*

[68] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 64

not merely quiet but rather compelled into silence. The steady drip of the faucet near her deceased husband serves as a metronome, while the weighty sound of her tears contrasts with her expression, which, unlike the grieving grandmothers, reflects a void in response to Vlasov's passing. Her heightened energy, expressiveness, and vibrancy parallel her deepening involvement in the new cause.

Pudovkin shows how oppressive the father is by counterposing his enormous shadow on the white wall (see picture 8); meanwhile, the mother, Pelageja Vlasova, is looking at him fearfully. The mother's humiliation is evident as she is captured from an elevated angle while washing the laundry in her room; this perspective is also narratively supported by her framing through the viewpoint of her towering, domineering husband.[69] Unlike *Battleship Potëmkin,* where the mother silhouette contrasts on a dialogical plan the figure of the soldiers coming down the Odessa Steps, the shadow on the wall serves here to delineate the sheer power of Michail within the family context. Light and illumination for Pudovkin are extremely important; he affirmed that there is one more element characteristic of the work of the director with the actor - that is, light without which neither object nor human being nor anything else has existence on the film.[70]

Pelageja is caught between two opposing forces: on one side, Michail Vlasov, wielding his iron fist, and on the other, Pavel Vlasov, a committed supporter of the Bolsheviks. Referring to the characters, Taylor wrote:

> *Pudovkin also uses the techniques of the actors as part of his raw material. The characters in Mother are archetypes; they represent their class in its historical struggle, but they are also individuals with individual human emotions. [...] They are individual human beings caught up in a historic human struggle.*[71]

The first conflict scene is displayed in the first minutes of the film. Michail, who has barely any money, wants to take the clock from the wall to go drinking. Pelageja desperately tries to stop him, and her son protects her from the fury of the drunk man. The mother's act signals her bond with the house. Similarly to what happens in *The End of St. Petersburg,* the mother starts by defending her house and finishes by

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[69] P. Gobetti, *La Madre,* Padova, I radar - enciclopedia del tempo libero, 1969, pp. 20
[70] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 59
[71] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998,pp. 90

going out into the open world with a Bolshevik consciousness. The confrontation between Michail and Pavel represents the fight between the old and the new world, where the first one is oppressive (the father is shot from the bottom), whereas the latter focuses on equality and justice among all people. Finally, the fact that Michail (the personification of the Old Regime) wants to steal a clock underscores the notion that the Tsarist Regime "steals" time from the common people (this is also evident during the trial scene). Similarly to Eisenstein's *October,* the Bolsheviks elicit a response; they act dynamically (see the scene of the jail evasion in *Mother* and the Storm of the Winter Palace in *October).*

The enemy is often portrayed as an aggressor due to consensual paranoia about the bad self:" *The unacceptable parts of the self - its greed, cruelty, sadism, hostility [...] are made to disappear and are recognised only as qualities of the enemy."*[72] The rhythm, which serves to concentrate the action, here is as follows: it starts slowly, then ramps up till the moment when the clock breaks and just after, when the object is broken into pieces, it becomes more relaxed.[73]

The place where the action breaks out, the house, serves as a foreshadowing of Pavel's arrest (always in the house). This serves as a counterbalance to the Bolsheviks: their uprisings often take place in open spaces, for instance, as in the case of the strike or the revolution at the end of the film.

It is also possible to reconstruct the formation process of Pelageja 's Bolshevik's conscience; she starts as a common woman, who is accustomed to her simple life, but then finds her new way of life, and as the film progresses, the spectator can acknowledge those places, where the action starts, e.g. in the trial scene, Pudovkin focuses on zooming on different objects also to show Pavel's location.

Another aspect, which will lead to the conflict between the two forces, can be observed in the next two scenes, where the father sells his "soul" to the Black Hundreders, a strong reactionary group, and Pavel has to hide a gun received from a Bolshevik woman.

Starting from the first one, the reactionaries are portrayed as loud, greedy people, completely corrupted by their luxurious life, e.g., smoking and abundance of food (See picture 9a). The faces of the Black hundreders are intentionally stylised, their

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[72] S. Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflection of the Hostile Imagination: The Psychology of Enmity,* New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1986, pp. 19

[73] P. Gobetti, *La Madre,* Padova, I radar - enciclopedia del tempo libero, 1969, pp. 9

flaws are exaggerated (see image 9b). The adversary is unquenchable, lacking any understanding of appropriate limits or valid boundaries. His consumption is not characterised by the refined palate of a connoisseur, but rather by the excessive devouring typical of a beast. He embodies the fearsome creature found in both fairy tales and nightmares.[74] As predators, comparable to a group of hyenas, they immediately perceive Michail as corruptible and ready to work with them to stem the tide of the revolution, and, in exchange for some drinks, they make a contract. The bourgeoisie is depicted similarly in Pavlo's speech in *Zvenigora.* The difference between the two is that Michail is the prey and will die as a result of this alliance. At the same time, Pavlo (the actual manifestation of wickedness in Dovzhenko's film) manages to trick his spectators by faking his death.

Concerning the tavern, where the action takes place, Paolo Gobetti explores its real nature and its real, dark meaning in the film. He wrote:

"*Al centro del quartiere operaio, accanto alla grigia, gelida presenza della fabbrica è l'osteria, il luogo in cui la maggior parte dei diseredati cerca un momento di evasione, di oblio e dove in realtà la società li spinge, con l'aiuto della vodka, all'abbruttimento e alla degradazione"*[75]

This serves as a counterbalance to the next happening: Pavel is given a gun to hide by a female supporter of the revolution. She is depicted as a fine, simple woman (see picture 10), who goes through the back door in order not to alert anyone, except Pavel (see picture 11). Therefore, the two forces have been created, and the viewer is already led to believe that the right party, the purest, is the Bolsheviks' one.

The day of the strike comes, and some light is shed on the living conditions of the workers, who not only wear simple clothes but also sleep on beds made of straw and other low-quality materials. On the contrary, the capitalists are portrayed in elegant jackets and trousers, smoking a cigar and staring at the workers from an upper window (see picture 12A); the perspective here is a low-angle shot, empowering

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[74]A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001 pp. 48

[75] "At the center of the working-class neighborhood, next to the gray, icy presence of the factory is the tavern, the place where most of the dispossessed seek a memento of escape, of oblivion, and where in reality society pushes them, with the helpp of vodka, to degradation and degradation."
P. Gobetti, *La Madre,* Padova, I radar - enciclopedia del tempo libero, 1969, pp. 8

their oppressive role in the film. Furthermore, the viewer sees them through the frame of the window, which enlarges the spatial dimension, i.e., Pudovkin manages to represent the power wielders as something far away, with which nobody has to feel sympathetic.

The strike begins with a tense oral confrontation, which is followed by Pavel being initially caught by the counterrevolutionaries and Michail recognising him. Action is then split into different lines: some workers want to help the revolutionaries but are stopped by a man firing a gun; the group is frightened and retreats like a scared herd. The gun, a symbol of oppression, is what scares the workers and stops them from helping their allies. The rifles in the jail's evasion play a similar role: because of them, the army manages to stop many prisoners from escaping, and also kills them. Pudovkin highlights the skirmish's dynamism; everything is framed and captured in ephemeral moments, so that the spectator is engaged in the action.

Michail chases his son, and in a sequence, he manages to catch him; this is a metaphor for the persecution inflicted by the tsarist Regime at the expense of the ordinary people. The family's division and the break-up of its ideals are recalled right in that scene. Michail is accidentally shot to death by Misha, a revolutionary who was trying to defend himself. The fact that the shooting is an accident is a crucial aspect of the narrative, as it maintains the total innocence of the revolutionaries against reactionary provocation[76]. Subsequently, the Black Hundreds proceed to beat him to death.

In addition to this, at the beginning of the fights, Pudovkin highlights the workers, who initially did not participate in the strike, taking part in the brawl as soon as the Black Hundred orders them to kill the revolutionaries. This moment signifies the initial signs of the working class's awakening, the early stages of self-awareness that are essential before it can fully engage in the revolutionary movement.[77]

As a consequence of the strike, the Black Hundreds manage to find the location of Pavel Vlasov and one of his friends; they break into his house, intending to arrest him. Pavel arrives home, sees his dad's body, and asks Pelageja who did this, and she answers back:" *Your men killed him, the strikers".* This is the only time in the whole film where the mother is furious against the revolutionaries and seemingly

[76] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 84

[77] Ibid. pp. 84

wants their end (after the trial, she will change her mind, though). To intensify the pathos, Mikhail Vlasov's body is positioned prominently in the centre, appearing foreshortened.

To the right of the body, the mother remains motionless, her pale face contrasting sharply with the dark surroundings. This moment once again aligns with Pudovkin's assertion that the primary goal of all art is to evoke emotion in the viewer, emphasising the filmmaker's responsibility to discover the most effective methods for achieving this impact on screen.[78]

During the inspection, Pavel's friend pretends to be Pavel himself, but he fails. In this sequence, the fraternisation and the bond that forms between the two are delineated, and, with a wider view, this can be extended to all Bolsheviks. In this scene, Pavel stares at the officer with hate; his gaze is full of hatred. He feels angry and disrespected, but not powerless. On the contrary, Pelageja bows down before the officer; she humiliates herself.

The other fact to take into account is the arrest of Pavel, even though Pelageja agrees to bring the gun to the police officer (played by Pudovkin himself) in exchange for her son's freedom. This part is of paramount importance because the mother is still convinced that the old order is right; she will regret this decision soon after and will support the Bolshevik cause[79].

Once the policeman is given the weapon, he decides to seize the son. However, a violent confrontation happens after the son is handcuffed, where the officer slaps Pavel Vlasov, who is framed with a broken lip and furiously staring at his executioner (see picture 12B). On the one hand, Pudovkin shows the oppressive role of the tsarist regime. On the other hand, Pavel's character and his revolutionary ideals are underlined: he does not fear the government and is prepared to fight it. Such abuses of power can also be observed in Pudovkin's *End of St. Petersburg* and *Storm over Asia.* While in the first two films, the protagonist tries to answer back, the agents overpower him; in the third, Bair does not actively resist them. This is not just a geographical difference (Pavel and the Lad are both Russian, whereas Bair is Mongol), but also a cultural difference, where the Asian counterpart is more passive but prone to outbursts of rage, which often lead to fights.

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[78] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 59

[79] ibid, pp. 14

When it comes to the motivation for Pavel's arrest, the officer answers the mother back by telling her:" *He did not confess".*[80] This statement encapsulates how the tsarist justice system works, i.e. it does not matter whether the person is innocent or not; the arrest is already a confirmation of one's guilt. In Taylor's words:

"*This is her [Pelageja] moment of realisation and awakening: the old world has been revealed in its true colours and it dawns on her that a new world can only be achieved through her own efforts and those of the class that she represents. In her degradation, therefore, are the seeds of her regeneration".*[81]

This theme is strengthened on the day of the trial, when the judges are more interested in painting, looking at the clock, speaking and enjoying themselves, rather than trying to understand whether one is guilty or not (see pictures 13 and 14). Furthermore, the scene is intercut with tsarist symbols, a statue of Nicholas 2nd and the hilarious intertitle "*Justice is sure*". The intertitles, which cut between the judges, are also represented in a satirical way, e.g. "*The court is just… quick… and merciful*". This associates the entire autocratic system with the impending trial, preemptively denouncing the verdict as a manifestation of class-based justice. The tribunal is represented with straight lines, in a strict, symmetrical way (whereas the tavern, as analysed, was deformed and monstrous).

Amy Sergeant also notices that the horse, which is drawing one of the judges, is a hint at a previous conversation. In particular, she writes that a discussion regarding a fine-looking filly in *The Mother* is disclosed to pertain to a horse, which the judge subsequently sketches on his blotter as the trial advances.[82]

The public mainly consists of bourgeois people, who are more passionate about enjoying themselves during the trial, rather than understanding what is going on; they see it as a form of entertainment. Occasionally, Pudovkin selects individuals from the bourgeois audience: for the trial, which is crucial to the workers' movement,

[80] MOTHER https://youtu.be/HIP9uGQ56ag?si=hBg7TDSFQOngWeY_ 44:15
[81] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 86
[82] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 63-64

serves merely as a form of entertainment. For instance, the woman with the lorgnette (see picture 15) says: “The presiding judge is so nice, isn’t he?” [83]

When it comes to enjoying violent moments or events that will hurt somebody else, Slocum comments that “*Like the moment of death and the moment of orgasm, the moment of violent collision becomes a fetish object, and people give their lives in the hope of approaching it.*[84]”

The defensive lawyer, the only person in the room responsible for defending Pavel, has a hiccup and is interrupted by the judge, who suggests that the attorney not waste his eloquence. Meanwhile, the prosecutor can freely speak against Pavel and his colleagues; Portrayed from the bottom to the top to enhance his decisive and assertive character, he directly points his finger at the traitors and the defence lawyer (see picture 16A). This creates an ascending pathos, which peaks as soon as the presiding judge sentences Pavel to deportation to Siberia, and Pelageja starts crying out and yelling: “*Where is the truth?*”. The mother then tries to hug Pavel, but the police officer does not allow her to do this, though. Thus, the role of all the participants comes to light together: on one side, the authority is represented by the tsar and his judges, while on the other, the accused serves as an implicit representative of their social class.[85] The question about truth posed by Pelageja will find its echoes in the war scenes of *The End of St. Petersburg* when a soldier asks, “*What are we fighting for?”* In both cases, there are no direct answers.

The trial scene is so relevant in the course of the film since Pudovkin perfectly develops two narrative lines: on the one hand, the spectator is shown that the tsarist regime has to be abolished due to its corruption in favour of the posh, wealthy people, who, in exchange, see it as a way of spending time. On the other hand, Pelageja Vlasova fathoms what the Bolsheviks are fighting for and is now able to understand that their motivation is not only righteous, but also the right one. With Taylor’s words:

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[83] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 86

[84] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 55

[85] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 87

"The trial sequence marks the turning point of the film, for it is the trial proceedings, and the verdict and sentence, that bring the mother from passive acquiescence in the world to active participation in the struggle for the new".[86]

Her new consciousness can be seen when she goes to meet Pavel in prison to give him a piece of paper with all the information about the demonstration, which will be happening the very next day (1st May). In addition to this, the milk on the plate should symbolise the mother (or better mother's milk), whereas the cockroach embodies Pavel, who will die in the last scene, hugged by Pelageja.[87]

When it comes to the evasion on May 1st (Workers' Day), many lines of action need to be analysed. First of all, the tsarist soldiers are mainly represented alone or in pairs, whereas Pavel and the Bolsheviks are always shown in groups, ready to help one another. The revolt begins as soon as the guard forces the prisoners to go back to their cells.

The fight begins, and the spectator immediately grasps the difference in power between the two forces: the guarding oppressors have rifles, whereas the prisoners/victims can just throw rocks. Similar to the previous strike scene, the scene where two Bolsheviks take down a guard results in a case of self-defence rather than an assault. Pavel, who is initially in the cell, appears to experience an explosion of anger and adrenaline throughout his body as he tries to break out of the place. He is framed while shouting and kicking the door with all his strength. He could sense the energy flow of the event: he is not selfish; he wants to help other people manifest their thoughts against the regime.

Finally, prisoners are shot down by tsarist soldiers while trying to climb up the main gate. Similar to *Battleship Potëmkin,* the execution platoon is not shown in the face, conveying an idea of their soullessness. What makes them even more brutal is the fact that they are killing people from behind the gate, as if prisoners were nothing but wild animals without dignity and moral ideals. The most striking shots represent the powerless victims of this rebellion gathered at an angle, physically and morally defeated (see picture 16B). A similar shot can be found in *Storm over Asia,* when Bair sees the soldiers of the occupying government shooting down a defenceless revolutionary at an angle (this will cause Bair's anger and his consciousness

[86] Ibid. pp. 87
[87] P. Gobetti, *La Madre,* Padova, I radar - enciclopedia del tempo libero, 1969, pp. 30

awakening). In both cases, the angle that frames the victims is the last place they can go, the last moment before their hopes vanish.

In the final manifestation, which concludes the film, all elements analysed can be observed: workers moving in mass (see picture 17), the bourgeois staring at them and implicitly criticising them, the tsarist army on horseback trying to stop the riot (see pictures 18 and 19). The army is portrayed with shots from the bottom, whereas the civilians are represented with a perspective from the top.

In the end, Pavel and Pelageja share the same destiny; they both die, but in two different ways: as many other civilians, Pavel is shot to death by an officer, while the scene is intercut with some ice melting: man and nature are finally reunited.[88] On the other hand, Pelageja is crushed by the army on horseback after picking up a flag from one of the Bolsheviks already killed by the soldiers; the film's tempo decreases, revealing the mother's body resting in the mud. These sequences make the two protagonists the true heroes of the revolution. Between these scenes, the director displays the terrorised face of Pelageja hugging her beloved son (see pictures 20 and 21); this seals her fate. She is bound to death, but just before her death, she makes that one act, which will, implicitly, save the communist cause. This act can be compared to the mother in *Battleship Potëmkin* bringing her dead child on the Odessa steps, begging the soldiers not to shoot.

With regard to this sequence, Pudovkin admitted that the inspiration for the film originated from the depiction of a mother who is overwhelmed, initially reflecting the overall mood of Gorky's novel, and ultimately culminating in the profound emotional impact of the scene where the mother is trampled by horses.[89] The last shot shows the Red Flag flying over the House of the Soviets in the Moscow Kremlin.

Concerning the intensified pace of the plot in the final shots and the union between characters and nature, Amy Sergeant wrote:

"It seems to me that the end of The Mother produces a markedly heightened tension which is physically effected and effecting: shots of the marching demonstrators' shadows cast over the flakes of ice flowing downstream; shots of demonstrators marching regularly horizontally across frame (eventually abstracted to a flickering

[88] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 89

[89] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 61

staccato punctuation of light and shade), shots of the flag being passed in action to the head of the march (the flag ascending from bottom to top of the frame, culminating in its appearance atop the Kremlin) create an urgent, forceful rhythm."[90]

Ilya Trauberg, assistant director in *October: Ten Days That Shook the World,* wrote that drawing a comparison between *Battleship Potëmkin* and *Mother* is worthwhile. While *Potëmkin* stands as a source of pride, *Mother* is poised to become another point of pride.[91] In general, *Mother* was enthusiastically acclaimed by the critics, who affirmed that Pudovkin's film could be compared to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potëmkin* and that the central role of the actors can be discerned.

