

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘THE UNDERLYING GESTURE’: TOWARDS THE NOTION OF GESTURE IN JEAN D’UDINE AND SERGEI EISENSTEIN

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Certain great movements are like *director’s signature*, which characterise the whole of a film, or even the whole of an oeuvre, but resonate with the relative movement of a particular signed image, or a particular detail in the image.

—Gilles Deleuze¹

In his groundbreaking essay *Notes on Gesture* (1992), Giorgio Agamben describes a gestural catastrophe that befell the late 19th century European culture. On the one hand, he points out the proliferation of motor disorders registered in medical records, on the other hand, an unprecedented fascination for movement and gesture in the sphere of art. “An age that has lost its gestures is, for this reason, obsessed by them”, he writes, giving various examples of gestural infatuation, including Serge Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, Isadora Duncan’s free movement dance, Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of eternal return, Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Marcel Proust’s novels, and, in particular, the emerging motion picture (Agamben 2000, 52f.). Not without certain psychoanalytical implications, Agamben argues that from the outset cinema was predestined to become a means to register both the loss of – and the extraordinary fixation on – gestures. The seemingly inevitable interest of silent cinema in gestural expression goes, however, beyond the technical limitations of the epoch, as became evident in sound film. The origins of this gestural fascination are therefore to be

¹ Deleuze 1986, 21; emphasis added.

sought somewhere else, in all likelihood, in an inexhaustible discussion regarding the prominence of body concepts within the modernist paradigm. Polemicising against Gilles Deleuze, Agamben has claimed that “the element of cinema is gesture, and not image” (ibid., 54) and thus reintroduced the notion of gesture into the current theoretical discourse.² It hence seems to be pertinent to return to the gestural craze that took place nearly a century earlier in order to inquire into the matter that occupied the first cineastes: the role of gesture for the still nascent film theory. Mikhail Iampolski (1991) has, for instance, observed how Lev Kuleshov’s theory of montage naturally evolved from his interest in corporeal expression and rhythm. Yuri Tsivian goes further by defining the history of early cinema as an oscillation between montage and gesture, two opposing formal elements expressing movement, which, in turn, forms the story and the sense of every film (Tsivian 2008). While montage expresses motion in a succession of frames, gesture does so through movement within a frame. Thus, the faster montage is, the fewer gestures the film contains, or, as Tsivian puts it, “gesture lasts, while montage cuts” (ibid.). In the following remarks, I will discuss Sergei Eisenstein’s reflections on gesture within the framework of his theory of “vertical montage”. Eisenstein’s meditations on gesture as an overarching aesthetic category remain rather marginal within the extensive scholarship on the filmmaker’s persistent interest in expressive movement and kinesthetic empathy. Little attention has been paid to one of Eisenstein’s crucial theoretical sources, the monograph *L’art et le geste* (1910) by the music theoretician Jean d’Udine. This monist study on the origins of art, undeservedly consigned to oblivion, provoked Eisenstein to conceptualise gesture as a key element of synaesthetic unity between the visual and the auditory.³

² Agamben’s contribution to the contemporaneous ‘gestural turn’ has been widely discussed in current research. See, Noys (2004); Noland, Ness (2008); Görling, Skrandies, Trinkaus (2009); Richtmeyer, Goppelsröder, Hildebrandt (2014); Gal, Friedlander, Wulf, Zuckerman (2014); Chare, Watkins (2015, 2017); Gustafsson, Grönstad (2014), just to name a few.

³ For the most recent mentioning of d’Udine in relation to Eisenstein, see Neuberger (2017, 258f.); Hedberg Olenina, Schulzki (2017). D’Udine’s influence on Eisenstein’s particular interest in gesture is also addressed in Tsivian’s yet untranslated book on movement and gesture in literature, art, and cinema. Tsivian claims “to have staked a claim” to a new branch of visual studies which he calls, not without irony, *carpalistics* (Tsivian 2010, 7). The term is a fictional discipline borrowed from Vladimir Nabokov’s 1957 novel *Pnin*, where it is introduced as a kind of philosophical kinesics. Tsivian discusses Eisenstein’s carpalistics and his concept of gesture in the context of the filmmaker’s drawings and film aesthetics. The contributors of the new collective volume *Notes For A General History Of*

