Insight

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Insight, a forum for nonfiction student thought, is published once each semester by the Brigham Young University Honors Program. Undergraduate BYU students of all disciplines are encouraged to submit original nonfiction papers for publication. These papers should demonstrate original thinking and should address subjects of general interest to the university community. Authors should gear their papers to an intelligent but not necessarily informed audience.

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contents

The U.S. government has recently stressed the importance of families, but tax laws affecting families aren't as supportive as the rhetoric behind them.

A recent Sikh text by Puran Singh provides answers about forming a community of religious mystics.

The death of C. S. Lewis's wife caused him to re-evaluate his relationship with God and to consider how to live in a world of grief and sorrow.

Playtime between mothers and their newborn children is more than just fun and games—it's the basis for how children learn to handle future relationships.

Sergei Eisenstein and other avant-garde filmmakers in the early days of the Soviet Union helped to shape the emerging Soviet consciousness.

"FAMILY VALUES." BUZZWORDS FOR THE 90S. POLITICIANS BOUNCE THEM BACK AND FORTH AT ONE ANOTHER WITH A CONFIDENCE SUGGESTING THAT THEY CAN SINGLE-HANDEDLY SAVE AMERICAN FAMILIES. BUT MANY AMERICANS END UP ASKING THEMSELVES, "WHAT IMPACT CAN THE GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY HAVE ON MY FAMILY?"

Taxes & Family Values

BY THERON BRENT HARMON & JOSEPH B. CALL

When they first married Andrew and Raquelle did not know what they were getting into financially. They took their vows before considering the benefits of a college education and never aspired to obtain degrees. Children came, forcing the couple to work to provide for the young family. A couple of years have passed, and they now have two children.

Both are still working for about minimum wage. Although fictitious, Andrew and Raquelle are representative of the lower-income American family. Their annual combined income is $22,600, and after the standard deduction is subtracted, personal exemptions are claimed, and the appropriate credits are applied, they pay Uncle Sam $93 in annual income tax. It may seem a small amount, but they are not bringing home that much money to begin with.

Across the street live their hypothetical neighbors, Robert and Holly. Robert and Holly were divorced from their first marriages and each has a child from the previous marriage.

They chose not to remarry but to live together. For the sake of comparison, they bring home the same income as their neighbors Andrew and Raquelle. In contrast, they receive two refund checks at tax time totaling $3,870.

If the United States government advocates the traditional nuclear family, it should also have tax laws beneficial to the family unit. But in reality, what are the effects of federal income tax laws on Americans' decision to marry and have children? Does the government encourage people to live in two-parent family units?[1]

Until midway through this century, everyone was taxed as an individual, regardless of marital status. In 1948, Congress passed a law that started taxing married people as family units instead of as individuals, which meant that husbands and wives could "split" their earnings. For example, in a marriage where one partner made $50,000 and the other $10,000, they would combine their incomes creating a total family income of $60,000 and then split this amount evenly for

tax purposes,. as if they had earned $30,000 each. This benefit decreased the tax liability of many couples, especially if the husband worked and the wife stayed at home ("Fair" 414).[2]

In the two decades following the enactment of the pro-marriage law, many singles became frustrated with the tax advantage of married people. In response, Congress passed the 1969 Tax Reform Act. This act stopped singles' liability at 120 percent of the liability for married individuals of the same income level, meaning that if an unmarried earner brings home the same amount as a married couple does jointly, the unmarried earner is guaranteed to pay in taxes no more than 120 percent of what the married couple would pay on the same income. Further changes in the standard deduction allowed singles to proportionally exempt themselves from more of their income, thus creating the "marriage penalty."

The penalty existed in this same form until 1981, when tax cuts eased the marriage penalty by a ten percent

reduction (up to $3,000) for the lower-income earner. For example, if a couple earned $40,000 and $20,000, they received a deduction of $2,000 from their joint income, or in other words, ten percent of the lesser income, $20,000. Tax relief in this form lasted until 1986, when a new Tax Reform Act ended the availability of this deduction (415).

The most recent change in the marriage tax law came about through the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act passed in 1993. Although the net effect on the "aggregate marriage tax"—the total dollar value of the marriage penalty—was very slight, it did cause significant tax liability changes to specific groups of people. On one side, "there has been a major expansion of the earned income tax credit" which increases the amount of marriage subsidies. On the other side, taxes increased for lower-income families with two partners working and earning similar salaries, and for the wealthy (Feenburg and Rosen 91–92). In 1995, Congress prepared legislation to ease this burden on families as part of the American Dream Restoration Act, a section of the Balanced Budget Act. This act was vetoed by President Clinton because of budget concerns in November of 1995, and no further legislation has been passed since that time ("Fair" 415).

Reasons for Supporting the Current Tax Structure

Very few people find reasons to completely support the American tax code. In a 1995 poll conducted by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, "respondents across economic, racial and ideological lines answered with remarkable unanimity" that no family of four should be required to pay more than twenty-five percent of their income in taxes. That percentage includes "all major levies combined—federal, state and local—including income, Social Security, sales and property taxes." In reality, most families have to pay much more (Wildavsky 57).

Many Americans seem dissatisfied with the amount of taxes they pay. However, there are some groups who ideologically favor the current tax code over previous ones. These supporters include: (1) people who believe that the marriage tax is financially discriminatory to singles; and (2) people who oppose abolishing the marriage tax for fiscal reasons.

Some women's rights advocates prefer the current tax policy to the pro-family taxation of the fifties. They argue that the tax code should encourage women to join the work force. Jane O'Neill, of the Urban Institute, posited, "A system of joint filing is likely to discourage the market employment of married women" (qtd. in Carlson 72). Dorothy Shinder, president of Single Persons Tax Reform, participated in the debate preceding the 1969 Tax Reform Act. Presenting before the House's Committee on Ways and Means, Shinder insisted that "because we are in a male dominated, family-oriented society, there is too much favoritism given the women who serve husbands . . . this cruelly discriminates against women who do not serve husbands" (United States, Tax 1977). Shinder showed how the government financially favored women who stay at home and out of the market place.

Annika Baude, a prominent Swedish feminist, argued to change women's economic position by advocating a tax policy catering to working women and singles, which she believed could reduce women's economic dependence on their husbands. When Sweden changed its tax law from a family-oriented structure to one favoring the single worker, the "nation's marriage rate fell by 40 percent in a mere two years." Baude called this move the "turning point in the struggle for the liberation of women in Sweden" because it disposed of marriage's financial advantages (Carlson 73).

Speaking out not only on behalf of working women but also for singles, Shinder pointed out another discriminatory element in the family-oriented tax code. She classified a group of almost three million women over the age of thirty-five as "war singles" who did not marry because their "would-be husbands were snatched from them before they ever had a chance to marry" (United States, Tax 1977). Women outnumber men, because many men died in World War II, severely offsetting the ratio of women to men. In her testimony, Shinder stated that in post-World War II America there were thir-

Taxes have increased for lower-income families with two partners working and earning similar salaries.

teen million single women over thirty-five years of age as opposed to six million men in the same age category. She argued that these women were financially discriminated against by the pro-marriage tax law (1977).

Some single people viewed the income-splitting policy of the 1948 tax code as flawed. Under this code, if a husband earned $30,000 and his wife was not in the work force, they each would have been considered to have earned $15,000. Clearly, "this lowered the tax liability of married couples," especially those with the wife at home. In the late 1960s, some single taxpayers argued that their taxes were proportionally higher and that married couples used the wives as a "tax shelter." They supported the Tax Reform Act of 1969 which reacted to the inequities of the "singles penalty" ("Fair" 414).

Economic reasons, in addition to the ideological ones, exist for supporting the current tax code. From a practical fiscal perspective, abolishing the marriage tax would be costly. The Republican-controlled House designed a 1995 tax package and spending cuts labeled the "American Dream Restoration Act" as part of the Contract with America. It contained "a provision easing the marriage penalty at a cost of $8.2 billion to the Treasury over five years." The Contract included measures to provide a universal $500 child care credit that any earner with child dependents could receive; this would also make the tax more pro-family. The proposal also included reform for the capital gains tax, independent retirement accounts, and other taxes. Opponents considered the cuts too heavy and voted them down (414).

Democratic House leader Richard E. Gephardt said, "Tax cut proposals may be a dime a dozen, but they cost billions of dollars apiece. . . . The 104th Congress isn't going to pass ten different tax cuts; we can probably afford to pass one" (United States, Contract 44). In the overview of the

Contract, calculations of the financial costs to each state were tabulated. Enactment of the legislation would reduce the state of Utah's federal aid per year by the following amounts: $71 million in funding for Medicaid, $19 million in highway trust fund grants, $9 million in funding for welfare, $80 million in funding for education, job training, the environment, housing, and other areas (578).

Reasons to support the current tax code include: it was designed around the value of women in the workplace; it corrected the discrimination problems against singles, especially single women and single parents; and finally, changing the code would severely cut into money set aside for other important government programs.

But, family values activists argue, the anti-family message the tax code sends costs more.

Reasons for Opposing the Current Tax Structure

In a frequently cited study, James Alm and Leslie A. Whittington, renowned economists who specialize in financial factors affecting marriage and marital fertility, statistically analyze the effect "of tax consequences of marriage on the aggregate marriage rate" (25). They understood that most "people choose to marry for reasons primarily other than tax considerations," so they looked at more than half a dozen other socioeconomic factors which affect marital trends. The Korean and Vietnam wars, the cultural revolutions of the sixties, unemployment, increases in female wages, and other social changes significantly impacted marital trends.

Alm and Whittington then measured for "marriage-tax elasticity"— the change in the collective marriage rate in relation to the change in the cost (as pertains to income tax) of being married as opposed to single. They found "that the marriage tax would have to fall by 20 percent to generate an increase in the marriage rate of 1%" and vice

> # There has been a drastic decline in the marriage rate over the past forty years.
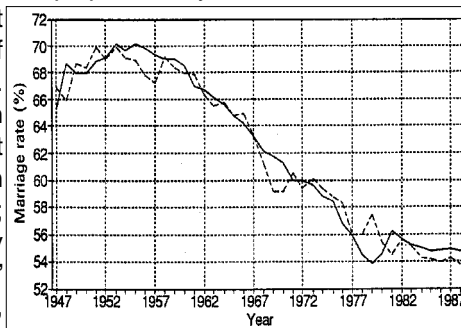
Marriage rate: (——) *actual,* (-----) *predicted*

(from Alm and Whittington, "Income Taxes" 28)

versa (29).

According to the graph below, the Economic Recovery Act of 1981 cause an upturn in the marriage rate. This act introduced the secondary earner deduction "to minimize the increased tax liability felt by married couples with similar earnings" (Alm and Whittington 26). Other evidence subtly points to the link between taxation and the marriage rate. For instance, the graph's slope becomes steeper and continues to descend following the 1969 act that shifted United States tax policy from pro-family to prosingle. The graph declines eight percent in the fourteen years before the 1969 legislative change. Thereafter, it declines eight percent in only ten years. Obviously, the 1969 Tax Reform Act did not help the marriage rate.

As mentioned earlier, feminists advocating single women's place in the work force favored a pro-singles tax because it removed the financial benefits of marriage and, in that sense, helped women. But the marriage penalty of the current tax code takes a significant chunk out of a family's combined income and adversely affects married women. Therefore, feminists interested in the plight of working wives oppose the current structure. Rose M. Rubin and Bobye J. Riney, authors of Working Wives and Dual-Earner Families, argue "Both the federal income tax and Social Security systems favor nonworking wives and have inherent disincentives for wives' employment" (49). According to their position, two inequities discourage families from having dual earners. First, "there is only one standard deduction allowed . . . regardless of the number of earners." Second, husbands and wives usually file jointly. This means that the wife's earnings are taxed at the "highest marginal tax rate" of the first earner (50). In other words, if a husband earned $50,000 in a year and his wife earned $20,000, the percentage taxed of the $20,000 would be much higher than if the two incomes were taxed separately. Rubin and Riney consider this a penalty for the wives' employment in the labor force and reason that "greater equity is possible."

Feminist economists sympathetic to married women accuse the current tax structure of discouraging married women from enter-

ing the work force. They contend that the present tax system "was developed when one-earner families were the norm" and "discriminates against the dual-earner families" (Rubin and Riney 52). Rubin and Riney view the government and the current law as advocates of traditional families in which the woman does not work, and they see themselves as defenders of today's contemporary families. If their assumption is correct, then the government's intentions, pro-family from the outset, simply backfired—or times have changed. In attempting to place a market value on the work of the married woman outside of the labor force, they devised a system "favoring nonworking wives" (49). In as much as women were joining the work force regardless of these factors, and still wanting relationships, it was to their and their husbands' financial advantage to stay single.