One of the most enthusiastic reviews belongs to Lunacharskij: he praised The Mother for its authentic imagery and performance, noting the absence of staged theatricality, as Batalov (Pavel) and Baranovskaia fully embodied the typical characters depicted. He also observed that Pudovkin utilises images to create a unique cinematic language, where visuals serve as the essence of the film rather than mere embellishments. Additionally, he praised *The Mother* for its lyrical quality, which arises from the emotional connections between related images. It is through these techniques that Pudovkin captures the reality, pathos, and significance of the initial workers' revolution.[92]

Analysing both films, *The Battleship Potëmkin* stands out for its cruelty, especially on the Odessa Steps, where people are shot down indiscriminately by the tsarist soldiers. Moreover, Eisenstein manages to connect the first part with the second by widening the perspective of the rebellion and by reversing some elements, e.g. the death of Vakulinchuk ends in a massacre in Kiev, the eyeglasses motif belongs at first to Doctor Smirnov to signal his blindness and on the Odessa step, the bespectacled woman (the schoolmistress) is the one shot down.

In *Mother,* the most violent sequences are the main source for the mother to develop her character; she, as the spectator, constantly builds her character until she unfolds her communist consciousness after the trial scene and dies trampled by tsarist soldiers on horseback. While in Eisenstein's film, nobody from the tsarist counterpart is hurt or killed, in *Mother,* a family is first destroyed, and Michail, who has found an

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[90] Ibid. pp. 71

[91] I. Trauberg, "Mat", Rabochii teatr, 1926, no. 43, quoted in Glagoleva, *Mat', pp. 213-214*

[92] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 72

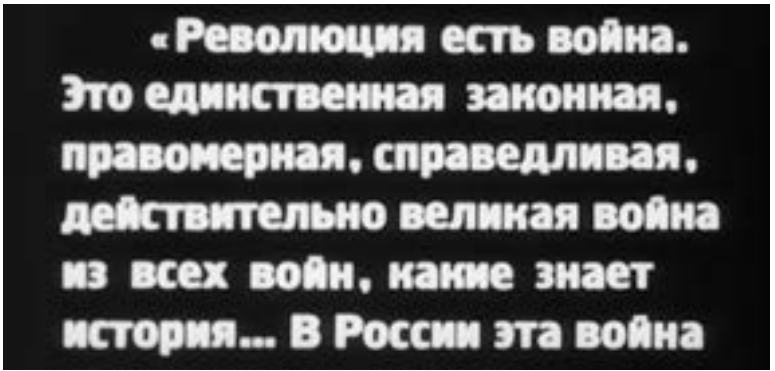
ally in the Black Hundred, is accidentally shot down by a Bolshevik, who will later be beaten to death by the counterrevolutionaries. Finally, in Pudovkin's film, the Ancient Regime is displayed in all its corruption, which is shown in manifold moments (the officer beating the handcuffed Pavel, the trial sequence, the evasion from jail).

MENTIONED SHOTS OF *BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN* AND *MOTHER*

PICTURE 1: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 2: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 3: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN



PICTURE 4: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 5: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 6: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 7: BATTLESHIP POTËMKIN

PICTURE 8: MOTHER

PICTURE 9A: MOTHER

PICTURE 9B: MOTHER

PICTURE 10: MOTHER

PICTURE 11: MOTHER

PICTURE 12A: MOTHER

PICTURE 12B: MOTHER

PICTURE 13: MOTHER

PICTURE 14: MOTHER

PICTURE 15: MOTHER

PICTURE 16A: MOTHER

PICTURE 16B: MOTHER

PICTURE 17: MOTHER

PICTURE 18: MOTHER

PICTURE 19: MOTHER

PICTURE 20: MOTHER

PICTURE 21: MOTHER

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION: *OCTOBER* AND *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

"As an unmuddied lake, friend. As clear as an azure sky of deepest summer"
Alexander “Alex” DeLarge in *Clockwork Orange* (1971)

Thanks to its resonance, the October Revolution, which took place in 1917, can be hailed as one of the most significant events of the last century. One of the main causes can be found in the tsarist handling of the First World War. The ineffective management of the war had drained the nation's resources. By 1917, a significant portion of Russian society recognised that Russia had already been defeated in the war, and that even a possible victory for the Allies would not yield the anticipated benefits nor restore Russia to its pre-war territorial boundaries. Given the futility of persisting in the conflict, the Russian populace became convinced that only a swift resolution through an armistice and peace could prevent the country from disaster.[93] Moreover, the situation was exacerbated after the February Revolution, at the end of which Keresnky seized power. The Provisional Government was now led by a new segment of society, one that did not comprehend the prospects or capabilities of the revolution, which completely lacked experience and possessed no knowledge or factual qualifications necessary to conduct a war or manage the country.[94] This system was completely overturned with the October Revolution led by the Communist Party, which held supremacy over all other entities and organisations within the Soviet state, and in this regard, it was fundamentally a party state from its inception.[95]

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the revolution, in 1927, two films were made: Eisenstein’s *October* and Pudovkin’s *End of St. Petersburg.* According to Billington, the view promoted by the Soviet government emphasises the “heroic” inevitability of

[93] M. Reiman, *About Russia, Its Revolutions, Its Development and Its Present,* Berlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 16
[94] Ibid. pp. 18
[95] Ibid. pp. 22

this pivotal episode. Therefore, the Revolution signifies the inevitable justification of everything virtuous and that could not have occurred in any other way.[96] This new revelation was effectively transformed and portrayed in pageants and films, especially following the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution in 1927.

In traditional cinema, violence was typically left to the viewer's imagination. When instances of violence and their consequences were depicted in classical films, the camera avoided lingering on the gruesome specifics; the portrayal of violence was not sexualized.[97]

Both *October* and *The End of St. Petersburg* illustrate the events that happened in the October Revolution. Lenin's words about the event are enlightening: he stated that during times of significant upheaval and the full application of human potential, revolutions are driven by the class awareness, fervent will, and creativity of millions, motivated by an intense class struggle.[98]

Similarly to what has been analysed in *Battleship Potëmkin,* Eisenstein is more focused on typage and celebration of the masses. At the same time, Pudovkin emphasises the psychological state of his characters. Especially concerning a comparison between *Potëmkin* and *October,* it is to note that Eisenstein's film represents a dialectical rejection of *The Battleship Potëmkin*, since the transition from emotional to intellectual objectives aligns with a shift from reflexology to ideography as the basis of montage. Furthermore, a key element of October's dialectical rejection is its incorporation of parody and comedic elements, contrasting with the earlier film's reliance on pathos and tragedy.[99] While Eisenstein inserts a loosely inspired chronological order by following the historical happenings, Pudovkin does not directly tell the spectator to which time of the revolution he is referring, i.e., the spectator is only able to infer it. In *The End of St. Petersburg*, history is presented as 'another text', acknowledged yet assigned a distinct status. In *October*, the film reconstructs history and integrates it into its narrative.

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[96] J.H. Billington, *Six Views of the Russian Revolution,* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966, pp. 459

[97] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 40

[98] J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 83

[99] Ibid. pp. 83-85

When it comes to violence, Eisenstein is convinced that montage, characterised by its percussive and violent force, represents the core of the film medium and advocates for a radically innovative cinema that would more completely utilise the medium's ability to impose its violent impacts on audiences.[100]

Finally, the role of the camera, as intended by Slocum in his book about violence, comes to light: each time the world undergoes transformation or transfiguration through its projection onto the screen, and each time it is reborn on film, recreated in its likeness, the world no longer endures the anguish of having its double created.[101]

[100] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 39
[101] Ibid. pp. 41

OCTOBER (TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD)

Eisenstein's aim when filming *October* was the creation of a new social dimension, or, with Marx's words, "*The birth of society into a new order after epochs of human existence"* This revolutionary change can be done only through conflicts, seen as the essential principle underlying the existence of all artworks and art forms.[102]

Concerning the events in *October,* Goodwin stated, "*The storming of the Winter Palace in Petrograd, both within Bolshevik culture and as rendered in October, is such a signal event announcing genesis".*[103]

Both the themes and the editing techniques in *October* and *Old and New* depict the Marxist revolution as a spectacle of historical emergence and utopian possibility. Eisenstein was scheduled to showcase the Bolshevik perspective on the fundamental essence of the October Revolution, culminating in the assault on the Winter Palace.[104]

As in *The Battleship Potëmkin, October also* starts with a statement of Lenin: Here, he not only talks about the masses of workers leading to the revolution, but also declares the born of a Soviet State (this is a more concrete element in comparison with his previous film):

"We have the right to be proud that to us fell the good fortune of beginning the building of the Soviet State and, by doing so, opening a new chapter in the history of the world".

To enhance this quote, the film director then portrays masses of people, who are erasing the statue of Alexander 3rd, who exemplifies the profound levels of reaction and repression, along with the extensive apparatus of tsarist oppression"[105] (see pictures 1 and 2). The statue's self-driven collapse reflects the Marxist dialectic inherent in the Russian Revolution: it was initiated by spontaneous class action, yet

[102] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 54
[103]J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993 pp. 78
[104] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 93
[105] Ibid. pp. 94

the regime ultimately fell due to its internal vulnerabilities.[106] In Eisenstein's film, the masses are treated compositionally to emphasise energy rather than pathos, and, when compared to *Potemkin*, they are depicted with dramatic distance and abstraction.[107]

In the meantime, we see the bourgeoisie and the clergy celebrating the Provisional Government, while ordinary people are fraternising by eating together or wearing German helmets. *October* ignores everything that is not Russian. The external world is referenced only a few times: the camaraderie between Russian and German soldiers, the subtitles highlighting the assistance provided to Kerensky by the British, the statues of different gods during the confrontation between Kerensky and General Kornilov (both defined as *"Two Napoleons"*) and the clock rotations indicating the time in major foreign cities at the moment the Bolsheviks took power.[108]

Eisenstein clearly articulates his warning: the bourgeoisie welcomes the Revolution, and the Church endorses it. This revolution belongs to them, despite being influenced by the masses. Therefore, February serves merely as a precursor to the true revolution.[109]

This joyful scene is bound to end with the Provisional Government announcing that the Russians will honour their word about the continuation of World War. This is the film's breakpoint, because Eisenstein directly frames the new enemy of the proletariat: the Provisional government, the pure reincarnation of that tsarist regime, which was seemingly destroyed in the first scene. The very next sequences show masses of people waiting for their daily bread (remembering the inscription of the smashed plate in *Battleship Potemkin),* starving (see picture 3), and an intertitle emphasising this interconnection with the old regime:" *The same old story".* The metaphor of the limited bread ration is exemplified by a press that seems to squeeze and oppress the workers.[110]

Upon Lenin's arrival, the Bolsheviks are identified with the clock behind him. The pathos given by the clocks skyrockets in the final scene, with different clocks

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[106] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 81
[107] J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 88
[108] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell, 1980 pp. 177
[109] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 94
[110] Ibid. pp. 95

showing time in many countries other than Russia.[111] The time dimension plays a greater role than in *Mother,* where Michail just tries to steal the clock for a drink at the tavern. Conversely, in *October,* the action concentrates more on the necessity for the Bolsheviks to be faster than the Provisional Government so that the revolution can achieve success.

The first scene with real violence is the very next one dedicated to the bloody July days, action is split into different sequences: masses of people trying to escape the soldiers and dispersing as ants (see picture 5), a young communist being tortured to death by some bourgeois people while they are enjoying it (see picture 6), the Provisional Government's ordering to raise the bridges, (see picture 7) copies of the Pravda being thrown in the water (see picture 8a) by the army and the destroyed Petrograd committee of the Bolshevik party as symbol of victory for the counterrevolutionaries (see picture 8b).

Concerning the beating of the Bolshevik kid, the film director introduces the pleasure, a new element in his depiction of violence; to this point, every violent scene was concentrated on showing just victims and oppressors. In this specific scene, Eisenstein illustrates the bourgeoisie's compulsion to inflict suffering on others. Something similar can be seen in the trial scene in *Mother,* where a lady is enthused about the trial and considers it a mere form of entertainment, whereas in reality, the central point is the life or death of a man. With regard to the element of pleasure when causing damage to somebody else, Robert Appelbaum wrote in an essay about the aesthetics of violence as follows: *"Harming the other unnecessarily while attempting to apply a strategically superior force: this is the violence of the violated game. Harming the other for the sake of harming the other: this is violence beyond the game: it is the violence of the catastrophe."*[112] Slocum affirms that violence is so interesting for everybody since we possess a craving for cinematic violence, a craving that is both satisfied and potentially generated by such violence. Films do not merely showcase images of violence; they also depict acts of aggression. In other words, we envision ourselves not just as spectators but as participants in this thrilling and frightening instance of violence.[113]

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[111] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 83-84

[112] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp. 120

[113] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 42-43

The protests of the July Days are the consequences of the discontent brought by the Provisional Government with their decisions; however, this upheaval is bound to fail, because there is no previous organisation, the civilians' uprising recalls the happenings on the Odessa Steps in Eisenstein's previous film, an enormous mass of people shot down by the army and incapable of defending themselves. Nonetheless, in *October,* events have an opposite structure in comparison with *Battleship Potëmkin,* where the first upheaval on the Battleship was the successful one, whereas the second one led to a proper massacre; in *Ten Days that shook the world,* the suppressed manifestation and the destruction of the Bolshevik headquarters are a prelude to the victory of communism over Kerensky in the final scene. Eisenstein employs violence in this sequence to represent the inequity in power between the two forces; the revolutionaries' words are rendered ineffective in the face of the Provisional government's overwhelming firepower, which is backed by rifles and machine guns.

This revolt is notably featured in compositions, and the 'truth' (*Pravda*) that has emerged serves as a concise depiction of the sequence's portrayal of the events of July as a crucial historical turning point between February and October, representing the dichotomy between preservation and revolution. The July massacre in Petrograd is captured in a stationary, extremely long shot, avoiding any graphic or bloody details of violence. Instead, the focus is on a single victim within the vignette of an enraged bourgeois mob assaulting a solitary Bolshevik.[114] This delineates a substantial difference from *Battleship Potëmkin,* especially when comparing this massacre with the one on the Odessa Steps, where victims are recognisable and the spectator can sympathise with them; in this sense, *October* can be seen as an evolution in the portrayal of the masses made by the film director, the mass dispersion makes the tragic situation more global, it looks as if Eisenstein wanted to convey that every citizen is in the eyes of the Provisional government an ant, and therefore, powerless, easily killable.

About the time dimension and the pathos element in the film, Goodwin points out:

"*The bridge raising episode [is adopted here] to render in the film material the phenomenon of retardation. Counterrevolutionary elements function as forces of*

[114] J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 88

delay in the momentum of October's events.[...] the montage links this event with the ransacking of the Pravda offices and the dumping of its issues into the river."[115]

The sacrifice of the working class is, somewhat sentimentally, represented by the visuals of the deceased girl and the deceased horse, both positioned in the centre of the bridges, both in a way representing a fragmented river.[116] These bridges appear to operate autonomously; they are colossal iron structures that, through their very movement, devastate the labourers.[117]

In the next scene, the intertitles "*Dictator" and* "*The tsar's lackey"* refer to the figure of Kerensky and his ministers, representing the betrayal of the revolution. Here, Kerensky climbs up an endless staircase, the "ladder of success". The Winter Palace presents a political perspective on the monarchy and, broadly speaking, on power; it lacks uniformity, as it does not function as a cohesive structure, and anyone who engages with it is destined for failure.[118]

Kerensky's toy soldiers are juxtaposed with lines of pistols at Smolny, and a complete segment is dedicated to the animated construction of a rifle: 'Proletarians, acquire the skill to wield weapons!'[119]: the Bolsheviks are the one that will bring the revolution and create a new world, while the chief of the Provisional Government is just a puppet pretending to be the emperor of his world. However, Kerensky's world is bound to collapse once Lenin's group breaks into the Winter Palace with its overwhelming power.

The statue of Alexander 3rd is hence reassembled in reverse, as it stands for "*an anachronistic restoration of autocracy."*[120] The interconnection between these figures (Krensky and Alexander 3rd) can be compared to the trial scene in *Mother*, where the judges are directly linked to tsarist symbols to underline their lack of interest in the trial and their oppressive role in society. Even though we do not see the direct expression of physical violence, the triangle established in the figures of Kerensky, Napoleon and Alexander the Third, poses the basis for the storm of the Winter

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[115] Ibid. pp. 86
[116] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 96
[117] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell, 1980, pp. 181
[118]Ibid. pp. 177
[119] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 83
[120]J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993 pp. 85

Palace, which symbolically can be interpreted as the dethronization of the old, conservative and corrupted power; The bolsheviks reject the negative influence of the tsarist regime in the scene depicting red soldiers while destroying the bottles of wine.

In the Bolshevik Headquarters, Lenin and his comrades are deciding when they will attack the Winter Palace (this is Lenin's second appearance). The last word is pronounced by Lenin, who wants to begin the siege the very next day, with this motivation:

"*The choice was either to wait for Rodzyanko and co. Strangled the revolution, or to begin the uprising. There was no middle course!"*

Lenin's presence here signals a pathos explosion before the final confrontation between the Bolsheviks and the Provisional government.

The film director decides on purpose to show the Mensheviks closed in their little room, spying on the Bolsheviks. The symbolism here is that the leaders of the communist party are the only ones to worship because they actively contributed to the revolution, whereas the mensheviks can be compared to subhumans; they act similarly to rats. The Menshevik delay role, in contrast with pathos, is described by Goodwin:

"*The concern for time here emphasises the political delays that prevent the Revolution from being announced until the early morning of October 26. The menshevik and Socialist Revolutionaries are presented as temporising factors whose uncertainty and unresponsiveness delay the course of history."*[121]

Hence, they, similarly to the counterrevolutionaries in the scene of the rising bridges, try to put off the fight. This symbolic fight can also be observed in *Battleship Potëmkin* with the tarpaulin scene on the deck, where the action was prolonged through manifold shots, which led to an extension of time perception just to be broken by Vakulinchuk's call to arms. In *October*, however, the time dimension is

[121] Ibid. pp. 83-84

directly extended through pathos, particularly in the depiction of the Mensheviks, and through the use of violence in relation to the July Days scene.