Bodily rhythms – both natural and mechanical – served initially as a “metamodel for the performing arts” (Iampolski 1991, 46). Film seemed to be more suitable than theatre for exploration of bodily rhythms, and, for the first time, could even record them. Eventually, as Iampolski cogently argues, the “anthropological” dominant in cinematic experiments with rhythm shifted towards purely filmic means of rhythmisation: montage. The focus on bodily movements in early Russian and Soviet cinema was inherited from the practices and theory of theatre, mainly from the acting style of François Delsarte and the method of eurhythmics of Émile Jacques-Dalcroze. These gained currency in Russia especially due to their ardent admirer and most consequent propagator, Prince Sergei Volkonskii.⁴ An influential theatre theoretician and practitioner, Volkonskii translated into Russian and published the aforementioned monograph *L'art et le geste* as early as in 1912, only two years after its original publication in France.⁵ This study was authored by Albert Cozanet, a French actor, theatre director, musician, and, above all, Jacques-Dalcroze’s disciple, although the book appeared under the pseudonym Jean d’Udine.⁶ It was the original French edition of *L’art et le geste* that Eisenstein discovered: “A book came in my hands. A book that was neither too popular nor too much widespread, neither recommended nor approved by anyone or anywhere” (Eisenstein 2004, 174).⁷ Although the filmmaker’s attitude towards the craze for the Delsarte and the Dalcroze methods in Russia was, as Naum Kleiman comments (*ibid.*, 635), rather ironic, two of d’Udine’s ideas turned out to be in line with Eisenstein’s own observations: synaesthesia and the decisive role of gesture in artistic creation and in the genesis of art.

D’Udine believed in an “extraordinary unity” and an “intimate correspondence” of all sensible expressions known under the name of synaesthesia (d’Udine 1910, xxi). He admits being directly inspired by the

Cinema deal consequently, albeit tangentially, with the Eisensteinian gesture (Kleiman, Somaini 2016).

⁴ For more on Delsarte-Dalcroze’s impetus to Volkonskii’s theatre system and, consequently, the influence of the latter on another prominent film theoretician, Lev Kuleshov, see Iampolski 1991.

⁵ Neither has the book been reprinted in France since then nor was it possible to find any traces of its reception in English or German sources. The only review appeared in English in 1911 (Briggs 1911) and is rather reserved in its usage of evaluative or critical expressions, and thus does not allow for judgment the grade of d’Udine’s impact on the art criticism of that epoch.

⁶ I assume, this pseudonym refers to the Italian High Renaissance painter and architect, a Raphael’s disciple, Giovanni da Udine (1487–1564), born in the city of Udine.

⁷ All translations from French and Russian are mine.

biologist Félix Le Dantec and his theory of mimicry as well as by Émile Jacque-Dalcroze, who conceived of rhythm as the basis of all art and therefore arrived at the general conclusion that gesture was the primary factor of synaesthesia (ibid., xv-xvi). D’Udine developed his own hierarchy of the five senses, in which touch was assigned a privileged position (Fig. 7.1). All human senses, he argued, were born from a “plastic reflex” (ibid., 82). Thus taste, smell, hearing, and seeing – exactly in this order of evolution – are to be traced back to haptic perception. In other words, all five senses are informed here as a development of one and the same tactile proto-sensation depending on the distance between the subject and the object: taste thus allows an immediate contact with the object, smell is touch in a short distance, hearing is touch in a long distance, and vision renders remote objects palpable. D’Udine suggests touch to be a mediating sense which enables the other senses to intercommunicate and thereby generate synaesthetic perception (ibid., 91f.).

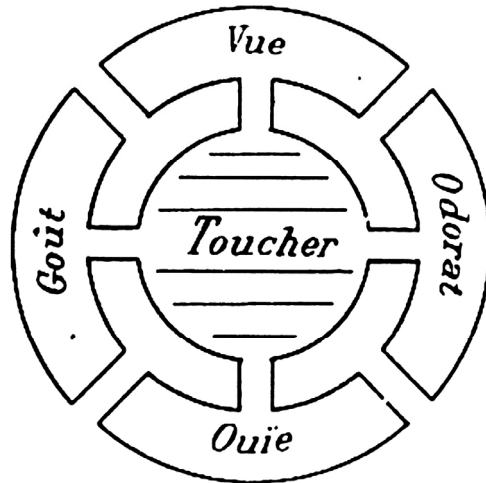


Fig. 7.1. Jean d’Udine’s scheme of the five senses interconnected by means of touch (cit. Udine 1910, 92).