Factors Affecting Senior Citizens

Some senior citizens also consider the current system inequitable. One set of statistics shows that many senior citizens avoid legal, civil marriage completely because it drastically affects their tax obligations on retirement benefits. This discrepancy in the tax code provokes "an estimated 370,000 men and women over sixty-five to live together." Although not all arrangements to live together outside of legal marriage can be attributed to a tax policy, many seniors do avoid legal marriage because of the potential effect on their finances. The study gives the example of one such couple, Marvin Goldman, age seventy-two, and Hilde Waring, age seventy-four. This couple had lived together for several years and "filed separate returns and kept more after tax than if they combined their incomes.". Waring said, "Some years ago I might have gotten married, but certain things have changed my mind, mainly Social Security and taxes" (Kirwan 100). Clearly, tax policy impacts many decisions and sends a message that does not advocate the traditional nuclear family.

Opposing the policy, David J. Roberts and Mark J. Sullivan of DePaul University's School of Accountancy pinpoint the problem—the earned income credit is "perhaps the most severe marriage penalty in the law"

One set of statistics shows that many senior citizens avoid legal, civil marriage completely because it drastically increases the tax on retirement benefits.

(53). The hypothetical but realistic example at the right graphically expresses why couples may choose not to marry or to have fewer children (see right).

As shown, the personal exemption remains the same, but there are huge differences between the standard deductions and earned income credit affecting the two sets. Fortune magazine stipulates that this powerful "dis-incentive to build stable families" hinders welfare reform (Spiers 20). For single parents remarrying does not make sense financially because the earned-income tax credit is based on a couple's joint earnings and "an unmarried individual with a child may lose part or all of the credit upon marriage" (Feenburg and Rosen 93). Unfortunately, the families most affected are those on the low-income end of the scale who are trying to raise children. The 1993 Omnibus Reconciliation Act increased the importance of the earned income tax credit. Now the spread between married and single people has widened (94). Hence, the new law is even more anti-family. Another problem is that the credit only adjusts for up to two children. People may be discouraged from having more children because they are not financially compensated.

The American tax codes strong anti-family system sends the wrong message for those who recognize the negative impact of marriage on their tax liability. "That awareness causes some degree of dissatisfaction and contempt for the tax system and/or for marriage itself." The government should use caution in these circumstances, for, as Roberts and Sullivan continue, "Both our voluntary-compliance tax system and the institution for marriage are already under great enough strain" (54).

Alan Carlson, president of the Rockford Institute, proposes some possible solutions. He suggests putting an end to "efforts to use the tax code to 'balance' one-earner and two-earner households" (75). Some economists, he points out, equate "earned market income" and "imputed income," (74) which is the value of the time spent in "home production," usually by a nonworking mother (71). Reformers try to equalize the monetary tax paid on these two forms of income. They

Legally married couple filing jointly and claiming two children.

Total income: $22,600
Deductions: -$16,550
Taxable income: $6,050

What we owe: $911
EITC: -$818
What we pay: $93
Refund $0

EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit): Tax money redistributed to lower-income working families based on income and number of children. (Graphs adapted from 1996 tax figures.)

"see no philosophical boundary between

Unmarried couple filing separately claiming one child each.

Total Income: $11,300 $11,300
Deductions: -$10,750 $10,750
Taxable Income: $550 $550

What we owe: $159 $159
EITC: -$2,094 $2,094
    $1,935 $1,935

What we pay (combined): $0
Refund (combined): $3,870

A legally married couple working for the same wages as an unmarried couple will pay more taxes and receive a smaller refund.

the 'public marketplace' and the 'private home'" (74). In other words, reformers feel that it is appropriate to tax families more because of the spouse that works in the home. This treats the bearing and raising of children at home as if it were a way of supplementing one's income.

Carlson continues with a final suggestion insisting that "the tax code should give strong preference to children as national treasures, in a manner that affirms parental responsibility." His solution is to create a "series of universal deductions and credits that depend on the number and age of children" and not contingent on marital status (75).

Conclusion

America's federal income tax structure is anti-family. Although it is not the only factor in the disintegration of the traditional nuclear American family, it does nothing to support two-parent family units. In fact, the current tax structure deprives two-parent families of valuable funds necessary to raise children's quality of life. The federal income tax system statistically contributes to the decline in the marriage rate, it discourages senior citizens from marrying. The tax system may also encourage limitations in family size.

Because other social and cultural policies affect marital decisions, erasing the marriage penalty will not necessarily increase the number or quality of American marriages. However, increasing the marriage rate may not be the most important reason for ending the marriage penalty. William R. Mattox Jr., vice president of the Family Research Council, stated, "The more important question is whether the tax code treats married people fairly" (qtd. in "Fair" 414). The modification of this tax is important not only in creating fairness in tax treatment, but also as a symbol of what society values.

Today's taxation laws seem to indicate that the government does not value the nuclear family, a situation that contributes to the undoing of the American family. America's tax policy can be improved; it should at least be neutral with regard to marriage. Otherwise, things will remain like Joe E. Lewis' witticism "The way taxes are, you might as well marry for love" (qtd. in Alm and Whittington 25). That's one thing the government can't tax.

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Endnotes

1. We approach this question with a decidedly pro-family perspective, upholding the legally married two-parent family as the ideal. Of course, we acknowledge that many parents are single, and we do not advocate any form of discrimination or the devaluation of their contributions to society.

2. The terminology of taxation gets rather complicated, so we will preface our discussion with a handful of basicterms and definitions. The numbers we use are taken from 1996 public tax information. "Decreased liability" means that an individual is categorized in a lower tax bracket and thus pays a lesser percentage of their income. A "standard deduction" is the amount the government allows an income earning unit to keep tax free. An income earning unit may be a two parent family, a head of household (an unmarried earner supporting one or more dependents), or a single earner. The current standard deduction for a married couple is $6,550, for a head of household $5,750, and for a single earner $3,700. Also deducted from a unit's gross income is the personal exemption, which is $2,500 for each earner or dependent regardless of marital status. By subtracting these two amounts,   along with any other possible deductions, a taxpayer calculates total taxable income—the net amount the government can and will require taxes on. Finally, the earned income tax credit (EITC) is a redistribution of tax money to subsidize the working poor, benefitting those who make less than $28,000. EITC varies according to the number of children.

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The inspired personality of this Brotherhood is song-strung, love–strung, strong and gentle, fearless, death–despising, even death–courting, seeking no rewards for incessant self–sacrifice in the name of the Master, dying like moths round the lamp, living like heroes, shining like orbs, intoxicated, sweetly exhilarated every moment of life, and desiring nothing but the lyrical repetition of His Name.

—Puran Singh

Community of Gods

by Channpal Singh

In the passage above, Puran Singh lays out a fascinating structure for a community, at the heart of which lies remembrance, service and relationship. Is it possible for such a community to exist? Puran Singh answers in firm affirmation. Furthermore, he invites us to follow him in the journey to discovering the solutions to such questions.

In this paper I will pursue the answer which Singh provides. In this journey I have chosen a particular passage from *The Spirit Born People* by Puran Singh. First, I will present the passage and explain some critical concepts which Singh presupposes the reader is familiar with. Then, I will pursue the answer to which Singh strongly attests.

> Nature makes individuals. They are as God made them, good, bad or indifferent. Pots, well-shaped or ill-shaped. As the Guru[1] says, some are cotton-wooled in sweet languor, some are ever-boiling kettles on fire, some full of cold water. All as Nature made them. They are many flowers and leaves; and some are poisons, some are nectars. And the Guru Personality creates the people, the galaxy of God-intoxicated men, the Sangha, the Sangat. As the planets revolve round the central sun, so people new-born, faith-born, spirit-born, Guru-born, revolve round the Guru. This planetary constellation of living, song-like men, living musical presences, almost emitting the music of the very spheres, is the society of Remembrance, Simrin, of the Beautiful. Such are the disciple saints of Simrin. The earth tries to run away from the sun, but it is the sun that holds it on. The disciple is under the centrifugal forces of individuality, the Guru holds him under the centrifugal forces Himward. This inspiration of Simrin is not of the individual, but of the cosmos. Simrin is always cosmic. The Guru's universal brotherhood is salvation from the selfishness of the inner forces that tend towards individuality. (40)

This passage, taken from the chapter entitled "The Garden of Simrin," introduces a key component for the whole book—the concept of Simrin. Singh also introduces the concepts of Sangha and Seva to aid him in answering these questions. These three concepts become the basis for a community founded on mysticism.

Using Sikhism, Singh introduces a life of a universal being,

namely, a life of God and how one attains it. The word how here does not mean that Singh provides a formula. He would be the first to say, "God cannot be a formula" (44). Rather the how used here refers to the immersion of one thing into another. It is like coming out of a pool completely drenched with water, residing in an inexplicable joy. It is as if Singh were saying that this is how God immerses Himself in the disciples (and vice-versa) and the disciples find themselves anew.

The Concept of Sangha

In this passage, Singh demands that to be a part of the Brotherhood, the God-born society, one must surrender him or herself to the society. Nature makes individuals as they are: good, bad, or indifferent. (Here and throughout the book the word Nature is used as a representation of Guru [God].) The creation of these individuals, however, is different from the Sangha , who are "the people, the God-intoxicated men." Though both are created by God, the Sangha live in the presence of that God. They have immersed themselves in God and the Sangha is the representation of that God.

To be merely an individual is to be like and unlike others. Like others, in the sense that one shares things in common with others, such as a common culture or common history. However, one is unlike others because one is not confined to those commonalties. There is something about being John that makes John who he is. The problem is this: the "unlikeness" of John cannot be named. There is something about being John which cannot be explained.

To be an individual in the Sangha is different from being merely individual. The Sangha, too, involves the idea of likeness and unlikeness. However, in their likeness the men and women of the Sangha are related to each other, because they have realized that God which created them. This realization sparks a form of higher individuality, for now the mere individual understands that which created him or her. The understanding of the Creator emanates a wholeness and completeness within the individual, from which ignites the flame of a higher individuality—John is bigger and more complete because he has realized his Creator. By immersing themselves in God (with this realization), the Sangha become

what the mere individual cannot be, namely, the individual's true being.

There is a transition that must be made from the world of mere individuality into God's Personality (God's world). This involves the surrender of one's self into the Sangha.

The Concept of Simrin

The transition from mere individuality into God's Personality occurs only by an "aching love for Him" (23). It is the love for the Creator and remembrance of Him which makes it possible to start the process of that transition. This remembrance and love is the definition of the word Simrin in its utmost simplicity. "To be happy in the Guru [God] in this unhappy world, to be able to distribute a starry cup of that vital liquid of joy and pain of life, is the highest self-sacrifice and the highest service. Naming Him, Loving Him, is service" (42). It is by remembering Him—"Naming Him, Loving Him"—that one initiates the process of self-sacrifice. At the same time, the mere individual begins to realize his Creator. It is thus the repetition of His name, like a bird piping its song, sweetly and subtly remembering Him, which holds the secret of Simrin. To the intellect this mechanical task of repeating His name is tiresome, but to the "God-intoxicated," it is that centrifugal force that drives them towards the Creator. This remembrance of Him, the chanting of His Name, is the highest form of service or Seva.

The Concept of Seva

Seva is a twofold concept. First, as mentioned above, it is His service to Him. It is glory of Naming Him that becomes the glory of a life of service (43). Even more so, it is "he who is kind is His servant" (42). It is the kindness that flows from within the man of His service that displays the second aspect of Seva. The people of His service are like drunkards who are unaware of their surroundings. Drunkards act and move in swaying motions ensnared in a mysterious high. So are the people of His service unaware of their surroundings. This is not to imply that the people do not know what they are doing. Rather, they are lost in what they are doing; they serve driven by Him (42). Thus, kindness begins to overflow from within as the servants are lost in an indubitable high. It is the remembrance of Him that creates the

The word *Sangha* literally means "the Gathered" and refers to those who have immersed themselves in God.

effulgence of the people of service, whereby they conduct the Master's Seva (service). Seva, therefore, is the instrumental use of the man of Simrin by the Almighty to fulfill His work.