After some shots of the ship Aurora, the revolutionaries manage to enter the Winter Palace and lower the bridges. They then proceed to give Kerensky an ultimatum. The ship Aurora signifies the new factor that will fundamentally disrupt the current equilibrium of power between Lenin and Kerensky.[122] In both films, emphasis is often connected to the sea dimension (ships and waves), e.g. in the initial scene of *Battleship Potëmkin,* the crushing waves are a prelude to the sailors ' uprising, whereas in *October,* the ship Aurora serves as a hint to the Bolsheviks' assault of the Winter Palace and their subsequently glorious victory.

Kerensky orders the preparation of the Women's Battalion of Death, which already does not seem reliable, since the female troops are represented as sexualized objects rather than soldiers (see picture 9). When it comes to this battalion, the mentioned "*dialectical denial*" between Battleship *Potëmkin* and *October, as* discussed above, becomes apparent: *Battleship Potëmkin* depicts the tsarist forces to evoke a sense of horror, while the counterrevolutionary troops in October are presented comically. The exaggerated notion of violence associated with the brigade's title is ridiculed as the battalion's soldiers are seen indulging in vanity and idle chatter around Nicholas II's billiard table.[123]

Due to the shots where these women admire a Rodin statue depicting a mother and her child, they are led by sexual frustration (this is counterposed with the organised Bolsheviks at the Smolny).[124] In connection with the sexual sphere, the instances of orgasm appear to provide us with the utmost intimacy with pure presence, allowing for the most immediate engagement in a purely sensual present. In this regard, as the characterisation of an orgasm as a "little death" suggests, it brings the individual nearer to that genuine immersion in pure presence at the moment of death.[125] This theme will be explored further in *Old and New* with the introduction of the separator, intercut by a delighted Marfa, covered in milk.

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[122] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 100

[123] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 85

[124] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 99

[125] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 57

The viewpoint regarding the historical impetus of the populace culminates with the assault on the Winter Palace. On a discursive plane, this concluding event resolves the struggle between the preservationist slogan 'For God and Country' and the revolutionary slogan 'For Peace, For Bread, For Land'. Semantically, the contention lies between a theocratic appeal and a social mandate.

During the assault on the Winter Palace, many lines of action are are displayed: the most striking emerges with the contrast between the Bolsheviks breaking wine bottles (see picture 10), and the Ministers of the Provisional Government that, after a long nap, affirm:" *Gentlemen. Let us meet them in a most dignified manner".* The Bolsheviks' act of destroying the bottles in the Palace can be directly linked to their refusal of the Old regime. They free themselves from this corrupted order; In doing so, "violence" against objects is completely justified. The Ministers, on the contrary, pay more attention to their appearance; their life is spoiled by lushness, and the exterior part plays the most predominant role in their mind.

This indirect fight can be linked to the scene in *Mother*, where Pelageja meets Pavel in prison. The two are talking about serious matters, while the tsarist guard is more interested in killing a cockroach. This theme can also be seen in one of the most violent scenes of *The End of St. Petersburg*, where the dead soldiers on the field are intercut with bourgeois businessmen in the Exchange, who just want to take the maximum advantage of their shares and pay little to no attention to the tragedy happening on the battlefield.

During the assault, the film director highlights more than ever the bond between the Provisional Government and religion by intercutting the action with paintings of Jesus Christ (see picture 10) sanctifying Nikolas 2nd (See picture 11). The soldiers are astonished by a wealth that is unfamiliar to them. A depiction of Christ bestowing blessings upon Nicholas and Alexandra offers a ridiculous perspective on the assumptions of authority. Similar to *Battleship Potemkin*, yet presented on a grand scale, the montage expands these occurrences to create a visual extravagance from devastation. The exuberant excess of the Winter Palace's opulence is broken by the soldiers smashing the wine bottles on the ground: this symbolises the decisive break from the traditional order of meaning.[126]

[126]J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp. 90

During the assault, the Bolsheviks are always portrayed as a dynamic group; they move as if they were an overwhelming force, which swallows everything it finds. The emphasis on Bolsheviks in these scenes is incommensurable; the counterrevolutionaries do not stand a chance against them, especially due to their immobilism; the Provisional Government's army is often represented as a motionless object; it looks as though they were stuck on the floor with their ideas (see picture 12). So they are bound to be crushed by Lenin and his companions.
While the assault happens, we see an awakened boy laughing, Taylor affirmed.

"The boy on the Tsar's throne is asleep: history has passed him by and made the throne irrelevant"[127]

Although the members of the Provisional Government are not depicted while imprisoned (except Kerensky, who managed to escape) in the film, the boy signals the victory of the Bolsheviks over Kerensky. In this sense, the boy can be seen as the symbol of a historical change which will bring a new, brilliant era. Bordwell adds to the ascription of victory to the boy, also the evolution of the passion and pathos. This figure serves as a traditional, desexualised emblem of a new political epoch, symbolising the substitution of the statue presented at the beginning of the film.[128]
About pathos, the event itself and the accomplishment of the revolution stated by Lenin are condensed in just a little time, whereas in reality it took 2 days to make all of this.[129]
This is also the conclusion to *Battleship Potëmkin*. To all the bloodshed dropped during the Odessa Steps, those victims have now been redeemed, and their massacre has not been in vain. While *Potemkin* addresses the emotional weight of social oppression and the need for coordinated action, *October* commemorates the beginning of the revolution. The aim to evoke class consciousness through a visceral response is supplanted by a focus on using images and montage to convey the transformation of history.[130]

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[127] R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany,* Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, pp. 101
[128] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005. pp. 91
[129] J. Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993, 84
[130] Ibid. pp. 82-83

The reception in the Soviet Union was mixed: Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, felt that *October marked a turning point in the development of Soviet film art,* whereas it was criticised by some at the first Party Conference on the Cinema in March 1928 for its symbolism. However, Krupskaya admitted that even though the symbols in the film help the spectator understand the role of the forces, they can hardly be perceived by the masses.[131]

Even though the film was strongly criticised by the critics of the time, Pudovkin once expressed his positive feelings about it and affirmed," *How I would like to make such a powerful failure."*

[131] Ibid. pp. 96

THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG

The tsarist capital is depicted through its statues (see Picture 1), which are filmed from bottom to top. This makes them feel imposing and oppressive. Sorlin describes the role of the statue of Alexander 3rd in the film by writing that the inscription on the statue states: "Petersburg, the capital of the tsars", followed by the sight of the equestrian statue of Peter the Great, recalls Old Russia and tsarism.[132]

During the factory sequence, the first signs of oral violence emerge, where a worker angrily answers back to his supervisor. The conflict between the worker and the stockholder is depicted through a shot/reverse-shot exchange, while the glance-reaction shots of the other workers validate their reaction to the injustice.[133] St. Petersburg is divided between two conflicting classes (workers and Bourgeoisie); as soon as the action takes place in the city, the spectator is informed that capitalists take advantage of the workers.[134] Other than this, Pudovkin highlights the fact that workers always do the most heavy, manual work, while the bourgeoisie, embodied by Lebedev and his minions, pays more attention to shares and transactions. The scene at the Exchange, which is intercut by dead soldiers at the front, shows the type of “transaction” about which is spoken in the film: blood in exchange for money. This strong accusation against the capitalist world finds its counterbalance only during the last scenes after the assault on the Winter Palace, where the Mother shares potatoes with the communist soldiers: The initial striving for personal well-being is superseded by mutual help.

The two narratives of the strike and the war are interspersed with scenes of Lebedev, who is described as the main cause of the violence in the next sequences.[135] Moreover, this contrast is enhanced the first time the manager is shown on the screen: He is represented so that his body does not enter the whole frame[136] (see picture 2). The fatness of Lebedev contrasts with the mother during

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[132] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 1980, pp. 161-162

[133] V Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 51

[134] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 165

[135] Ibid. pp. 167

[136] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 99

the strike, who will affirm that "*they [the bourgeoisie] are getting fat of us*". During the strike, a bread shop (a symbol of capitalism) is devastated.

Other than this, after the communist man's speech, in which he affirms that "*Lebedev can't hold out more than a week"*, Baranovskaya angrily answers back, "*So in a week we will be dead from empty bellies"*. The wife's reaction reveals caution towards outsiders who could potentially undermine her family's limited resources.[137] Meanwhile, she fervently rocks her infant, an action that the viewer interprets as a manifestation of her profound anxiety.[138]

Regarding the tense meeting between the workers and the vice-administrator of the factory, who wants to lengthen the work time, it is worth noting that the latter is depicted as if he dominates the entire space(see picture 4).[139] Hence, a leitmotif throughout the film can be traced, where the symbols of the capitalist world and the tsarist regime dominate all space; their presence is oppressive, as if it has robbed the workers of their very breath.

When the strike begins, the Lad denounces the communist worker and his friends to Lebedev's plant manager in exchange for some money. The young man's actions are uninformed by political factors, resulting in unforeseen outcomes.[140] This fact is followed by the Mother shouting at him (see picture 6) while everybody is staring in disdain at him. The climax of the sequence is reached when she grabs him and shakes him violently as an expression of her anger and desperation, because she knows that the arrest of the communist worker will bring a lack of food at home. A desperate act due to a lack of food is also well displayed in *Old and New* after Marfa finds out about the death of Fomka the bull. Unlike the undead Marfa, who falls to the ground helplessly upon returning home, the mother in Pudovkin's film expresses her despair with energy; she takes the Lad and shakes him, finding a new power in her hands.

The Lad storms into the office of Lebedev, requesting the boss to set the communist worker free. The confrontation between him and Lebedev's minion signals one of the first violent outbreaks in the film; here, the main hero stares directly at the boss with a demonic gaze (see picture 6) before beating up one of his minions (the one who gave him money). Pudovkin gives us some spatial instructions; he indirectly shows

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[137] V. Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 57
[138] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 101
[139] V. Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 60
[140] Ibid. pp. 64

the Lad surrounded by the minions. The protagonist, similarly to what happens with the communist worker, is bound to fail in his uprising because he has not yet obtained the support of the other Bolsheviks and has acted on his own.
During the confrontation, the outbreak of violence is also juxtaposed with the secretary starting to scream: the October Revolution is the highest fear of the bourgeois people. When it comes to violence escalation in this scene, Vance Kepley stated:

"*When the fighting breaks out, however, the space around the Lad begins to warp. The lad tussles with the plant manager and throws him aside, and that action seems to create an energy that radiates out to the rest of the office. In a series of shots with often inconsistent screen direction, we see workers running about, items of furniture overturning, and people shouting*. [...] This is the only time in the film that Lebedev, the personification of capitalism, must deal directly with a representative of the toiling classes"[141]

The main hero is arrested and brought to the police station, where he meets the police officer. The officer in Pudovkin's film also seems to be pleased with arresting the lad and making him suffer: he looks at the handcuffed man with an evil stare while touching his moustache (picture 7). In the end, the officer orders one of his policemen to *"explain him* [the Lad]", i.e. to beat him up. This pleasure is the direct consequence of the Bourgeois people in *October,* who were clobbering the young communists during the July days. In *The End of St. Petersburg,* violence is so standardised that the State itself is accustomed to its use. According to the director, brutal acts, such as kicking an innocent man, are part of the everyday life of the Old Regime.
When it comes to the officer's false indifference and cruelty in seeing the Lad beaten up, Appelbaum wrote that spectatorship necessitates a degree of indifference; however, it also draws the spectator towards an interest in the other that either mimics or may even blend with self-interest. Typically, indifference to the object, viewed solely as form, is paired with an intense absorption in the object itself. It is within the realm that exists between indifference and rapture that both sport and art

[141] Ibid. pp. 67

occur.[142] Furthermore, the interest in the violent act is well described by Slocum, who affirms that throwing a punch is immensely more pleasurable than imagining throwing a punch (he then proceeds to illustrate the famous scene in *The Untouchables* where Al Capone smashes one of his minions' heads with a baseball bat).[143]

Similarly to what happens during the trial session in *Mother,* tsarist justice is not right; instead, it is corrupted, and it takes pleasure in seeing people suffer. While clobbering his prey, the officer becomes distracted, ignoring what is happening around him. It looks as though he is already accustomed to this type of violence. To ascribe this unjustified, vile act to the old regime, Pudovkin intercuts the whole scene with statues in St. Petersburg.

The very next sequence is the one that will lead to the February Revolution: under the intertitle "*Mother Russia calls",* a parade starts to announce that the Russian Empire will take part in the First World War. During the event, a crying tsarist statue is decorated with flowers (see picture 8), which gives the impression that the tsar himself is enthused about the happening; this fact can be ascribed to a more satirical and critical tone because the director jokes about the "seriousness" of the regime. Pudovkin's use of the term 'clear and expressive' refers to the ability to effectively and succinctly communicate a specific idea or emotion, reflecting the director's aim to prevent any confusion or misinterpretation during the film's creation and its audience's experience. In *The End of St. Petersburg*, the adorned statue of Alexander III sheds tears as Europe descends into war.[144]

During the parade, the war supporters throw flowers to the soldiers, who are partly prisoners enlisted in the war (see picture 9). Therefore, the bourgeoisie plays a passive role in a comfortable environment, while peasants and workers are sent to die in the trenches.[145] Neither workers nor peasants are cheering for the soldiers to go to war. Besides, the brutal police officer, who beat the lad in some sequences before, is busy posing for a painting. Therefore, the contrast in the parade sequence emerges in the coquettish, excessive attitude of the wealthy people, who do not understand the consequences of their actions. The State so brainwashes the

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[142] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp. 125

[143] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 42

[144]A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 90-91

[145] V. Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 73

bourgeoisie that they lack empathy towards the ordinary people who are going to die on the front lines.

The most visually striking sequence is the one concerning the war: on the one hand, soldiers on the field are forced to fight for something they do not understand, and nobody wants (see picture 10). On the other hand, businessmen are depicted at the Exchange (their natural habitat) while waiting for the beginning of their working day (see picture 11). The soldiers move in panic, trying to survive another day, while the people at the Exchange follow the voice of the giant Lebedev; they move not as individuals, but as a single machine. They are just as savage as the tsarist army on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potëmkin.* As a foregone conclusion, the war is caused by the will of the higher classes, but it needs to be paid for with the sacrifice of the humble civilians, who are already the prey in everyday life and need to survive and find bread for their families. Unlike Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* with its link between the First World War and the Civil War as examples, where everybody is guilty, in *The End of St. Petersburg*, posh people are shown as the leading cause of war; their craving for power and money has been so intense that other people are forced to die for this.

About the stockholders, it seems that the more soldiers die in the war, the more satisfied they are; the director depicts them as bloodthirsty (see picture 12). This can be related to Pavlo's speech in *Zvenigora,* where the bourgeoisie is represented as a group of beasts, who wait for Pavlo to commit suicide and are not interested in anything but this horrible act, perceived as entertaining. The culmination of the scene in *The End of St. Petersburg* is given by an external voice, who says:" *What are we dying for?"*. Whether German or Russian, the causes of the war are unfathomable to the simple soldiers. This is a universal message that denounces the injustice of the regime. Last but not least, the phrase "*The transaction is completed*" signals the end of this bloody sequence; it underlines that for every dead man, somebody else did manage to earn something. An image of a factory worker, who has collapsed from fatigue, is introduced early in *The End of St. Petersburg* and reappears later; a soldier suffering a slow and painful death in the muddy trenches is interspersed with the stock market sequence, depicting the frantic activity as prices increase ('both parties are content').[146] The newspaper *Pravda* (The Truth), on the dirty ground

[146] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 91

during a rainy day, suggests that the men have been subjected to leftist propaganda, seemingly as a result of clandestine organising activities conducted by communists within their ranks (see picture 13). The sequence places significant emphasis on 'capital' as the origin of destruction; the final title references capitalism in relation to the deceased, attributing the war's devastation to capitalism. Although the similarities between German and Russian soldiers create a sense of equivalence, the relationship between the stock market and the conflict is depicted as causal.[147]

In light of this unjustified massacre, the mother takes part in the uprising in the city, where a shop is destroyed and the bread inside it is stolen. This leitmotif continues throughout the film; the population can't stand the hunger; therefore, they revolt. The small store is the subject of the violation: here, Pudovkin not only addresses the food problem in the pre-Bolshevik state, but also foreshadows the phrase concerning the transaction in the last sequence (the shop is synonymous with entrepreneurship in this scene). Moreover, the mother is the key figure: she concentrates the anger of the other activists against the shop, and she calls out the others to break into it.

Meanwhile, the Provisional Government announces they "*will bring the war to a victorious conclusion"* with the subsequent explosion of bourgeois eros (see picture 14). On the grounds of this affirmation, there are dead soldiers: the bourgeois lust counterbalances the deaths of millions of innocent people.

Shareholders are restless, talkative, portly individuals; by catching fleeting glimpses of faces, hats, spectacles, and chins, the middle class is envisioned as a disorganised assortment of entities, perpetually in a state of agitation.[148] Thus, the director intercuts the sequence with dead soldiers on the front. As happens in the storm of the Winter Palace in *October,* the bourgeoisie is more devoted to words than facts.