D’Udine goes on to say that emotions are evoked by an immediate contact between the body and the outer world. Thus, the rhythms of nature affect the body in the most direct sense by leaving a trace, an *impression*, and by making the body express the received impulses, in short, to “vibrate”. This

is why the formula “vivre c’est vibrer” [to live is to vibrate] opens d’Udine’s discussion (ibid., 3).⁸ The idea of movement underlies the very concept of emotion (fr. *émouvoir* – ‘to move’, ‘to touch’); hence, in the sphere of art, it is the artist’s emotion that reveals the archaic tactility (ibid., viii). “*Tout génie artistique est un mime spécialisé*” [Every artistic genius is a special mime], d’Udine claims (ibid., xvii; original emphasis). Natural rhythms and gestures have to be “repeated” in the artwork, be “crystallised in a stable form (in words or phrases (...), sounds, colours, marble, wood or stone)” (ibid., 8). The essence of artistic phenomena thus consists in the exteriorisation and incarnation of emotions into “a palpable matter”, into a movement that could be measured, or any concrete form of material signs (ibid.). D’Udine discovers a motor basis in practically all arts: in poetry, architecture, painting. Every work of art, he argues, is “a series of attitudes” and of “creative gestures” (ibid., 202). He does not, however, mention one of the most “kinematic” art forms, cinema, at all, which is not at all surprising at the dawn of the 20th century: d’Udine simply did not seem to consider cinema to be an artistic practice in the first place. There is no need to say that the certain ‘aesthetic Darwinism’ and the distinct monism of d’Udine’s approach fell entirely into the pattern of the utopian impulse of modernism. Perhaps that was the reason for Eisenstein’s fascination for it in his search for unity between image and sound. Following d’Udine, he claims to find it in the “underlying gesture”.

The notion of gesture is implicated throughout Eisenstein’s writings, in particular in his discussion of “movement”, “a single, unifying image”, “a plastic rhyme”, etc. (Eisenstein 1975, 82, 69, 258). Yet it received a pointed formulation in his 1939-40 unfinished essay *Opredel'aiushchii zhest* [The Underlying Gesture], which was thought to be a chapter of his *Vertical Montage – The Film Sense* in the English edition – and to precede there Eisenstein’s analysis of *Alexander Nevsky* (1938). In the end, the chapter on gesture was not included in the book, although it elucidated Eisenstein’s method of vertical montage in a programmatic way. For the first time, the essay appeared in Russian only in 2004 in the first volume *Neravnodushnaia priroda* [Non-Indifferent Nature].⁹ This essay unfolds the thesis that gesture, language, music, and colour are commensurate “voices”, or development stages, of some unified “language” that co-exist in the form of “layers” in our logical and sensual apparatus (Eisenstein 2004, 165f.). One

⁸ Similar theses were formulated two decades later by the French anthropologist Marcel Jousse in his holistic theory of gesture (Jousse 1925). It is not a coincidence, since Jousse directly refers to d’Udine’s study.

⁹ For more on the destiny of this text, see Naum Kleiman’s commentaries (Eizenshtein 2004, 614, 633).

has to bear in mind that Eisenstein considered the evolutionist assumption that language originates from corporeal movements as common and self-evident. In this regard, he explicitly refers to the concept of “linear” or “kinetic” speech advanced by the Soviet linguist Nikolai Marr (*ibid.*, 169).¹⁰ However, this idea was first introduced by the French philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac in his celebrated *Traité des sensations* (1754), and culminated in Wilhelm Wundt’s *Die Sprache* (1900), the first volume of his monumental *Völkerpsychologie*. Reflecting the zeitgeist, Eisenstein believes in a syncretic impulse – “proto-gesture” (*ishkhodnyi zhest*, Eisenstein 2004, 176) – of every bodily movement, music, poetry, painting, film montage, and, more broadly, artwork composition.