The Interconnection of the Three
Sangha refers to the company of those who follow the path of Simrin and Seva. They are those who are driven towards Him. It is the community of those that are His servants and are lost in His remembrance. Here one sees the inseparability of the three. In the Sangha (company) reside Seva (service) and Simrin (remembrance). However, without Seva and Simrin there can be no Sangha because Sangha is the company of the service driven individuals of Simrin. Seva is inseparable from Simrin because Naming Him is the highest service and it is only through this Remembrance that one is able to perform Seva. The three are an inseparable whole.

The Word Guru
Finally, the usage of the word Guru is also important for this passage because it is toward this Word that the people strive. The word Guru comes from Sanskrit, meaning "One who brings into the light." The word, in its more contemporary sense, also means "The Master," "The Teacher."

For Singh, the word Guru holds more than what can be said about it. It is the "Cosmic Personality impersonal." The word does not only mean Master, but rather, it is a Cosmic phenomenon that is at work in the creation of a life of the spirit. The Guru, in effect, becomes the guide to Himself. He grafts the spirit so that it may be perceptive of the Glory which He, Himself, holds. The word Guru is something that must be achieved through its own Cosmic nature.

If one has an aching love for the Guru (God), then one has an aching love for His creation. In turn, that love for His world creates a servant. In the service (Seva) one is lost in God; one is ablaze with love for God. It is within this process that one surrenders one's self to God, transcending it into another level which marks the beginning of a realization of one's self to begin with. Surrender is not a giving up; rather, it is laying down what one holds before the Master to become like Him. To lay down implies that the thing does not belong to the person. If I lay down my life for another, my life belonged to that person for whom I laid it down. The laying down of the self recognizes that the self belongs to Him who created it. In laying down the self, the self is still retained, yet it is submissive to God and His will.

Individuality in a Mystic's Community
Individuality is an indispensable part of the mystic's community, because it is through the self that one gains what every mystic hopes for—unification with God. This union is not a loss of one's self; it is a transcendence of the self to another level. So, though a person is one with God, he or she still maintains his or her self. It is now a bigger self than it was before the recognition. One retains one's self by laying it down at the feet of God and thereby attaining union with Him. When one lays down one's being to the Brotherhood, one lays down one's self to God who is at the center of the Brotherhood. One lives within the Brother-hood, immersed in the Guru, connected to God by one's renewed self.

In a very real sense, though the people surrender their selves, they still preserve themselves. Individuals who are created by God are related to Him because they are created by Him. They become renewed in the act of surrender. This is the difference between the individuals of the world and the God-born. The latter have realized God and have been created afresh in God. This is the meaning that Singh gives to the word individuality—a "renouncing without re-nouncing" (119). In other words, it is surrendering without a giving up of one's self so that the mystic's union with God is not a loss of individuality.

Each individual has a uniquely personal relationship with God, while the whole of the "spirit-born" has a relationship of oneness with God which makes them the Brotherhood—the disciples of the mystic community. Thus, God is in relation to the Brotherhood as well as to the individual. This is what makes God both impersonal and personal. Perhaps an easier way to illustrate this is by associating Singh's imagery to that of a wheel. Each spoke is connected to the center and to the outside covering. The outside covering stands on the many other spokes which are connected to the center. It is through this outside covering and center that each spoke is connected to one another.

> **Individuality is an indispensable part of the mystic's community, because it is through the self that one gains what every mystic hopes for—unification with God.**

It is through the Sangha as a whole that God manifests Himself as impersonal while each individual within the Sangha is related to Him personally. This is not to say that the Sangha and individual are in relation to God from two separate spheres. Were it not for the Sangha, the renewed self would not exist, for one surrenders one's self to the Sangha in which God resides. Without the Sangha there is no communal manifestation of God. On the other hand, the Sangha would not exist it if it were not for the individuals who constitute the Sangha. Without God, there would be no connection between the individuals, no Sangha. Further, if the Sangha were not present, the renewed individual would cease to exist.

The Sangha consists of individuals who are related to each other and to God. "The Guru-personality is impersonal but when it reacts on an individual, it becomes a personal God and the consequent inspiration and companionship of His presence becomes continuous" (119). He presents Himself to each individual as a personal being. For this reason, the Sangha includes individuals, different selves, each with its own relation to the "personal God." Simultaneously, there is a unity amongst the selves of the Sangha because they are in relation to God. This is the relationship of oneness with God, a constant yearning for Him even though they are connected to Him.

Relationship of Mystics to Seva and Simrin
For the mystic, life is a quest for God and a hope for infinite remembrance of God. Simrin is that perpetual remembrance of Him—the remembrance or yearning is one that is infinite by its very nature. If it were merely ephemeral there would be no need for it because it would be nothing more than a means to some end. So, if Simrin is not infinite, then there is no need for it because at some point laboring ceases to exist. In effect, hope ceases to exist.

The infinite looking up to Him is Remembrance and Naming of Him is love (68). It is within Simrin that hope emanates, a hope for a fulfillment of that love. Singh writes, "Love is, according to the Guru, an ineffable glow of the soul, wholly subjective in its nature, and self-contained and is the final fulfillment of life, which, in itself, is capable of infinite refinement and infinite responsiveness" (68).

Hope, then, is a fulfillment of an infinite culti-

vation of the self through which one begins to understand that love. It becomes an infinite creation of the self because there is always that something more to be understood. It is through His Grace that he gives a part of that something more. Simultaneously, it is the disciple's yearning for the something more which makes him a disciple. For the mystic, life is a journey towards that something more, a hope for a union in which his self is infinitely created anew.

Those who move in this love for Him, live in it, and have their being in it, in remembrance of Him, are the true servants of humanity (70). The highest service in the mystic community is the Naming of Him. In this Naming, as mentioned above, lies hope and is driven by hope, because in Naming the Beloved the mystic looks forward to the union. Thus, the thought of attaining that union drives the mystic to endeavor in Naming Him. Moreover, in the service of remembrance also lies a relationship between the disciple and God. The Seva of Naming Him is an eternal companion for the lonely traveler of life (50). Hence, God is an eternal companion in the life of the disciple. It is by remembering that companion that one recalls the existence of that companion, even though the companion is there whether one realizes Him or not. The traveler is alone until he realizes that there is a companion and as soon as this realization occurs, the connection is made.

Labor in the Mystic Community
The connection with Him marks the start of life, a life of labor. Before the realization, one is a "mere corpse" (1). As soon as one realizes the companion, life is poured into him or her. This life is a life of constant, incessant laboring towards God with God at one's side. This is the mark of Seva. The disciples become lost in a yearning for God. In doing so, one begins to labor for and towards God. I use both "for" and "toward" because, in one sense, to become one with God is to become an instrument for Him. Also, one is striving toward God because He is always more than what one understands. The Sikh mystic labors toward God in order to become like Him.

Simrin, Hope, and Labor
The "highest service" of Naming Him creates within the disciples a spark for contin-

For the mystic, life is a quest for God and a hope for infinite remembrance of God. *Simrin* is that perpetual remembrance of Him.

Love is, according to the *Guru*, an ineffable glow of the soul, wholly subjective in its nature and self-contained and is the final fulfillment of life, which, in itself, is capable of infinite refinement and infinite responsiveness.

uing the hope. Though this hope involves the effort of the disciples, it is not an act of their will. The disciples do not know if they will become one with God, they merely hope for the unification, for it is by His grace that one attains that union. This does not mean, however, that the disciples should not put forth an effort. The effort is one in which the disciples realize that only by His grace may they attain oneness with Him. But, for this to come about they must labor towards and for God.

Grace is not conditional. God does not say, "If you do this, then I will do that." On the contrary, God says, "I expect you to put forth an effort because you expect something from me." The effort in such a view becomes effortless. Further, in the Naming of Him lies that effortless effort, for now the disciples comprehend what it means to be a disciple. To become one with God is not a matter of will. Rather, it is a matter of hope in which the labor towards Him is necessary.

This is the spark created in Naming Him. In this spark lie the attitudes of the disciples toward the world. They are now completely immersed in the world without being a part of it. "[Their] eyes see what those around [them] do not see" (118). The disciples see that the world is God's creation and should be taken care of. Herein lies the reason why people such as St. Francis of Assisi went out preaching to birds and beasts. The astonishing fact lies not in this irrational act, rather, in the fact that those animals did listen. Such people see nothing but God radiating from His creation. The world is filled with richness because God resides in His creation.

The concept of Seva becomes more practical after the realization that God must be sought, not in the thereafter, but in the here and now. The mystic labors in the world because it becomes a symbol for his spiritual labor. Acts of philanthropy, charity, and love all become a part of that labor and a fascination with the something more—God. One realizes that to labor is not only to be human, but to be a lover, a disciple.

In this laboring towards God, one becomes related to the world. In laboring for God, one is related to others through the something more about the others, for in them the Creator also resides. Since He exists in everyone, the relationship of the disciple also exists with everyone.

To labor towards God always involves the possibility that one might cease to labor. For the mystic, this is a real possibility. This very fear of ceasing to labor keeps hope alive. When one realizes that one can turn away from the search of the something more, one shudders at the thought. At any moment, one can become lost in lauding the creation not because God created it, but because of the fact that it merely exists. God is thence lost and the creation is sought. That is why one must continuously graft oneself by Naming Him because this provides an eternal companionship of God within him. It is by "His favor" that one starts and continues on the journey (119). For the mystic, God is the catalyst, the preserver, and the provider for a glimpse of Himself on the journey. The possibility of going astray on the search for God keeps the mystic's hope alive.

A Synopsis of the Mystic's Community

God is community manifest in Sangha and Simrin and community is God, for it has realized His existence. This is becoming like God or being one with God. God dwells within the Sangha and the Brothers have access to God. "The brothers have a cup of nectar for you. They raise it to your lips. Truth is simple. Drink and you shall know of it" (41).

In other words, what Singh propagates is the notion that the Brotherhood is God, because they have dipped themselves into Him and He manifests Himself in them. Therefore, God is community because the Sangha represents God, and the community is God, for He lives in the community.

The question, then, which every mystic must be able to answer is what it means to be like God, what it means to be a part of the Brotherhood. For the mystic, the answer to the question cannot be explained. The only way to talk about the answer is not to talk about it, for the mystic believes that the answer to such a question is like describing the taste of salt. The taste can never be described, but to say this is, in itself, a description of the taste. Similarly, the mystic answers the question of what it means to be like God with a resounding "To be God." In other words, to know and to depict what it means to be like God is to be God. It is a perpetual search to become like Him that describes being like Him. Therefore, the only answer to the question of what it

means to be like God or a part of the Brotherhood is to be God or to be a Brother.

Community is something that always has an unknown, indeterminate characteristic about it. There is always something there that cannot be explained because to explain the inexplicable would be to make it determinate, to make it known. For the mystic, community must have this indeterminate characteristic.

This is what it means for mystics to be in a community. In the community reside individuals who have their own histories and the community as a whole also shares a history. The community, because its key component is God, must be both determinate and indeterminate. Within this determinate and indeterminate characteristic of the community dwells the idea of hope. It is a hope to understand God through what is known. Further, it is the hope for knowing God that drives the Brother toward the indeterminate. So, hope is a search for the indeterminate through the determinate—a search for the unknown through the known, a search for the Guru through that which the Guru Himself has revealed and displayed to the disciple. That guidance through the determinate by the indeterminate is what the mystic holds to be the essence of hope. Also, there must exist a relationship within this community—a relationship amongst individuals through God and between individuals and God. Thus, a community of mystics has hope, history, and relationship.

Simrin, Seva, and Sangha are the foundation on which the mystic community is established. From the whole of the three emanate hope, history, and relationship. Simrin or the remembrance of God is the first part that adds to hope, history, and relationship. Through realizing that God created one's self and then submitting that self to Him, the mystics begin their journey. In this act of submission the mystics create themselves afresh. Their personal history is created anew. The mystics surrender what they were, to become like God. From this realization they encounter their origin (God) and their history begins.

In one sense, then, mystics begin their history, and yet their history still remains to be initiated. In the encounter, the mystics must again lay down their selves to the something more that they might learn from it. Once again, they have surrendered themselves to God to know their own individuality, which is God, for the true individuality lies in the "Guru (or God)-born." Thus, the mystics are spirit born; they have a new beginning because they have encountered their origin. By realizing that which they did not know, the something more, the mystics begin themselves anew. Simrin contributes to the mystics' history because the only way to pursue the something more is by remembering Him. In this remembrance the mystics recall their history and hope for a fulfillment of their origin (God, the something more).