The uprising goes on with the confrontation between the plant manager and the Communist Worker, where the roles are switched: this time, the latter wins over the first one. It results in an overturning of the first confrontation. Pudovkin's use of framing emphasises the dominance of the communist figure in the space, overshadowing the small factory manager, who appears to have diminished in size compared to earlier scenes.[149]

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[147] V. Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 75
[148] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 1980, pp. 160
[149] V. Kepley. *The End of St. Petersburg,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 85

After the start of the October Revolution, lines are called back from the front: the Lad and the communist worker reappear and together rise against the general who ordered them to do so. Similarly to what happens with Tymosh in *Zvenigora,* the general is shot down by the platoon, who recognise their new guide in the couple: the path of the Lad is hence complete; he has finally become a Bolshevik. This is testified by the frame where the communist worker and the Lad are put together (see picture 15). About this framing, Vance Kepley wrote:

"*Their glance directions are inconsistent, and Pudovkin uses no master shots to sort out their locations. This allows the dramatic turn at the scene's climax; the firing squad appears to be aiming at the Lad and the Communist but opens fire on the commander. [...] The moment also contains several ingredients that highlight the shift in power toward the proletariat. When the communist addresses the ranks of men, there is a substantial shift in shot scale [...] This recalls the uneven scale of Lebedev and the workers."*[150]

The mother has a similar evolution: after the upsurge, some policemen want to arrest her husband, but she puts her life at risk to save him. The scene is emphasised through the confined space in which it takes place. Moreover, the wife's experience during the escape scene serves as a case study illustrating personal reactions to political inequality: it encompasses the particular emotions and thoughts an individual may encounter when facing injustice. When the woman hurls the cup through the window, her action is entirely justified as a practical reaction to a crisis within the household. Appropriately, it features a household item, a teacup. She converts the cup from a mere domestic object into a form of political weapon, an item to rebel against oppression.[151]

The film's final sequence concerns the storm of the Winter Palace and the conclusion of the October Revolution. If Eisenstein, in *October,* decides not to show the Winter Palace in its entirety, as in Pudovkin's film, the focus is more on the building itself rather than Kerensky and his minions. The director emphasises the physical environment, specifically the palace grounds. The editing patterns focus on the place rather than the opposing forces, making it the target of the attack. The

[150] Ibid. pp. 86
[151] Ibid. pp. 90-91

framings largely overlook the palace defenders and fail to depict any members of the provisional government. Instead, the editing highlights the intricate details of the building, seemingly contrasting Bolshevik soldiers with the palace's features. This concept is reinforced by the recurring intertitle "*against the Winter Palace*."[152]

The elevation and depression of the ship's artillery over the Neva serves as a recurring theme: its repetition provides form and visual coherence to the film while dynamically emphasizing the narrative; the artillery signifies the menacing authority of the state over the laborers, yet it is their toil, diligently polishing shells, that keeps the artillery ready; the artillery is adorned for battle; the guns of the Aurora pay tribute to the fall of the Winter Palace.[153]

After the conquest of the Palace, the mother looks for her husband while delivering bread to other soldiers, including the Lad. The most significant sequence shows her running in the enormous building before meeting her husband: This shows her progressive evolution, from her claustrophobic flat to the enormous Winter Palace.

Mother's evolution is not only mental, but also spatial; she occupies new areas, she is not a mere domestic symbol related to the house, but has a wider function: she plays a fundamental role in the revolution. The symbolic role of the woman is noteworthy; during her initial appearance in the film, she is indoors, safeguarding all her possessions for her family; in her last appearance, she is outside on the street, assisting strangers and offering them the food she had planned to take to her husband.[154]

In conclusion, the theme of the October Revolution is elaborated in both *October* and *The End of St. Petersburg* in two completely different ways. On the one hand, Eisenstein's film focuses more on the key historical figures (Lenin and Kerensky most of all) to convey messages affecting everybody; they incarnate the masses. Moreover, violence, especially during the storm of the Winter Palace, is shown as a flow that cannot be stopped by any means: the strength of the revolution in *October* lies in the people gathered together with one aim.

On the other hand, Pudovkin tells us about the revolution through common people that can easily be recognised (most of all, the Lad and the Mother) and that experience a real awakening of their consciousness through violent events, e.g., the

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[152] Ibid. pp. 92

[153] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, pp. 95

[154] P. Sorlin, *The film in History, restaging the past,* Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 1980, pp. 167

lad storming into Lebedev's office and the Mother leading the strike and assaulting the bread shop. If violence made by common people is the proper way to attain their goals, the brutality of the government and the Bourgeoisie is just their last resort to hold power and exploit the workers.

MENTIONED SHOTS OF *OCTOBER* AND *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 1: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 2: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 3: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 4: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 5: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 6: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 7: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 8A: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 8B: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 9: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 10: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 11: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 12: *OCTOBER*

PICTURE 1: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 2: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 3: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 4: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 5: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 6: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 7: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 8: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 9: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 10: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 11: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 12: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 13: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 14: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

PICTURE 15: *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*

THE CIVIL WAR: *ZVENIGORA, ARSENAL* AND *STORM OVER ASIA*

"Even though I'm no more than a monster - don't I, too, have the right to live?"
Dae Suh Oh in *Oldboy* (2003)

The Civil War (1917-1922) can be interpreted not only as the direct consequence of the October Revolution, but also as the moment in which the rest of the world fathomed the new worldview born in Russia. The Soviet Government estranged foreign nations by rejecting responsibility for debts incurred by prior Russian administrations and by nationalising foreign investments. However, it was primarily Russia's exit from the Great War that incited Allied intervention.[155] The outbreak of the fight between the White Guard and the Red Army perfectly frames the contrast between the old world and the new one.

Among the various challenges faced by the two armies during the civil war, the mass mobilisation of the Russian peasantry emerged as the most formidable and crucial in military terms. The backing of the peasantry was vital for the execution of all military operations in Russia. Any large-scale army would predominantly consist of peasants, who would also be responsible for its sustenance and transportation. However, the overwhelming majority of the Russian peasantry, having solidified their control over land and local governance during 1917-18, showed hesitance to engage in the civil war, which they perceived as a "war between brothers." Neither the White nor the Red factions possessed genuine political authority in rural areas to facilitate the mass mobilisation of the peasantry. The leaders of the White faction were too closely linked to the former landowning class to exert any enduring influence over the peasantry. The Tsarist insignia worn by White officers were viewed by the peasants as symbols of the old regime and the discipline of the imperial army, both of which they had rejected in 1917. Conversely, the Red Army lacked a dependable political or military framework in the countryside and did not enjoy the active support of the rural populace. Nevertheless, as previously noted, when the peasants perceived an imminent threat of a White victory, they would unite in support of the Red Army. It

[155]A. Trapeznik, *Foreign intervention from 'down under' during Russia's Civil War, Canterbury, University of canterbury, 2005*, pp. 151

appears that the peasants' distrust of the Bolsheviks was not as intense, nor as deeply rooted, as their animosity and fear towards the old landed gentry.[156]
The most relevant characteristic of this event lies in the fact that the civil war was marked by extreme violence, resulting in a total of 10 million injuries [157] and between 1 to 2 million refugees fleeing from Russia due to the instability in the country. The White and Red Terror, widespread famine, and numerous mass arrests and executions characterised this tumultuous period.
Dovzhenko's *Zvenigora* and *Arsenal,* Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia,* depict this pivotal episode from the communist perspective. In all three films, there is a particular focus on the protagonists being common people who end up awakening their communist consciousness and leading the revolution.
Zvenigora (1927) is Dovzhenko's fourth work in the film industry and is considered by critics to be his first real film. It develops on different levels and during different periods, but they are always characterised by one single aim: the search for the ancient treasure of Zvenigora. Thanks to this plot organisation, Dovzhenko also manages to show the evolution of pathos and the conflicts that derive from the obsessive interest in the myth narrated by the old man. Here, violence is both physical and psychological, and, concerning this theme, Freud affirmed that "*A clear boundary between real and symbolic violence is difficult or impossible to draw. Real violence can have symbolic meaning, and symbolic violence can have real consequences.[158]"*
Arsenal (1928) instead focuses on the civil war, seen as closely related to the First World War. This film moves between "a celebration of the revolutionary spirit and reservations about the turmoil and human misery caused by revolutionary violence."[159] The revolution and the civil war are represented in a grey area: The director sheds some light on the negative consequences of the wars, instead of focusing on the classical division between heroes and villains.
If *Zvenigora* presented the challenge of national identity on screen, *Arsenal* introduced the related issue of the enemy. When groups of individuals recognise and

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[156] O. Figes, *The Red Army and Mass Mobilization during the Russian Civil War 1918-1920,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 209
[157] In Dovzhenko's *Arsenal,* the spectator is clearly shown the streets packed with dead bodies of both the revolutionaries and the counterrevolutionaries
[158] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 40
[159] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 62

categorise themselves, they establish boundaries that separate people into classifications of "us" and "them", friend and foe.[160] In this context, Sam Keen analyses the birth of enmity, in which he says, "*In the beginning, we create the enemy. Before the weapon comes, their image. We think of others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them.*[161]"

Storm Over Asia (1928) is the last film of Pudovkin's trilogy about revolution. As the title suggests, action does not take place in either Moscow or St. Petersburg, as in the previous films, but in Asia (more specifically, in Mongolia). To expand revolutionary ideals across borders, therefore, Pudovkin chooses to counterpose Mongols and the British Empire, where the former play the role of victims and the latter that of oppressors. Finally, Bair, the main character, is different from Pavel Vlasov in *Mother* and the Lad in *The End of St. Petersburg* because his character mainly focuses on unpredictable rage outbursts, e.g., in the yurt at the beginning of the film or during the fur sale with the English merchant

[160] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000, pp. 98

[161] S. Keen, *Faces of the enemy: Reflection of the hostile Imagination: The Psychology of Enmity,* New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1986, pp. 10

ZVENIGORA/ THE ENCHANTED PLACE

Dovzhenko's *Zvenigora* opposes Ukrainian nationalism and advocates for a multinational working class in Ukraine, emphasising their fight against both national and class oppression. The film highlighted the shared interests of the working classes in Ukraine and Russia, while also asserting Ukraine's distinct cultural identity.[162]

The four-part framework, which includes the prologue featuring the grandfather and the Cossacks, the segment addressing World War I and the revolution, the dramatisation of the Roksana legend, and the portion concerning the civil war and the early Soviet era, enables Dovzhenko to explore parallels and contrasts between contemporary Ukraine and its historical past.[163]

The first violent sequence is shown on screen when the Old Man, the central figure of the plot, fights alongside the Cossacks against the Poles (this first part is presumably set in the 17th/18th century) while searching for the secret around Zvenigora. In this scene, the Poles are hiding in the trees in order to take the cossacks by surprise; nonetheless, they are bound to be shot down thanks to the Old Man's eyesight (see picture 1). The representation of the first enemy of the film is essential, because only the Poles are depicted while hiding. Moreover, we do not see their faces; they just fall down the trees one after the other like drunk monkeys. This could be ascribed to Keen's representation of the enemy as a faceless, completely dehumanised and devoid of his human characteristics.[164]

The spectator then finds out who the real enemy is, not just the Poles, but Death itself (see picture 2), a horrific figure personified by a monk that appears from the Otherworld with a lantern. Since the monk is immortal, guns cannot harm him; the soldiers are scared by this mythical figure, who disappears after the cossacks' escape. This character is essential for understanding the theme of violence in the film, because "it" will have different reincarnations as the plot goes on. This is also hinted at by the fade-out at the end of the sequence (see picture 3).

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[162] Ibid. pp. 89-90

[163] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 47-48

[164] S. Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflection of the Hostile Imagination: The Psychology of Enmity,* New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1986 pp. 24-25

These figures born from the Death will also be more brutal than the original monk, e.g., the same Pavlo, the grandson of the Old Man, who will drive his grandfather crazy. More specifically, concerning the diabolical monk and its reincarnation, "*Dovzhenko suggests in this protean figure that reactionary forces endure over epochs, that they reappear in different guises."*[165]

The fantastic element is one of the main reasons why the film was difficult to understand at the time, similarly to *October*, which was screened in the same year and received considerable criticism for its symbolism. In this first scene it is possible to trace Dovzhenko's aim: the material referenced in the ancient sections, while imbued with myth, also carries a political undertone, particularly evident when the prologue mentions the Haydamakas, the Cossack groups from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that played a significant political role in Ukraine and defended the territory against Polish invaders.[166]

Before going further with the plot, it is important to describe the three main characters of the film: The Old Man (also called Grandfather), Pavlo, and Tymosh. Their bond works in a similar way to the one in *Mother* between Michail and Pavel*,* but it is explained on a more symbolic level. The Old Man represents the Ukrainian rural part of the population. At the beginning of the film, he is the master of Pavlo, and he tells him the tale of Zvenigora. In the end, he is convinced by Pavlo that the train driven by Tymosh and the Bolsheviks is a demon, but then the Bolsheviks teach him how to behave in the New World.[167] The Old Man is also the bridge between the first monk's appearance and the contemporary story; he is the key to fathom the essence of *Zvenigora.* The grandfather is not simply a nostalgic representation of our people's history. Through this character, Dovzhenko aimed to illustrate the connections between generations, particularly the elderly, who often step back in favour of the youth.*[168]*

Pavlo, on the contrary, is one of the reincarnations of the devil; this is visible in the scene of the Old Man's nightmare: the demon that appears there is directly linked to

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[165] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 52

[166]Ibid. pp. 48

[167] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 91

[168] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 91

Pavlo blowing some bubbles (see picture 4)[169]. Therefore, he is the contemporary antagonist in the story; the spirit of the demon is transferred into his body and mind. Unlike the *Mother,* Pavlo grants Dovhzhenko the opportunity to liberate the grandfather from the weight of embodying a solely reactionary impulse and allows him to attribute a more intricate role to the character.[170]

While Pavlo is almost always connected with the soil, the land, Tymosh is the symbol of the city, of progress; he does not believe in his grandfather's tales and is determined to keep on studying and to serve the Bolsheviks' cause. As soon as he is displayed on the screen, Tymosh appears as a diligent person (unlike Pavlo, who blows bubbles) by repairing an object with his small hammer (see picture 5). Similarly to Pudovkin's film, Tymosh plays the same role as Pavel in helping his relative.

The conflict between the two brothers is already in the air, and the premonition of the Old Man to the crying mothers encompasses it:

"More than one mother cried for her son, both on the German and Ukrainian soil [...] One people rose against another people, kingdom against kingdom. The enemy of humankind reigns over us…"

This statement encapsulates Dovzhenko's approach to the portrayal of brutality in the film. His attitude implies that comprehending the eternal truth of *Zvenigora* enables one to overcome the transient nature of events, specifically the political turmoil of the twentieth century.[171] The generalisation of this premonition (the whole world will be affected by it) serves to expand the field: this is not only the story of a village in Ukraine; the overarching theme serves to put the whole world on the same level. A similar technique is used in Eisenstein's *October*, where Russian and German soldiers are shown fraternising.

Regarding violence, another scene to mention is the rebellion of the soldiers against their general. First of all, Tymosh fraternises with the armed soldiers by reaching out (see picture 6). He is called out by the general, who wants him to be shot down. Here, Dovzhenko heroically portrays the revolutionary. He stands in front of the

[169] Ibid. pp. 56
[170] Ibid. pp. 54
[171] Ibid. pp. 55

platoon that is ready to open fire. Unlike *The Battleship Potëmkin*, the hero is not afraid of death; he trusts the soldiers and knows the platoon won't shoot at him (see picture 7). Finally, shot after shot, Tymosh is still standing; he goes by the old general, who falls to his death (see picture 8) in a sequence that symbolises the new order overcoming the old one. The victory of the young Bolshevik was already hinted at by the fact that the tsarist general, in a spasmodic, arrogant way, allowed Tymosh to give the order to the platoon. He was already in charge of the soldiers; this is the prelude to the defeat of Pavlo at the end of the film.

When it comes to military successes, it is underlined that such military achievements are the domain of legends. The contemporary segments lack any such martial triumphs, and the revolution's success is not attributed to military strength. Dovzhenko does not depict a triumphant revolutionary army. Instead, war merely interrupts the natural progression of life.[172] The film only hints at the outbreak of war by replacing natural scenes of rural life with scythes; haystacks become rifles: this means the revolution suspends the natural cycle of life, it disrupts social order.[173]

If the older brother is linked with the present, with the mechanical rifles and the city, the younger one, Pavlo, is closely related to the past, to the old traditions. Hence, the first one is destined to become a Bolshevik, the second one a nationalist.[174]

According to Vance Kepley, the difference between the two is constantly repeated:

"*Contrasts between the two young men run throughout the film. During the sequence set in World War II, for example, Dovzhenko cuts from Pavlo, huddled fetal-like in the "treasure" hole, to Timosh at the front, defiantly emerging from a trench to forge a separate peace with the Germans."* [175]

After the confrontation scene, Dovzhenko immediately intercuts it with the Old Man narrating the tale of Zvenigora to his grandson in a rural landscape. The main hero of this tale is Roxana, who lived in Zvenigora, an enchanted place, which is destroyed in the end by a mysterious population (this story probably hints at the destiny of the

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[172] Ibid. pp. 58
[173] Ibid. pp. 58
[174] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 92
[175] IV. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 56

Ukrainian people after the destruction of the Kievan Rus'). The conquerors act in a very brutal way; they kill many innocent people (see picture 9) who tried with no success to defend themselves. A comparison can be drawn between *Battleship Potëmkin* and *Zvenigora*: in both films, innocent people are massacred by a superior, faceless, soulless force. However, the main difference lies in the dimension of violence. In Eisenstein's work, the content is real, concrete; the massacre is happening in a specified time and place. In Dovzhenko's film, the cruellest scene occurs in a tale: this enhances the bond between reality and fantasy that is observable in all *Zvenigora.* The inequity in power between victims and conquerors is sharply depicted in one sequence where a villager with a handmade wooden axe tries to harm a soldier in heavy, impenetrable armour and, failing, he is killed[176].
Thus, the Old Man is a physical participant in the legend; he is one of the villagers who tries to defend Zvenigora at all costs, but his head is cut off in the end. The formidable grandfather figure, representing Ukraine's rich history and traditions, challenges Zvenigora's seemingly anti-nationalist position. Ultimately, the grandfather has withstood a millennium of oppression from external forces.[177]
The Old Man himself can be seen as a bridge between reality and fantasy. In particular, the Grandfather is present in all four segments of the film, offering a significant element of continuity from one segment to the following. He must endure through the ages to represent the lasting traditions of Ukraine.[178] The legend ends with the curse pronounced by the chieftain, who is one personification of the monk, against Roxana and the others.
It is to highlight that the Old Man misunderstands his tale, since the wealth is in reality symbolised by the invaders' ship filled with gold, yet it is truly personified in Roksana. Upon her death, as her characteristics are mystically transmuted into the landscape of the countryside, we come to understand that the feminine and fertile nature of the land serves as the foundation of life and prosperity.[179]
With regard to the different story interpretations, Pavlo firmly believes that Zvenigora concealed gold; Tymosh begins to understand that his grandfather's tales symbolise