The emergence of sound film was able to reveal the synchrony of senses as no other art form had before (*ibid.*, 175), although the transition “from the silent montage to (...) the audio-visual montage changes nothing *in principle*” (Eisenstein 1975, 70; original emphasis). His, in some sense romantic, aspiration for cinema as an “organic union” of sound and image (Eisenstein 1964, 261) resulted in the certitude that cinema was a form of synchrony of senses and a system of correspondences par excellence. The more channels of perception are involved in the creation of a film work, the more intense and “polyphonic” it appears to the recipient at the end. In the theory of the “vertical montage” and its application, Eisenstein’s primary concern was a simultaneous coordination between visual and sound strips – what he called “vertical splices” (Eisenstein 1975, 81) – in contrast to “horizontal” composition of pieces in a silent film (Fig. 7.2). In search of “those means of (...) *an inner synchronization between the tangible picture and the differently perceived sounds*” (*ibid.*, 83; original emphasis), Eisenstein concludes that one and the same motif can be realised by different elements of the film, whereas the polyphony of different voices is to be subordinated to a “principle idea” (Eisenstein 2004, 165). The simplest audio-visual montage, he notes, is based on rhythm: “shots cut and edited together to the rhythm of the music on the parallel sound-track” (Eisenstein 1975, 83). Yet his goal was evidently more ambitious: he was preoccupied with finding “a system which will determine the intricate plastic and aural movements of a theme through all the diverse correspondences” (*ibid.*, 81). His vertical montage was conceived of in order to reveal that common “language”,

¹⁰ Nikolai Marr (1865-1934) is notoriously famed as the author of the speculative ‘Japhetic theory’ which obtained state recognition as a Soviet leading linguistic theory in the 1920-30s, albeit mainly because of its ideological premises (application of Marxism to linguistics). Marr’s theory wielded great influence on the Soviet intellectuals, including Eisenstein, but was irrevocably dethroned in 1950. On Marr and Eisenstein, see Vogman 2017.

which, finally, was sought in the movement expressed by a linear element of plastic art: “a line along which the artwork’s dynamic unfolds and flows as well as the graphic composition of the artwork’s static elements” (Eisenstein 2004, 169-170). It is remarkable how Eisenstein’s choreographic and music imagery, reminiscent of d’Udine’s vocabulary, intertwines with the graphical one: “a line of the image’s trace”, “geometrical flourish”, “plastic subtext” (Eisenstein 2004, 179, 183, 197-8). In the 1947 essay *Melodiia i zhest* [Melody and Gesture], he again stresses out that “it is necessary to catch a melody’s gesture; and melody is that primary ‘dance’ (...) melody altogether corresponds to drawing in general terms (...) that is one general movement holding together points that are scattered in the space” (ibid., 533f).

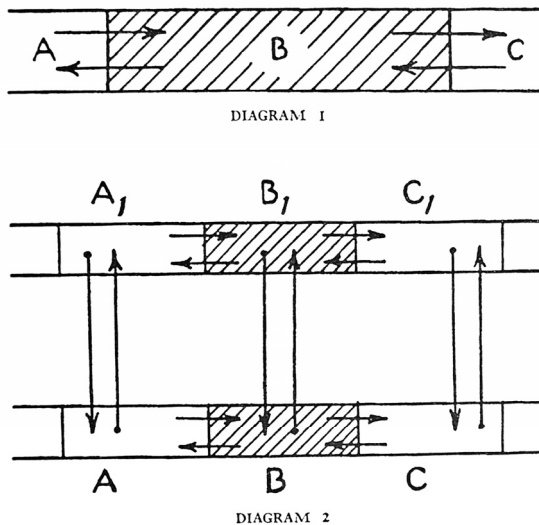


Fig. 7.2. Composition of pieces in silent film (horizontal montage, diagram 1) and in sound film (vertical montage, diagram 2) (cit. Eisenstein 1975, 79).