Seva, or service of God, also adds to the history. Serving Him is akin to serving His creation, and therefore the mystics find that they must labor toward Him by laboring in the world. The mystics know that it is only by laboring that they will establish their history. To continue their history, the mystics must serve.

The mystics serve because they know that without labor there can be no hope. The fear of falling away from laboring, from striving towards the something more, one's origin, also gives rise to hope. This is where Simrin contributes to hope. The fear of falling away reminds the mystics that they must continue to remember Him in order to have hope. Furthermore, the remembrance of Him keeps the mystics aware of the fear. Herein lies the relationship. By remembering God, they build personal relationships with Him. Even more so, by laboring toward Him the mystics keep in mind that it is God Himself who is guiding them towards Him. There is a constant relationship of the "lonely travelers" and their companion. The traveler yearns for the companion to show the way and the companion responds accordingly. The travelers journey towards God by following their companion, God.

Sangha includes the contribution to history, hope, and relationship. It also expands and clarifies the idea of relationship. Each mystic is related to his own Beloved, the companion that guides him. Though the Beloved is the same, the relationship with Him is different for each mystic. Yet, since they are all related to the same Beloved, they are related to each other. Thus, Sangha includes relationship. Since Simrin and Seva are part of Sangha, hope and history are also part of Sangha.

Determinacy and Indeterminacy in the Mystic

The question which every mystic must be able to answer is what it means to be like God, what it means to be part of the Brotherhood.

Community[2]

To understand the nature of indeterminacy and determinacy one must understand that they are inseparable. Every determinate thing is indeterminate because there is always something there which cannot be explained. For example, when one sees a book, one sees the book and something more. One cannot see the book as a whole, for it cannot be seen as a whole in any one glance. There is always something about the book which one does not know, for example, the other side, the content, the words, etc. Yet, what presents itself about the book is what one knows. So, in one glance the book is both determinate and indeterminate. The two words (determinacy and indeterminacy) are not two things; rather, they are a part of one whole. Similarly, community must be both determinate and indeterminate.

Without the determinate, community ceases to be community. If community is merely indeterminate, the mystic has no hope for discovering the something more because it is only through what one knows that one can strive towards the unknown. God must be determinate because it is He who guides the disciple along the path of discovering the something more about Himself. Following this line of argument, God must also be something indeterminate, because it is after that which the disciple endeavors. So, community for the mystic must be both determinate and indeterminate. The determinacy and indeterminacy, according to the mystic, are one. It is through the determinate that the indeterminate presents itself. The determinate is needed, because without it there is no hope for the indeterminate. Simultaneously, the indeterminate is crucial because the mystic strives towards it.

The mystic believes that the determinate is that which is known about the community. It is the history, customs, and norms which come about from that history. It is the history of each individual within that community—how they submitted themselves to the Brotherhood, and how they continue to abdicate themselves to the Guru. So, within this history lies the Guru—the God to whom all these individuals are related through their personal and collective histories. The determinate is therefore the history of the individuals (the Brothers) of the community and the communal history of the people—the history of the Brotherhood.

What Constitutes A Community?

Any community must have three things: memory, hope, and relationship. Here, imbued in memory, is the community's history. This history must be indeterminate as well as determinate. Relationship becomes a part of the individuals in the community as they interact with each other, their history, and what is beyond their history. The individuals themselves have a determinate and indeterminate characteristic, for it is they who make up their history; there is always something about the individual and the history which is indeterminate. This is what the individual seeks to find through the determinate. The indeterminate gives rise to hope because the disciples want to know what their history holds. They seek their origin and realize that the origin lies beyond history; it is meta-historical. They understand that if the origin is merely historical, then it is determinate and if this is the case, then they should already know their origin. Obviously, they do not know their origin. Therefore, they realize that the origin must be meta-historical; it must be indeterminate. The search for that origin begins and continues.

Hope comes from the realization that the origin is indeterminate and determinate and is beyond the individual. The individual must labor toward that origin. In effect, to know one's origin, one must hope and labor towards that hope. However, if individuals believes that it is their labor that brings about the origin, they are mistaken because understanding the indeterminate is not a matter of the individual's will. The mystics realize this; they know that God will present Himself according to His will. Yet they must continually labor. Without this labor the indeterminate will not present itself, for in the labor the indeterminate, the meta-historical, disrupts the determinate and gives a glimpse of itself.

To labor is to work for something that is not historical, something that is beyond history. Labor can only be for the indeterminate because the determinate is already present; laboring towards what is not is a part of the duty of being a disciple of God, a seeker of the something more. It makes no sense to say that one labors for the something in history because what one labors towards already

> H ope is a search for the unknown through the known, a search for *Guru*.

exists. Labor only makes sense when it seeks the unknown. It becomes one's duty as a disciple to respond to the unknown by laboring towards it. In seeking the indeterminate—that which is beyond history—the indeterminate presents itself in the form of a disruption.

It is in this disruption that the relationship between the indeterminate and the individual emanates. From this disruption, one now understands something which one previously did not. In essence, the origin has been understood, yet there still remains something about it that needs to be understood which keeps the hope for searching for the indeterminate alive.

The existence of a mystic community is a very real possibility. However, some problems remain which need to be pursued further. The very usage of the Punjabi words Seva, Simrin, and Sangha introduces a language unfamiliar to an English speaking audience.[3] I use these words as concepts rather than mere words. If there are communities—and I do not doubt that there are—which contain these concepts and within them these concepts work similarly, then I would argue that they are a part of the mystic community.

Another question which also remains to be answered is the problem that I think a mystic would have with my analysis. In talking about a mystic's community, one must inject the role of God. The mystic might argue that since it is not possible to talk about God, it is not possible to speak about His community. Any effort to do so is ultimately fruitless because it is like asking a mute the taste of sweets. God's presence is ineffable. How does one talk about that which fundamentally can only be experienced?

The answer lies in the realization of the possibility of experiencing God. It is through a community of Gods that such a vision might be accomplished. But the first step on that journey of a thousand miles lies within the individual.[4] The choice of whether we desire to have the experience or not is ours. The answer lies deeply imbedded in our own souls. To search within our own being for the answer is the task of every man and woman. Once the choice is made, the journey begins.

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Endnotes
1. The word Guru, though explained in detail later, is used by Singh throughout the book to mean the Master (a Prophet), God, the Beloved, or the something beyond. Singh uses the word here in its first sense, the Master. I will use the word Guru synonymously with God and the Beloved, for ultimately the difference between the Master, God, the Beloved, or the something beyond dissolves into a congruent whole.
2. I am greatly indebted to Dr. James E. Faulconer for this and the following section.
3. Punjabi is the native language of all Sikhs and is primarily spoken in the state of Punjab in northwestern India.
4. The Chinese sage Lao Tzu stated, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step."
5. The name Singh is given to all Sikh males as denoted by one of the Sikh prophets. The author bears no blood relation to Puran Singh.

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Surprised by Grief

The Faith of C. S. Lewis

BY DAVID ALLRED

C. S. Lewis's journey from atheism to Christianity has been an inspiration to people around the world. When his wife died of cancer, his faith was seriously challenged by the reality of grief and suffering in the world.

I forget whether you know that my wife died in July. Pray for us both" (Letters 300). Almost a passing comment, C. S. Lewis conceals the greatest pain in his life. He met his wife, Joy Davidman, in the 1950s while writing his autobiography—ironically entitled Surprised by Joy. She died of cancer just three years later. Overcome by grief, Lewis's understanding of God changed; at first, he was bitter, then reconciled.

Two of Lewis's novels, The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed, show his ideas about God and human suffering. The first, The Problem of Pain, written years before Lewis met Joy, was largely based on theological reasoning—it is an intellectual explanation of pain. A Grief Observed, on the other hand, records the anguish he felt at Joy's death with deeply personal and at times despairing observations. Pain, written about the sufferer, is a cerebral response. Grief, written by the sufferer, is an emotional reaction. These two powerful works display the progression of C. S. Lewis's trust in God from a reasoned to a tried faith.

Lewis was no stranger to pain and suffering; even before his wife's death he began to understand God's role in suffering. He was nine when his mother died. He recalled the horror of seeing her body after she had passed away as "grief overwhelmed in terror" (Surprised 20). Her death also caused an emotional rift between Lewis's father and his sons. Lewis later wrote that his father's "temper became incalculable; he spoke wildly and acted unjustly. Thus by peculiar cruelty of fate, during those months the unfortunate man . . . was really losing his sons as well as his wife" (19). World War I split the family further apart—Lewis was emotionally drained by the "memories of combat, wounds, and the unburied corpses gradually mashed into the 'no-man's land' of the battlefields" (Loades 271). These and other events caused Lewis to turn to atheism. After he converted to Christianity, though, he began to theorize about the divine benefit of trials.

Lewis's faith in God deepened as he grew older and perceived God as both omnipotent and loving. In hindsight, Lewis identified what he called his "first religious experience" after his mother's death (Surprised 20). He had prayed fervently for her recovery to no avail. Later, he realized his mistake: he had wanted to control God's will. He wrote, "I had approached God . . . without love, without awe, even without fear . . . but merely as a magician; and when he had done what was required of Him I supposed that He would simply . . . go away" (21). As a child, Lewis had not learned how to fully exercise faith; with time, he became willing to submit completely to

God.

Other experiences in Lewis's life also taught him how the divine could be reconciled with grief and pain. Five years after the publication of Pain, his friend Charles Williams died. This trial strengthened Lewis's trust in God:

> The odd thing is that [Williams's] death has made my faith stronger than it was a week ago. And I find that all that talk about "feeling that he is closer to us than before" isn't just talk. It's just what it does feel like—I can't put it into words. One seems at moments to be living in a new world. Lots, lots of pain, but not a particle of depression or resentment. (Letters 206)

Lewis's reaction to Williams's death made him confident that understood the divine benefit of grief.

An Intellectual Explanation of Pain—
The Problem of Pain

With his growing faith in God, Lewis wrote Pain by drawing from "plenty of experimental evidence" (Farrer 32). He addresses the reader who wants "to see pain and theism reconciled" (35). Lewis seeks to "solve the intellectual problem raised by suffering" only, not to down play the hurt and anguish of living (Pain vii). He declares, "I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made 'perfect through suffering' is not incredible" (93). For Lewis, pain is not merely unpleasant, but necessary for spiritual growth.

Lewis makes several arguments justifying pain. After laying the foundation of the nature of God, Lewis claims that God is not responsible for much of life's suffering: "When souls become wicked they will . . . certainly hurt one another; and this, perhaps, accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men" (Pain 77). However, Lewis acknowledges that sometimes God uses pain to further his work, "For C. S. Lewis the essential premise of [Pain] is that the story of God could not be written without the existence of pain and suffering in the world" (Wall 448). This pain is meant to punish us when we sin and help us grow. The spiritual growth comes when we turn over our wills to God. Lewis suggests, "We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are . . . rebels who must lay down our arms" (Pain 79). To enable our surrender, God uses pain and suffering as a "megaphone" to awake us to our need for his help (81). Pain, then, is part of God's plan in encouraging men to follow him; it has a "redeeming value" and can even be a sign of God's love (Wall 446). In Pain, Lewis preaches submission to God and trust in his goodness.

C. S. Lewis wrote Pain with no delusions of personal perfection. Lewis recognizes that he does not always apply his own principles in dealing with suffering: "I feel so far from the true feeling of that I speak, that I can naught else but cry for mercy and desire after it as I may" (Pain vii). He also admits that he lacks bravery; he confesses, "If I knew any way of escape [from pain] I would crawl through sewers to find it" (93). Lewis understands pain is easy to theorize about but difficult to bear.

Faith Tried—A Grief Observed

Joy's death forced Lewis to confront pain like never before, shaking his belief in a loving God. After the death of his wife, Lewis had "an outspoken resentment toward God . . . like Job's cry" ("Reactions" 7). He found the principles set forth in Pain difficult to apply. Although he had written a powerful and helpful book on pain, the theories he had so "airily" set forth were of "no consolation." (Farrer 31–32). Lewis's book, A Grief Observed, written in reaction to Joy's death, is "scrupulously honest in laying bare [his] hell of grief" (Loades 273).

Lewis published Grief using the pseudonym N. W. Clerk. His false name is "derived from an Anglo-Saxon phrase meaning 'I know not whom' and 'clerk'—one able to read and write." Lewis published the book anonymously because he wanted to help others, but also wanted "to protect himself from being inundated with yet more correspondence . . . of a profoundly stressful kind" (Loades 269). Interestingly, after the book was printed Lewis received many copies of his book from well-wishers seeking to comfort him ("Reactions" 8).