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[176] See also the jail evasion in *Mother*
[177] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 92
[178] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 54
[179] Ibid. pp. 60

a different kind of treasure, namely the iron ore and coal that would fuel the Soviet industrial revolution. The old man's quest for the hidden treasure also signifies Ukraine's pursuit of freedom.[180] The different ideas about the treasure are reflected in the destinies of Pavlo and his older brother, their political views and their national identities: this tale plays a key role because violence and pathos will be generated from the different views the two brothers have concerning it. Liber goes further in this contrast by writing:

"*If Pavlo represented Dovzhenko's political views in 1917-1920, then Tymosh, who received his grandfather's approval in the final scene, symbolised a politically reborn Dovzhenko*"[181]

About the connection between the past and the future, it is possible to make a comparison between Roksana's dream about a dragon's head and the Old Man's nightmare, which ends up with the monk's face; Roxana's dream anticipates the arrival of the invaders, while the Old Man's nightmare echoes his obsession that will lead to the transformation of the train in a demon in the final sequence.[182]
In the very next sequence, Pavlo dyes his horse white[183] and goes to conquer the village. He claims to preserve the heritage of Ukraine; however, he attempts to achieve this by aligning himself with the White Guard, as if counterrevolution were equivalent to tradition.[184] The scheme analysed in *Mother* has been toppled. Dovzhenko demonstrates that being a counterrevolutionary or not is not a matter of age; instead, it depends on the environment in which a person has grown and their

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[180] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 92
[181] Ibid. pp. 93
[182] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 54
[183] In various contexts, the white horse can symbolize both life and death, along with other concepts such as purity, victory, spiritual enlightenment, and strength.
In the context of death, the white horse may signify the 'pale horse' from the Apocalypse, representing Death. Additionally, in folk beliefs, the white horse is often linked to the transition into another world. In the Apocalypse, the Revelation of John the Evangelist outlines the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, one of whom rides a 'pale horse', frequently interpreted as a symbol of death.
In folk beliefs, certain folk traditions associate the white horse with funeral rites, symbolizing the creature that transports the soul of the deceased to the afterlife.
In the context of life and death, the white horse serves as a dual symbol, embodying both life (in terms of purity, victory, spiritual enlightenment) and death (in relation to the afterlife).
[184] Ibid. pp. 56

experience. Pavlo conquers the village because of his Grandfather's influence. The scene intertitle at the end of this conquest is crystal clear. Pavlo, who wears the same clothes as the chieftain in the legend of Zvenigora:

"*Be aware, native village. Pavlo is advancing riding on a white horse [...] The sun had not risen yet. Red guerrillas left the village, abandoned their native village to the villain Pavlo."*

This is the only contemporary battle displayed in the film. In Dovzhenko's mind, the triumph of the Bolsheviks is assured by industrial strength rather than military power. In *Zvenigora*, the revolution prevails not due to the violent actions of an armed force, but through the productive abilities of the workers and peasants. The revolution was constructed from the foundation up, resulting in a vibrant society. Contrary to the misguided faith in superstition and miracles, the Bolsheviks achieved a true miracle by reforming the social and economic structures of Ukraine.[185]

Tymosh and the other red soldiers are forced to leave the village, and a woman follows him. However, she falls to the ground after he refuses to return to the town. The scene's climax marks Tymosh's decisive rejection of rural life for the advantages of the industrial, more advanced world. Subsequently, Pavlo's speech in front of the public, composed of bourgeois people, is important, as Dovzhenko shows the true face of the Bourgeoisie in the film. First of all, they are depicted in a satirical, almost grotesque manner with animal traits (see pictures 11 and 12); they seek entertainment at the expense of others, and they are incapable of waiting like predators, whose primary aim is to consume their prey. This can be linked to the depiction of the Black Hundreds in the tavern of Pudovkin's *Mother.* In both films, the bourgeoisie share the same characteristics; they simply wait for their prey to come, while sharing the common image of abundance.

The craving for entertainment closely related to violence is well explained by Appelbaum: He affirms that what we desire in violent entertainment is a form of "excitement" that has largely been absent from our daily lives. This assertion is likely accurate. However, as real violence becomes increasingly distant from our everyday existence, simulations become more widespread, and the concept of violence

[185] Ibid. pp. 59

becomes equally, if not more, integral to our daily experiences than it was during times characterised by greater bloodshed.[186]

During his speech, Pavlo speaks about the fate of Ukraine and in the end, he fakes to shoot himself, but he is interrupted by a policeman. The fact that Pavlo fakes to shoot himself is a prelude to his true suicide in the final scene: the spectator finally sees the true face of the wicked man. He follows his rules; the enemy in *Zvenigora* is subtly represented as a grey figure that is hardly fathomable.

Aside from this, it is worth noting that the depiction of the ravenous Paris audience features a prominent overlay of a bourgeois figure's large visage looming over the crowd. This imagery recalls the appearance of the monk, whose face is similarly presented in a significant overlay during the prologue and in the dream of the grandfather.[187] Slocum well encapsulates the essence of the sequence by writing in his book about violence in cinema that *"The loss of experience creates a consumer hungry for thrills.[188]"*

The film's final scene is the right conclusion to this dichotomy between Pavlo and Tymosh, land and city, tradition and progress. This is the civil war narrated through symbols. Pavlo, appearing from behind like a demon (see picture 13), convinces the Old Man that the train is the devil that appears in his nightmares; he has replaced the monk of the script as the embodiment of malevolence and exploitation.[189]

Tymosh, who is in the vehicle, manages to stop it in time and rescues his grandfather, who will later become one of the Bolsheviks. As a consequence, Pavlo lies dead on the ground: the civil war has been won by the Bolsheviks in this symbolic image. Concerning the Old Man's deception, Vance Kepley signals:

> "*The vagrant monk ultimately manages to exploit the grandfather's superstition. In the final scene, he manipulates the Old Man into trying to destroy the Bolshevik train. Grandfather is led to believe that he should keep the treasure from being defiled by the train."*[190]

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[186] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp. 123

[187] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 60

[188] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 55

[189] Ibid. pp. 56

[190] Ibid. pp. 52

In this scene, violence needs to be read more psychologically; the Old Man is tricked into thinking the train is the enemy to stop. The acceptance of the Old Man by the Bolsheviks needed to be done in order to underline the possibility of political reeducation in the soviet system. The embrace of the Soviet Ukrainian revolution implies that the grandfather and his narratives can find harmony with the emerging socialist state.[191]

It is possible to make a comparison between the train in *Zvenigora* and the ship in *Battleship Potëmkin*: symbolically, they are both moving into a radiant, better future.

When it comes to its reception, *Zvenigora* was criticised at the time for its complexity:" *Zvenigora - with its camera trickery, its frequent narrative ellipses, its final sections and its many invocations of Ukrainian culture arcana - baffled its distinguished Moscow audience."*[192] Nonetheless, not everybody had the same idea about the film; Eisenstein praised it, saying that Dovzhenko's film marked "*the birth of an artist.* [193]. Both Eisenstein and Pudovkin hailed it as a masterpiece.[194]

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[191] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 89

[192]V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 46

[193] Ibid. pp. 46

[194] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film Institute, 2000 , pp. 94

ARSENAL

Arsenal (1928) comes right after *Zvenigora* in Dovzhenko's cinematographic production. The plot here focuses on the defence of the Bolshevik arsenal in Kyiv. The film was commissioned to celebrate the anniversary of the event, which took place a decade before. Dovzhenko admitted:

"I wanted to make a film about the revolution, not the palace revolution, but the revolution of peasants, workers, and intellectuals who made the revolution and then did not get anything.[195]*"*

Even though *Arsenal*'s main aim should have been the glorification of the revolution in Ukraine, the film director drops hints that strongly contrast with the main message of his work, e.g., the connection between the First World War and the civil war; both are destructive and serve only to bring despair and death among people. Concerning this aspect, parallels between World War I and the Revolution are continuously drawn, instilling moral uncertainty regarding the revolutionary endeavour. In many ways, the second segment of the film mirrors the first, depicting the final stages of World War I and its impact on Ukraine. The revolutionary ideal, by sacrificing innocent lives, succumbed to the harsh truth of a life-and-death conflict. Dovzhenko implied that all factions, including the Bolsheviks, bore some degree of responsibility for the widespread decline that accompanied the Civil War.[196] Differently from *The End of St. Petersburg,* where Pudovkin directly linked the death of the soldiers to the Bourgeoisie and the government, in Dovzhenko's film, the focus is more on the event itself, its a reflection on history repeating itself: even though people change, tragedies such as the first World War or the Civil War won't stop. The Ukrainian film director effectively conveys a strong message from the outset, namely that no one is flawless in their actions.

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[195]V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 74
[196] Ibid. pp. 99-100

The film starts with some sequences that show the spectator the consequences of the conflict: trenches, a very slim mother in a room, a crippled man, and a soldier who touches the breasts of a dead woman (see picture 1). Every sequence has one thing in common, and it lies in the fact that war makes human beings more similar to beasts, both in body (the mother and the crippled man) and in behaviour (the soldier). The loss of human traits is enhanced by the mother beating his crying kid (see picture 2) and the crippled man clobbering his horse. The conflict between humans and nature (represented by the farmer and the horse) is a leitmotif of the film. While in *the End of St. Petersburg*, ordinary people were just described as victims of a larger system based on exploiting vulnerable individuals to make money, in *Arsenal,* victims become at the same time executioners at the expense of weaker people: a chain has been established, where everybody is at the same time prey and predator.

An outbreak of brutality is signalled right in the next sequences, which depict the war right at the front: grenades explode, missiles are launched, soldiers are moved as herds. To deliver more pathos to the scene, Dovzhenko shows a German soldier who takes off his mask and starts laughing due to gases (see picture 3) and the hand of a dead soldier (see picture 4). The soldier laughing at death embodies the quintessential nihilistic action of an individual who has succumbed to the insanity of warfare.[197] Despair is above everybody, regardless of their nationality. The only way out is to abandon themselves to madness: "*The World War consists of an elaborate, vicious system of destruction which incorporates all classes in the Ukraine[198]".*

Until now, on the screen, the main subjects were either dead or alive; there has been no in between. Dovzhenko now displays an officer killing a soldier who disobeyed the orders of his superior. The merciless officer takes the rifle from the hand of the dead (see picture 5). The sequence is intercut with the intertitle "*Where is the enemy?",* whose aim is to underline the vanity of death on the front, the lack of justifiable causes. The dead German soldier challenges the reason for the whole operation. His inquiry is addressed when a German officer appears and executes him for his refusal to proceed with the pointless advance. This scene suggests that

[197] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 68
[198] Ibid. pp. 65

class adversaries transcend national identities and establishes the class conflict that unfolds in the second part of the film.[199]

The indirect fraternisation between German and Russian armies and, most of all, the uselessness of war can also be found in Pudovkin's *End of St. Petersburg*, when an enlisted man wrote:" *What are we dying for?".* In Pudovkin's film, the enemy is shown; it is the bourgeoisie and Lebedev's system. In Dovzhenko's *Arsenal,* the question posed in this scene is more subtle; An answer is never given.

The train crash scene is the true moment that marks the start of the second part, the one connected to the civil war. Regarding the train scene in *Arsenal,* Vance Kepley wrote:

"The train wreck scene is pivotal, providing the break between the two sections [...] While the train crash is an enormous catastrophe, it is also an essential purging. [...] The only course is a completely new beginning, and as is traditionally the case, renewal follows purgation. Tymosh seems literally to rise from the dead when he emerges from the wreckage.[200]"

The true role of the machines in this film is exemplified: Mechanical tools given by technological progress and innovation are permanently the enemy of the human being. They spread chaos and despair: during the war, grenades and rifles already foreshadowed this problem; here, the personification of chaos becomes the train, and in the final sequence, the minigun used by Tymosh suddenly stops functioning. Technology often serves as the adversary in *Arsenal*, as it amplifies human errors. Individuals mismanage or relinquish control over the machinery, which subsequently retaliates against them.[201]

The train crash as a genre is considered as an equation between technological destruction, pleasure and terror; it is the "imagination of disaster" and denotes the evolution in the spectators' interests. The crash thus transforms into an emblem of a singular moment, the elusive instant of absolute presence, the boundary of immersion in the sensory experience of the now that we can never truly achieve.[202]

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[199] Ibid. pp. 66

[200] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, pp. 64

[201] Ibid. pp 68

[202] J. D. Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema,* New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 54-55

While in *Zvenigora,* technology plays a positive role, which is counterposed with the "underdeveloped" nature, in *Arsenal* Dovzhenko overturns the situation; it seems that nature is the true response to all the terror spread by machinery. However, in both Dovzhenko's films, the train is a presage of death; in *Zvenigora,* it is initially depicted as the personification of the devil in the eyes of the Old Man, but there, nobody dies because of it.

The same protagonist, Tymosh, can be seen as the link between the two films: in the first one, he develops his communist conscience and decides to become a Bolshevik; here, he decides to undertake and follow this path once and for all. The train sequence ends with Tymosh affirming," *I will become a train engineer".*

To enhance the tragic situation and the consequences of war, Dovzhenko shows us a mother with an illegitimate child and a soldier coming back home. In the meantime, Tymosh is displayed as he asks the factory boss for a job. He stands before the factory manager in a manner reminiscent of the returning husbands. The manager's inquiry - 'Who are you' resonates with the 'Who-Qui-Wer' questions that the husbands directed at their unfaithful spouses. In a way, Tymosh embodies both a returning veteran and an illegitimate child. Yet he is metaphorically 'born' from the consequences of war.[203]

The enslaved Ukraine and its long oppressed status are visible in the procession sequence, where the director shows the leitmotif of the free Ukraine and nationalists, who want to be independent from everybody, which they repeat many times during the film:

" *For 300 years I was tortured by the Katsap* [which means a Russian, especially from a Ukrainian perspective.*]"*

This is already an ominous presage to the betrayal of the Black Sea Fleet during the "pan-ukrainian" congress. During the congress, the bourgeoisie stands behind the spokesperson while the workers are represented in front of him; there is a significant power division. During the meeting, many important events, which will generate tension, take place, and many lines of action start developing.

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[203] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 64

First of all, one participant at the congress asks a question that is fundamental to understanding the theme of violence in the whole film. He asks:

"I wonder, can we kill the bourgeois and officers on a street if we meet them?"

The inquiry addresses the core ethical dilemma of the revolution: Considering the existence of class adversaries, does the proletariat hold the moral right to eradicate them systematically? Dovzhenko does not give a clear answer; there is only one scene where a nurse answers yes to this question, which is written in a letter from the dead man. The nurse speaks to the audience. She "*posed the moral problem posed by the question outward.*[204]*"*

Other than this, during the congress, the Bolshevik orientation of Tymosh becomes clear when he is asked whether he is Ukrainian, and he answers by saying:" *Yes, a worker".* He already knows that the revolution's main aim is to bring down ethnic differences to conform everybody to the communist ideology. In this scene, Tymosh, as a Ukrainian, recognises the oppression endured by Ukrainians; however, he did not believe that national independence would automatically liberate the impoverished from the trajectory of social inequality.[205]

Last but not least, the betrayal of the Black Sea Fleet (representing the government) plays a determining role in the representation of the parts. More specifically, the Fleet sends a letter where it is written:

"*Do not lie to our brothers and sons, because they will soon see your reality, and you will be cursed by all Ukraine's sons"*

This appears as the direct negation of the fraternisation that occurred in Eisenstein's film between the Battleship Potëmkin and the Black Sea Fleet.

Due to this intense debate, workers went on strike, which led to a conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Bourgeoisie. During the preparation, many workers and peasants raise their rifles in mass (see picture 6): this can be seen as a clear reminder of Eisenstein's *October,* when common people were framed all together

[204] Ibid. pp. 67

[205] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000, pp. 98

with the intertitle "*Proletarians learn to use your rifle"*. The image creates the new proletarian system. Later, the film director displays the disasters caused by this fight, where many civilians and soldiers have been killed or severely injured (see picture 7). In this scene, only a nurse stands out: it looks as though she could be the only one to bear with all this chaos brought by the civil war. The representation of urban combat, featuring the lifeless bodies crushed beneath feet, evokes a sense of utter mayhem. The distinctions between the factions are obscured, and the killings are indiscriminate. The disorder depicted in the scene recognises that the matter of eliminating class adversaries is framed in misleadingly logical terms.[206]

The only element of reconciliation in the film is presented through the funeral of the deceased soldier, where humans and nature are shown to be in complete harmony. More specifically, soldiers and horses travel together to satisfy the last desire of the dead man to meet his wife. The organic reality not only replaces the mechanical one, but the sequence progresses by reversing the train's direction. The train was coming back from the front; the carriage advanced towards the battle. The horses perceive the revolutionary spirit and the thrill of their undertaking.[207] The Bolsheviks also rely on nature, the nationalists only on technology. Hence, the latter are bound to be defeated.