Eisenstein’s passion for drawing is widely known; it was admitted by the filmmaker himself when he mentioned his preference for sketches over finished canvases (Eisenstein 1975, 71). Indeed, sketches and drawings were an integral part of his creative process and surpassed mere illustration of his theoretical oeuvre. In the chapter devoted to the self-analysis of *Alexander Nevsky*, Eisenstein meticulously reconstructs post factum “a complete correspondence between the movement of the music and the movement of the eye over the lines of the plastic composition” (ibid., 178;

original emphasis). He demonstrates this correspondence by the example of twelve shots preceding the scene “The Battle on the Ice”, namely, the sequence that he describes as following: “Alexander on Raven Rock and the Russian troops at the foot of the Rock on the shore of the frozen Lake Chudskoye, peering into the distance from which the enemy is to appear” (ibid., 175). Influenced by Prokofiev’s score, the frame composition, and the light accents, Eisenstein visualises their common movement with a line traversing four points: (a) “a tensely rising line” arching from the left lower corner upwards (b) followed by “an abrupt fall” (c) and, at last, (d) by an even “horizontal gesture” (ibid.; original emphasis): “The line a – b – c (...) very clearly reproduces the state of ‘holding one’s breath’, holding in the exhalation until the chest is ready to burst – to burst not only with the increasing intake of air, but also with the increasing emotion that is bound to the physical act” (ibid., 212). The linear composition he contours (Fig. 7.3) is accompanied by a suggestive description of a gesture, a brilliant ekphrasis and a peer ‘laying bare’ of one’s own artistic device (ibid., 176f.).

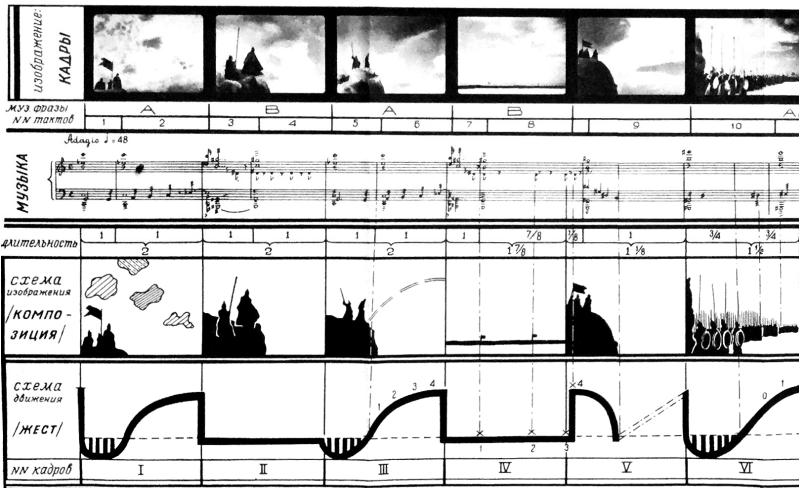


Fig. 7.3. Audio-visual correspondences in the sequence “Alexander on Raven Rock” (*Alexander Nevsky*). The first six shots depicting the picture frames, music phrases, music score, duration, diagram (composition), and diagram of movement (gesture) – (Eisenstein 2004, attachment).

This is where Eisenstein’s notion of proto-gesture becomes the key of synaesthetic unity. “Au commencement était le Geste” [In the beginning was the gesture], proclaimed d’Udine (1910, 86), and this seemingly trivial

reformulation of the opening of the John's Gospel was taken over, word for word, by Eisenstein (2004, 173, 177). The filmmaker asserted that gesture is "the only means of linear commensurability of image and sound" and "the cradle of all kinds of imagery" (*ibid.*, 177). Gesture is thus deployed as a figure of potentiality ("an embryo") that is to be actualised into an "audio-visual image" (*zvukozritel'nyi obraz*, *ibid.*, 175). One has to be aware of the ambiguity accountable for Eisenstein's concept of "image" and "imagery" (Rus. *obraz*, *obraznost'*). There are two albeit single-root words for "image" in Russian: *obraz* and *izobrazhenie*. Whereas *izobrazhenie* concerns immediate seeing – what we perceive with our senses ('depiction' or 'representation'), *obraz* presupposes rather an intelligible generalisation of the visible, akin to the Old-Greek *eikon*, as Naum Kleiman rightly observes (*ibid.*, 7f.).¹¹ The word *obraz* is commonly utilised to express both visual motifs and most general ideas or topics in art, or, in short, empirically invisible abstractions. It is rather in this latter sense that we have to read Eisenstein's audio-visual image: "Image [*obraz*] presupposes a generalised, unified, integral form" (*ibid.*, 183).¹² In this way, the curve $a - b - c$ in *Alexander Nevsky* shapes the non-representational idea of 'holding one's breath'. Thus, gesture is defined as "an initial act that determines the plastic formulation of images in any artistic sphere. Those images are not a mere geometrical abstraction but something deeply connected with the main theme [of the art work]" (*ibid.*, 179).