The poignant entries in Grief reflect varying emotional states. At times, Lewis

Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made "perfect through suffering" is not incredible.

appears hopeless: "I not only live each end-less day in grief, but live each day thinking about living each day in grief. . . . I need some drug" (Grief 22). Others are senti-mental. Lewis remembers, "For those few years [Joy] and I feasted on love; every mode of it—solemn and merry, romantic and realistic, sometimes as dramatic as a thunderstorm, sometimes as comfortable and unemphatic as putting on your soft slip-pers" (19). The personal and grieving tone is completely different than in Pain. One entry in Grief significantly contrasts with what Lewis wrote after Charles Williams's death:

> At the death of a friend, years ago, I had for some time a most vivid feeling of certainty about his continued life; even his enhanced life. I have begged to be given even one hundredth part of the same assurance about [Joy]. There is no answer. Only the locked door, the iron curtain, the vacuum, absolute zero . . . I was a fool to ask. For now, even if that assurance came I should distrust it. I should think it a self-hypnosis induced by my own prayers. (20)

Lewis's reaction to Williams's death was dramatically different than his feelings at his wife's death. Although he believed in prayer, now he doubted its power.

The intellectual faith set forth in Lewis's first book failed to buoy him against the waves of mourning and grief caused by Joy's cancer. In 1958, Lewis had written about a God who deserves our obedience, but who at times "makes no response" at all (qtd. in Loades 273). Now, with more expe-rience with pain than before, Lewis writes:

> Where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy . . . [it feels] you will be . . . wel-comed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and the sound of bolting and double bolting inside. After that silence . . . Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble? (Grief 17–18)

The pain of Joy's death overwhelmed Lewis's faith in a caring God; he never

doubted God's existence, just his love, explaining, "The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God is really like. Deceive yourself no longer" (18–19).

Grief Understood

The power of Grief lies not in the soul-wrenching questions, but in the calming assurances of Lewis's road from suffering to recovery. After many pages of anguish-filled entries, Lewis's attitude begins to change: "I have gradually been coming to feel that the door is no longer shut and bolted. Was it my own frantic need that slammed it in my face?" (58). Lewis speculated about the possible reasons for lack of consolation at Joy's death: "God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't" (65). Lewis came to experience something more than Pain's logical theories. Under the pressure of a broken heart, Lewis finally recon-

> **G**od has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't.

ciled his feelings by trusting in God's will.

In Grief, Lewis struggles through torment and emerges with a statement of faith. Speaking of Joy's last moments, Lewis remembers, "She said not to me but to the chaplain, 'I am at peace with God.' She smiled, but not at me. Poi si tornò all' eterna fontana" (89). The final line comes from Dante's Divine Comedy; translated, it means, "Then turned away to the eternal fountain" (Loades 276). Lewis sensed Joy moving toward God, acknowledging she saw something he could not (276). She maintained her faith even when faced with death.

Lewis's confirmation of God's goodness came later than Joy's. His key to recovery was "praise . . . of God as giver and of [Joy] as the gift" (Loades 274). Lewis came to feel that Joy was still somewhere near him: "Don't we in praise somehow enjoy what we praise, however far we are from it?" (Grief 74). Although Joy was gone and Lewis missed her for the rest of his life, he did not let the pain destroy his faith in God (Kilby 106). In his book, The Four Loves, published the same year Joy died, Lewis affirms, "By loving Him more than we love them [in this case, Joy] we shall love them more than we do now" (qtd. in Loades 275). Lewis kept his relationship with both God and Joy through an understanding of their relationship to one another: "So [Lewis] turn[ed] from the garden to the Gardener . . . life-giving Life and the Beauty that makes beautiful" (275).

The spiritual recovery which began in Grief can be seen in his later writings. Lewis "emerged from the shadowlands of grief and despair to a restored and invigorated faith that energized his last authored and perhaps most reassuring volume, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer" (Edwards). In Malcolm, Lewis teaches, "God sometimes seems to speak to us most intimately when he catches us . . . off our guard" (116). The spiritual power of his book shows Lewis's renewed devotion to God. Malcolm closes with the hope of resurrection:

> Then the new earth and sky . . . will rise with us as we have risen in Christ. And once again, after . . . silence and . . . . dark[ness], the birds will sing and the flowers will flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills, and faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition. . . . For "we know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (124)

Lewis walked alone in silence and darkness when he lost Joy, but after, in the light of faith, he was reborn. In the process of working through grief, Lewis learned to rely on God and to understand how suffering can deepen faith.

The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed give an encompassing view of human suffering that neither could provide alone. These two works trace Lewis's progression from a strong and reasoned faith to a strong and seasoned faith of God's mercy in trials. Since Lewis chose to call the account of his conversion to Christianity, Surprised By Joy, the account of his faith in God's love—a second conversion—could be entitled Surprised by Grief.

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The reactions mothers give to their newborns have a tremendous impact on future development. Factors such as maternal depression, preterm births, and gender difference play a critical role in determining how successfully mothers and infants will react with one another during the first few months of life.

Mothers & Infants

BY JERICA MOHLMAN

In the presence of a young infant, many adults will automatically display a distinctive pattern of interactive behaviors, including smiles, raised eyebrows, and wide-open eyes. The infant looks into the adult's eyes and shows a social smile or a cry, to which the adult responds. In turn, the adult vocalization or facial expression often precipitates another emotional response from the infant. This pattern of behaviors is called interactional synchrony (Isabella, Belsky, and von Eye, 12–21). Such episodes of reciprocal, mutually engaging cycles of behavior are crucial to mother-infant attachment.[1]

Mothers and infants create specific attachments based on patterns of behavioral exchange. For infants, these patterns represent an internal working model of interaction-based expectations. For mothers, attachments represent a system which rewards availability and responsiveness. As the "attachment relationship has developed, the infant's behaviors will be organized around the mother in a manner that is consistent with his or her interaction-based model of the relationship" (12). This theory of attachment has its base in ethological theory that incorporates the need for proximity, survival, and exploration.

It is essential for such an attachment to take place between the mother and infant if the child is to gain a sense of being, and if the mother is to feel rewarded for her care-giving. Infants signal their needs by crying or smiling, and respond to being held by snuggling with their mothers or being soothed by them. Mothers, in turn, enter into this two-person dance with their own repertoire of caregiving behaviors. They pick up infants when they cry, respond to their signals of need, smile at them when they smile, and gaze into their eyes when they look at them. This mutual experience of being in-sync socially and emotionally accounts for the pleasure that both adults and infants experience from face-to-face interaction. Interactional synchrony has been variously described by researchers as "the meshing of a finely tuned machine," "a patterned dance or dialogue of exquisite precision," and an "emotional attunement of an improvised musical duet" (Stern 408). One of the most intriguing aspects of interactional synchrony is that most of us seem to know how to do this particular dance, and we do it in similar ways. It is partly through synchrony that infants learn to express and read emotions and develop some of the basic skills of social interaction—such as turn taking—that they will use throughout life.

A mutual feedback system is in operation as both mother and infant tend toward the same goal: the maintenance of a level of attention within some optimal range in which the infant is likely to manifest positive behaviors such as smiles and coos (404).[2] It is a fascinating phenomena that two people who differ vastly in age, experience, and cognitive skills can strive for this same goal and understand each other. These interactions are what characterize the attachment that occurs between the mother and infant during interactional synchrony.

Isabella, Belsky, and von Eye observed the interactional synchrony of mother-infant combinations at one, three, and nine months to see what kind of attachment occurred.[3] As predicted, infants with a higher occurrence of interactional synchrony had more secure attachments with their mothers than the other infants. The secure infants' relationships with their mothers were characterized with thirty percent synchronous exchanges, while

insecure babies demonstrated interactional synchrony less than five percent of the time. The mothers of secure babies were more responsive to their infants' vocalizations and distress signals than mothers of insecure infants.[4]

Interactional synchrony is an essential element in accomplishing the characteristics found in a secure relationship. It leads to the establishment of an effective and necessary attachment between the mother and the infant. Certain variables, such as maternal depression, having a preterm baby, or an infant's gender, produce negative effects on interactional synchrony and attachment.

Depressed Mothers
Infants cared for by depressed mothers have problems achieving successful interactional synchrony. An infant first becomes briefly positive and then avert its gaze and shows distress when its mother doesn't respond, which signifies an infant's capacity to modify its own behavior in response to that of its mother. An infant attempts to reinstate normal interaction with its depressed mother and when it is unsuccessful, it becomes disengaged and negative (Cohn and Tronick 185–93).

Cohn and Tronick observed the interactional synchrony of twenty-four mother and infant pairs in two brief interactions. The first observation was of a normal interactional synchrony relationship. The second was a three minute simulated maternal depression interaction. Infants with depressed mothers were more negative, protested more, had shorter attention spans, and looked away more often than infants with non-depressed mothers. To test for the presence of condition carry-over, the infants' reaction to the first sixty seconds of the second observation in a normal condition was also examined. This provided a comparison between those infants who had been with depressed mothers to those who had been with non-depressed mothers.

Infants who had previously experienced depressed maternal expression were significantly more likely to respond to subsequent normal maternal expression with protest and loss of attention. An infant's social development could be jeopardized if the infant were continually confronted with depressed or distorted maternal behavior. Briefly being with a depressed mother resulted in a pattern of distress that persisted well into the next period of normal interaction. It seems that maternal depression may not only cause children to internalize the same unresponsive behaviors as their mothers, but it may lead infants to generalize these behaviors to other situations and people, which could have far-reaching consequences on infants' social development.[5]

Another study provides more detail on the effects depressed mothers have on their infants and the carry-over effect into situations with non-depressed people. Seventy-four pairs of depressed and non-depressed mothers with their infants between the ages three to six months old were videotaped in face-to-face interactions with their mothers and with non-depressed female strangers.[6] Depressed mothers and their infants received lower ratings on all interactional synchrony behaviors when compared to compared to non-depressed mothers and infants. Also, infants of depressed mothers were more likely to be distressed and unhappy with non-depressed female strangers after being with depressed mothers (Field et al. 1569–79).[7] This data confirms that infants may be in danger of internalizing depressed behaviors if cared for by a depressed mother.

In another study, Pickens and Field established with even greater detail the effects depressed mothers have on their infants during interactional synchrony. Pickens and Field expected that infants of depressed mothers would show fewer positive expressions such as interest and joy and more negative expressions such as sadness and anger when exposed to depression in their mothers. As the hypothesis predicted, infants of depressed mothers exhibited more negative affect. The infants spent a significantly greater proportion of interaction time showing sadness and anger expressions and less time showing interest than infants in the non-depressed group.

The higher incidence of anger expressions suggests that infants not only internalize the depressed characteristics of their mothers but also outwardly express these emotions. Depressed mothers inhibit their infants' ability to learn social interactions by

It is a fascinating phenomenon that two people who differ vastly in experience, age, and cognitive skill can strive for this same goal and understand each other.

Effective exchanges between infant and mother lay the groundwork for social behavior and emotional dispositions at later ages.

showing characteristics of depression that infants replicate in their own behavior.

Further research by Toda and Fogel supports the idea that the depressed behavior of a mother will be internalized by the infant. They observed thirty-seven mother-infant pairs in the laboratory with three- and six-month-old infants. The infants were exposed to the still-face situation (where mothers freeze their face and stop talking to their infants after normal interactional synchrony was occurring) to see the effects depression would have on their response behaviors. They found that infants were more likely to be sober than to cry during the still-face. They also found an increased amount of both grasping and touching the self, clothing, or chair during the still-face interactions. When mothers pose the still-face expression following a period of spontaneous face-to-face interaction, three-month-old infants show an increase of gazing away from the mother's face, changes in heart rate, and a decrease of smiling. The behaviors emitted by the infant—soberness, unresponsiveness, and gazing away—are characteristics of depression and indicate that these behaviors have been internalized by the infant.[8]

Effective exchanges between infant and mother lay the groundwork for social behavior and emotional dispositions at later ages. For example, researchers found that infants

of clinically depressed mothers expressed a good deal of negative affect in face-to-face interactions, probably in response to the disengagement of the mothers. These infants tended to express more sadness and anger, which expressed in the presence of adults, even those who were not depressed (Field et al. 1569–79). Tronick, Ricks, and Cohn found that the dominance of specific emotions during early mother-child interactions culminates in a general mood or emotional state that pervades the child's own behaviors. The child then brings this negative tone to new situations. The nature of the exchanges between the mother and the child influences the strength of the attachment between them.