As in the First World War, many innocent people were killed, and so were they during the Civil War. Arsenal's bipartite structure includes two distinct conflicts: the first being a war stemming from corrupt, imperialist policies, and the second, a proletarian revolt aimed at unifying Moscow and Kiev under a socialist framework. The initial part, characterised by its portrayal of pervasive suffering and meaningless brutality, serves as a grim benchmark for the audience to evaluate the moral implications of the revolution that unfolds in the second part. [208]

The final conflict in Kiev is where everything breaks down, where Dovzhenko delineates the part played by people and machines as a leitmotif of the film. First of all, weapons and technology convey a message of misfortune; they are the main cause of all the suffering. Besides, they are untrustworthy, as in the scene of Tymosh's minigun jamming during the last battle (see picture 8). In the industrial part

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[206] . Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 67

[207] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 70

[208] Ibid. pp. 63-64

of the film, the one strictly linked with industrial production, it becomes clear that the labourers fall prey to their industriousness; they manufacture the weaponry that ultimately devastates their homeland. As the conflict for the factory reaches its peak, the entire Kievan economy collapses.[209]

About humans, Dovhzhenko underlines that Bolsheviks are any better than the others. This is visible during the confrontation between a red soldier and a bourgeois man, where the latter orders his prey: "*Stand with your face to the wall so I could kill you in your back".* The Bolshevik turns himself around and, while staring at the harmed man, ironically answers back *"Can you if I look into your eyes? [...] and why can I?",* just before stealing the weapon from the hand of the aggressor and shooting him down with a demonic smirk (see picture 9). On the one hand, the bourgeois man is not able to shoot his enemy while looking in his face, a symbol of cowardice; on the other hand, the Red soldier is the one who can shoot and is not afraid of killing a person. Dovzhenko presents a notable contrast between the political aspirations of the Ukrainian nationalists and those of the Bolsheviks. While *Arsenal* commemorates the success of the Bolsheviks, their ruthless nature may have weakened the film's intended message.[210] Vance Kepley goes further by stating," *The Bolshevik is prepared to act ruthlessly. He barely hesitates before firing the fatal shot, and in so doing seems to confirm the necessity of dispassionately shooting down enemies of the revolution.[211]"*

The film's final scene, where some nationalist soldiers try in vain to shoot Tymosh down, but their rifles seem not to affect the body of the legendary soldier (see picture 10), so they escape. In this sequence, Dovzhenko does not represent just the soldier Tymosh [212], but conveys a deeper message: as long as an idea remains alive and present in people's minds, nobody can sway them. Regarding this final scene, Liber wrote:

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[209] Ibid. pp. 66

[210] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000,pp. 100 (see also V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 72-73)

[211] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 71

[212] See also chapter 3 of *Battleship Potëmkin* where the dead Vakulinchuk is not a mere human anymore, he has finally become a martyr, acknowledged by the vast majority of people. In the final scene of *Storm over Asia*, Bair finally becomes a communist and incarnates the ideas of the party.

"In the film's famous last scene, the main hero, Tymosh, defends the arsenal against the approaching Ukrainian nationalists [...] His invulnerability stems from his uncompromising revolutionary idealism, triumphant even in death. Although Tymosh's final stand provoked disbelief, Dovzhenko's intended message - that the revolution will inevitably triumph - proved very compelling."[213]

Dovzhenko does not guarantee that a harmonious socialist society will arise from the chaos of revolution. For the workers, the experience is so excruciating that they cannot conceive of anything more hopeful than a mere reduction in the hostilities.[214] *Arsenal* can be seen, in Appelbaum's words, as a film where violence establishes its foundation in two distinct ways. Firstly, violence serves as the foundation within the depicted world of the characters, either due to their choice to embrace a violent lifestyle or because the environment they inhabit is inherently ruled by violence. In this context, violence is simultaneously the issue and the resolution. The challenge of violence is inescapable, and the only response to this challenge is further violence.[215]

Speaking about the film reception, Stalin praised it and defined it as a "real revolutionary romantic film."[216] Other than this, the majority of Ukrainian critics thought that *Arsenal* represented yet another significant achievement in Ukrainian cinema, receiving acclaim for its authentic depiction of the Ukrainian Revolution.[217] Piotrovsky also acclaimed Dovzhenko's work and wrote:

"*The method of historical symbolism employed in Arsenal appears in truth fundamental to the creation of Soviet films with a historical background in the near future. Therein lies its enormous significance, far beyond the boundaries of Ukrainian cinematography.*"[218]

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[213] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000,pp. 97
[214] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 71
[215] R. Appelbaum, *Notes Toward an Aesthetics of Violence,* Uppsala. Uppsala University, 2013, pp. 127
[216]G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000,pp. 97
[217] Ibid. pp. 98
[218] D. Giurlando, *MONDI IN GUERRA Strategie di rappresentazione del conflitto nel cinema russo,* Venice, 2011, pp. 120

Last but not least, according to Eisenstein, *“Dovzhenko possesses the ability to shoot directly at the target. This is due to both the content he can convey while enduring enemy fire and the form in which he operates freely. He stands out as unique. The rest of us resemble a caravan of camels burdened by the weight of form. Coexisting with Dovženko is akin to living with dynamite. Dovzhenko stumbled into the cinema by chance, opting for it instead of wielding an axe or a machine gun. Consequently, his cinema 'shoots,' allowing one to deliver impactful strikes with a mere flick of the wrist! This is the reason we all support Dovzhenko”*.[219]

[219] Ibid. pp. 119

STORM OVER ASIA / THE HEIR TO GENGHIS KHAN

Storm over Asia (1928), together with *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg,* completes the so-called revolutionary trilogy of Pudovkin. In *Storm over Asia,* Pudovkin delineates his development by choosing the Mongolian landscape as a new stage: this decision already enhances the film's aim to extend the revolution and the aim of Soviet power from Russia to other countries.[220]

If the upsurge in Eisensteinian *Battleship Potëmkin* was embodied by the waves crashing on the surface, in *Storm over Asia,* Pudovkin ascribes this role to a horse succeeding in breaking free (see pictures 1 and 2), while some dogs are barking at it. Through these animals, the director shows the main fight of the film. On one hand, the strong horse representing the population is held tight by the rope, which embodies religion. On the other hand, the enraged dogs, whose aim is to stem the tide in case of problems, symbolise the occupying government.

In the yurt, due to the fox fur, the first violent confrontation takes place between Bair (the main protagonist) and the monk (see picture 3). Concerning Bair's character, Amy Sergeant describes him as a man shaped by his tribal heritage and the natural surroundings that sustain the tribe.[221] The monk, instead, is presented as a *"healer and collector of offerings at the monastery".* For his service, he requires "*a reasonable fee",* and so he steals the pelt from the hands of the son. After the fight, the corrupted, greedy monk is forced to run away and, in doing so, loses his talisman. Amy Sergeant grasps the true essence of the monk in this first sequence by writing:

> "*While the tribesmen may be held to be the innocent victims of superstition, their fears are deviously preyed upon by the priest at the old man's bedside: 'the gods demand a great sacrifice', he says. As he sways with the incantation of the prayers, his eyes flash open at the mention of the valuable fur, suggesting that his mind is occupied with more worldly concerns and that his religion is a sham. [...] 'THE INTERESTS OF CAPITAL.'* [222]

[220] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 115
[221] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 15
[222] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 118

This sequence is very important because the pelt is also the object connecting Bair with his ill father. Besides, thanks to Bair's rage outbursts, the spectator is shown that the protagonist already possesses some traits that will eventually push him to lead the revolution against the occupying government. Unlike *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg,* Bair is immediately portrayed as having a passive-aggressive character; his idea of justice subconsciously aligns with that of the communist party.

Through two intertitles, the market sequence represents the other two figures that play an important role in subduing the population. The first are "*Those who buy for pennies and make millions",* the well-dressed, arrogant merchants (see picture 4), the second are "*those who guard the interests of capitalism"*, the soldiers, whose inflexibility is suggested by the first framing of their back (see picture 5): they are inextricable linked one with each other, this gives form to the corrupted system underlined in the film.

The pelt sale leads Bair to his second brawl. The skirmish begins as the rich merchant gives Bair way too little money in exchange for the precious fur, which seems to have become a cult object: when seeing it, everybody just keeps staring at this unique pelt, and a large group of simple people comes to know the trade of this legendary object. During the fight, Bair, who is just trying to defend himself, manages to hurt one of the tyrant-merchant's men with a knife. As in the confrontation between Pelageja and Michail over the clock in *Mother,* the fight in *Storm over Asia also* revolves around a domestic object. The bottom line is that violence always occurs when theft is committed. The stolen object is something inextricably linked with the idea of family (the pelt was given to Bair by his father).

As Pelageja in *Mother* and the Lad in *The End of St. Petersburg*, the explosions of the main hero in *Storm over Asia* serve to show the path that will finally lead him to devote the revolutionary cause. Pudovkin highlights the merchant's minion who thinks that Mongols are any better than beasts: he, from the top of his social rank, shouts, "*Avenge the white man's blood!"*.

This announcement is interspersed with frames of the man's hand covered with blood (see picture 7). Unlike the *Battleship Potëmkin,* where the schoolmistress was covered in blood, which showed her function as a victim of the tsarist regime, in *Storm over Asia,* the suffering man is part of the ruling class.

The reaction to this ultimatum is instantaneous; the army is deployed to strike and eliminate the non-pure enemy. According to Sam Keen, this order can be ascribed to

consensual paranoia, where "*the 'bad' self remains unconscious so long as it may be projected onto an enemy. [...] We remember only the evidence that confirms our prejudice."*[223] *Thus,* the preparation of the soldiers answering to the request of the white man intercut with intertitles is a technique used by Pudovkin to intensify the pathos of the scene; this trick enhances the emphasis contained in the shots.[224]

In the meantime, the director displays common people helping Bair to escape the oppressors. During his travels, the third crucial moment in the evolution of the main character takes place: he helps a revolutionary to fight a soldier (see picture 8) by throwing him off a cliff. The film's pace is accelerated; action develops in a couple of minutes.

After arriving at the camp and hearing the last words of the revolutionaries' leader about the bond between Moscow and the Mongols, Bair's evolution moves forward: he is immediately accepted by the rebels, who recognise him not only as an ally, but as a friend. Bair's and his explosive character were designed in a way that his temperament significantly contributes to the force that triggers his awakening of conscience.[225]

The very next sequences contrast with what we have seen at the camp, where the atmosphere was relaxed and the main focus was on the simple things, on human bonds. During the preparation for the ceremony, the general, his wife and the lama are dressed up in the most luxurious clothes (see pictures 9 and 10). The insistence on their look and their appearance can be well compared to the provisional government in Eisenstein's *October,* which wanted to meet the revolutionaries in *"the most dignified manner"*. Concerning the army, it is essential to note the general's harsh demeanour. This is explicit in his order to start "*the immediate collection of two hundred head of cattle from the nearest village."*

The lamas' preparations for the ceremony, to which the commander of the occupying forces has received an invitation, are ironically juxtaposed with the indulgence and grooming of the commander and his wife as parallel actions. A scene depicting the commander's uniform on its valet stand, next to the unclothed commander bathing,

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[223] S. Keen, *Faces of the enemy: Reflection of the hostile Imagination: The Psychology of Enmity,* New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1986, pp. 19
[224] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 21
[225] Ibid. pp. 18

serves to undermine and mock its authority, presenting a stark contrast to the tattered, improvised attire of the partisans.[226]

The film's director underlines the traits of the army with the scene of the trial in the barracks. After being captured by the occupying forces, Bair is asked whether he is linked with Moscow and the communists. He does not understand the question and answers yes. Subsequently, the general orders to shoot him referred to the prisoner as an "*animal".* This sequence is indispensable for understanding the essence of the conflict between these two realities.

First and foremost, Bair does not know the language of the conquerors, not only in a literal way, but also on a metaphorical level: the main character lives in a different world than his persecutors. This fact can be attributed to the smile on Bair's face when answering. Secondly, when it comes to the general's decision to shoot the prisoner down, the spectator sees the sentence of an unfair trial. Similarly to the judge in *Mother,* the general is filmed in a close-up shot of his face looking into the camera; it looks as though he is judging us, the spectators. This shot also signals his inflexibility and his staticity.

The execution sequences have a slow pace, and an indirect act of rebellion is displayed on the screen when the soldier asks Bair to help him light his pipe; the prisoner refuses to help him. This deed can be intended as a mute rebellion against the order. Here, the protagonist is also declining every friendship request between the two. The execution corresponds with the scene climax; the protagonist is shot and left dying on a mountain (see picture 12). In the meantime, the General finds out from the talisman that Bair is a direct descendant of Genghis Khan. The whole scene is constructed so that Bair's collapse and the revelation happen at the same time.

Osip Brik, Pudovkin's screenwriter, asserts that the sequence depicting Bair's execution is extended due to dramatic necessity. Nevertheless, the suspense is not employed gratuitously, merely to tease the audience. This episode is vital to Pudovkin's thematic objectives. Reluctantly, Ronald, the soldier, steps forward to carry out the order to execute Bair.[227]

From this point on, Bair will be reborn as a new person: as a temporary puppet of the occupying forces, he loses his smile and, in the final sequences, he bursts out on

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[226] Ibid. pp. 37

[227] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 118

manifold times, e.g., when he fixes his eyes on the fox fur [228] or when he sees a rebel shot down in front of him.

A sign of psychological violence can be detected in Bair's transformation into a puppet under the control of the illegitimate government to brainwash him so that it will be easier for them to rule over the Mongols.[229] During this transition, the film director delineates the pure vanity of the bourgeois women and of the occupying government. In a section, Bair is dressed up as a gentleman in front of the laughing general and his minions. Nonetheless, Pudovkin conveys the message that the laugh is false; it is more of a mock because the main hero does not laugh back at the group, as he is excluded from this act and is not enjoying himself (see picture 13).

The women of society remain unaware of the genuine grandeur and influence of the tribal legacy represented by Bair (both real and imagined), thereby disrespecting its significance by commenting on the ceremonial garments as if he were merely a figure designed to please the eye. The impression of a deeper force at play, more substantial than mere satire, is reinforced by Bair's rigid passivity. While one may feel inclined to laugh freely with Bair at his innocent astonishment upon encountering Daria, there is a growing sense that the subsequent jokes are inappropriate and come at his cost.[230]

The episode of the broken tank is fundamental to grasp the true nature of Bair's psychology; this is his externalisation: the fish gasping is a metaphor standing for Bair's lack of freedom in the headquarters of the occupying government.[231]

The puppet role played is well described by Ute Scholz-Margraff, who writes:

"Der von Kugeln durchbohrte, im Leiden christusähnlich überhöhte Bair wird gesund gepflegt und auf europäische Art eingekleidet, womit seine Identität verleugnet und der beabsichtigten Domestizierung symbolhaft Ausdruck verliehen wird. Als Marionettenherrscher soll Bair die imperiale Herrschaft über die ansässige Bevölkerung befestigen. Die Kamera nimmt materielle Zeichen der westlichen

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[228] The fur, an object Bair was given by his father, contributes to the awakening of Bair communist consciousness.

[229] A difference with *The End of St. Petersburg* is that the Lad indirectly helps Lebedev by observing social rules, while here Bair is completely brainwashed by the occupying forces: Pudovkin's message experiences, in this sense, an intensification.

[230] Ibid. pp. 121

[231] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 17

Luxuswelt auf an den frühen Pudovkin erinnernde, expressionistische Weise in den Blick."[232]

However, this refusal to join the other side is not perceived by the army leader, this error proves fatal to them: as soon as Bair sees the merchant's wife embellished with the pelt, he stares at her (see picture 14), something explodes in him as he grabs the fox fur worn by the woman and a fight starts between them.

The transformation of Bair's character is influenced not only by his gradual awakening to intense anger and indignation but also by the reactions of those around him. Mr. Hughes' floozy screams and trembles hysterically as Bair takes the silver fox from her neck. The spectators' perception of the escalating tension makes the eventual explosive retaliation even more powerful and striking. The camera focuses on Bair, whose anger grows as the condemned Mongolian pleads with him: 'Save me, my brother!'. An elderly man bites his lip in anticipation of an eruption when Hughes scornfully discards his pieces of silver for the fur. Bair gazes down thoughtfully and calmly before striking out decisively.[233]

In the last sequences, Bair's revolutionary consciousness is formed as he sees a rebel shot down at an angle (see picture 15). The revolutionary is depicted as a victim when shot down, since he only fights with the sole purpose of defending himself. Subsequently, the protagonist understands the situation, and he must take his role as the true heir of Genghis Khan, which will lead the Mongols to their freedom and independence from everybody else. Only the death of a comrade could fully awaken Bair's consciousness; Through this execution, Pudovkin shows the bond among those who want to build a new world.

During the last fight, Bair's true nature comes to light; he fights against a group of men all alone, and nobody can stop him. Everybody can only escape in the face of absolute Bair's power. Similar to what happens at the end of *Arsenal,* Bair is not a mere human anymore; he stands for an ideal, and he wants to break free so that his

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[232] "Bair, pierced by bullets and exalted Christ-like in his suffering, is nursed back to health and clothed in a European manner, thus denying his identity and symbolically expressing the intended domestication. As a puppet ruler, Bair is supposed to consolidate the imperial rule over the local population. The camera focuses on material signs of the Western world of luxury in an expressionist manner reminiscent of early Pudovkin." Ute Scholz-Marggraff *VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN: The Heir to Genghis Khan / Storm Over Asia,* Moritz Arndt Universität Greifswald, Greifswald 2013, pp. 490

[233] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 131-132

country can too. The protagonist chases after soldiers who are tumbling down the stairs, brandishing his sabre high above, while the camera becomes progressively tilted and dynamic, immersing itself into the chaos.[234]

In the last, most famous sequence, the main hero guides a group of rebels to accomplish this goal: he has become the true heir of Genghis Khan, the true storm over Asia is coming, and nobody can stop it; the strong wind announces the beginning of the new era for the Mongols. The wind depicted on the screen transforms into the social narrative "Storm over Asia". This marks a transition from reality to the symbolic aspect of cinema.[235] The film's remarkable conclusion portrays the class struggle through an expressionist depiction. Amidst the individuals, trees, and various items that have been uprooted by a storm and stripped of their place are the commander-in-chief of the intervention forces along with his soldiers.[236]

Bair represents a hero possessing both unique traits (he undergoes a sequence of personal challenges) and legends.[237] This global dimension of the main character is described by Amy Sergeant, who states in connection with the last scene of *Storm over Asia*:" *The increasing turbulence of the elements, throughout the film, culminates in the final frames. Bair, as a typical representative of his people, is shown as a 'world historical individual' equivalent in his seizure of the force of the moment to the Great Khan himself."*[238]

Concerning the reception of *Storm over Asia,* the newspaper *Pravda* praised it and wrote, quoting Lenin:" *We live in the last phase of capitalism… called imperialism. The Heir to Genghis Khan deals with the theme of imperialism."*[239]

In these three films, the civil war is represented in different ways. Starting from Dovzhenko's works, where the truth is always grey. More specifically, even though Pavlo in *Zvenigora* is the personification of cruelty, he also tries to help his father in looking for the treasure of Roxana's legend; he symbolises rural Ukraine. Something similar happens in *Arsenal*, where both the counterrevolutionaries and the Communists are represented while committing inhuman deeds (see the link in the

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[234] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 49
[235] M. Zak, *Kino kak iskusstvo ili nastojaščee kino*, Moskva, Materik, 2004, p. 319
[236] Ute Scholz-Marggraff *VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN: The Heir to Genghis Khan / Storm Over Asia,* Moritz Arndt Universität Greifswald, Greifswald 2013, pp. 490
[237] D. Giurlando, MONDI IN GUERRA Strategie di rappresentazione del conflitto nel cinema russo, Venice, 2011, pp. 114
[238] A. Sergeant, *Classic films of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 124
[239] A. Sergeant, *Storm over Asia,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 32

film between the First World War and the Civil War). Hence, violence is neither positive nor negative; it is how one can achieve their goal.