Furthermore, Eisenstein quotes Goethe, who also claimed that colour and sound could be correlated by means of some "higher plastic formula" (*höhere Formel*, *ibid.*). In the same manner, we should grasp the filmmaker's "vertical connector" (*ibid.*) – that linear pattern uniting an abstract idea with its various material representations. To some extent, we surely deal with a basic Platonism in the Eisensteinian thought – this insightful analogy was drawn by Mikhail Iampolski (1998, 228). Noteworthy is that gesture in Eisenstein not only connects noumena and phenomena but enacts ideas in a tangible way. Besides, it is the question of individual artistic style that is at stake: The gestural trace left by the author's

¹¹ It is no coincidence that the synonym of the Russian word *ikona* [ikone] is *obraz*.

¹² But we have also keep in mind that an image arises foremost in a dialectical process. As Joan Neuberger puts it: "Elements of character, appearance, types of movement, material objects, music, lighting, mise-en-scene and so on, trigger our awareness and imagination in increasingly intense emotional and intellectual contradictions until the dialectic explodes in a synthetic, transcendent, out-of-body experience, that produces illumination, understanding and change, before then quickly fragmenting into new dialectical contradictions." (Neuberger, manuscript courtesy of the author).

movement becomes captured in a “graphical scheme” (Eisenstein 2004, 176). One might feel reminded of d’Udine’s understanding of art as the creation of a “double”, or a “substratum” (Udine 1910, 81). Another pictogram depicting Eisenstein’s emotional state is found in his diaries (March 20, 1945): a single line-arrow, sinuously descending from the left corner to the right, is signed in English: “So do I feel” (Eisenstein 2004, 21). This ‘melancholic’ gestural curve is an explicit and reversed reference to the flourish of freedom by which the corporal Trim of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (Book IX, Chapter 4) advocates celibacy.¹³

One more illuminating gestural pattern comes from Eisenstein’s discussion of his staging of the opera *The Valkyrie* for the Bolshoi in 1940. When working on the concept of the love scene of Siegmund and Sieglinde (act 1), Eisenstein admits being inspired both by Wagner’s musical theme and by the following line in the libretto: “die hintere Tür ist aufgesprungen” [the back door has sprung open]. Nearly spontaneously, Eisenstein draws a “plastic gesture” that he is planning for the basic image of the stage set: consistently growing concentric circles which are supposed to call forth the idea of “the exploded tension that has prevailed since the beginning of the act” (Eisenstein 2004, 187–8), a burst and an expansion associated with springtime, as well as an abstract image of romantic ecstasy – an opening and simultaneously all-encompassing movement. Somewhere else he remarks that Wagner’s music requires “becoming visible, seeable. Its visibility needs to be sharply outlined, tactile, quickly alternating, physical” (Eisenstein 2002, 204). Eisenstein’s synaesthetic vision recognises but does not confine itself to the same archetypical proto-gesture of divergent circles in the composition of other artworks, such as Degas’ famous painting *The Star* and Bach’s *St Matthew’s Passion*, but also in the contours of domestic objects such as his round bracket clock which evokes a “spatial image” of time (Eisenstein 2004, 191f.).¹⁴ This led him to the conclusion that not only single emotions and their ranges but whole systems of ideas and philosophical conceptions could be expressed through – or reduced to – “unifying” (*ob’ediniavushchii*), “general” (*obshchii*), “transversal” (*skvoznoi*) gestures (ibid., 184–188). Here Eisenstein came closer than ever before to Bertold Brecht’s concept of *Gestus* – an unintentionally arising and yet disputable analogy.¹⁵

¹³ Stern’s gestural graph is also mentioned in *The Underlying Gesture* (2004,176) as well as in his *Non-Indifferent Nature* (1964, 261). Tsivian, too, reads Stern’s gesture in regard to Eisenstein’s graphisme (2010, 12).