Educating mothers is a possible solution to combat this problem, since "there are few, if any, formal or informal educational structures through which mothers, especially new mothers, can learn their trade. The stress of motherhood itself can induce depression in the mother or new mother" (Stern 419). Stern's research found that when depressed mothers were "trained" or "coached" in mothering they felt more comfortable and confident in being mothers, and the interactional synchrony between mother and infant improved. Researchers had depressed mothers watch videotaped interactions of effective and ineffective interactional synchrony. When the mothers were able to view the results of effective and ineffective interactional synchrony, it resulted in more effective interactional synchrony between mothers and their infants. They found that when depressed mothers had a group of mothers like themselves to talk to, interactional synchrony improved. When mothers are able to share their emotions and stress with someone who can empathize with them, stress and depression are relieved and they can function at a more normal level. Educating depressed mothers can be an effective strategy to overcome the typical negative effects of maternal depression on interactional synchrony.

Preterm Infants
Preterm infants, in general, have been found to emit weaker and less easily interpretable signals to their mothers which makes it difficult to maintain or even initiate

interactional synchrony on the mother's part. What inevitably happens is that the mother overstimulates the preterm infant with hope that the infant will respond back to her. An example of these characteristic behaviors is found in an experience baby Jenny and her mother had:

> Whenever a moment of mutual gaze occurred, the mother went immediately into high-gear stimulating behaviors, producing a profusion of fully displayed, high-intensity, facial and vocal social behavior. Jenny invariably broke gaze rapidly. Her mother never interpreted this temporary face and gaze aversion as a cue to lower her level of behavior, nor would she let Jenny self-control the level by gaining distance. Instead she would swing her head around following Jenny's to reestablish the full-face position. Jenny again turned away, pushing her face further into the pillow to try to break all visual contact. Again, instead of holding back, the mother continued to chase Jenny. . . . She also escalated the level of her stimulation more by adding touching and tickling to the unabated flow of vocal and facial behavior. Jenny closed her eyes to avoid any mutual visual contact and only reopened them after she had moved her head to the other side. All of these behaviors on Jenny's part were performed with a sober face or at times a grimace. (Berger and Thomson 276)

Preterm infants don't respond to their mothers' initiation of interactional synchrony, which causes mothers to overstimulate their infants in an effort to induce responsive behaviors from them.

McGehee and Eckerman found that preterm infants differed significantly from full-term infants in their ability to orient visually, sustain eye-to-eye contact, and generally appear socially available. "The findings suggest that mothers of preterm infants are faced with a somewhat different social partner than are mothers of full-term infants" (461). Preterm infants exhibited more startling and jerking movements accompanied by gasping and grunting and were less able to maintain their ongoing state of attentiveness when their mother presented the still-face to them. Full-term infants, in contrast, moved less often and more smoothly and were more able to continue being alert or non-alert during the interaction. The hyper-responsivity/ hyperexcitability of preterm infants may not only be an important reflection of the infant's neurological status but may also have an important impact on the feelings and behaviors of the caregiver. In other words, she cannot respond to her infants because she cannot read them in order to respond to them.

> A well-accepted general rule in understanding the evolution of mother-infant interaction is that the organization of the dyadic interaction occurs as a function of the capabilities of each member: the infant's capabilities for signaling its needs and responding to maternal ministration and the mother's ability to appropriately perceive and respond to her infant's cues. (468)

A critical factor in shaping the ensuing mother-infant interaction is the clarity of behaviors emitted by the infant to the mother and not the mother's response. Such clarity of behavioral communication is often referred to as the readability of the infant behaviors, because the mother must be able to read or interpret meaning from the baby's behavior in order to respond appropriately.

Preterm infants seem to present their mothers with conflicting signals and cues. It would be difficult for mothers to interpret and respond to preterm infants' often changing state of arousal. The preterm mixes jerks, gasps, and grunts with face-to-face gazing. These combined signals may be difficult to read and respond to. Not only may the mother be confused, troubled, or puzzled by the pre-mature infant's behaviors, but she may have difficulty in responding to the infant. The mother increases her own activities in reaction to the unresponsive activity level of the infant, which in turn may have direct impact on the infant's behaviors causing it to avoid interactional synchrony all together. Because preterm infants are underdeveloped in many systems of their bodies, they cannot control their behaviors, making their actions unreadable to mothers, who in turn respond with overstimulation to try to produce a desired response in the

Infants of depressed mothers internalize the depressed characteristics of their mothers and also outwardly express these emotions.

infants. Although it has been demonstrated that full-term infants with neurological deficits exhibit similar conditions, the evidence presented describing preterm infants is still applicable in this situation.

Another study confirms that overstimulation produced by mothers of preterm infants causes interactional synchrony to be altered (Field 763–71).

It is essential for mothers and infants to feel "in-sync" if the child is to gain a sense of well-being.

When mothers were asked to keep the preterm infant's attention they spent more time initiating conversation than time waiting for the infant to respond to their communication. The increase in maternal activity certainly was an information overload for the infant. In the attention-getting situation, the mother was providing more information for the infant to process than it could handle and the infant in turn was averting its gaze a greater percentage of the time. The overstimulation produced by the mother caused the preterm baby to avoid interactional synchrony.

In a further study, twenty full-term and forty preterm infants were observed. The preterm had first been observed and concluded to be less alert, less attentive to stimulation, and less active than term infants (Field 485–88). Conversely, the preterm infants were conversely hyperactive, easily made happy, and irritable during the three minutes of spontaneous face-to-face interactions with their mothers. Preterm babies spent less time looking at their mothers and

appeared to enjoy their interactions less than full-term infants. Their smiles and vocalizations were less frequent and their frowns and cries were more frequent than those of full-term babies. Elevated heart rate, gazing away, and negative behaviors of the infants are linked to the information overload and elevated attention levels deriving from excessive stimulation from the preterm's mother. In their natural attempts to elicit positive affective responses, mothers appear to provide a level of stimulation that seems to be counterproductive. This overstimulation impedes the interactional synchrony between the mother and the preterm infant.

Field et al. analyzed forty-eight full-term and forty-eight preterm infants' ability to discriminate facial expressions and discovered that infants are capable of discriminating happy, sad, and surprised facial expressions. Even though infants can discriminate these expressions, the visual discrimination process may be less developed in preterm than in full-term infants. This could result in the infant's inability to respond to the expressions from its mother, which would leave the mother assuming that the baby was uninterested in communicating with her. The mother would then either stop trying to interact with the infant or would overstimulate the infant in hope of a response, which would frustrate interactional synchrony.

The unresponsiveness and inability to control responses of the preterm infants, coupled with their inability to accurately discriminate facial expressions in their mother because of their underdeveloped discrimination system, leads mothers to overstimulate preterm infants in an attempt to gain a response from them. This leads to preterm infants being unresponsive and gazing away from their mothers.

Field uncovered alternate strategies that might alleviate overstimulation in the mother and unresponsiveness in the infant during interactional synchrony. "The attentiveness and positive affect of these infants can be enhanced by modifying the mother's behaviors" (469). In a previous study conducted by Field, mothers were asked to imitate the behaviors of their infants. The effect of this manipulation was that mothers became less active and their infants became more atten-

tive than they had been during spontaneous interactions. Obviously, the mothers could understand to a greater extent the needs of their preterm infants because they "put themselves in their preterm infant's shoes." Decreases in the infants' heart rate suggested that the infant was not under the stress normally caused during overstimulation. "The interpretation of this data was that these infants may have limited information-processing and/or arousal-modulation abilities, thus requiring more frequent 'breaks' from the conversation to process information and modulate arousal" (Field 770). Mothers of preterm babies need to: (1) take breaks between interaction to maintain the synchrony desirable to the infant; and (2) be sensitive to their infants needs and include those into their repertoire of emotions,perhaps even through imitation of their infants' behaviors.

Gender Differences

Tronick and Cohn found that mothers and their infant sons were more likely to be in-sync than were mothers and their daughters. Coordination was evaluated with two measures: (1) matching—the extent to which mother and infant engage in the same behavior at the same time; and (2) synchrony—the extent to which mother and infant change their behavior with respect to one another. Mother-son pairs had higher synchrony scores than mother-daughter pairs. Mothers tend to ignore their sons' expressions of pain but respond with a knitted brow to their daughters' expressions of pain (85–92). These findings could be suggestive of a different form of emotional attachment between mothers and daughters as compared to mothers and sons. Such a difference would have important consequences for emotional responsiveness and formation of identity in females and males. Sons may develop a greater sense of control over people and the environment. This might result because mothers allow their sons to employ expressions of pain without negative facial responses from them. Sons would thus tend to believe that it is acceptable to show emotional expressions. When daughters expressed pain their mothers showed negative feedback, giving them the impression that they're not free to express their emotions. This feeling of having to control their emotions would convey a feeling of dependence, not autonomy. This would mean that sons have an advantage in the interactional synchrony relationship between mothers and infants. Because mothers match their daughters' emotional state may also signal an empathic response which would help the girls to understand that emotions are shared across individuals.

In Toda and Fogel's study of infant responses to the still-face they found that a gender difference emerged in the reactions of the infants to the still-face of their mothers. Girls were more negative during the still-face at three months than were boys. This negativity may be displayed in girls because it is their way of resuming the interaction with their mothers. When interaction was not resumed after their initiation of an emotion daughters might have felt like they had no control. If this feeling of not having control was long-lasting, girls may adopt a sense of negativity into all their interactions with people. This negativity found in girls may harm their emergence of self as well as their feelings of control, which are secure attachments in infants. This would also lead to the conclusion that boys benefit more from interactional synchrony with their mothers than girls. These findings might also signal that girls are exposed to greater levels of emotional exchange, so that when presented with the still-face they are disturbed more.

This discrepancy in gender treatment

In their natural attempts to elicit positive responses, mothers appear to provide a level of stimulation that is counter-productive for preterm infants.

could lead to a greater development of self-concept in the son and hinder the same development in the daughter. Although the mother behaves differently depending on the gender of her child, it does not necessarily mean this behavior will be a detriment to her infant. It could mean that infants need a different kind of stimulation in interactional synchrony to develop fully into their gender roles.[9]

Bukatko and Daehler's research suggests that mothers need to be sensitive to their infants and treat them individually, remembering that "girls and boys possess high levels of personality characteristics associated with both sexes" (516). If mothers believe that boy and girl infants are more alike than they are different they would be more apt to treat both girl and boy infants the same during interactional synchrony. This might produce equal periods of being in-sync with her infants, both male and female, which would lead to greater self-concept and effectance motivation that are characteristic of strong attachments in infants.

Interactional synchrony is paramount in the mother-infant relationship. Variables such as maternal depression, preterm infants, and gender differences can lead to unsuccessful interactional synchrony between mothers and infants.

Conclusion

Maternal depression was found to produce an unresponsiveness in the infant that generalized to other situations and to their interactions with others. Preterm infants were found to be unresponsive and unreadable to mothers. Because of this behavior the mothers overstimulated their infants in an effort to induce interactional synchrony. Preterm infants were also discovered to have a less developed discrimination of facial gestures which left them unable to correctly read or decode their mother's behaviors and respond appropriately. Gender differences affect the interactional synchrony between mothers and their babies, in that mothers and sons were in interactional synchrony more often than mothers and daughters. Although evidence was presented to support a gender difference, adequate research has not been conducted to make a solid conclusion.

These variables could be neutralized so that interactional synchrony could still proceed between the mother and the infant by educating the depressed mother, taking breaks in the interactional synchrony with preterm infants, and treating both genders equally.

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Endnotes
1. The term "mother" will be used in this paper in place of "primary caregiver" for reasons of clarity, even though fathers, grandparents, and others fill the role of primary caregiver in many instances.
2. Stern explains the significant elements included within interactional synchrony. Middle-class, white, educated women were the subjects of this study. They were all mothers for the first time and their babies were four months old. Stern observed the interactions between these mothers and infants to see what characterized interactional synchrony. He observed some critical components in this attachment.
3. The infants were labeled as secure or insecure. Of the thirty pairs, ten were secure, and twenty were insecurely attached.
4. Although it has been shown that this sample was highly selective and not representative of normal attachment the outcomes are still relevant for this paper.
5. Although this study was very brief in respects to the time than depression employed in the maternal depression event, and the infants themselves may adapt to ongoing depression, the conclusions reached can be seen as suggestive of an anomaly.
6. Depression was determined by Becks Depression Inventory-BDI.
7. Although the infants of both depressed and non-depressed mothers received lower ratings with the stranger adult, there were very few differences noted between the ratings of the infants of depressed mothers when interacting with their depressed mother versus the ratings when interacting with the stranger, suggesting that their depressed style of interacting was not specific to their interactions with their depressed mothers but generalized to their interactions with non-depressed adults.
8. Although some would argue that the still-face expression is a novel event produced by the mother, the information gleaned from the study can still be applied to improve our understanding and lead to more research on maternal depression.
9. Through the analysis of these various studies, it is apparent that there has not been adequate research performed to fully deduce gender variables have on interactional synchrony.