Finally, Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia* represents violence as the outbreak for Bair (and the Mongols) to elaborate and develop their communist consciousness. The moments in which the main hero loses control in the film (confrontation with the monk, fight with the merchant, war against the occupying government) underline this process. Here, violence serves the purpose of counterbalancing the injustice perpetrated at the expense of Bair and discovering the right path the main hero has to follow: Violence as the awakening of all the workers in Mongolia.

MENTIONED SHOTS OF *ZVENIGORA, ARSENAL,* AND *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 1: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 2: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 3: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 4: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 5: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 6*: ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 7*: ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 8: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 9: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 10: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 11: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 12: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 13: *ZVENIGORA*

PICTURE 1: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 2: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 3: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 4: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 5: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 6: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 7: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 8: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 9: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 10: *ARSENAL*

PICTURE 1: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 2: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 3: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 4: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 5: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 6: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 7: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 8: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 9: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 10: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 11: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 12: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 13: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 14: *STORM OVER ASIA*

PICTURE 15: *STORM OVER ASIA*

COLLECTIVISATION IN *EARTH* AND *OLD AND NEW*

"Your body belongs to the State. Since your birth, the State has nourished it. Now the State asks something in return."

The Matron in *Red Sparrow (2018)*

During the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Stalin started to promote the process of collectivisation to create a new society. Both Dovzhenko's *Earth* and Eisenstein's *Old and New* (also called *The General Line)* focus on this theme.

Due to its complexity, Soviet interpretations of such a change have undergone manifold evolutions in history. In the period preceding Stalin's death, historians were required to demonstrate a connection between the commercial and trade cooperatives prevalent in rural areas in 1929 and the collective farms established thereafter. Conversely, under Gorbachev's leadership, historians were more focused on creating a connection between Lenin's ideas and collectivisation, which should have ruled out the role played by Stalin in the process.[240] Finally, recent research indicates that the strategy for collectivisation was not thoroughly considered, that Stalin hesitated until the very last moment, and that it was only the intensifying occurrences of that disastrous autumn of 1929 that compelled him to take actions he may have been inclined towards, yet was deeply apprehensive about.[241]

The problem in addressing the kulaks had the most significant impact on the outcome of the conflict, as it was evident that genuine, effective collectivisation could not be realised with the limited resources available. However, the party commission was confident that, if the government was willing to deploy the armed forces in substantial numbers, the opposing kulaks could be eliminated. The sub-commission, led by K. Ya. Bauman, proposed that in areas of extensive collectivisation, all means of production owned by kulaks should be seized and allocated to the kolkhozy.[242] In May 1928, Stalin proclaimed that the 'expropriation of the kulaks would be folly';

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[240] E. Economakis, Soviet Interpretations of Collectivization, London, The Slavonic and East European Review, 1991, pp. 261, 267

[241] O. A. Narkiewicz, Stalin, War Communism and Collectivization, Abingdon, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1966, pp. 20

[242] Ibid. pp. 34

however, during the summer of 1929, he instructed Party members to 'liquidate the kulaks as a class.' The Party characterised a kulak as a peasant possessing more property than his neighbours, which could lead to their exploitation.[243]

On the one hand, the kulaks were still a hurdle for collectivisation; on the other hand, the party had to find a way to convince peasants to contribute to this cause. Collectivisation emerged as a new phase of an actual Civil War. In the 1920s, Soviet Russia remained primarily an agrarian society, and this process had a detrimental impact on nearly the entire rural populace. This initiative was marked by extreme violence, widespread terror, the confiscation of property, and the forced relocation of kulaks to Siberia and Central Asia. The aim of *Earth* and *Old and New* is to show the positive effects of such a global change. Since both films were shot before Dekulakisation entered its most violent part, we do not see a proper, decisive conclusion to the Kulak question.

Dovzhenko's E*arth (1930)* was made on the grounds of collectivisation to show the benefits of this change, strongly promoted by Stalin[244]. The film was distributed in 1930 during the toughest part of collectivisation, when dekulakization (the elimination of kulaks) was implemented as part of this plan. In *Earth*, the essential factor in altering nature is termed "electrification," a multifaceted concept that carries various connotations, functioning as a metaphor for both "enlightenment" (which signifies the introduction of light and/or awareness) and the liberation of "energy".[245]

In the film, the main leitmotifs are the life cycle, starting from life to death (and vice versa) and the fusion between human and nature[246]. Therefore, violence (most of all resulting in death) is often followed by a metaphorical rebirth. Concerning its structure, death is the introduction, whereas life occupies some aspects of the epilogue.

Old and New was a project that started in 1926; its previous title was *The General Line*. To portray the new reality that emerged after collectivisation with the introduction of the Kolchoz and Sovchoz, the title was later changed to *Old and New.* With this film, Eisenstein wanted to show that collectivisation can only be reached

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[243] R. Bergan, Sergei Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict, New York, Arcade, 2016, pp. 193

[244] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 76

[245] Elizabeth. A. Papazian, *Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth,* Kansas The Russian Review, 2003, pp. 414

[246] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000, pp. 108

when peasants, nature and machines work together as a single body. The director developed the conviction that both spiritual and sexual ecstasy are the connection between the observer and the observed, as well as between the subject and the object. In *Old and New,* the revolutionary pathos advances towards the elimination of all distinctions.[247]

EARTH

In Dovzhenko's film, death is never perceived as a conclusion, nor as a mere return to dust. Instead, it is viewed as a sacrifice, the fundamental one, integral to the continuous cycle of rejuvenating life. It is not a hollow cycle, but rather a source of hope and assurance, embodying the unavoidable process, indeed, the ritual of advancement.[248]

The film starts with the peaceful death of old Semën (see picture 1) surrounded by his family. This event is closely related to nature (Semën is displayed while eating an apple before dying) and to the life cycle, as the whole scene is intercut with children smiling and laughing. The man, almost dead, has finally found peace surrounded by nature.[249] In this sequence, there is no establishing shot; instead, the scene consists solely of medium close-ups and close-ups of each individual, all gazing offscreen. Each person directs their gaze in a distinct direction.[250] Besides, Vasyl's profound, smiling, nearly angelic gaze beyond the frame engages with the offscreen looks of the other characters in this deathbed scene: a connection is formed between the Communist "new life" he is (silently) conveying and the unseen world. This marks the film's initial chance to articulate an explicit ideological statement: the old and the new are contrasted.[251] Differently from Dovzhenko's *Arsenal*, whose opening is bloody and brutal, in *Earth,* the last phase of one's life is seen in a more positive, hopeful perspective.[252]

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[247]D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 108
[248] Ivor Montagu, *Dovzhenko: Poet of Life Eternal*, Sight and Sound, Summer 1957, pp. 47
[249] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 79
[250] Elizabeth. A. Papazian, *Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth,* Kansas The Russian Review, 2003, pp. 417
[251] Ibid. pp. 418
[252] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 82

Pathos reaches one of its highest peaks in the very next sequence with the introduction of kulaks, the antagonists of the film: two women are crying (see picture 2), a hopeless man on his desk reads the newspaper, where it is written that the kulak Belokon' (literally meaning "white horse") is destroying fields and killing the livestock. This tension ends with Khoma's father desperately trying to chop his horse with an axe so that he does not have to give it away (see picture 3) to the collective, just to be stopped by the other kulaks. About these vicious, sinister figures, Vance Kepley wrote:

"*Kulaks are associated with death - and not the death that promises renewal - but the death of sterility and obsolescence. They engage in wanton destruction; Khoma's father would rather kill his horse than surrender it to the collective"*[253]

A significant technique employed in the subversion of socialist realism is crosscutting, which in Dovzhenko's Earth disrupts the clarity of the linear narrative and its propagandistic assertion that the new communist lifestyle surpasses the old, traditional one. When the socialist realist narrative of collectivisation commences in part 2 (peasants reading the newspaper), the violence stands in stark contrast to the tranquil atmosphere and calmness of part 1, which depicts the peaceful death of the old grandfather. The immediate implication is that this new communist existence is rife with violence.[254]

The tense confrontation between Vasyl (played by Semën Svashenko, the same actor as Tymosh in both *Zvenigora* and *Arsenal)*, who represents the new world, and Opanas, who at the beginning stands for the old, rural Ukraine, provides pathos to the sequence. After Vasyl mocks his father, an infuriated Opanas (see picture 4) asks rhetorically his son:" *You are saying I'm stupid?!".* This is then followed by Vasyl staring at the old man with a defiant glare (see picture 5) and answering back:" *Not stupid, father, you have just grown old"*. Here, Dovzhenko illustrates the initial division between the two and their ideological divergence, where the old man is attached to a more traditional worldview, and the young communist, who is determined to accomplish his mission for the creation of the new system. Thus, the

[253] Ibid. pp. 82
[254] Romana M. Bahry, Subversion in Dovzhenko's Earth, Cambridge, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2011, pp. 99

shots are in conflict as well; not only are the interlocutors turned away from one another, disrupting the continuity, but also because of the disparity in lighting. Vasyl's father is oriented away from both Vasyl and the viewer, as well as from the brilliant light emanating from the window. The intense light that Vasyl gazes towards, which illuminates him, serves as a metaphor for the new, radiant world of communism that he aspires to create and which appears to be visible only to him, while simultaneously suggesting his closeness to death and his martyrdom.[255] The confrontation between father and son in *Earth* can be seen as the evolution of the family contrast represented in *Mother,* where Michail and Pavel do not speak to each other (only during the prologue, there is a small conversation between the two), and they only share their fate because they are both bound to die.

The main focus of the discussion in Dovzhenko's film is the implementation of machines in agriculture: differently from *Arsenal,* technology in Dovzhenko's *Earth* is seen positively; it does not serve to destroy cities or kill people. Moreover, new tools, such as the tractor, the telephone wires, and the aeroplane, can live together with nature and human beings, e.g. when peasants urinate in the tractor to make it move. The conflict between the conventional, natural lifestyle and the technological influences that challenge it can be interpreted through the lens of the cultural transformation in the early 1930s: transitioning from the machine as the "preeminent cultural emblem" of the initial years of the First Five-Year Plan to an emphasis on nature as both a tumultuous force to be conquered and an idealistic aspiration.[256]

After Vasyl manages to bring the tractor into town, he has a stiff confrontation with Khoma (see picture 6), the son of the Kulak chief, in which the latter foresees the death of the main hero. Khoma says to Vasyl,*" Beware, so your mother has nothing to mourn about."* Even though a fight does not break out, the wicked nature of the kulak is highlighted: he does not tell the main hero what will happen to him in case he pursues his aim. During this hard time, the suspense rises, and the scene is intercut by one of the kulaks tightening his fist as he is waiting for the skirmish to start.

After succeeding in employing the tractor in agriculture, the dancing Vasyl is murdered by Khoma. The peasant's demise is sudden, premature, and constitutes a

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[255] Elizabeth. A. Papazian, *Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth,* Kansas The Russian Review, 2003, pp. 421

[256] Ibid. pp. 414

transgression against the narrative's portrayal of the appropriate order of occurrences.[257] Vasyl's murder sharply contrasts Semën's peaceful death in the prologue: the former is a wanton interruption of somebody's life, whereas the latter suggests that the balance between man and nature has been accomplished. Other than this, a comparison can be drawn between the dance of the main hero and that of Khoma, which takes place some sequences earlier: the kulak dances without harmony, his steps are comparable to those of a drunk man, the act is devoid of taste and technique, he is not synchronized with the world[258], whereas Vasyl is in complete accordance with nature. The connection between the peasant with the surroundings is enhanced with the juxtaposition of a horse near a lake that occurs contemporaneously with the murder. Lastly, Dovzhenko manages to give a sense of discomfort by placing Vasyl's body alone (see picture 7); he dies with nobody (except his killer, who is not shown in the face) able to testify what has happened.

While Vasyl's relatives are mourning him, a child is shown eating a watermelon: this recalls Semën's funeral, which gave way to a new generation. More concretely, a baby, who might be Vasyl's successor, is born during the hero's funeral. Similarly to what happens in *Storm over Asia* with the death of the Mongol rebel, Vasyl's death awakens Opanas's new socialist consciousness: now he is convinced to promote the communist cause and contribute to collectivisation.

Once spotted, the old man angrily asks Khoma whether he has killed his son, the kulak completely negates this question, though. The mise-en-scène is of paramount importance (see picture 8): Opanas approaches the young man, who is gazing into space. Khoma's attitude is the beginning of the process that culminates in his confession about the murder without being listened to by anybody. Following Opanas's confrontation with the village boys, once more, the scene is intercut with a long shot of telephone poles, as the old man approaches to face Khoma. Opanas's newly discovered dynamism is subsequently conveyed to the collective, which is also captured in the funeral procession with a camera that pulls back.[259]

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[257] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 81

[258] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000 , pp. 110

[259] Elizabeth. A. Papazian, *Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth,* Kansas The Russian Review, 2003, pp. 426

Not only is Khoma a coward (he kills Vasyl, shooting him in the back), but also a traitor to his ideals. He wants to disrupt the continuity between nature and humans, but is bound to fail miserably. Instead, his desperate act serves the only purpose of awakening Opanas's communist consciousness.

This particular murder brings the old man to the party headquarters to request a funeral for Vasyl devoid of priests and religion, yet accompanied by "songs of the new life." In this context, the sole dynamic character of the film, Opanas, demands not only "electrification" represented by the tractor (operated by his son) but also something more, something symbolised by the death of his son.[260]

Differently from Semën's funeral, Vasyl's procession is wider as it expands to the whole village, except for the Kulaks and the priest, who is praying to God for the sinners-bolshevics to be punished. In the meantime, to display the life cycle, Vasyl's mother gives birth to a baby. The demise of the hero, the emergence of a new life, and the earnest belief of the singing crowds inevitably evoke the concept of reincarnation: The essence of all the emotional depth in Dovzhenko's films lies in fate.[261] Nevertheless, not everybody has accepted Vasyl's death: Natalia, Vasyl's fiancée, does not tolerate his passing as a sacrifice for the communist cause and collectivisation. Instead, her grief is so extreme that she suffers a nervous breakdown, where she tears off her clothes and runs around naked.[262] This mise-en-scène did not strike Eisenstein's fancy, who expressed his critiques against this "requiem for the dead" while praising the exaltation of life in Dovzhenko's film.[263]

The main contrast in the sequence takes place between the communist young man holding a speech to the masses, who in the end will look up at an aeroplane in the sky, and Khoma, firstly represented while burying his head in the ground (see picture 9) and then admitting he is the killer without anyone paying attention to him (see picture 10). On the one hand, the communist man, who recalls the figure of a Messiah, metaphorically strives to extend collectivisation to the sky (a similar message can be seen in *Old and New,* where the communist man convinces the village to help Marfa in her aim). On the other hand, Khoma refuses to give way to

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[260] Ibid. pp. 415
[261] Ibid. pp. 423
[262] Romana M. Bahry, Subversion in Dovzhenko's Earth, Cambridge, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2011, pp. 100-101
[263] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000, pp. 111

his land and buries his head in anticipation of his defeat. In the end, as he understands his inexorable end, he confesses what he has done. The crosses framed in the shots enhance his inescapable collapse.[264] This imagery (Khoma near the crosses) evokes themes of suffering, guilt, sin, transgression, and confession. It suggests that Khoma has sinned due to his act of murder, and the only path to forgiveness lies in turning to God, confessing his sins, and repenting.[265]

By proposing various potential definitions for the invisible offscreen utopian vision, Dovzhenko conceals its inherent contradictions. On one side, tradition, nature, and the life cycle are present, enduring, and captivating the audience with their allure; conversely, the village has been "electrified," awakened through technology and sacrifice, and it is likely to keep advancing towards that envisioned future.[266]

Owing to its innovative structure and its symbolism, *Earth* was harshly criticised at the time of its distribution; the culmination of this dislike is well represented in the review of Demian Bedny, one of Stalin's favourite poets, who hailed Dovhzhenko's work as "cynical" and "unnatural".[267] The film was hence recalled on 17th April 1930 (he had just premiered on 8th April).

THE GENERAL LINE/ OLD AND NEW

About *Old and New (1929),* Eisenstein wrote, *"There is no material more discredited in cinema than the village. There is nothing more difficult, nothing more frightening for the director. Yet there is nothing more necessary."*[268] Moments of tension are provoked when Nature, human beings and machines are not in harmony. Furthermore, the kulaks, similarly to Dovzhenko's *Earth*, are the ones who disturb this balance: they stand for private property and are the ones who kill Fomka, the bull, while Marfa is travelling to town to obtain a tractor from the soviets.

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[264] V. Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,* Madison, University of Wisconsin Pr, 1986, pp. 82

[265] Romana M. Bahry, Subversion in Dovzhenko's Earth, Cambridge, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2011, pp.102

[266] Elizabeth. A. Papazian, *Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth,* Kansas The Russian Review, 2003, pp. 428

[267] G. O. Liber, *Alexander Dovzhenko: A life in Soviet Film,* London, British Film institute, 2000, pp. 112

[268] B. Crais, *Cultivating History: Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and the Cinema of Agrarian Transition*, Detroit, Wayne state university press, 2023, pp. 138

Concerning the prologue, Crais writes:

"The first twenty or so minutes of The General Line depict the misery of peasant life. In this sequence, which culminates with Marfa declaring the necessity of forming a collective farm, Eisenstein depicts the unity between the peasantry and nature as taking a contradictory form. [...] In the depiction of the peasant life that begins The General Line, this immersion appears as a form of dependence: lacking modern agricultural equipment or methods, the peasantry is rendered utterly dependent on natural cycles over which they have little control."[269]

In the first part, Eisenstein displays the old, divided world, *where "a brother leaves a brother, the form is split half-and-half*" and "*The land [...] is in shreds"*. Dividing a house symbolises the condition of ignorance and disunity that the peasantry has descended into.[270] The fence becomes a symbol of backwardness, since it serves the only purpose of marking one's property. To enhance this message, the barrier is intercut with a mother with a crying baby (see picture 1): "*The farms grow poorer and collapse".* The artificial barrier serves the same function as the walls in the claustrophobic flat where the mother in *The End of St. Petersburg* lives; it represents division and underscores the ignorance of the ordinary people, who believe that private property is the right solution.

