

titles ("one pound," "half a pound") to the steady starvation of the children. Eisenstein's editing discontinuities encourage us to build up a political commentary on the story events.

Graphic discontinuities recur throughout *October*, especially in scenes of dynamic action, and they hit our eyes more forcefully than neatly matched shots would. To watch an Eisenstein film is to submit oneself to percussive graphic editing. But that editing also gives us powerful images—friendly soldiers, faceless bureaucrats, suffering women and children—that stir our emotions. By refusing to focus on one protagonist, Eisenstein moves masses of people to the fore.

But he did not want to stop with mere sympathy. *October* tries to show the underlying causes of the masses' suffering more directly than the traditional dramatic conflict between individualized heroes and villains could. Eisenstein's editing constructs correspondences, analogies, and contrasts that ask us to *interpret* the story events. The interpretation is not simply handed to the viewer; rather, the editing discontinuities push us to work out implicit meanings. By assembling the shots in our minds, we grasp his idea that the new government is no different from the old one and that ordinary people are sacrificed to a war machine.

No one was more aware of the multitude of creative decisions involved in editing than Eisenstein. He saw that classical continuity would not achieve his purposes. So he chose to make a film in which discontinuities of graphic elements, time, and space could prod the spectator into sympathy and thought. In the process he demonstrated that there are powerful alternatives to the principles of continuity editing.

SUMMARY

When any two shots are joined, we can ask several questions:

1. How are the shots graphically continuous or discontinuous?
2. What rhythmic relations are created?
3. Are the shots spatially continuous? If not, what creates the discontinuity? (Crosscutting? Ambiguous cues?) If the shots are spatially continuous, how does the 180° system create the continuity?
4. Are the shots temporally continuous? If so, what creates the continuity? (For example, matches on action?) If not, what creates the discontinuity? (Ellipsis? Overlapping cuts?)

More generally, we can ask the question we ask of every film technique: How does this technique *function* with respect to the film's narrative form? Does the film use editing to lay out the narrative space, time, and cause-effect chain in the manner of classical continuity? How do editing patterns emphasize facial expressions, dialogue, or setting? Do editing patterns withhold narrative information? In general, how does editing contribute to the viewer's experience of the film?

Some practical hints: You can learn to notice editing in several ways. If you are having trouble noticing cuts, try watching a film or video and tapping each time a shot changes. Once you recognize editing easily, watch any film with the sole purpose of observing one editing aspect—say, the way space is presented, or the control of graphics or time. Sensitize yourself to rhythmic editing by noting cutting rates; tapping out the tempo of the cuts can help.

Watching 1930s and 1940s American films can introduce you to classical continuity style; try to predict what shot will come next in a sequence. (You'll be surprised at how often you're right.) When you watch a film on video, try turning off the sound; editing patterns become more apparent this way. When there's a violation of continuity, ask yourself whether it is accidental or serves a purpose. When you see a film that does not obey classical continuity principles, search for its unique editing patterns. Use the slow-motion, freeze, and reverse controls on a video player to analyze a film sequence as this chapter has done. (Almost any film will do.) In such ways as these, you can considerably increase your understanding of the power of editing.