¹⁴ Remarkably, D’Udine also interprets lines in regard of their temporal function and as a source of aesthetic pleasure (Udine 1910, 54, 102f.).

¹⁵ see Naum Kleiman’s reflections on this in his preface to Eisenstein 2004, 22.

By scrupulously ‘dissecting’ the sequence from *Alexander Nevsky* and the scene from *The Valkyrie*, Eisenstein emphasises that this analysis could only be done post factum and that the audio-visual structures always occurred to him intuitively, even automatically (Eisenstein 1975, 196).¹⁶ In fact, the ‘extraction’ appears as a twofold process: at first, the artist traces the gesture from the world, and then the recipient does the same from the oeuvre. Eisenstein writes: “There is an artist’s emotion. But there is also a flourish of his movement in the created image.” (2004, 173). Eisenstein denies any objective or absolute equivalencies and asserts instead that the process of ‘extraction’ of an underlying gesture is subjective, relative, if not speculative. Such syncretic knowledge is visceral in nature and related to the area of muscular movements – to the tendons, as he mentions in another essay (Eisenstein 2002, 151). In this sense, the French critic Georges Sadoul, who discerned various visual formulas that determine all elements of Eisenstein’s *Ivan the Terrible*, can be regarded as a model viewer of Eisenstein’s oeuvre. According to Sadoul, the film’s peculiar gestural vocabulary comprises S- and A-form compositions, as well as a zigzag movement.¹⁷ An act of art perception hence turns into deciphering the author’s emotion and into reading the flourish of his movement, or, as Deleuze puts it, of “director’s signature” (1986, 21). Iampolski (1998, 226) sagaciously remarks: “Eisenstein arrives at a kind of pangraphism: the world, for all its diversity, is, under the phenomenal surface of things, governed by the semantically charged line.”

“Gestures elude” us, maintains one of the most recent publications on gesture (Göring 2009, 9), thereby underscoring one of the crucial conundrums of any inquiry into the matter: the impossibility of utterance. Gesture’s muteness challenges the discourse surrounding it and makes gesture to a perfectly ‘unspeakable’ figure of speech. With Agamben’s terms, we are always “at a loss in the language” (1999, 78) when we try to conceptualise gesture. It is therefore striking how Eisenstein, who masters this difficult task of verbalisation with an innate poetical fineness, reaches the conclusion that reading the image with the aim to substrate the underlying gesture can be performed only in a non-verbalised fashion: “The

¹⁶ According to Iampolski’s shrewd remark, there is a certain resemblance between Eisenstein’s fascination for instinctively generated lines and the surrealist method of *écriture automatique*, proclaimed in André Breton’s *Le Message automatique* (1933). Like Eisenstein, Breton arrives at the notion of an “eidetic image” (Iampolski 1998, 234).

¹⁷ Eisenstein mentions Sadoul’s article (*L’Ecran Français*, 1946) in his essay *Neskol’ko slov o plasticheskoi i zvukozritel’noi kompozitsii* [Some Remarks on Plastic and Audio-Visual Composition] (Eisenstein 2004, 526).

image is to affect the mind and the emotions by its own verbal unspeakability” (Eisenstein 2004, 198). The pathos of Eisenstein’s aesthetic project consists, finally, in the search for harmony between the sensual and the intellectual, in which gesture appears as an ideal form-and-content amalgam. In Agamben’s call for a “liberation of the image into gesture” (2000, 55), which occurs only in the medium of cinema, we can sense that very Eisensteinian ‘extraction’ of the underlying gesture aiming at the same setting free of the movement that had been petrified in the image. One can argue that for both thinkers gesture meant a subtle passage from aesthetics into ethics and politics, as well as into the sphere of pure mediality: “*The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such*” (Agamben 2000, 57; original emphasis). However that may be, Eisenstein’s utopianism regarding his aspiration to find a magic formula of artistic creation and of its perception leaves us with the same undeniable vestige indicated by Agamben, namely, gesture’s unspeakability and its mediality as the benchmark for further reflection.

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