Shown on the ground and alone*,* the introduction of Marfa Petrovna (see picture 2) is nowhere more positive than that of the other villagers. Moreover, she is intercut by an illustration of her inventory as if her value as a human depended on her properties: All of this leads to her classification as a *bednyak* (poor peasant).[271] Nonetheless, the film director highlights Marfa's revolutionary character by portraying her fence as broken. Her triumphs take place against a background of regressive habits: the izba-cutting, the religious procession, the kulaks' indifference and hostility, the peasants' suspicion of technology and new forms of social organisation.[272]

In this context, she goes to the fat, greedy kulaks (see picture 3) to ask them for a horse, with which she could plough the field, but her request is denied. Similar to

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[269] B. Crais, *Cultivating History: Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and the Cinema of Agrarian Transition*, Detroit, Wayne state university press, 2023, pp. 152

[270]V. Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 46

[271] B. Crais, *Cultivating History: Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and the Cinema of Agrarian Transition*, Detroit, Wayne state university press, 2023, pp. 154

[272]D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 102

Pudovkin's *End of St. Petersburg*, the rich man is represented so that his body cannot enter the frame. Besides, to counterbalance the shortage of time Marfa has, he takes his time to drink; his movements are slow, delineating that this is not only a matter of money, but also of time. In the sequence, the kvass flowing conveys another message; it symbolises the pleasure of all senses, the orgasm[273]. The same happens in the sequence of the cream separator, intercut with Marfa expressing joy. The obesity and lethargy of the kulaks are depicted not only through their performance but also via deep-focus imagery that juxtaposes them with Marfa, alongside cutaways to a spherical jar of kvass where a ladle sinks sluggishly. In his unwavering indifference, the kulak is likened to his bull.[274]

During the ploughing and, later on, the procession, the old system is portrayed as collapsing. While ploughing, Eisenstein broadens Marfa's narrative by juxtaposing her struggles with those of a peasant labouring alongside a malnourished horse and an elderly couple compelled to drag their harrow. As the peasants' endeavours grow increasingly futile, the montage establishes parallels between their situations.[275]

In the absence of technologies or methods to effectively mediate their connection to the earth, the peasants descend into a primal state, as the film director persistently alternates between the weary visage of the aged peasant labouring with his plough and that of a distressed cow, which has collapsed from fatigue.[276] Havoc breaks out as soon as the cow falls on the ground due to excessive work (see picture 4), and the intertitles (*"It's impossible to live like this!")* appear, displaying the woman's utter desperation. The climax ascension can be likened to the events that occurred on the Battleship Potëmkin, where Vakulinchuk initiates the mutiny by affirming that he is "*Above". In Old and New,* however, it takes more time to perform the collectivisation: Eisenstein wants to point out that peasants act according to the time of nature.

The last piece of the "old world" puzzle is portrayed during the procession, organised by peasants to pray for good weather, and abruptly interrupted by a storm. The sequence emphasises several secondary stimuli. In conjunction with the plot's action, the escalating fervour of the peasants' pleas, Eisenstein showcases inter-shot

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[273] See the July Days in *October* and the clobbering of the young communist
[274]D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 98-99
[275] B. Crais, *Cultivating History: Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and the Cinema of Agrarian Transition*, Detroit, Wayne state university press, 2023, pp. 155
[276] Ibid. pp. 156

"overtones" of heat, delirium from thirst, and various other attributes.[277] The scene illustrates the inadequacy of spiritualism and ritual in the face of material hardship. The drought, symbolising death and sterility, along with the procession aimed at countering it, takes on an ambiguously sexual connotation. This culminates in a prayer where the participants exhibit an unusual fervour.[278]

After the disaster, people are lying on the ground as a mass of dead bodies (see picture 5); intercut by the intertitle "*Deception?*", an establishing shot between the priest and some peasants delineates their mistrust in religion: The procession ends up being a harsh critique directed at the religious sphere. The only way out is the creation of a sovkhoz.

The initial division between man and nature is made clear, and the storm starts abruptly to signal this problem, which will be overcome only thanks to Marfa, the communist worker and the machines. In this sense, the cream separator is both literally and figuratively the object that separates the old ideas from the new system; milk coming from the machine is a symbol of rebirth, hope, and a completely innovative world.[279] Marfa is displayed overflowing with joy (see picture 5). This scene proves that machines and humans can work harmoniously. According to Vance Kepley, the pathos in this scene can be compared to the end of Battleship Potëmkin:

> *"Also, the scene of the demonstration of the cream separator contains a direct reference to Potemkin. As the villagers wait to see whether or not the machine will function, their suspense resembles 'The Time of the Battleship Potemkin' when the crowd waited for the encounter with the squadron.' The success of a cream separator is as significant to the cause of revolution as the rebellion of a naval fleet."*[280]

As new tools are introduced, the peasants' worldview needs to be changed as well. This occurs during the confrontation over money between Marfa, who wants to hold

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[277] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 97

[278] V. Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 47

[279] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 104

[280] V. Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 42

the collected funds to reinvest them, and the villagers, who want to get them for themselves. This leads to a physical fight, where the woman is mocked by the other peasants, and subsequently, thrown away by a tall man spilling some milk. A particular shot, displaying the tall man "above" her, covers most of the frame (see picture 7), encapsulating the sense of superiority the man exudes and the oppression to which Marfa is subjected. Furthermore, the cream separator is treated with near-religious reverence. Eisenstein has stated that the handling of the separator is an allusion to the Holy Grail.[281]

To highlight the importance of the soviet system, the communist worker is the one who stops the fight and illuminates people's minds with a new perspective concerning the purchase of a bull.

Similarly to what happens in *Earth,* the tractor plays an important role in the story; thanks to it, villagers can peacefully work with nature. However, the soviet is ready to deliver a tractor only after the harvest, which ends up in a catastrophe due to unsettled weather. This second rebellion of the natural world suggests that humans have not conquered it yet: the harmonious dimension will be reached as soon as the machine is obtained. Therefore, the possible solution is to travel to the city and ask the soviet for the tractor.

Once arrived, the montage indicates the bureaucrats' automatic and routine denial of credit, and by juxtaposing the office activities with storms that disrupt the grain, it suggests that not all threats to collectivisation arise from natural phenomena.[282] The inertia inherent in bureaucracy is mocked through grotesque depictions of oversized typewriters, pencil sharpeners, and self-important secretaries. The quintessential representation of bureaucratic laziness is the official signature, characterised by its disorganised and chaotic nature. When Marfa and a factory worker challenge the bureaucrats and urge them towards quicker action, the moment is highlighted by the imprint of an official seal, serving as a sudden and exact illustration of administrative activity[283]. Concerning the confrontation, the action of the factory worker violently knocking on the table while being intercut with flames and the intertitle "*Apply the general line!"* signals the final explosion of the communist character (see pictures 8 and 9). This radical change demonstrates the object importance for the survival of

[281] V. Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 47
[282]D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 97
[283] Ibid. pp. 48

the whole village. Through Eisenstein's typage, the man represents in this sequence not only himself but all the peasants of the small town.

In the meantime, the kulaks decide to kill Fomka the bull: the wicked plan is interspersed with close-ups of the organisers' faces, the true antagonists of the film, looking at each other (see picture 10). To underline their cowardice, Eisenstein shows the animal being killed by some henchmen, who bought a mysterious liquid in secret. Even though the director displays such inhumane deeds, the perpetrators get away with it, and the fact is left isolated[284]. When Fomka is poisoned by the kulaks, the villagers once more turn to paganism as they perform enigmatic rituals in a bid to rescue him. Eisenstein juxtaposes these rituals with sombre images of skulls, which represent the certainty of death and the pointlessness of attempting to overcome death through mystical means.[285]

A visual contrast emerges when Marfa finds out about the bull's death; in pure despair, she goes home under heavy rain while a kulak woman is staring at her with a sinister smile (see picture 11). The window motif serves a similar function to that during the strike in *Mother:* the spectator perceives both the kulaks (in *Old and New)* and the counterrevolutionaries (*in Mother)* as something distant, on another level. The window serves as an object to outdistance the subject framed in it.

While Marfa is going home, the kulaks are not synchronised with the dimension in which the villagers live; they are green with envy when Fomka is brought to the small town because they see competition in this. On the other hand, since the animal was the symbol of rebirth, the protagonist is desperate about what happened; she is hopeless as she thinks the whole community is doomed. Her hopelessness peaks when she enters her property and, powerless, falls on the ground (see picture 12). Her position recalls that of one of the villagers in the procession; she is a living dead, her life has lost its aim. The whole sequence is overturned when a calf enters her property. Even though the bull has passed away, there are still its offspring and the lifecycle can continue.[286]

The arrival of the tractor is the solution to all the problems about the harmony between nature, human beings and technology, where emphasis is on the machines

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[284]Ibid. pp. 106

[285] Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 47

[286] B. Crais, *Cultivating History: Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and the Cinema of Agrarian Transition*, Detroit, Wayne state university press, 2023, pp. 162

conquering land.[287] The tractor's introduction plays a key role in breaking the fences (see picture 13), which have been built in the initial scene; it is the solution to the problems caused by private property (it serves to counterbalance the division of the izba in the prologue[288]), it serves as the symbol of collectivisation in *Old and New.* Furthermore, the relationship between the city and the countryside is exemplified when the driver is compelled to tear fragments from Marfa's blushing skirt to ensure the machine operates.[289]

When it comes to its perception, *Old and New* was enthusiastically welcomed by the newspaper *Pravda*, which spoke of "*the great mastery, the tremendous emotion, the sweep, and the pulsating tempo of life...*" Mordaunt Hall, in The New York Times, praised it as "an enlightening cinematic study."[290]

Both *Earth* and *Old and New* focus on the same theme and use violence to convey their respective messages. In Dovzhenko's film, both Semën's and Vasyl's funerals focus on the life cycle and the harmony between human beings and nature. Here, violence and death (Vasyl's murder) are not seen as an abrupt interruption of life, but rather as a metamorphosis: Semën is transfigured in some children, while Vasyl's mother gives birth to a baby after the death of his only son. Finally, failing miserably (Khoma's admission of the murder), the kulaks try to disturb this natural flow.

In *Old and New,* violence is caused by the non-observation of the natural rules, which leads to the world depicted by Eisenstein: the procession's failure is brought about by the storm. Moreover, machines can help the peasants to reach harmony with the natural world. The kulaks are initially characterised by a strong indifference and lack of sympathy, but later their true nature is revealed: through the murder of Fomka, the bull, they are portrayed as greedy enemies who are envious of the goals accomplished by the villagers. Finally, while Dovzhenko shows the fate of the kulaks by displaying Khoma crying out in a graveyard without being listened to by anybody, Eisenstein leaves this question open; the rich farmers are neither punished nor forgiven for what they have done to the animal.

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[287] Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 46

[288] D. Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein,* Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2005, pp. 102

[289] Ibid. pp. 101

[290] Kepley, T*he Evolution of Eisenstein's Old and New, Cinema Journal* Austin, University of Texas, 1974, pp. 49-50

MENTIONED SHOTS OF *OLD AND NEW* AND *EARTH*

PICTURE 1: *EARTH*

PICTURE 2: *EARTH*

PICTURE 3: *EARTH*

PICTURE 4: *EARTH*

PICTURE 5: *EARTH*

PICTURE 6: *EARTH*

PICTURE 7: *EARTH*

PICTURE 8: *EARTH*

PICTURE 9: *EARTH*

PICTURE 10: *EARTH*

PICTURE 1: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 2: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 3: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 4: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 5: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 6: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 7: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 8: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 9: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 10: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 11: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 12: *OLD AND NEW*

PICTURE 13: *OLD AND NEW*

CONCLUSION

The types and modalities of violence taken into account in this dissertation are multiple and vary depending on the director's aim. On the one hand, *Battleship Potëmkin* and *Mother* portray a world where Tsarism needs to be stopped and subsequently is seen as the source of all the problems. On the other hand, the two directors have shot two completely divergent films. Eisenstein focuses more on violence against the masses; the tsarist system strikes against everybody without discrimination (see the sequence on the Odessa Steps). Vakulinchuk's death in exchange for the victory on the Potëmkin is reversed in Odessa, where the massacre takes place. This inversion also happens on a more symbolic level, where the eyeglasses motif is first ascribed to Dr. Smirnov to show his stubbornness, is later inverted in the second part of the film, where the victims, in particular the schoolmistress, are the ones to wear them: in this case the pince-nez symbolizes the reflection of the atrocities the civilians have seen until now. On the contrary, in *Mother*, Pelageja and Pavel are the true victims of the tsarist regime. Pudovkin uses them as a reflection of all the workers in the Russian Empire. Violent acts here occur not only on a physical level (the officer slapping a handcuffed Pavel and the soldiers shooting at the prisoners), but also on a more metaphorical dimension, e.g., the corruption manifested in the tavern during the introduction of the Black Hundreds, the emphasis on time during the trial, where the prosecutor can take his turn to speak whenever he wants.

If Eisenstein portrays the bourgeoisie in *The Battleship Potëmkin* as one of the victims in Odessa, Pudovkin directly highlights their coquettish attitude and their thirst for entertainment. This passive role becomes active in *October,* when some bourgeois men and a woman take pleasure in beating a Bolshevik man during the slaughter of the July days. Moreover, in this film, contrast emerges on a symbolic level, as the Provisional Government's delay in action is juxtaposed with the Bolsheviks' forward momentum. In the storm of the Winter Palace, Lenin and his men seem to become a flow; they completely overwhelm the enemy and destroy the wine bottles in it, in order not to be influenced by the Palace, seen not as a mere building, but as the symbol of the Provisional Government, and its old ideals: to mark

the beginning of a new era the communists in Eisenstein's film metaphorically destroy Kerensky and the Winter Palace.

In The End of St. Petersburg, Pudovkin directly addresses the enemy of the new communist state by juxtaposing Lebedev and the other businessmen with dead soldiers at the front. This act is the climax that will lead to the October Revolution with its refusal of the traditional order. Furthermore, in this film, oppression is caused not only by Lebedev but also by St. Petersburg as a city: many statues are represented from the bottom so that they cannot be framed in only one shot, thus meaning that the power and tyranny of the tsars, symbols of the old regime, are overwhelming. Moreover, before the final attack, the Winter Palace is represented not through Kerensky and the other members of the Provisional government, as it was in *October,* but through the details of the Palace, suggesting that the true enemy is something deeper, invisible at first sight. Besides, violence serves to awaken the communist consciousness of the Lad (see the storm of Lebedev's office) and the mother (her leading of the strike).

Nonetheless, violence can also be positive. In Dovzhenko's *Earth,* the funerals of Semën and Vasyl have a positive meaning strictly related to rebirth and the life cycle. Their deaths are seen on a wider dimension while giving the film a circular structure. Moreover, the demise of his son helps Opanas to develop his communist consciousness and makes Khoma aware that the kulaks are bound to die out with collectivisation approaching. Similar consequences to Vasyl's death can be found in the murder of the bull in *Old and New*, where a desperate, powerless Marfa falls to the ground of his property before finding out that the bull's offspring can contribute to the expansion of the sovkhoz. Thus, the kulaks try in both films to disturb the natural cycle (see Vasyl's and Fomka's murder), but they fail in it: if in *Old and New* the kulak question is not shown in its resolution, in *Earth,* Dovzhenko openly tackles the question by juxtaposing Khoma's admission to the speech of the Communist worker, where the former is negated by the latter.

Finally, in the cinema of the civil war, violence is expressed in manifold ways. In *Zvenigora,* the fights break out mainly due to the Old Man's convictions; Roxana's legend serves to fuse every temporal line displayed in the film. Throughout different timelines, a wicked figure is consistently present: the brutal chieftain in the tale of the

Old Man, the monk who personifies Death in the prologue during the fight between the Cossacks and the Poles, and Pavlo in modern times. What is to highlight is that the more time passes, the more subtle violence becomes; while the chieftain was just a bloodthirsty commander willing to kill everybody, Pavlo is more psychological as he deceives the old Man into thinking the train is the personification of a demon. The train is important in *Arsenal* as well, because it divides the plot into two parts, which are strictly interconnected. With this film, Dovzhenko suggests that these two events generated the same amount of deaths and destruction: the German soldier laughing at death in the prologue and the one killed by his general are nowhere better than the White Guard and the Red army shooting to death millions of people (see the sequence in the hospital). The main question (Can we kill bourgeois and officers on the street if we meet them?) posed during the meeting is only partially answered by the nurse looking directly at the screen, hence breaking the fourth wall. Finally, the most striking sequence, where a communist soldier kills a white officer, signals the difference between the two sides, in which the former are bloodthirsty and the latter cowards (Stand with your face to the wall so I could kill you in your back). Differently from these two films, *Storm over Asia* extends its revolutionary purpose in Mongolia. Here, Bair's explosions and confrontations (with the monk, the merchant and the occupying government) make him closer to understanding the communist aim and to begin the storm over Asia suggested in the title. The protagonist's final outburst, where he becomes invincible, can be compared to the final scene in Arsenal, where Tymosh stands for an ideal; he is therefore invulnerable.

Last but not least, these directors with their techniques have contributed to expanding the soviet culture in the whole world: Eisenstein managed to create the soviet style in cinema (Piotrovsky said that *Potëmkin* stands as a source of pride), which was then expanded by Pudovkin (Piotrovsky affirmed that *Mother* is poised to become another point of pride) and revolutionised by Dovzhenko (both Eisenstein and Pudovkin praised *Zvenigora)*.

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