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One man in Stalin's Russia changed the way a

Power & Cinema

nation saw the world

BY LORI HARMAN HANSEN

"Life imitates art far more than art imitates life"–Oscar Wilde • "Film is the most effective of the arts"–Lenin

The history of the Soviet cinema is to a great extent the history of its context. Like all artists, the Soviet cinema giants of the 1920s and 30s produced their films within the context of their experiences—and against the political and cultural landscape of their lives. Born out of the revolution, and bred under the scathing eye of Stalinism, Soviet film artists like Sergei Eisenstein were part of an avant-garde of intellectuals that gave shape and substance to the party's ideology and propaganda to a countryside of illiterate, cinema-going peasants. When the revolution ended, however, and the new regime became entrenched, filmmakers were routinely censored and controlled by Stalin's ever-stiffening policies—even if their films were ideo-logically supportive of the revolution. Ironically, the principles of the revolution were not always the principles that Stalin's new regime celebrated—indeed, the most "revolutionary" filmmakers became subject to the most scrutiny. As Stalin established a centrally-controlled cinema to build up the nation and unite it, he purposely and effectively silenced his most politically-fervent filmmakers.

This paper will explore the Soviet cinema's increasingly effective means of social control in the Soviet state after the revolution, the kinds of ideological pressures the state enforced on cinema artists, and how the Stalinist system, in its attempt to crush subversion, destroyed the passion of one of its greatest original patriots, the filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein.

The Soviet film industry was sur- prisingly healthy after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Lenin and his comrades were concerned primarily with their own survival and the implementation of their new regime. Film directors were still relatively free to produce movies that reflected their consciences even after Lenin nationalized the film industry in 1919—including films that were carefully critical of the new regime and its leaders. When newer and younger filmmakers joined the Bolsheviks they began creating films that glorified the Marxist world view and the platforms of the revolution (Shlapentokh 39). Many of these new filmmakers developed and celebrated their political ideas within the rebellion. Sergei Eisenstein, remembers being

nineteen, a civil engineering student with a penchant for art, sitting in the shadow of a doorway during the October days of the Bolshevik revolution, and sketching the scene in the streets of Moscow (Eisenstein 10). Like most young intellectuals of his time, Eisenstein had the revolution in his blood; and its mood dominated his work.

During the early 1920s, the spirit in Russia celebrated revolutionary populism. Lenin and his colleagues believed strongly in a socialist utopia realized through the liberation of the masses. They believed that "revolutionary intellectuals would defend Marxism on their own initiative, so direct supervision was not necessary" (Shlapentokh 39). This was to some degree true. Intellectuals, as a group, were supportive of the revolution and were interested in using art to relive it and take it to the masses. Eisenstein writes in his autobiography, Notes of a Film Director, when he first comprehended art's power to persuade:

> This formula appealed to me aesthetically—that a proper display of details usually associated with an emotion can arouse the emotion itself . . . thus art enables man through co-experience to ficti-

tiously experience great emotions. (13)

Eisenstein understood implicitly that cinema had the power to re-present experiences to any man or woman regardless of their previous exposure and that through cinema people could be heroes or murderers based on the emotions they experienced simultaneously through a character. With a passion for the revolution, Eisenstein both feared art and embraced it. He understood its power to further the ideals of the revolution, but he feared its potential to present ideas inconsistent with the new ideology.

At twenty-two Eisenstein joined the Lef, the Left Front in Art, an organization of futurist writers and critics that existed from 1923 to 1930 and provided a haven for intellectuals of the revolution. Their common plan was to master art and then destroy it if it wasn't used to further the revolution. "Influencing minds through art was, after all something. And if the young proletariat state was to fulfill the urgent tasks confronting it, it had to exert a lot of influence on hearts and minds" (15). The new regime had yet to recognize the cinema's role in this task, and ironically, it was likely that the artists themselves brought this to its attention.

That is not to say that up to this point film had been used purely as entertainment; in reality, the Russians had been subjected to a wave of film propaganda that originated outside the country during World War I. The Allies used film in an attempt to "put spirit back into the Russian army" when more than a million half-starved soldiers deserted the trenches during a long stretch of frontline fighting in 1916. Frantically trying to stave off mutiny, France released a series of crude films that were actually newsreel clips cut and pasted together into full-length features. Great Britain, America, and even Italy got involved in the effort. In fear of being preempted, the Russian government enlisted the cinema studios in Moscow and Petrograd, commissioning films to support many government causes—some of which had nothing to do with the war,

and most of which were designed for the general public. Utilizing innocuous newsreel from the war, "the few films shown were more cautious . . . showing a life at the front without the ugly details the soldiers knew too well" (Leyda 85).

In the years following the revolution, Lenin, and subsequently, Stalin, molded the nation with stiffening ideology. The growing Socialist bureaucracy began to recognize cinema as a great means of ideological control and wanted to impose restrictions on it. Lenin declared to Soviet cinema organizations that they must "pay attention to the need to select films carefully and take account of the impact of every film on the population while it was being shown" (Khokhlova 92).

As the state wielded increasing control over the screen, it created a subjective reality in film that had almost nothing in common with the everyday reality of Russian life (Shlapentokh 21). Just as Eisenstein had foreseen, when movies were effectively produced they acted as propaganda creating a false reflection of people's lives, and more important, offering a glorified, glamorized version of people's relationship to the state. The movies sanctioned by the state glorified the revolution, its leaders, and showed dissenters being watched and punished. Thus movies became the most effective means of disseminating nationalist, socialist images. "Due to their visual presentation, emotional impact, and popularity, they were able to influence a wider audience than any other media"— the best vehicle to carry the ideological messages of the new regime to the cities and the countrysides (21).

Soviet cinema historians, Dmitry and Vladimir Shlapentokh, point out:

> While life imitates art in any society, this is even more likely to be the case in a totalitarian society . . . It was as if Soviet life were not the model for Soviet moviemakers, but rather an object of accommodation to the requirements of ideal reality as it was presented in movies. The ease with which ordinary people accepted essentially false images of

Soviet film artists like Sergei Eisenstein were part of an avant-garde of intellectuals that gave shape and substance to communist ideology and propaganda.

> A few scenes could do what thousands of handbills and speeches couldn't guarantee—it could make people experience emotions that bonded them to the cause.

reality was possible because the masses, under the pressure of omnipresent propaganda and out of an Orwellian fear of punishment, believed (against their own personal experience) in the veracity of what they saw on screen. (22)

Whether or not the people actually feared punishment for not believing what they saw on screen is debatable—there was no mandate which forced people to go to the movies. It was, however, a popular national pastime. Many of the peasants were illiterate and poor, and because of government intentions, movies were accessible and cheap. By regulating the specific films that would be shown in the theaters, the regime could dictate the specific ideology presented through this medium. The ideology was determined and institutionally controlled by boards set apart for this purpose; thus within the cinema, as in most other places in Soviet life, Stalin's ideology held a monopoly.

During the first ten years of the new regime this monopoly was not a great problem for political filmmakers like Eisenstein. As noted previously, these new filmmakers believed in the regime and its ideals, and were anxious to join the cause of communism, world revolution, and the party. Much of their work interpreted and glorified the ideology; in their view, art should be used solely for that purpose. The tension developed when Stalin tried to control every aspect of their interpretation, method, and production. In the early years, censorship was not overt or resisted. To many film-

makers it was simply a "manifestation of the party's control over all aspects of life"—which at that time was to be expected if the revolution was to be effective and permanent. As long as they were part of the revolution filmmakers wanted to dedicate their talents to ensure its success. Stalin encouraged the artists to come up with principles and methods that would be suitable for the cause. In those early years, filmmakers were rarely passive victims of blatant coercion; most of them acquiesced or actively collaborated (Kenez 54).

But in 1929, the slogan *ideological planning* was implemented, and every cinema studio was required to introduce an annual theme. The Council of People's Commissars adopted the decree "On Strengthening the Production and Exhibition of Political-Educational Films," and a purge began in every cinema organization. This purge was called the ideological mirror. All cinema workers were subjected to a detailed cross-examination by the Purge Commission. This included questions about their origins, their political views, and their attitudes toward Formalism and anti-Marxist positions in cinema (Khokhlova 93).

Two years previously, Eisenstein had produced his masterpiece Battleship Potemkin, which was received by film critics around the world as an awesome work, and by his homeland as a consummate example of on-screen propaganda. It quickly became a standard for film, and indeed, Eisenstein made it for that purpose. Battleship Potemkin was originally commissioned by the government to commemorate the 1905 revolution.

When the preview for

his next film *Strike*, (Eisenstein's first ideologically successful film) aired, the committee was quick to offer him an assignment. At that time they had only two qualifications: "that it should not have a pessimistic ending; and that one of the film's major episodes be completed by 20 December of that year" (Barna 91). Eisenstein, with the help of the Committee for Documentation, pulled information from a variety of primary sources: press articles, documentary research, eyewitness accounts, and other historical writings. The film was to capture events from the Russo-Japanese War to the armed uprising. Each event would then be compressed into a short summation scene.

In his early work on the film, Eisenstein was successful in capturing the dynamism, tempo, and prevailing atmosphere of that historic period—all of which he had so thoroughly absorbed during his own experiences in 1917: "When it came to the shooting, he was completely at home in the revolutionary world he was depicting . . . he was able to invent episodes not in the scenario which were completely in harmony with the atmosphere of 1905." (91)

His methods became a formula for future films. Propaganda required a hero from the working class, typically a peasant, a soldier, a sailor, a revolutionary or Party worker; and it required a villain, typically a foreigner, a spy, a bourgeois, a landowner, or a priest. The hero was a member of the masses, and the villain was a loner or an individualist. Their struggle was over something that the masses protected, typically their families or the motherland; and the masses always triumphed in the struggle. The images had to be simplistic, stereotypical, and reflective of "Socialist Realism."

Socialist realism took shape only in the presence of the *other*, or in the threat of the *other*. The other became a unifying foil, and ultimately created the need for strict social control. Silent cinema was particularly effective since it required symbols and simplicity to sustain the story. Because the Soviet cine-

ma banned most foreign films from the country's theaters, this form was used again and again without much outside competition and it was sanctioned and encouraged by the Soviet cinema bureaucracy.

The idea of using images to create emotionality was, as Eisenstein had predicted, the most powerful form of propaganda. A few scenes of one film could do what thousands of handbills and speeches couldn't guarantee—it could make people experience emotions that would bond them to the cause. For instance, the imagery and horrors of the people spliced with their frantic movement was calculated not to document an event, but "to cause a sense of emotional outrage in the audience at the callous brutality of the tsarist army" (Taylor 73).

Not surprisingly, *Battleship Potemkin* was successful propaganda abroad. Not only did it reinforce the power of a Marxist revolution, but it gave a false impression of the Russian military, particularly the navy. "The scenes near the end of the film, showing the whole naval squadron, caused an anxious debate in the German Reichstag over the size of the Soviet navy. Eisenstein later revealed the surprising source of these shots: old newsreel of naval maneuvers—not even of the Russian fleet, but of a certain foreign power, probably the British navy" (Leyda 195).

Just as important, *Battleship Potemkin* gave prominence to the masses as heroes. The ruling elite tried to "persuade themselves and the masses" that the "new power" was held equally among all, but only because they had yet to establish themselves as the "legitimate masters" of the country (Shlapentokh 52). As Marxism began to be institutionalized, however, in the form of Stalinism, the party leadership changed, the policy toward cinema stiffened, and Eisenstein's relationship with the party and his craft faced conflicting intentions.

With this shift in party leadership, Eisenstein and other directors, producers, and industrialists balked at the increasing censorship, demands, and

Not only did Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* reinforce the power of a Marxist revolution, but it gave a false impression of the Russian military, in particular the navy.

interference of the bureaucracy. According to their actions, filmmakers were rewarded, punished, or permanently silenced depending on Stalin's requirements. In order to relieve the conflict between Stalin and the film-makers, many within the industry simply pretended to be Bolsheviks. As government policies became more institutional and less ideological, this number grew. Filmmakers of this time were characterized in three categories: "those who glorified reality and ate salmon and caviar at receptions in the Kremlin; those who denounced reality and were beaten and bloodied; and those who glorified the same reality, but with various reservations and innuendoes" (52).

