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## The Manipulation of Visual and Aural Allegorical Images on Motion Picture Film

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THE MANIPULATION OF VISUAL AND AURAL ALLEGORICAL  
IMAGES ON MOTION PICTURE FILM

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Art

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by  
Douglas Rogers Atherton  
August, 1972

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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As a means of expression and communication, I have found motion picture film to be the most rewarding and satisfying artistic medium I have yet encountered with the exception of musical sounds. Because I feel a strong affinity for both film and music on a nearly equal basis, and because the two art forms compliment each other in practical and aesthetic senses, I have attempted to develop from established film theories, a personal and therefore unique approach to the combination of sound and picture images and the statement held therein.

When we combine sound and picture images together on motion picture film we are performing what Sergei Eisenstein termed vertical montage. This is a progression of the standard silent film concept of horizontal montage in which shot follows shot in a flow through time. If we were to draw a musical analogy to these concepts, we may consider the horizontal montage to represent a melody line in which each shot may be considered to be another note, or we may wish to designate each frame as a note and the single shot as the melody. If we draw this analogy further, the vertical montage becomes harmony. As in a musical score, the film piece is developed both horizontally and vertically in vertical synchronization. This then, in essence, is the basic technique and structure upon which to build the film.

It is obviously not coincidental that a musical analogy should be drawn parallel to the concepts of filmic construction, for both have the capacity to flow together through time and space.

Beyond this point lie the motivations and emotions of the filmmaker, which in this instance coincide with those of the musician, for they are one in the same.

I am attracted to what I consider to be an allegorical approach to sound and picture images, whether combining them into a montage unit toward a cinemagraphic end or simply dealing with the sound images as projected by an instrument and/or accompanying lyrics.

For some time prior to my work in cinematography I was acquainting myself with sound images created musically and lyrically and the thought pictures they produced. Aside from the pure emotional response to these sounds, the thought pictures or mental images evoked are in themselves allegorical in that they are visual images described through sound; the description of one thing under another image. The content of such pieces, visually and aurally, is also allegorical when consumed as a complete and whole idea. When dissected and explored, these creations can be seen to be constructed substantially through the use of extremely delicate and varied combinations of analogies, metaphorical references and similies.

I believe that, for myself, the beauty and essence of this allegorical concept resides in its' substitutional subtleness. This descriptive method involves and thrives on an almost magical transformation of what could possibly be mundane surface images into a realm of highly symbolic and mysterious interwoven harmonies, flowing lyrical overtones and simultaneously occurring fluid personal visions. It is this concept, as previously applied to aural images, that I have attempted to expand and coordinate with the visual images produced on motion picture film. If permitted here, one is naturally prone to conjecture that this method of sound cinematography is potentially more expressive than aural or visual images presented separately. The womb in which to plant

the seeds of ones' imagination toward the composite film is lush and fertile.

There is, however, a point we inevitably reach where analysis of structure, content and motivation must give way to the projected images alone. Images we find splashed subtly upon the public beach, like seashells that we may curiously inspect, touch and put to our ear to catch the oceans' roar that swells inside. Perhaps we will be greeted by images comparable to the thunderous wave itself, bombarding our senses, overwhelming us with their power and retreating quietly with the tide to the vast sea of tumultuous life where they were born. Indeed, revealed beyond the final analysis is the inner consciousness as, exposed and naked in its' simple and passive flesh, it stands in judgement before the cosmic truth.

## APPENDIX

1. Eisenstein, Sergei, Film Form, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949.
2. Eisenstein, Sergei, The Film Sense, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942.
3. Lipton, Lenny, Independent Filmmaking, San Francisco, Straight Arrow Books, 1972.