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21F.031 Response Paper 3/10

> What are the characteristics of Eisenstein's cinema? Having read extracts from <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, how do you think Adorno and Horkheimer would assess a film like <u>Battleship Potemkin</u>?

Eisenstein's films defied conventions and worked in experimental directions. Eisenstein also believed in political motives behind art. Adorno and Horkheimer would attribute both his political methodologies and editing techniques as contributing to the culture industry.

Eisenstein was always trying to push the envelope; the gruesome death in <u>Battleship</u> "displayed a horrific violence unprecedented in silent filmmaking" (*The Cinema of Eisenstein*, p 11). His methodology also defied convention, from writing the script on site (*Cinema*, p 10) to letting his "intuition guide the shooting" (*Cinema*, p 12). His films also served to fortify the new order of the proletariat in Soviet Russia, using character abstraction to glorify the common worker (*Cinema*, p 8), believing that the "artist must fulfill a political task" (*Cinema*, p 12).

In cinefying the Party and state ideologies, Horkheimer and Adorno would argue that Eisenstein's seemingly avant-garde style was merely co-opted by a larger socio-political culture industry. This seems to be substantiated when his later attempts at the various *Ivan* installments, billed as too experimental by the ruling party, were dumbed down to conform with their views. Also, his abstraction of characters is consistent with Adorno and Horkheimer's views that the culture industry destroys the concept of the individual. This just reinforces the point they try to make that the culture industry is so prevalent that even the so-called avant-garde gets assimilated before long.