Eisenstein was increasingly interested in exploring the theories behind powerful filmmaking and developing his own method of montage rather than in making films expressly for the state. Yet this sort of renegade thinking was threatening to Stalin and to the preservation of the state. In time, Eisenstein fell out of favor because of his approach—his independence—rather than because of his actual work. Although abroad he received encouragement and appreciation for his work, at home he was constantly under attack for his montage theory and intellectual cinema. Finally, the Stalinist iron curtain came down on even the leading Communist intellectuals.

From all accounts, Eisenstein did not alter his theories on cinema, but the constant pressure and scrutiny did seem to dampen his outspokenness—and it certainly kept him from producing almost half of the films that he attempted. Stalin wanted films that unified the Soviet state and gave the common man a political consciousness, and, although Eisenstein typically chose or wrote scripts that were ideologically correct, his filming techniques continually obscured the message and personalized the film. His independence provoked cinema bureaucrats, and they sought to subjugate his talent.

For example, the Special Cinematographic Committee commissioned his third film, *October: Ten Days*

T o Soviet bureaucrats, a film was a useless piece of propaganda if the audience had no narrative point of reference.

that Shook the World, to be one of several films made to commemorate the Bolshevik Revolution. Eisenstein received financial support and a free hand in shooting—he was even allowed to shoot scenes at the Winter Palace in Leningrad. Critics and audiences alike viewed the festival as an opportunity to compare two of the country's most innovative filmmakers: Eisenstein and Pudovkin. Eisenstein did not bend to these expectations—he was intent on creating a technical, albeit abstract, masterpiece.

Eisenstein's film, *October,* and the film by Soviet artist Pudovkin, *The End of St. Petersburg*, deal with similar subjects in vividly contrasting ways. "Pudovkin centered the convulsion of the uprising around the peasant face of one individual swept up in its chain of events . . . the organization of the film around these events in his life provide[ed] a unity that govern[ed] the scenes of fighting for the possession of the city" (Hanson 812). While Pudovkin's film was an acceptable approach, Eisenstein's was not.

Eisenstein constructed montage scenes that emphasized not the individuals and their involvement in the action, but rather the abstract intellectual ideas behind the action. This is best exemplified with the opening scene: the toppling of the czarist government. Instead of shooting straight action, Eisenstein symbolizes it by showing in slow-motion a huge cast-iron statue of the czar being pulled down by workers with ropes. The statue slowly falls as parts of it break off and crash to the ground. Then as the new government is installed, the statue resurrects itself, each part floating back into its proper place. Although there seems to be a new statue, in reality, "the status quo has been resumed" (811).

When Eisenstein wanted to emphasize the historic moment the Soviets established power, he again turned to a montage. The scene consisted of a montage of clocks. Each clock was set for the time of a particular city—Paris, New York, London, Shanghai—when the provisional government fell. "This device created a unity fusing people everywhere together in a perception of the moment of victory" (812).

Ironically, Eisenstein's subjects using the montage technique glorified the power of the new state—indeed made the state the center of the world—and yet because of his original and obviously intellectual approach, it was unacceptable. Stalin didn't want a state of thinkers; he wanted a state of common men who knew their place.

Eisenstein was accused of making *October* an intellectual experiment that had virtually no practical application. To Soviet cinema bureaucrats, a film was a useless piece of propaganda if the audience had no narrative point of reference. Eisenstein was not allowed to complete another film until 1938. He tried to make a film with Upton Sinclair, *Que Viva Mexico*, but it was never finished and much of the film was badly mutilated. The film had gone drastically over budget and over time, and Eisenstein received a cable from Stalin saying, "Eisenstein lost his comrades confidence in Soviet Union. He is thought to be a deserter who broke off with his own country. Am afraid the people here would have no interest in him soon. Am very sorry but all assert it is the fact" (Barna 180). Shortly thereafter Eisenstein returned to the Soviet Union for good. During the next eight years, the head of Soviet cinema, Boris Shumyatsky, set out on a campaign to destroy Eisenstein (186).

Eisenstein wasn't the only director to suffer from chronic criticism and control. The longer they were in power, the more paranoid Stalin and his elitist comrades became about maintaining control and punishing subversives. Believing that artists who did not follow government restrictions were dangerous, the state, through their policies, banned intellectual and artistic freedom. Under this system of power, thousands of films were detained, cut, changed, never released, forbidden, and even destroyed. Many independent sources record that a number of movies were completely ruined in the middle of production, including

> The longer they were in power, the more paranoid Stalin and his elitist comrades became about maintaining control and punishing subversives.

another Eisenstein film, *Bezhin Meadow*. Eisenstein relates in his memoirs that after this film was banned, he was forced to make a "confession" entitled "The Mistakes of *Bezhin Meadow*" (Marshall 212). The letter said among other things, "In my stylistic striving and make-up, I have a great tendency to the general, the generalization, to generalizing. But, is this realism? No . . . and such generalization pushes into the background the basic task to show the struggles of the Kulaks against the collective farm." (213).

The irony is clear. As Soviet historian Zorkaya notes: "Eisenstein [had to] ask pardon for the fact that he was Eisenstein."

The standard demanded by Stalinism was largely unspoken, but understood. In many cases Stalin gave direct orders. The 1980s filmmaker Tarkovski wrote in his diary, "Without the permission of the state it is impossible to even begin filming. And attempting to use your own money is even more forbidden. Such an action would be immediately assessed as criminal, ideo-logical diversion, and subversive activity" (Shlapentokh 25–26). Another director, Alexander Askol'dov, was blacklisted and impoverished for his film that sympathetically described the life of the Jews during the civil war (25). All copies of the film were removed and destroyed.

Authorities were unhappy with scripts that were written by anyone besides chosen writers; yet the number of acceptable writers was few. In addition, the writer never had any control over the changes that were made. Not enough material was written, and not enough

> **Eisenstein symbolized the czarist government by showing in slow-motion a huge cast-iron statue of the czar being pulled down by workers with ropes.**

material passed through the authorities and made it to production. Countless time and money was lost on the cumbersome system. But as Peter Kenez points out, it is difficult to distinguish between the culpability of the censorship system and the acquiescence of the artists. "On the one hand, it is inappropriate to blame people who worked under cruel pressure in the shadow of mass destruction. On the other, it is obviously misleading to treat these people as innocent martyrs. The genius of the Soviet system lay in its ability to make almost everyone an accomplice, and the record of artists was neither better nor worse than that of other groups: filmmakers denounced one another, just as most other Soviet people did" (Kenez 66). From a group of bitter artists, Stalin created an intellectual class of accomplices.

Eisenstein came back into favor with the opening of *Alexander Nevsky*, a film that eulogized a nationalist hero and honored the Soviet homeland. A political "save face," could have been his motivation for making the film, as noted in the New York Times film review announcing its release:

> After more than six years of unproductivity, not all of it voluntary, Sergei Eisenstein has returned to party favor and to public honors with Alexander Nevsky, a rough-hewn monument to national heroism. This is the picture which saved Eisenstein's face, and possibly his hide, after his *Bezhin Meadow* was halted after two years' shooting because of its allegedly unsympathetic treatment of the Communist revolution. Alexander Nevsky is the picture which prompted Josef

Stalin to slap its maker on the back and exclaim, "Sergei, you are a true Bolshevik." (1590)

And indeed, it seemed so. Eisenstein recorded in his notes that patriotism was the thought in his mind and his crew's during the shooting, the sound recording, and the editing of Alexander Nevsky. Such patriotism paid off. In February 1939, Eisenstein was awarded "The Order of Lenin" award by Stalin himself for the honorable patriotism reflected in his work. Eisenstein made no apologies for the clear allusions drawn from the film to present-day circumstances. Again in his writings, he made his purpose clear:

> The theme of patriotism and national rebuff to the aggressor is the theme that permeates our film. We want our film not only to mobilize those who are in the thick of the fight against fascism on a world scale, but also to give heart, courage and conviction even to those parts of the world population to whom fascism appears invincible . . . let them not kneel before it without protest, let them not stop the unending policy of concession and appeasement towards this insatiable monster. Let the skeptics remember that there is no force of gloom and darkness that could stand against the combined efforts of all that is best, healthiest, most progressive and forward-looking in

mankind. (Taylor 117)

Eisenstein's private passion against oppression is powerfully stated. Yet his words. Coupled with his consistent choice of film topics, also show a person who seems sincere in his patriotism. It is often noted that "of his six completed films, Alexander Nevsky is, in its ideas, the most superficial and the least personal of his work" (Leyda 349). A powerful and successful piece of propaganda, it not only charged the national climate, but also defined the nation to foreign powers abroad, becoming a symbol of the state's power to effectively transform a revolutionary artist into a revolutionary puppet. However, for Eisenstein, Alexander Nevsky was simply a politically savvy step that opened the door for his most important and telling work: Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II.

Eisenstein began working on *Ivan the Terrible* in the early 1940s at Stalin's request. Eisenstein embraced the challenge to represent a man whose life somehow resonated with his own. Ivan was a great and talented leader who was charged to rule when he was still young and idealistic. As Ivan sought to lead the country, he was double-crossed by his comrades—those on the inside who were elected to help him unify the country. This betrayal broke his heart and embittered him. When his own aunt poisoned his beloved wife, he took revenge in blood baths across the coun-

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tryside, becoming Ivan the Terrible.

Ivan is presented by Eisenstein as a tortured soul, trying to act according to principles within the confinement and corruption of the state. The movie is filmed almost completely in black and white with long shadows and low ceilings, menacing faces, and twisted bodies that create a sense of repression and distrust. Up to this point, Eisenstein's films had been crafted with simple plots and one-dimensional heroes that showed no real weaknesses. But in *Ivan the Terrible*, particularly Part II, Eisenstein does more than represent the political story—he shows the internal struggle of a man who, under intense pressure, responds in a very personal way, a way that ultimately leads to violence.

During filming, Eisenstein made consistent efforts "to reconcile the direct orders of the authorities with 'decent' philosophical ideas, thereby rationalizing in his mind his allegiance to Stalin and his role as purveyor of propaganda" (Shlapentokh 79). He sought Stalin's approval for various scenes and details in the film—including the length of Ivan's beard. Although Eisenstein had deferred to Stalin by glorifying the leader in the first half of the movie, the second half was made with more a personal interpretation. His work was compared to others' whose epics were devoted to glorifying Stalin (Marshall 221).

Yet ironically, the film seems to represent precisely what the Soviet state was so eager to impress upon the populace: that "genuine patriots should be ready to denounce and punish even those close to them if they were regarded as traitors of the motherland . . . Ivan the Terrible was the ideal role model for this purpose" (Shlapentokh 108–09). Stalin enthusiastically approved of the first half, awarding Eisenstein the Stalin Prize for his work. But Part II was strongly denounced and banned from the country until after Stalin's death in 1958. In 1946, the Soviet Bulletin of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries related that Ivan the Terrible, Part II, was criticized for

[its] ignorance, and untrue representation of events . . . distortion of historical truth in the first form . . . and carelessness in the representation of historical fact . . . Ivan the Terrible, a man of powerful will and character, is shown as weak, nervous, will-less, something in the nature of Hamlet. (220)

Eisenstein died before any of Stalin's suggestions for revision could be implemented. Some of his close friends suggested that he never planned to make the changes (79). His widow, Pera Attasheva, stated that she tried to convince her husband not to produce the script he had prepared: "He was told it would be the end of him. He was firm though he had a sick heart. He would not retreat" (Marshall 228). When he was warned again, he declared to a colleague, "This is the first time in history that a man has committed suicide by cinema!" (230).

Eisenstein died out of favor with the state and criticized by his colleagues. Authorities of the state viewed his work as too subtle and too intellectual to have been propaganda; some Russian cinema experts believed he was a filmmaker that made ideological control effective and possible. Moscow philosopher Mezhueiv included Eisenstein with those filmmakers who molded the totalitarian mentality. Through censorship and denouncement, Stalin silenced the voice and message of one of his most politically supportive filmmakers. Ironically, Eisenstein's work has survived—not only survived, but it has given the Soviets a name in cinema and trans-ported the message of the Russian revolution and its artists across the globe.

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